

Women of the House: Race-Mixing, Mistresses,  
and Servants in Plantation Literature of the  
Americas, 1839-2009

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## **Declaration**

I, Kathleen Sparks, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## Acknowledgements

Many people supported the completion of this project. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Stephen Hart, for his invaluable advice, encouragement, and keen critical eye. My gratitude also goes to my advisor, Doctor Linda Freedman, and to Doctor Tyler Fisher for their many constructive and helpful comments and suggestions.

Thank you to my husband for his endless, *endless* support and to our daughter for her endless smiles. A million thanks to my parents, who raised me to never stop moving forward. Finally, I am grateful to the Universe for granting me the gifts, tools, and time to undertake this journey.

## Abstract

This study traces literary representations of race-mixing in the Americas as informed by the paradigms of the true Plantation, the nostalgic Plantation, and the post-Plantation, especially through the figure of the black and mixed-race female domestic servant and the potential for darkening she continues to embody. A comparison of US texts with their contemporary counterparts in Latin America focuses on differing ideologies of race-mixing that resulted in divergent representations of black and mixed-race women by Plantation writers, especially in regard to their sexuality. The works analyzed here include: the nineteenth-century abolitionist novels *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab*, Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés*, and Bernardo Guimarães's *A Escrava Isaura*; the interwar works *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* by Teresa de la Parra and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*; and turn-of-the-century novels *Como agua para chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, Mario Vargas Llosa's *Elogio de la madrastra* and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto*, and Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*.

The representations of black and mixed-race female servants reveal an erasure of race-mixing in US literature that results in the figure's relegation to a sexless mammy type. Alternatively, Latin America's relative embrace of mixing results in a different fate for the servant; though granted greater agency and complexity in the literature, she is ascribed an aggressive or hyperactive sexuality that exposes more nuanced regional anxieties about race-mixing and the female body. This study argues that these differences originate in a foundational religious belief in the US's unique spiritual project, which has worked to exclude the female subaltern from the national identity. Ultimately, this taboo mindset

surrounding race-mixing manifests in US post-Plantation literature in an eradication of normative black sexuality unparalleled in contemporary Latin American texts, and condemns its female servant characters to a dehumanizing fate: unwanted, ignored, silenced, unpersoned.

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## INTRODUCTION: Race-Mixing, the Female Servant, and Religion in the Plantation Home

The literary works examined in this study span 170 years, from the decades leading up to the end of slavery in the Americas to the first decade of the twenty-first century. These works are products of the Plantation, a paradigm from colonial times that continues to govern societies of the Americas.<sup>1</sup> As argued in the pages that follow, the Plantation is both a physical place and an ideology that sets the socio-political, economic, religious, and racial norms and practices of the nations that lie within its parameters. As such, the Plantation, its history and its living legacy, emerges in literature of the Americas as both a setting and a state of mind. The Plantation writers<sup>2</sup> in this study in fact bear witness to three iterations of the Plantation, which determine this study's three-part structure. The first iteration of the Plantation is the true Plantation: literature from this period comes from *within* the Plantation, from a time and place where its living practices structured daily life. The Plantation's defining institution, slavery, was under attack, and the true Plantation literature in this study formed part of the textual assault but still reflected contemporary Plantation paradigms and discourse. Plantation works included in this study are Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841), Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* (1882), and Bernardo Guimarães's *A Escrava Isaura* (1875).

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<sup>1</sup> This study defines a plantation as a large farm or agricultural estate in the Americas, dating from the colonial period until the late nineteenth century, which produced cash crops through the exploitation of slave labor. The Plantation is a pan-American paradigm of shared customs, practices, and hierarchies, comprised by a network of plantations.

<sup>2</sup> 'Plantation writers', in this study, references white writers whose work is set within the Plantation and who, as members of Plantation culture and part of the Plantation's legacy, produce work that also reaffirms the Plantation's hierarchies and hegemony.

The second iteration is the nostalgic Plantation; its depictions rely upon nostalgic yearning for a lost way of life. Its writers long not for a return to chattel slavery, but for a return to the clear hierarchies (regionally and nationally distinct thought they were) that existed within the true Plantation. This nostalgia expresses disillusionment with the present and looks backwards in search of solutions for an unsatisfactory present and future, and its literature praises the Plantation even as it seeks a path out of it. *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* by Teresa de la Parra (1929) and *Gone with the Wind* (1936) enable a comparative reading of Plantation nostalgia. The third iteration is the 'post-Plantation'. The term 'post-Plantation' is preferable to ambiguous and heavily laden terms such as 'postcolonial',<sup>3</sup> and achieves two ends: one, it coincides with these terms in its concept of 'post' as something contemporary and culturally relevant (a late twentieth-century perspective that considers issues of class, gender, and race, for example); and two, it highlights the continued influence and legacy of the Plantation itself, which is purportedly shed in the 'post-Plantation', but which is in fact inescapable for Plantation writers. Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* (1989), Mario Vargas Llosa's *Elogio de la madrastra* (1988) and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto* (1997), and Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009) each offer a potential rebuttal to the Plantation. Yet the traces of slavery's collective trauma haunt these works and serve to ultimately reproduce the Plantation. In support of these claims, this study traces literary representations of

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<sup>3</sup> For work on postcolonial theory's application to globalization in Latin American contexts, see Coronil, 'Latin American Postcolonial Studies'; for its application to literature, see Lie, 'Postcolonialism and Latin American Literatures' and Ortega and Natali, 'Postcolonialism and Postcolonial Writing'. For a discussion of the nation's importance to postcolonial criticism, see Larsen, 'Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism'; on race, hybridity, and globalization in the southern US literature, see the collected 'position statements' in McKee and Trefzer, 'The U.S. South in Global Contexts'; for a discussion on the continuation of colonial discourse in the postcolony, see Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* and Toro, 'From Where to Speak?'

race-mixing in the Americas as informed by the paradigms of the true Plantation, the nostalgic Plantation, and the post-Plantation through the figure of the black and mixed-race female domestic slave or servant and the potential for darkening she continues to embody.

### **Slavery and the Plantation**

Slavery's legacy in the Americas has proven profound and its effects perpetually damaging, especially in regards to national identity politics. Slavery's legacy in literature is often pernicious, creating or reinforcing racial stereotypes of slaves that persist in representations of their black and mixed-race descendants. Following emancipation,<sup>4</sup> slaves in literature became servants who continued to constitute the laboring class that waited upon the nation's élite.<sup>5</sup> This 'working' relationship was and is complex and ambiguous, especially in regards to the intimate and personal dynamics that domestic service entails. Much of the relationship's ambiguity and tension stems not from racial and bodily difference as perceived by masters and mistresses, but from the threat of sameness. These anxieties express themselves through representations of non-white female slaves and servants framed in comparison to their white mistresses, which in turn expose deep- and long-running preoccupations with race-mixing and the consequences of sexual exploitation of non-white women. These representations reveal key racial features of the American Plantation.

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<sup>4</sup> The dates of official abolition of the nations discussed in this study are as follows: Mexico in 1829; Venezuela and Peru in 1854; the United States in 1865; Cuba in 1886; Brazil in 1888. See the collected essays in part 1 of Paquette and Smith, *The Oxford Handbook*, for more details on the political processes of abolition by nation.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'élite' in this study refers to individuals who are white, educated, and privileged by either material wealth or membership in upper-class society.

Criticism of slavery in American Plantation literature requires a theoretical and geographical definition of what constitutes the Plantation itself. Following from Antonio Benítez-Rojo's theory of the Caribbean as 'repeating' itself in a network of nations with shared social and cultural histories, in which communities separated by large distances operated similarly as Plantation societies (iv, 1-9), a methodically delineated, yet still vast and inclusive border to the Plantation is suggested by Philip D. Curtin in *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*. A colony or nation's inclusion in the 'complex' was established when the economic and socio-political structure met six criteria. In short, a majority of the labor was forced; population maintenance required a constant influx of immigrants; agriculture took the form of 'large-scale capitalist plantations'; there was a feudal quality in the daily life of the plantation, especially in legal jurisdiction; the plantations were structured to produce a specific export for a distant market; and the political 'system' of the plantation specifically or colony in general was controlled by a distant power in a very different (European) society (Curtin 11-12).<sup>6</sup> Curtin's criteria are largely concerned with power dynamics, so therefore it is crucial to recognize the prevalence of a seventh feature of the Plantation he overlooks: sexual exploitation of non-white women, which was both indisputable and foundational. As Barbara Bush argues, it was the 'sexual liaisons' between

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<sup>6</sup> These criteria apply to the Atlantic basin and Caribbean, which held the vast majority of plantations (sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco), but Curtin also incorporates the feudal *encomienda* structure and mining operations found further afield, for example, in central Brazil and Peru, which 'consumed slaves just as the plantations did' (68, 102). Amerindians could not be enslaved once they had converted to Christianity but were virtually enslaved in a *de facto* serfdom (63-64). On the North American continent, large-scale agricultural projects and the use of slave labor extended to the northern colonies of New England, until regional abolition and abolition of the international slave trade in the US following its independence from Britain. States north of the Ohio River passed anti-slavery legislation before 1805, but abolition was often gradual; see Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color*. The US passed the Act to Prohibit the Importation of Slaves in 1807, which took effect in 1808; see Mason, 'Slavery Overshadowed' for a legal history.

white men and black women that ‘determin[ed] the moral climate of plantation society’ (251). Yet attitudes towards and beliefs about the morality of such a relationship varied across the Americas.

As a study of literature inspired by the American Plantation that incorporates linguistic, cultural, and historical diversity, this work is best situated in the field of Inter-American Studies.<sup>7</sup> In its crossing of disciplines, the Inter-American approach affords opportunities to pursue comprehensive comparative enquiry. Methodologically, it relies upon ‘what the literatures of the Americas have in common’ (Saldívar 5) – the Plantation – and eschews the “‘Nuestra América’ versus Anglo-America’ ideological battle for cultural hegemony espoused by José Martí.<sup>8</sup> Situating this study within the Inter-American studies canon requires an acknowledgement of several developmental parallels that shaped the Americas: similar patterns of European colonization, adaptations to European political and religious systems shaped by a New World context, and popular ideologies about race that defined the Plantation. These features also define the available approaches for scholarly analysis of the Plantation and slavery; established

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<sup>7</sup> Rather than ‘Comparative American Studies’, the name for a current international journal devoted to the discipline which suggests various national entities set comparatively against each other, the term ‘Inter-American’ suggests the penetration of various national cultures into one another, indicating an active project of ongoing international influence.

<sup>8</sup> Saldívar cites Cuban national Martí’s rhetorical disaffection with the United States, its ‘capitalism and Anglocentrism’ as essential to articulating a ‘profound gap’ between the US and Latin America (6). Retamar points to Martí’s rejection of European (or Anglo) ‘ethnocide’ in Latin America in favor of ‘our *mestizo* America’ (19, 4). See Martí, *Política de Nuestra América*. The *mestizo* is essential to Latin American self-identification, as later chapters will demonstrate. See also McClennen’s ‘Inter-American Studies’ for a historical discussion on the term ‘America’ and its deployment as an US imperialist tool in the Americas, as well as the perceived threat posed to Latin American studies by Inter-American studies. McClennen highlights the difficulty of selecting an alternative popular name for the United States, as does Sonia Torres when she employs the awkward ‘Unitedstatesian’ (suggestive of the Spanish ‘estadounidense’) in ‘US Americans and “Us” Americans’. McClennen also relies upon ‘Pan-American’ to designate the whole of the Americas, which is arguably useful but not used in this study, where ‘Plantation’ is more culturally specific and geographically and historically relevant.

concepts of nationhood, socio-economic and religious institutions, and cultural and biological race represent the diversity of the Americas, which requires Inter-American studies' comparative framework to effectively cross the national boundaries and disciplinary barriers of the Plantation.

Despite the similarities among the socio-economic structures of the Plantation that governed and connected the colonies of the Americas examined above, the cultural differences inherent in the formations of the colonies of the New World were profound in their divergent effects on the Plantation. The Plantation region was governed largely by either an Anglo or a Latinate cultural heritage,<sup>9</sup> which rooted the American colonies in religious traditions of either a syncretic Catholicism or an exclusionary Protestantism. Henry Goldschmidt articulates the foundational importance of religion to different Plantation contexts:

in the United States and throughout the Americas, from the fifteenth century through the twenty-first – religion has been inextricably woven into both racial and national identities to such an extent that 'race,' 'nation,' and 'religion' have each defined the others. (5)<sup>10</sup>

Religion informed race by dictating who was included, or excluded, from the hegemonic (white) religious community. Catholic colonies (and later nations) in the Americas absorbed, to varying degrees, practices and rituals of indigenous and African religious traditions in a comparatively fluid spiritual climate to that of Anglo-Protestantism, first brought to North America by the Puritans. Considered

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<sup>9</sup> 'Anglo' refers to British settlements, 'Latinate' to French, Spanish, and Portuguese (based on shared linguistic origins and common religious practices). This division also appears throughout Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica* as formative to American republics, and in Morse, *New World Soundings*.

