

RACISM IN NOVELS:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BRAZILIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN  
CULTURAL HISTORY

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on comparing racism in South Africa and Brazil by analyzing eight novels written between 1909 and 1953 that discuss racism. The aim is to examine the phenomenon in these two societies and the way it was reflected in the novels of two white authors – Alan Paton and Jorge Amado – and two black authors: Afonso Henrique Lima Barreto and Peter Henry Abrahams. Methodologically, this study is concerned with the use of literature as a source for social and cultural history. The selected novels are used as primary sources, supported by historiography and other secondary sources.

Paton's novels *Cry, the beloved country* and *Too late, the Phalarope* use the theme of racial segregation in South Africa and its consequences of social, economic and political exclusion as a basis for their stories, while the selected novels of Amado – *Seara Vermelha* and *Jubiabá* – explore social, political and economic segregation in Brazil during the authoritarian reign of Getúlio Vargas. On the other hand, the works of Lima Barreto, *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* and *Clara dos Anjos*, approach racism via the Brazilian mentality and examine how this contributes to social and economic exclusion. Peter Abrahams denounces social and economic exclusion based on racial discrimination in South Africa. His novels achieved considerable success inside and outside Africa, all of them addressing this problem, although this study selected only two: *Mine Boy* and *The Path of Thunder*.

The period chosen for this investigation – 1900-1953 – witnessed the advance of capitalism, which for underdeveloped countries and colonies meant the exploitation of minerals, railways and port constructions; urbanization; industrialization; and all their social consequences. The rise of Nazi regimes in the thirties, with distinct racial ideas and social policies revived old theories about racial differences. After the World War II, the fight for democracy influenced the debate on racial discrimination and segregation worldwide, bringing a new wave of scientific explanations and a political and social demand for ending colonization on the African continent and racial segregation in the United States.

As the features of South African politics and policies of exclusion emerged with new colours for the world – given the testimonies, and new analyses publicized in the past fifteen years

– Brazil was been pushed to face the problem of racial and social exclusion, unmasking its image as a “racial paradise”. At this point, comparative analysis of racial issues through their cultural history would help to understand differences and similarities between the two societies, which are still fighting racism and its consequences.

Key terms:

Racism, class division, comparative history, Brazilian history, South African history, literature, Apartheid, miscegenation, cultural history, dictatorship.

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Elaine P. Rocha

Bridgetown, summer of 2007.

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a comparative study of Brazilian and South African racial policies and conceptions during the first half of the twentieth century, and how they are reflected in both countries' literature, particularly in the novels of Alan Paton, Jorge Amado, Lima Barreto and Peter Abrahams.

As Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre proposed, “history is a daughter of its own time.” This means that history is tightly connected to the historians and the time during which they are writing. Not only the exact moment when the act of writing is done, but also the personal history of the historian interferes with his or her choice of subject, theoretical analysis and sources.<sup>1</sup>

For more than fifty years, the ideas of Bloch have influenced the way history has been read, written and taught. Abandoning positivist tendencies and linearity, he defended an approach in *close up*, considering human activity, in *the making of history*, the interdisciplinary approach and the use of multiple sources of documents. In 1931, Bloch wrote a book about French medieval history using literature as the main source to understand the daily lives of ordinary people in the country. By doing this, he proposed an analysis of the society mindset and the purposes that motivated the actions in the past, along with justifications, reason and causes. It was the beginning of the *history of mentalities*.

In the journal *Annales*, he defines history as a science of the present. The historian's job, as he contends, starts when he/she faces what remains of the past. The remains can be documents, but documents do not speak for themselves; the historian must know how to interpret them. That means that every research result in history is a

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<sup>1</sup> M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire, ou métier d'historien*. Brazilian edition: *Apologia da história ou o ofício do historiador*, Rio de Janeiro, 2001.

version of the past, depending on the researcher's own history, the remains that he or she faced, the choices that were made when selecting the documents and, most of all, what questions were asked to these documents.

As such it is important to emphasize that this dissertation is written by a Brazilian historian who could be classified during the apartheid era in South Africa as a "coloured woman" and in Brazil as a "morena"<sup>2</sup>. In both cases it means that the author has both black and white ancestors.

This project was conceived at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, during the academic year 2004-5, and developed during the following years until 2007. The process of investigation included efforts to understand South African history and culture, and a re-evaluation of Brazilian cultural history.

The first thing that attracts the attention (and curiosity) of a Brazilian visiting or living in South Africa is the issue of race, and how this is predominant in South African daily life. In the same way, a newcomer to Brazil will notice that Brazilians rarely talk about issues linked to racism. Over the years, the image of Brazil as a place without racial conflicts has attracted tourists and scholars, many of whom found that the image was just an illusion and that racism is also an important issue in Brazilian society.

Brazilian society has its own way to cope with racial issues on its own terms, which can be misunderstood by tourists or a less attentive researcher. Race is in fact a big problem in Brazil, and has been since colonial times, and it also contributes to social, political and economic exclusion. According to the 2004 census, about 46 per cent

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<sup>2</sup> *Morena* is the Brazilian classification for those who "are in between", which means that they are neither black, nor white. We use *morena*, for females and *moreno* for males. It is a classification that varies from a polite way to refer to somebody with dark brown skin, to a person with fair skin and dark hair. The classification is very subjective and depends on many elements, including affection and politeness.

of Brazil's population of 180 million were African descendents<sup>3</sup>. Yet Afro-Brazilians are under-represented in all sectors of society as a result of systematic racial discrimination – associated with poverty and lack of access to education – in contrast with the well-publicized myth of Brazil as a racial democracy.

To make comparisons is a difficult task and can also be very unfortunate, since on the one hand the subjects in question would never be pleased with the judgment of an outsider, considering it obtuse, or on the other with the judgment of their peers, considering it as treason. Despite honest efforts made to obtain a basic understanding of South African history, nothing can equal the experience of having been born in Brazil and having studied its history for more than twenty years. Therefore, a balanced knowledge of history and historiography of both countries is far from accomplished.

Coetzee is suspicious about outsiders studying apartheid in South Africa, particularly historians, who he declares cannot expand their work beyond comparisons between different countries and racial policies.<sup>4</sup> The author believes that to understand what it was like to live under the regime of racial segregation, one must have lived there. Similarly, to understand the disguises and masks of Brazilian racism, it helps to have been raised in Brazil and it helps even more to be part of

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<sup>3</sup> A more precise number of the African descendent population in Brazil is not an easy task, since the census depends on personal declarations and classifications. In 1976, a survey found not less than 136 different classifications of "skin color" or race, according to those interviewed. In 1996, another survey found that blacks and *morenos* together comprise 51 per cent of the population (43 per cent of respondents classified themselves as *morenos* and only eight per cent as blacks). The complexity of racial classification in Brazil is demonstrated in L. M. Schwarcz, *Questão racial no Brasil* (The racial question in Brazil), in: L. M. Schwarcz and L. S. Reis (org.) *Negras Imagens: ensaios sobre cultura e escravidão no Brasil* (Black images: essays on culture and slavery in Brazil), São Paulo, 1996, pp. 153-177; E. Piza, "Branco no Brasil? Ninguém sabe, ninguém viu" (White in Brazil? Nobody knows, nobody saw), in A. S. Guimarães and L. Huntley (org.) *Tirando a máscara: ensaios sobre o racismo no Brasil* (Taking off the mask: essays on racism in Brazil), Rio de Janeiro, 2000, pp. 97-125; C. M. Damasceno, "Em casa de enforcado não se fala em corda: notas sobre a construção social da 'boa aparência' no Brasil" (In the hanged man's house, nobody talks about rope: observations on the social construction of a 'good appearance' in Brazil), *idem*, pp. 165-99.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. Coetzee, "The mind of Apartheid: Geoffrey Cronjé", *Social Dynamics* 17(1), 1-35, 1991.

the discriminated population. I am considering the racial issue as something very sensitive for both societies – a field with land mines, one might say – or a holy land for those who prefer the biblical approach.<sup>5</sup>

Debates and informal discussions comparing Brazil and South Africa can lead to discussions about racial segregation in the African country, in comparison to the relative tolerance of mixed relations and marriages among Brazilians and the absence of segregation laws. However, the numbers show that more black South Africans have access to university than Brazilians<sup>6</sup>. During the twentieth century South African literature included a larger number of black authors in literature and in academia, even during the apartheid regime, while Brazil cannot point to more than half a dozen.

Laws and statistics have a limited capacity to explain a topic so involved in feelings and perceptions. That is why, in this particular dissertation, the similarities of and differences between the South African and Brazilian answers to the racial questions are analyzed by using the literature of a particular time in the history of both countries.

This project focuses on comparing racism in South Africa and Brazil by analyzing eight novels written between 1909 and 1953 that discuss racism. The aim is to examine the phenomenon in these two societies and the way it was reflected in the novels of two white authors – Alan Paton and Jorge Amado – and two black authors: Afonso Henrique Lima Barreto and Peter Henry Abrahams.

Paton's novels *Cry, the beloved country* (1948)<sup>7</sup> and *Too late, the Phalarope* (1953)<sup>8</sup> use the theme of racial segregation in South

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<sup>5</sup> The consideration of writing “other people’s” history as an act of violation of holy ground is presented by P. Suess, “A história dos outros escrita por nós – apontamentos para uma autocrítica da história do cristianismo na América Latina”. (History of others written by us – notes for an autocritic history of Christianity in Latin America), *Boletim Cehila* 47-48. São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> A. S. Guimarães and L. Huntley (org.) *Tirando a máscara: ensaios sobre o racismo no Brasil* (Taking off the mask: essays on racism in Brazil), Rio de Janeiro, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> A. Paton, *Cry, the beloved country*, London, 2002.

Africa and its consequences of social, economic and political exclusion as a basis for their stories, while the selected novels of Amado – *Seara Vermelha* (1946)<sup>9</sup> and *Jubiabá* (1934-35)<sup>10</sup> – explore social, political and economic segregation in Brazil during the authoritarian reign of Getúlio Vargas.

On the other hand, the works of Lima Barreto, particularly *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* (1909)<sup>11</sup> and *Clara dos Anjos* (1922),<sup>12</sup> approach racism via the Brazilian mentality and examine how this contributes to social and economic exclusion.<sup>13</sup> He is a lonely voice in a society that denies discrimination and segregation, in a time that Brazil had not other black or coloured intellectuals writing about their own views of this problem.

This was certainly not a problem for Peter Abrahams, who was not alone when denouncing social and economic exclusion based on racial discrimination in South Africa. His novels achieved considerable success inside and outside Africa, all of them addressing this problem, although this study selected only two: *Mine Boy* (1946)<sup>14</sup> and *The Path of Thunder* (1948)<sup>15</sup>.

The fact that Barreto's writings are from the beginning of the century is useful to understanding racial thoughts in Brazil and the daily life of black and coloured people in Rio de Janeiro during the first two decades of the century, a period when the debate on racial policies and scientific racism was still very heated in Brazil. The

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<sup>8</sup> A. Paton, *Too late the phalarope*, New York, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> J. Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978.

<sup>10</sup> J. Amado. *Jubiabá*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978.

<sup>11</sup> A. H. Lima Barreto, *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha (Recollections of the clerk Isaías Caminha)*, São Paulo, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> A. H. Lima Barreto, *Clara dos Anjos (The story of Clara dos Anjos)*, Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> A. Candido, *Iniciação à literatura brasileira: resumo para principiantes. (Initiation to Brazilian Literature: a synthesis for beginners)*, São Paulo, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> P. Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Johannesburg, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> P. Abrahams, *The Path of Thunder*, Claremount, 1984.

theories presented during this time provided the framework in which to understand concepts and policies adopted by the Brazilian government and society after the 1930s.

It is true that comparative analyses between Brazil and South Africa have become more popular in recent years, following the strengthening of diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries, the impact that anti-apartheid policies in South Africa have had overseas, and the intensified struggle for affirmative action against social exclusion in Brazil.

Despite the fact that Brazil and South Africa share many common historical aspects, like colonization, imperialism, slavery and totalitarian regimes, there is still a vast area in comparative history to be researched. A start was made by Gay Seidman, comparing the role of labour organizations and the movement for democratization in South Africa and Brazil<sup>16</sup>. Another important contribution came from a Brazilian researcher, Fernando Rosa Ribeiro, who analyzed and compared racism and nationalism in Brazil and South Africa. His work opened the doors for a new perspective on Brazilian racism, helping to break down the myth of “racial democracy”.<sup>17</sup>

In part, this absence is associated with the problem of the difference in languages and the way both academic communities are connected with European and North American theories and authors. Even though Africanism or Afrocentrism introduced a new methodology and theory of history after the 1950s, this movement did not affect Brazilian academics in the same way it did those in the United States, for example.

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<sup>16</sup> G. Seidman, *Manufacturing militancy: workers' movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985*, Berkley and London, 1985.

<sup>17</sup> F. R. Ribeiro, *Apartheid and “democracia racial”: South Africa and Brazil compared*, PhD dissertation, Universiteit Utrecht, 1996; “Classifying ‘race’ and ‘whitening’ the nation.” *Safundi, the Journal of South African and American Studies* 5(3), 2004, pp. 1-14; “Apartheid e democracia racial: raça e nação no Brasil e África do Sul” [Apartheid and racial democracy: race and nation in Brazil and South Africa], *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 24, 1993, pp. 95-120.

Until recently, strong diplomatic relation between Brazil and South Africa were nearly nonexistent, which affected the development of scholarship in Brazil about South Africa and vice-versa. Prejudice also plays a role, since most Brazilians have a stereotypical idea about Africa, thinking of it as “the dark continent”, and associating with poverty, exploitation, civil war, misery, underdevelopment and a mainly illiterate black population, none of these perceptions has attracted many researchers.

As Chris Lorenz indicates, “next to the method of historical comparison is the politics of comparison, which is hidden in the choice of parameters”.<sup>18</sup> In this case, the present political challenge to overcome racial exclusion in both countries inspired the choice of the subjects. Nowadays, the interest in race as a topic of study has grown among Brazilian historians, especially after the defeat of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

As the features of South African politics and policies of exclusion emerged with new colours for the world – given the testimonies, and new analyses publicized in the past fifteen years – Brazil was been pushed to face the problem of racial and social exclusion, unmasking its image as a “racial paradise”. At this point, comparative analysis of racial issues through their cultural history would help to understand differences and similarities between the two societies, which are still fighting racism and its consequences.

The period chosen for this investigation – 1900-1953 – witnessed the advance of capitalism, which for underdeveloped countries and colonies meant the exploitation of minerals, railways and port constructions; urbanization; industrialization; and all their social consequences. The rise of Nazi regimes in the thirties, with distinct racial ideas and social policies revived old theories about racial differences. After the World War II, the fight for democracy influenced

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<sup>18</sup> C. Lorenz, “Comparative historiography: problems and perspectives”, *History and Theory* 38, 1999, p. 25.

the debate on racial discrimination and segregation worldwide, bringing a new wave of scientific explanations and a political and social demand for ending colonization on the African continent and racial segregation in the United States.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the advance of transnational companies in the Third World and their demand for cheap labour and markets influenced social policies in Brazil, such as the increase in public education and what was called “education for labour”<sup>19</sup>. Although 1945 marked the beginning of a democratic period that ended nine years later in Brazil, the South African the post-war period was marked by the institutionalization of the apartheid policy after the ascendancy of the National Party to power in 1948.

Since this project intends to focus on the idea of race and racism, books published before the 1950s will be used as primary sources<sup>20</sup>, while those written from the 1980s onward will be taken as

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<sup>19</sup> The policies of “education for labour” came in contrast to “academic education”. In the first case, the educational system concentrated in training students and giving them practical skills to work in factories or to support the industries. As “academic education” was concentrated in creating and reproducing an intellectual elite, most of the poor (and black) population only had access to “education for labour”, which only required the candidate to be able to read and write, which would provide a better possibility of employment. Competition, demands and prejudice against lower-class people would prevent many students from achieving higher levels of “academic education”. Until the 1970s Brazil had just a few public universities that provided free education; however, the examinations to enter such universities are very demanding, in contrast to the poor quality of the education given at basic and secondary levels. This way, mostly those who were able to attend good (and expensive) private schools managed to pass the exams and enter public universities. Even if some lower-class students passed the exam, the demand of full-time dedication to their studies would prevent them from working and, therefore, from supporting themselves in the university. In addition, Brazilian universities have very scarce housing facilities for students. Those who came from other parts of the country had to provide their own housing, food, transport, etc. Finally, for many years, lower-class students and black people have been discouraged from applying for professions considered as “belonging to the elite”. The prejudice come from teachers, colleagues and authorities in general, in such a way that most black people would strongly support the idea of “education for labour” as the only possibility for their social growth.

<sup>20</sup> *Inter alia*: E. P. Dvorin, *Racial Separation in South Africa*, Chicago, 1952; J. Burger, *The Black Man's Burden*, London, 1943; G. Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* [Masters and slaves], Rio de Janeiro, 20a. ed., 1988; J. H. Grobler, *Africa's Destiny*, Johannesburg, 1958; A. Ramos, *O Negro Brasileiro: Etnographia Religiosa e Psychanalise* [The Brazilian black: religious ethnography and psychoanalyses], Rio de Janeiro, 1934; O. Vianna, *Raça e assimilação* [Race and Assimilation], Rio de Janeiro, 1932; and Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil* [Africans in Brazil], Rio de Janeiro, 1932.

a basic bibliography. Although not a strict categorization, since some seminal works written in the 1950s still have strong claims to current validity, this distinction seeks to separate what was once thought about race and influenced political arguments at the time the novels studied here were written and published, from what are considered today as new concepts in social history, sociology and anthropology.

This study is also concerned with the use of literature as a source for social and cultural history. The selected novels are used as primary sources, supported by historiography and other secondary sources. The most important questions raised are: “How are the racial issues manifested in the works of Paton, Abrahams, Barreto and Amado novels?” and “How are those novels connected with Brazilian, South African and world history?”

## About the novels

The selection of the novels was made by considering their relevance in the national and international literature, their contents and links with Brazilian and South African history, and their authors’ political views. For better understanding, a summary of each novel follows.

### *Seara Vermelha* (Red Harvest)<sup>21</sup>

This novel was chosen for this study because it explores social, political and economic problems in rural Brazil during the 1930s. It shows the inequality between the black and white populations, and also between southern and northern Brazil. The racial problem is carefully

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<sup>21</sup> J. Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978.

exposed in small details in the scenes and dialogues, yet, it is clear from the beginning to the end of the novel that poverty is brown and black.

*Seara Vermelha* is among the first novels of Jorge Amado, what critics consider his “early novels”, because his production extends until the 1980s. Published in 1946, the same year in which the Communist Party of Brazil was recognized by the government, and the peasants movement was starting in central and northeastern Brazil.

It tells the story of Jerônimo, a peasant and his family in northeastern Brazil, who lived in a big farm with other families, all very poor. The farm belongs to a rich man, and it is a type of structure that remained from the time of slavery, reproducing the dominance of the rich/white man over poor/black people. The peasants are completely dependent on the farm and exploited by a system that keeps them in debt to the landlord and prevent them from saving money for themselves.

At the beginning of the novel, the farmer dies and his property goes to his son, a politician with no interest in rural life. He sells the farm and all the workers are forced to leave the place within a week. Some families decided to travel south, to São Paulo, where they believe there is no poverty, drought or misery as in the northeast. The entire family has to travel by foot with scarce food for many days, crossing the parched lands until they reach a town at the river’s shore; then they travel by boat to another town, where they hope to get a pass for a train trip to São Paulo. During their trip, death, hunger and disease accompany them.

Those who survive arrive in the town and have to submit to a medical examination in order to get their passes for the train and employment. Jerônimo is very sick, and is diagnosed with TB; therefore he cannot receive his pass. However, his daughter Marta, a young woman of 18 years, decides to exchange her virginity for a pass

for her father from the local doctor. The family finally travels south – but is now very diminished. Of the three children, one dies from tetanus, another from food poisoning; a young couple of cousins (Jerônimo's youngest son and his brother's daughter) give up the journey and become peasants at a farm, an old aunt disappears, and another aunt dies from hunger. Marta must stay in the town by the river, because she is now a prostitute. Three other men who do not take the trip, had left the family before. They are also Jerônimo's sons: one became a *cangaceiro*, a type of bandit who attacks villages and farms in the region; another became a policeman in the same region. Without knowing it, the two brothers became involved in a fight between the police and bandits and the *cangaceiro* kills his own brother. The third brother became a soldier in the army and later left to join the Communist Party.

The trajectory of Jerônimo's family and friends provides the author with a plot, to explore the inequalities and injustices in Brazil, and to criticize the system that preserved the structure of slavery, under other names. At the end, the old man dies on a farm in São Paulo, without having bought the land he dreamed of owning his entire life. His communist son is in jail, after rebelling against the dictatorship, and his grandson, Tonho, is the only hope for a new future. As an adult, Tonho goes back to the dry lands, to teach about a new way of life that could be possible with communism.

### *Jubiabá*<sup>22</sup>

Jorge Amado published this novel in 1935, during the first years of the Vargas dictatorship, in a period when Brazilian intellectuals were still discussing race as part of the nationalist movement that characterized the Vargas government. The early 1930s also marks the engagement of the author with the Communist Party and the Party's commitment to the lower

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<sup>22</sup> J. Amado, *Jubiabá*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978.

classes and the movement of Brazilian intellectuals valuing the popular culture as opposed to the European.

In *Jubiabá*, the author depicts the lives of black people in Salvador, the capital of Bahia State. The racial theme is clearer in this novel, especially because it explores the love of a black man for a white woman. In each part of the book, Amado makes an effort to demolish racial stereotypes that were very common in the 1930s and 1940s. Its black characters are strong men, popular heroes and leaders. It was also the beginning of a tradition in Amado's novels: the use of love scenes depicting black bodies in a sensual manner.

This novel traces the trajectory of Antônio Balduino. Starting from his life as a boy in Salvador's slum, Amado points out how different lives of black and white people are in the 1930s' Bahia. Balduino lives with his aunt, until she goes crazy and has to be committed to an asylum for the rest of her life. A neighbour takes the boy to a rich white man's house, where he works and lives. As time passes Balduino gets closer to Lindinalva, the daughter of his master. He is also an easy target for the racist governess, who does not want to see a black boy in a better position. Accused of lusting for Lindinalva Balduino is severely punished and decides to run away. In the second part of the novel, he is a homeless teenager, a bum who practices petty crimes to survive and lives among other homeless boys on the streets of Salvador. As a young man, he is "discovered" by a boxing manager, who transforms him into a champion. Balduino becomes famous as the black man who defeated the German boxer, but he leaves the fights and makes his living selling music for white musicians and radio producers. He also has a very busy sexual life.

Disappointed with his life and still in love with Lindinalva, Balduino goes to the countryside to work on a farm. There he encounters more misery and human exploitation, and so decides to return to Salvador. As he engages himself as a stevedore in the port, the workers go on a strike for better salaries. The hero starts to follow

the ideas of communism and becomes the strike leader and an example for other workers. At the same time, Lindinalva, who was abandoned by her fiancé, works as a prostitute to provide for her child.

At the end of the novel, Balduino meets her again and decides to pay her for sex, but he finds that she is dying. She asks for his forgiveness and to take care of her son. Balduino finally acknowledges his love for Lindinalva and decides to be a foster parent for the boy.

### *Cry, the Beloved Country*<sup>23</sup>

Alan Paton's famous novel is also one of South Africa's internationally best known literary works. Published in 1946, two years before the rise of the Nationalist Party, it became the voice against apartheid outside Africa, for more than three decades. The novel tells the story of two men, a black priest and a white farmer, who lived very close but never really knew each other until a tragedy united them.

Father Kumalo is a Christian priest of Zulu origins who lives in the countryside. One day he is called to Johannesburg – the big city to where every African goes and disappears – to get his sister back. It is an opportunity to find out about his brother and son, who also left the village years before and never came back. In his journey, the priest comes across many problems that affect the black population: the poverty of the countryside, the poverty of the cities, alcoholism, prostitution, crime, corruption, and the struggle for services and rights.

James, the farmer, also has a son who lives in Johannesburg, but his son has different ideas about how the social policies in South Africa should deal with black people. James could never understand his son, until he was killed during a robbery. The killer is Kumalo's son, and as a result the young man is condemned to death.

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<sup>23</sup> A. Paton, *Cry, the beloved country*, London, 2002.

In the novel, aspects of life in South Africa in the 1950s are presented: the illegal sale of liquor in black neighbourhoods, juvenile criminality among the urban African population, the deficiency of transportation for black people in Johannesburg, rural exodus, poverty, and broken families.

The novel describes many aspects of apartheid, intending to give the views from white and black perspectives. Using segregation and educational policies as a means to control the African population is discussed in the chapters. However, the most important message is that apartheid brings loss to black and white people. Two men lose their only sons because of apartheid's inequality and exclusion. Although limited by his own position in this society, Paton's novel criticizes the government's policies of segregation and proposes another way: blacks and whites coming closer and working together for a better South Africa.

### *Too late, the phalarope*<sup>24</sup>

This is another novel by Paton, although not as well known as the previous one. It was published in 1953, during the first years of the apartheid regime, taken by the author as a tragic moment for South Africa.

The central theme is the forbidden relationship between an Afrikaner man and a coloured woman. Pieter is a policeman in a small town dominated by racial classifications and the norms of segregation imposed by law and sustained by culture. Married to an Afrikaner woman and with two children, he had the perfect family. Yet, he is not sexually happy and nurtures a strong attraction for Stephanie, a coloured young woman – who in the novel is called “girl”.

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<sup>24</sup> A. Paton, *Too late, the phalarope*, New York, 1995.

The author explores the cultural universe of the Afrikaner society and family, depicting the religiosity, the sense of community and the aversion to miscegenation that characterized this social group in the 1950s. The novel tells the story from the point of view of Aunt Sophie, an Afrikaner woman, subordinated by her brother's will, whose views reflect her culture and her love for her family.

Pieter is divided by his duties as a citizen, husband, son, Christian, and policeman and his uncontrollable lust for Stephanie, who does not present any resistance to him. His authoritarian father is totally against any miscegenation, including Afrikaner/English, based on his interpretation of the Bible. Also his friends and colleagues are always trying to avoid closer contact with black and coloured people. But Pieter does not feel that way, and at a very young age he understands that, because of this, there is something wrong in his soul or mind.

The story is about a man struggling against his feelings and trying to fit into his own culture. In the first chapter, he caught a young man chasing Stephanie and, instead of bringing him to jail, gives him advice, explaining how disgraceful it would be for the youth to be in a situation where everybody would condemn him and what could happen to his mother and his friends.

Stephanie lives with an old coloured lady and her son, providing for them by selling *kaffir* beer, the forbidden liquor. This gets her in jail very often, which is why she is known among the policemen of the town. Pieter resents the fact that his wife does not know how to make him happy and shows little interest in sex. One night he goes again to meet Stephanie and has sex with her in the shadow of a tree. But somebody sees him, although he does not know who. It was his colleague, from the police station. However, he keeps quiet until the right time to present proof of Pieter's crime.

Aunt Sophie feels the danger when she notices the way Stephanie looks at Pieter and tries to send the coloured woman away, with her son, using the existing rules of segregation for that. However, before she can succeed, Stephanie is again caught by the police for selling liquor, and to avoid losing her child and going to jail for a long time, she agrees to denounce Pieter under the Immorality Act.

Disgrace comes to Pieter's family. His father erases his name from the family book and dies a few days later from a heart attack. His sister breaks her engagement with the minister, her mother loses her job, and he goes to jail. The final words of Aunt Sophie speak against the apartheid and the "iron laws" that sacrifice the entire society.

This novel is used to analyze the South African perspective on interracial relationships and miscegenation, in contrast to Brazilian culture. It shows how emotional this issue was, and how culture and laws regulated marriage and sexual intercourse.

### *The Path of Thunder*<sup>25</sup>

*The Path of Thunder*, from Peter Abrahams is another version of interracial love in South Africa. It was published in 1948, in the United States and tells the story of a forbidden love between Lane, a coloured man and Sarie, an Afrikaner woman.

The story starts when Lane, a teacher who had attended college and worked as a teacher in the Cape, comes back home intending to start a school for coloured children in his village. From the beginning he experiences racism and violence. The Afrikaner men dislike his clothes and attitude, which are quite contrary to the submissive, dependent and illiterate coloured people that live in the area.

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<sup>25</sup> P. Abrahams, *The path of thunder*, Claremount, 1984.

Although the central theme is the love between Lane and Sarie, the context explores the roots of miscegenation, how coloureds and Afrikaners were related in the past and present. Lane is actually the son of the old Villier master, conceived when his mother used to work in the big house of the Villiers. Sarie is not a real Villier, yet she is part of the family, since her father was a foundling raised by the old Villier. Mad Sam is another coloured who was violently beaten up by Gert Villier the new master, because of his love affair with his wife, the other Sarie, (dead in the novel) in the past, as a result, Sam developed mental problems. He protects the young Sarie, even though he does not know why, since he can't remember the past. Fieta is the coloured woman with a liberal sexual life. She loves Sam and takes care of him.

Mabel, Lane's sister wants the same things that white girls have: nice clothes, light work, leisure and education. She falls in love with Tony, a non-racist English anthropologist, but he only wants her friendship. Hopeless, she runs away to the Cape, where coloureds have a better life.

Racial hierarchy is shown in the novel as Lane makes friends with Mako, the African teacher in the native community. The coloured priest dislikes the idea of a coloured coming closer to a black, considered racially inferior.

At the end of the novel, Lane and Sarie decide to run away to live in Mozambique, where a coloured man can freely marry a white woman. Their affair is discovered and a group of Afrikaner men come to teach Lane a lesson, as they did with Sam in the past. Sam recovers his memory and comes to help the couple. Lane, Gert, Sam and Sarie die in the conflict.

Abrahams clearly exposes the insanity of a society and government that decide to rule over love affairs. The Afrikaner rejection of miscegenation is, also in this novel, treated as an emotional rather than a rational question. It is also exposed as a hypocritical position, since

coloured people have existed in South Africa for centuries, as a result of sexual relations between Europeans and Africans.

### *Mine Boy*<sup>26</sup>

Peter Abrahams published this novel in 1946, the same year in which about 70,000 African workers challenged the system and almost paralyzed the economy through a strike that was violently suppressed by the Smuts' government at the cost of many lives. As in *Red Harvest*, racism is exposed together with the question of class.

Xuma is a young man who comes from his tribal village to Johannesburg searching for a job to help out his family (mother and siblings). Just like many other men in the same situation, he finds a job in the mines and a place to live in the township. All the social and economic problems of the township are explored in this novel, but not quite in the same way as Paton does in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Abrahams' view of the lives of poor people is from the inside. There is no moral questioning as the author narrates the difficulties of life in Johannesburg and how poor people have to twist the law to survive.

Two universes co-exist and relate to each other in the novel: the township and the mine. In the first one, Xuma finds love with Elisa – the black teacher who struggles to accept the differences between her life and the lives of white women – the friendship of Leah, the liquor seller and Johannes, a miner who helps him to find a job. He also gets to know a black doctor, and admires the fact that the doctor has a nice house, furniture and an “almost white” wife. In the township Xuma finds coloured people and black people living side by side, sometimes married to each other; workers, policemen and criminals. In the mines he meets other black miners living in the same poverty, and white miners commanding the black ones, sometimes abusing them. But he also gets to know the

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<sup>26</sup> P. Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Johannesburg, 1989.

meaning of fellowship, and through Paddy – “the Red” – he is introduced to the ideas of communism and anti-racism.

From his first night in the township, Leah takes Xuma under her protection, teaching him how to survive and introducing him to friends like Johannes. On the other hand, he helps her in the beer business, watching out for the police and keeping troubled people out of Leah’s place.

In the mines, the work is divided into groups of black men who work under the supervision of a white man. Xuma is employed as a leader of the black miners in Paddy’s group. His responsibility is to make sure that everybody is working and that the ground is safe for the group to excavate the walls. Johannes does the same for another group, but he drinks too much, and Xuma tries to help him.

Paddy’s words of equality and workers uniting for their rights are strange to Xuma at the beginning. He regrets that inequality is what makes Elisa reject him, because she cannot accept herself as a black woman and conform to the life of black people; she wants the same life as the white women. Paddy and his girlfriend explain to Xuma that everybody has the right to a better life. But Xuma cannot understand Paddy’s words, because inequality made Leah go to jail for selling liquor in the township, while white people could enjoy drinking liquor in their bars or pubs.

The meaning of Paddy’s words only comes to him when a group of miners die in an underground accident, Johannes among them, and the company wants to force them to go back there and keep working. Together, Xuma and Paddy lead a strike and challenge the authorities. At the end of the story, Paddy and Xuma go to jail, but Xuma feels like a real man – no longer a “boy” – as equal as anybody else, as he decides to stand up and fight for a better life.

### *Clara dos Anjos*<sup>27</sup>

Alphonsus Lima Barreto wrote *Clara dos Anjos* in 1912, but he could publish it only in 1922. It tells the story of a young coloured woman, Clara dos Anjos, who dreams of her first love and is seduced and abandoned by a white man. The author's choice of a surname for Clara – “dos Anjos” – is a way to clarify that she is poor and comes from a coloured family. Surnames like “dos Anjos”, “de Jesus”, and “da Conceição” recall the past, when the absence of a family name was overcome by a religious denomination<sup>28</sup>. The name Clara dos Anjos – in English, Clara of the Angels – gives the idea of innocence, which is very convenient for the purpose of this novel.

Clara lives with her parents, who try to protect their only child from the world, fearing that somebody would take advantage of her innocence, as so often happens with poor coloured women. Although the concept of township is not applicable in this case, Clara lives in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, in a working-class neighbourhood.

Cassy is the villain of the story. He is white, with blond hair and blue eyes - the prototype of the “charming prince” or “an angel”. However, he is the opposite: selfish, lazy, and uneducated. He enjoys seducing women and then abandoning them right away. At the beginning of the century, when chastity was the norm for a non-married woman, Cassy's victims are left to prostitution or loneliness. Their families were disgraced forever.

Cassy goes to Clara's home as a musician, during a celebration for her seventeenth birthday. As friends of Clara's family try to alert her father to the danger of having Cassy close, her father prohibits him from visiting.

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<sup>27</sup> A. Lima Barreto, *Clara dos Anjos*, Rio de Janeiro, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> The pronouns “dos”, “de” and “da”, mean “from”. Like “van” in Deutch.

The villain pays the alcoholic dentist to arrange secret meetings and kills Clara's godfather, as a revenge for his standing up against him.

Alas, it is too late. Clara is already in love, and refuses to see the bad in her lover. Everything falls apart when she finds herself pregnant, and Cassy, runs away with his mother's help, abandoning her.

Racism is clearly exposed when Cassy's mother refuses to accept Clara's right to "reparation" – which is marriage, according to the customs of the time – because she is a "nigger"; and when the police releases Cassy but charges his coloured partner in the slaughter of the godfather.

By depicting the character and features of Cassy, Lima Barreto denounces in this novel the stereotypes of good/white – bad/coloured. Moreover, he condemns the overprotection of women and pleads for their education, as he asserts that they are the only ones who can defend themselves.

Despite the fact that this novel was written at the beginning of the twentieth century, its relevance consists in being one of the few samples of literary works produced by coloured men in Brazil. It is useful in this study to provide insight into the racial problem.

*Recordações do escrivo Isaiás Caminha* (Recollections of the clerk Isaiás Caminha)<sup>29</sup>

In the same way, in *Recollections of the clerk Isaiás Caminha*, Lima Barreto connects class and racial discrimination. The novel was published in 1909 and is considered an autobiographical work. Isaiás is a young man, a bastard, born from the union of a white priest and his black servant.

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<sup>29</sup> A. Lima Barreto, *Recordações do Escrivo Isaiás Caminha*, São Paulo, 1995.

Despite the shame that his father nourishes for his “sin”<sup>30</sup>, which kept him distant from his son, he provided a good education for his son, until the point when Isaías wanted to attend law school. At this time, his father is dead and his poor mother and her siblings cannot afford to support the young man’s dreams. The solution is to find somebody who has political influence, so he can nominate Isaías for a government job in the capital, where he can live and attend the university.

Isaías leaves his village with a letter from the rich farmer of the region and the hopes of his entire family. However, the letter does not help him in Rio de Janeiro. He cannot find a job, and his scarce savings dwindle away, as the politician who was supposed to help him, let him down. As he looks for other jobs, in spite of his education and intelligence, racial prejudice keeps him unemployed. Even a simple job in a bakery is unavailable to him because of his features.

Finally, with the help of a friend that he made in the hostel, he finds a job at a newspaper as a clerk. Isaías’ function is to help everybody, taking papers in and out, delivering messages, and other simple tasks. Nobody expects him to write or asks his opinion about any matters.

After a time, Isaías starts to learn about corruption in politics and at the personal level. Alcoholism, immorality, and mediocrity surround him at work. Nevertheless, he maintains his integrity, refusing to engage in parties with prostitutes and drink alcohol with the others.