<sup>10</sup> See Goldschmidt and McAlister, *Race, Nation, and Religion* for recent collected essays on the intersection of race, nation, and religion in Anglo- and Latin America.

to be religious extremists in Britain, these families – husbands, wives, and children – sailed to the New World in pursuit of religious freedom and to flee corruption and persecution.<sup>11</sup> While still in transit, the Puritan settlers ascribed themselves a sacred mission: a ‘Citie Upon a Hill’. This metaphor, taken from Puritan John Winthrop’s 1630 sea-voyage sermon, ‘A Model of Christian Charity’, conceptualizes Puritan America as God’s promised land for their devout cause and an ideal for which (white) America must continually strive.<sup>12</sup> The ‘Citie’ was no place for indigenous Americans or imported African slaves, regardless of whether they had converted. Early colonial law ensured racial exclusion and purity.<sup>13</sup>

In comparison, Latin America was settled largely by unmarried *conquistadores*, priests, agriculturalists, and miners who arrived hungry for companionship and found it with indigenous and African women.<sup>14</sup> The Holy See

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<sup>11</sup> Rosenthal claims that English wives emigrated to the US colonies with their husbands and families (6). Woodson, however, argues that for white men there was a ‘tendency to cohabit’ with black women, but that the English would abandon or neglect these women and their offspring later, ‘unlike the Latins’ (44).

<sup>12</sup> See Bercovitch’s *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* for discussion on Winthrop’s and the Puritan’s influence in early colonial America. The ideological strength of the Citie Upon a Hill continues undiminished in the present day; for example, former US Presidential candidate Mitt Romney referenced political threats to the ‘shining city on a hill’ in a 2016 speech. See Beckwith, ‘Read Mitt Romney’s Speech’ and Attanasio, ‘Mitt Romney Speech’ for context. See also Elliott, *The Puritan Influence*.

<sup>13</sup> See Zabel (56-57), and Woodson (45-51) for examples of colonial statutes against race-mixing.

<sup>14</sup> Woodson also distinguishes these English colonial practices from those of the Spanish and Portuguese (as well as the French, whom he claims gave race-mixing ‘its best chance’), labelling the Portuguese as ‘good-natured people void of race hate [who] did not dread the miscegenation of the races’. The Spanish, he continues, mixed less, but, since ‘men are but men and as Spanish women were far too few in the New World’, the Spanish settlers mixed with the non-European populations as well (43-44); this mixing occurred despite preoccupations with blood purity. Gilberto Freyre echoes the importance of race-mixing to Brazilian identity: ‘[the] social policy consisted in the utilization of the natives, chiefly the women, not merely as instruments of labor but as elements in the formation of the family. Such a policy was quite different from that of [...] the English in North America (24). Freyre’s assertion has merit because the facts of immigration undoubtedly had different consequences for the offspring of the earliest settlers, as well as the resultant attitudes about a colony’s racial composition.

determined how these interracial unions were classified and labelled. Pope Paul III 's 1537 papal bull explicitly forbade the enslavement of indigenous Americans, as well as 'all other people who may be discovered by Christians', in recognition of their humanity and their 'desire' for conversion (MacNutt 11). Also, in 1838 Pope Gregory XVI penned a papal bull condemning and prohibiting Catholic participation in the slave trade by pain of excommunication (Davies 10). Even where race-mixing was illegal, it was socially accepted; as Carl Degler points out, early colonial Brazilian law 'forbade marriage between whites and Negroes or Indians' but 'the church and the society accepted such unions informally' (213, 216). The Catholic Church recognized the humanity of black and indigenous people, absorbing converts into mainstream colonial society in an act of religious mixing that informed society's broader acceptance of social and sexual race-mixing.<sup>15</sup> Yet, conversion was secondary to conquest; for example, the Spanish crown's objectives superseded the church's, but the crown also relied on the church for legitimacy in their colonial project and dedicated their conquest to spreading Christianity.<sup>16</sup> In short, Anglo-America was first settled by Europeans whose politics were wedded to its religious praxis. Latin America's political colonizing powers answered – spiritually, collectively – to Rome. The diverse ideologies and driving forces of settlement in Anglo- and Latin America structured how the colonies included or excluded autochthonous populations and African

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<sup>15</sup> Schwaller notes that, as early as the late sixteenth century, many missionary priests relied upon, or at least accepted to varying degrees, native people's syncretizing of pre-Columbian traditions and practices to their newly adopted Catholic faith (xx-xxiii).

<sup>16</sup> Schwaller argues 'the Crown justified its conquest and settlement of the New World in religious terms, to extend the benefits of Christianity to hitherto unknown populations' (xiii). Murphree argues that Spain undertook the 'Christianizing' of indigenous Americans once it was 'no longer preoccupied with discover expeditions or the ousting of European adversaries' (36).

slaves in the social fabric, and whether race-mixing was permitted, encouraged, or forbidden.

Literature offers privileged access to these historical divergences. For example, in the US, religious ideology influenced literature from colonial times through the jeremiad. In its purest essence, the jeremiad is a political sermon.<sup>17</sup> In his study on the origins and evolution of the American jeremiad, Sacvan Bercovitch traces it from its roots, where it was 'a mode of public exhortation that originated in the European pulpit, was transformed in both form and content by the New England Puritans, persisted through the eighteenth century, and helped sustain a national dream through two hundred years of turbulence and change' (xi). European, and in this case English, in origin, the *American* jeremiad bore an important distinction from its earliest exploitation by first-generation Puritan emigrants: an 'unshakable optimism' which heralded the promise of America (6),<sup>18</sup> a New Jerusalem and a sacred project that would not, and could not, fail. The jeremiad's influence pervades the American works examined in this study as a call to action, a demand that the Citie be realized according to foundational principles of freedom, equality, and charity. The jeremiad's 'sermonic mode' (Coleman 271), optimism, and fire-and-brimstone rhetoric are uniquely American and do not permeate the works of Latin American fiction in this study.

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<sup>17</sup> Bercovitch designates the jeremiad as a 'state-of-the-covenant address, tendered at every public occasion', and credits Perry Miller's *The New England Mind* with the standard definition of the jeremiad as 'New England's errand' (*The American Jeremiad* 4). For a discussion of the jeremiad as a literary project, see Minter, 'The Puritan Jeremiad'.

<sup>18</sup> See the collected essays of Bercovitch, *The American Puritan Imagination*, especially Brumm, 'Christ and Adam' and D. Levin, 'Essays to Do Good'. See also Murphy, 'Longing, Nostalgia' for a discussion of the form's 'radical [promise]' (132).

Regardless of generic difference, the depiction of slavery in Plantation literature reveals its societal legacy and broad historical repercussions. When examined through an Inter-American comparative framework, Plantation literature also reveals a shared problem of perspective: it is written from a position of authority and dominance, no matter how benign its intentions. Analysis is informed by subjective memories, romantic ideals, and vague conceptions about the slaves themselves. If, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues, the subaltern's speech is appropriated rather than authentic,<sup>19</sup> it is the paradigm of slavery that most supports her view, for how can a writer accurately anthropomorphize a possession without projecting upon it the prejudices of ownership? It is one thing to imagine being marginalized; it is another altogether to imagine being an owned object. Plantation writers answered this challenge to literary authenticity by appropriating the experience of those with whom they had most contact: the domestic slave. The domestic or house slave's daily reality subjected him or her to an elevated and enforced level of intimacy with the white family. Female slaves particularly were susceptible to white expectations and exploitation: the mistresses' demands for companionship could be tinged with maternal pride or driven by sexual jealousy, and the masters' ability to sexually abuse slave women with impunity located these women in a state of perpetual powerlessness. The place slave women occupied was the inverse of their mistresses'; it positioned them as infinitely othered, close in physical proximity but inhabiting different experiential worlds. The writers and their fictional servants discussed in this study

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<sup>19</sup> Spivak conflates the Western practices of 'speaking of (or for) the subaltern woman' (271).

represent two ends of a vast racial and cultural spectrum, organized by the 'pigmentocracy'.

### **The 'pigmentocracy'**<sup>20</sup>

Since their discovery and colonization by European powers, the Americas operated from a position of inferiority. In a type of American pyramid, secondary to Europe, Europe-born immigrants occupied the top tier. A tier below were the *criollos*, or creoles. This study uses Benedict Anderson's definition of a *criollo*/creole as an individual who is of '(at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas' (47, footnote).<sup>21</sup> This group was of special importance and influence in the Plantation region's first centuries of colonization. Perceived exploitation by the metropolises eventually drove a wedge between mother country and colony,<sup>22</sup> but a racist hierarchy continued to infiltrate the American Plantation and structure society as a 'pigmentocracy'.

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<sup>20</sup> This study's selection of the term 'pigmentocracy' applies to all members of the population, including whites born in the Americas who 'anxiously affirmed their shared [European roots] in contrast to the Africans, Indians, and mixed-bloods who occupied the lower rungs of the caste hierarchy' (Chasteen 10).

<sup>21</sup> This study insists on linguistic consistency and uses 'Creole' in analysis of English language texts and 'criollo' in analyses of Latin American texts as interchangeable terms, in the interest of clarity. This approach contrasts with other scholarly uses of the terms. For example, Brathwaite defines 'creolization' as the 'cultural action or social process' of a 'new construct' involving the dominant and subordinate populations as 'contributory parts of a whole' (202-205). Here, he is suggesting the outcome of a cultural creole mixture, which complicates the term and is not consistent with the use of 'Creole/*criollo*' in this study. Benítez-Rojo also attempts to define the *criollo* of Spanish America as a 'direct descendant of the conquistadors and first colonizers' who 'could not forget his Iberian descent, the customs of the old country, his Catholic faith' (60). However, he confuses the definition when he references 'creole culture' as a transformational society that emerged over time and included *criollos*, *gente de la tierra*, indigenous populations and African slaves as part of a cultural and racial mixture (18, 24). This study adheres to Anderson's definition to avoid such confusion and inconsistency.

<sup>22</sup> The most powerful and exclusive economic positions and political appointments were often reserved for European-born immigrants, a distinction which angered *criollos* throughout the hemisphere (Chasteen 159). Benítez-Rojo argues that the Spanish were

The preoccupation with blood purity (in the US, the ‘one-drop rule’<sup>23</sup>; in Spanish America, *limpieza de sangre*<sup>24</sup>), the pigmentocracy, and the ‘darkness scale’ – a racial spectrum specific to the darker members of the pigmentocracy – among *criollos* as well as slaves informed an internal slave hierarchy and often determined what role or type of work a slave performed. Dark-skinned slaves were relegated to the hard labor of the fields. Most commonly, light-skinned, mixed-race, and attractive slaves were kept in or close to the main house. The darkness scale evidences widespread race-mixing that, accounting for the extreme inequality of power dynamics in slavery, meant exploitative, forced interracial sex. This hierarchy relied upon nomenclatures specific to cultural and linguistic contexts. The Anglo-American term ‘miscegenation’, a journalistic creation, appeared in the mid-nineteenth century United States as evidence of the fear-charged racial politics caused by abolition and the Civil War.<sup>25</sup> Its origins situate it as imperfectly synonymous with the Spanish American ‘*mestizaje*’ and the Brazilian ‘*mestiçagem*’ (mixing/mixture). Both the Latin and Anglo-American term ‘*mulato*’/‘mulatto’ designate a black-white mixed-race person, while ‘*mestizo*’ is used for a person of indigenous and European descent (Rosenthal 5). Miscegenation refers especially to African and European interracial sexual

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‘discriminadora con respecto al indio, al mestizo, al negro, al mulato e *incluso al criollo hijo de peninsulares*’ (2; my emphasis).

<sup>23</sup> See Weinstein, *Family* 11. Weinstein terms the ‘one-drop rule’ a ‘cruel mandate of blood’ that condemns the child to slavery for possessing a single black or mixed-race ancestor (44).

<sup>24</sup> Rosenthal argues the Spanish were concerned historically with blood purity because of ‘the presence of Arabs and Jews’ in Spain (6).