When one of the journalists dies, he is the one who must give the news to his boss. He finds him in a whorehouse, in embarrassing circumstances: in the middle of a party with other men and women, naked and being ridden by a woman, who was spanking him. Ashamed of the situation and fearing the comments about the event, the boss gives Isaías a promotion and he gets the opportunity to write articles for the newspaper.

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<sup>30</sup> What is considered as a “sin” is the fact that a Catholic priest had a sexual affair and a son.

Despite the high quality of his work, as acknowledged by one of the older journalists – a Russian, with communist ideas – most of his other colleagues treat Isaías with hostility. Feeling the pressure at work and knowing that he only got the position because of the secret, Isaías considers himself corrupt for accepting the promotion. Self-conscious, he cannot enjoy his own success. After a time he takes a job in a government office away from the big cities, moves from Rio de Janeiro and marries a local coloured woman, convinced that his plans of being a lawyer or a journalist will never be possible for a poor coloured man like himself.

## **General organization of this study**

The first chapter discusses the methodological approach and theoretical bases to analyze history and racism using literature. It is not the aim of this study to analyze the literature through the viewpoint of a historian, but rather to identify the history of Brazil and South Africa inside their respective literatures, like a plot in a novel, that influence the design of characters and their tragedies. The best way to do this is to understand both countries' social history and how European ideas on racism influenced local governments and the viewpoints of intellectuals.

More on Brazilian and South African social history is present in the second chapter, which explores these countries' trajectories and how colonialism and slavery have influenced their social fabrics and concepts of racial superiority. Each country had its own views on miscegenation, nationalism, and modernity, which influenced the policy of racial segregation in South Africa and the strategy of “whitening” in Brazil.

The third chapter explores the authors' environment and their relationship with their countries' racial policies. The influence of being

raised in a particular class or racial group has determined their approach to social themes just as much as their political commitment.

The fourth chapter examines the importance of economic constraints imposed on the black and coloured populations in Brazil and South Africa and how they are reflected in these novels, as they examine themes such as land ownership and labour exploitation. The author's political ideologies and concerns about economics serve as a backdrop to these writings. The influence of communist ideas in Abrahams and Amado is particularly strong in their proposed solutions for social and racial exclusion.

In the fifth chapter, this dissertation analyzes the fear of sexual miscegenation in South Africa and the complexity of the Brazilian perspective regarding miscegenation – which tolerates sexual intercourse between white men and black women, but denies the sexual interests of white women in black men. Gender roles in romantic and sexual relations and the social pressures exerted on interracial couples, and how they are presented in the novels are also part of this chapter.

For a better understanding, quotations from the novels are presented between inverted commas, since they are the “voices” of the authors – used as primary documents. These “voices” will dialogue with the historiography and theories from sociology, economy and political science.

Finally, it is important to state that it is not the intention of this dissertation to fill all the gaps that the historiography on racism in both cultures embodies, but rather to propose a diverse view of the topic, amplifying the possibilities of analysis and approach to the social history.

## Chapter I:

# COMPARING BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA THROUGH CULTURAL HISTORY

Comparative history is always a high-risk job. And if we add to this the chore of discussing the racial issue, in countries such as Brazil and South Africa, it can be even more dangerous.

The best way to display the difficulties of this task is to start by identifying and analyzing very common signs found in Brazilian and South African daily life. In Brazil these signs appear in many restaurants and cafes: “Visite nossa Cozinha” (visit our kitchen); in South Africa there is a warning, at the entrance of most businesses: “Right of Admission Reserved”. What do these signs mean?

Well, if a foreigner decides to take the Brazilian invitation seriously and mention to a local the intention of going inside the restaurant kitchen, he or she will be discouraged from doing so. The sign is an invitation on which no one is expected to act. Why? Because it would be unpleasant to face how the food that is being prepared and served. Consequently, to avoid disappointment and frustration, the Brazilian host will prevent the naïve guest from accepting the “cordial invitation”. The cordiality is one of the characteristics that Brazilians are most proud about, despite the large amount of violence in this society.

On the other hand, the South African sign is very clear to advise you that the owner or manager of the business or office (sometimes governmental) can ask you to leave the premises. Being a foreigner in South Africa ten years after the end of the apartheid regime, the warning implicit in the message troubled me, bringing me to ask a local gentleman about it. The answer, somehow reminded me

of the “Brazilian way”<sup>31</sup>: “Don’t worry, these days, you can go wherever you want to”. In both cases, the visitor could ask what these signs are for.

So, here is the first comparison between the two countries: Brazilian cordiality does not presume your attendance, and the South African warning does not prevent you from getting into shops and public buildings. In both cases, what is written must be interpreted in the terms of the local culture, since what the words mean go beyond the dictionary definition.

The second phenomenon that brings South Africans and Brazilians closer is the definition or classification of races. In Brazil, where miscegenation is predominant, the racial hierarchy is built in such a way that “one drop” of white blood can take an individual closer to being white, instead of being classified as black, like in the United States. The impossibility of applying the dichotomy “black – white” is explained by a wide gradation and significance of skin color and other characteristics that define race in Brazil. The question in Brazilian studies, policies and surveys is to determine “who is black”. On the other hand, in South African society the white minority of the population is outnumbered by black Africans<sup>32</sup>, who have distinct backgrounds and are also influenced by miscegenation. The South African racial state needed to classify its population into European, coloured or native, a task that proved to be very challenging from the beginning. Because the idea was to safeguard the white population’s privileges, the South African answer to the question was to determine “who was not European”<sup>33</sup>. The racial classifications in both countries

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<sup>31</sup> “Brazilian way”, in Portuguese: “jeitinho brasileiro”, is an expression that remarks the modus operandi of Brazilians, exploited by authors like S. Buarque de Hollanda in “*Raízes do Brasil*” [The Brazilian Roots], Rio de Janeiro, 1956; and R. DaMatta in *Carnivals, rogues and heroes: an interpretation of the Brazilian dilemma*, New York, 1995; and *O que faz o Brasil, Brasil?* [What does make Brazil?], Rio de Janeiro, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> I am using the term “black Africans” considering that white people born in Africa are also African.

<sup>33</sup> D. Posel, “Race as common sense: racial classification in twentieth-century South Africa”, *African Studies Review* 44(2), Sept. 2001, pp. 87-113.

were subjective to personal preferences or tendencies, and the building of a racial hierarchy based on biological features was interwoven with class and social components.

### **1.1- Race, history and the inevitable comparisons**

If the racial issue is in daily lives of South Africans and has been a theme of different studies for more than a century, in Brazil it was for a long time part of the *kitchen*. In other words, Brazilian racial issues were long considered private problems, which many researchers did not want to visit, while the government and the mass media kept advertising “racial democracy” as the strongest feature of Brazilian culture.

It is not the purpose of this project to discuss the idea of race and racism extensively, even though previous knowledge of the matter proves to be helpful to understand the problem in Brazil and South Africa and why it is part of the novels of Paton, Abrahams, Lima Barreto and Amado.

During the postwar years, the problem of race and racism started to gain more importance among academics, with the question of decolonisation in Africa and Asia. The rise of African and African-American intellectuals in Europe and the United States, and the results of the racial policies of Nazism and fascism influenced the opening of history to new subjects, approaches and sources.

The study of racial issues, at first framed by anthropology and sociological studies, advanced through other fields. In the subject of history, it overcame the traditional study social history, binding culture, politics and economy, and unfolding other aspects to be considered, such as gender and class. The result of this movement among historians is exemplified in recent works. Eric Hobsbawn, in

*The Age of Imperialism – 1875-1914*<sup>34</sup> refers to racial domination in association with economical and political factors; Peter Gay, explores the idea of “the convenient other” in *The Cultivation of Hatred*<sup>35</sup>, which fits perfectly with the concept of racism and racial inferiority, civilization and modernity in the late nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Marc Ferro has sharp arguments in *The Use and Abuse of History*<sup>36</sup> as well in *Colonization: a Global History*<sup>37</sup>, in which he emphasises the problem of racial exploitation and discusses the role of historians and history in perpetuating and fighting exclusion. The author strongly supports that colonialism and racism were closely related in the processes of nation building and imperialism in the past and understanding them is crucial when analyzing contemporary social, economic and political problems.

His point of view can be used to analyse the absence of studies on racism in Brazil, where historians and other intellectuals embraced the idea of racial democracy, or simply treated social history as racially uniform – avoiding explorations of racial inequalities and conflicts after abolition (1888).

Although many studies have been conducted on racial relations from a historical perspective, the majority have concentrated on the period of slavery. Brazilian historians, following a tendency in the seventies and eighties to use Marxist analyses, divided slavery and the labour movement in Brazil, the first being a theme for the study of race<sup>38</sup> and the second for the study of class<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> E. Hobsbawn, *The age of imperialism*, Rio de Janeiro, 1988.

<sup>35</sup> P. Gay, *The cultivation of hatred*, São Paulo, 1993.

<sup>36</sup> M. Ferro, *The use and abuse of history*, London/New York, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> M. Ferro, *Colonization: a global history*, London and New York, 1997.

<sup>38</sup> From extensive literature about slave labour and racial relations in Brazil, the following should be highlighted: C. F. Cardoso, *Agricultura, escravidão e capitalismo* [Agriculture, slavery and capitalism], Petropolis, 1979; F. H. Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil Meridional* [Capitalism and slavery on southern Brazil], Rio de Janeiro, 1977; C.

The military dictatorship that prevailed in Brazil between 1964 and 1985, once more exploited the myth of “racial democracy” as part of a policy of conflict denial. Government propaganda emphasized the peaceful character of a united and homogeneous society, and to talk or write against it could be considered subversion.

The struggle for civil rights in the United States during the sixties and seventies affected Brazilian society in a different way. On one hand, the government controlled all information that came to the public; on the other hand, it reinforced the propaganda about racial tolerance in Brazil, usually emphasizing that Brazilian society is much better than the American one because of Brazil’s absence of segregation and racial conflicts.

This phenomenon attracted some intellectuals, who came to visit and study the “racial paradise”. In the middle of the seventies, authors such as Thomas Skidmore<sup>40</sup> and Arthur Corwin<sup>41</sup> were loudly criticized by Brazilians when they pointed out racial discrimination and segregation in this society. Skidmore, a Brazilianist, analyzed official documents and some of the most important newspapers from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1930, remarking the trajectory of the racial issue in Brazilian history. Corwin, in an article, went straight to the point, deconstructing the myth of racial democracy by exposing patterns of inequality in Brazil. Their works were well received by some intellectuals, but the Brazilian society in general

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Degler, *Neither black, nor white*, New York, 1971/Rio de Janeiro, 1976; O. Ianni, *Escravidão e racismo* [Slavery and racism], São Paulo, 1978; R. Slenes *Na senzala uma flor* [A flower in the slaves’ quarters], Rio de Janeiro, 1999; K. Q. Mattoso, *Ser escravo no Brasil* [Being a slave in Brazil], São Paulo, 1990; J. J. Reis and E. Silva, *Negociação e conflito: resistência negra no Brasil escravista* [Negotiation and conflict: black resistance in Brazilian slavery], São Paulo, 1989; L. Kowarick, *Trabalho e vadiagem: a origem do trabalho livre no Brasil* [Labour and laziness: origins of the free labour in Brazil], Rio de Janeiro, 1994.

<sup>39</sup> An example of the social approach to racial studies in Brazil is O. Ianni, *Raças e Classes Sociais no Brasil* [Race and social class in Brazil], São Paulo, 3rd. ed., 1987.

<sup>40</sup> T. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1974.

<sup>41</sup> A. F. Corwin, “Afro-Brazilians: myths and realities” in R. Toplin (ed.), *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, Connecticut, 1974.

accused them of being outsiders, with a narrow view of Brazilian history and culture.

This problem also affected Brazilian scholars. In the 1990s Fernando Rosa Ribeiro suffered the same opposition when presenting part of his conclusions from a comparative study about Brazilian and South African racism during a congress.<sup>42</sup>

The concern with race among Brazilian intellectuals was highly important during the first half of the twentieth century. The nation was defining itself right after the Republic (1889) and during what was called “*Estado Novo*” (new state), the period that marks the government of the dictator Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945). Debates on the eugenics thesis, the hierarchy among races, the connection between crime and race, and other features of pseudo-scientific racism were in academic journals, discourses of politicians, and in the pages of newspapers and popular magazines. The idea of “racial democracy” grew in parallel with the theory of a racial hierarchy, as part of a strategy to prevent political and geographical separation. Brazilians did not see opposition between these two proposals, it was understood that there was racial differences, however in Brazil they could be tolerated and overcome up to a certain limit.

Following this policy, Brazil saw increased intellectual production about race in the country, of which the most important title is the already mentioned masterpiece of Gilberto Freyre, preceded by other authors such as Nina Rodrigues – a medical doctor very influenced by Gobineau’s ideas, which reinforced the thesis of the biological inferiority of Africans<sup>43</sup>, and Oliveira Vianna – who defended the idea that Brazilian society would become white, after

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<sup>42</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, “Ideologia Nacional, antropologia e a questão racial” [National ideology, anthropology and the race issue]. *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 31, 1997. Rio de Janeiro, pp. 79-89.

<sup>43</sup> Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil* [The Africans in Brazil], Salvador, 1932.

many generations of blacks and coloureds marrying lighter partners<sup>44</sup>. These theses have strong influence on sociological and anthropological ideas from the first half of the twentieth century.

All those works, despite being written more than seven decades ago, are still very important for this research as they reflect what the fields of sociology, criminology and medicine were proposing on that particular moment as a solution to the racial problems. In these cases, the books became primary sources, and are very important for studies of intellectual thought and cultural history<sup>45</sup>.

Around the 1940s, the concern with racial questions declined, together with the policies of immigration. The Brazilian government, after the World War II, concentrated its efforts on building a national image of a united society, without conflicts or exclusions. By law and according to the propaganda, all Brazilians were considered equal, and talk about racism became taboo and a sign of anti-nationalism.<sup>46</sup>

The issue of racism is still quite sensitive among Brazilian intellectuals, although the historiography has made some advances. New studies have overcome the argument of an absence of sources on racial conflicts in Brazil, pointing to new possibilities of analysis and materials that combine cultural history, history of the family, social history, history of diseases and so on. Foreign researchers, such as Sueann Caulfield, who discusses racism in connection to morality and nationalism in Rio de Janeiro between the 1920s and 1930s<sup>47</sup>, and Kim

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<sup>44</sup> Oliveira Vianna, *Raça e assimilação* [Race and assimilation], Rio de Janeiro, 1932.

<sup>45</sup> Despite the examples given on Brazilian history, similar works published in South Africa between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s must to be analyzed in the same way, as proposed by Saul Dubow in *Scientific racism in modern South Africa*, New York, 1995.

<sup>46</sup> See T. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1974; J. Bacelar, *Negros e Brancos em Salvador - A hierarquia das raças* [Blacks and whites in Salvador - The hierarchy of races], Rio de Janeiro, 2001; and K. Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade nacional versus identidade negra* [Re-discussing miscegenation in Brazil: national identity versus black identity], Petrópolis, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> S. Caulfield, *In defense of honor: morality, modernity and nationality in Rio de Janeiro: 1918-1940*, Campinas, 2000.

Butler, who describes and analyzes the black movement in São Paulo and Bahia during the first years of the Republican regime<sup>48</sup>, have added new possibilities to the studies previously focused on slavery. At the same time, historians of slavery have presented new views on similar issues<sup>49</sup>.

Especially after the 1980s, some Brazilian historians have focused on racial issues in their analyses of social and cultural history, going beyond slavery. They describe, categorize and analyze racial discourses in public policies related to immigration, urbanization, security and criminality during different periods of history<sup>50</sup>. Among them is Lilian Schwarcz, whose study on racial classification in Brazil uses medical and political debates on race. The author has limited her work to the years of 1870 to 1930, the period when Brazilians were constructing their idea of nation and scientific theories about race, evolution and civilization were dominating the debates<sup>51</sup>. At this time, Brazil imported ideas and scientists from Europe, aiming to explain

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<sup>48</sup> K. Butler, *Freedoms given, freedoms won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador*, New Jersey, 1998.

<sup>49</sup> See: S. L. Graham, *House and street: the domestic servants and masters in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro*, Cambridge, 1988.

<sup>50</sup> Many studies of Brazilian social and cultural history are still unpublished, however, one can highlight a few publications in this field, such as: C. M. Azevedo, *Onda negra, medo branco: o negro no imaginário das elites século XIX* [Black wave: white fear: black people into the white nineteen-century imagination], Rio de Janeiro, 1987; S. Chalhoub has published three books in this field: *Trabalho, lar e botequim; o cotidiano dos trabalhadores no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Epoque* [Labour, home and pub], São Paulo, 1986, *Visões da Liberdade* [Visions of freedom], São Paulo, 1990, *Cidade Febril: cortiços e epidemias na corte imperial* [The febrile city: tenements and epidemics in the imperial court], São Paulo, 1996; E. Silva, *D. Oba II D'Africa: o príncipe do povo – vida, tempo e pensamento de um homem livre de cor* [The life, time and thoughts of a free coloured man], São Paulo, 1997, *As camélias do Leblon e a abolição da escravidão* [The flowers of Leblon and the campaign for abolition], São Paulo, 2003 ; R. Moura, *Tia Ciata e a pequena África no Rio de Janeiro* [Aunt Ciata and the Little Africa in Rio], Rio de Janeiro, 1995; H. M. Castro, *Das cores do silêncio: os significados da liberdade no sudeste escravista* [The colours of silence: the meaning of freedom in Southeastern slavery], Rio de Janeiro, 1993; J. Gorender, *Brasil em branco e preto: o passado escravista que não passou* [Brazil in black and white: the past that hasn't passed], São Paulo, 2000.

<sup>51</sup> L. M. Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil 1870-1930* [The racial spectacle: scientists, institutions and the racial question in Brazil] São Paulo, 1993.

itself and to promote a “good image”, distant from savages, poverty, diseases and a black-skinned population.<sup>52</sup>

Above all, Brazilians have rejected comparisons between racism in Brazil and in the United States, and South Africa, contending the theory that the Brazilian case is unique and special. Likewise, for decades, South Africans have rejected any comparison between their society and foreign countries and culture on the issue of racism with the excuse that they too live in a unique situation.<sup>53</sup>

Rosa Ribeiro, in his extensive study has shown that racial domination – or racism – is at the basis of the process of nation building in Brazil and South Africa. Although Brazilians never adopted racial segregation officially, racial classification and discrimination have been part of the political culture for a long time.

Although in the last years of the twentieth century the black movement against racism had achieved some importance in Brazilian society, by denouncing inequalities, Brazil is still far from recognizing the existence of racism and racial exclusion. In fact, although many Brazilians argue that the country has no segregation laws, has never forbidden bi-racial marriages or reserved jobs for “whites only”, like South Africa and United States, researchers have presented statistics that prove that black people are far from economic, social and political equality.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See also L. M. Schwarcz, *Questão racial no Brasil* [The racial question in Brazil], in: L. M. Schwarcz and L. S. Reis (org.) *Negras Imagens: ensaios sobre cultura e escravidão no Brasil* [Black images: essays on culture and slavery in Brazil], São Paulo, 1996, p.153-177.

<sup>53</sup> G. Seidman, “Is South Africa different? Sociological comparisons and theoretical contributions from the land of Apartheid”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1999. [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com), retrieved on 2006/1/12.

<sup>54</sup> See A. S. Guimarães and L. Huntley (org.). “*Tirando a máscara: ensaios sobre o racismo no Brasil*” [Taking of the mask: essays about racism in Brazil], São Paulo, 2000; also H. Santos, *A busca de um caminho para o Brasil: a trilha do círculo vicioso* [The search for a pathway for Brazil: the vicious circle’s path], São Paulo, 2001.

Comparative studies in history about racism in Brazil and South Africa are quite new, as are the studies about racism in Brazilian history and new are also courses in Brazilian history in South Africa's universities and vice versa. In contrast, the opposite happens in social studies of race and racism. Analyses from the point of view of Brazilians or South Africans, and also from other countries such as the United States and Britain, have been written and published for more than a century.

Differently from Brazil, South Africa has studied racism in all its conformations for a long time, mainly since the 1950s, as a consequence of the rise of the apartheid regime. The racial issue is presented in academic or non-academic works, in fields like literature, sociology, anthropology, history and others. Authors have presented their thoughts against and for segregation with diverse features and versions.

South African scholars acknowledge that racial politics have an important role in building their society. The variety and quantity of books and articles exploring different faces of this problem available were crucial for this research. Among the many works in this field, useful to understanding the racial politics in twentieth-century South Africa, and consequently the context of the novels analyzed in this project, is *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652-2002* by Sampie Terreblanche<sup>55</sup>, which is an extensive work that explores four centuries of racial relations in South Africa, from the earlier colonization to the post-apartheid period, relating social and political exclusion to economic interest and domination.

Other essential reading was *The Afrikaners: a biography of a people* by H. Giliomee<sup>56</sup>, an extensive work in South African history, which emphasizes culture and society, from the first settlements to

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<sup>55</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002.

<sup>56</sup> H. Giliomme, *The Afrikaners*, Cape Town, 2003.

apartheid. In this book, Giliomee makes a brief comparison of Brazilian and South African perspectives on adultery and sexual intercourse between female slaves or servants and the master<sup>57</sup>. Accordingly, he asserts that Brazilian white wives tolerated their husbands' black concubines and their mixed race children, who shared the same place, while Afrikaner wives were very demanding on this issue, condemning the unfaithful husband and resorting to the law to prevent and punish this behavior. The author's point of view is an example of Gilberto Freyre's influence on international level. Although the Brazilian sociologist is acknowledged as a pioneer on the studies of race and culture in Brazil, more recent studies in gender history have shown conflicts and resistance to accepting adultery and slaves' sexual exploitation, from both sides: white wives and black concubines<sup>58</sup>.

Deborah Posel's *The making of apartheid, 1948-1961: conflict and compromise*<sup>59</sup> is also a seminal work in understanding the process of racial segregation and its policies in South Africa. Despite its focus on the period after 1948, it analyzes the antecedents of apartheid and the impact of the segregationist legislation in the first years of the regime. The author emphasizes the political aspect of segregation and how the National Party developed and justified its social, economic and political views, in a world that increasingly condemned racism. After World War II, while nations such as Brazil acted to deny racism and racialism, South Africa developed an original political and moral discourse aimed at maintaining the *status quo*. Another work of Posel delves deeply into governmental views on racial classification in South

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<sup>57</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: autobiography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003, p. 37.

<sup>58</sup> G. Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* [Masters and slaves], Rio de Janeiro, 20a. ed., 1988.

<sup>59</sup> D. Posel, *The making of apartheid*, Oxford, 1991.

Africa, illuminating contradictions of the system and its application in everyday South African life.<sup>60</sup>

Michael Green alleged that South African contemporary history can be divided into “pre-apartheid” and “apartheid” periods, given the impact of the political regime in every aspect of South African life. In the same way, the advent of the end of the apartheid regime could be characterized as “a rupture, a break, an end to history itself as South African history has been so long conceived”<sup>61</sup>.

Apartheid... is so implicit to the representation of the southern African region and its periodisation, governing these in the way even most vehement opponents are constructed in relation to itself, that attempts to nullify it need to go beyond not just the anti-Apartheid manoeuvres that characterise many of the works I deal with in this book, but even a post-Apartheid vision that still defines itself (in the logic of its strategies as much as its grammatical formulation) in relation to the very things it wishes to leave behind.<sup>62</sup>

Considering Green’s affirmation, it is relevant to ask if the distinct position of Brazilian history – an almost total absence of studies addressing the social exclusion of the black population, keeping the racial issue framed in the studies of slavery and immediately post-slavery – does not reflect the idea of “social whitening”, developed during the first years of the Brazilian Republic (1891-1920) and defended by many intellectuals and scientists who believed in the gradually mixed population with the predominance of the white gene<sup>63</sup>. The absence of the black population in many works on Brazilian history can be considered a “whitening” of the Brazilian historiography, as a consequence of the Brazilian perception about race.

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<sup>60</sup> D. Posel, “Race as common sense: racial classification in twentieth-century South Africa”, *African Studies Review* 44(2), September, 2001, pp. 87-113.

<sup>61</sup> M. Green, *Novel histories: present, past, and future in South African fiction*, Johannesburg, 1997, p. iv.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem*, p. v.

<sup>63</sup> For the theory of whitening in Brazil see T. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1974.

## 1.2 - History beyond borders

Bergh analyzes the uses of comparative history based on the debates that followed the publication of George Fredrickson's *White supremacy: A comparative study in America and South African history* (New York, 1981) from 1982 to 2002, reinforcing the importance of comparative history, as a means to provide “new insights and interpretations... and fresh contributions to the corpus of historical knowledge in various fields”<sup>64</sup>. Although the author refers to the comparative history between the United States and South Africa, to expand research projects to compare South Africa to other countries from Africa and the American continent can be equally stimulating.

North American and South African authors writing about racial policies in South Africa have compared this society to the United States' southern policies before the 1960s, when racial segregation was abolished in America. They mark the influence of the United States' experiences of segregation on South African policies. The connection between the two countries went further, with the support from American intellectuals to anti-apartheid activists. These groups in United States gave South African activists asylum, published and distributed their works, disseminating their ideas through different media, and pushed the United States government to put diplomatic pressure on South Africa to change its racial policies.<sup>65</sup>

Considering the distance between the United States and South Africa – compared to the shorter distance between Brazil and South Africa – the question that rises is why comparative studies of Brazilian

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<sup>64</sup> J. S. Bergh, “White supremacy twenty one years on: opportunities for comparative historical research”, *Historia* 48(1), 2003, p. 371.

<sup>65</sup> P. Lyman, *Partner to history – the U.S. role in South Africa's transition to democracy*, Washington, DC, 2002.

and South African social history did not develop in the same way as those between South Africa and the United States?

A precipitate explanation could point to the difference in the language, which surely makes it more difficult to understand and circulate ideas between these two societies. However, historians from the United States have made comparisons between Brazil and the United States, or even studied the racial problem in Brazil itself, as did Thomas Skidmore<sup>66</sup>, some came to South Africa and learnt Afrikaans, like Rosa Ribeiro, who learned Afrikaans during his comparative studies of nationalism in Brazil, Suriname and South Africa.<sup>67</sup>

The American reaction to the common Brazilian perception about the problem of racial exclusion is found Conney's essay: *Brazil: where class is more important than race? Are they crazy?*<sup>68</sup>, which compares Brazilian and American thoughts about race, class and racial exclusion. Gail Triner presents an essay about the Brazilian historiography of racial issues, comparing intellectual works to social statistics, in: *Race with or without color? Reconciling Brazilian Historiography*<sup>69</sup>.

Many other American authors have studied South African history emphasizing the meaning of race in that society. Authors such as George Fredrickson who wrote and published several works on racism, always used his comparative studies on South Africa and the United States as a base<sup>70</sup>. According to Fredrickson, comparative

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<sup>66</sup> T. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1993.

<sup>67</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, "A construção da nação (pós) colonial: África do Sul e Suriname, 1933-1948" [The construction of the (post) colonial nation: South Africa and Suriname, 1933-1948], *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 3, 2002. Rio de Janeiro, pp. 483-512.

<sup>68</sup> P. L. Cooney, *Brazil: where class is more important than race: are they crazy?* Website: <http://members.aol.com/plcooney/brazil.htm> retrieved at: 2005-12-03

<sup>69</sup> G. D. Triner, "Race, with or without color? Reconciling Brazilian historiography". *History Compass* 3(1), 2005. [www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j1478-0542.2005.00138.x](http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j1478-0542.2005.00138.x) retrieved at 2006-04-13.

<sup>70</sup> See: G. M. Fredrickson, *Racism: a short history*, Princetown, 2002; *White supremacy: a comparative study in American and South African history*, New York, 1981; "Race and

history must be based on some fundamental similarities in the past and the present. He also explores contrasts and subtle differences that could be illuminating for understanding of both societies. In reference to comparative studies of race in South Africa, Brazil and the United States, he writes:

Like all history, comparative history is influenced by the location of the historian in time and space. (...) The comparative history of 'race' in these societies is clearly not a purely disinterested manifestation of scientific curiosity. To varying degrees, it reflects current interests and ideologies in its search for a 'usable past'.<sup>71</sup>

For this reason, it is understandable that Brazilian, American and South African intellectuals were interested in participating on seminars about racism in Brazil, South Africa and the United States in 1999. Dozens of works were presented and debated in search of a collective solution to overcome racism in these three societies. Although they were not concentrated on history, the articles offer an overview of the problem at the end of the century from different viewpoints.<sup>72</sup> At that point, Brazilians were starting to discuss policies of affirmative action and racial exclusion, South Africa was struggling to overcome the problems generated by a century of segregationist policies and the United States was, once again challenged by the racial and social exclusion in their own country, despite decades of policies of affirmative action.

Over the years, South African society and history have attracted scholars from the United States, such as Eugene Dvorin, who analyzes racism and the politics of the authoritarian state during the first years of apartheid.

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Racism in Historical Perspective: comparing the United States, South Africa and Brazil", in Hamilton et al.(org.), *Beyond racism: race and inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States*", Boulder/London, 2001, Boulder/London, 2001, pp 1-25.

<sup>71</sup> G. M. Frederickson, "Race and Racism in historical perspective: comparing the United States, South Africa and Brazil", in C. Hamilton "Beyond racism: race and inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States". Boulder/London, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> C. Hamilton et al. (org.) *Beyond racism: race and inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States*, Boulder/London, 2001.

The Nationalist theory and practice of Apartheid is the outstanding characteristic of the postwar Nationalist party in the Union South of Africa. Although some writers consider the concept to be but the extension of the historical segregation policies, merely to attribute to the program a historical significance is to lose sight of its true relationship to South African politics today. Whereas the theory of Apartheid may be considered as merely one form of segregation between the white and black races in the Union, its value as a potent political weapon and its contemporary role of attempting to alter the pattern of segregation already existing give to the concept an importance of the first magnitude in race relations and the more limited sphere of practical South African politics.<sup>73</sup>

Like Dvorin, many other authors went beyond their borders in search of answers to their questions about racial inequality and domination. In the same way, the results of their studies also have traveled to distant shores – or desks – adding information and proposing different analytical approaches to this matter. An example is Kenan Malik<sup>74</sup>, who traces the trajectory of the discourse on race in England and France during the eighteenth century to the idea of multiculturalism and the actual problems in the Islamic world, such as the war between Israel and Palestine.

First published in 1952, *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Franz Fanon<sup>75</sup> has been translated into many different languages and retains its freshness, looks at the racial problem from a different perspective by analyzing day-to-day situations. Being a classical study on the issue, it is a mandatory reference for analysis of racial inequality. Another study, conducted by Milles and Brown was important to this dissertation, as it analyzes the idea of racism around the world and how it is connected to culture.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> E. Dvorin, *Racial separation in South Africa*, Chicago, 1952, p.1.

<sup>74</sup> K. Malik, *The meaning of race: Race history and culture in western society*, New York, 1996.

<sup>75</sup> F. Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, New York, 1967.

<sup>76</sup> R. Milles and M. Brown, *Racism*, New York, 2003.

### 1.3 – Racism and cultural history

Thomas Sowell's *Race and culture: a world view*<sup>77</sup>, relates racism to culture, economy, slavery and history while discussing white supremacy. The author works in the same direction as Edward Said<sup>78</sup>, Marc Ferro<sup>79</sup> and others.

With this idea, this dissertation examines not only South African and Brazilian history, but also how history is represented in the literary work of four selected novelists, at one specific moment.

This study utilizes the methodological tools of Marxism, as proposed by Raymond Williams<sup>80</sup>, substituting Marx's theorem – thesis, antithesis and synthesis – with dominant, residual and emergent, for cultural analysis. According to this idea, culture is a continuous process resulting from the conflict and interaction between a dominant culture, residues from traditional beliefs, customs or behaviors and new practices, which emerge from this relationship, and that will also be in conflict with the two previous factors. This movement in the culture is the cultural history.

In his thesis about symbolic power, Pierre Bourdieu explains culture as an instrument for domination; he affirms that the culture that unifies a group is the same one that separates it, creating forms of distinction and resistance to the hegemonic culture<sup>81</sup>. The theory of a dominant culture that embraces all forms of expression inside it – including resistance – is also approached Michel Foucault<sup>82</sup> and Michel de Certeau<sup>83</sup>. The present study utilizes the theories of

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<sup>77</sup> T. Sowell, *Race and culture*, New York, 1994.

<sup>78</sup> E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, São Paulo, 1995.

<sup>79</sup> M. Ferro, *Colonization: a global history*, London/New York, 1997.

<sup>80</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and literature*, Oxford, 1977; and *Culture*, Rio de Janeiro, 1992.

<sup>81</sup> P. Bourdieu, *O Poder simbólico* [Symbolic power], Lisboa, 1989.

<sup>82</sup> M. Foucault, *Microfísica do Poder* [Microphysics of power], Rio de Janeiro, 1982.

<sup>83</sup> M. de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, Minneapolis, 1998.

symbolic power and dominant culture to understand the novels as part of a culture, reacting to pressures from political acts that create a social problem.

By considering the proposition of Bloch<sup>84</sup> and other authors from the *École des Annales* for an open approach to history, working with different sources, meanings and subjects, and by adding Raymond's theory of culture and its dynamics, it is possible to get a deeper view of cultural elements of the politics of racial inequality.

Benjamin, another Marxist, went further in his definition of the historian's job and asked for involvement from the researcher, a kind of commitment to the subject and the results of the analytical work. This idea was also espoused by Bloch, who pleaded for the abandonment of the neutral position defended by positivists, but it was Benjamin and Gramsci who proposed it as an obligation of the intellectual.<sup>85</sup>

Nowadays, this intellectual commitment is still present among historians who analyze facts from the past in connection with the present. This approach is also valid for literature, and can be identified in the novels analyzed in this study.

## 1.4 - History and literature

This dissertation seeks to identify particular aspects of social and economic policies, in Brazil and South Africa, during the first half of the twentieth century, and to identify how those policies personally affected the authors and are reflected in their novels.

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<sup>84</sup> M. Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire, ou métier d'historien*. Brazilian edition: *Apologia da história ou o ofício do historiador*. Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar ed., 2001.

<sup>85</sup> See W. Benjamin, *Obras escolhidas, (Auswahl in Drei Bänden)*, São Paulo, 1985. These three authors wrote what later became books in the middle of political turmoil; all of them got involved in the struggle against fascism and Nazism, so their theories have a strong bearing on personal experiences. A. Gramsci, *A concepção dialética da história* [The dialectic concept of history], Rio de Janeiro, 6ed., 1986.

Two novels by each author were chosen for analysis. From Alan Paton, the world-famous novel *Cry, the beloved country* and *Too late, the phalarope* were both written at the beginning of the apartheid regime in South Africa, but evolved under the influence of a long trajectory of segregation and racial domination policies. Peter Abrahams, a South African from Johannesburg, published his novels while living in England: *Mine Boy*, 1946 and *The Path of Thunder*, 1948.

These novels reflect his experience of growing up in a society that determines one's social, economic, political and geographic place according to racial background. From Jorge Amado, two novels were chosen from the beginning of his career: *Seara Vermelha* (Red harvest), 1946 and *Jubiabá*, 1936. They were published during a dictatorship and at the beginning of the myth of Brazilian racial democracy. Lima Barreto, the earlier Brazilian writer was chosen for his importance to Brazilian literature and for being one of the few black authors in Brazil. His novels, both written during the first two decades of the twentieth century, reveal the experience of a black man in the first years of the Brazilian Republic, and exhibit many elements of his own experiences.

The use of these novels to analyze the problem of race is useful from the perspective of cultural history, which proposes the use of cultural expressions to understand society, politics and the economic context of a certain period. This school of thought also seeks to identify how and when a specific social reality is constructed, thought and presented.<sup>86</sup>

The literary work itself cannot be considered as the “mirror” of a society at a particular moment, since literature is a complex product of imagination, experience and ideology. Instead, the focus of this project is to analyze how the racial issue appears in these novels, what

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<sup>86</sup> R. Chartier, *A história Cultural: entre práticas e representações* [Cultural history: between practice and representations], Lisboa/ Rio de Janeiro, 1990.

ideology surrounds the authors, what solution they suggest for problems their societies were facing, the location where they were writing and for whom they were writing.<sup>87</sup>

All these authors had a political commitment that is evident in their works. In distinct ways, they re-created what was happening socially, economically and politically in their countries through their novels, seeking a change in their societies. Thanks to their talent as writers and the issues they wrote about, they became famous and contributed to the construction of an external image of their societies that is still being perpetuated.

Many intellectuals all around the world embraced revolutionary ideologies during the first half of the twentieth century when the ideals of communism and the Russian Revolution were spread in books, magazines, newspapers and academic journals. Social problems and theories about race and colonization were already growing when the World War II started and the issue of democracy became more important. After the war, these ideas grew wider, with the struggles for democracy, anti-colonization and civil rights all around the world influencing many aspects of intellectual life, including literature.