<sup>25</sup> A mock pamphlet entitled ‘Miscegenation’ was penned as a ‘colossal hoax’ by two anti-abolitionist New York newspaper editors but credited to an anonymous abolitionist; their aim was to incite outrage over the possibility of post-emancipation racial ‘amalgamation’ by promoting interracial marriage as desirable and necessary to the future of the US (Kaplan 253). Its critics numbered many abolitionists, who questioned not only the logic of encouraging miscegenation but recognized the dangers to abolition of “the advocacy of an idea of which the American people” were “more afraid than any other” (the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, 30 January 1864, cited in Kaplan 231).

mixing (Rosenthal, Sundquist)<sup>26</sup> or 'intermarriage between whites and blacks' (Kaplan 230),<sup>27</sup> whereas *mestizaje* derives from 'mezclar' – to mix – and has no etymological foundation in sex. Its use therefore references interracial relationships in general, 'without a negative value attached' (Rosenthal 6).<sup>28</sup> Doris Sommer argues that *mestizaje* was in fact 'practically a slogan for many projects of national consolidation' (22). 'Miscegenation', on the other hand, possesses a distinct and paranoia-filled etymology.<sup>29</sup> According to Rosenthal, the term 'did not appear until relatively late in the history of interracial sex, [...and] was coined not long after the Emancipation Proclamation', while Sundquist argues it 'quickly acquired a contagious and derisive force, one that expressed the nation's most visceral fears [...] about emancipation' (4). With race mixture came the blurring of lines, the merging of identities, and the perceived debasement of white America.<sup>30</sup> Rosenthal claims that 'the narrative anxiety about miscegenation reflects fears that the races may not be inherently different – interracial attraction presumes the humanity and sameness of the other' (40). With the threat of emancipation and equality arose the need to distinguish. Race mixture incorporated the black body

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<sup>26</sup> Rosenthal argues that US 'miscegenation' applies to 'black and white mixing' (6). Sundquist distinguishes between 'amalgamation' as 'simply a mixing' and miscegenation, which 'quite clearly meant interracial *sexual* mixing' (107).

<sup>27</sup> This definition appears in the 23 January 1864 *Anglo-African Review* and was written by the editor, Dr. James McCune Smith, who supported miscegenation (cited in Kaplan 230-231).

<sup>28</sup> Rosenthal claims that *mestizaje* denoted 'primarily [...] Indian and white mixture' (6). This study, however, adheres to the term's etymological roots and applies *mestizaje* to 'mixture' of all races.

<sup>29</sup> According to Rosenthal, the term 'miscegenation', even when 'historically appropriate', may be offensive due to its racist origins (5). However, this study employs the term because acknowledgement of those same origins are crucial to understanding the linguistic, cultural, and literary difference in race-mixing ideologies of the Americas.

<sup>30</sup> An 1864 poem by Horace Otis, printed in the *New York Day-Book*, expresses anxieties about miscegenation in the US:

Fill with mulattoes and mongrels the nation,  
THIS IS THE MEANING OF MISCEGENATION. (Kaplan 239)

into the white nation as the darkening agent of miscegenation, a practice of racial degradation that required its own classifying terminology.

The cultural causes of these linguistic deviations in mixing terminology in turn influence broadly different attitudes about race and race-mixing that prevail today between the US (degrading, taboo) and Latin America (exploited, accepted, even celebrated). In Latin America, a long tradition of mixing fostered positive ideologies about a future racial identity. This current of thought prompted twentieth-century philosophical treatises, such as Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica* (1925), which prophesies a 'fifth race' in which no current racial strand dominates – a spiritual or aesthetic era in which harmony prevails and the new race, which comprises all of humanity, emerges stronger and more advanced than any previous races. This cosmic race, according to Vasconcelos, will be more than the sum of its parts. Vasconcelos condemns the US for its racial segregation and oppression of its black and mixed-race citizens. According to him, the Anglo-American nation to the north committed 'el pecado de destruir esas razas, en tanto que nosotros las asimilamos, y esto nos da derechos nuevos y esperanzas de una misión sin precedente en la Historia' (57). This historical inaccuracy, which denies recognition of racial violence and genocide, reveals a conscious attempt to craft a syncretic racial history for Latin America.<sup>31</sup> Vasconcelos's fellow countryman, Octavio Paz, promotes syncretism by arguing in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950) that Mexicans ignore their mixed indigenous and Spanish ancestry at their own peril; rejection or denial of one part

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<sup>31</sup> For example, Gustavo Verdesio's essay on the 1831 slaughter of the Uruguayan Charrúa, an indigenous group also found in Argentina, argues that the population 'needed to be eliminated because [...] they were the inheritors of indigenous barbarism' and were a danger to the construction of the new national consciousness (201). Vasconcelos omits any mention of such atrocities.

leads to a crisis of identity. In Brazil, Gilberto Freyre penned an opus on slavery's national legacy titled *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (1933) that highlighted what he considered to be Brazil's unique history of racial syncretism.<sup>32</sup> Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar echoes Vasconcelos's focus on the Latin American race-mixing tradition, despite calling *La raza cósmica* 'un libro confuso' (10). Rejecting earlier philosophies that emphasized whitening rather than mixing, such as Argentinian Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845), and in response to Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó's pro-European essay, *Ariel*, Retamar's *Caliban* (1971) posits the Latin American identity as undeniably mixed – a composite, unique identity he embraces. *Mestizaje* was a conversation that included voices from throughout Latin America, though as terms like *mestizo*, *mulato*, and *zambo* demonstrate, these voices were categorized and ranked. The historical veracity or intellectual rigor of these works, which vary, are, for the purposes of this study, less important than the fact that a conversation about race and race-mixing was taking place at all. No comparable intellectual conversation about race emerged in either the nineteenth- or twentieth-century United States.

These ideologies surface in Plantation fiction, where racial dynamics are depicted and then reinforced. Racial and religious segregation appears in US literature and perpetuates a trajectory of cultural and physical apartheid that ultimately relegates black female characters to an eternal role as 'the help'. In

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<sup>32</sup> This text informs analysis in ch. 3 of this study, where its English translation is applied (*The Masters and the Slaves*). The translation was selected for this study due to extensive quotation, for the bilingual English/Spanish reader's convenience. Portuguese quotation appears only for the primary literary text, *A Escrava Isaura*, and critical sources for which no translation was available. For critical readings of Freyre and his work, see Cleary, *Race, Nationalism and Social Theory*; Burke and Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: Social Theory*; Drayton, 'Gilberto Freyre and the Twentieth-Century Rethinking'.

Latin America, a '*café con leche*'<sup>33</sup> culture inspires a consensus of racial hybridity that permits literary depictions of race-mixing with or without the hope or fear of offspring – interracial sex for procreation or for pleasure. In Latin American literature, though the infantilized figure of the *muchacha*<sup>34</sup> still exists, the servant's role is often exoticized and eroticized through the mixed-race servant. It is a role at odds with American literary mammies, who are de-sexed workhorses still dedicated to raising white babies. The mammy, a 'large dark body' with a 'round smiling face' who devotes herself solely to the white children she raises in an act that internalizes her own inferiority, also acts as the 'tendon between the races', according to Kimberly Wallace-Sanders. Mammy is a cultural connective tissue, rather than a sexual or biological one; she connects 'the muscle of African American slave labor with the skeletal power structure of white southern aristocracy' (2-3). Yet her position as an intermediate is permanent because it also serves as a *barrier* between the races. Mammies serve as intimate reminders to white households of their own elevated positions, but also reinforce, through their place as the subservient Other *within* the white home, black women's perceived racial and social inferiority. These different conceptions of the servant's role in the literary Plantation home requires, first, an examination of her place in the historical home.

### **From Slavery to Servitude in the Americas**

Depictions of both mammies and exotic mixed-race servants are inherently bound to a notion rooted in a prevalent and resilient myth: the slave or

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<sup>33</sup> This term derives from a popular Latin American concept of mixed-race collective identity. The terminology and accompanying ideology are further discussed in ch. 4 of this study. For the term's origins, see ch. 1 in Wright, *Café con leche*.

<sup>34</sup> Chaney and Garcia Castro translate 'muchacha' as 'serving girl' ('A New Field' 6).

servant is 'one of the family'. In both the US and Latin America, close proximity between the masters and slaves of the household<sup>35</sup> led to the development of personal relationships, often predicated on or reinforced by biological kinship ties – when the slave was in fact the master's child. Elizabeth Kuznesof argues that early *mestizo* offspring, 'the illegitimate children of Indian women and Spaniards [...] were raised in Spanish households' where they received 'sustenance, education [sic] and affection, but were seen in the light of servants' (Kuznesof 21). Though it was a persistent and engrained ideology, the 'one of the family' myth collapses under the lightest scrutiny. The fact of the family's ownership of the slave or the second-class status bestowed upon the mixed-race, illegitimate child of the master completely undermine claims of kinship made by the white family. However, regardless of its inconsistencies, the myth remained a powerful weapon of justification in the mistress's arsenal after slavery and in the absence of biological ties. In Spanish America, for example, a 'frequent ploy of the *patrona* is to adopt a maternalistic attitude, referring to an employee as another daughter. This relationship [...] is demystified when the employer demands breakfast in bed from her "daughter"' (Goldsmith 226). Where fictive kinship was not sufficient to ensure perpetual servitude, systematically exploitive measures guaranteed the servant's dependence upon the white household. Domestic service and the women who perform it are evidence of the Plantation's legacy since slavery and its continued hold upon the social and racial paradigms of the Americas.

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<sup>35</sup> Graham defines a household as:

a set of social relationships among persons who by race and birth occupied markedly unequal social positions. A paternalistic culture set the terms within which the male head was invested with authority and responsibility over all members of the household. It remained for dependents to return obedience appropriate to their place either as wife, children, other kin, or servants. (69)

The history of slavery comprises a vast socio-political corpus<sup>36</sup> and reveals common themes: the black woman is abused, raped, manipulated, and forgotten; she is underpaid, paid-in-kind, not paid at all; she is 'one of the family' but she is not to be trusted. David Katzman's *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* presents a sociological analysis of the US black and mixed-race domestic's experience from slavery to the late twentieth century and the multiple features of the Plantation paradigm that survive in the guise of remunerated work.<sup>37</sup> The continuation of the white mistress/black servant paradigm following emancipation met with little resistance from either side. In her critical literary history, *From Mammies to Militants: Domesticity in Black American Literature*, Trudier Harris states that the relationship dynamic is indicative of 'the way things are. The pattern was handed down from slavery and the majority of mistresses *and maids* are not inclined to alter it' (21; my emphasis). Harris argues that fear, behavioral conditioning, and identity negation formed the basis for the black servant's reluctance to facilitate change, and she suggests the apparent apathy on the part of the servants derived from habituation.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, freedom presented them with a vast and potentially

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<sup>36</sup> For historical overviews of slavery in the US from different scholarly approaches and time periods, see: Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution*; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; Beckert and Rockman, *Slavery's Capitalism*. For slavery in Latin America, see: Rolando Mellafe, *La esclavitud en Hispanoamérica*; Herbert S. Klein and Ben Vinson III, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*; Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Slavery, Freedom, and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World*. For recent comparative criticism of slavery in the Americas, see Baptist and Camp, *New Studies*.

<sup>37</sup> Katzman argues that, in many ways, the institution lived on. The black woman continued to wait upon the white woman, proving that 'domestic service was inseparable from race and caste in the South' (xi). Involuntary servitude, for example, was not 'completely abolished by the Reconstruction constitutional amendments. Peonage [...] could tie a woman to a mistress's kitchen. Furthermore, some Southern states had vagrancy laws that compelled blacks to work' (96). With unemployment criminalized, skill sets systematically limited, and segregation legalized, black women had few alternatives to service roles.

<sup>38</sup> Harris argues that 'images formed from years of habit could not be easily uprooted from the minds of [...] black women; to them, whites were the models for everything good and right, while black was ugly and undesirable [...] so they] found themselves without

dangerous unknown, especially considering widespread illiteracy and the lack of educational opportunities available to the former slave community. Between 1890 and 1920, the number of black domestics in the United States increased by 43 percent, and by the end of the period black females made up 40 percent of domestic servants in the country (Katzman 72).<sup>39</sup> Black women remained equated with domestic service and the low social standing of their occupation.<sup>40</sup>

Lakshmi Srinivas articulates some universal characteristics of the mistress-servant relationship. She highlights the 'function of the domestic as status-giver and the use of the servant role to reinforce the superior status of the employer and to create her identity in opposition to that of the servant' (274). Here, then, is an example of racial othering on a very intimate level, a re-creation of 'the features of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled' in an individual, personal capacity (275). Srinivas catalogues the 'desirable' qualities in a servant, including 'humility, lowliness, meekness and gentleness, fearfulness, respectfulness, loyalty and good temper', and notes that mistresses complained about 'dishonesty, irresponsibility, laziness, sullenness, requests for free time, illness and possible pregnancy' (274). One white female defined herself as the antithesis of everything her black servant represented – poverty, ignorance, untrustworthiness. These negative characteristics had once served to support the masters' mission to educate and religiously indoctrinate their slaves into

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identities beyond those of the white families for whom they had spent most of their lives working' (36-37).