The link between history and literature arose from the need to build a history of literature. It soon became more complex; ceding place to an approach that seeks the history inside the literature – which includes the history of the texts’ creation, the history of the authors, the history of books (publication, public reaction, translations, etc.) and history as part of the narrative.

Raymond Williams recognizes the connection between history and literature as “...the process and the result of formal composition within the social and formal properties of a language”. According to his thesis, it is also important to consider the author’s history in

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<sup>87</sup> R. Darnton, *O grande massacre de gatos e outros episódios da história cultural francesa* [The great cat massacre and other episodes of French cultural history], Rio de Janeiro, 1986.

composing the text and the ideology he/she embraces beneath the lines written.<sup>88</sup>

The affirmation that every literary work is historically built is also in the writings of Roger Chartier, who suggests a “cultural history of society” as an approach that considers expressions and reasons of culture, with all the complexity that its dynamics reflect and their trajectories<sup>89</sup>. Carlo Ginzburg uses literary works allied with primary documents in analyzing the Inquisition charges against an ordinary man during the sixteenth century, adding an important contribution to the *histoire des mentalités*<sup>90</sup>. The seminal book of Mikhail Bakhtin<sup>91</sup>, which analyzes François Rabelais’ literature to understand popular culture during the Renaissance, can be considered a bridge between cultural history and *histoire des mentalités*. Pierre Bourdieu proposes that historical action is divided into two states: the objective history and the incorporated history – which he named *habitus* – which are present in everyday life.<sup>92</sup>

That is precisely the aim of this research: to search for the history depicted in customs and everyday lives that are represented in the novels, as well as the influences of the objective history. The hypotheses is that an examination of the contexts in which the authors operated and that they used to compose their novels – the main troubles, as well as daily lives, popular beliefs and customs – can provide a perspective on how a specific event, policy or belief has influenced that society’s trajectory. Moreover, this study will consider how racism became part of the social mindset, which will be analyzed from the viewpoint of the history of mentalities.

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<sup>88</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and literature*, Oxford, 1977, p. 46.

<sup>89</sup> R. Chartier, *História cultural* [cultural history], Lisboa/Rio de Janeiro, 1990.

<sup>90</sup> C. Ginzburg, *O queijo e os vermes* [The worms and the cheese], São Paulo, 1998.

<sup>91</sup> M. Bakhtin, *A cultura popular na idade média e no renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais* [Popular culture in the middle age and renaissance: François Rabelais’ context], São Paulo, 1996.

<sup>92</sup> P. Bourdieu, *O poder simbólico* [Symbolic power], Lisboa, 1989

There is nothing new about the use of literature as a source for studying history. At the beginning of history as a discipline, in the nineteenth century, Homer's writings were used for studies of Ancient Greece. Today, many scholars acknowledge the importance of Mark Twain's novels in understanding southern United States society during slavery.<sup>93</sup>

Edward Said used Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, among others, to criticize colonialism in Africa and Asia<sup>94</sup>, while Darnton used the first folk tales written in France to analyze the French mentality during the eighteenth century<sup>95</sup>. On the other hand, researchers of fictional literature have used history to understand the form and contents of classical works, as shown by Ian McGuire's analysis of Herman Melville novels<sup>96</sup>.

We can also analyze South African literature to understand history. In the novels black authors, such as Eskia Mphahlele<sup>97</sup>, ghetto life during the pre-apartheid years is depicted. J. M. Coetzee<sup>98</sup> brings racial segregation to his novels during the apartheid regime and explores the challenges of overcoming racism in his post-apartheid writings. Race relations are also important in the novels of women writers, such as Sarah Gertrude Millin<sup>99</sup> and Nadine Gordimer<sup>100</sup>,

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<sup>93</sup> Among M. Twain's novels, one of the most used by historians is *The adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which tells the story of a poor white boy and his experiences in a slave society.

<sup>94</sup> E. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, São Paulo, 1995.

<sup>95</sup> R. Darnton, *The great cat massacre*, Rio de Janeiro, 1986.

<sup>96</sup> I. McGuire, "Who ain't a slave?: Moby Dick and the ideology of free labor". *Journal of American Studies* 37, 2003, pp. 287-305.

<sup>97</sup> E. Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, London, 1959; *The Wanderers*, New York, 1971; and *Father come home*, Johannesburg, 1984.

<sup>98</sup> J. M. Coetzee's novels used in this context to better understand South African society during the apartheid years were: *Boyhood*, New York, 1997; and *Disgrace*, New York, 1999.

<sup>99</sup> See S. G. Millin. *God's stepchildren*, 1926 and *King of the bastards*, 1949.

<sup>100</sup> Among the novels of N. Gordimer see: *Burger's daughter*, London, 1979, *A world of strangers*, London, 1958, *The conservationist*, London, 1974 and *July's People*, London, 1981.

whose novels can be used to understand racism, gender, class and ethnicity in South Africa.

In Brazil, historians use Euclides da Cunha's novel, *Os Sertões*, to teach about one of the latest revolutions in the country, the War of Canudos. To understand society during the nineteenth century, Machado de Assis is the novelist most widely used. With the increase in the studies of social history, the writings of Lima Barreto and Aluisio Azevedo have become more popular among historians and teachers for exploring aspects of daily life in Rio de Janeiro in the late nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries.<sup>101</sup>

Comparative studies of social practices and the imaginary, is quite a new ground for historians. If the comparison is between countries such as South Africa and Brazil, and the issue is racism, the problem becomes more complicated. As argued by Gay Seidman, South African scholarship is only now beginning to develop studies around race relations through the perspective of culture.<sup>102</sup> Rosa Ribeiro suggests that historians interested in traditions and the imaginary use "Afrikaans plaasromans or 'farm novels' and Brazilian *sertão*-related literature"<sup>103</sup> to compare the thoughts on race in these countries.

The method of content analysis will be applied to the novels, but not their form. What this study intends to analyze is how the authors have treated the issues of exclusion, poverty, racism and sexism in their novels. Furthermore, how the dimension of their discourses that are linked with their political commitments and socio-economic environment will be studied. Therefore biographical texts on

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<sup>101</sup> The link between history and literature in Brazil, using these authors is exploited by N. Sevcenko in *Literatura como missão* [Literature as a mission]. São Paulo, 1986.

<sup>102</sup> G. Seidman, "Is South Africa different? Sociological comparisons and theoretical contributions from the land of Apartheid", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1999. Online version: [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com) retrieved on 2006-01-12.

<sup>103</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, "Classifying 'race' and 'whitening' nations. Suggestions towards comparative reading of South Africa and Brazil", *Safundi* 5(3), 2004, p. 3.

Jorge Amado, Lima Barreto, Peter Abrahams and Alan Paton are part of the consulted material.

Walter Benjamin uses photography as a metaphor for the task of the historian. According to his view, a historian, as a photographer, catches an image as it reflects one particular instant, during a conflict. The historian works on that image, trying to understand what happened. In literature, analyzing Baudelaire and the German Baroque, he describes the *voyeur*, an observer – somebody who stays out of a scene, out of reach of the characters whose lives he or she enjoys observing in detail.

The *voyeurs* in this case are Paton and Amado. The Intellectuals do not belong to the social segment that their novels describe; even so, they present a very detailed description of their characters' daily life and troubles. They are outsiders by class and race. The other two, Barreto and Abrahams cannot be considered as *voyeurs*, given that they belonged to the discriminated and excluded group. As Xuma explains to Paddy, in *Mine Boy*: "You understand with your head. I understand with pain. With the pain of my heart"<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> P. Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Johannesburg, 1989, p. 172.

## Chapter II

### **BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA: FROM COLONIZATION TO NATION**

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was”. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. (...) The danger affects both the content of the tradition and the receivers. (...) Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.<sup>105</sup>

The racial issue in South Africa and in Brazil must be understood as a historical process, which started with colonization and, as Benjamin says, is “still flashing up until these days”. Embedded concepts and prejudices about race and societies play important role in the colonized and colonizer’s mindset that keeps making its way throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century worldwide. Sometimes, the past comes in waves that take societies back, reviving old convictions, other times in flashes, which reflects the old into the new. The past is never really gone, and that is why we keep fighting the very same enemies.

Moreover, the past does not always belong to a single person or society, or a particular time. It can spread out, contaminating what it confronts. It can also bring different people together, even if they cannot see each other. Societies that have been separated by geography and time can be gathered to a common history that goes beyond concepts of time.

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<sup>105</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the philosophy of history*, New York, 1969, p.255.

For this reason, in this dissertation, the colonial process in South Africa and Brazil will not be displayed separately, for the sake of understanding how the past brings both societies together, and how it has “flashed”, distinctively, in each country. When it is least expected, the past becomes present, manifesting itself in different forms, in history as much as in daily life.

It has been common for analysts to make comparisons between Brazilian and South African societies when trying to understand racism. This was especially true during the 1990s, when South Africa finally ended apartheid and Brazil began to implement policies to combat social exclusion. These comparative studies, conducted for the most part by sociologists did not, however, always cover the field of comparative history.

Comparing the historic processes of South Africa and Brazil is imperative if one is to understand their policies towards race and development, and how they resulted in unique cultures with distinct consequences for their population. Moreover, understanding the roots of the racial thought in these colonies – and further in their colonizers – can be enlightening when analyzing racial relations in other societies.

## **2.1 – Colonization, slavery and racial hierarchy**

Primarily, it is important to remark that while South Africa is an African country, with a predominance of natural-born black population, of local origins as well as immigrants from other colonies/countries in Africa, Brazil is second only to Nigeria in its black population, because of the importation of slaves from Africa for more than 300 years.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> It is important to clarify that this work uses of the term “natural-born” as referring to the predominance of black population in South Africa in comparison to Brazil, were the “natural-born is the native-American indian. Although there is a majority of Afro-descendents among the Brazilian population, this predominance is the result of a colonial policy, which introduced people from sub-Saharan Africa as slaves. Furthermore, the use

After having been ‘discovered’ by Portugal in 1500, the colonization of Brazil started around 1532, under intensive control that sought to avoid the loss of colonial territory and to contain the smuggling of colonial products. The colonial authorities divided the territory into *sesmarias*, extended rural properties, and gave the rights of exploitation to a few rich vassals, who were expected to show profits within a limited period of years or risk losing their rights to someone else. The size of these properties averaged 8.7 thousand hectares, with some as large as 12 thousands of hectares.<sup>107</sup>

To colonize the *sesmarias*, the landlord could use the indigenous inhabitants as a work force, even buy some from neighboring *sesmarias* or sell a few individuals, but only to the Portuguese crown. Facing an increasing market for sugarcane in Europe, the Portuguese kingdom expected that every *sesmeiro* (landlord) could start a big farm, called *engenho*. These properties were also a kind of pre-industrial unit that produced sugar from sugarcane as well all other necessary products for daily life including clothes, bricks, and rudimentary equipment and tools.<sup>108</sup>

In South Africa, after a long period of being used only as a refueling port by Portuguese navigators, colonization started in the 1650s in the part of the country that became later the Cape Colony. It was there

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of the term “black” when referring to African descendents in Brazil and African population in South Africa, is to clarify that racism in both countries is very much about the colour of the skin and other physical characteristics associated with sub-Saharan African populations. As will be demonstrated in this work, slavery and racial issues will include other racial groups in both countries.

<sup>107</sup> V. L. Ferlini, “Os pobres do açúcar: estrutura produtiva e relações de poder no Nordeste colonial” [The sugar poor: productive structure and power relations in colonial North-east], in: T. Szmrecsanyi (org.), *História econômica do período colonial* [Economic history of colonial period], São Paulo, 2002, pp. 21-34.

<sup>108</sup> The *engenho* can be translated as a *mill*, however, since the beginning of colonization in Brazil, the word *engenho* was used to express not only the machinery used to transform sugarcane juice into sugar but as an agro-industrial complex and economic complex, which was very often compared to a feudal unit by Marxist historians, sociologists and economists such like C. Prado Jr., *História econômica do Brasil (Economic History of Brazil)*, São Paulo, 1976; O. G. Velho, *Capitalismo autoritário e campesinato (Authoritarian capitalism and peasants)*, São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro, 1979; P. Singer, *Desenvolvimento econômico e evolução urbana (Economic development and urban evolution)*, São Paulo, 1974.

that the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC), also known as the Dutch East India Company, located a few employees at the Cape of Good Hope to produce fresh food and build ‘a refreshment station to service VOC ships on their way to and from its empire in the East’.<sup>109</sup> As the functions of Portuguese and Dutch settlements were different, also distinct were the policies of each colony and the range of control and money invested in them.

Less than ten years after the initial settlement, nine servants of the Company were released from their duties to become full time farmers, and given properties of approximately 11.4 hectares each, where they had relative independence from external control.<sup>110</sup>

The size of colonial properties and the connection between the settlers and their European homeland were among the most important differences between Brazil and South Africa. However, both Portuguese and Dutch settlers faced difficulties in communicating with their homeland, a problem that gave the settlers, who had to confront daily problems in a challenging environment, a sense of independence. In order to succeed in this task, the local inhabitants’ cooperation was fundamental.

They were instrumental in aiding settlers in everything, from basic subsistence to techniques of cattle husbandry and agriculture. Natives had the skills to manage the soil, weather, diseases, housing and many other things. And from this daily intimacy on the economic level, other relationships evolved. Interracial marriages or sexual relations resulted in mixed-descent populations that increased rapidly in Brazil as well as in South Africa.

About 40 per cent of almost ten million Africans imported to the American continent were shipped to Brazil as slaves between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the nineteenth centuries. These laborers were of vital importance to the

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<sup>109</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003, p.1.

<sup>110</sup> idem.

colonial system, whose economy was devoted to exportation, extensive agriculture and a small number of landowners for a vast territory.

Taken from various regions of Africa, they were shipped from ports in the Congo, Angola, the Gold Coast and Mozambique, heading mainly to the Brazilian ports of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. From there, they were distributed to other parts of the country.<sup>111</sup> These African slaves often lived and worked together with native captives, depending on the region and the needs of the farmer, also depending upon the variation of the prices of imported slaves and the availability of native work in the region.<sup>112</sup>

A similar situation was found in the Cape Colony, after the first years of its colonization. The need for a working force brought up the need for the importation of men and women from neighboring African colonies at the beginning and from more distant colonies thereafter. With intensive occupation, a very distinct population was born, composed of people coming from different nations and cultures.

In Africa and in the Americas, wars against indigenous tribes were often used as an excuse to enslave the population and as a strategy to increase the availability of land for colonization. In South Africa and in Brazil, the war against the indigenous people started with the first settlements and advanced until the nineteenth century, with isolated clashes in the twentieth century.

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<sup>111</sup> M. Florentino, *Em costas negras. Uma história do tráfico de escravos entre a África e o Rio de Janeiro* [On black sholders. A history of slave trafficking between Africa and Rio de Janeiro], São Paulo, 1997.

<sup>112</sup> C. M. MacLachlan, "African slave trade and economic development in Amazonia, 1700-1800", in: R. Toplin (ed.), *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, Westport, 1974; J. M. Monteiro, *Negros da terra: índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo* [Native blacks: indians and bandeirantes in the origins of São Paulo], São Paulo, 1994; T. A. Gandon, "O índio e o negro: uma relação legendária" [Native and black: a legendary relationship], *Afro-Ásia* 19/20, Salvador, 1997, pp. 135-164; K. Mattoso, *Bahia, século XIX: uma província no Império* [Bahia, nineteenth century: a province in the empire], São Paulo, 1992; M. Karasch, "Catequese e cativo. Política indigenista em Goiás: 1780-1889" [Conversion and captivity. Indigenous policy in Goiás: 1780-1889], in: M. C. Cunha, *História dos índios no Brasil* [History of Amerindians in Brazil], São Paulo, 1998.

Slavery was the major component of colonization in Latin America and the southern United States, and the Portuguese government invested heavily in African slaves to develop its colonial economy, recognizing the low efficiency of indigenous work and their physical vulnerability to diseases brought by Europeans. African slaves, on the other hand, had a greater knowledge of agricultural technologies and were skilled in metallurgy and mining. Even after independence, in 1822, the Brazilian oligarchy continued using slave labor in activities such as farming and mining, refusing to increase free labor in the country, until the 1880s.

Across the Atlantic, South Africa also made extensive use of slaves during the seventeenth century. Using land wars as a stratagem and as an excuse, they took Africans into indentured labor or serfdom. The introduction of slaves from Angola, Mozambique, Madagascar and Indonesia started in 1658 and it was later increased with slaves brought from Bengal, South India and Sri Lanka.<sup>113</sup>

Together, the free natives, white wage laborers and an increasing number of mixed-descent people, called *bastaards* in the Cape and *mulattoes* or *pardos* in Brazil, composed very complex societies, which have inspired social scientists, anthropologists and writers for centuries.

The complexity of South African society comes close to that of Brazil. In each of these countries colonial settlers became sexually involved with slaves and natives. Among servants and slaves, people with very different racial backgrounds also became sexually involved, and gave rise to a very racially mixed society. As a consequence of slavery and miscegenation, colonial laws divided the population into groups with different status. Throughout the centuries, the complexity grew stronger, challenging the policies of segregation during the twentieth century.

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<sup>113</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A History of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; C. Hendricks, "Ominous liaisons: tracing the interface between 'race' and sex at the Cape", in Z. Erasmus (ed.), *Coloured by history, shaped by place. New perspectives on coloured identities in Cape Town*, Cape Town, 2001, pp. 29-44.

In Brazil, imported slaves were called *boçais*, placed at the bottom of the social pyramid. They were considered ignorant and uncivilized. Next were the *crioulos*, as the Portuguese called black slaves born in Brazilian territory. They were more or less integrated into that society, because they could speak Portuguese, were Christians and had ties within the colony. In third place came the indigenous, who enjoyed the protection of catholic missionaries, although as communities they could always be endangered by the colonial government or groups of settlers that would fight them in order to impose land control.

The children born from the mix of indigenous and black slaves were placed at the lowest level of the mixed segment of the population. They were called *cafuzos* and their freedom depended on the status of their mothers, which they inherited. Children from white and black parents, called *mulattos*, could sometimes be freed or given the best jobs. The children born from the miscegenation of white and indigenous were named *caboclos*. They usually were not enslaved, which did not prevent them from total dependence on the patriarch together with the poor white settlers, who worked for the landowner or lived in his property as sharecroppers or aggregated<sup>114</sup>.

In colonial South Africa, the imported slaves were also considered inferior for the same reasons that they were in Brazil. There were also those born as slaves, and the indigenous Khoisan, protected by colonial laws against slavery. As part of an extensive creolisation process, children born from relations between Khoisan and imported slaves, from white and slaves, from white and Khoisan, and so on, were divided in distinct groups, as pointed by S. Terreblanche:

... there was extensive miscegenation between slaves and whites, and between slaves and the Khoisan. Given the preponderance of males between both free burgher and slave

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<sup>114</sup> The aggregated is somebody or a family that does not belong to the landowner family or to the group of property workers (slave or not). They usually are allowed to stay in the property and can be used as a reserve labor force or private militia. The links between the property owner and the aggregated are not official and rely on verbal agreements. In Brazil this character can still be found in rural properties.

populations, this was to be expected. Children from white fathers and slave mothers were usually freed. (...) The children born from slave and Khoisan unions were called Bastaard-Hottentots. Their number grew so rapidly in the eighteenth century that they became regarded as a new category of colonial subjects.<sup>115</sup>

Social composition in South Africa became more complex as colonial authorities introduced laborers from Indonesia, China and India. Furthermore, as the British government assumed distinct policies towards race in the Cape Province and Natal, in contrast to the Free Orange State for example, the social fabric showed visible changes.

But how did the colonial authorities react to the growth of interracial marriages and mixed-descent population in these different cases? In Brazil, interracial marriages among Portuguese settlers and native Indians were not only tolerated during the first years of colonization, but also supported by the authorities. The Portuguese government saw these marriages as a way to induce the majority of single men brought from Portugal to remain in the colony, building the settlements, which would help to control the land and discourage the French and Dutch from claiming parts of the territory for themselves.

The king of Portugal not only recognized interracial marriages among Portuguese men and native women, but would also give them a dowry and sometimes nominate the husband for an administrative job. For those men, originally from the lowest class in Portugal, including some convicted criminals, this was an opportunity to elevate their social status and provide their children with the same status of that of a child born in Portugal.<sup>116</sup>

In the Cape Colony, the Dutch East India Company, however, had prohibited interracial marriage. The children born from illegal

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<sup>115</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A History of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002, p.158.

<sup>116</sup> The recognition of marriages between native women and Portuguese men in colonial Brazil is in S. Buarque de Hollanda, *Raízes do Brasil* [the Brazilian roots], Rio de Janeiro, 1956; and in R. Faoro, *Os donos do poder* [the owners of the power], v.1, Rio de Janeiro, 1989.

relationships between natives and settlers, or between slaves and settlers were not accepted in the society. They could be freed or subject to indentured labor until the age of 25. The children born from both parents who were classified as *bastaard* were also designated *bastaard* and although not slaves or servants, they had limited rights in this society.<sup>117</sup>

In Brazil, racial differentiation started during the second century of colonization, with the intensification of African slavery. A white or native man married to a black woman could lose his social status, or even be punished by losing his government job or title, for having gone “low”<sup>118</sup>. Racial prejudice against black people during colonial times was connected to both slavery and physical features, but each had different significance.

A man could have children with a black slave without “going low”, since sexual relationship between different races were not unusual if the man held a superior racial status than the woman. But this man could not marry a black woman without bringing him dishonor. Marriages with natives or mixed-descent women were more tolerated.

Similar phenomena occurred in the South African Cape Colony, where slaves were stereotyped according to their origins and features, as Cheryl Hendricks remarks:

East Asian slaves were simultaneously valued as skilled artisans and seen as thievish, dangerous and insubordinate. Many of the women of this group were employed in the household and engaged in cooking and needlework. Slaves from the African continent (i.e. beyond South Africa) were relegated to doing the menial task of working the fields. Creole-born slaves were stereotyped as being more dependable (no problems with runaways) and those of ‘mixed’ descent (which commonly only denoted a white and black admixture) were especially sought after: they were purchased at higher premiums and given the more

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<sup>117</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A History of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; and P. D. Gqola, “Slaves don’t have opinions: inscriptions of slave bodies and the denial of agency in Rayda Jacob’s *The slave book*”, in: Z. Erasmus (ed.), *Coloured by History, shaped by place. New perspectives on coloured identities in Cape Town*, Cape Town, 2001.

<sup>118</sup> S. Buarque de Hollanda, *Raízes do Brasil* [Brazilian roots], Rio de Janeiro, 1956.

supervisory-oriented jobs whilst the women were incorporated as domestics into the settler households.<sup>119</sup>

Curiously, the legislation and traditional historiography do not approach the marriage or sexual relationships between white women and native or black men, although some new research on women's and gender history has shown, based on wills, inventories and testimonies, that white women had borne children without marrying. The race of those children was not identified in the documents.<sup>120</sup>

Given the fact that the number of men coming from Europe to the colonies was much higher than that of women, it is easy to conclude that interracial relationships occurred between European men and native or black women. Yet, as cited above, there is evidence suggesting that European women were involved in interracial relationships as well.

After a century of European exploitation, colonies such as Brazil and South Africa had a larger number of slaves and natives in their labor force than Europeans. In fact, male slaves or servants were preferred. Moreover, circumstances like war or long journeys searching for minerals could take men away from the rural properties, leaving white women surrounded by non-white males. The scarce options for sexual partners and the lack of male control over those women, in this case, influenced the possibilities of miscegenation.

Another similarity that ties Brazil to South Africa is the patriarchal system that is the foundation of both societies. Present in colonial Brazil, Afrikaner *volk* and Victorian society, the patriarchal system is

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<sup>119</sup>C. Hendricks, "'Ominous' liaisons: tracing the interface between race and sex at the Cape" in: Z. Erasmus, ed.), *Coloured by History, shaped by place. New perspectives on coloured identities in Cape Town*, Cape Town, 2001. p. 36.

<sup>120</sup> On this matter, see A. L. Campos, *O casamento e a família em São Paulo colonial* [Marriage and the family in colonial São Paulo], D.Phil. USP, 1986; R. D. Costa, *Divórcio e anulação de matrimônio em São Paulo colonial* [Divorce and marriage annulment in colonial São Paulo]. D. Phil. USP, 1986; M. Del Priori, *Ao sul do corpo* [At the south of the body], São Paulo, 1993; E. M. Samara, "Mistérios da fragilidade humana: o adultério feminino no Brasil – séculos XVIII e XIX" [The mystery of human fragility: the female adulter in Brazil – 18 and 19 centuries], *Revista Brasileira de História* 15(29), São Paulo, 1995, pp 57-71; and J. M. Pedro, *Mulheres honestas e mulheres faladas: uma questão de classe* [Honest and dishonest women: a question of class] M.A. dissertation, UFSC, 1994.

characterized by the authority of the oldest active male in the household and in the economic unit (farm in South Africa, *engenho* or *fazenda*<sup>121</sup> in Brazil). His authority encompasses all members of the extended family, all workers – slaves, servants or free waged laborers – and could also extend to the neighborhood, village, and the region itself, creating a base for political power.

## 2.2 – Patriarchy, oligarchy and imperialism

Authors such as the Brazilian Gilberto Freyre, have analyzed the patriarchal society as a form of power, based on the authority of the father, who employed honor, commitment, loyalty and a Christian moral code of conduct to assert himself. Patriarchy was the dominant system under which colonial societies in the Americas and Africa were organized. This contributed to government political, economic and social control, and reinforced the power of elitist families. In Freyre's words:

It is the family, not the individual, neither the state, nor any commercial company, which since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is the major factor in Brazilian colonization. It is the productive unit, as from the family comes capital to exploit land, set up farms, buy slaves, cattle, machinery. It is the social force that supports the politics and itself constitutes the most powerful aristocracy in colonial America.<sup>122</sup>

In South Africa as much as in Latin America, the authority of the patriarch was imposed over economically dependent family members, the labor force, impoverished neighbors, slaves<sup>123</sup> and servants and most of all

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<sup>121</sup> The *fazenda* is a large rural property, similar to the English *farm*, usually devoted mainly to the intensive production for exterior markets, e.g. coffee, cotton, cocoa, cattle.

<sup>122</sup> My translation from the original text: “A família, não o indivíduo, nem tampouco o Estado, nem nenhuma companhia de comércio, é desde o século XVI o grande fator colonizador no Brasil, a unidade produtiva, o capital que desbrava o solo, instala as fazendas, compra escravos, bois, ferramentas, a força social que se desdobra em política, constituindo-se na aristocracia colonial mais poderosa da América.” G. Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* [Masters and slaves], Rio de Janeiro, 31<sup>st</sup> edition, 1996, pp.18-19.

<sup>123</sup> The British government slavery in the Cape Colony in 1834. The Boer Republics of Natal never traded in slaves officially, although various forms of indentured labour persisted. See, S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002.

above women. Pamela Scully, analyzing rural Western Cape society under British rule during the first half of the nineteenth century, perceived this hierarchy in gender and class relations. There, male slaves stayed at the bottom of the social pyramid, with no legal authority over their wives, labor or children – given that the law did not recognize their paternity rights. Yet, the law recognized the rights of enslaved or freed women over their children. In cases of a child being born from a free mother, she or he could inherit the mother's social status.<sup>124</sup>

By making use of new sources – such as journals, wills, personal letters or statements – to understand colonial societies in Brazil and South Africa, other researchers have shown that even when patriarchy was a predominant form of rule, women could make their way. Widows of powerful patriarchs could inherit their husband's authority not only above family and household, but also over entire regions. Also, being free of marital and paternal control, they brought up children by themselves, sought legal rights and imposed their authority over family members and small communities.

Analyzing South African social history, H. Giliomee refers to the power of the Afrikaner women since colonial times, while Eskia Mphahlele and Sol Plaatje write about non-white women as head of families in early twenty-century South Africa.<sup>125</sup> However, when Giliomee compares the status of women in Spanish and Portuguese America and South Africa, he was apparently unaware of more recent findings, showing that beyond written family laws, the daily life of Latin American women and their struggle to survive, allowed them to exercise a great deal of power, even when it went against official and moral rules.<sup>126</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>124</sup> P. Scully, *Liberating family? Gender and British slave emancipation in the rural Western Cape, South Africa, 1823-1853*, Portsmouth, 1997.

<sup>125</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003, p. 37; E. Mphahlele, *Es'kia – education, African humanism & culture, social consciousness, literary appreciation*, Cape Town, 2002; S. Plaatje, *Native life in South Africa before and since the European war and the Boer rebellion*, Johannesburg, 1982.

<sup>126</sup> E. P. Stevens, "Marianismo: the other face of machismo", in A. Pescatello (ed.), *Female and male in Latin America – Essays*, Pittsburg, 1973, pp. 89-101; E. Rocha, *Entre a pena e a espada – a trajetória de Leolinda Dalto: 1859-1935* (Between the feather and

the relation between patriarchy and gender roles worldwide are still an issue that demands further analysis that would lead to a revision of traditional sources and the inclusion of new ones to promote better understanding of this very complex issue.

A kind of matriarchy, where *mothers* commanded a strong position over extended families, was found in upper and middle class families, but also among peasants and poor urban families. These women became pillars for communities whose adult men were away seeking jobs and fortune. They managed to keep families together, helping and being helped by an extensive network built around their communities, and places of work. Some of them were single mothers who supported their families as domestic workers, street peddlers, farmers, washwomen, or working in other under-skilled professions.<sup>127</sup>

Politically, in Brazil and in South Africa, patriarchy prevailed by extending its culture to the whole system, affecting laws and bureaucracy. Religion was, in both countries, the right hand of this system, managing to keep and justify the *status quo* for centuries.

Patriarchy is particularly present in the northeast of Brazil, where for three centuries the sugarcane industry made fortunes for a small oligarchy and brought misery to millions of enslaved people and free poor laborers. Bahia, the richest among the nine states of this region, has the largest black population in Brazil. This racial group comprised the majority of laborers in the sugarcane plantations since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in

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the sword – the trajectory of Leolinda Daltro: 1959-1935), Salvador, 2005; M. K. Falci, “Mulheres do sertão nordestino” [The women from northeast hinterlands], in M. Del Priore (org.), *História das Mulheres no Brasil* [Women’s history in Brazil], São Paulo, 1997, pp. 241-277; V. Stolker, *Cafecultura: homens, mulheres e capital: 1850-1980* [Coffee agriculture: men, women and capital], São Paulo, 1986.

<sup>127</sup> T. Le Roux, ‘Where are the men? Black women’s views on male participation in family life’ in S. C. Ziehl (ed.), *Multi –cultural diversity and families*. Grahamstown, 1998, pp. 95-139; R. Smith, “The impact of labor migration on African families in South Africa: yesterday and today”. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 32(4), 2001, pp. 533-546. C. E. L. Soares, “Comércio, nação e gênero: as negras minas quitandeiras no Rio de Janeiro, 1835-1900” [Commerce, nation and gender: black women “Mina” street sellers in Rio de Janeiro 1835-1900]. *Revista do Mestrado de História* 4(1), pp. 55-78; J. Bacelar, *A hierarquia das raças: brancos e negros em Salvador* [The hierarchy of races: whites and blacks in Salvador], Rio de Janeiro, 2001.

the diamonds mines, discovered and exploited during the nineteenth century, as well as in the cocoa farms, which started to develop around the 1890s. Cattle husbandry and subsistence crops were developed in small, medium or large properties since the beginning of colonization, in order to support other activities.

Beyond the coast, a big part of the northeast is subject to seasonal droughts that sometimes leave farmers with no option but to leave and seek for a better place to live. Economic losses are great and people and livestock die from thirst and starvation. The droughts create cycles of impoverishment that help to increase the size of the *latifundios*<sup>128</sup>, as rich landowners can expand their property by buying small farms (or slaves, before abolition) for a very low price or even by taking it as payment for loans.

Since colonial times, waves of free laborers and poor peasants have left their homeland looking for jobs in the cities, or seeking fortune in the mines or any other “new thing” that would enable them to survive.<sup>129</sup> Sometimes families, sometimes only men, would leave the northeast for the Amazon region, hoping to engage as “rubber soldiers”, the name given to those who work collecting sap from trees and converting it into rubber. Other times they headed for the gold mines of the center-west, but most often they went southeast to the big cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, or to the coffee farms in São Paulo state.<sup>130</sup>

This region includes two very distinct environments: the coast, with a tropical forest gradually giving way to sugar plantations, which benefits from regular rains and fertile soil; and the country side, with its

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<sup>128</sup> Latifundio is a large extension of land that belongs to a family or company, which produces mainly for export and allows subsistence agriculture to support the labor force. It can reach more than 300 square kilometers in size.

<sup>129</sup> That could be new farms of cattle husbandry opening the centre-west region, road construction, or the construction of Brasília, capital of Brazil, which took thousands of north-eastern workers between 1955 and 1960.

<sup>130</sup> The droughts cycles in the Brazilian northeast have been the target of government policies and intellectual debate for more than a century. Even nowadays the tragedy of loss and pain repeats its cycle and the exodus towards other parts of Brazil is still happening, along with its social costs.

semi-desert climate and seasonal droughts. The *latifundio* is the predominant form of rural property, in the hands of a conservative white elite that has political and economic control over an extremely poor population and a middle class composed of skilled workers, civil servants and traders (among them poor white, mixed blood and black families)<sup>131</sup>. The social and economic gap between classes in the Brazilian sugarcane region is acknowledged as the widest in the country for centuries<sup>132</sup>. The northeast is also the cradle of colonization in Brazil. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and seventeenth century, it was the wealthiest region, with great political influence, maintained until recently, despite the economic decline.

Between slaves and masters, and among them, was a very complex social fabric. It included laborers, peasants, urban lower and middle classes composed of black people, individuals of mixed-descent from native, black and white ancestry, urban slaves and many other distinct combinations of skin color, ancestors and level of dependence on masters and bosses. This influenced the social relations and racial concepts (and prejudices) in the northeast and in the entire country.

In 1822, Brazil proclaimed itself independent from Portugal, with little resistance from colonial forces. However, the new state – now transformed into an empire was kept in Portuguese hands, as the government control was given to Dom Pedro de Alcântara (who became Dom Pedro I of Brazil), son of Dom João IV of Portugal and first in line of succession to the crown. A few years later, when it was time for Pedro de Alcântara to reclaim his crown in Portugal, he renounced the Brazilian crown in favor of his son, who became Dom Pedro II, assuming the throne in 1840.

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<sup>131</sup> The economic and social diversity in the Brazilian Northeast is analyzed by S. Schwartz, *Segredos internos: engenhos e escravos* [Internal secrets: sugar mill and slaves], São Paulo, 1988; and *Slaves, peasants, and rebels: reconsidering Brazilian slavery*, Illinois, 1992.

<sup>132</sup> M. K. Falci, *Os escravos do sertão* [Slaves from hinterlands], Teresina, 1995; J. M. Passos Subrinho, *Reordenamento do trabalho – trabalho escravo e trabalho livre no nordeste açucareiro, Sergipe, 1850-1930* [The re-organisation of labor – slave labor and free labor in the sugar producing Northeast, Sergipe, 1850-1930], Aracaju, 2000; V. L. A. Ferlini, *Terra trabalho e poder* [Land, labor and power], São Paulo, 1988.

In this manner, the conservative oligarchy managed to delay liberal reforms, such as the establishment of a constitution and to control the pressure for a parliamentary regime that could ignite political ambitions among lower classes. Despite what had already occurred in Western Europe and the former colonies in the American continent, where the bourgeoisie conquered a portion of the political power, the Brazilian oligarchy managed to keep the former Portuguese colony in America united. Centralization was key to avoiding social and economic change.

The political and social process of becoming an independent country happened in a different way for South Africa. In fact, one cannot talk about South Africa as a country until 1910, when the unification was finally complete, as the independent republics of Transvaal, the Orange Free State, agreed to join the Union of South Africa, together with Cape Colony and Natal.

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the political situation was very unstable in that region. The control over Cape colony was transferred from the Dutch to Britain in 1795, while Natal was annexed by British forces in 1838.<sup>133</sup> Traditional African kingdoms such as the Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele were holding on to their possessions and fighting the European invasion, which was increasing since the Boer trek and the growth of British ambitions over that territory.

Groups of Dutch descendants, known as Boers or Afrikaners managed to form five independent republics, described by M. S. Geen:

The Sand River and Bloemfontein Conventions of 1852 and 1854, by which Britain recognized the independence respectively of the Transvaal and Orange-Vaal territory, meant that the spirit of the trek had won, and that for a long time to come South Africa was to be a land divided. At one time, in 1857, there were three British colonies – the Cape, Natal and Kaffraria – and as many as five republics with their centers of government at Bloemfontein, Pretoria, Utrecht, Lydenburg and in the Zoutpansberg.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners, a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003.

<sup>134</sup> M. S. Geen, *The making of South Africa*. Cape Town, 1958, p.102-3.

The communities formed by the trekkers were built upon a strong patriarchal base. The regional political leaders were elders acknowledged by the heads of families. They held political and economic power with crucial support of religious authorities.

Geographically and economically, like Brazil, South Africa also has big internal differences, with arid and semi-arid areas, where agricultural production depends upon irrigation projects, and which demands substantial financial investment to be profitable. And like Brazil, the best areas for agriculture were often bought or taken from African farmers by the wealthy and politically powerful white men, with government support.

This left traditional African communities with scarce means to support themselves, and created a situation in which people left their lands and traditional villages for employment on white people's farms or in the cities. On the other hand, caught between these two extremes, less wealthy and powerful settlers had no other alternative than to go deeper into the countryside looking for new areas to cultivate and fight indigenous population for land and water control.<sup>135</sup>

Economic development in colonial South Africa also did not occur in the same way as it did in Brazil. The slower colonization and later intensive agriculture, changed radically with the economic boom caused by the discovery of diamonds (1869) and gold (1886) during the last quarter of nineteenth century.

Newcomers from Europe arrived seeking their fortunes in mining or just trying to escape from post-war crises in Europe. Immigration with its subsequent development and urbanization around the mining region promoted an increase of demand for food and labor (for the farms and mines). As a result, agriculture, cattle breeding, trade and general services were also developed, providing products for the new cities.

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<sup>135</sup> P. Delius, *The land belongs to us. The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the nineteenth-century Transvaal*, Johannesburg, 1983; J. S. Bergh, "We must never forget where we come from", in: *History in Africa* 32, 2005.

Urbanization and discovery of gold and diamonds increased the need for cheap labor, in the mines and farms. Both authorities, British and Boer, were very keen to take new measures to supply labor and profitability to local investors.

One of the most important examples of government actions taken during the period is the Native Taxes and Vagrancy Law of 1870, signed by the government of Pretoria (Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, also known as the Transvaal Republic). This law imposed taxes upon indigenous and colored people and fought vagrancy, which led native males to seek regular jobs among colonizers in order to pay taxes and to prevent repression for vagrancy.<sup>136</sup> The law also regularized the importation of workers from neighboring countries for the mining industry.

Since 1840, in the warmer northeast area, around Kwazulu-Natal, white settlers began to develop agriculture, including sugarcane and other products. The colonization was increased after the *trek Boers*<sup>137</sup> had defeated Zulu warriors and established their control over the land. This is the same region referred to by Paton in *Cry, the beloved country*.

Rural properties in South Africa never reached the size of the plantations in Brazil, therefore, they never needed a large number of slaves or employees. The Brazilian *engenhos* and *fazendas*, often employed more than a hundred laborers. During slavery, middle-sized properties had around thirty slaves, while small units would have ten, and even poor peasants would have at least two slaves. For a long time, physical labor and poverty in Brazil were associated with slavery and black skin<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> J. S. Bergh and F. Morton: “*To make them serve...*” *The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour*, Pretoria, 2003.

<sup>137</sup> The *trekboers*, as they were called, were burghers who walked into the hinter lands, starting their journey from Cape Colony and other regions controlled by the British to non-colonized areas, during the last quarter of the eighteenth-century, until around the 1870s, after the defeat of the Sotho kingdom.

<sup>138</sup> See H. T. Gomes, *As marcas da escravidão* [The scars of slavery], Rio de Janeiro, 1994.

Slavery was abolished in the British colonies in 1834, although other forms of exploitation and control of the black population and its work persisted until the twentieth century<sup>139</sup>, among the Boers, and British farmers. Social composition in South Africa became more complex as colonial authorities introduced laborers from Indonesia, China and India. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, as the British government assumed distinct policies towards race in the Cape Province and Natal, in contrast to the Orange Free State for example, the social fabric showed visible changes.<sup>140</sup>

Some authors argued slavery in Brazil was *mild*, in comparison with other countries. Similarly, historians have argued slavery was not as harsh in Cape Colony as it was elsewhere in the world. However, in both countries living conditions of black laborers were very difficult and the relations between workers and masters were often violent. Legislation against abusive treatment existed but, as Robert Conrad denounced, “*legislation was more a matter of theory than practice*”<sup>141</sup>.

Economic differences in South Africa link labor exploitation to land control. The creation of *Bantu* reserves, was part of a policy of separate development and racial separation, which reserved about 13 per cent of the land for black people, divided by nationalities. The rest of the land was occupied by the white population, which used black labor to develop and maintain their farms.

Similarly, in 1850 the Brazilian government approved the ‘*Lei de Terras*’ (Land Act), which established that the ownership of land in Brazil could only be legal through purchase. The law ruled that all available existing land could be used or occupied only after being bought from the

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<sup>139</sup> K. Atkin. *The moon is dead! Give us more money! The cultural origins of an African work ethic. Natal, South Africa: 1843-1900*, Portsmouth/London, 1993.

<sup>140</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1653-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002.

<sup>141</sup> R. Conrad, “Nineteenth-century Brazilian slavery”, in Toplin (ed.), *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, Connecticut, 1974, p. 146.

government, after which one had to pay annual taxes and provide documentation.

It was an answer to the problem that arose with the interruption of slave trafficking from Africa to Brazil. The assumption that slave labor was going to end encouraged landowners to pressure the government in order to guarantee cheap labor for rural properties. After the “Lei de Terras”, free peasants and indigenous groups that occupied small parcels of land were indeed in danger of having their holdings confiscated by the government or taken by wealthy and powerful farmers or politicians. Without land of their own to work, those people were pushed to become tenants or peasants in big farms.<sup>142</sup> When republicans overthrew the imperial government, a new constitution included a law against vagrancy that complemented the *Lei de Terras* and imposed severe penalties on people without regular jobs.<sup>143</sup>

This law can be compared to the Natives’ Land Act of 1913, which forced natives and colored people to work for white investors, businessmen, farmers and government, due to the lack of land available and the prohibition for black people to acquire or rent properties outside the existing reservations. According to Charles H. Feinstein, the “successful attainment of the main objectives of the strategy of conquest and dispossession was embodied in the notorious Natives’ Land Act of 1913.”<sup>144</sup>

The black and colored population has been the main labor force in South Africa, given their lack of economic power. They are still alienated from ownership, a consequence of colonial and segregation policies that subjected them to very low wages and no political rights until the last

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<sup>142</sup> J. S. Martins, *Expropriação e violência – a questão política no campo* [Expropriation and violence: the political question in rural áreas], Petrópolis, 1990; and *O cativo da terra* [Capturing land], São Paulo, 1993.

<sup>143</sup> C. A. Marinho, *Onda negra, medo branco; o negro no imaginário das elites, século XIX* [Black wave, white fear: black people in the elite’s imagination, XIX century], Rio de Janeiro, 1987.

<sup>144</sup> C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa. Conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005, p. 43.

decade of the twentieth century. In Brazil, the absence of such laws did not guarantee a better situation for the black and colored population, who are the majority among the poor.

After the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902), many white families were impoverished – some having lost their property – with no other options but to seek employment with other white farmers, in the mines or in the cities. The South African government and civil society were concerned that those families living in poverty and sharing jobs and neighborhoods with colored people would become more vulnerable to interracial marriages and relationships, increasing the mixed-race population. For the white middle class and the elite, such a result was a dishonor to the Afrikaner that represented a menace to the entire *volk*. The fear of miscegenation was also the fear of the disappearance of the Afrikaner culture and lifestyle.

The period of 1890-1950 was crucial for both countries, which were in the process of defining themselves as nations, building the bases for a “new society”. During this period, in Brazil as well as in South Africa, the state was characterized by its authoritarian performance, intervening in civil society and with a strong concern about “race” and development.<sup>145</sup> This is also the period in which Paton, Abrahams, Lima Barreto and Amado started to write their novels.

In 1889, the Brazilian emperor - Dom Pedro II - was an old man without a son that could succeed him in government. The ideas about republican government, modernization, civilization and democracy had spread among the middle class and bourgeoisie (the commercial and industrial elite). They rapidly created followers among students, intellectuals and liberal politicians, also reaching the military. The military was dissatisfied with the government after the exhausting war against Paraguay (1864-1870), which claimed Brazilian lives and money and

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<sup>145</sup> F. R. Ribeiro, “Apartheid e democracia racial: raça e nação no Brasil e na África do Sul” [Apartheid and racial democracy: race and nation in Brazil and South Africa]. *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 24, 1993, pp. 95-120; and “Classifying ‘race’ and ‘whitening’ the nation: suggestions towards comparative reading of South África and Brazil”. *Safundi* 5(3), July 2003, Cape Town, pp. 1-14.

increased popular criticism against the government. The strongest argument about the war was that Brazil gave up its autonomy and fought under British pressure, jeopardizing the national economy, with no benefits.<sup>146</sup>

The abolition of slavery, added to increasing urbanization, and development of a public education system, are also factors that led to the *coup d'état* that deposed the monarchy and introduced the republican regime in Brazil, in 1889.

Having captured power, republicans started their own project of modernization. However it did not bring any significant social or economic change for the lower classes. Slavery had already been abolished at the same time that industrialization and demand for services were growing in Southeastern states.

Brazilian urbanization and industrialization did not absorb the increasing number of ex-slaves that were migrating to big cities at this point. Investors did not consider black people skilled enough to work in factories or attractive enough to work for classy magazines and shops. Scientists and journalists published many articles and stories to reinforce this idea, while the emerging middle class and elite would always prefer to have an European immigrant as their worker rather than a black man or woman.

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<sup>146</sup> The war reunited Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay against Paraguay, under the auspices of Britain government, which had economic interests in Southern South America. The war brought debts to Brazilian government, which had no navy or an adequate army previously. Slaves were freed in order to participate on the war and the abolitionist movement grew all over the country with the end of the war, when soldiers refused to obey command to chase runaway slaves, arguing that this was dishonour. Women from different races and parts of the country supported soldiers during the war, some of them following them to the battlefields. A very interesting comparative history research could compare social history of this war with the Anglo-Boer war in South Africa. For more information see L. M. Schwarckz, *As barbas do imperador. D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos* [The emperor's beard. Dom Pedro II, a monarch in the tropics], São Paulo, 1998; R. Salles, *Guerra do Paraguai – escravidão e cidadania na formação do exército* [The Paraguayan war – slavery and citizenship in the formation of Brazilian army], Rio de Janeiro, 1990.

Oligarchic groups from distinct regions still held most of the political power. The disadvantage faced by black and *mestizos* in southeastern urban areas contributed to exploitation in the northeast. There, as in most of the Brazilian rural areas, work conditions had not improved much, especially for former slaves, as shown by Jorge Amado in his novels.

The nineteenth-century in South Africa was a century of wars. White settlers and the government, English and Dutch-Afrikaans speakers regularly fought against native African kingdoms for land. Yet, at this time, another source of conflict was growing between the English and Afrikaners. The former subjects of the extinct Dutch colonial empire resented British domination and imposition over their independent society. This situation became unbearable after the discovery of gold and diamonds, which ignited British ambitions to control South African riches.

By 1880, the British were attempting to take control over all the Afrikaner states, which felt their culture, economy and political rights were being jeopardized. Discontent arose against British interference in labor relations between Afrikaners and Africans/colored people. Afrikaners were also upset with the increasing number of European immigrant workers, attracted by diamond and gold mines, who were taking the best jobs. The inflation and increase of prices that followed the mining boom also affected middle and lower classes. Farmers were already victimized by the *rinder-pest*, a cattle disease that swept the country in 1896-1897. The resultant loss of farms and livestock increased the anti-British feelings, which grew into rebellion<sup>147</sup>.

Violent clashes between the Boers and the British in 1880-1881, ended with an agreement between the two sides. By the end of 1899, the Anglo-Boer (or South African) war started, with resistance of Afrikaners to the British attack on the Zuid-Afrikaan Republiek (the Transvaal region), and the Republic of Orange State.

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<sup>147</sup> C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa. Conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005.

It was a war of republicans against imperialists, although the ideologies which arose during the French Revolution or in the American colonies war for independence, were not present in the South African claims of freedom and independence. It was not about individual freedom or rights. Afrikaners were deeply devoted to serve their republic and their Volk, and authoritarian leaders were part of their culture.

Racial presumptions of superiority were present in the South African war. Black and colored people were to be used in the building of a strong republic, as a work force, with no political rights at all. Historians have remarked the racial obsession of Alfred Milner, the British high commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Transvaal and the Orange River colonies. He strongly believed that English people belonged to a superior race, and that this justified Britain's imperial policy towards Africa, Asia and Middle East. In South Africa, Afrikaners came in "second place" on this racial hierarchy. In practical terms, both "races", Afrikaner and English were, according to his ideas, entitled to use African and colored labor and territory.<sup>148</sup>

The war ruined the economy, especially since British forces had destroyed and burned farms, as pointed out by Charles Feinstein:

Rural poverty was then greatly exacerbated by the South African War of 1899-1902, when Britain decided that extensive destruction of Boer farms was necessary in order to prevent the Afrikaner commandos living off the land while waging their guerrilla campaigns against the British army.<sup>149</sup>

Among the deaths after three years of fighting, there were not only soldiers, but also thousands of civilians. Afrikaner women and children, as well as captured soldiers, were held in British concentration camps. There they died from starvation and diseases; hazards that also victimized white and black people outside concentration camps.

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<sup>148</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners, a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003; L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, New Haven/London, 2001.

<sup>149</sup> C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa. Conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005, p. 84.

Africans and coloreds were extensively used on both sides, as menial workers or soldiers. They also lost their lives on the battlefields and in concentration camps, and they also suffered under the British scorched earth policy. When cooperative African groups were allowed by British officials to occupy Boer farms taken in war, the Africans saw this as an opportunity to recover their traditional lands, which however, did not last long. With the end of the war, African farmers were removed again to give space to white farmers.

Under Milner's government, the situation of Africans worsened, as much on the farms in the former republics as in the urban environment and in the mining industry. Pass laws were expanded, former servants were given back to their masters and the wages of mine workers were lower than ever. If the situation of white people was difficult after the war, for Africans – who also were victimized by crop destruction – it brought more unemployment and starvation.<sup>150</sup>

The policies of exclusion and segregation were improved and expanded during the first two decades of the twentieth century, in part because of Afrikaner demand for labor and land, in part to attend to the controlling needs of the mining industry and avoid African competition for skilled jobs and better wages.<sup>151</sup> On the other hand, all those actions to reserve power for white people in South Africa were reinforced by a scientific and political discourse, influenced by foreign ideas about race and development.

In Brazil as well, politicians, scientists and intellectuals were deeply influenced by European racial theories. As they designed the new image of the Brazilian nation, they were giving birth to a racial policy that could, at the same time, unify the country and support economic progress and modernization.

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<sup>150</sup> L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, New Haven/London, 2001.

<sup>151</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002

The unification of nation was also a strong component of British policy for South Africa, being the reason for political agreements that conciliated Afrikaner interests and participation in the new government.

The construction of a “new nation”, or the “re-invention of the nation”, was also an important part of the political program of South Africa and Brazil during the first decades of the twentieth century. South Africa reconstruction after the South African war and the consolidation of the Nationalist Party during the 40s, culminating with the Party’s attainment of political power in 1948, are developments that occur in an atmosphere that is dominated by notions of modernity, progress and development. In Brazil, the process started earlier and gained force after 1930s, when Getúlio Vargas became the president, governing the country for fifteen years.

According to Maria Luiza Carneiro, Vargas’ campaign to “reconstruct the nation” emphasized the necessity of an authoritarian government that could conduct the country to modernity. Intellectuals would explain that because Brazil was dominated by mestizos, democracy was too dangerous. The nation needed somebody (white) to guide a nation of coloured and black people that could not act and decide for themselves, as part of their genetic inheritance.<sup>152</sup>

Racism had an important role in the ideology of nation building, in a fusion of religiosity (Catholic Church), anti-communism, anti-semitism, and social control that applied ideas imported from European Fascism. In 1937, a coup of state closed the congress and cancelled the new approved constitution (1934), with the argument of a “communist menace”, starting a dictatorship which ended in 1945.

The victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948 was also marked by the nation’s fear of liberal and communist ideas, that could bring the country

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<sup>152</sup> M. L. T. Carneiro, “Sob a máscara do nacionalismo. Autoritarismo e anti-semitismo na era Vargas (1930-1945)” [Beneath the mask of authoritarianism Authoritarianism and anti-semitism in Vargas age (1930-1945)], *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 1(1), pp. 23-40.

to disorder. As pointed by Rosa Ribeiro, similar arguments in support of a new and modern nation and against the anarchy, supported by religious speeches and strong oligarchies guided the beginning of the apartheid regime in South Africa.<sup>153</sup>

As these countries pursued progress, modernisation and economic development, they also presented their own projects of social development. South African's segregation was not too far from Brazilian integration, for both intended to keep the *status quo* of the elite, exploiting the lower classes.

Because the relationship between policies and reality cannot be judged by reading laws and other official texts, this research project has chosen literature to analyse the roles that projects for development in Brazil and South Africa reserved for Africans and African descendants. From this point on, history is interwoven with literature, reality with fiction, considering actors and the public, scenario and plot, as a way to understand the daily life of ordinary people in the process of nation building and the composition of Brazilian and South African societies.

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<sup>153</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, "A construção da nação (pós) colonial: África do Sul e Suriname, 1933-1948" [The construction of the (post) colonial nation: South Africa and Suriname, 1933-1948], *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 3, 2002, Rio de Janeiro, pp. 483-512.

## Chapter III

### BLACK LIVES IN WHITE NOVELS

The influence of racism in the novels written in South Africa and Brazil can be observed since the first colonial writings, basically from missionaries and administrative officials, continuing during the nineteenth century when both societies witnessed a growing movement in their literature. Most authors during this period were members of the ruling classes. The portrayal of the slave, the savage, “the other” came as part of the literature that tried to depict their own societies and the social fabric. As a result, Africans and their descendants were characterized as servants, slaves or criminals in opposition to European descended characters.<sup>154</sup>

The number of black and colored authors increased in Africa and America, at the beginning of the twentieth century and under strong influence of new ideologies such as communism, realism, and humanism. At this time, white authors were also showing different viewpoints of racism and racialism. Liberal and radical white authors, engaged in anti-racist ideologies, and conquered an important share of the publishing market. In addition, new ideas, approaches and subjects started to become more popular, especially in novels.

Yet, the relationship between indigenous, black or colored authors and the colonial or imperialist societies (even after independence) oscillated between seduction, unconditional surrender, conflict, resistance and synthesis. Acknowledging the importance of written speech and western style in communication, indigenous and colonized authors abandoned the traditional oral traditions of their societies for a place

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<sup>154</sup> For more analyses on colonial literature and the representation of indigenous and slaves, see E. Said, 1995, op.cit.; J. M. França, “O negro no romance oitocentista”[The black man in the eighteenth’s novels], *Estudos-Asiáticos* 30, 1996, pp. 97-112; D. La Capra (ed.) *The bounds of race. Perspectives on hegemony and resistance*. London, 1991; and H. L. Gates Jr. (ed.), “Race”, *writing and difference*, Chicago, 1986.

among local respectable intellectuals. Many of these stories can be seen as justifications and defense of the authors' social and/or racial group, others are instruments to denounce injustice, exploitation and inequality. This movement popularized autobiographical novels.

Houston A. Baker Jr. is among the authors who compare the relationship between a colonized literary author and the colonial/imperialist society. As done by others, the author uses the relationship portrayed by Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, between *Prospero*, the colonizer who transforms the environment, and *Caliban*, the colonized who rebels against the invader.

Language, writing, ideology, race and a host of other Western signs are conveniently given resonance and force (in the office of a definition of *civilization*) by the simple iconography of the conquering magician *Prospero* and his enslaved and "deformed" island subject *Caliban*.<sup>155</sup>

To this comparison, one could add *Ariel*, as the author who tries to fulfill all of his master's demands and necessities and still waits for his personal freedom. *Caliban* wants his original power back, and also *Prospero's* powers. He wants to govern his own island, which he does not forget was taken by a foreigner.

The relationship between colonized author and hegemonic state develops as an eternal conflict. However, *Caliban*, the colonized author has no alternative than to acknowledge the master's superiority and power. Nevertheless, he gives in, learning the language with grace and style, to use the written word as an instrument of resistance.

Liberal authors, though engaged in an anti-colonialist, racist or imperialist struggle, are still infused by colonial culture. Their education, gave them a superior status and a very distinct view of the problem. Basically, they use the knowledge acquired through the hegemonic system to fight against it.

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<sup>155</sup> H. A. Baker Jr., "Caliban's triple play", in H. L. Gates Jr. (ed.), *"Race", writing and difference*. Chicago, 1986, p. 389.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze how racism affected the lives of these black and white authors and how they reflected their political views through their novels. It also explores the authors' expectations about their countries' future and respective solutions to the problem of racial discrimination and exclusion.

### 3.1 – Color definitions and racial classifications

The dichotomy of colonial literature vs. indigenous literature, as proposed by Said<sup>156</sup> is not appropriate to analyze these novels, given that the selected authors were born in colonized countries, but one cannot say that they belong to an indigenous culture. Abrahams and Barreto are colored, born and educated in colonized societies. As children of mixed marriages, their own existence is a product of their countries' colonization. Jorge Amado, as well, is not a “pure white”, even though he is considered as such and comes from a well to do family. Paton is from a British family, but born in South Africa. This is what gives him a distinct perspective in comparison to British authors.

It is important to emphasize again that this dissertation is using “black”, “white” and “colored”, in the same way that Brazilian and South African societies classify their population. Definitions of racial groups, as done in South African, and skin color, as done in Brazil, are mutable, subjective and depend on a variety of factors. These factors differ according to the perspective of the person in charge of such classifications. It evolves from feelings to the social status of individuals in question.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, São Paulo, 1995.

<sup>157</sup> Many authors have discussed this complexity in Brazil and South Africa, among them see: Z. Erasmus (ed.). *Coloured by history, shaped by place. New perspectives on coloured identities in Cape Town*. Cape Town, 2001; T. E. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1974; R. B. Toplin (ed.), *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, Connecticut, 1974; J. Bacelar, *A hierarquia das raças: brancos e negros em Salvador*. (The hierarchy of races: whites and blacks in Salvador), Rio de Janeiro, 2001.

Therefore, Brazilians see Jorge Amado as a white author, independently of his racial background, due to his fair skin, high level of education, and because of his family's economic, social and political status<sup>158</sup>. Lima Barreto was a mulatto, belonging to a family that in South Africa could be classified as colored, since both his parents were also mulattoes. Although in many cases a person could “pass” as white, this author kept the stigma of being *mestizo*, mainly because he came from a poor family.

Peter Abrahams was officially classified as colored in South Africa. His mother was also colored and his father an Ethiopian immigrant. When Abrahams moved to Jamaica, people there called him “*buckraman*” in reference to his pale skin<sup>159</sup>. Alan Paton was a son of British parents born in Kwazulu-Natal in 1903, during the period of British control. He is definitively white, no matter how sympathetic he could be to African and colored problems.

Definitions of race or racial groups are always subjective<sup>160</sup>. And the fact that this study separates the analyzed authors by racial group, must be understood as a necessary tool to analyze their place in societies that classify individuals in these terms, imposing limits to their actions, relationships and political, economic and social status. These limitations have influenced their political choices and literary works. When Todorov defined racism, he deliberately avoided the word “race”, given that in scientific terms the human being cannot be divided into distinct races.

‘Racism’ is the name given to a type of behavior, which consists in the display of contempt or aggressiveness toward

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<sup>158</sup> Amado's grandfather was a cocoa planter in the Bahia state and his uncle a congressman.

<sup>159</sup> C. Heywood, *A history of South African literature*, Cambridge, 2004.

<sup>160</sup> E. McCaughan, “Race, ethnicity, nation, and class within theories of structure and agency”, *Social Justice* 20(1-2), 1993, pp. 82-105, online version, [www.questia.com](http://www.questia.com) retrieved at 2007-05-24.

other people on account on physical differences (other than those of sex) between them and oneself.<sup>161</sup>

This kind of discrimination is justified by attributing positive or negative values to physical characteristics, sometimes in addition to specific behavior and culture. So, racism though real, is associated with non-specified feelings. It is a very subjective concept that can manifest in different forms.

Todorov's definition can be combined to Gay's idea of the "convenient other", in which, for being "the other", one must be different, wrong, inferior and so on<sup>162</sup>. The negative qualities of "the other" can vary according to the circumstances and are influenced by political and economic exploitation.

Based on this, one cannot say that Brazilian and South African racial problems became more pronounced during the last quarter of the nineteenth and towards the middle of the twentieth centuries. The disparities of colonization – allied to the land and labor exploitation – had been marked by the assumption of the Europeans' (and their descendants') superiority over the natives and slaves (and their descendants), within a complex graduation of values regarding different patterns of miscegenation and ascendance.

In this period, the Brazilian and South African elite and government had to define the social policies considered vital for their economic development allied to the desirable image of a modern state that both countries wished to project abroad.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> T. Todorov, "'Race', writing, and culture", in H. L. Gates Jr. (ed.) *"Race", writing and difference*, Chicago, 1986, p. 370.

<sup>162</sup> P. Gay, *The cultivation of hatred. The bourgeois experience: Victoria to Freud*, São Paulo, 1993.

<sup>163</sup> See: S. Terreblanche, *A History of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; and L. M. Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas e questão racial no Brasil, 1870-1930* [The spectacle of races: scientists and the racial question in Brazil, 1870-1930], São Paulo, 1993.

A study of the novels written in both countries presents the possibility of analysis of the theme of racial exclusion as part of the social, economic and political problems. Politically engaged authors such as Jorge Amado, Lima Barreto, Peter Abrams and Alan Paton, witnessed and denounced these problems through their writings, framed by their distinct perspectives.

### **3.2 – Political discourse in fictional works**

These black and white authors had different political perspectives, such as communism (Amado and Abrahams), liberalism (Paton) and an independent position (Lima Barreto), which influenced their discussion of main national problems, such as poverty and racial exclusion, as being connected to other problems, such as land and labor exploitation. They also depicted social exclusion and racism and their influence on love and friendship relations.

The levels of involvement are different among these authors. The white authors (Amado and Paton), coming from educated middle class families, describe in their novels situations that they experienced as observers. On the other hand, the black authors (Barreto and Abrahams), were themselves brought up in the middle of poverty, exclusion and discrimination. These issues were part of their daily battles, problems that marked their destiny as persons and as writers.

While Paton and Amado have a clear purpose in denouncing the politics of economic exploitation as the main reason for social and racial exclusion, Barreto and Abrahams take the opposite path denouncing racism as the root of economic, social and political exclusion in Brazil and South Africa. Their novels bring the problem of exclusion to the lives of different characters, in daily situations, exploring also their hopes and anxieties about their future, as these authors present alternatives to answer the main problems they see in their societies.

As proposed by Coetzee<sup>164</sup>, the problem of a white author depicting black people's lives involves ignorance, stereotypes and romanticism, since it will always be an interpretation about "the other" as a character, without having a deep knowledge about his/her language, culture and life.

Writing during the apartheid era, Nadine Gordimer accepts the fact that a white author in South Africa represents his/her own racial group and cannot be alienated from his/her privileged status in that society. However, she argues that the system of segregation imposed in the country prevented a white person from getting to know and understand more about black lives<sup>165</sup>. On the other hand, the opposite is not true, since black people have been inserted into white people's lives (and intimacy) since the beginning of colonization, which has created in black authors a very strong sense about white people's mindset.

Fernando Rosa Ribeiro has pointed out that in Brazil, although most of the literary production has been written by white authors, the problem of "white writing" was never discussed or even considered. In his view it may be explained by the fact that Brazilians were never officially declared white as an opposition to black; also, Brazilian intellectuals have no barriers to approaching to black people. But, most importantly, Brazilians are not used to thinking and acting in terms of this dichotomy.<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, it is important to add that both interpretation and denunciation are aimed at the white public, or a very small black/colored elite, given the high rates of illiteracy among black and mixed people in South Africa and Brazil during this period.

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<sup>164</sup> J. M. Coetzee, *White writing . On the culture of letters in South Africa*, Johannesburg, 1988.

<sup>165</sup> N. Gordimer, *The essential gesture. Writings, politics and places*. Johannesburg/Cape Town, 1988; S. Pearsall, "Where the banalities are enacted. The everyday in Gordimer's novels". *Research in African Literatures* 31(1), 2000, pp.95-118.

<sup>166</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, "Classifying 'race' and 'whitening' nations. Suggestions towards comparative reading of South Africa and Brazil", *Safundi* 5(3), 2004, pp. 1-14.

Statistics from the Brazilian government show that in 1890, the rate of illiteracy was 82, 3, falling to 71, 2 in 1920 and 57, 2 in 1950.<sup>167</sup> Although the census does not include numbers by racial background, the predominance of black and colored people among the poorest population and the illiterate are still present in recent data<sup>168</sup>.

The latest reports from the Brazilian Institute of Statistics revealed that 39, 8 per cent of black and colored (pardos and mulattoes) population are currently employed, in contrast to 60 per cent of the white population. According to the data, in Salvador (the capital of Bahia state) 93, 5 per cent of domestic workers and 88, 4 per cent of people employed in the construction industry, activities with lower salaries in Brazil, are black. A persistent inequality in the levels of educational is depicted by statistics, which show that only 8, 2 per cent of black and colored population has access to university, against 25, 5 per cent of white; the average years of formal education for those black and colored is 7, 1 years, for white it is 8,7.<sup>169</sup> That means that the majority of afro-descendants do not reach high school. In addition, the same data shows that the educational gap is wider in the countryside and towns far from the major cities.

The South African black population could rely on schools managed by missionaries, from the nineteenth century up to the 1950s, although illiteracy was still particularly high among black and white. According to Gesine Kruger, until the late 1920s “about 35 per cent of white children had never seen a school in their life”.<sup>170</sup> A second consideration regards

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<sup>167</sup> A. R. Ferraro, “Analfabetismo e níveis de letramento no Brasil: o que dizem os censos?” (Illiteracy and levels of literacy in Brazil: what do censuses tell?). *Educação Social* 23 (81), pp.21-47, dez. 2002.

<sup>168</sup> H. Santos. *A busca de um caminho para o Brasil. A trilha do círculo vicioso* [Searching for a path for Brasil: The road of the vicious circle], São Paulo, 2001. M. Paixão, *Desenvolvimento humano e relações raciais* [Human development and racial relations], Rio de Janeiro, 2003.

<sup>169</sup> Resultados da Pesquisa Mensal de Empregos (results from the monthly research on employment) IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. Brasília, Comunicação Social November, 2006.

<sup>170</sup> G. Kruger, “Historical patterns of writing and literacy in South Africa: neither destroyed orality – nor incomplete literacy”. Workshop: *Orality and literacy in African Societies. Institute for African and Ethiopian Studies*. Hamburg, July 4-5, 1996, [www.zmo.de/personen/Ehemalige/Reinwald/orality/11krue.htm](http://www.zmo.de/personen/Ehemalige/Reinwald/orality/11krue.htm) retrieved on 2006-12-04.

language, since it was a minority of the South African population that could read and write in English. If these limitations did not stop authors, journalists and editors from producing relevant literature in English for the black and colored population since 1884, they certainly limited the number of readers.

Another important consideration concerns the economic background of black and colored populations in Brazil and South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century, and the quality of education these populations received from their respective governments. While economic difficulties (unemployment and low wages) prevented them from buying books, the low quality of public education and scarce resources allocated for school libraries, limited the access of this population to books. These factors contribute to their lack of interest in written texts and prevent them from gaining academic tools for critical analysis.<sup>171</sup>

Despite the best intentions of white writers and their commitment to changing the system of racial exclusion in their societies, they are writing from a privileged position, and their visions on the subject is influenced by their own social and racial culture, as explained by La Capra:

This limitation applies particularly to those who are not ‘people of color’, for one’s own existential or ‘subject’ position inflects what one says independently of the prepositional content of assertions. It is decidedly difficult to

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<sup>171</sup> N. V. Silva, “Extensão e natureza das desigualdades raciais no Brasil”. In: Guimarães & Huntley: *Tirando a máscara: ensaios sobre o racismo no Brasil* [Taking the mask off: essays on racism in Brazil], São Paulo, 2000. South African struggle against illiteracy among black population is in J. Aitchison, “Struggle and compromise: a history of South African adult education from 1960 to 2001”, *Journal of Education* 29, 2003, pp. 125-178; and H. S. Sibiya, *A strategy for alleviating illiteracy in South Africa: a historical inquiry*. M. A. Dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2005.

<sup>171</sup> A. R. Ferraro, “Analfabetismo e níveis de letramento no Brasil: o que dizem os censos?” [Illiteracy and levels of literacy in Brazil: what do the census say?]. *Educação Social* 23 (81), 2002, pp. 21-47. M. Paixão, *O ABC das desigualdades raciais: um panorama do analfabetismo entre a população negra através de uma leitura dos indicadores do Censo 2000* [The ABC of racial inequality in Brazil: a panoramic vision of illiteracy among black population through an analysis of the census of 2000], [www.lpp-uerj.net/olped/documentos/ppcor/0340.pdf](http://www.lpp-uerj.net/olped/documentos/ppcor/0340.pdf) retrieved at 2006-10-12.

overcome the tendency to privilege whiteness as the master-text – the valorized and often unmarked center of reference – and to identify the non-white as ‘other’ or ‘different’.<sup>172</sup>

These selected novels, once linked with their historic and social contexts, can explain a lot about South African and Brazilian racism, and the social complexity that led both countries to different political paths in their history. Their relevance continues, as the social and racial differences inside these societies pose a challenge to contemporary policies of development and ignite academic debate.

To understand the trajectory of racism and its reflection in ordinary lives for almost a century, the use of literature can be the key as it depicts the daily lives of characters inspired in real people challenged by contemporary difficulties.

Moreover, an important consideration must be given to the authors’ biographies as a way to understand their position in their plots, as well as their political purposes and literary approaches, in parallel with the history in which they were active participants.

The novels of Amado, for instance, must be analyzed considering the regional differences in Brazil, with an understanding of the roots of patriarchy and how it influences its political and social life. The economic and social disparities in Brazilian policies, in the northeast and southeast, for example, and how they have affected regular people’s lives, are in Amado’s *Seara Vermelha*.

In the same way, a few of his novels reflect his political and intellectual engagement, the communist ideal and the importance given to popular culture. He focused on Afro-Brazilian culture, which is very strongly present in Bahia state, and the debate surrounding these ideas during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, he fought Brazilian intellectual tendencies favoring the thesis of scientific racism,

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<sup>172</sup> D. La Capra (editor). *The bounds of race. Perspectives on hegemony and resistance*. London, 1991, p. 02.

very much present in academic and political debates in Brazil during the first years of the Republican regime.

Regarding Barreto's novels, they can be seen as a portrait of the Brazilian dilemma on racial issues: a conciliatory image and a discriminatory practice. As Brazil is a country of mixed population, and has created its image as a positive experience of racial miscegenation, it is important to focus on the process that brought the nation to emphasize itself as a racial paradise and the contradictions on its society. The selected novels of Barreto reflect the troubled lives of the black and mulatto population in Rio de Janeiro, revealing the patriarchal roots in daily relationships and the convergence of class and racial discrimination.

Gender roles, in connection with racial groups, and sexuality in the first half of the twentieth century are also very important issues during this period for both societies, thus they became part of the authors' themes. As such, it allows an analysis of male views of white and black female sexuality in connection with racism.

Marxist scholars dedicated to cultural studies, such as Raymond Williams and Walter Benjamin, recognized the connection between history and literature and between history, literature and sociology. Williams pointed to the influence of the author's context in his work, which is part of the dynamics of cultural reproduction and production. He also emphasized that the intellectual functions cannot be isolated from the social political and intellectual context.<sup>173</sup> Those dynamics are part of his theory of "cultural materialism" and its "social material process", which is formed in the friction between *dominant, residual and emergent* elements, and are an important part of the methodological analysis in cultural history<sup>174</sup>.

The idea of residual elements in the cultural process, which influences cultural production and reproduction, was already present in

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<sup>173</sup> R. Williams, *Marxism and literature*, Oxford, 1977.

<sup>174</sup> *Idem*.

Walter Benjamin's thesis, which he called *reminiscences*. Benjamin attributed special importance to reminiscences in literature. He defended that the author's context and social environment influence his cultural work, even when a bourgeois author chose the proletarian cause<sup>175</sup>.

### 3.3 – Literature as a window, literature as a mirror

*"Hell is other people"*<sup>176</sup>

The reminiscences of racial representations in both cultures, together with governmental policies towards black people are part of the authors' lives, and are also present in their portraits of characters and their practices of everyday life that are represented in the novels. These representations and ideologies are in accordance with each author's intentions to interfere in and change his own society. The novels reflected dilemmas of each society. They offer as well a window through which the writer could look at and describe other people's lives.