<sup>39</sup> Limited northward migration of the black community occurred during World War I, as poor white or immigrant urban domestics entered the industrialized work force. Black servants filled these roles throughout the United States, yet the majority of black domestics remained concentrated in the South.

<sup>40</sup> Srinivas argues 'the domestic worker automatically has low status in a society whose definitions of class rely on occupational classification' (270).

Christian obedience, but were increasingly used as a catalogue of complaints by the white employers after emancipation (Katzman 186). The white mistresses who *employed* their domestics rather than *owned* them no longer felt, or pretended to feel, maternal warmth and patience for perceived inefficiency. Black domestic employment by whites across an expanding socio-economic demographic simply reinforced the racial caste structure of the pigmentocracy that had existed from slavery: black served white (185).

Many black domestics worked seven days a week, and long hours. Live-in servants faced further loss of autonomy and isolation (Katzman 115).<sup>41</sup> The defining factor of the work was the mistress-servant relationship, and 'mistresses generally made it clear that whatever freedom a domestic had was a privilege granted by the mistress' (116). This control served to perpetuate a false sense of familial ties and ensure loyalty to the white family. White nostalgia for the total rights of ownership they enjoyed under slavery thus informed contemporary domestic servant roles. Though black women began to move out of service and into manufacturing following World War I, southern society worked to ensure the perpetuation of a black domestic labor pool through vocational training.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the most important skill was the 'requisite of invisibility' (Katzman 188; Harris 12). 'Good servants' excelled in their dual roles of helper and phantom, and performed

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<sup>41</sup> Harris's study focuses on the varying degrees of fictional black domestics' self-identification with black culture and their own black families, versus self-identification with white culture and the white families they served. The black domestic's isolation from the black community is central to her study.

<sup>42</sup> Katzman shows that their employment prospects, much like any early education they received, were clearly delineated by their racial caste and segregation:

[v]ocational training for black women followed a direction different from that of schools for whites. [...Black] secondary schools provided training [...] for domestic service [... since] few jobs other than domestic or personal service were open to black women [...]. Black educators received the support of whites by preparing their graduates to live within the caste system rather than challenging it. (245)

their work in an unseen silence that helped white employers retain a sense of control.

New feelings of powerlessness on the part of the mistress also evoked the advantages of slavery for the collective white memory. E. K. Brathwaite points to the 'persuasion of the whip and the fear of punishment' which ensured slave obedience before emancipation (203). Slavery had been a full possession of another's physicality, Michel Foucault's 'appropriation of [docile] bodies' (137), and when emancipation denied this corporeal control to the mistress, she relied on coercion and manipulation to elicit docility.<sup>43</sup> Strain to the relationship was compounded by a perceived sexual rivalry for the attentions of the male head of the household. The Plantation's history of exploitative master-slave sexual relationships continued to complicate post-slavery mistress-servant relationships, but with fresh urgency. As Katzman argues, 'for Southern [black servants], white sexual exploitation was a major problem'.<sup>44</sup> During slavery, the master's dalliances had been more acceptable to his wife. Annie S. Barnes contends that not only were some mistresses largely unconcerned by their husbands' sexual relationships with their slaves, but that they went as far as insisting their husbands free the slave women who bore their children (28).<sup>45</sup> Without the institution of slavery enforcing a quasi-familial structure, master-servant sexual relationships undermined the hegemony of the white household.

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<sup>43</sup> Foucault's chapter 'Docile bodies' in *Discipline and Punish* (135-141) elucidates the high value placed on 'docility' in the laborer.

<sup>44</sup> He claims that '[d]omestic service seemed to compound white male sexual exploitations because it placed young girls even more directly under white power within a system that condoned white male/black female relations. From slave days when slaveholders had liaisons with their female slaves this sexual contact had been tolerated by whites' (216).

<sup>45</sup> The progeny of these relationships, especially the light-skinned children, were often raised and educated in the main house as 'one of the family'.

To maintain their employment, servants kept any harassment or affairs hidden from their mistresses (33). This air of secrecy led to growing distrust from mistresses and contributed to ‘the stereotype of the hot mamma black woman: [the belief that] a lascivious beast lurks just beneath the clean, presentable, respectable exterior’ of even the most trusted and irreproachable black domestic (Harris 78-79). A hostile stigma surrounded black female servants and sexual mixing, and contemporary dissatisfaction with this perceived danger triggered the emergence of the reimagined mammy in nostalgic Plantation literature. The Plantation was glorified as an idyllic landscape, a simpler time when black Americans were unambiguously in the service of whites. George B. Handley notes that how ‘slavery is told plays an important role in establishing an understanding of both the implied reader and the implied author’s ideological position vis-à-vis slavery’s legacies’ (32). White, literary culture of the United States rejected the hot mamma black woman and her threatening and destabilizing sexuality in favor of the mammy, who instead upholds the Plantation.

As in the United States, light-skinned slaves were preferred for domestic servitude in Latin America. Also as in the US, the continued repression of subaltern classes was effected through a dearth of alternative employment and educational options.<sup>46</sup> Unlike in the US, domestic service remains a common form

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<sup>46</sup> An academic address by the mid-nineteenth century Chilean politician Enrique Coo Ross provides an example of the socio-economic importance of the servant class. Ross warned that:

permitting education to be disseminated indiscriminately and with excessive liberality to the inferior classes will inspire them to despise their status and their peers, and they will develop haughtiness out of a false sense of superiority. They will regard manual labor, domestic service, and even the exercises of those honorable but humble arts – those activities which permit us to enjoy the prime necessities of life – as tedious. (Kirkendall 97-98)

of employment for a sizeable portion of racial minority women in Latin America. Skin color marked an intrinsic inferiority that relegated them, past, present, and future, to the service of the white upper classes (Radcliffe and Westwood 14).<sup>47</sup> Elsa M. Chaney and Mary Garcia Castro point to the continuing reproduction of the mistress-female servant paradigm as a socio-economic norm: for example, domestic workers 'account for not less than 20 percent of all women in the paid work force in Latin America and the Caribbean' (3). This statistically relevant demographic is not the result of a recent boom; throughout the nineteenth century domestic service constituted *the* major source of employment for female workers (Kuznesof 24) – especially indigenous women (Chaney and Garcia Castro 3-4). They are often live-in servants, and therefore suffer from a loss of autonomy, increased alienation from their family and friends, and the lack of a private or romantic life.

According to Garcia Castro, post-Plantation servant women are still restricted in their reproductive ability unless by the approval of the mistress; in the meantime, they serve simply to reproduce and reinforce the labor caste (121). This exercising of reproductive control echoes demands upon US mammies for total devotion to the white household they serve, at the expense of their own children and families.<sup>48</sup> In the twentieth century in Latin America, the increasing professionalization of domestic service (albeit without increased prestige),

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<sup>47</sup> The authors argue that '[e]specially in Latin America it is still the case that the "naturalization" of difference is tied to the body. The signifier of colour is a crucial aspect of the ways in which racial formations are generated and sustained'.

<sup>48</sup> See Wallace-Sanders, 'Every Child Left Behind', for a discussion on the black female domestic's actual and perceived neglect of her own offspring in favor of the white family's children. Wallace-Sanders makes a compelling argument that practical time restrictions, exhaustion, and privation contributed to barriers between black mothers and children, and strained the relationship. Harris also argues that the 'mammy role' has 'destructive effects' on the mammy's own family (48). See also Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy*, especially ch. 2.

alongside the aforementioned isolation and devaluation of the live-in servant, strained a relationship that had some historical context of a mutual, affectionate bond rooted in the household structure. As under US slavery, the Latin American white family had felt obliged to 'assure protection to the honor of servant women' and to look after their physical well-being (Graham 70) – in other words, to control them. After emancipation, and in some places prior to it (for example, in Brazil) masters and mistresses lost the right to inflict corporeal punishment on their servants. This loss of control altered the relationship and led to employer frustration and distrust, causing a 'gradual alienation' between mistress and female servant (Kuznesof 22), similar to the changing dynamic in the US. In short, the Plantation hierarchy continued in shadow form, spawning nostalgia for an era of clear social and racial distinctions. This nostalgia was reflected in Latin American literature through stereotyping that promoted racial harmony, where everyone knew their place – especially the subaltern female domestic servant. Therefore, in Latin America as in the US, the figure of the black and mixed-race female, an economically and physically vulnerable figure of degraded social worth who is intimately tied to service and the threat of interracial sex, acts as a litmus test for how Plantation writers view and construct their societies in literature.

### **The Plantation in Literature**

Depictions of black and mixed-race female domestic slaves and servants are directly informed by the different religious contexts that shaped ideologies and rhetoric about race-mixing. Part 1 examines several nineteenth-century sentimental-abolitionist novels of the true Plantation, in which the black slave is portrayed sympathetically. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), the most famous, controversial, and widely read abolitionist text in the US among

Stowe's contemporaries, as well as today, offers a variety of black and mixed-race female slaves in terms of characterization, including the prototypical mammy. *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's (1841) and *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde (1839/1882<sup>49</sup>) are jointly considered national novels of Cuba from the nineteenth century that deal with race and racial-mixing through subtly different approaches.<sup>50</sup> These texts were two of the 'spate' of Cuban abolitionist works from around 1838 to appear in Cuba (Davies 10); both focus on the twin tragedies of slavery and incestuous race-mixing. Bernardo Guimarães's Brazilian novel, *A Escrava Isaura* (1875), takes an extreme position in regards to race-mixing and slavery in the Americas: the female slave marries the hero. It is a work of *pacotilha*, or 'pulp fiction' (Lisboa 103), one of incredible popular appeal that has persisted for over a century in multiple reissues, film versions, and telenovela series (Miramontes 73).<sup>51</sup> This range of abolitionist fiction provides a valuable starting point for analysis as these anti-slavery missives offer the most sympathetic depictions of slaves, served discernible agendas, and reached wide audiences.

In these works, the slave is a major character with a carefully constructed morality and detailed inner life which the author employs to stress their redemptive traits and their humanity. These depictions greatly influenced

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<sup>49</sup> The original version was published in Havana in 1839. An extended second version, which this study uses, was published in New York, where Villaverde lived in self-imposed exile, in 1882.

<sup>50</sup> Sommer includes both texts in her *Foundational Fictions*, and argues that *Sab* 'yearns for racial privilege while [*Cecilia Valdés*] plays on it' (131). Sommer points to *Cecilia Valdés*'s 'canonical' status and *Sab*'s 'scandaliz[ing]' effect in Cuba, where it was immediately banned (126).

<sup>51</sup> Brazilian film versions appeared in 1929 and 1949. Telenovela versions appeared in 1976 and 2004 in Brazil and were syndicated internationally, especially throughout Latin America. See [http://www.imdb.com/find?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_fn&q=isaura&s=all](http://www.imdb.com/find?ref_=nv_sr_fn&q=isaura&s=all).

contemporary and subsequent characterizations of black literary figures.<sup>52</sup> These works also deal heavily in types, including the 'good slave'. Female slave figures often battle charges of wantonness, the onus of which it is upon them to disprove. A 'good' female slave is always chaste, while an unchaste slave gets what she deserves. Master-slave sex was a ubiquitous, shameful practice of exploitation, but the master was rarely held to account. From this foundation, interracial sex was established as a national preoccupation in the Americas, with either the threat or potential of race-mixing embodied by the black female.

Part 2 centers on two texts from the interwar period: Venezuelan author Teresa de la Parra's fictive memoir, *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* (1929), and Margaret Mitchell's epic novel about the antebellum US South, *Gone with the Wind* (1936). These works are an exercise in nostalgia, a nostalgia that belongs to both the authors and to their white societies, which long for the racial paradigms that operated under slavery. What specifically constituted those paradigms was dependent upon historical practices of racial and religious syncretism or segregation and whether the dominant religion was a homogeneous, puritan creed (Anglo-Protestantism) or a conglomerate faith enriched with heterodox elements that incorporated indigenous and tribal rituals. Both of these texts reject the loss of the Plantation, but for different reasons. In the Venezuelan text, for example, racial mixing is celebrated and encouraged. *Memorias* is an intimate, insular memoir of the Plantation household that recalls, from a white perspective, the idealized racial 'harmony' that structured life on the Venezuelan slave plantation. It is a subversive text that defies the shift from

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<sup>52</sup> Abolitionist representations of slaves, rather than proslavery ones, have proven enduring since emancipation, arguably due to later national narratives that rejected historical proslavery rhetoric and promoted abolitionist works as part of the canon.