Studies on racism or on racial ideas are part of the mainstream of cultural history, as much as the history of thoughts, since concepts and policies towards races or ethnic groups are part of the human experience. Once again, Marxist influence can be found in historians who approach the problem of racism, especially in the context of colonization and internal dominance of one ethnical group over others.

While orthodox materialists defend a strong link between economic exploitation and racism, Marxist researchers of culture focus on the complexity of the problem, where tradition and social structure go beyond class stratification.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> W. Benjamin, *Theses on the philosophy of history*, New York, 1969, p. 255.

<sup>176</sup> J. P. Sartre, *No exit and three other plays*, New York, 1989.

<sup>177</sup> G. M. Fredrickson, *The black image in the white mind. The debate on Afro-American character and destiny, 1817-1914*, Hanover, 1987.

As already stated, the intellectual concern about racial issues is nothing new, but started to grow in importance during the nineteenth century, intimately connected to colonialism and imperialism. Social Darwinism, or the applicability of Charles Darwin's hypothesis on the evolution of species, as presented in *The Origin of Species – The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859), served as a guideline for a thesis on human and societal evolution. It can be considered as the dividing line for Social Science, Medicine, Anthropology, and Criminology, influencing literature, history, and other fields of human knowledge.

It is not a coincidence that Darwin's masterpiece became a worldwide success during the second industrial revolution and the age of imperialism that followed colonialism. It gave the necessary explanation and, most important, the desired justification for conquest, control and exploitation of colonial societies and racial groups by predominant nations all around the world.

Brazilian and South African intellectuals saluted the new idea, as an alibi for the maintaining the *status quo* in their societies, whose economic development was firmly supported by the exploitation of indigenous population and slaves.

The idea of racial superiority of Europeans and their descendents in Africa and America has prevailed even after the abolition of slavery and serfdom. Furthermore, it was useful to support government policies, cultural practices and personal attitudes that prevented dark skinned people from participating in economic growth and gaining political power.

In South Africa, Darwinism came to complement cultural practices, based upon religion and colonial experience. It was a solution for society's need to keep the majority of the population under control.

Economic exploitation was accompanied by social and political exclusion, with the effective support of legislation, which kept the vast majority of South African population away from land ownership,

education, and employment and from enjoying general services, with the exception of a small number of Africans and “colored”, who achieved some intellectual or economic success.<sup>178</sup>

These concepts and approaches from government and hegemonic society towards Africans, coloreds, and other racial subdivisions created to classify South African inhabitants are at the center of Paton’s and Abrahams’ novels. In order to understand them, it is important to understand South African social and cultural history.

Similarly, to understand the complexity of Barreto’s and Amado’s characters is important to first understand how the Brazilian social fabric was composed and the implications of this complexity in people’s behavior and destiny. The Brazilian elite managed to maintain the *status quo* after independence (1822) and the later adoption of a republican regime (1889). The society was divided into an elite, freed slaves, and middle and working classes composed by European immigrants, and a mixed population that would struggle to distance themselves from the ex-slaves, considered the lowest segment.

After the 1890s, the mass of black and colored workers had to compete with European immigrants for employment and ownership, against the economic and political preference for the “white worker”. They had also to face the propaganda about European superiority over the Brazilian population, degenerated and weakened by its African influence.

Any strategy to reinforce communist ideas and lead to a workers’ revolution in Brazil, as Amado wanted in his young years of militancy, had to face the problem of racism that was at the roots of economic, social and political exclusion. This exclusion based on race, or better, on the skin color, is the main component of Barreto’s novels and what he denounces as social injustice.

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<sup>178</sup> E. Mphahlele, *Es’kia: Education, African humanism & culture, literary appreciation*, Cape Town, 2002.

By the turn of the century, the industrial revolution arrived in Brazil and South Africa with new patterns of modernism and progress. This influenced new policies regarding labor, land use, ownership, and education. South Africa openly decided to keep indigenous and “coloreds” – considered inferior and unable to improve themselves and contribute to the nation’s progress – under control and away from economic and political power. On the other hand, Brazilian policies were not inclined to segregation and racial control. However, the preference for white workers in industry and the efforts to maintain the *status quo* in rural and urban areas left the dark skinned segment of the population with scarce options to survive.

These policies in South Africa not only prevented social, economic and political development for the vast majority of population, but also kept it under strict control, as they forbid their presence in the cities without special permission. For those who could leave, work or visit the cities, separate facilities and services demarked the urban segregation. What the white South African feared most of all was sexual miscegenation, and the governments were very aware of the need to impose legislation that would prevent and punish sexual relationship between different races.<sup>179</sup>

Brazilian legislators did not agree on passing segregation laws or discriminatory acts. However, the debate about black people’s destiny in Brazil after abolition is marked by Darwinist ideas and eugenic proposals. The proposals included shipping the ex-slaves and their descendents back

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<sup>179</sup> The fear of miscegenation and sexual partnership between white and non-white was not an exclusive characteristic of South African society. It was well defined in the United States and other countries, and was explored by different authors, such as H. L. Gates Jr. (ed.), *“Race”, writing and difference*, Chicago, 1985; G. M. Fredrickson, *The black image in the white mind. The debate on Afro-American character and destiny, 1817-1914*. Hanover, 1987; S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1652 – 2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; A. McClintock, *Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*, New York, 1995; A. L. Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power. Race and the intimate in colonial rule*, London, 2002; Sampie Terreblanche, and J. M. Coetzee, *White writing . On the culture of letters in South Africa*, Johannesburg, 1988.

to Africa, and the creation of a separate state or a hope for their gradual vanishing through miscegenation.<sup>180</sup>

In his extensive analysis about the history of racial problems and concepts in Brazil, Thomas Skidmore identifies a significant wave of racism among Brazilian intellectuals during the turn of the century. The debate, however, brought up its own contradiction: an anti-racist movement, which based their arguments on nationalism and affection. For these intellectuals, miscegenation was a desirable component of Brazilian character and originality. They opposed the policies of segregation already in use in the United States, and argued about the impossibility of its applicability to Brazil, given the fact that *mestizos* were already part of the society, belonging not exclusively to the lower class, but also as part of the intellectual and economic elite.<sup>181</sup> They also recognized values in the Afro-Brazilian culture, the contributions of black people to national development and the intellectual capacity of all people who could receive education. Among those who shared this school of thought were Lima Barreto, Gilberto Freyre and Jorge Amado.

### 3.4 – Culture, history and racism

The novels selected for this study – Alan Paton’s *Cry, The Beloved Country* and *Too Late*, Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder* and *Mine boy*, Jorge Amado’s *Jubiabá* and *Seara Vermelha* (*Red Harvest*), and Lima Barreto’s *Clara dos Anjos* and *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* (*Recollections of the Clerk Isaías Caminha*) were written and published during the first half of the twentieth century. All these authors had a political commitment that is shown in their novels.

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<sup>180</sup> See the works of L. Schwarcz: “O Espetáculo da miscigenação” [The spectacle of miscegenation]. *Estudos Avançados* 8(20), 1994; and *Espetáculo das raças. Cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil* [The spectacle of races: scientists, institutions and the race question in Brazil], São Paulo, 1995.

<sup>181</sup> T. E. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1974

Each tried to recreate the social, economic and political context of their countries.

The use of these novels to analyze the problem of race in the two countries is useful from the viewpoint of cultural history. This perspective proposes the use of cultural expressions to understand society, the politics, and the economy of a certain period, seeking to identify how and when a specific social reality is constructed, ‘thought out’ and presented.<sup>182</sup>

Lima Barreto (1881-1922) was born earliest than any of these authors. He was a mulatto from Rio de Janeiro who went to college, even though the poverty of his family prevented him from finishing his education. The discrimination and economic deprivation he experienced during his life is present in “*The recollections of the clerk Isaías Caminha*”, published in Portugal, in 1909. It was the first of his eighteen books published, some after his death. The agreement with the publisher included the author’s surrender of all copyrights. Nevertheless, Barreto was grateful to get this opportunity to start his career as a professional writer.

Although Brazil had no segregation or discrimination laws, cultural practices and prejudices were part of the social norm that made the lives of black and coloured people much harder than for the lighter skinned ones. Daily situations, including minor offences and petty discrimination brought the clerk Isaías to despair and disenchantment with the new Republic. In the end, Isaías gives up and cancelled the publication of his memoirs, which would reveal the moral corruption of society.

Barreto was an obstinate critic of Brazilian society and its cynicism in dealing with racial exclusion, political corruption and social injustices. In addition to his criticism, his sympathy to the communist revolution did not make Barreto a very welcome person among upper class intellectuals. The *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (Brazilian Academy of Letters) did not

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<sup>182</sup> R. Chartier, *A história cultural: entre práticas e representações* [the cultural history: among practices and representations], Lisboa/Rio de Janeiro, 1990.

find any value in his novels, criticized the absence of formalism in his style. His meagre salary came from writing in newspapers and magazines, as well from his government job. Early in his life he suffered from alcoholism and depression.<sup>183</sup>

“*Clara dos Anjos*”, written ten years before, was published in 1922, and tells the story of a seventeen year old young black woman who is seduced by a white man, despite all the care of her parents. She becomes pregnant and is humiliated by the boyfriend’s mother who rejects the idea of seeing her only son married to a black woman. The villain of this novel, Cassy, is Clara’s seducer, a man without scruple who brings disgrace to many poor young women, most of them black or coloured. By describing Cassy, Lima Barreto condemns the unfair social and economic context in the Brazilian capital. He is from the beginning to the end the “bad guy” and Clara is his inevitable victim.

The author depicts life in the suburbs, where the poor population of Rio de Janeiro lives. Life there does not hold high expectations and darkness of skin is always complemented by poverty. While men live to work and are always under suspicion from the police, women have no alternative to marriage, which can only be possible if they preserve their virginity and honour. However, those poor young women were often the targets of men who saw them as nobodies, or only as bodies, without rights or feelings, available for white and richer men’s pleasure. The last words in the novel belong to Clara, as she suddenly acknowledges her social status and her miserable destiny: “Mom! We are nothing in this life!” This can be also read as the last words of the author who died, from alcoholism and poverty, in the same year that *Clara dos Anjos* was published.

After Lima Barreto’s death, the issue of racial exclusion in Brazil only appeared in Jorge Amado’s novels. The white communist writer was born in 1912 in the north-eastern Brazilian state of Bahia. The author’s

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<sup>183</sup> A. A. Prado. *Lima Barreto. Literatura comentada* [Lima Barreto. Literary Comments], São Paulo, 1988.

first novel was published in 1931, when he was still in the law school and already a member of the Brazilian Communist Party.

The poverty of black and colored people in rural areas, caused by the concentration of available land in the hands of the elite, and the consequent displacement of families due to droughts and lack of land ownership is described in *Seara Vermelha*. The novel also presents the loss of cultural and family roots and values, social exclusion, crime, prostitution and corruption. In this early novel, the author discusses racial discrimination in connection with economic exclusion and the exploitation of the lower classes by the elites.

Jeronimo is a coloured man, politically impotent and illiterate who leads his family to São Paulo, after being evicted from the farm where they used to live. In the process, some of them will die from causes associated with poverty and the hardship of the trip. In the end, less than half of the family manage to arrive in São Paulo and receive the desired job in one of the coffee farms.<sup>184</sup> At this point, his grandson, the only survivor among the youngest travellers, is a young man convinced that worker's organization and communism are the solutions to exclusion.

In his second novel analyzed here, *Jubiabá*, Jorge Amado used the title as a homage to a *candomblé*<sup>185</sup> priest, known as Jubiabá, and also one of the characters in the novel. The main character however is Antonio Balduino, a young black man who was born in the poorest part of Salvador, Bahia's capital, and was taken to a white family after the death of his aunt. There he experienced abuse and discrimination. As a teenager, he is a homeless in Salvador's streets, where he continues to face violence

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<sup>184</sup> Migrant labour from northeast Brazil is still very much part of the economic development in São Paulo state. The Northeastern worker plays an important role in filling menial positions and keeping salaries down. For a history of this migration, see: M. Falcí, *Os escravos do sertão* (Slaves from hinterlands), Teresina, 1995; J. M. Passos Subrinho, *Reordenamento do trabalho – trabalho escravo e trabalho livre no nordeste açucareiro, Sergipe, 1850-1930* [The re-organisation of labor – slave labor and free labor in northeast sugar plantation, Sergipe, 1850-1930], Aracaju, 2000; V. A. Ferlini, *Terra trabalho e poder* [Land, labor and power], São Paulo, 1988.

<sup>185</sup> Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian faith commonly found in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, it mixes elements from indigenous Brazilians and West Africans religious cultures .

from policemen, exclusion and famine. He becomes first a criminal, later a hero to black people and a leader of the stevedore workers during a strike.

The opening of the novel is very significant. It introduces Balduino as a boxer who defeats a German opponent and is presented in the newspapers as an answer to those that defend the superiority of the Aryan race. His trajectory however, does not allow him to overcome discrimination. He cannot confess his love for Lindinalva, who rejects him because of his race. When she is abandoned by her fiancé, and has no other choice than to become a prostitute, Balduino comes to her help and agrees to raise her baby after she died from venereal disease.

There is a kind of sadness in Amado's acknowledgement that class movement and communism are not enough to avoid racial prejudices. The love between Balduino and Lindinalva is presented as something impossible from the beginning to the end. In addition, the moral superiority and generosity of the black character is shown by his forgiveness of the ones who had been responsible for his misery.

Despite his commitment to the communist cause and the way he sympathised with Afro-Brazilian culture and black people, some critics have accused Amado of sexism, sexual stereotyping and of romanticizing poverty<sup>186</sup>. These critics point particularly to Amado's post 1958 works, which explore predominantly the eroticism and sensuality of black and coloured women. Some of his biographers attributed the change in his plots and approaches to a growing disappointment of the novelist with Stalinism and his proximity to Afro-Brazilian culture.

The period between 1930 and 1950 was marked by important historical developments, such as the economic depression that began in 1929 whose effects were felt around the world. It was also the period in the advance of capitalism, which for underdeveloped countries and colonies meant exploitation of minerals, railways, port construction,

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<sup>186</sup> K. Brower, E. Fitz and E. Martines-Vidal (eds), *Jorge Amado: new critical essays*, New York, 2001.

urbanization, and industrialization. These investments of capital demanded control over territory and an abundant labour force.

The same period saw the ascension of dictatorial regimes in America and Europe, where dictatorships were ideologically linked to fascism, communism and Nazism.

Finally, the fight for democracy in the World War II, and later for civil and political rights, democracy, and independence in different parts of every continent, forced a revision of scientific racialism and racist policies. The revision influenced movements for decolonisation of African and Asian continents, the movement for civil rights in United States and the struggle against dictatorship in Latin America.

While 1945 in Brazil marked the beginning of a short democratic period (1945-1964), in South Africa the post-War period is marked by the institutionalisation of the apartheid regime, after the ascendancy of the National Party in 1948.

Alan Paton was born in 1903 in Kwazulu-Natal, to a middle-class family. He describes his birthplace in “*Cry, the Beloved Country*” published in New York, 1946. The novel is quite pessimistic. It presents two families, one black and the other white, victimized by problems that were generated by policies and a culture of racial segregation in South Africa. The author depicts the consequences of this regime for the black population: social, economic and political exclusion, extreme poverty, despair, criminality, displacement and the loss of cultural values. The white characters are depicted as alienated, akin to foreigners in their own country.

In the novel, Stephen Kumalo, an aging pastor of the Anglican Church, is concerned about the situation of his Zulu people, who live in precarious conditions. Kumalo’s church is close to the farm of James Jarvis, a white man who did not develop a relationship with the pastor, despite being neighbours for many years. Kumalo has to leave his tribal reserve to search for his sister, brother and son in Johannesburg. There he

finds out that his son Absolom murdered the son of his neighbour, Arthur Jarvis. According to Edward Callan, in this novel

...Paton succeeds to a remarkable degree in portraying a segment of South African life during a brief period immediately following the end of World War II. And he succeeds, to an even more remarkable degree, in endowing this regional portrait with universal significance. He accomplishes this by incorporating into the actualities of South Africa's physical and social setting a fundamental theme of social disintegration and moral restoration.<sup>187</sup>

His reflections and criticism of the apartheid regime come from the point of view of the Liberal Party, to which he was affiliated and which he led for more than ten years. The influence of Paton's experience as director of a reformatory for young African delinquents is present in the words of Arthur Jarvis and his statement in defense of a better education for black and colored people.

In contrast, communism, class conflict and political organization are also themes of Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* (1946) published in the same year that a miners' strike in South Africa was violently suppressed by Smuts' government.<sup>188</sup> Abrahams was born in 1919, in one of Johannesburg townships, which he describes colourfully in this novel.

The book was not published in South Africa, from where the author had emigrated in 1941, but in England and later in the United States (1955). Racial segregation is a major theme in this novel and it is present in the way Abraham describes the struggle for life in the township: women selling illegal liquor, the white authorities' demanding the "pass" – the document used to regularize and control black and coloured people – the repressive actions of policemen, and the general poverty. Abrahams knew this reality very well, having grown up in the ghetto. He came from a poor family, had struggled to educate himself and finally completed college in 1938. One year later, he left the country taking a job as a stoker on a ship.

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<sup>187</sup> E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, New York, 1968, p. 23.

<sup>188</sup> For more details about South African strike of 1946, see L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, New Haven, 2001.

Apart from communist ideas, the fear of miscegenation and non-white sexuality is the story line in *The Path of Thunder* (Abrahams, 1948), *Too Late the Phalarope* (Paton, 1953), *Jubiabá* (Amado, 1935), (1922) written during a time when racial policies were being defined in both countries, under the influence the policies of Germany, the United States, and Italy. With the exception of *Clara dos Anjos*, these novels were written and published during periods of dictatorial regimes in South Africa and Brazil.

Getúlio Vargas used his authority to impose a nationalist policy in 1930, while the country faced economic depression, as a solution for Brazil's development and modernization. The dictator had the support of intellectuals like Oliveira Vianna, who argued that, contrary to European nations, the remarked presence of "African blood" in the Brazilian population make this people unfit for democracy and depending on a strong state to command their lives.<sup>189</sup> Although Vargas was sympathetic to eugenic ideas and tried to eliminate any manifestation of African culture,<sup>190</sup> he rejected the idea of segregation and defended integration, promoting an image of a racially mixed nation, a land of "racial democracy".

All Brazilians were considered equal under the law, and foreigners could easily be naturalized, except if they were communist or ascribed to political ideas that could be considered prejudicial to the nation. However, that did not prevent or stop racial and social discrimination, in a society where black people were still marginalized.

Also written under a dictatorial government, *Too Late* was published soon after the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and the Immorality Act of 1950, which outlawed sexual intercourse between

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<sup>189</sup> K. M. Matos, *O autoritarismo em Oliveira Vianna* [The authoritarianism in Oliveira Vianna], *Metanoia* 2, São João Del Rei, 2000, pp. 71-75.

<sup>190</sup> During the Vargas government, *candomblé*, the Afro-Brazilian religion was considered illegal, as well as the musical festivities and *Capoeira*, a type of dance and ritualized fight, very popular among black and poor people in Brazil. See J. Braga, *Na gamela do feitiço. Repressão e resistência nos candomblés da Bahia* [In the witchcraft's bowl. Repression and resistance in Bahia's candomblés]. Salvador, 1995.

whites and non-whites. Pieter van Vlaanderen is a white married policeman in a small South African town. He struggles with his intense sexual desire for Stephanie, a young coloured woman. His father is a Nationalist who rejects mixed marriages even between British and Afrikaners. The whole society, represented by Pieter's family and friends, condemn sexual relations between white and non-white as something immoral, and a sin against God's will.

Despite the tragedy in the lives of an Afrikaans-speaking family guided by racial policies and stereotypes, Paton's description of black characters does not reveal any humanity or emotion. The plot is the lives of white characters and their troubled life surrounded by a black population and all the risks this proximity can bring. There is no interracial love, only interracial sex. Maybe the love of a white man for a black woman was a barrier that the author could not cross, or imagine at this point.

Balanced interracial love is at the centre of Abraham's *The Path of Thunder*, published in 1948 in the United States. In the novel, Lanny is a coloured man who has lived in Cape Town, where he received education and experienced relative freedom. Coming back to his village, he meets and falls for Sarah, the white woman who is related to the rich white family of the town. The novel discusses the possibility of love between coloured men and white women, as well the sexual abuse of coloured women by white men, which results in generations of bastards.

The novel is set in a rural area of South Africa. Once again, as we find so often in these novels, we are in a symbolic heartland, where a wealthy white farm is juxtaposed with a poverty-stricken "coloured" village nearby. (...)

Symbolically the model of a fractured family distils a whole racial history in South Africa: the white father refuses to recognize the identity or existence of his own "coloured" offspring; the typology of disinheritance takes on a deeply intimate, colour-coded form.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> A. McClintock, "The very house of difference: race, gender, and politics of South African women's narrative", in D. La Capra (ed.), *The bounds of race. Perspectives on hegemony and resistance*. London, 1991, p. 207.

Poverty, exclusion and fear of sexual contact, interact in a complex situation exposed in a very simple novel. Perhaps because he is a coloured man, Abrahams sees love differently from Paton, Barreto and Amado. He approaches love and respect between a coloured man and a white woman as something natural, and possible. However, the fact that this story takes place in South Africa imposes a violent end: the couple dies together fighting the racists, who also die.

All of these authors embraced a political commitment that is reflected in their works. They tried to recreate through their novels the troubled reality of their countries, seeking to change their societies. The choice of two “white” authors follows the idea of using the narrator as someone who observes and tells a story, like someone who watches the movement on a street from a window. One could say that, coming from the ruling class (Jorge Amado) and the privileged middle class (Alan Paton), they would represent “a view from the top”.

It is important to note that their writings at that particular time were not directed to the popular class, but to the minority of both populations that could read and write, and buy books.<sup>192</sup> That being so, their messages of social change are directed to readers from the middle class and maybe to some readers from the ruling class in Brazil and South Africa.

Abrahams and Barreto, as coloured authors, are at the same time witnesses and participants in the social problems they depict in their novels. Their own trajectories testify about the difficulties confronting black people in their countries. Barreto never left Brazil, where he died relatively young and in extreme poverty. Abraham left South Africa for Europe and the Caribbean, from where he published his books and achieved economic, political and professional success. They wanted to denounce racism and exclusion, exorcizing their own ghosts related to poverty and colour barriers that their societies imposed on them.

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<sup>192</sup> See W. Benjamin, “The author as producer”. In *Walter Benjamin, Obras Escolhidas (Auswah in Dre Banden)*, 6a. ed., São Paulo, 1993. pp. 120-136.

All these novels, written by white or black authors talk about racism and how their societies have classified individuals – economically, socially and politically – based on the colour of their skin and other physical features; just as the Brazilians would define a “good black” as “somebody that knows his/her own place”.

## CHAPTER IV

### BUILDING MODERN NATIONS: RACIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

Racial and economic exclusion in countries such as Brazil and South Africa are deeply interwoven, and are the root of social inequalities. Whatever authors emphasize class domination (or economic exclusion) or racism, when discrimination is based on biological features and economic and social status cannot change racial classification, the issue of racial discrimination is always related to economic exclusion. In Brazil as well as in South Africa, black and coloured people make up the majority of the lower classes.

Dubow argues that whenever historians and sociologists acknowledge the primacy of race or class to analyze segregation, cultural aspects of the process must also be considered. He refers to an *internal logic of scientific racism*<sup>193</sup> that is also applicable to culture, which interweaves thoughts from scientific racism, religious beliefs, common sense, economic and political interests.

Using historiography to support the analysis on the issue, this chapter is concerned about how racism and class domination appear in the novels of Abrahams, Paton, Lima Barreto and Amado during the first half of the twentieth century, and how it is related to the problem of land ownership and labour exploitation. In this sense, the novels serve as expressions of those entangled elements.

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<sup>193</sup> S. Dubow, *Scientific racism in modern South Africa*, New York, 1995, p. 4.

## 4.1 – The colours of nationalist development

Brazil and South Africa allocated many resources to build themselves as “modern nations”, particularly during the period between World War I and World War II. The meaning of modernity, in that context, was related to achieving European quality, patterns of life and economic growth, something that these nations tried first to get by imitating the physical appearance of their population. In other words, Brazilians and South Africans wanted to be identified as white nations.

By the middle of the twentieth century, most of the world had already overcome the first wave of scientific racism. Yet, deep and visible scars were left from a past of slavery and serfdom. Full development and progress were still seen as impossible for social groups beyond the Aryan/Caucasian racial classification. In African, Asian and American states and colonies, development and progress would only be possible with black, coloured and/or indigenous populations working under white management and their strict control.

However, it is important to signal that racial and class relations are far from the *black and white* dichotomy that has typically characterized superficial analyzes. In Africa, as much as in America, class and racial hierarchies have crossed over ethnical considerations, adding value to skin colour and attitude.

Economic exclusion or, for better understanding, the limitations to personal improvement and social placement in Brazilian and South African societies was based on physical features, education and personal abilities to “act as a civilized man or woman”. With these characteristics, men and women would find ways to improve their lives as much as the dominant classes would find ways to better use those people to advance their economic and personal interests, reassuring their supremacy.

Brazil is a society characterized by miscegenation, while South African society has to deal with miscegenation, indigenous peoples and an

immigrant population coming from neighbouring countries. In both cases, the white elite is outnumbered by *mestizos*, coloureds, and Africans, who it was thought should be controlled in order to achieve economic progress, social order and political stability.

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, as industrial development in Western Europe and the United States spread to Central and South American markets and to African colonies, the economies of these colonies and countries experienced a boost, which demanded a larger labour force and more specialised workers. This situation coincided with other factors in European countries, which contributed to massive emigration from countries such as Spain, Italy and Germany towards American countries and African colonies.

The arrival of European workers to Brazil and South Africa was welcomed as a way to improve the qualified working force and as an addition to the white elite, struggling against *blackness*. Brazilians found in the immigrant worker a way to inject more white blood in their mixed society, contributing to their aim of *whitening* the country's population<sup>194</sup>. In the new South African independent state, the elite saw in the immigrant a source of cheap qualified work and an extra help to increase the white minority population in the country. In both societies, part of the working class viewed the arrival of immigrants as job competition.<sup>195</sup> The problem became worse during economic crises, especially during the second and

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<sup>194</sup> T. Skidmore, *Black into white: race and nationality in Brazilian thought*, New York, 1974.

<sup>195</sup> The phenomenon of immigration and its contribution to the ideology of whitening are seen not only in Brazilian society, but also in Colombia, Argentina and Cuba. For more details, see: M. Morner (ed.), *Race and class in Latin America*. New York, 1970; G. R. Andrews. "Blackness and race mixture: the dynamics of racial identity in Colombia". *Journal of Social History* 28, 1994, online version: [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2005/is\\_n2\\_v28/ai\\_16351025](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_n2_v28/ai_16351025) retrieved in 2006-3-15; and M. C. McLeod, "Undesirable aliens: race, ethnicity, and nationalism in the comparison of Haitian and British West Indian immigrant workers in Cuba, 1912-1939". *Journal of Social History* 32, Spring 1998, online version: [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2005/is\\_3\\_v31/ai\\_20574141](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_3_v31/ai_20574141) retrieved at 2006-3-15.

third decades of the twentieth century, when South African and Brazilian workers went on strikes for better salaries and job guarantees<sup>196</sup>.

The racial problem in Africa and the Americas can be analyzed as part of the colonial system up to the 1900s. After that, economic development – industrialization, intensive agricultural and mineral exploitation – allied to an increasing complexity in the social fabric – immigration, miscegenation and the consolidation of a *proletariat* – brought about a conjunction of race and class conflict.

## 4.2 – Race as class in the rural context

Despite the opposition of authors who contend that racial conflict cannot be analyzed under the Marxist umbrella since it cannot be seen as class conflict<sup>197</sup>, this dissertation analyzes class conflict in conjunction with racism, since the novels used to understand racism in Brazil and South Africa point to the confluence of racism, economic exclusion and class conflict. Furthermore, studies have proved that even now in South African and Brazilian societies the majority of black population makes up the lower class. This phenomenon is clearly explored by Amado, Paton, Abrahams and Barreto in their novels. All these authors criticized and

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<sup>196</sup> The competition for jobs among black, white, local and immigrant workers in South Africa is in S. Terreblanche, *A History of inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, Sandton, 2002; D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise*. Oxford/Clarendon, 1997; L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*. New Haven/London, 2001; and C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa. Conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005.; in Brazil the problems were among national workers (since black workers did not organize themselves as a distinct category) and immigrants. See: V. L. Ferlini, *Terra, trabalho e poder [Land, labour and power]*, São Paulo, 1988; A. L. D. Lana, “Santos: transformações urbanas e mercado de trabalho livre 1870-1914” [Santos: urban transformations and the free labour market 1870-1914], in S. Silva and T. Szmrecsanyi (org.) *História Econômica da Primeira República* [Economic history of the First Republic], São Paulo, 2002, pp. 297-319; M. A. R. Ribeiro, “O mercado de trabalho na cidade de São Paulo nos anos vinte” [The labour market in São Paulo city in the twenty’s], in S. Silva and T. Szmrecsanyi (org.) *História Econômica da Primeira República* [Economic history of the First Republic], São Paulo, 2002, pp. 341-68; and B. Fausto, *História concisa do Brasil* [A concise history of Brazil], São Paulo, 2001.

<sup>197</sup> See A. W. MARX, “Race-making and the Nation-State”, *World Politics* 48, 1996, and *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 29, 1996, pp. 9-36.

denounced the way in which economic exploitation was justified by racial prejudice.

The first half of the twentieth century was also a very fertile time for the arts and literature. Artists and writers decided to take a different track from romantics and realists and founded a different stream in the Modernist movement. Engaging themselves in political ideologies, concerned with social problems, the modernists grounded their work not only in denouncing social injustices but also in suggesting alternatives to solve social problems.

Class conflict is an important component in *Red Harvest*. At the beginning of the story, Amado introduces the farm workers in a north-eastern plantation by describing their children playing while dressed in rags. They are destitute, hard working, some brown, some black; their origins go far back into slavery, like *Negro Bastião*, who lived on the same farm since his ancestors arrived there, as slaves. In the novel, land expropriation and labour exploitation are openly denounced as the roots of underdevelopment and social injustices. The main characters belong to Jerônimo's family, described as an average poor family in Brazil. Composed of individuals with different physical features, from lighter to darker skin, wider noses and "almost straight hair", they are *caboclos* – those with dark skin and straight dark hair – or *mulattos* – those with brown skin and curly hair with some African features. His family represents the Brazilians, and also their friends and other people they encounter on their long way from the farm in the northeast to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

This novel presents the problem of economic marginality, exploring situations where poverty and alienation come together with racism and paternalism. This is clear when Colonel Ignácio, the landlord, "gives" Bastião the small piece of land where the old black man had worked his entire life, since before abolition. The colonel was very happy during the wedding party, and Bastião was playing his accordion

wonderfully. In the end, the old master, full of emotion, called the black man:

- “ – Negro, I am close to death...
- God protects you, boss...
- ...I am going to die soon, and before God calls me I want to give you a present...
- You may say, colonel...
- This land where you have your crops is now yours. It is not only idle talk, no sir. One of these days I'll put this on a paper...”<sup>198</sup>

Since that day, whenever Colonel Ignácio was reminded, somebody would tell this story to show how generous he was even though the landlord did not sign any document confirming that donation. After his death, his son – Colonel Aureliano – becomes the new landlord and in an act of respect for his father's honour, he confirms the old boss' generosity – and does not take the land from Bastião: “- Keep your land, Negro.”

<sup>199</sup> Again, no papers are signed.

The landowner forgets about his rural property, as he leads his life in Rio de Janeiro, at that time the capital of Brazil. He only remembers it when he decides to sell and make more money with new investments. Faced with the possibility of profit, there is no paternalism. At this point, the lives of people who live there and are already exploited in a system of semi-slavery<sup>200</sup>, struggling to survive another drought, are turned upside down with the notice that they must take their few belongs and leave the farm, including Bastião.

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<sup>198</sup> J. Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 39: “- Negro, já tou perto de morrer... – T'esconjuro... Deus guarde vosmecê, meu patrão... – Já tou perto de morrer e antes de ir prestar contas a Deus quero te dar um presente... – Vosmecê diz, coronel Inacinho... – Essa terra onde tá tua roça fica sendo tua. Não é só de boca, não. Um dia desses boto no papel...”. Author's translation.

<sup>199</sup> *Idem*, p. 35.

<sup>200</sup> The system described in Amado's novel was predominant in Brazil for a long time. It is characterized by rural workers living on the farm, depending exclusively on the landowner for every expense: clothing, housing, medicine, tools, etc. The system demands that all workers can only buy from the landowner (at very expensive prices) and sell their products, such as chickens, eggs, and corn to the farm store (at a lower price than they could find in other markets). This system was denounced by sociologists as a variation of feudalism. See: O. G. Velho, *Capitalismo autoritário e campesinato* [Authoritarian capitalism and peasants], 2nd. ed., São Paulo, 1979.

It is a metaphor of how Brazilian governors and politicians have neglected this region, and how those people's lives are worth nothing. It is also an example of how racism and economic exploitation in Brazil are masked by paternalism, an old disguise for that master-servants relationship present since colonisation, which prevails until today particularly in rural areas dominated by *latifúndios*. Once again, the novel works as a mirror reflecting disparities and injustices in the Brazilian countryside.<sup>201</sup>

Some studies have been done, comparing this particular novel to John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), given the way both authors have shown passion and ardent advocacy of humanitarian and social reforms as they described the lower class people and their daily struggles. Earl Fitz approached the similarities between the two authors, rejecting the possibility of literary influence, positing instead an international tendency.

...it seems clear that we are not dealing here with a problem of literary influence as much as with a case of similar response to similar stimuli, the later being the social and political problems that develop in Brazil and the United States as a result of the world-wide depression of the 1930s.<sup>202</sup>

Since the book was published in 1946, one cannot claim that Brazil was still under direct effects of the depression of the 1930s. Most probably, *Red Harvest* was influenced by the events surrounding World War II, such as the struggle for democracy, the legalization of the Communist Party in Brazil, the defeat of scientific racism and the awareness about social and economic differences in Brazilian society. The author positioned himself as a propagandist for communist ideas and used all his knowledge of poverty in the north-eastern region – including racial exclusion – to present his characters as the future leaders of the revolution.

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<sup>201</sup> About paternalism and racism, see Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society*. New York/London, 1969; and Clóvis Moura, *Dialética radical do Brasil Negro* [Radical dialectics of black Brazil], São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>202</sup> E. E. Fitz, "The vox populi in the novels of Jorge Amado and John Steinbeck", in K Brower, E. Fitz and E. Martinez Vidal, *Jorge Amado: new critical essays*, New York, 2001, pp. 111-23.

The story is divided into two parts. The first one, *Caminhos da Fome* (*The Path of hunger*), describes the painful trajectory of Jerônimo and his family as they cross the *caatinga*<sup>203</sup> towards the Bahia state, where they hope to find a way to get the train to São Paulo, “the promised land”:

Those peasants fired from the farm were spread now along the paths of the *caatinga*. They were all going south, looking for the country (sic) of São Paulo. Many others have gone before, following the contractors that had visited the farms, telling amazing stories. There were no poor people in São Paulo, where coffee grows. Each worker that arrived there became a farmer in a few years. They became rich...<sup>204</sup>

The novel reveals that immigrants could only reach the “promised land” after going through a bureaucratic system, expecting long days waiting, filling papers and finally, passing the physical check up. The system’s target is to select healthy and fit workers for São Paulo’s farms. The São Paulo government, under farmers’ pressure for cheaper labour, offered the immigrants train tickets for the long trip and a guarantee of a job on one of the farms. After being “approved” in the physical exams, every person would receive a “pass”, a type of health certificate that gave them a right to continue their journey towards the south. Although anyone could buy his own ticket and travel to São Paulo, the “pass” was a guarantee of a job and housing there.<sup>205</sup>

Despite São Paulo farmers’ and industrialists’ general preference for European immigrants, north-eastern immigrants were considerably cheaper than Europeans; besides, they were not organized into

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<sup>203</sup> *Caatinga* is the name given to the driest region of Brazil, that is located in the Northeast, beyond the coastal areas.

<sup>204</sup> J. Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 61. Author’s translation from the original: “Os colonos despedidos da fazenda estavam espalhados pela estrada da caatinga. Iam todos no rumo do sul, em busca do país de São Paulo. Muitos outros haviam ido antes, os contratantes de trabalhadores apareciam pelas fazendas, contavam histórias, diziam coisas de assombrar. Não havia gente pobre naquela terra paulista, onde se plantava e colhia café. Cada trabalhador que chegava era fazendeiro em poucos anos, virava coronel...”

<sup>205</sup> For more information about immigrants from the North-eastern region to São Paulo see: O. C. Paiva, *Caminhos cruzados: migração e construção do Brasil moderno, 1930-1950* [Crossroads: migration and the building of modern Brazil], Bauru, 2004.

corporations or syndicates, and had much lower likelihood to participate in strikes or similar movements than the Europeans.<sup>206</sup>

Thirteen members of the family started on this trip, such as Dinah, Jerônimo's sister-in-law, insisted on counting a goat, a cat and a donkey as "living souls" travelling together. Only four people arrived in São Paulo, as Jerônimo explained to a friend who asked about the rest of the family: "The hunger ate them along the way."<sup>207</sup>

By "hunger", Amado synthesizes all the troubles they went through since they left the farm: the starvation in the *caatinga*, the diseases, Aunt Zefa, who delusional, disappeared one night and never came back; and the way Martha, his beloved 18 year-old daughter, had become a prostitute to help her family and was left behind, since her father's honour was forever affected by her decadence. Even before they started their long journey, Jerônimo had already lost four of his children. One of his daughters died giving birth to her third baby, her husband left the farm right after, leaving the three children with the grandparents. His three young sons left the farm separately, their destinies led them along different paths: one became a policeman, another became a criminal and the third one joined the army and later became a communist leader.

Strong dependency, paternalism, alienation, class and racial exploitation play important roles in this first part. The relationship between the landowner and his workers, and his power of *giving* and *taking away* as it suits him, are shown alongside the abyss-like difference between the landowner and workers' lifestyles. Living on the margins of the economic system, the farm workers try to please him as much as they can, hoping to get his sympathy and in so doing, get some benefits from this. They don't

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<sup>206</sup> According to Maria Tereza S. Petrone, between 1923 and 1929 more than 120.000 national immigrants entered São Paulo state, going to coffee farms. M. T. S. Petrone, "Imigração" [Immigration] in B. Fausto, *História Geral da civilização brasileira. III Período Republicano: sociedade e instituições (1889-1930)* [General history of Brazilian civilization. Republican period: society and institutions (1889-1930)], Rio de Janeiro, 5th. ed., 1997, pp. 93-133.

<sup>207</sup> Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 189. Author's translations from the original: "A fome comeu eles tudo pelo caminho."

fight for their rights, since they don't know they have any rights, except for Gregorio, who had shot at the manager when he gave them all a few days to leave the farm. Gregorio's crime does not imply any class conscience, but an emotional act in defence of all his work and plans for the future against the one he identifies as an enemy.

In the second part of the novel, *The Roads of Hope*, Amado describes different alternatives chosen by north-eastern Brazilians to survive and alleviate their poverty: criminality, religiosity, military service. João, the first son to leave the farm, engages himself as a policeman, fighting against armed groups that used to attack villages and rural properties, and killing, robbing, raping and torturing people. These bandits are called *jagunços* or *cangaceiros* and among them is José, the second brother, a famous outlaw feared all around.

The mythical idea of a “benevolent slavery” and a paternalist relationship between master and slaves, which has made the Brazilian elite so comfortable with its slavery past, is questioned by Jorge Amado when José comes to know about his family's fate and decides to take revenge. As explained by Freyre,<sup>208</sup> children of the master and the slaves would play together, and even be good friends, during their childhood. This relationship is fated to change in adult life, when those friends grow up on opposite sides. The band of *jagunços* arrives at the farm and set fire to the plantations and the big house. But José was longing to kill Colonel Aureliano. “He shot Aureliano that same day, but was not sure if he was dead. He stayed around, until getting the news that he only harmed his old playmate of childhood games...”<sup>209</sup>

The two brothers, José and João, followed opposite paths in their adulthood. They would finally meet when the *jagunços* were called to

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<sup>208</sup> G. Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* [Masters and slaves], Rio de Janeiro, 1988.

<sup>209</sup> J. Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 225. Author's translations from the original: “Atirou em Aureliano naquele mesmo dia mas não tinha certeza se o havia matado. Ficou rondando pelas proximidades até que soube que apenas ferira o seu antigo companheiro de correrias quando meninos.”

protect the “prophet” Estevão and his followers, including Aunt Zefa, who joined the group after running away in the *caatinga*. During the fight, José kills João, just another soldier in the darkness of night.<sup>210</sup>

In this region, the phenomenon of religious groups concentrated around a “prophet” was quite common, especially during crises, from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1950s. The “prophets” would go from village to village, announcing the end of the world, and urging people to repent their sins and pray for salvation. Among their followers were very poor families, criminals and other marginalized people (like the crazy Aunt Zefa). They would steal food (fruits, vegetables, cattle) from the neighbouring farms to feed themselves, and work on their common crop, as a type of primitive communism. Authorities fought against these groups, considering them a menace to the social and political order, because such activities would reduce the work force and encourage people not to pay taxes and not respect private property.

These religious groups, considered fanatics by the authorities, were quite common in this region, particularly during drought or other crises. Although they considered themselves Catholic Christians, the followers did not defer to the authority of the Vatican, claiming a return to the origins of Christianity. The destruction of the prophet Estevão’s village in *Red Harvest* seems to be inspired by Euclides da Cunha’s description of the defeat of Canudos, a village of “fanatic” religious people on which federal forces declared war in 1897, killing thousands of people in Bahia state.<sup>211</sup>

The novel also denounces government corruption and the fragility of the poor population. Attacked by *jagunços* or government soldiers,

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<sup>210</sup> The fight in the darkness is a metaphor for the political and social situation in Brazil. Divided brothers cannot recognize or identify each other. In their struggle, they kill themselves and make the dominant system stronger than ever. The author also shows how impotent revenge is when one decides to take justice individually. José chances of victory (as a class) lie on political and class organization, and that’s why Aureliano does not die when José shoots him.

<sup>211</sup> B. Fausto, *História concisa do Brasil* [A concise history of Brazil], São Paulo, 2001; E. Cunha, *Rebellion in the backlands*, Chicago, 1944; R. Facó, *Cangaceiros e fanáticos: gênese e lutas* [Cangaceiros and fanaticism: genesis and struggle], Rio de Janeiro, 1965.

peasants were pushed from their lands to the benefit of landowners and rich farmers. Although usually coming from peasant families, these criminals do not refrain from attacking, killing and raping other peasants. As referred to by Hobsbawn, they were:

... bands of men outside the range of law and authority (traditionally female are rare), violent and armed, imposed their will by extortion, robbery or otherwise on their victims. In doing so, banditry simultaneously challenges the economic, social and political order by challenging those who hold or lay claim to power, law and the control of resources.<sup>212</sup>

In the novel, the armed group to which José belongs attacks a small town, raping women and torturing men. The corruption of politicians is denounced when the senator shelters the group on his farm, and also gives them arms and money. Amado takes time in describing the *jagunço* lifestyle; without moral judgement the author shows that these bandits have no political affiliation, sympathy or perspective. They attack for revenge, for money or just “for fun”.

The Communist Party is presented as a system that would bring economic equality and social justice. The last chapter of the second part is dedicated to Juvêncio, the son who became a communist leader. His trajectory and discourses clearly explain the political party’s ideology and methodology to the readers. The author emphasizes equality among comrades, no racial or gender discrimination, a literacy campaign for peasants and total rejection of the accumulation of property.

Contrary to the pledges of communists to educate people from lower classes for the revolution, Jorge Amado wrote for middle and upper class readers. Historians show that the Communist Party in Brazil, despite its important role in the political process, failed in recruiting lower class followers. Working-class members were a minority among middle-class

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<sup>212</sup> E. Hobsbawn, *Bandits*, New York, 2000, p. 10.

intellectuals, students and military personnel, some of whom came from impoverished elitist north-eastern families<sup>213</sup>.

Juvêncio is caught and imprisoned in Ilha Grande<sup>214</sup> when the party was banned by dictator Getúlio Vargas, in 1936. There he had the opportunity to improve his knowledge of politics and philosophy with books and help from elder political inmates, and finally has time to dedicate himself only to study. After being granted amnesty<sup>215</sup>, he goes on another journey, back to his father's region, to recruit militants for a communist revolution.

In the epilogue, Tonho, the only child of the family who survived their journey to São Paulo, gets involved with communist ideas. This youth represents Amado's hope for the next generations to build a new nation with a communist government. The book was published right after the amnesty, and the last scene is set in the dawn, symbolically enforcing the idea of a new age, coming with the new day.

The symbolism of a journey and discovery of a different world beyond the limits of the community is also in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. But while Jerônimo's family seeks "the promised land", the journey taken by Father Stephen Kumalo – a Zulu Christian priest – goes from his "beloved" land towards hell, which is what Johannesburg represents for African natives, in Paton's view. It is a place where individuals lose their souls, as they lose their traditional values and ties. It is a city of sinners and evil, the priests of the Anglican Mission in Sophiatown advised the visitor.

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<sup>213</sup> B. Fausto, *História concisa do Brasil* [A concise history of Brazil], São Paulo, 2001, p. 175.

<sup>214</sup> The Ilha Grande (Big Island) Prison is now closed. It was located nearby Rio de Janeiro city, and it was the prison for political prisoners during the 1930s and 1940s. Many of Jorge Amado's friends and comrades were interned there.

<sup>215</sup> The Brazilian Communist Party (PCB – Partido Comunista Brasileiro) was banned between 1936 and 1945, when the Vargas dictatorship finished. Their freedom did not last much longer and the party was again banned from 1964 until 1984.

Although Paton acknowledges the strong influence of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* on *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the author's depiction of South African social problems through the lives of the black man Kumalo and the white man Jarvis was unique, and very welcome to American readers in a post-war world that was struggling to overcome racial policies and to understand the African claim for equality and justice. The novel was taken internationally as a wake-up call for racial inequalities in South Africa, becoming an instant bestseller and recommended reading in United States schools and universities.<sup>216</sup>

*Cry, the Beloved Country* was first published in New York, in 1948. There was a boom in the mining industry in South Africa, but it was also the time when South African Indians were fighting racial discrimination and exploitation under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, African miners went on strike for better salaries, as the wide gap between white and black workers' salaries became part of the political debate along the increasing criminality in the major cities. It was during the 1940s that the South African Communist Party increased its influence and the African National Congress increased its pressure for reforms<sup>217</sup>.

Kumalo travels around Johannesburg city and its surroundings, watching and listening to people talking about all the problems in the country. Most of the problems affect not only black people, but white and coloured people too. These included the bus boycott, unemployment, criminality, alcoholism, low quality of education and even lack of schools for the black population.

"This is a bitter journey",<sup>218</sup> Kumalo explains to his friend, Father Msimangu – the priest from Johannesburg who wrote asking him to come and rescue his sister Gertrude. The journey takes place when Father Kumalo has to leave his home after receiving a letter telling him that his sister is very ill in Johannesburg. Gertrude was one of many people who

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<sup>216</sup> P. Alexander, *Alan Paton: a biography*, Cape Town/Oxford, 1995.

<sup>217</sup> D. Posel, *The making of Apartheid, 1948-1961*, Oxford, 1991.

<sup>218</sup> A. Paton. *Cry, the beloved country*, London, 2002, p. 25.

left the village for the big city, never coming back. She went away with her son, looking for her husband, who left the village to work in the mines and never went back. Before her, John Kumalo, brother of Father Stephen Kumalo, and his wife had also left for the city. The last to leave was Father Kumalo's only son, Absalom.

In this novel, the patriarch does not lose his family throughout the journey, like Jerônimo, in *Red Harvest*; instead, he starts the journey to look for those already lost, “eaten by the city”, as he explains to his brother. The description of the Valley of Umzimkulu evokes the beauty and peacefulness of the land, in contrast to the descriptions of Johannesburg and its surrounding townships: noisy, filthy, dangerous, ugly places.

Paton's own religious beliefs are in the novel – in the Christian religiosity and extreme faith of Father Kumalo – and it is mixed together with his political views on South Africa's segregation. As Peter Alexander points out, the author had clear views on the racial problem, condemning racial prejudices and exploitation. However, for him, the solution to the so-called “native problem” in South Africa was to improve the standards of living in the reservations. This could prevent people from migrating to the cities, where they would be exposed to cultural disintegration and destruction of tribal and family ties.<sup>219</sup>

The writer faced no difficulty in depicting the criminality of black youth, being himself the director of a reformatory for young delinquents. The fate of Absalom can be seen as a synthesis of many cases of juvenile delinquency the author came across during his years at the institution. Broken families, early pregnancy, gangs, crime, going in and out of prisons, were some of the characteristics of young black people's trajectories witnessed by Paton in the reformatory.

Along his journey, the Zulu priest tries to understand what could possibly cause his people's loss of morality in the big city. Even though

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<sup>219</sup> P. Alexander, *Alan Paton: a biography*, Cape Town/Oxford, 1995.

religion is a very important aspect of this narrative, the author cannot help but discuss class conflict and economic exploitation as major factors of social injustices. The two main characters, the Zulu priest Stephen Kumalo and the white farmer James Jarvis, do not question European domination in South Africa or segregation policies per se. Whenever the problems of black people's poverty confronts white economic and attitudinal superiority, these characters emphasize the need for improving the lives of black people – by giving them assistance to fight soil erosion in rural areas or solving housing problems in urban environments.

Political and economic criticisms appear in the words of Father Msimangu, who recognizes that total segregation could be a solution if it brings the same quality of life and opportunities for self-improvement to whites and blacks:

“The white man has broken the tribe. And it is my belief – and again I ask your pardon – that it cannot be mended again. But the house that is broken, and the man that falls apart when the house is broken, these are tragic things. That is why children break the law and old white people are robbed and beaten. (...) It suits the white man to break the tribe, he continued gravely. But it has not suited him to build something in the place of what was broken.”<sup>220</sup>

Also, John Kumalo, who is clearly a political leader of black people opposed to South African policies, puts more emphasis on the economic roots of racism. In a public speech, he claims that black people should get their share of the gold extracted from South African mines:

“It is important to find more gold, they say, for all South Africa is built on the mines. (...) But it is not built on the mines (...) it is built on our backs, on our sweat, on our labour. Every factory, every theatre, every beautiful house, they are built by us.”<sup>221</sup>

Analyzing South African liberal novels, Tony Morphet has pointed that novels such as *Cry, the Beloved Country* “sought to explore the ways in which life-sustaining bonds could be forged between people across the

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<sup>220</sup> A. Paton, *Cry, the beloved country*, London, 2002, p. 25.

<sup>221</sup> *Idem*, p. 35.

racialised lines of division.”<sup>222</sup> He also refers to Jarvis and Kumalo as “aliens living together in the same place”, a reflection of black and white relationships in South Africa<sup>223</sup>. This is very clear in the novel, as Jarvis has difficulty in recognizing Kumalo when they first meet in Johannesburg, despite having been neighbours for more than 30 years.

This first dialogue between them shows how social barriers would prevent an individual from the most banal act of solidarity, such as helping to pick up his dropped papers. A crime involving their two only sons unites them when young Absalom, a thief, kills Arthur, the head of a family, engaged in the fight against black people’s marginality.

As each father tries to understand the causes of that crime and the lives of their sons, Kumalo discovers the marginality of African populations in the townships of Johannesburg and the high incidence of crime, drugs and prostitution that had dragged down his relatives in the big city. James understands that his son was a liberal who believed in equality for all races and had a very strong opinion about the roots of criminality in South Africa.

As James Jarvis read the writings of his son, he understands Arthur’s criticism of the exploitation of African natives’ labour, the educational policies that keep them unskilled and then justify their low salaries and positions; and the destruction of families as men are forced to leave the reserves to seek work in mines, leaving children, women and old men behind. Arthur also emphasizes that if the destruction of tribal life was important to establish “civilization”, it does not exclude the need to rebuild something to replace the old system, something of which African people could feel worthy.

Indeed, historians have found that the exploitation of labour, together with intensive control and use of land, have played an important

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<sup>222</sup> T. Morphet, “Stranger fictions: trajectories in the liberal novel”, *World Literature Today*, 70(1), 1996, p. 53.

<sup>223</sup> *Idem*, p. 54.

role in strengthening the economy of modern states. Moreover, within the process of nation-building, racial groups have been selected as labor to be exploited by another group, which tries to monopolize wealth and political power. Fernando Rosa Ribeiro, in his studies of racial policies and the construction of an independent state in Brazil, South Africa and Suriname, emphasizes that a well-defined policy towards race, migration and population control is of crucial importance for nation-building and the maintenance of power in the hands of an elite<sup>224</sup>. He also points out that, since colonial times, citizenship in South Africa did not incorporate African ethnic groups. Ideologically, the concepts of citizenship and civil rights were essentially white.<sup>225</sup>

Racial exclusion in South Africa, as in Brazil, started with the possession of land and exploitation of native groups as cheap labour. Cry, *the Beloved Country* reflects the political debate on native migration to the cities. In 1946, an official report revealed that the harsh living conditions in reserved areas were driving an increasing number of men, women and children to the cities, because the quality and size of reserved areas were not enough to feed those families<sup>226</sup>. On the other hand, white farmers, and mine and factory owners were very keen on having an abundant source of cheap labour, which contributed to low quality of life in rural and urban areas.

It is through the voice of James Jarvis that Paton discusses the South African dilemma concerning land ownership and labour. The farmer also uses people from the native village of Ndotsheni – Kumalo’s village – as a source of labor. He thinks about the scarcity of growing food in the

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<sup>224</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, A construção da nação (pós) colonial: África do Sul e Suriname, 1933-1948 [The construction of the (post) colonial nation: South Africa and Suriname, 1933-1948], *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 3, 2002, pp. 483-512.

<sup>225</sup> F. Rosa Ribeiro, Apartheid e democracia racial: raça e nação no Brasil e África do Sul [Apartheid and racial democracy: race and nation in Brazil and South Africa], *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 24, 1993, pp. 95-120.

<sup>226</sup> D. Posel, *The making of Apartheid, 1948-1961*, Oxford, 1991; L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*. New Haven/London, 2001; and C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa: conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005; J. S. Bergh, “We must never forget where we came from”: The Bafokeng and their land in the nineteenth century Transvaal, *History in Africa* 32, 2005, pp.95-115.

reserves, due to the eroded soil and the lack of technological know-how among the natives. Each year, more and more young people leave the village for the city, and this creates a cycle, since those who are left behind cannot make the soil flourish as it once did.

“Some people said there must to be more education, but a boy with education did not want to work in the farms, and went off to the towns to look for more congenial occupation. (...) Some said there was too little land anyway, and that the natives could not support themselves on it, even with the most progressive methods of agriculture. But there were many sides to such a question. For if they got more land, and treated it as they treated what they had already, the country would turn into a desert. And where was the land to come from, and who would pay for it? And (...) if they got more land, and if by some chance they could make a living from it, who would work on the white men’s farms?”<sup>227</sup>

Poverty and marginality in the townships are extensively explored by the author, as he describes living conditions in Alexandra and Sophiatown. Prostitution, promiscuity, illegal production of liquor, broken families, neglected children and crime are shown as consequences of uncontrolled urbanization and migration. The case of Alexandra calls for special attention, as this township played a very important role in resisting apartheid in the eighties.

Paton describes Alexandra ambiguously: it is a place of crime and evil, and it was also a place where a black man could have a home outside the reserves.

“But the streets are not cared for, and there were no lights, and so great was the demand for accommodation that every man if he could, built rooms in his yard and sub-let them to others. Many of these rooms were hide-outs for thieves and robbers, and there was much prostitution and brewing of illicit liquor.

These things are so bad, said Msimangu that the white people of Orange Grove and Norwood and Highlands North got up a great petition to do away with the place altogether.”<sup>228</sup>

Priest Msimangu’s description of Alexandra is confirmed in Belinda Bozzoli’s book about the role of this township in fighting

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<sup>227</sup> A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, London, 2002, p. 113-14.

<sup>228</sup> *Idem*, p. 41.

apartheid. The researcher refers to overpopulated yards, poverty and criminality during the 1940s through the 1960s, when the township had several gangs, of young men. However, it was from places like this that resistance came and grew, challenging apartheid. “Bus boycotts focused upon the essential geographical connection between the secluded and excluded space of the township and the wider city which sought to draw upon its labour but refused to embrace its people.”<sup>229</sup>

In fact, Father Kumalo and his friend had a difficult time trying to get to Alexandra, due to the bus boycott, part of the earliest repertoire of non-violent resistance. In a society where wages for blacks were so low, a slight rise in the prices of transportation, which was a daily necessity – to get back and forth to work – could destroy individual or family finances. Poverty is the reason behind the boycotts, as explained by a young politician who tried to convince the priests to avoid the buses:

“– Men as old as you are doing it everyday, umfundisi. And women, and some that are sick, and some crippled, and children. They start walking at four in the morning, and they do not get back till eight at night. They have a bite of food, and their eyes are hardly closed on the pillow before they must stand up again, sometimes to start off with nothing but hot water in their stomachs. I cannot stop you taking a bus, umfundisi, but this is cause to fight for. If we lose it, then they will have to pay more in Sophiatown and Claremont and Kliptown and Pimville.”<sup>230</sup>

Paton illustrates the economic growth of Johannesburg by depicting its busy streets, tall buildings, shops and factories, like the one in which Absalom had found a job, which he later abandoned. According to Feinstein, commercial and industrial development in the 1940s was reinforced and sustained by the gold mining industry.<sup>231</sup> Thompson remarks that black workers concentrate around Johannesburg, hoping for a

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>230</sup> A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, London, 2002, p. 40.

<sup>231</sup> C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa: conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005.

better life, because mining and manufacturing industries would pay higher wages than white farmers<sup>232</sup>.

Unlike Jorge Amado, who found in communist corporative and political organization a solution for racial exclusion in Brazil, Alan Paton relies on individual initiative and commitment with the country's development and peace. In spite of suggesting that black and white men could work together, "desiring only the good of their country", in the novel, Msimangu does not trust black politicians:

"... when a black man gets power, when he gets money, he is a great man if he is not corrupted. I have seen it often. He seeks power and money to put right what is wrong, and when he gets them, why, he enjoys the power and the money. (...) Some of us think when we have the power, we shall revenge ourselves on the white man who has had power, and because our desire is corrupt, we are corrupted, and the power has no heart in it."<sup>233</sup>

Many voices are heard in the novel, reflecting distinct positions towards the social problem, such as more restrictive norms for migration, the intensification of the pass law to discourage black people from coming to the city, stronger control over black populations in urban areas, destruction of townships such as Alexandra, and killing black political leaders. Some of these views became reality after the Nationalist Party assumed power and institutionalised apartheid.

Because he rejected the idea of revolution, social and economic change, in Paton's vision, would come from white people helping black people to get a better life in towns and to improve living conditions in the reservations. By the end of the story, Jarvis understands, by reading his son's writings and listening to his grandson, that it is his duty to put some effort into improving the lives of his neighbours. And he uses his influence to bring technical assistance, getting a new teacher, re-building the old church and distributing milk to those families who have children.

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<sup>232</sup> L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, New Haven/London, 2001. The industrial growth is also analyzed by E. Webster, in *Cast in a racial mould. Labour process and trade unionism in the foundries*, Johannesburg, 1985.

<sup>233</sup> A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, London, 2002, p. 37.

Despite the tragedy, there is a happy ending. Kumalo goes back to his homeland to live with his wife, his son's girlfriend, who is pregnant, and the young son of his sister, who decided to stay in the city. The new generation is the hope for South Africa. Only they can change the future, since the intermediate generation is lost when Arthur was murdered and Absalom executed for his crime.

Descriptions of black people's oppression and their lives in ghettos in *Cry, the Beloved Country* appear as impressions from a traveller from outside. Metaphorically, one could say that when Paton describes those townships, he is passing by in his European-only carriage, in a train that will take him back to town safely. He describes the view that he observes through his window; he is obviously touched by it, and his description is tragic. Yet, his experiences concerned with that environment are gleaned from the newspapers, stories and reports he read and listened to as a director of a reformatory for black delinquents. The author acknowledges this lack of closeness, comparing himself to James Jarvis. He is not a racist, and yet, cultural patterns and policy constraint have prevented him from reaching out to black friends, even before apartheid was officially adopted in the country.<sup>234</sup>

#### 4.3 – Race as class in the urban context

Peter Abrahams, also proposed the union of blacks and whites for a new South Africa. He also points out that this union could start with the working class organizing themselves for better work conditions, instead of whites and blacks, South African natives and African immigrants, white South Africans and European immigrants competing for better salaries and jobs.

It was also in 1946 that one of his most famous novels, *Mine Boy*, was published. Written outside South Africa, it reflects Abrahams'

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<sup>234</sup> P. Alexander, *Alan Paton: a biography*, Cape Town/Oxford, 1995.

experiences during his childhood and youth. Different from Paton's novel, this story describes the South African social dilemma from the black people's point of view. For this reason, all the characters presented in *Mine Boy* are actively trying to survive despite the odds.

*Mine Boy* is a story of a young man and his personal journey of transformation from a shy teenager coming from tribal life growing into a man, conscious of social exclusion and labour exploitation, which affect all black people in South Africa.

What Paton described as a dangerous and evil place is a safe haven for Xuma. Liquor sellers, drunken men and women, criminals, teachers, miners, policemen and even a medical doctor are all black, living in the ghetto, helping each other, sometimes hurting each other. They easily became the family and friends this young man found in Vrededorp, among all the miseries surrounding that township.

It is through the township people that Xuma finds his job in the mines. Living in the city's outskirts, the young man understands for the first time what discrimination, exclusion, exploitation and racism are. Abrahams uses all characters in this story to expose the life of black people in Johannesburg.

The fate of African workers in gold mines is clear from the beginning of Xuma's experience in Camp Malay and Vrededorp. As he explains to Leah, the liquor seller, why he left his village:

"- I came for work. There is no work where I come from. And here, they say, there is much work.

- Where will you work?

- In the mines. It is a man's work.

Leah shook her head and poured herself a drink.

- The mines are no good, Xuma, later on you cough and then you spit blood and you become weak and die. I have seen it many times. Today you are young and strong, and tomorrow you are thin and ready to die."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> P. Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Johannesburg, 1989, p. 5.

The load of work, the danger and the risks of tuberculosis, which have been in many official documents and historical studies about South Africa, are described in the novel as Xuma starts to work in the mine and notices the abysmal differences between black and white workers.<sup>236</sup> In fact, the distinction between black and white workers starts with the title of the novel: *Mine Boy*. A South African black man was always called “boy”, in the same way a black woman was always called “a girl”, no matter what their age was. It is a way to reaffirm their inferiority, their dependence. Abrahams denounces the discrimination and paternalism that persists even in well-intentioned white people. In the words of Di, a white lady:

“So many people who consider themselves progressive have their own notion about the native, but they all have one thing in common. They want to decide who the good native is and they want to do good things for him. ... They want to lead him. To tell him what to do. They want to think for him and he must accept your thoughts.”<sup>237</sup>

The paternalism denounced by Abrahams is in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. It is evident in Jarvis’ attitude as he comes to help the black community. The white farmer does not work with the African priest. He does things for him. Paton’s African characters have little autonomy and depend totally on white people’s understanding and help. Their humanity comes from suffering, while white humanity comes from understanding.

In *Mine Boy*, communism and unionism represent a possibility of change. Paddy is a white communist from Ireland who understands discrimination and sees all workers as equals, no matter if they are black or white. He argues that a better society without racial differences could be

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<sup>236</sup> T. D. Moodie, *Going for gold. Men, mines and migration*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1994; Z. Magubane, “Mines, minstrels, and masculinity: race class, and the formation of the South African working class, 1870-1900”, *The Journal of Men Studies* 10(3), 2002, online version: [www.questia.com/PM.qst?action=print&docId=5000773866](http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?action=print&docId=5000773866), retrieved at 2006-2-23.

<sup>237</sup> P. Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Johannesburg, 1989, p. 68.

achieved through the union of black and white workers. The idea is clear in the dialogue between Xuma and Paddy about apartheid:

“- Johannes is black like me and he knows Elisa left me because of the white man, he knows Leah is in jail because of that. When he is sober there is a great unhappiness in his heart because he knows these things.

- There is always great unhappiness in my heart.

- You are white.

- I am a man first. I want you to be a man first and then a black man. (...) It is not good to think only as a black man or as a white man. The white people in this country think only as white people and that is why they do this harm to your people.

- Then, I must think as a black man.

- No. You must think as a man first. You must be a man first and then a black man. And if it is so you will understand as a black man and also as a white man. (...) When you understand that you will be a man with freedom inside your breast. It is only those who are free inside who can help free those around them.”<sup>238</sup>

The final chapter is the beginning of a strike in the mines, with Xuma leading the black workers in a protest against the dangerous conditions of their job. Paddy stays on his side, against the rest of the white miners, who do not want to get involved in the Africans’ movement. Optimistically, Abrahams finishes his novel proposing a new beginning, with the union of white and black people for a better future. His position is a response to some labour activists in South Africa who had proclaimed a division based on racial differences, with privileges for white workers.<sup>239</sup>

Paton refers to the black miners’ unionism. As Jarvis struggles to understand the roots of criminality in South Africa, he is given the explanation that migration and rural exodus are causing the disintegration

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<sup>238</sup> *Idem*, pp. 172-73.

<sup>239</sup> The limits of solidarity between black and white workers in South Africa are analyzed by Feinstein. The author pointed out this problem in the 1920s, when “white miners and their supporters marched under the banner ‘WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE AND FIGHT FOR A WHITE SOUTH AFRICA’ ”. C. H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa. Conquest, discrimination and development*, New York, 2005, p. 81.

of tribal values, leading black people to rebellion. The strike is one example of this kind of behaviour.

By the second decade of the twentieth century in Brazil, Lima Barreto was starting to come into contact with communist ideas, even though the novelist was quite pessimistic about the possibility of a black political organization. In *Recollections of the Klerk Isaías Caminha*, the author denounces discrimination, exclusion, poverty and illiteracy among the black population.

Isaías Caminha also comes from a rural village to find a job in the big city. His dreams were to get a good job in a governmental office and attend law school. His good education, however, did not get him anything, since his brown skin was always an obstacle for getting better jobs. The young man, despite his intellectual capacity, has to accept a job as a clerk at a small newspaper.

Brazil has no townships. It has poor neighbourhoods located at the edge of the towns or cities, called *subúrbios* – which, by the way are very different from American suburbs and more like the Latin American *barrios*. Isaías lives in a small room in a house in the *subúrbio*, and describes the view from his window. Again, the solidarity and violence appear beside the striking poverty of black and coloured people.

“It amazed me that these people could live, fighting starvation, sickness and civilization. That they could have energy to live surrounded by so many deprivations and difficulties. I don’t know what strange stubbornness makes them live, and why this was as strong as their misery and humility. In the house lived a young black woman that could survive long days without food, badly surviving from what she could get prostituting herself to other miserable people like herself.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> A. Lima Barreto, *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha*, São Paulo, 1995, p. 128. Author’s translation from the original: “Admirava-me que essa gente pudesse viver, lutando contra a fome, contra a moléstia e contra a civilização; que tivesse energia para viver cercada de tantos males, de tantas privações e dificuldades. Não sei que estranha tenacidade a leva a viver e por que essa tenacidade é tanto mais forte quanto mais humilde e miserável. Vivia na casa uma rapariga preta que suportava dias inteiros de fome, mal vivendo do que lhe dava uma miserável prostituição”.

The harsh conditions of the black population living in extreme poverty, according to the author, would prevent any broader view about their lives, while their lack of education would make it impossible to understand politics or unionism. Although the clerk admired the Russian journalist who helped him to get that job, he saw him as a lonely and brave soul among other corrupted minds.

Lima Barreto emphasizes individual action to improve one's own life and the importance of family. The clerk keeps remembering his mother, father, uncle and aunt. Although he owes his education to his father, a white priest, the support for him to finish his education and leave the place for the capital city came from his coloured relatives. The novel is a response to racial ideologies that proclaimed black and coloured people had no family ties and were destined to vanish over the years.

"I noticed that he [his boss in the newspaper] was amazed that I had a mother, that I was born in a family environment and that I was educated. For him, this was extraordinary. What I thought was extraordinary in my adventures, he found natural. But that I had a mother who taught me to use a fork, this was exceptional."<sup>241</sup>

For many years, Brazilian sociology has described black families as dysfunctional and unstable. Poverty, illiteracy and economic exclusion, according to Florestan Fernandes, were the main factors driving black families in Brazil to alcoholism, prostitution, crime and marginality<sup>242</sup>. It reflected how common sense and prejudice contaminate academia.

In contrast to Fernandes' description of black people's lives, and probably as a response to general prejudices against blacks and coloureds in Brazil, in Barreto's novel *Isaías* is the only one who does not drink, gamble or have sex with prostitutes. As the clerk witnesses some of the white characters drunk in a brothel, he gets a promotion and becomes a

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<sup>241</sup> *Idem*, p. 157. Author's translation from the original: "Percebi que o espantava muito o dizer-lhe que tivera mãe, que nascera num ambiente familiar e que me educara. Isso, para ele, era extraordinário. O que me parecia extraordinário nas minhas aventuras, ele achava natural; mas eu ter uma mãe que me ensinasse a comer com o garfo, isso era excepcional."

<sup>242</sup> F. Fernandes, *The negro in Brazilian society*, New York, 1969.

journalist. However, he despises himself for having to go so low to achieve his goal, and without fulfilling his family's plans for him.

The novel ends at night. Isaías acknowledges that life in the city has also corrupted him, and decides to move back to the countryside, to a small town where he can start his own family.

Lima Barreto is the first writer to depict Brazilian racism “from inside”. All the insidious forms of discrimination practiced in Brazil for more than a century are described in his novels. In fact, through the clerk's experiences of social rejection and inferiority, the Brazilian invisible racial barriers are revealed<sup>243</sup>. A good example of this attitude is when Isaías Caminha, despite his education, decides to take any job available, and applies for a position at a bakery. The owner, a white man, dismisses him because of his appearance. Without any remark about his race, the employer just says: “You do not suit me”.

Despite the absence of laws supporting racial discrimination, Arthur F. Corwin points out the Brazilian type of discrimination against job applicants during the 1940s, when job vacancy advertisements would specify: “no coloured need to apply”. In 1951, the Brazilian government approved a law prohibiting racial discrimination. However, employers still used different strategies to keep black and coloured people from competing for jobs, such as the expression “candidates must have good appearance” in recruitment advertising.<sup>244</sup> Organizations and institutions linked with the black movement in Brazil have condemned this practice since the 1980s.

Race and class must be considered together as important components of social relations in South Africa and Brazil. Historical and

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<sup>243</sup> See: L. B. Rout Jr., “Brazil: study in black, brown and beige”, in A. Simpson, R. M. Levine and J. J. Crocitti, *The Brazil reader – history, culture, politics*, Durham, 1999, pp. 367-73; C. M. de Jesus, “Growing up black in Minas Gerais”, in A. Simpson, R. M. Levine and J. J. Crocitti, *The Brazil reader – history, culture, politics*, Durham, 1999, pp. 359-364; and M. Hanchard, “Black Cinderella? Race and the public sphere in Brazil”, in M. Hanchard (ed.), *Racial politics in contemporary Brazil*, Durham, 1999, pp. 169-89.

<sup>244</sup> A. F. Corwin, “Afro-Brazilians: myths and realities”, in R. B. Toplin, *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, Westport/London, 1974, pp. 385-437.

sociological studies, as well as the novels of both countries have proved that racial discrimination in both societies lies in the roots of an internal colonialism. Moreover, racial exploitation and discrimination have contributed to economic development.

In South Africa, a clear system of segregation has pushed black and coloured populations to the margins of towns and cities. In Brazil, economic restrictions and policies of urban development have done the exact same thing, pushing black and coloured populations to the slums (called *favelas*) situated on the periphery of towns, on the hills or riverbanks. In both cases, “marginal” became “criminal”, and life in such places is characterized by its fragility and cheapness.

Paton and Barreto depict the lives of these marginal populations with a dose of pessimism, although Barreto identifies family ties and solidarity among them. Amado and Abrahams, inspired by communist and socialist ideas, create in their novels the possibility of overcoming marginality through solidarity and, in Amado’s novel specially, political organization.

Peter Abrahams reunites a black, a coloured and a Jewish man in *The Path of Thunder* as a group of friends that criticizes their marginal position and dreams about a new society with all people living in harmony. The fact that those three men are intellectuals shows that, for Abrahams, transformation would only come through education.

Jorge Amado traces in *Jubiabá* the life of Antônio Balduino, a black boy growing up partly in the slum watching the lights of the city, partly in the white man’s house, as a kind of servant. Balduino faces the typical tragedies of black people’s lives: the premature death of his relatives, labour exploitation, physical abuse, marginality and criminality.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> J. Amado, *Jubiabá*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978.