Plantation towards Positivism that Parra's contemporary society was undertaking.<sup>53</sup> *Gone with the Wind*, on the other hand, is a monumental romance, an epic story defined by the racial discord of Reconstruction. Where *Memorias* fondly remembers an era of idyllic race-mixing, *Gone with the Wind* mourns the loss of an enforceable racial hierarchy.

These two female-authored texts centered on the plantation home and the white family offer a startling contrast in scale, scope, and message. They also enable a comparison of their black slave nanny figures. Despite their divergent attitudes towards race-mixing (social, religious, sexual), both works assign essentialized, stereotypical roles to female domestic servants that are rooted in the nineteenth-century works in Part 1. These black and mixed-race women, historically abused by white masters, are now charged with the literary preservation of white femininity and patriarchy. The women are formidable and androgynous, or sexless and ridiculous, but they undeniably represent a continuation of the black female servant's role from slavery. The nostalgic return to the Plantation establishes literary depictions of domestic servants with vastly different potentials for mixing. In Venezuela, a '*café con leche*' country, the black woman is still excluded and exiled – she is, in keeping with the analogy, too much coffee. In the US, the non-white domestic servant is fixed in the literary imagination as Mammy, the sexless, ebony nursemaid destined to raise white children and serve white women.

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<sup>53</sup> Sommer characterizes *Memorias* as 'a series of vignettes and evocations that never really add up to a coherent story' (290); such a description is at odds with more popular, linear literary efforts such as *Gone with the Wind*, or, within Venezuela, Rómulo Gallegos's *Doña Bárbara*, which embraced Positivism (see ch. 4 of this study for a comparison).

Part 3 focuses on the relegation of black servants in the US (no longer mixed-race) to a barren, supporting role that upholds white families, and the opposing approach in Latin America, where mixed-race females (still in the kitchen) are hypersexual beings. These works from the decades around the turn of the twenty-first century were published starting from 100 years after the end of slavery in the Americas, in a post-Plantation context. Slavery is outside of living memory for these writers, yet they are the inheritors of its toxic racial constructs and paradigms of inequality and violence. Relevant to this idea of inheritance is Marianne Hirsch's theory of 'postmemory', in which she posits memories can be passed through generations and are not necessarily the product of first-hand experience.<sup>54</sup> Hirsch writes:

[to] grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to [...] be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. This is [...] the structure of postmemory and the process of its generation. (5)

Hirsch's focus is upon the victims of traumatic events, yet she allows for postmemory's formation in perpetrators and their descendants as well (3). The Plantation's white writers are the privileged racial and cultural descendants of slavery's perpetrators: the masters. In their writing, the Plantation persists despite their efforts at 'narrative reconstruction'; their literary works fail as 'acts of repair

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<sup>54</sup> 'Postmemory' is, as she defines it, 'a *structure* of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience' (6). Her book *The Generation of Postmemory* focuses on Holocaust 'postmemory' in the second generation, but includes slavery as a comparable '[context] of traumatic transfer' (18).

and redress' (16). The descendants of the victims of slavery are now victimized by their depictions in post-Plantation literature.

Mexican author Laura Esquivel's quasi-magical realist novel, *Como agua para chocolate* (1989), was a publishing sensation in both Mexico and the US. It is a border narrative centered on women and the domestic sphere that pulls from both Latin and Anglo-American race tropes; it condemns the anti-miscegenation ideologies of the US, yet it relies on racial stereotypes of female servants and black women as inseparable from their sexuality. The erotic novels of Nobel Prize-winning Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa, *Elogio de la madrastra* (1988) and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto* (1997), depict the destabilizing force of a mixed-race kitchen maid on the white household. Her sexuality has nothing to do with national agendas of producing a mixed-race citizenry, but is characterized by lust and an impulse to pursue pleasure. In *Elogio* and *Los cuadernos*, the maid can mix with anyone, and does. In the US, Kathryn Stockett's bestseller, *The Help* (2009), reduces black servants to their title role and, in this way, achieves the inverse of the subaltern agency it attempts to depict. The servants and the white mistresses work tirelessly, together, to break through the narrow racial confines inherited from the Plantation. However, even the maids who reject Mitchell's sexless Mammy prove incapable of escaping her shadow. These four post-Plantation works, which focus on life in the domestic sphere and ostensibly represent the 'agency' of the servant, seek to undermine and revise the racial hierarchies that are the Plantation's legacy. However, they remain works situated within the Plantation, both governed and limited by its historical and living paradigms.

If, as Rosenthal argues, '[n]ineteenth-century anxieties about miscegenation continue into the twenty-first century' (146), this study is both

timely and relevant to understanding literary depictions of race-mixing. In 1988, Spivak asked, 'Can the subaltern speak?', and determined they could not. She also claimed: '[c]learly, if you are poor, black, and female, you get it in three ways' (294). Post-Plantation writers attempt to challenge her assertion, to present poor, black female characters who reject historical silencing, but these writers prove unable to transcend the damage inflicted by the Plantation, and ultimately end in reaffirming and perpetuating a literary subjugation of black and mixed-race women. Race-mixing, having grown more taboo (US) or more unexceptional (Latin America) since slavery, continues to thematically penetrate narratives, whether as an explicit sex act or in its willful, glaring absence. These narratives share a racial context: they are written in places where the races do in fact mix, regardless of that mixture's recognition or obliteration in literature. Mixing (miscegenation or *mestizaje*) remains rooted indelibly in the figure which signifies race-mixing in fiction and the collective imagination of the American Plantation. This study probes these literary traditions through the character of the black or mixed-race domestic servant.

## **PART 1: In the Plantation – Sentimental Abolitionism, 1839-1882**

Slavery was a powerful emotional issue, which made the sentimental novel the ideal genre for spreading anti-slavery arguments. Through fiction, abolitionist writers framed the debate around slavery in moral and sympathetic terms, rather than economic or political. The sentimental novel is perhaps most often associated with the ‘rhetoric of tears and blushes’ and a ‘conspicuous display of emotion’, but in its heyday sentimental fiction, according to Markman Ellis, was generally considered ‘a positive influence and a desirable virtue – a “pleasure” that improves the mind of the individual, and society in general’ (4-5). Its influence was directed at a largely female readership with activist leanings;<sup>55</sup> sentimental fiction offered readers ‘a sense of what it would be like to be someone else, [...] establishing a hitherto unknown relation between strangers’ (17). The crafting of a bond between a readership of, for example, middle-class females or young law students and the character of an abused slave had profound political implications; establishing sympathy was the first step towards Abolition.

Anti-slavery writers were attracted to the genre by the idea that ‘reading sentimental fiction [...] was an active participation in the reform of society’ (47). Indeed, moral suasion, or ‘reform, [as] the sum of personal conversations to the

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<sup>55</sup> In 1775, *The Lady’s Magazine* cautioned against sentimentality’s potentially licentious nature, erring towards gossip, and ‘the ambiguity of the reading experience’ for middle-class women (Ellis 46). This publication also warned against the dangers of reading sentimental fiction inappropriately – for pleasure rather than as activism. Ellis points to a ‘simultaneous...expansion of the numbers of women readers’ with the ‘emergence of women novelists’ who wrote sentimental fiction (25).

cause' is a fundamental hallmark of the novel (Walters 174-175).<sup>56</sup> Ellis offers numerous technical reasons for the symbiotic relationship between abolitionist material and the sentimental novel: the 'asymmetrical power relation essential to slavery' which heightened drama (55); the slave as a representation of 'pain and suffering' which led to a 'formation of the moral conscience of the abolition movement' (86); and the possibility of scandal and conspiracy that the gulf of inequality occasioned (49). Catherine Davies argues that 'sentiment [became] a moral prerogative; virtue [was] predicated on the capacity for feeling' in sentimental heroes (15). However, sympathy also became a moral imperative and a barometer of virtue in the readership. The sentimental-abolitionist novelist worked to elicit an outpouring of emotion through establishing empathy between their readers and their fictional slaves. Through sympathy, what Cindy Weinstein terms 'the coin of the emotional realm' (*Family* 17), they hoped to effect change.

Abolitionist writers were wary of alienating readers by 'cross[ing] certain limits' through aggressive proselytizing (Ellis 86). This somewhat hesitant approach invited later charges of generic impotence and disingenuousness, most notably from James Baldwin in the US. In his 1949 critique of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as 'Everybody's Protest Novel', Baldwin derides sentimentality as:

the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, [...] the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty. (28)

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<sup>56</sup> Walters states that moral suasion was a nineteenth-century term that encouraged reform through language. He states that for words 'to serve as means to reformist ends, they must [...] connect people across time and space [...] and] must evoke sympathy by revealing the truth and persuading men and women to accept it' (186).

For Baldwin, sentiment works in generalities, not specifics; the moralizing effect on the public is important, the suffering of individuals is secondary. What the sentimental-abolitionist novelist therefore hoped to achieve, according to him, was a collective lament for the 'powerless resigned to powerlessness' (Ellis 128).

Sentimental-abolitionist fiction also perpetuated negative racial stereotypes of the very slaves it sought to humanize. The mammy, the Sambo, the piccaninny,<sup>57</sup> the temptress, and the tragic mulatto/a<sup>58</sup> are common black figures in sentimental-abolitionist novels.<sup>59</sup> These types respond to and work with or against the comparatively generalized types of the Cruel Master and the Moral Master. The Moral Master was invariably the hero, unable or unwilling as he (or she) was to challenge slavery. The high level of generalization permitted readers to identify with the moral character, who appeared throughout the texts in different forms: male, female; old, young; rich, poor. The black types, however, were specified by gender, age, intellect, and appearance, factors which limited diversity and authenticity within the types. Their biology – especially their racial composition – greatly informed their categorization into a specific stereotype.

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<sup>57</sup> 'Sambo' designates a mixed-race man, but derives from the Spanish *zambo*, used to designate a mestizo of African-Amerindian mixture (Forbes 235). 'Piccaninny' is a derogatory term for a black child deriving 'from [the] Portuguese-based pidgin [...] *pequenino*' ('piccaninny').

<sup>58</sup> A 'tragic mulatta' (or mulatto) is not merely a mulatta who comes to a sad end, but one who, according to Sterling A. Brown, is victimized by her own 'divided inheritance', that of a "[wo]man without a race" worshipping the whites and despised by them, despising and despised by Negroes', following her desire to 'find a white lover, and then go down [...] to a tragic end' (280). Clark assigns the tragic mulatta the abolitionist task of depicting a 'series of torments and temptations' that portray the extreme abuses of slavery (299). For analysis of the 'tragic mulatto' in US fiction, see Judith Berzon, *Neither White nor Black*; Zanger, 'The "Tragic Octoroon"'. For a comparison of US and Cuban 'tragic mulattoes', see Windell, *The Diplomacy of Affect* (194-195); see also González, 'American Theriomorpha'.

<sup>59</sup> For general information on nineteenth-century subaltern literary stereotypes in the Americas, see Rosenthal. On Cuba, see Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets*. For a comparison of racial typologies in Cuban and Brazilian sentimental fiction, see Moore, *Representation of People of Color*.

These stereotypes, a legacy of sentimental-abolitionist fiction, do indeed support Baldwin's reading of the genre's 'violent inhumanity'.

Yet, Baldwin's assessment, penned almost a century after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, does not necessarily appreciate the power and influence that sentimental fiction held within its nineteenth-century context. For example, it is worth noting that William Lloyd Garrison, a polarizing figure in American abolitionism who espoused the relatively radical abolitionist ideology of 'immediatism', wrote that *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

displayed rare descriptive powers, a familiar acquaintance with slavery under its best and worst phases, uncommon moral and philosophical acumen, great facility of thought and expression, feelings and emotions of the strongest character. [...] The effect of such a work upon all intelligent and humane minds coming in contact with it, and especially upon the rising generation in its plastic condition, to awaken the strongest compassion for the oppressed and the utmost abhorrence of the system which grinds them to the dust, cannot be estimated: it must be prodigious, and therefore eminently serviceable in the tremendous conflict now waged for the immediate and entire suppression of slavery on the American soil. (*Review*)

Garrison, whose beliefs regarding abolition were comparatively extreme to Harriet Beecher Stowe's,<sup>60</sup> hailed her work for its moral strength and its undoubted effects upon its readership – its 'awaken[ing of] the strongest compassion' that would convert readers into abolitionists or compound their previously held abolitionist beliefs. Stowe's work, according to Garrison, is in the very service of humanity. For white abolitionists in the US and throughout the Americas, the sentimental novel was a moral weapon.