The novel explores the idea that even when leaving the slum to live in the city, the black man is still a marginalized person. He has no education, no job, no house or dignity. The only source of respect Balduino gets is the fear that other marginal and the white people have of his physical strength. *Jubiabá* is considered one of the boldest writings of Jorge Amado. In 1935, the author started his story with the defeat of a German boxer by Balduino, the black hero from the slums. As analyzed by Celso Oliveira:

The central intention of the novel, then, is to show the development of a hero with an enlightened political consciousness through a character who starts with the odds against him. What about Jubiabá? He is a very old man... a *pai-de-santo* who protects Balduino. This *candomblé* priest is a mentor to the hero, and his presence allows the author to widen the perspective of the scene by describing the religious ceremonies and other African customs (...) that make Bahia the extraordinary place that is.<sup>246</sup>

The decade of the 1930s in Brazil is marked by Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship. Although historians consider his government to be populist, the dictator used political and military force to destroy African religions and accused the followers of witchcraft and barbarism. This policy generated a strong movement in defence of *candomblé*, which was marked by the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress, which occurred in 1937 in Salvador-Bahia. Jorge Amado participated actively during the congress, while Gilberto Freyre accused the communists of taking it over.<sup>247</sup> The Communist Party decided to support the congress as part of their strategy of giving power to the people. The defence of *candomblé* in Bahia was the defence of popular culture. It was also the recognition that the black population in Brazil comprised the lower class and it was numerically significant.

Balduino grew up in the slums, amidst poverty. Taken in by a well-to-do family, the boy becomes a kind of servant. However, his intelligence

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<sup>246</sup> C. L. de Oliveira, "The early Jorge Amado", in K. Brower, E. E. Fitz and E. Martinez-Vidal, *Jorge Amado: new critical essays*, New York/London, 2001, p. 164.

<sup>247</sup> J. BRAGA, *Na gamela do feitiço: repressão e resistência nos candomblés da Bahia* [In the witches' tray: repression and resistance in Bahia's candomblés], Salvador, 1995.

would have taken him to a better position in the family business if was not for the white maid who falsely accuses him of watching Lindinalva, the master's daughter, taking a bath. After being severely flogged, Balduino runs away and becomes a young criminal (he steals small amounts of money or food), homeless and living on the streets of Salvador.

Discovered by a boxing manager, he becomes a winner, but still a *marginal*<sup>248</sup>. Like Xuma, his life is definitively transformed when he gets a job as a stevedore in Salvador's docks and finally joins the strike. In fact, the port workers, and particularly the stevedores, were already strongly organized in the Brazilian ports of Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Santos during the last decades of the nineteenth century. It is also predominantly a profession for black men, and it was common to recruit them from among petty criminals like Balduino. A similar system of leadership to that seen in *Mine Boy*, with a physically and morally strong man leading a group of workers, was used on the Brazilian docks.<sup>249</sup>

Again in *Jubiabá*, the strike unites all men for a greater purpose. Amado states that Balduino leads the strike not only on behalf of all black men, all ex-slaves, but also for a better life for all humanity, for all poor men. As pointed out by Ana Rosa Ramos, there is commitment that crosses racial lines, and this is illustrated in the novel by the adoption of Lindinalva's white baby by Balduino after her death.<sup>250</sup>

Through the decades, historians have debated if racial exclusion is a cultural or an economic issue, without giving a conclusive answer to this

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<sup>248</sup> In Brazilian Portuguese, *marginal* is equally an outlaw or somebody that lives on the edges of the social order.

<sup>249</sup> With regard to the political organization of Brazilian stevedores see: J. J. REIS, "De olho no canto: trabalho de rua na Bahia na véspera da Abolição" [Watching the corner: street work in Bahia on the eve of abolition], *Afro-Ásia* 24, 2000, pp. 199-242; M. C. Velasco e Cruz, "Tradições negras na formação de um sindicato: sociedade de resistência dos trabalhadores em trapiche e café, Rio de Janeiro, 1905-1930" [Black traditions in the formation of a syndicate: organized resistance of dockworkers in Rio de Janeiro 1905-1930], *Afro-Ásia* 24, 2000, pp. 243-290; and C. E. L. Soares, *A negregada instituição: os capoeiras na corte imperial, 1850-1890* [A "nigger" institution: capoeiras in the imperial court, 1850-1890], Rio de Janeiro, 1999.

<sup>250</sup> A. R. Ramos, "Desigualdade e exclusão em Jubiabá" [Inequality and exclusion in Jubiabá], in *Colóquio Jorge Amado: 70 anos de Jubiabá*. Salvador, 2006, pp.57-73.

problem. Authors such as Fernandes and Terreblanche have used statistics to prove that black and coloured populations in Brazil and South Africa have been systematically excluded and exploited by capitalist economies and that both countries owe their development to these populations that are still at the bottom of the economic pyramid. On the other hand, Moura, Cooney, Skidmore and MacDonald argue that racism has a very strong cultural component in both societies and that it goes beyond economic exploitation.<sup>251</sup>

Arguments and opinions keep growing and expanding their reach, through distinct approaches in each article, book, seminar or conference. However, what brings historians and sociologists together is the fact that cultural and economic roots of racism are still contributing to its prevalence. Whether racism is a cultural problem that contributes to economic exploitation, or whether it is a matter of economic exploitation by one group of human beings of another that ended up building a culture of social exclusion and racial discrimination, it has not been conclusively answered yet.

In the novels analyzed for this particular study, authors have exposed clearly that racism contains cultural and economic factors and manifestations. In South Africa and Brazil, black and coloured people are the majority at the bottom level of the social pyramid, even though these two societies have different views and approaches to the racial phenomenon. Brazil went down the path of miscegenation, while South Africa chose segregation. In both cases, these societies were judging not only political and economic relations, but also sexual and emotional relationship between individuals belonging to different racial groups.

The dynamics of these relationships have been in the heart of novels all around the world, but it is in Brazilian and South African

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<sup>251</sup> F. Fernandes, "Beyond poverty: the Negro and mulatto in Brazil", in R. B. TOPLIN, *Slavery and race relations in Latin America*, Westport/London, 1974, pp. 277-97; S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa, 1652 – 2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; C. Moura, *Dialética radical do Brasil Negro* [Radical dialectic of Black Brazil], São Paulo, 1994; P. L. Cooney, "Brazil: where class is more important than race? Are they crazy?" <<http://members.aol.com/plcooney/brazil.html>> Access: 2005-12-03.

literature that one can depict how social and economic factors can be entangled in individuals' feelings.

## CHAPTER V

### RACIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN LOVE AND SEXUAL AFFAIRS

When comparing the cultural history of Brazil and South Africa, specifically on the subject of interracial love or sexual relationships, it is easy to fall for the idealistic Brazilian option for miscegenation and South African obsession with segregation and “pure white race”. However, a deeper analysis of the thoughts and practices of both societies shows contradictions and challenges that these nations faced while building their images as “modern states”.

In a period when white skin translated into “civilization”, “superiority” and “modernity”, while black skin meant “wild”, “inferior” and “backwards”, miscegenation was viewed as a menace to social development. The fear of miscegenation plays an important role in eugenics and the western concern with racial degeneration and social disorder that marked the late nineteenth century. As pointed out by Dubow, the “imaginary of degeneration” related to interracial sex was part of the anxieties of Victorian societies around the world.<sup>252</sup>

This chapter analyzes the issues concerned with interracial sex in Brazil and South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century and how they are presented in the selected novels. Because miscegenation is a theme surrounded by feelings of rejection/attraction, which cannot be explained uniquely from the point of view of eugenics or laws, the use of novels helps to explore cultural constructions, how they imposed barriers to romantic feelings, and – at the same time – created the sexual desire between black and white.

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<sup>252</sup> S. Dubow, *Scientific racism in South Africa*, New York, 1995.

## 5.1 – Miscegenation and the sexual fear

Michel Foucault, in his analysis of power and sexuality, introduces the idea of a connection between political power and sexual control over populations, including the establishment of marriage policies and birth control.<sup>253</sup> Although his hypothesis is based on European experiences, it can be applied to colonial experiences as well, where authorities used sexual and marriage control to stop the increase in the mixed population, which could jeopardize the status of the white elite.<sup>254</sup>

Historically, religions and governments have tried to control sexuality and ruled over marriages with limited success, because it is a matter of intimacy, an issue reserved for the private arena, even though it can affect the public domain as it links the individual and the family, and the broader concerns of race and class.<sup>255</sup>

The word “miscegenation” in South African culture was, for a long time, affiliated with negative associations of sin, decay, perversity, shame, and filth and so on. Particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century and during the apartheid regime, the idea of miscegenation was associated with the “black peril”, what some authors refer to as the white sexual fear of black people.<sup>256</sup>

For Brazilians, on the contrary, miscegenation is the definition of their culture and society. The idea of mixed races was, since the 1930s particularly, associated with strong people, democracy, tolerance and adaptability.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> M. Foucault, *History of sexuality – the will of power*, New York, 1978.

<sup>254</sup> A. L. Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power. Race and the intimate in colonial rule*, London, 2002.

<sup>255</sup> S. Dubow, *Scientific racism in modern South Africa*, New York, 1995.

<sup>256</sup> P. Blair, “That ‘ugly word’: miscegenation and the novel in preApartheid South Africa”, *Modern Fiction Studies* 49(3), Fall 2003, p. 581; J.M. Coetzee, “The mind of Apartheid: Geoffrey Cronjé” *Social Dynamics* 17(1), 1991, pp. 1-35.

<sup>257</sup> G. Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala* [Master and slaves], Rio de Janeiro, 1933; K. Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade nacional versus identidade negra* [Re-discussing miscegenation in Brazil: national identity versus black identity], Petrópolis, RJ, 1999; L. Martinez-Echazábal, “O culturalismo dos anos 30 no Brasil e na

In both countries, black and coloured populations outnumbered whites, and this characteristic was at the centre of their attitudes toward miscegenation. Because they feared becoming a “coloured country”, white South Africans condemned mixed-race relations to safeguard racial purity and therefore, their culture and hegemony in the country.

On the other shore of the Atlantic, Brazilians embraced the idea of miscegenation, hoping to become a white nation. Since the “pure white” was the minority, to condemn “coloureds” was equivalent to condemning more than 90 per cent of the population, many of whom were part of the hegemonic power. Also, because in Brazil race is determined by physical features and not by genetics, a policy of segregation or racial discrimination that officially excluded all non-whites would divide families and definitely bring the country to civil war.

The difficulty on finding a “pure white” in Brazil is expressed in the argument of João Batista Lacerda in 1911. He argued against the hypothesis that it would take between six to seven centuries to accomplish the ideal of whitening, when indigenous, black and coloured populations would totally disappear. According to Lacerda, to achieve this goal, the process of miscegenation should be absolutely controlled to avoid mixed-race people engaging again in relationships with indigenous, black or darker-coloured people. “The total disappearance of Indians, blacks and coloured would happen only if all the future miscegenation included a partner with **extremely fair skin (if not white)**...”<sup>258</sup>

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América Latina: deslocamento retórico ou mudança conceitual?” [The culturalism in the 30s in Brazil and Latin America: rhetoric dislocation or conceptual change?], in M. C. Maio and R.V. Santos (org.), *Raça, ciência e Sociedade* [Race, science and society], Rio de Janeiro, 1996, pp. 107-24.

<sup>258</sup> J. B. Lacerda, *Sur les metis au Bresil*, as quoted by K. Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade nacional versus identidade negra* [Re-discussing miscegenation in Brazil: national identity versus black identity], Petrópolis, RJ, 1999, p. 53: “O desaparecimento total do índio, do negro e do mestiço poderia ocorrer, apenas, se toda a miscigenação futura incluir um parceiro extremamente claro (senão branco)...”. Translation and emphasis by the author. Please note that when the author refers to a white partner, he is talking about physical characteristics, instead of genetic inheritance. This argument clearly denotes that in Brazil racism is not exactly determined by genetic inheritance but by appearance, in contrast to the “one drop” rule adopted in the United States.

An immature analysis of Brazilian and South African attitudes on the racial question would generate a conclusion that white South Africans avoided miscegenation, while Brazilians openly accepted every mixed couple, which is not true. As previously mentioned, in South Africa miscegenation occurred since the first colonial encounters, and Brazilians have developed some “conditions” or “patterns” to accept mixed relationships – usually related to economic power and gender domination. To analyze this phenomenon in both societies it is necessary to understand the representations of gender and race and their influence on how these cultures deal with love and sexual affairs between men and women of different racial backgrounds.

The representations of black men and women are marked by a past of slavery and exploitation, as well as by the fear of retribution. On many different occasions, black people – enslaved or not – organized in groups or as individuals have attacked farms in revenge for the social and economic conditions imposed on them by the dominant class. In this case, physical assault followed by homicide was the most common fate of farmers attacked by black rebels.<sup>259</sup> The myth of black rapists attacking white women grew since abolition in both countries, and travelled from rural to urban areas. However, from the nineteenth century, the term “black peril” became a synonym of the white fear of the imagined African hyper sexuality, as pointed out by Krista O’Donnell:

The term ‘black peril’ refers to settlers panic based upon subject men’s alleged plots to rape Western women. Rape paranoia erupted periodically during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in most of the European colonies in Africa and Asia, as well as the American South.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> J. D. Smith, “Segregation at the age of Jim Crow”, in J. D. Smith (ed.), *When did southern segregation begin? From slavery to segregation*, Boston/New York, 2002, pp. 3-41; H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003; A. L. Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power. Race and the intimate in colonial rule*, London, 2002.

<sup>260</sup> K. O’Donnell, “Poisonous women: sexual danger, illicit violence, and domestic work in German Southern Africa, 1904-1915”, *Journal of Women’s History* 11(3), 1999, online version: [http://web4.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/957/642/70666008w4/purl=rcl\\_GRGM\\_0](http://web4.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/957/642/70666008w4/purl=rcl_GRGM_0), access: 2005-8-3.

The idea of “black peril”, as the colonial fear of rebellion, was extended to the fear of contamination in urban areas. Since the eighteenth century, many diseases have been linked to black populations (native or not). However, it was during the twentieth century that the urgency of controlling and avoiding diseases such as typhoid fever and smallpox prompted the government to draw lines and to introduce regulations that supposedly kept the allegedly infected black population away from the white people in South Africa. In Brazil, regulations and urbanization plans were made in such a way that the poor people (predominantly black or mulatto) would not share the same space as the middle and upper classes.<sup>261</sup>

As urbanization required a large labour force, it became clear that it was quite impossible to avoid the presence of black workers in the cities and towns. The economic exclusion at this point stimulated increasing criminality, to which the dominant class in Brazil and white people in South Africa added the fear of being robbed to the fear of rape and rebellion. The image of the criminal black man was finally complete.<sup>262</sup>

Despite the emphasis, given by historians, on the presence of black men in urban centres, black women migrated to the cities since the colonial period. Their motivations were basically the same as their male counterparts’ – employment and economic empowerment. However, new studies have shown that many women have left rural areas to avoid patriarchal control.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> S. Challoub, *Cidade Febril: corticos e epidemias na corte imperial* (Febrile city: tenements and epidemics in the imperial court), São Paulo, 1996; J. Perlman, *O mito da marginalidade: favelas e políticas no Rio de Janeiro* [The myth of marginality: slums and policies in Rio de Janeiro], Rio de Janeiro, 1977.

<sup>262</sup> S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; B. Fausto, *Crime e cotidiano: a criminalidade em São Paulo (1880-1924)* [Crime and everyday life in São Paulo 1880-1924], São Paulo, 1984; C. A. Ribeiro, *Cor e criminalidade: estudo e análise da justiça no Rio de Janeiro (1900-1930)* [Color and criminality: study and analysis of justice in Rio de Janeiro, 1900-1930], Rio de Janeiro, 1995.

<sup>263</sup> T. Barnes, “Virgin territory? Travel and migration by African women in twentieth-century Southern Africa”, in J. Allman, S. Geiger and N. Musisi, *Women in African colonial histories*, Bloomington, 2002, pp. 164-90.

Once in the cities, black women were also qualified as “dangerous” and as part of the “black peril”. While the police saw those women as partners in black male crime, society regarded black women in the first half of the twentieth century as associated with prostitution and the making and selling of illicit liquor.

African women were seen as the main vehicle for the contamination of whites. Although white families from middle and upper classes could not be seen without their black servants, employed as maids, baby-sitters, washer-women or cooks, authorities usually advised housewives about the risks of diseases that an African maid would bring to the entire family.<sup>264</sup>

Karen Jochelson, in a study on racism and sanitary measures in South Africa, describes how black women faced medical examinations that were imposed on them to identify venereal diseases. The examinations took place when African or colored women applied for a “pass” to come to the city and after that in random raids carried out by policemen in Johannesburg’s townships.

In 1929 he (a magistrate) instigated a police raid on slum and municipal townships to serve notice on all women who were over 13 years old, unmarried, widowed or beer brewers to submit to a VD (venereal disease) examination. The police arrested 94 women and subjected them to an examination.<sup>265</sup>

The white South African fear of physical contamination went beyond concerns about tuberculosis and smallpox, to include a terror of venereal diseases and a predominant fear of miscegenation. In this society, sexual contact between blacks and whites was also considered a type of blood contamination, particularly if it produced offspring.

Afrikaner authorities were also concerned that the simple proximity of people belonging to distinct (and opposed) racial groups would

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<sup>264</sup> A L. Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: race and the intimate in colonial rule*, London, 2002; V. R. Beltrão-Marques, *A medicalização da raça* (The racial medicalization), Campinas, 1994.

<sup>265</sup> K. Jochelson, *The colour of disease. Syphilis and racism in South Africa, 1880-1950*, New York, 2001, p. 121.

jeopardize their culture. This included contacts between Afrikaners and the British, Afrikaners and coloureds, and Afrikaners and Africans.<sup>266</sup>

## 5.2 – White men and coloured women

As a South African citizen of British origins, Alan Paton made an extra effort to understand the Afrikaner society. He interprets their lifestyle, culture and racial relations in *Too Late the Phalarope*. The plot of this novel revolves around a small town and its racial segregation. It is the story of the dilemma of an Afrikaner man, considered a model for the whole society, and his sexual desire for a coloured woman. It is a tragedy that strikes Pieter van Vlaanderen, a victim of the racial system and his Afrikaner family.

Pieter is a married man, a lieutenant, a famous football player, and a war hero. But he is also a man who struggles to fit into his own culture. The main problem is that he does not feel the same aversion for black and coloured people as his compatriots. Not only that, but he cannot keep away from Stephanie, the coloured woman.

The novel was written right after the ascension of the Nationalist Party to power and the official implementation of its policy of apartheid. Different from *Cry the Beloved Country*, Paton ignores economic, political and social problems generated by the policy of segregation adopted in South Africa to focus on the human dilemma. However, it only offers a biased view of the problem – the white man's angle.

According to one of his biographers, the liberal position of Paton made him open to understanding Afrikaner culture and customs. Liberalists believed that South Africa could be a society without racial separation and that Afrikaners and British should cooperate in

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<sup>266</sup> M. MacDonald, *Why race matters in South Africa*, Scottsville, 2006.

administering the country.<sup>267</sup> Despite this ideology, one cannot help but notice a tone of reprobation in the novel, as the Afrikaner patriarch refuses to accept British culture and imposes severe discipline upon his family.

In this novel, the author's religiosity is marked by his construction of the story. Pieter's father represents the Old Testament and the old fashioned religiosity of Afrikaners, who believed that their fate was close to that of the Jewish people. In South Africa, they had found the "promised land", which they were entitled to run as well as the domination of the people living there. Pieter himself represents the New Testament, the world of love for all humanity, independent of race.

The lieutenant knew the black people of his region. Raised on a farm, he played with some of them, and could speak their language very well. Brazilian and South African social histories again show similarities as Paton explains black and white childhood on the farms:

"It was our custom to allow our boys to play with the black boys, but not our girls with their girls. But after a certain age it stopped, not by law but by custom, and the growing white boy became the master."<sup>268</sup>

Freyre's analysis of masters and slaves relationships in Brazil can be applied to understand how the relations between black and white people, especially in rural areas, following a pattern that mixes white paternalism and supremacy with black dependence and subordination.<sup>269</sup>

Yet, Pieter's love for all mankind seems more like tolerance than a complete sentiment of acceptance of the "other" as an equal. Pieter's relationship with Stephanie defies the "Immorality Act" of 1950, which prohibited sexual intercourse between different races. Pieter clearly has a problem with love – in the novel it is a consequence of his very strict education – because he loves Nella as his wife and mother of his two

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<sup>267</sup> E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, New York, 1968.

<sup>268</sup> A. Paton, *Too late the phalarope*, New York, 1995, pp. 29-30.

<sup>269</sup> G. Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* [Masters and slaves], Rio de Janeiro, 20a. ed., 1988.

children, but he resents the type of sexual relationship they have as incomplete. For Stephanie, the word “love” is not said. He desires her, and has sex with her. For how long, the author does not tell, as he does not explain how this affair started. Pieter does not see Stephanie beyond her body, which the author also refrains from describing.

It is not a love story. The reader finds from the first pages that there is a sexual affair between the couple, and Pieter feels ashamed of his acts. He knows that he is going against the law and that his crime can jeopardize his entire family, as he explains to a white boy caught chasing Stephanie:

“The police have had instructions to enforce the Immorality Act without fear or favour. Whether you’re old or young, rich or poor, respected or nobody, whether you’re a Cabinet Minister or a predikant or a headmaster or a tramp, if you touch a black woman and you’re discovered, nothing’ll save you.”<sup>270</sup>

Interracial relations, according to segregationist societies such as some states of the United States and South Africa, were considered a criminal act that affected the moral well-being and the social order. For this reason they were not only punished by the laws, but also condemned by the society, which would cast out those accused of crossing the racial borders.<sup>271</sup>

The religious aspect of racism in South Africa also comes to light as Pieter prays, asking God forgiveness for his sin. Interracial relations are understood, at this time, for Afrikaners as a disobedience of the will of God, who created different races with the purpose of regulating life on earth, with white Christian people dominating the others.

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<sup>270</sup> A. Paton, *Too late the phalarope*, New York, 1995, p. 21.

<sup>271</sup> P. Wallenstein, *Law and the boundaries of place and race in interracial marriage: interstate comity, and miscegenation laws in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia, 1860s-1960s*, University of Akron, [www.uakron.edu/law/lawreview/docs/wallenstein323.pdf](http://www.uakron.edu/law/lawreview/docs/wallenstein323.pdf), accessed: 2007-04-05; A.Y. Amoateng, T. B. Heaton and C. K. Jacobson, “Inter-racial marriages in South Africa”, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35(3), 2004, online version: [www.questia.com?PM.qst?action=print&docId=5007154256](http://www.questia.com?PM.qst?action=print&docId=5007154256), accessed: 2006-2-23.

Scholars from South Africa and abroad have emphasized the important role played by the Dutch Reformed Church in promoting and justifying racial segregation and white supremacy.<sup>272</sup> Eugene Dvorin highlights the importance of religion among Afrikaners in the early 1950s, and how racial separation is prescribed by the Bible and re-enforced by the Nationalist Party after 1948:

... the close link between party and church, devoid of religious fervor or appeals to moral or ethical justification of Apartheid, there is in the background of the doctrine the ultimate defence that can be made: to follow any other policy than complete inequality in both church and state would be immoral.<sup>273</sup>

The idea of having an affair with Stephanie does not make Pieter feel guilty because he is betraying his marriage – he feels bad because he does so with a coloured “girl”. Again, the reduction of an adult to a childlike status – Stephanie is between 23 and 25 years old – denotes the treatment reserved for black and coloured people in colonial societies, where the natives are represented as children, without responsibilities or the intellectual capacity of taking care of themselves.<sup>274</sup>

Stephanie’s dialogues are minimal. She barely says a few phrases and smiles. The author describes her smile sometimes as childish, at other times as something “strange and secret”. The reader would compare it to the enigmatic smile of Leonardo Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa. It does not reveal anything, but strongly induces the imagination. She is a coloured unmarried woman who lives with a black old lady and sells liquor. There is no love or desire in her words, and there is also no resistance, even when she is sent to jail for her illicit sale of beer. All the feelings belong to Pieter and his white family and friends.

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<sup>272</sup> Among the authors who refer to the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church in South African racial policy, see: M. MacDonald, *Why race matters in South Africa*, Scottsville, 2006; S. Terreblanche, *A history of inequality in South Africa: 1652-2002*, Pietermaritzburg, 2002; D. Posel, *The making of apartheid: 1948-1961 – conflict and compromise*, Cape Town, 1997; S. Marks and S. Trapido, *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, London, 1987; and L. Thompson, *A history of South Africa*, New Haven/London, 2001.

<sup>273</sup> E. Dvorin, *Racial separation in South Africa*, Chicago, 1952, p. 189.

<sup>274</sup> M. MacDonald, *Why race matters in South Africa*, Scottsville, 2006.

“She made him no answer, except to smile in her strange and secret way. Then she heard the sound of the men above, and drew back. And as she drew back she touched him. And he did not move.

He did not move, neither forward nor back, nor did she. It was all silent but for the sounds of the men above, and for his breathing, and the racing in his heart. Then she turned round and smiled at him again, and moved forward an inch or two, standing still with her eyes on the ground; while he, shaking with the shame, went and sat on a stone...”<sup>275</sup>

Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, explains that in colonial societies it is quite common for a white man to have sex with black or coloured women, as part of the colonial domination and as an extension of his rights as a superior being. This does not include love, respect or responsibility for the offspring that might come from these relations.<sup>276</sup>

Another important fact about this novel is that the woman in question is not black. She is a coloured having an affair with a white man. The same situation will occur in Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder*, in Lima Barreto’s *Clara dos Anjos* and in Jorge Amado’s *Red Harvest*. It seems like these authors do not dare to talk about sex between a white man and a black woman. The intermediate status of coloured people in Brazilian and South African societies could explain these choices.

During the biggest part of the twentieth century South Africans were afraid of the increasing coloured population. The acknowledgement of the risk that a growing mixed-blood population posed to the white people’s status, forced the South African government to take legal actions against mixed marriages and to attempt to regulate sexual intercourse between whites and non-whites.

It was certainly quite brave for Paton to publish a novel exploring miscegenation in South Africa without an open condemnation against it at the beginning of apartheid. On the other hand, one must understand that there were some cultural, social and political ties that would prevent him

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<sup>275</sup> A. Paton, *Too late the phalarope*, New York, 1995, p. 61.

<sup>276</sup> F. Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, New York, 1967.

from depicting the relationship between an Afrikaner man and an African woman. Even though he opted for a coloured woman, he does not dare to say explicitly that she has a son from this relationship.

Stephanie has a young child – her only child – as she emphasizes to Pieter, smiling. His aunt Sophie is afraid of this child; she does not want to have him around, living in the same town. For her, it would be better if the child and the mother were kept away. Sophie’s apprehension is a hint about the child’s paternity; however, Paton does not affirm that Pieter is the father of Stephanie’s son.

The only time Stephanie shows some concern and care is when the magistrate warns her that the child may be taken away. Similar to many black and coloured women living in South African towns, she has a shortage of choices to generate income – she could be a domestic servant or sell homemade liquor. The last option can provide a higher and faster income, and also more independence.

In the novel, the young coloured lady is often put in jail for breaking the law that forbids the brewing and selling of “*kaffir beer*”. The author’s criticism of the Liquor Act is clear as he refers to Pieter’s friend and father as people who enjoyed drinking their liquor. The liquor prohibition only affected black and coloured people. However, whites were free to sell, buy and consume alcoholic beverages.

As soon as Stephanie is released, she re-starts her little business again. This situation is analyzed by Julie Baker, who states that the marginalization of black and coloured women in the urban labour market in South Africa, added to their low capacity to generate income in the rural areas – since most of the men often went to the mines or to the cities in their most productive age – pushed them into illicit liquor production and selling as a means of survival.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> J. Baker, “Prohibition and illicit liquor, on the Witwatersrand, 1902-1932”, in J. Crush and C. Ambler, *Liquor and labor in southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, 1992, pp.139-61.

Historically, the production of beer was part of African communal life in southern Africa. It has always been part of women's house chores, although it was not made for commercial purposes. In the novel, Stephanie does not take her imprisonment seriously, but as part of her life. This behaviour is also found in *Mine Boy*, when Leah goes to jail. As explained by Sean Redding: "after serving their sentences, women convicted of selling beer simply returned and began to brew and sell again."<sup>278</sup>

If Stephanie represents the average coloured woman living in a small town, Tante Sophie represents the average Afrikaner woman, who is devoted to her family and therefore very concerned about the effect of black and coloured woman in the proximity of white men. She works for the Women's Welfare Society, which can be compared to the many Afrikaner women's associations devoted to fighting white poverty and women's exploitation as much as racial mixing. Such associations found their roots in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War and increased during the 1930s.<sup>279</sup>

Paton uses Sophie as a watcher. And because she observes everything around her, she understands that Stephanie looks at her nephew in special way and senses the danger. After the tragedy, she stands up to face the entire community. Together with Pieter's mother and sister, she accepts with pride the judgement of neighbours and friends as they reject the entire family.

As the case is discovered, Pieter is sentenced to jail and his father erases his name from the family book. In a chain reaction that affects the entire family, his mother resigns from her position in the women's organization, his sister breaks off her engagement, his father dies eight days after his condemnation and his wife and children retreat to avoid comments. What about Stephanie? She turned him in because she was

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<sup>278</sup> S. Redding, "Beer brewing in Umtata: women, migrant labor, and social control in a rural town", in J. Crush and C. Ambler, *Liquor and labor in southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, 1992, pp. 236-51.

<sup>279</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003.

forced to, or else she would lose her child, as the magistrate had warned her before. She had no history, and the author gave her no future. After denouncing Pieter (could he be called her “lover”?), she disappears.

The last voice in the novel is Tante Sophie’s. Her worries do not include Stephanie and her son; it is all about Pieter. Through her, Paton shows his worries about South Africa’s destiny:

“And I grieve for him, and the house he has made fall on him  
(...) And I grieve for the nation which gave him birth, that left  
the trodden and the known for the vast and secret continent,  
and made there songs of heimwee and longing, and the iron  
laws.”<sup>280</sup>

Depicting a similar situation from another point of view, Lima Barreto tells the story of Clara dos Anjos, a 17-year-old coloured woman from Rio de Janeiro who is the subject of a white man’s lust. The villain of this novel, Cassy, is Clara’s seducer, a man without scruples who brings disgrace to many poor young women, most of them black or coloured.

Clara is romantic and waits for true love. When Cassy approaches her with fake words of love and marriage, she cannot help herself from falling for him. He is a white man, which means the possibility of a better life and, more than that, a possibility to overcome the racial barriers.

Fanon holds the opinion that it is common for a black or coloured woman to surrender herself to a white man, because this marriage can be a passport to a superior status for coloured and black people. He also states that marriage usually does not happen, since a man is more likely to choose a black woman for sex and a white woman for a wife.<sup>281</sup>

In the same way as he does in *Recollections of the Clerk Isaías Caminha*, Barreto uses fiction to deny negative stereotypes against coloured people in Brazil. Clara has a lovely and caring family. Joaquim, her father, is a postman and her mother is a housewife devoted to her family. Her parents and friends try to protect her from the seducer, without

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<sup>280</sup> A. Paton, *Too late the phalarope*, New York, 1995, p. 284.

<sup>281</sup> F. Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, New York, 1967.

success. This picture goes against the hypothesis of some sociologists, such as Florestan Fernandes, who describes black and coloured families in Brazil as lacking structure and stability, with careless parents.<sup>282</sup>

In describing Cassy, Lima Barreto denounces the unfair social and economic context in the Brazilian capital. He does not work, but still has money, a place to live and nice clothes, and if he decided to get a job, he would get a better position than a coloured man – despite the fact that he was too lazy to learn anything in school. He is, from the beginning to the end, the “bad guy”, and Clara is his inevitable victim. In this case, the white character is negatively constructed as a villain without honour or respect for anybody. Even when he seduced Nair, causing her poor mother’s suicide, the courts absolved him.

Antônio Carlos Costa Ribeiro, in an extended study of criminal justice in Rio de Janeiro, proves that during the first thirty years of the twentieth century in Brazil, many criminals could be absolved for being white, in contrast to the massive condemnation of coloureds and blacks, who were seen as potential criminals.<sup>283</sup>

Published in 1922, the story of Clara dos Anjos also exposes the situation of poor women in this period, and the scarce options for a woman to keep her integrity and honour. Pregnant, she is abandoned and humiliated by her boyfriend’s mother, who rejects the idea of seeing her only son married to a black woman.

As analyzed by Caulfield, many cases of seduction and abandonment went to the courts between 1918 and 1940. By considering seduction and deflowering a crime against honour, the judicial system

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<sup>282</sup> F. Fernandes, *The negro in Brazilian society*. New York, 1969.

<sup>283</sup> A. C. C. Ribeiro, *Cor e criminalidade: estudo e análise da justiça no Rio de Janeiro (1900-1930)* [Color and criminality: study and analysis of justice in Rio de Janeiro], Rio de Janeiro, 1995.

reflected Brazilian culture and social customs, refusing to see honour in dark-skinned women and men.<sup>284</sup>

African-American feminists such as Bell Hooks have exposed how in the southern United States black women were subject to sexual violence from white men, as part of the relations between dominant and the dominated.<sup>285</sup> In Brazil and other parts of the American continent, black and coloured women would acquiesce to white men's sexual intentions in order to uplift themselves economically and socially. In these cases, there was no violence, but rather misleading. The white man would make promises or somehow make the woman believe that he actually loved and cared for her.<sup>286</sup> These studies do not discharge the fact that black and coloured women were exposed to sexual violence from privileged white men.

In the novels analyzed for this study, sexual intercourse between different racial groups is consensual, which denotes mutual attraction and a deliberate defiance of social rules. Yet, the white male does exercise direct power over coloured woman, as he imposes his supremacy on her powerless condition.

Barreto also does not give the power of decision making to his female characters, except for the white lady, *Dona Margarida*. By depicting her strong character, the author sets the example for other women in similar conditions as Clara:

“What is needed for her and others like her was education, reinforcement of self-esteem, like the brave *Dona Margarida* had, to defend herself against *Cassy* and those like him. To fight against all those who impose, somehow, obstacles to her moral and social uplifting. Nothing would make her inferior to

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<sup>284</sup> S. Caulfield, *In defence of honour – sexual morality, modernity and nation in early-twentieth century Brazil*, Duke, 1999.

<sup>285</sup> B. Hooks, *Ain't I a woman, black woman and feminism*, Boston, 1992; G. Lerner (ed.) *Black women in white America: a documentary history*, New York, 1992.

<sup>286</sup> F. Fanon, *Black skins, white masks*, New York, 1967.

others, nothing but common sense and her cowardly attitude in accepting this treatment...”<sup>287</sup>

Although interracial love was also part of *Dona Margarida*’s story, differently from Clara’s hers was a love story, with a happy end. As an immigrant from Europe, she was a “pure white” person who married a coloured man – a very good man, as the author emphasizes, who dies young and gives her a son, a coloured boy with dark skin and blue eyes. As a widow, *Dona Margarida* remains in the neighbourhood, and is highly respected by the whole community for her moral integrity, independence and strong stance in helping her neighbours.

Clara is a victim of her own romanticism and innocence. The novelist, however, blames the white man, who deliberately decides to use her sexually; the society in general for imposing and accepting social and racial prejudice; and the Brazilian government system that denies educational opportunities for women and protects criminals based on their racial group and economic situation.

The novel assumes a pessimistic tone at this point, as the author is disappointed with his personal situation. For him, life there does not hold high expectations, and the darkness of one’s skin is always complemented by poverty. While men live to work and are always under suspicion of the police, women have no alternative besides marriage, which can only be possible if they preserve their virginity, a synonym for honour at this time. However, those poor young women were often targets for those men who saw them as nobody or only as a body, without rights or feelings, available for white and richer men’s pleasure.

Brought up in a safe and enclosed environment, as her parents tried to protect her from the external world, Clara had never suffered racial and social discrimination. It is Cassy’ mother who clearly expresses all the

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<sup>287</sup> A. L. Barreto, *Clara dos Anjos*, Rio de Janeiro, 1997, pp. 171-72. Author’s translation from the original: “O que era preciso, tanto a ela como às suas iguais, era educar o caráter, revestir-se de vontade, como possuía essa varonil Dona Margarida, para se defender de Cassy e semelhantes, e bater-se contra todos os que se opuserem, por este ou aquele modo, contra a elevação dela, social e moralmente. Nada a fazia inferior às outras, senão o conceito geral e a covardia com que ela o admitia...”

prejudices and the improbability of a white man loving and marrying a dark-skinned woman:

“- What are you saying, nigger?” (...) “These types are funny! They claim they have been abused... It is always the same old story... Did my son tie them up? Does he gag or treat them with a knife or revolver? No. These women are the ones to be blamed, only them...”<sup>288</sup>

Studies on the judicial process concerned with crimes of rape and seduction confirm that, despite the ideologies of racial democracy and tolerance toward miscegenation, the story of Clara illustrates how racism reinforced endogamy and the objectification of black and coloured women.<sup>289</sup> The problem would be worsened by class differentiation between victims and perpetrators, exposing poor women to abandonment and misery. The last words in the novel belong to Clara, as she suddenly acknowledges: “Mother! Mother! – Yes, my daughter? – We are nothing in this life!”<sup>290</sup>

In Jorge Amado’s *Red Harvest*, Marta is another coloured woman who surrenders to a white man’s lust. Yet, differently from Clara, she realizes that by giving in to Doctor Epaminondas’ sexual desire she can bargain on behalf of her family. The novelist avoids judging the medical doctor; instead, he depicts this character as a well-intentioned physician who was corrupted by the misery surrounding him.