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<sup>60</sup> For a recent critical biography of Garrison, see Stewart, *William Lloyd Garrison at Two Hundred*. For a discussion of the intersection of Garrisonianism and 'immediatism', see Sinha, *The Slave's Cause* 195-228.

Weinstein's recent reading of sentimental fiction's generic conventions also provides a rebuttal to Baldwin's indictment of it as a lifeless and dishonest textual field. She identifies the internalization of sympathy as the foundation for a 'claim to being right [and] ethical' (*Family* 17). Thus, sentimental fiction ultimately endeavors to actively lead its readership to the *correct* conclusions. Morbid or tragic outcomes reveal the extent of slavery's injustice. Concerns about blood relations, parental obligations, marriage, adoption<sup>61</sup> – in short, human relationships – permeate sentimental fiction, even 'fascinate' it (37), and root the literature in a deep anxiety about humanity itself. The texts examined in this section are informed by different cultural, political, and racial contexts. What sets them apart most significantly is their use of types and their portrayals of *who* constitutes the nation – the ethnicity and appearance of the ideal citizen. This is primarily established by ideas about race, which in turn are determined by ideas about religion, spirituality, and humanity.

Since socio-political ideas about race-mixing are intrinsically linked to concerns about national identity, the four abolitionist texts examined in this chapter act as case studies of nineteenth-century literary representations of race-mixing throughout the Americas. Works from the United States, Cuba, and Brazil feature due to those nations' late dates of abolition and their intense internal debates about slavery during the second half of the nineteenth century. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe (US), *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde (Cuba), and *A Escrava Isaura* by Bernardo Guimarães (Brazil) demonstrate the ideologically diverse positions these writers take on the issue of race-mixing. The strength of each writer's anti-

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<sup>61</sup> Weinstein, *Family*, ch. 1.

slavery message was limited by how potential emancipation could be imagined and depicted in line with national beliefs about race-mixing. In the US, successful sentimental portrayals depended upon an ideology of the eradication and empirical impossibility of miscegenation; in Cuba, *mestizaje* was more readily accepted; and in Brazil, mixing offered a new strengthening potential to the citizenry. These different approaches expose a disconnect throughout the Plantation, based on founding religious contexts, as to what constitutes ideal racial composition and what race-mixing means for the representation of black and mixed-race female characters.

## CHAPTER 1: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), is a projection of the author's convictions about the wrongness of slavery into a debate that bitterly divided the nation, but her righteous message was, and remains, plagued by her deployment of African colonization as a possible solution to slavery.<sup>62</sup> The exodus of her black and mixed-race protagonists to Liberia is the novel's most ambiguous yet radical feature and a uniquely American 'solution' to slavery.<sup>63</sup> A free black and mixed-race population was anathema to slaveowners and many anti-slavery advocates whose interest in ending slavery focused on saving the soul of white America, Winthrop's *Citie Upon a Hill*, rather than in embracing, or even accepting, its non-white members. Colonization offered, as the American Colonization Society's (ACS) founder Reverend Robert Finley argued, comprehensive benefits for Christian whites seeking the preservation of national racial purity: '[we] should be cleared of [blacks]; we should send to Africa a population partially civilized and Christianized for its benefit; [thus] our blacks themselves would be put in a better situation' (Brown, *Biography* 99-100).<sup>64</sup> Stowe's goal, in line with Finley's thinking, was not a settling of scores or restitution in pursuit of saving a nation that included all races, free

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<sup>62</sup> The otherwise laudatory review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Garrison's *The Liberator* concluded with the criticism that '[the] work, towards its conclusion, contains some objectionable sentiments respecting African colonization, which we regret to see' ("Review"). Both black and white abolitionists found her use of colonization 'deplorable' (Weinstein, 'Introduction', 3).

<sup>63</sup> For recent histories of colonization that reconsider the movement, see Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution*, and Spooner, 'I Know This Scheme Is from God'.

<sup>64</sup> This excerpt is drawn from Finley's 1816 letter to John P. Mumford. After the ACS's founding in 1816, black Americans mounted a 'virtually unanimous rejection' of the program (Sinha 160).

and equal, but the salvation of the white soul of America and the opportunity to spread the message of Uncle Tom's Christian meekness.

It is important to note that Stowe attempted to distance herself from colonization almost immediately following the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and instead draw focus to its abolitionist message.<sup>65</sup> Yet, as Josephine Donovan argues in 'A Source for Stowe's Ideas on Race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*', her use of colonization reads as intentional. Manisha Sinha claims that 'Colonization rather than abolition brackets Stowe's novel' (442). This reading relies upon Stowe's mention in the preface of 'an enlightened and Christianized community [...] on the shores of Africa [...] drawn from among us' (Stowe 4). Stowe was the devout daughter and sister of Presbyterian ministers and the wife of a biblical scholar; thus, Christian evangelism was a family priority (Weinstein, 'Introduction'; Sinha 442-443).<sup>66</sup> The denominational divide in the US between North and South presented an urgent need for a shared Christian message, and mission work and conversion emphasized Christian cohesion.<sup>67</sup> Colonization as a concept enjoyed a long history in the US, originating in the seventeenth century with the return of 40 'kidnapped' black Africans, but experienced a resurgence in the 1850s (Spooner 561, 572). Political figures, including Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson, even promoted the idea before ultimately abandoning it due to its unfeasibility. The ACS expanded its influence just as Stowe was writing *Uncle*

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<sup>65</sup> Donovan notes that 'Stowe soon came to regret her decision to end the novel on a colonizationist note', and that '[e]arly criticism of the novel from both black and white abolitionists focused on the colonization scheme'. In reaction to the 1853 American and Foreign Anti-Slavery convention's condemnation of her use of colonization, Stowe 'sent a note...in which she stated that she was not (or no longer) a colonizationist' (24). See Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

<sup>66</sup> For recent critical biographies of Stowe, see Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe* and Belasco, *Stowe in Her Own Time*.

<sup>67</sup> See Sparks, "'To Rend the Body'", for a discussion of the church schisms of 1844-45.

*Tom's Cabin*. Finley's second benefit, the 'population partially civilized and Christianized' that could spread religion to Africa, features prominently in Stowe's depictions of her colonizing characters. The entire work is imbued with the racial designation of black Americans as 'harbingers of a utopian future' (27). Stowe clearly states her support for colonization at the beginning and end of her novel;<sup>68</sup> it is a choice that ultimately marks her as the ally of an exclusively white, Protestant America, one that ships its ex-slaves back to Africa.

The African mission begins with Tom's martyrdom.<sup>69</sup> His murder paves the way for the surviving slaves, the Harris family and Topsy, to settle in Liberia and continue his evangelical work. The Harrises, in the penultimate chapter titled 'Results', wind their way back from Protestant America via Montreal and France, working back through their Catholicism, to their native land. But Stowe's use of colonization at the close of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not a vicious exile for all black and mixed-race people, slave and free. Rather, it is a continuation of her religious agenda. Donovan argues that Stowe in fact exhibited a positive racism in transporting her characters back to Africa. It is, in Stowe's view, the Harris family's privilege to convert Africans to Christianity.<sup>70</sup> Liberia therefore represents a

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<sup>68</sup> For a gendered social context of the debate around colonization, see Varon, 'Evangelical Womanhood'.

<sup>69</sup> For thorough discussion of the Christ type, see Brumm, "Christ and Adam as 'Figures' in American Literature"; for discussion of Tom as a Christ figure, see Farrell, "Dying Instruction" and Weinstein, 'Introduction'.

<sup>70</sup> In his 'letter', George Harris claims 'it is my wish to go, and find myself a people', and he envisions 'the whole splendid continent of Africa open[ing] before us and our children'. George expresses enthusiasm for his part in 'the development of Africa [which] is to be essentially a Christian one' (Stowe 440-442).

possible continuation of the Citie Upon a Hill.<sup>71</sup> Even in leaving the United States, the former slaves are appropriated to further its purpose.

While colonization does not signal that Stowe fully despairs of America's failed mission, it reveals the urgency she feels in lifting the stain of slavery from the nation. Because she is unable to envision a harmonious, racially integrated population and confront the reality of the forced race-mixing which occurs under slavery, Stowe's anti-slavery views have been read as racist.<sup>72</sup> But she was primarily, as Weinstein argues, a woman of her time and place who displayed a complete 'inability to transcend problematic aspects of her cultural context' (*Family* 23). Stowe engaged with anxieties over the consequences of emancipation, its 'problematic aspects', through compromise. Colonization offered a pragmatic and appealing solution to an important demographic: border state slaveowners who invested heavily in the ACS.<sup>73</sup> These men viewed the institution as a sin that threatened national cohesion, and they sought an end to it that they could justify morally and that would minimize economic disruption. Stowe's deployment of colonization, a concept that appealed ambiguously to both religious and racist motives and also enjoyed a certain popularity among

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<sup>71</sup> Spooner calls the Liberia project the US's 'initial foray into nation building' (559). Liberia's founding therefore echoes the US's spiritual-political project, since its colonization was tied to evangelism – the Christianizing of Africa.

<sup>72</sup> According to Weinstein, Stowe's black American contemporaries found her stereotyped slave characters 'unpalatable', and her text 'clearly laid the foundation for the deeply racist images that followed' ('Introduction' 3-4). Stowe's particular brand of racism is defined by Fredrickson in *The Black Image*. He terms it 'romantic racialism', a term that suggests inequality between the races, but can '[posit] the members of racial or ethnic groups as superior by virtue of ascribed cultural attributes' (Donovan 25).

<sup>73</sup> 'The "small but opulent group of slaveholders" from the Border States, whose number comprised the bulk of the Society's membership, who manumitted the slaves that the ACS first sent to Sierra Leone and then to Liberia, and who contributed the majority of the Society's early funds, was on the whole genuinely troubled by their source of wealth. Yet unlike abolitionism or Quaker missives, colonization allowed them to assuage their guilt while furthering their economic interest' (Spooner 568).

southerners, is an example of the author making a direct appeal to the other side; colonization developed a reputation for 'probable success' that could appeal to slaveowners on the fence and 'make manumission possible' (Spooner 564-565). Yet to portray colonization as workable and positive, the slaves she returned to Africa needed to be productive, upstanding, and Christian. Stowe therefore relied on essentialized portrayals of her non-white characters to argue that they deserved freedom and to appeal to troubled slaveowners by presenting emancipation as an evangelical project.

Stowe's narrative is framed by the jeremiad. Her meaning is occasionally hidden behind a self-imposed censorship, but her evangelical message is clear. Her characters sit on a spectrum of complexity ranging from dynamic to stereotyped, thinking to feeling, active to accepting, and each one has a lesson to teach. In this way, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is also an anti-slavery primer.<sup>74</sup> The heroic mother Eliza Harris provides the first of Stowe's lessons.<sup>75</sup> She is also a model candidate for emancipation and colonization since she has already undergone 'whitening', marking her as a potential threat to future racial purity. Her choice to flee the Shelby plantation with her son, making herself not only a fugitive but also a thief in the eyes of the Fugitive Slave Act that Stowe reviled, is demonstrative of independent thought and action.<sup>76</sup> Stowe, for her part, employs every tool of moral suasion at her disposal to cloak Eliza in sympathetic agency.

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<sup>74</sup> The hagiographic elements of Tom echo the sentimental depictions of child saints in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Sunday School primers that, according to Molly Farrell, Stowe had grown up reading. These books taught empathy, instructed on proper Christian feeling, and encouraged a spirit of sacrifice (Farrell, 'Dying Instruction').

<sup>75</sup> Wallace-Sanders argues that Eliza's heroicism is in direct contrast to the mammy stereotype (*Mammy* 38-40, 42).

<sup>76</sup> Weinstein claims *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was 'written as a protest' against the legislation ('Introduction' 3). For a history of abolitionist resistance to and defiance of the Fugitive Slave Act, including the Underground Railroad, see Blackett, *Making Freedom*. For political responses to the Act, see Sinha, ch. 12-13.

At first introduction she is young and beautiful, but modest, her 'complexion [giving] way on the cheek to a perceptible flush' under male scrutiny (Stowe 10). She is the perfect slave: religious, loyal to her mistress, and obedient. But the inhumanity of slavery proves too much for this paragon of Christian forbearance. When threatened with losing her child, she escapes and heads north. Her fiercely maternal impulses humanize her and highlight her relatability to Stowe's female audience: genteel, middle-class women who formed the 'backbone' of her readership (Meer 11).<sup>77</sup> Eliza is the stable moral core of the Harris family in which the text's miscegenated figures are consolidated for removal overseas.

Stowe designs a three-step program for creating a perfected, Christian America. The instructions are simple: end miscegenation; enact emancipation; promote colonization. These three steps were selected to mitigate the strongly opposing views held by both sides of the religious divide in a bitter debate that split northern and southern denominations.<sup>78</sup> Stowe therefore crafts her message carefully. She never directly confronts the issue of miscegenation, perhaps to avoid alienating potentially sympathetic readers. If there was anything more abhorrent to the white American antebellum consciousness than a free black population, it was the growing mixed-race population, the coerced interracial sexual relations it evidenced, and the racial and moral debasement it threatened. Miscegenous desire suggests equality, not in a lofty, Christian sense, concerning the soul of the individual, but in an intimate, corporeal sense. It is this physical

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<sup>77</sup> Karcher notes that Stowe's readership also extended to evangelicals who normally avoided sentimental fiction in favor of religiously didactic works, and internationally to Europe and Asia, where the Chinese, for example, applied its message to the repression of their nation's poor (203, 208).

<sup>78</sup> By the 1840s, according to Blake Touchstone, the entrenchment of the southern clergy in the proslavery camp was virtually complete ('Planters and Slave Religion' 100). See the essays in McKivigan and Snay, *Religion and the Antebellum Debate*.

intimacy, framed by the violence of rape, which was unthinkable to so many white Americans.<sup>79</sup> Eliza, the embodiment of miscegenation in slavery, suggested too great an intimacy even to her creator, who, after touting her piety and other positive qualities for the length of the novel, banishes her elsewhere.

Though Eliza and her family are conveniently exiled, the millions of real-life mixed-race US residents (slave and free) presented a much bigger challenge. Light-skinned men and women fed white Americans' fears about racial purity and racial 'passing'.<sup>80</sup> Baldwin describes Eliza as a 'beautiful, pious hybrid, light enough to pass', in many ways indistinguishable from her 'genteel mistress'. George is 'darker, but makes up for it by being a mechanical genius, and is, moreover, sufficiently un-Negroid to pass through town' (29-30). From the earliest settling of the continental United States, shame attended interracial relationships. Passing and miscegenation were feared to the extent of restrictive legislation being enacted.<sup>81</sup> Interracial unions between free and slave, and their offspring, could not be recognized because they did not *officially* occur.<sup>82</sup> Without widespread social and religious

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<sup>79</sup> The 'Miscegenation' pamphlet's exploitation of white fear is an example of how abhorrent race-mixing was considered.

<sup>80</sup> The 'passing mulatta' and the 'tragic mulatta' derive from the same mixed-race source – one that Bullock terms a 'cultural hybrid'. The mulatta is a 'stranded personality living in the margin of fixed status [...] faced with the predicament of [...] resolving within [herself] the struggle between two cultures and two "races"' (280-81). The tragic mulatta's struggle leads to the discovery of a black ancestor, which leads to a fate 'so severe that in some works [its] disclosure [...] makes her commit suicide' (280-281). A passing mulatta's suicide derives from the discovery of her black ancestry by a third party.

<sup>81</sup> See part 1 in Sollors, *Interracialism*, for a history of US anti-miscegenation legislation and its enforcement, especially the postbellum statutes of Virginia and the court challenges in Alabama and Virginia (23-34). See especially Zabel, 'Interracial Marriage'; Kennedy, 'The Enforcement of Anti-Miscegenation Laws'; and Pascoe, 'Miscegenation Law'. Pascoe argues that the creation and exploitation of anti-miscegenation laws promoted white supremacy after the abolition of slavery, when the paradigm of ownership no longer structured sexual relationships.

<sup>82</sup> Fictive kinship ties were based on non-fiction narrative. Frederick Douglass wrote of the rumors he heard as a child that his master, Captain Anthony, was his biological father.

consensus that a mixed-race union involved two humans of equal spiritual value, miscegenation could not be considered normal human sexual behavior, and the children could exist only as uncomfortable reminders of an otherwise collectively ignored practice.

Miscegenation during slavery was rarely, if ever, consensual, and the very idea of female consent is negated by the fact of the man's ownership of the woman. There was no respite for these women. American slaveholders largely lived on their plantations by 1800, unlike their Caribbean counterparts who often practiced absentee ownership.<sup>83</sup> The master was always at home, and the female slave, especially the house slave, was only an arm's reach away. Condemned for engaging in behavior for which they had no recourse, the physical, emotional, and spiritual horrors endured by these women were known to their white contemporaries.<sup>84</sup> Yet, there was no outcry from the greater sisterhood of America, nor the female abolitionists. In her 'Notes Illustrative of the Wrongs of Slavery', published in 1832, southern abolitionist Mary Blackford wrote about the sexual abuse perpetrated against slave women in the master's home (cited in Varon 180). Even proslavery literature, such as Caroline Lee Hentz's *The*

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Baker, Jr. notes that '[i]n accord with the slaveholding practices of his day, the young Douglass assumed both the surname and the enslaved condition of his mother' (16). Stowe read Douglass, and the theme of the master's fathering of children-slaves appears in Stowe's treatments of miscegenation in some of her characters' personal histories.

<sup>83</sup> Genovese argues that masters residing on the plantation encouraged 'paternalism' (5); see also Genovese and Fox-Genovese, *Fatal Self-Deception*. However, the concept of paternalism has been contested, notably by Lynd who claims that the 'difficulty with the methodology of *Fatal Self-Deception* is not that it states facts that are untrue, but that it states only some of the facts' (734). One such overlooked fact is that slavery undoubtedly fostered an atmosphere of unchecked sexual abuse as well, which refutes the image of a benign plantation patriarch.

<sup>84</sup> Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* exposed first-hand accounts of the sexual abuse of slaves and the resultant mixed-race children. This text, though published almost a decade after *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1861, confirms the abuse that earlier writers – even white writers like Mary Blackford, Stowe, and Caroline Lee Hentz – considered common knowledge.

*Planter's Northern Bride* (1854) confronted the blood 'mingling' that occurred under slavery as evidence of masters' sexual depravity (21). These noteworthy examples demonstrate a rare accord between white southern women on different sides of the slavery debate, but it was insufficient to join them in the common cause of protecting slave women.

Stowe readily and graphically exposes the gruesome violence inflicted on pious Uncle Tom, but the sexual violence the female slaves endure is merely insinuated; it was left mostly to the reader's imagination, so that the sensitive, middle-class female reader may have the comfort, if she chose, of not imagining it at all. As Stowe declares in the introduction to her 1853 *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, there are some things best left behind the 'veil'.<sup>85</sup> Her treatment of female slave characters proves her unwillingness to explicitly depict and condemn sexual abuse. Instead, her shrouded acknowledgment calls a different kind of attention to the issue than a direct confrontation with the topic might have; it wraps the unspeakable in a 'veil' of mystery, taboo, and sensuality, and it transforms rape into an unsavory seduction.<sup>86</sup>

In her most direct indictment of sexual abuse, Stowe lapses into sermonistic mode, a voice both revelatory and authoritative, yet impersonal. Emmeline, whom Tom meets in the 'slave warehouse' prior to his sale to Legree, is fretted over by

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<sup>85</sup> Stowe writes, 'The writer acknowledges that the book is a very inadequate representation of slavery; and it is so, necessarily, for this reason, - that slavery, in some of its workings, is too dreadful for the purposes of art. A work which should represent it strictly as it is would be a work which could not be read. And all works which ever mean to give pleasure must draw a veil somewhere, or they cannot succeed' (*Key* 2).

<sup>86</sup> For sexualized readings of Cassy, Eva, and Tom, see Berman, 'Creole Family Politics'.

her mother, Susan, who is powerless to protect her daughter. Stowe tells the reader:

[...] she knows that to-morrow any man, however vile and brutal, however godless and merciless, if he only has money to pay for her, may become owner of her daughter, body and soul; and then, how is the child to be faithful? [The mother] thinks of all this, as she holds her daughter in her arms, and wishes that she were not handsome and attractive. It seems almost an aggravation to her to remember how purely and piously, how much above the ordinary lot, she has been brought up. But she has no resort but to *pray*;...for it is written, 'Whoso causeth one of these little ones to offend, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.' (339)<sup>87</sup>

Though Stowe's meaning is clear, she presents the reader only with the threat of future abuse, rendering Emmeline's 'offense' less horrific in the abstract. The mother's concern about her daughter remaining 'faithful' in her new situation conjures the young, corrupted odalisque in her exotic chamber rather than a defenseless young woman raped at her master's whim.

The impotence of the mother is also telling, not only of the female slave's place in her society, but of Stowe's conflicting opinions of slave mothers. Susan worries and prays over her daughter's chastity and piety, and is frustrated at the 'aggravation' of it all. Stowe may think that the very idea of the abuse is enough to rouse her readers and that any violence on the mother's side would make her a less sympathetic character.<sup>88</sup> However, the result is the construction of a pathetic creature, a woman to be pitied for her dilemma rather than respected for

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<sup>87</sup> This verse is paraphrased from scripture, Matthew 18.6.

<sup>88</sup> Sentimental fiction's insistence on the importance of family bonds (see Weinstein, *Family*) goes some way in explaining Stowe's reliance on the mother-child relationship to elicit sympathy in this passage; the 'maternal' as a type needs no embellishment or explanation.

her maternal rage. Stowe does not depict an equal in motherhood; Susan's instincts to protect her child do not even extend to a fierce rebellion in her own thoughts. She presents a stark contrast to the exceptional Eliza. Stowe tells the reader that Susan 'had the same horror of her child's being sold to a life of shame that any other Christian mother might have; but she had no hope,—no protection' (338-339). What is primarily feared here is *shame*, not physical and emotional suffering, and this testifies to Stowe's personal priorities and the worldview that informs her writing. The mother's anger is not directed outwards to the man who will assault her daughter, but inward towards her daughter's beauty and her own carelessness at bringing her up so well. In this passage, Stowe portrays a female slave as a victim, the passive, sexualized trophy of the white patriarchy.

Is it Stowe's desire to portray Susan and Emmeline as absolutely faultless that informs the mother's (and daughter's subsequent) muted response, or is it her own ignorance about black familial relationships?<sup>89</sup> Here is a prime example of denial of speech to the subaltern.<sup>90</sup> The entire episode reads like a botched sentimental set-piece, reducing the mother and daughter to 'poor souls' whose commitment to their faith as their best option is poured directly from the pen of a white female who determined that it was the most sympathetic way for them to act. Susan and Emmeline's characterization in this passage proves that, for Stowe at least, it was 'not easy to ask the question of the consciousness of the

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<sup>89</sup> Susan's muted rebellion can be read as an indictment of the hopelessness of her situation. However, Stowe does not make us privy to feelings of rage or despair that one might expect a mother to feel. The omission of rage in Susan evidences that, while Stowe may sympathize with her generally as a mother, she cannot empathize with her specifically, as a black female slave whose child is being sold away from her. Sara Suleri argues that race, or the 'literal structure of the racial body' is privileged over gender (761), and Susan's silencing suggests that Stowe cannot identify with this black character.

<sup>90</sup> See Spivak.

subaltern woman' (Spivak 295). What she has done here, according to Spivak, could even be construed as 'dangerous' (296). Stowe permits the women to 'speak', but the 'voice' she gives them only comprises two women who will not put up a fight against a white man. What is left is a Shadow Woman,<sup>91</sup> the intangible manifestation of Spivak's assertion that, 'between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling [...]' (306). In short, Emmeline becomes a black woman whose moral weakness marks her as complicit in her own abuse. She is unwilling, but ultimately acquiesces to white control and exploitation.

This passage also is a study in self-contradiction; the national debate and Stowe's own uncertainty about the status of the black Christian soul is represented almost in its fullness. Slaves depicted throughout the text generally and Susan and Emmeline specifically are designated 'poor souls'. Their powerlessness, forbearance, and silent suffering under the burden of their enslavement is noted and celebrated, and Stowe constructs, through Tom's hagiography, the image of a man with a great soul whose religious faith cannot be broken. Here, she claims through her protagonist, is proof that slaves are human beings with immortal souls, loving and feeling hearts, and Christian purpose. Her Tom cannot be made to despair; he cannot be made to hate.<sup>92</sup> No

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<sup>91</sup> Spivak writes '[if], in the context of colonial production [read in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the white male's colonization of the black female], the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow' (287).