After a few months as a doctor for migrants, witnessing the extreme poverty and its consequences in the bodies and lives of those

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<sup>288</sup> *Idem*, p. 170-71. Author’s translation from the original: “ O que é que você diz, sua negra? (...) Engraçado essa sujeitas! Queixam-se de que abusaram delas... É sempre a mesma cantiga... Por acaso, meu filho as amordaça, as ameaça com faca e revólver? Não, a culpa é delas, só delas...”

<sup>289</sup> S. Caulfield, *In defense of honour – sexual morality, modernity and nation in early-twentieth century Brazil*, Duke, 1999; R. Sohiet, *A condição feminina e outras formas de violência: mulheres pobres e ordem urbana (1890-1920)* [The female condition and other forms of violence: poor women and urban order], Rio de Janeiro, 1989; C. Fonseca, “ Ser mulher, mãe e pobre” [To be a woman, mother and poor], in M. Del Priore (ed.) *História as Mulheres no Brasil*, São Paulo, 1997, pp. 510-53.

<sup>290</sup> A. L. Barreto, *Clara dos Anjos*, Rio de Janeiro, 1997, p. 172. Author’s translation of the original: “Mamãe! Mamãe! – O que é minha filha? – Nós não somos nada nessa vida.”

people, the doctor develops a sexual perversion and decides to take advantage of women in desperate situations. Yet, the doctor does not force them. He develops a slow and gradual approach, like a predator that enjoys playing with its prey before the final attack.

Marta has a story, desires, dreams and feelings. She fell in love during the journey, but poverty prevented the success of her romance. She is about 17 years old, and Amado describes her body in a sensual way, as a woman's body that attracts the doctor's desire. In exchange for allowing him to touch her, Doctor Epaminondas gives her money, and so she can provide food for the entire family. Finally, he employs Marta as his maid; this way, she is more exposed to his advances.

“As the days passed by, Marta understood the reason for Epaminondas' generosity. He would not waste time in touching her body, her breasts and thighs. She tried to avoid the contact, knowing that she could not deny him always. In addition, there was the time for those injections, which he started to give her at home. She was making him crazy from desire, as he decided that he was going to have her at any cost.”<sup>291</sup>

There is no innocence in Marta's attitude. She knows that the doctor will never marry her and she will be abandoned as soon as he satisfies his lust. She also knows that her father would expel her from the family if he knew that she was not a virgin anymore. She could even guess what her future would be: prostitution. Even so, Marta decides to go ahead, but not before the physician signed the passes of her family, including her sick father, who by the rules could not travel to São Paulo.

The moral rules concerned with women and family in Brazil and South Africa do not show remarkable differences. In Brazilian families, as well as among the Afrikaners, a woman's behaviour has a significant impact on the family honour. The Victorian ideal of women who were

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<sup>291</sup> J. Amado, *Seara Vermelha*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 183. Author's translation from the original: “ *E, com o correr dos dias, Martha compreendeu os motivos porque Epaminondas os ajudava. Ele não perdia ocasião de pegá-la, apertar-lhe os seios e as coxas. Ela negaceava o corpo mas não podia se furtar sempre, e, ao demais, havia a hora da injeção que ele passara a lhe aplicar em casa. Estava cada vez mais doido pela cabrocha, disposto a possuí-la custasse o que custasse.*”

devoted to their family, sexually inactive and totally controlled by male members of the family and elder female members, exerted a heavy pressure on single women until the 1950s, when urbanization and the availability of contraceptives gave more sexual freedom to women. According to Raquel Sohiet, the imposition of stereotypes and ideal models on women, together with the restrictions imposed by poverty, can be seen as a different mode of gender-based violence.<sup>292</sup>

After losing her virginity, Marta is considered “lost” by her and her family. In this patriarchal society that only sees a woman in relation to her role in the family – as a daughter, mother, sister or aunt – and establishes these roles according to her sexual status, a woman that is not a virgin – having not been married before – cannot marry. She is considered a pariah, unless she is too poor and has no male relatives to protect her. In this case, she enjoys moral independence as a result of her active role in generating income.

In the situation depicted by Amado, extreme poverty and patriarchy limit the options of Marta. She lives in a very poor society, where besides the doctor, nobody else can afford to employ her as a domestic worker and the limited possibilities of work drive this woman to keep using her body as a means of survival.

The major difference between Barreto and Amado’s characters is that while Clara is a victim, Marta is a heroine. Marta deliberately takes the decision to use her own body to give her family a chance to realize their dream of a better life. Later, as a prostitute, she keeps giving all the money she makes to her mother. However, social constraints make her father despise her, and she is not allowed to continue the journey with her beloved ones.

Furthermore, a comparison of the relationships between Paton’s Pieter and Stephanie, Barreto’s Clara and Cassy, and Amado’s Marta and

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<sup>292</sup> R. Sohiet, “Mulheres pobres e violência no Brasil urbano” [Poor women and violence in urban Brazil] in M. Del Priore (ed.) *História as Mulheres no Brasil*, São Paulo, 1997, pp. 362-400.

Epaminondas points to sexually abused characters – not by rape or physical violence, but by an imposition of white male sexual power and coloured female’s lack of power to say no. Among the analyses of various scholars on racism, sexuality and power, two distinct interpretations must be highlighted to understand this phenomenon.

First, there is Fanon’s thesis that black and coloured women (and men as well) are affected by a cultural imposition, which leads them to acknowledge the superior status and quality of white people. As a consequence of colonization, white men and women are recognized as more beautiful, powerful and – very important – able to extend part of their status to those in association with them, except in the case of master/slave, or boss/subordinate, relations.<sup>293</sup>

The same thesis can be useful in analyzing Mabel’s passion for Tony in Peter Abrahams’ *The Path of Thunder*. Mabel is a secondary character who falls in love with an English gentleman because he is white, because he is gentle and treats her nicely. She wants to leave with him, even if he only takes her as his servant. Although there is no sexual intercourse between them, Mabel asks him for a kiss, saying that just a kiss from him would make her feel special.

Secondly, JanMohamed gives another interpretation of power and sexuality in interracial relationships. For him, most of the relationships involving white men and black or coloured women are characterized by rape or seduction and must be analyzed as part of the colonial mechanisms of control. To understand the applicability of JanMohamed’s thesis in countries such as South Africa and Brazil, we must understand racism as part of an internal colonialism that is still predominant in Third World societies.

The society, in these cases, acknowledges moral and material superiority of white people, in contrast to stereotyped inferiority and immorality of colonized people. Part of the stereotype is the assumption

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<sup>293</sup> F. Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, New York, 1967.

that non-whites are obsessed with sex and cannot control their instincts, in opposition to whites' strong control over their sexuality. In this case, the dominant group sees intercourse between blacks/coloureds and whites as the non-white counterpart's fault, as she or he somehow induces the white man or woman to take an action that contradicts their nature.

This author's thesis synchronizes with Foucault's thoughts about sexuality and power. Analyzing colonial literature, JanMohamed contends that "by imposing the inferiority of the native as a metaphysical fact (novelists) mask the pleasure the colonizer derives from that authority".<sup>294</sup>

Another similarity that occurs in the novels analyzed is the fact that the women involved in interracial sexual relations are not black, but coloured. This raises the question of a scale of racial values in South Africa and Brazil. Could that mean that by depicting the attraction of white men to coloured women, the authors want to create the most plausible situation for a romance, or that the authors also attribute more beauty to lighter-skinned women?

### 5.3 – Black/coloured men and white women

In *The Path of Thunder*, Abrahams also explores a variation of the interracial relationship, exploring the feelings between a coloured man and a white woman. The difference in this novel is the feelings that unite the couple. Sarie and Lanny love each other, and it is because of this love that they decide to confront the social barriers and legal impeachment imposed in South Africa.

In this novel, Lanny is a coloured man who comes back to his rural town after spending many years in Cape Town, where he attended university and became a schoolteacher. The relative flexibility and

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<sup>294</sup> A. R. JanMohamed, "The economy of Manichean allegory: the function of racial difference in colonialist literature", in H. L. Gates Jr. (ed.), *"Race", writing and difference*, Chicago, 1985, pp. 78-106.

tolerance that he experienced in Cape Town, contrast with the conservative minds of people in the Cape Karoo. His problems start as soon as he arrives in the train station and is challenged by three local white men:

“Do you see what I see? One of the men asked.

The other pursed his lips and looked doubtful:

I’m not sure. It looks like an ape in a better Sunday suit than I have. But today’s not Sunday so I’m not sure.

Perhaps he wears suits like that every day... Besides, you are wrong, he is too pale to be an ape. That’s city bushy.

(...)

... in the cities they speak English and call themselves Eurafricans.

Eurafricans? It’s a big word. What does it mean?

The first man grinned:

You know. Coloured, half-caste, bastard! He spat out the last word with contempt.”<sup>295</sup>

One of these men start to interrogate him, and as he tells them that he is coming from Cape Town and has received two titles from the university, the man strikes Lanny in his mouth. The author uses his character to express his feelings about his racist society:

“South Africa, Lanny thought, this is South Africa. And this man in front of him resented him because he was educated and showed independence. If he had been humble the man probably would have been kind to him, smiled and sent him away. (...) This man in front of him had to dominate him, he was fearful in case he did not. This was the history of South Africa in stark, brutal reality. He saw it clearly suddenly.”<sup>296</sup>

Peter Abrahams was living in London when he wrote this novel; however, it was first published in New York in 1948. It reflects the most human aspect of apartheid, the prohibition of love between different cultures and races. The central theme of this novel is the love between the coloured Lanny Swartz and the white Sarie Villier, an adopted member of the Afrikaner family who controls the region.

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<sup>295</sup> P. Abrahams, *The Path of thunder*, Claremount, 1984, pp. 18-9.

<sup>296</sup> *Idem*, p. 20.

Goldsmith's essay on Bloke Modisane's novel *Blame Me on History*, identifies a variation on women's value, concerning her racial background among black men in South Africa. In this hierarchical scale, white women were on top, followed by the coloureds, in an intermediate position while the black women were at the bottom. According to her interpretation, the novel's author attributes to white women the capacity to bring "a temporary salve to the anguish of disenfranchised black masculinity".<sup>297</sup>

This idea is also reflected in Fanon, as he describes a characteristic behaviour among Antillean Negroes, affirming that as soon as a black man from those islands arrives in Paris he goes after a white prostitute, as a "ritual of initiation into 'authentic' manhood."<sup>298</sup> The author expresses the intricate question of black men's feelings about white women as follows:

Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping  
of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white.

I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white.

Now – and this is a form of recognition that Hegel had not  
envisaged – who but a white woman can do this for me? By  
loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am  
loved like a white man.

I am a white man.

Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total  
realization...

I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness.

When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp  
white civilization and dignity and make them mine.<sup>299</sup>

In the Abrahams' novel, Mabel – Lanny's sister – suffers because she wants to have a better life, with fancy dresses, nice places to go and dignity. Her character is similar to Elisa from *Mine Boy*. They both suffer with the colour barrier; they both would like to become white to end their

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<sup>297</sup> M. Goldsmith, "Of masks, mimicry, misogyny, and miscegenation: forging black South African masculinity in Bloke Modisane's *Blame me on history*", in L. Ouzgane and R. Morrel, *African Masculinities. Men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present*, Scottsville, 2005, p.116.

<sup>298</sup> F. Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, New York, 1967, p. 113.

<sup>299</sup> *Idem*, p. 63.

suffering. Both women live the dilemma of colonization. As all the beauty, love, purity, respect and worth are exclusive to white women, there is nothing for them to expect from this world that they are supposed to serve. In a state of total subordination, Mabel is expected to work, but not to enjoy life. She is expected to conform to her poverty and alienation, and yet she complains and rebels. She is the female Caliban who wants the power inherent to white people, which gives them authority, beauty and love.<sup>300</sup>

A strong influence of Frantz Fanon's thoughts against the idea of white superiority over other races and how it conquers the minds of dominated peoples can be seen in Mako's concerns about coloured people and how they want to be closer to whites than to Africans:

“... Now they (the coloureds) try to grade toward the white man because the white man has power. They accept the inferior position and try to escape by trying to become white themselves. You see, it is a slavery of the mind and that is even worse than the slavery of the body. It is like we black people trying to make our hair straight because the white man has straight hair. It is the internal unfreedom, the acceptance of the slave state and trying to graduate from it that I am against.”<sup>301</sup>

The white men in the village identify in Lanny an enemy, even before knowing about his relationship with Sarie. The fact that he has got education and developed some “fancy” manners seems to those rude men somehow disrespectful, a kind of behaviour to be eradicated to avoid more coloureds deciding to follow his path.

In their analysis on racism, Miles and Brown state that racism is a representational phenomenon. Different groups tend to create and emphasize various characteristics to distinguish one from another, attributing value to each one of these characteristics. Ultimately, the differentiation, defined as racism, gives support to a “subsequent

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<sup>300</sup> W. Shakespeare, *The tempest*, online version, <http://www.shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html> retrieved on 2007-04-09.

<sup>301</sup> P. Abrahams, *The path of thunder*, Claremount, 1984, p. 91.

structuring of political and economic relations”.<sup>302</sup> Therefore, racial discrimination sustains class domination and political power, and any change to the status of the classes involved is conceived as a menace to the hierarchic system. That is why the Afrikaner men reacted so violently to Lanny’s attitude and his plans to start a school in the coloured community.

“- And who do you think you are to make plans without consulting me or the other Europeans around here?

- We are not slaves.

- Ah! Villier exclaimed and walked back to the window. An independent man, I see. My friends who met you this morning – do you remember them? – were right. You are proud. You feel as good as any man... You have forgotten your place! ...We don’t like that sort of spirit here, Mister Swartz. We like the things the way they have always been.”<sup>303</sup>

Moreover, his plans to start a school for coloured children are also taken as a dare by those who do not want any change, and as dangerous by the coloured people, who are fearful of the consequences for the teacher and his community.

In the same way as in *Mine Boy*, Abrahams reflects on the negative aspect of education for coloured people. Using Fieta’s voice, he explains that education would bring good things as it opens a new world through books and ideas. However, it also brings lots of pain, as people would begin to long for things that are out of reach in this society.

Education makes Lanny a superior man. His knowledge and capacity to overcome poverty are considered threats to the status of Afrikaners in that town. But for Sarie, he is superior to those other men, who are white but have no education and no experience outside that society. The author does not attribute any education to Sarie, and she is the daughter of the adopted son of the old master. In the family, her role is quite similar to a governess, although Villier considers her behaviour intrinsically related to the familial honour.

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<sup>302</sup> R. Miles and M. Brown, *Racism*, New York, 2003, p. 118.

<sup>303</sup> P. Abrahams, *The Path of thunder*, Claremount, 1984, p. 65.

Although Sarie did not expect a coloured man to act as an equal, she acknowledges his superiority over other coloured and black people in the area. By running away with him, she would not lose economic or power status, since she has none. Her whiteness is compensated by his education. Contrary to Mabel and Tony's relationship, given that he is white and educated and she is dark-skinned and ignorant, the romance between Lanny and Sarie is acceptable.

Analyzing the predominance of dark-skinned men marrying lightly skinned-women, Brazilian scholars identified a pattern of concession of status from the white woman that gives the coloured or black man a superior status among his social group.<sup>304</sup>

Michel Foucault, in his study on sexuality associates it with power. Moreover, he states that the relation between sex and power is based on repression, interdiction, censure and denial. According to the author, after the French Revolution and the ascension of the bourgeois state, the social control over marriages, birth, death and sex is related to the control over the population as an important tool for the maintenance of political power maintenance.<sup>305</sup> This explains the Afrikaner reaction to interracial relationships in this novel and in *Too Late the Phalarope*.

In fact, the South African law of 1928 prohibiting interracial marriages did not ban marriages between coloured and white people. It was only in 1949 that a new law was introduced, banning all marriages between whites and non-whites. In addition, the Immorality Act of 1950 prohibited sexual intercourse between whites and non-whites.<sup>306</sup> These

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<sup>304</sup> L. Moutinho, "Razão, afetividade e desejo em relacionamentos afetivo-sexuais entre brancos e negros no Rio de Janeiro (Brasil) e Cidade do Cabo (África do Sul): primeiras reflexões"[Reason, affection and desire in affective-sexual relationships between blacks and whites in Rio de Janeiro and Cape Town: first reflections], in D. P. Silva (ed.), *Novos contornos no espaço social: gênero, geração e etnia* [New contours in the social space: gender, generation and ethnicity], Rio de Janeiro, 1999, pp. 95-110; L. Moutinho, *Razão, cor e desejo* [Reason, color and desire], São Paulo, 2004.

<sup>305</sup> M. Foucault, *History of sexuality – The will of power*, New York, 1978.

<sup>306</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners, a biography of a people*, Cape Town, 2003; Y. A. Acheampong, T. B. Heaton and C. K. Jacobson, "Inter-racial marriages in South Africa", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35(3), 2004, online version: [www.questia.com?PM.qst?action=print&docId=5007154256](http://www.questia.com?PM.qst?action=print&docId=5007154256), accessed: 2006-2-23.

laws responded to an increasing proximity between coloureds, Africans and proletarian Afrikaners living in urban areas. The “black peril” assumed another face in this case, as poor women could not help but get employed in coloured-owned shops or live in low-price rental houses, in proximity to coloured and black men. Their economic and moral fragility would expose them to sexual abuse and seduction.

But miscegenation did not start with urbanization. In Abrahams’ novel, the setting is a conservative rural town, where miscegenation is in the roots of the coloured village. Lanny finds out that the old master Villier is his biological father, the one who paid for his education and to whom his mother refers as a good man, the best one she ever knew. His son Gert Villier also had a sexual affair with the coloured Fieta in the past.<sup>307</sup>

There is nothing strange about that, but if a coloured man and a white woman fall in love or have a sexual affair, they must be punished with severity. The story of Mad Sam and his twisted body and mind is an example of this. Sam was another educated man that years ago intended to buy a property in the region and live there with another Sarie, the Afrikaner wife of Gert Villier. When their romance was discovered, Sam was beaten almost to death, while Sarie died mysteriously. Now, 30 years later, Gert Villier’s wrath is doubled as Lanny repeats the outrage of Sam and tries to take another woman from the Villier family. Lanny and Sarie die fighting Gert and his men. Gert also dies, but at the hands of Sam, who recovers his memory and comes to defend his friends. He also dies. At the end of the shooting, six people have died: four Afrikaners and two coloureds. The newspaper publishes the story with a strong protest against educating coloured people.

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<sup>307</sup> In this novel, African (black) women are depicted only as part of the scene, without identification, in the kitchen. They are the domestic workers in the Villiers’ house who are supervised by coloureds Mabel or Fieta. This picture confirms the Brazilian popular saying: “White woman for marriage, mulatto woman for sex and black woman for work”, examined by Kabengele Munanga in *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil – Identidade nacional versus identidade negra* [Re-discussing miscegenation in Brazil – national identity versus Negro identity], Petropolis, 1999, p. 91.

The government saw the problem of miscegenation as a menace to white supremacy, with the real possibility of coloured and black populations taking power from the outnumbered white population. The problem would be aggravated with the expansion of the education program to African and coloured people. As expressed by Grobler in 1958:

In such a mixed society the Bantu is bound much sooner to reach a stage in his development where it would not only be unfair but impossible to deny him full political rights. People who believe that the Bantu would continue to subscribe submissively to a politically subordinate position in an integrated society are living in a fool's paradise. The European minority will be forced to accord more rights to the Bantu until they eventually have equal rights, or the Bantu will revolt against White authority.<sup>308</sup>

Abrahams' proposal of solidarity among different races to achieve social equality is present in the friendship between Lanny, Isaac – a young Jewish man, and Mako – a black teacher. Their conversations and analyses of South African society give the author a window to display his political and philosophical thoughts about racial policy in the country right after World War II. Through the voice of Mako, he describes another type of nationalism, in which the nation is the product of the combination of all tribes, equally empowered and mixed.

“There is more courage in the national marriage than there is in the tribal marriage for it means a man is freer. You see, a marriage between a Zulu and a Msutu is intermarriage too. They are different tribes. It is a mirror to the nationalism on a higher plane. There are those who say the world would not be free and happy – and I agree – until nations stop fighting other nations and nations stop oppressing nations. The national intermarriage, whether it is between black and white or between pink and red, is a mirror of this highest form of world nationalism when a man is really free.”<sup>309</sup>

By reading this passage in Abrahams' novel, one could ask if he was referring to the absence of laws against interracial marriage, as it was in Brazil and other countries in Latin America. It could be so, given that

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<sup>308</sup> J. H. Grobler, *Africa's destiny*, Johannesburg, 1958, p. 53.

<sup>309</sup> P. Abrahams, *The Path of thunder*, Claremont, 1984, p. 93.

during the late 1950s Brazil was already exploring the image of racial democracy, as explained previously.

But the absence of racial laws as they existed in the United States and South Africa, for example, does not mean racial equality and freedom for all people irrespective of their racial background. Jorge Amado's *Jubiabá* is a novel that explores the limits imposed on a black man throughout his infancy and adulthood.

It is not a love story. The emphasis is on political aspects of life in Salvador and how black people as the lower class are excluded from economic, political and social power by a small white elite. Antônio Balduino is not a coloured man; he is black. And as a black man, he faces all the stereotypes the society constructed to keep the descendants of slaves from attaining full citizenship and dignity.

Although his love for Lindinalva is not the central plot in the novel, it is a paradigm of an impossible love of a black man for a white woman in the 1940s. Once again, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is useful to understand the master/slave type of relationship that unites Balduino and Lindinalva. One could relate the black man's love for his boss' daughter to Caliban's lust for Miranda in Shakespeare's play<sup>310</sup>. Like the slave in *The Tempest*, Balduino cared for Lindinalva, admiring her white face as one of those images of Catholic saints found in churches and homes.

In the white man's house, Balduino was often a victim of physical abuse from the cook; from Amélia, the white maid; and from the master. He would work hard and could not leave the house without permission. Yet, he liked it there, because he had Lindinalva's friendship; even though it was a type of friendship between servant and master, as he would do anything she asked him to do.

When he turned fifteen and had already received some acknowledgement on the grounds of his intelligence and capacity, the boss

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<sup>310</sup> W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, online version: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html>, access: 2007-04-09.

decided to give him a real job in his trading company, with a salary. That was not accepted by Amélia, who believed that black people should always be slaves.<sup>311</sup> She told the master that Balduino often stared eagerly at Lindinalva.

Her accusation inflamed the white paranoia about black rapists. In Brazil also, the myth of the “black peril” was present. Based on that, the idealistic purity of white women was always endangered by the presence and proximity of vicious black men. In the southern United States, the cry of rape of a white woman by a black man – or its possibility – always generated fear and panic that would ultimately justify the lynching and murder of African-American men.<sup>312</sup> Balduino was severely beaten by Lindinalva’s father, although the biggest pain was that nobody in the house believed him.

There was no law prohibiting a black man to love a white woman, still, strong social barriers made this relationship impossible. The barrier is particularly visible if the black man is poor and the white woman is rich. Racism and class discrimination in South America are associated in an accumulative way, which prevented the formation of an important anti-racist movement in the region.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> The prejudices held by Amélia against Balduino reflect a popular concept in Brazil, in the decades following the Abolition (1888), that black people were not suited for paid jobs, and that even if they were to be employed, it should be in the worst and lowest remunerated functions. See: L. Kowarick, *Trabalho e vadiagem: a origem do trabalho livre no Brasil* [Labour and vagrancy: the origin of free labour in Brazil], Rio de Janeiro, 1994. Jorge Amado criticizes this prejudice, as he depicts Amélia as jealous and illiterate. Balduino is the one who reads the newspapers for the maid, in the evenings.

<sup>312</sup> H. V. Carby, ““On the threshold of woman’s era’: Lynching, empire and sexuality in black feminist theory”, in H. L. Gates Jr. (ed.), *“Race”, writing, and difference*, Chicago, 1986, pp. 301-16.

<sup>313</sup> C. A. Hasenbalg, “*Notas sobre relações de raça no Brasil e na América Latina*” [Notes about race relations in Brazil and Latin America] in H. Buarque de Hollanda, *Y nosotras Latino-Americanas? Estudos sobre genero y Raça* [What about we, Latin American women? Studies on gender and race], São Paulo, 1992, pp. 52-8; C. Moura, *Dialética radical do Brasil Negro* [Radical dialectic of Black Brazil], São Paulo, 1994; K. Munanga, *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade nacional versus identidade negra* [Re-discussing miscegenation in Brazil – national identity versus Negro identity], Petropolis, 1999.

As explained by Fredrickson:

In such societies, ideologies sanctioning or even glorifying race mixture could in fact serve as an apparently non-racist façade for the persistence of great social and economic disparities that correlated roughly with differences in phenotype.<sup>314</sup>

The maid's accusation started to grow strong in his mind as a possibility, and what was platonic love became a strong sexual desire for something that was forbidden and totally out of reach for that black teenager. Since then, Lindinalva was in his dreams, as he was also part of her dreams but as a nightmare, with the fear of rape and repugnance.

He ran away the same night of the beating, but throughout his entire life, every woman he had sexual intercourse with was – in his mind – Lindinalva. Paradoxically, the white girl also became the image of purity and innocence, to the point that Balduino would try to “protect” a young white prostitute from her client, based on his fantasy that she was a pure and innocent virgin exploited by a gigolo. The hero could easily pay a few coins and have sex with that white woman, but his own assumptions about her superiority prevented him from doing so.

The ambiguous character of Balduino is shown in the author's description of his life after leaving the white man's house. He is a young, strong and smart young man, but above all, he is free. Marginality and freedom are depicted as the two faces of a coin. Without family, house and job, young Balduino lives on the streets of Salvador, but he is a king among his pawns, loved by black and coloured young women in the poorest neighbourhoods of the city.

Denying intellectuals' assumptions that black people's sexual-hyper activity was the result of their promiscuous and vicious nature,<sup>315</sup> Amado depicts the sexual freedom of black men and women in Salvador as a positive manifestation of their social freedom. Anticipating a style that

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<sup>314</sup> G. M. Fredrickson, *Racism: a short history*, Princeton, 2002, p. 102.

<sup>315</sup> A. L. Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: race and the intimate in colonial rule*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 2002.

he would follow in more than twenty novels, the author explores scenes of sex and love outside marriage. Sex appears in this novel as part of the picture of the daily lives of poor people. It mixes a strong political concern with romantic descriptions of their ways of life.<sup>316</sup>

“Joana let her hair down, that hair that she thoroughly straightened and perfumed in a way that made Antônio Balduíno dizzy. He put his wide nose between her hair and the back of her neck, to smell that perfume. She said, laughing:

- Take your nostril from my neck...

He also laughed: - What a nice bodum...

He shoved her on the bed. Her voice would come weakly: - You devil...”<sup>317</sup>

However, his freedom was not complete because of social and racial barriers, which he internalised and which would prevent him from being a whole man, as proposed by Peter Abrahams in the novels analyzed in this study. Some of Amado’s critics, such as Susan Quinlan, accuse the author of reproducing stereotypes that reinforce racism, such as black male criminality and black women’s sexual permissiveness. Particularly in this novel, the absence of scenes of sex between black men and white women, could confirm the views of Amado’s critics.<sup>318</sup>

On the other hand, the racial barrier that impedes Balduíno from having sex with Lindinalva, even after she becomes a prostitute, is internally imposed. The white woman had become very poor after her father’s failure, and was working as a prostitute on the lower-class streets of Salvador. Still, the hero attributes moral superiority to his beloved and refuses to cross the line between them. At this point, the limitation is not

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<sup>316</sup> C. L. de Oliveira, “The early Jorge Amado”, in K. Brower, E. E. Fitz and E. Martinez-Vidal, *Jorge Amado: new critic essays*, New York/London, 2001, pp. 159-71.

<sup>317</sup> Author’s translation from the original: “Joana soltou os cabelos, aqueles cabelos que ela trazia cuidadosamente esticados e perfumados, de um jeito que deixava Antônio Balduíno tonto. Ele botou seu nariz achatado no cangote dela para sentir aquele perfume. Ela disse, rindo: - Tira essa fuça do meu pescoço... Ele também riu: - hummm, que bodum gostoso... Ele atirou ela na cama. Sua voz veio fraca: - seu demonio...” J. Amado, *Jubiabá*, Rio de Janeiro, 1978, p. 92.

<sup>318</sup> S. C. Quinlan, “Questioning Jorge Amado’s fictional women-of-color: Tereza Batista as legend or heroine?”, in K. Brower, E. E. Fitz and E. Martinez-Vidal, *Jorge Amado: new critic essays*, New York/London, 2001, pp.191-202.

imposed by a social rule anymore, but the black man cannot overcome his own beliefs.

Despite being loved by many women and respected by many men, Antônio Balduino is inferior in the white people's world. Those who love and respect him are black, coloured and – above all – poor. One example is when Lindinalva and her fiancé encounter Balduino and his gang in the street, a homeless teenager, begging. Her reaction is a mix of revulsion, horror and fear.

Brazil refused to adopt the United States' "one-drop rule", which determines that even if a person has only one drop of African blood, he/she is considered as black. In Brazilian society racial status is not strictly related to someone's ancestors. As explained by Guimarães, the Brazilian concept of race is structured in a hierarchical system, with gradations of prestige valuing social class, profession, income, family, education, skin colour and body features. It is also related to the dichotomies of elite vs. people, and white vs. black.<sup>319</sup> In this case, Balduino is at the lowest level of the scale, since he has no family, profession, job, education, or income. He also has dark skin, nappy hair and a wide nose.

At the end of her life, Lindinalva is a single mother, and a drunken prostitute fighting tuberculosis. Balduino decides to overcome his mystifications about the white woman and pay her for sex. But when he enters her room in the brothel, he finds her very ill. She recognizes Balduino and asks for his forgiveness. She also begs him to take care of her son, and dies.

The interracial love in this novel has a tragic end, as well as in the other novels analyzed in this chapter. Black and white authors both did not picture the possibility of a successful love relationship between blacks and whites.

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<sup>319</sup> A. S. A. Guimarães, "Raça, racismos e grupos de cor no Brasil" ['Race', racism and color groups in Brazil], *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 27, 1995, pp. 45-63.

The main difference between these white and black authors' interpretations of racial problems remains in the way they depicted the problem. For the white ones, it is not natural for a white person to love a black or a coloured, while it is quite expected that coloured and black people should develop love for whites.

On the other hand, coloured authors Lima Barreto and Peter Abrahams indicate that relations between a white man and a black woman are always purely sexual, without respect or affection. However, love between a black or coloured man and a white woman is possible for them, especially if the man has achieved intellectual and economic success, which improves his social condition and brings balance to the relationship.

Yet, existing social and political barriers to interracial sexuality during the first half of the twentieth century influenced black and white authors in a way that, for political reasons – perhaps given the urgency to denounce an abusive system – or for cultural limitations, they explored the problem without proposing any favourable outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

South African and Brazilian experiences with racism and racial policies are too complex to fit into a master dissertation. However, studies have progressively showed the accuracy of the use of comparative history in order to understand specific phenomena, such as racism in a broader context.

Historians have gone beyond the borders of their disciplines, languages and countries, pursuing answers to internal dilemmas, trying to understand what makes a phenomenon unique, what makes it just a small reflection of a universal condition, and in this case, what are the particular features of an issue such as racism, as it developed in African or Latin Americans societies.

As explained by Milles and Brown<sup>320</sup>, racism can be studied as an ideology, a moral question, a political question, a simple matter of anthropologic classifications, or it can even be a type of doctrine, when combined with religious beliefs, ideologies and politics. Basically, racism is a concept that helps societies to identify and classify individuals, distinguishing the “self” from the “other”. It is a representation and, because of this, it is mutable and subjective.

Concepts, ideas and representations about race and racism are part of cultural history, even though its manifestations are intrinsically related to social, economic and political processes. For this reason, studies of racism must to be included when analyzing imperialism and colonialism.

Other important aspects of racism is its subjectivity and its presence in everyday life, which imposes on the historian the need to work outside the frame of conventional historical papers or official documents – even though this type of sources are very important, as they can contain laws, policies, propaganda and speeches on the issue.

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<sup>320</sup> R. Milles and M. Brown, *Racism*, New York, 2003.

For the purpose of this study, an analysis of selected novels was used with an intersection of historiographical works in order to understand what links Brazilian and South African views on racial issues and what differentiates them. The literature was analyzed from a historical perspective, according to the context in which it was published and the life experiences of each author.

The first half of the twentieth century was remarkable in both societies, because it marked their processes of self-building as modern nations, their efforts to distance themselves from their colonial past and, at the same time, mimic the western European nations, considered models of civilized societies. Brazil and South Africa had also to respond to scientific racism and they did so by incorporating the views of eugenics in their social policies. In doing so, South Africans justified segregation and Brazilians twisted the theories to support the idea that a mix-raced population was stronger and more adaptable than a pure (white or black) one.

The novels were selected based on their themes, the period when they were written and published and the importance of their authors in the national and international context. Although many other different authors and novels could be useful for the same type of analysis, Paton, Abrahams, Amado and Lima Barreto were chosen because of their impact on public opinion inside and outside their time and country barriers.

Besides being fictional writings, the novels capture and reflect the social problems witnessed by the authors and divulge their proposals for quick and urgent solutions. In some cases, they describe the view from a window, in a society which forbade their approximation, as in Alan Paton's case. In others, they describe their own lives, as in Lima Barreto's case. The literature works as an imperfect mirror, whose reflected images were interpreted by the author in order to reach out to the reader and influence his or her views about the social problems depicted romantically.

Color and racial classification are clarified when presented contextualized, in the lives of well constructed characters and the challenges they must to overcome. The novels are representations of everyday lives and situations, human dilemmas are explained and exposed in a process which intends to denounce what the authors think as unfair in their societies.

Racism is an emotional issue to be taught with objectivity. It is sometimes almost invisible and other times as clear as daylight. It can be in the laws and rules, and in the authorities' manuals, but in its roots it is a feeling. Novelists use their creative freedom to explore the feelings of superiority/inferiority related to racism and to insert political dialogues in their characters voices and attitudes. It is not real, but it is a possibility of reality, that mixes many singular tragedies in the life of one perfectly designed character.

The novels offer a vision of both rural and urban contexts, the interwoven relationship between class and racial discrimination, and how concepts and prejudices about racial differences affect human feelings of love and sexual attraction.

Descriptions of the environment or the setting of the novels, permits one to visualize the context of economic development, such as industrialization and urbanization during the 1940s' and 50s', the question of immigration and rural exodus, government policies of population control and their efforts to project images as modern nations, internally and externally.

In South Africa and in Brazil, economic development and nation building happened in middle of a process of internal colonization, with a powerful elite exploiting the labor of the majority population. Comparisons of policies of development in both countries have show that despite Brazil having never adopted racial segregation as a government policy, its black population was denied opportunities to grow economically and to participate politically. The absence of laws and political parties,

made the enemy invisible but not non-existent in Brazil, and delayed the struggle for equality, unlike South Africa, where the struggle against apartheid was mostly defined along racial lines.

The biggest contrast between Brazil and South Africa – besides apartheid – is their views on miscegenation. In South Africa, laws, rules, family values and religion cooperate to outlaw interracial marriage or sexuality, attempting to ban what was considered unacceptable behaviors. However, the number of children born from interracial relationships proves that those mechanisms were not always effective. On the other hand, the Brazilian pro-miscegenation attitude does not mean that there were no barriers to interracial marriage. Social and family pressure imposed limits to the acceptance of black-white marriages, when gender, class and power were taken into consideration.

The intersection of race and gender is an important element of racism, in any society. It contributes to understand the dynamics of migration, labor, class and sexuality. In the same way, the phenomena of “sexual fear” and “black peril” must to be considered as part of the imaginary of racism that influenced individual and collective attitudes towards black and colored people. The novels analyzed here offered a possibility of understanding how these factors interact in everyday life, even though they were fictional stories.

Finally, the use of novels as primary sources to analyze racism in comparative history contributes to the widening of the possibilities of studies of cultural history, amplifying the use of representations in order to understand an issue that is so intimately related to concepts such as experience and feelings<sup>321</sup>. Much more could be done to extend this study, like for example, analysis of novels from female authors, or include other countries literature, or different periods. The road is wide and long.

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<sup>321</sup> I am using the concept of “feeling” as Williams referred in “structures of feelings”, in R. Williams, *Marxism and literature*, Oxford, 1977.

Racism is a persistent problem not only in Brazil and South Africa, but worldwide. It provokes war, underdevelopment, exploitation, corruption, poverty, isolation and negligence. It is a question that comes from the past, and insists in not passing. It is still flashing in the present, and the better we understand all its nuances and peculiarities the better can be our response, in order to finally overcome this very long past.

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