<sup>92</sup> Tom defends Legree, who has beaten him to the point of death, to George Shelby, saying 'he's a poor mis'able critter! [...] O, if only he could repent, the Lord would forgive him now; but I'm 'feared he never will! [...] He ain't done me no real harm,— only opened the gate of the kingdom for me; that's all!' (Stowe 426-427) Tom is the lone character in whom total passivity is heroic. George Harris and the Quaker Phineas Fletcher take up arms against slave catchers. George Shelby knocks Legree to the ground; he is able to

pain or violence can conquer the freedom of his soul. Yet Susan, in her despair, readily accepts that Emmeline's new master will compromise her chances of eternal salvation through sexual corruption. In the passage quoted above, she explicitly 'knows' that 'any man' 'may become owner of her daughter, body and *soul*' (Stowe 339; my emphasis). The mother's fears are realized when the girl is bought by the wicked Simon Legree who 'has got the girl, body and soul, unless God help her!' (344) The soul, then, is not the private center of a black person, but something that can be purchased or controlled, a position argued by slaveowners and proslavery clergy through their efforts to indoctrinate slaves to a perverted Christianity that emphasized obedience and meekness.<sup>93</sup> The black female body itself becomes a commodity which houses the commodified black soul; human agency is negated. God may help Emmeline, but it does not appear that she can help herself. Stowe's insistence throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on slaves' humanity is dramatically undermined by the portrayal of spiritual control exercised by slaveowners.

Emmeline's counterpoint in godliness and purity, as well as agency, is the woman whose place she is selected to fill. Legree's plantation is a house of horrors ruled by vice and iniquity; it conjures hell on earth. The reigning female 'devil' of the home is Cassy. A proud 'quadroon',<sup>94</sup> Cassy is simultaneously the abused black domestic and the mistress of the house. The unmarried Legree grants her certain privileges and comforts, and she is stationed firmly above the

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exact some retribution for Tom's death so that Tom may remain an untainted martyr (Crane 161-162).

<sup>93</sup> For discussion of proslavery evangelism to slaves, see the essays in Boles, *Masters and Slaves*, especially James, 'Biracial Fellowship' and Touchstone, 'Planters and Slave Religion'. See also Ambrose, 'Of Stations and Relations'.

<sup>94</sup> Stowe entitles the chapter on Cassy's history 'The Quadroon's Story' (366). The term quadroon signifies quarter-black ancestry.

other slaves on the plantation. Cassy does not wholly signify the reality of master-slave miscegenation in which the female is ultimately powerless; she enjoys a degree of autonomy and wields some influence over Legree. She is both corrupted and corrupting, a victim and a perpetrator. As Stowe argues, '[t]he slave is always a tyrant, if [s]he can get a chance to be one' (354).<sup>95</sup> Her depiction of the institution of slavery as corrupting to both master and slave serves several narrative and thematic purposes for Stowe. Chief among these is the godless nightmare a home becomes in the absence of a white Christian woman, a wife or daughter whose presence could discourage miscegenation. Legree's plantation is where Stowe most directly confronts the consequences of sexual abuse under slavery.

Miscegenation at Legree's is a destructive force: cruelty and superstition reign in the big house and the quarters; the house is crumbling and the gardens are overgrown; and it has only served to feed an insatiable lust in Legree who has now purchased Emmeline, presumably for miscegenatory grooming. The reader is introduced to Legree's property through imagery of 'utter decay' and an ominous 'blasted tree' that stands as testimony to unspeakable horrors (352). Purchased by Legree on foreclosure, the house and grounds are a perfect metaphor for how Legree views any investment: use a commodity until it is worn out, then replace. He even admits that he 'don't go for savin' niggers. Use up, and buy more, 's my way' (348). Cassy, then, according to Legree, is 'used up';

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<sup>95</sup> Stowe writes this in describing Legree's 'principal hands' Sambo and Quimbo. She condemns their cruelty and does not consider that it derives from the abuse and degradation they have suffered. Cassy, too, is portrayed as an opportunist in her authority over them. Stowe also writes that the slaves' tyranny derives from the fact that 'the negro mind has been more crushed and debased than the white'. Cassy, as a quadroon, is therefore three-quarters less debased.

hence, his purchase of Emmeline. However, the plantation reveals signs of hope: the garden, it seems, will not be overrun with weeds and other 'slovenly remains'.

Spots of beauty and life persist:

[h]ere and there, a mildewed jessamine or honeysuckle hung raggedly from some ornamental support, which had been pushed to one side by being used as a horse-post. What once was a large garden was now all grown over with weeds, through which, here and there, some solitary exotic reared its forsaken head. (353)

The 'exotics' blossom in spite of neglect and abuse. Stowe offers a floral metaphor for the spiritual resilience of the slaves who have been 'used as a horse-post'. Legree is not as effective a slave-crusher as he thinks; the black soul's longing for salvation is a righteous and defiant power. This power is epitomized by the rebellious Cassy who first greets Tom and Emmeline in arboreal form as:

a noble avenue of China trees, whose graceful forms and ever-springing foliage seemed to be the only things there that neglect could not daunt or alter,—like noble spirits, so deeply rooted in goodness, as to flourish and grow stronger amid discouragement and decay. (353)

Despite years of sexual abuse, powerlessness, isolation, forced separation from her children, and apparent hopelessness, a noble spirit still dwells within Cassy.

This spirit, however, is weak and in danger of being extinguished altogether. Its weakness stems from two factors: her history and her faith. Cassy's misplaced trust in her first master, a man she claims to have loved and to whom she bore two children, held dire consequences; his death proved she was not the

mistress of the house after all.<sup>96</sup> Her children, Henry and Elise, are sold away from her, and her rage-fueled retelling of these events to Tom establishes Cassy as a maternal over-correction to Susan. She carries hope of a reunion with her children for years but, during this time, kills her new infant son to save him from a life of bondage. Stowe does not condemn the infanticide, but argues through Cassy that intense suffering drove her to commit an atrocity. The second and, as Stowe would argue, more serious challenge to a complete spiritual life for Cassy is that she has turned her back on God. She speaks French and is a mixed-race *créole*,<sup>97</sup> educated in a Catholic convent, the very embodiment of the Puritan's foil. Her white father and her first master both impart a flawed theology to her. At Legree's, she incites superstition and suggests heresy, the supernatural, and evokes that most reviled figure – the witch. Churches as dogmatically erratic and opportunistic as Stowe believed the southern Protestant churches to be could offer no salvation to a woman like Cassy. Still, she had the foundations of faith and the spirit of charity, as Stowe demonstrates through her nursing of Tom. Cassy is a commanding presence: a healer, quick-witted and vengeful, with a proud face (367, 362, 360); if she were not convinced of the futility of a spiritual life, the suggestion is that she could be a voodoo priestess.<sup>98</sup> Tom is placed in

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<sup>96</sup> Cassy recounts, 'he told me that, if we were only faithful to each other, it was marriage before God. If that is true, wasn't I that man's wife? Wasn't I faithful?' (372) The South's misappropriation of Christianity (according to Stowe) to suit the slavocracy allows for adultery and sin; the southern clergy provided no effective barrier to this type of revisionist spirituality. For historical accounts of the southern clergy's pandering to the 'slavocracy', see Boles, *Masters and Slaves*.

<sup>97</sup> 'The residents of the Louisiana territories continued to call themselves *créoles* long after Louisiana had become part of the United States, suggesting that the Louisiana Purchase had not so much liberated them from a colonial relationship as replaced their distant overlords with a new set closer to home' (Berman 329). In short, they did not consider themselves truly 'American'. The designation of Cassy here aligns with a cultural definition of creolism, rather than a racial one (see the Introduction of this study, p. 17).

<sup>98</sup> Voodoo was both feared and manipulated by anti-Catholic Americans. It was a heathen and superstitious practice at odds with the Protestant message, and it embodied a significant threat to the spiritual health of the nation. Fessenden notes, 'Beginning in the

her path, an evangelist to bring her the Word and to help her acquire a true Christian faith. In doing so, he also, perhaps most importantly, exorcizes her *créole* hybridization of Catholicism and voodoo. Cassy becomes a *tabula rasa* upon which can be written the true faith of Protestant America, a faith she will later embrace and advocate.

Cassy's history is tragic, but indicates that her tendencies towards violence and rage predate her concubinage. Legree is a cruel and hateful master, but is absolved of sole responsibility for the imperiled state of her soul. As Carolyn Vellenga Berman argues, Legree is more than a literary villain; a born New Englander, he stands as a metaphor for the degrading effects of slavery upon the entire nation (334).<sup>99</sup> Legree is the fatal embodiment of a poisoned America that has compromised Cassy's spiritual health and it is from its corrupting influence that a Christ-like Tom must save her. He elicits a spiritual reawakening in Cassy (Stowe 369-70); she believes in the Lord again, but this time it is a different Lord. Tom's ministrations evoke a gentle Protestant God, a deity who promises that '[if]

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1840s, reports of voodoo in New Orleans, by then a prestigious center (along with Haiti and Cuba) of Afro-Catholic religious syncretism, appeared among the evidence cited by anti-Catholic writers for the familiar argument that Protestantism alone was truly Christian, and the Roman church a corruption whose members [...] were naturally attracted to the ritual forms of "savage" peoples' (243). Voodoo was a female-dominated, secretive practice that posed a direct challenge to the male-dominated, austere Protestant church of the northern US. Voodoo was confused with Catholicism or was seen as the natural extension of Catholicism. Fessenden offers a brief account of Marie Laveau, a black New Orleans woman who, in 1850, was the 'essence' of voodoo: she was branded a 'witch, madam, murderer, doctor, and saint', but considered herself a Roman Catholic. She 'presided...over the city's voodoo community for the remainder of the century'. Cassy arguably fills each of these various roles: witch, mistress, spectre (her 'haunting' resulting in Legree's deterioration), healer, savior (the rescuer of Emmeline). She was raised in the Catholic tradition, but emerges from Stowe's imagination as a voodoo priestess. Laveau blurred the lines between Catholicism and voodoo in the public imagination, further blackening Catholicism's reputation in Protestant America (see Fessenden, endnote 89, or Blake Touchstone, 'Voodoo in New Orleans' for voodoo's hold on the local and national imagination).

<sup>99</sup> Berman argues that '[upon] closer inspection, Legree's estate succinctly symbolizes the domestic degradation wrought by the Louisiana Purchase', through which slavery spread westward.

we suffer with him, we shall also reign' (370).<sup>100</sup> Cassy regains her maternal purpose through her symbolic adoption of Emmeline and, though she pushes Legree past the brink of madness, she ultimately leaves him to succumb to his own excesses. Her hands and conscience are clean. The episode of the garret is riveting. It is both suspenseful and unique in the novel in its depiction of intellectual agency in a female subaltern. Cassy manages her escape to the North with Emmeline by passing as a mistress with her slave, a transgressive action also undertaken by George Harris and one that the institution of slavery has perpetuated. Cassy achieves what Tom could, or would, not attempt. She now has perfect faith in the Lord's protection and, as a new convert, is untouchable.

The parallel of Cassy's escape with those of George and Eliza Harris suggests a link that will inevitably culminate in a reunion. Eliza is obviously Cassy's daughter Elise. Harry, Eliza's son, could be named for Eliza's brother Henry, but a practiced nineteenth-century reader of sentimental fiction would note the potential for the incest motif.<sup>101</sup> George's ancestry is unconfirmed, and Elise and Henry were separated as young children. The possibility that young Harry could have unwittingly been named for his father rather than his uncle would have occurred to Stowe's contemporaries. This catastrophic outcome, present in and central to the tragedy of nineteenth-century Cuban novels *Sab* and *Cecilia Valdés* (as argued in the next chapter), as well as earlier American sentimental novels,<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Pryse defines Tom's (and Stowe's) God as a 'New Testament God' who espouses 'forgiveness' (134).

<sup>101</sup> Kristal argues that the incest motive 'underscores a New World problematic that has been significant, to varying degrees, in both American and Spanish-American literatures', and that it is 'associated [...] to an anxiety regarding the sins of the fathers that may visit the children' ('The Incest Motif' 392). Here, the sins of Eliza's slaveowning father could potentially affect his mixed-race slave children.

<sup>102</sup> Kristal notes that the incest motif became less relevant to US literature by the second half of the nineteenth century (Ibid. 395). Stowe's readership in 1852, however, would have read sentimental novels in which the incest motif was prominent. Rosenthal argues

does not come to fruition. Incest is an even greater taboo than miscegenation and has no place in a jeremiad<sup>103</sup> – it destroys hope and optimism because there is no undoing an incestuous birth. The jeremiad is a mode that counsels against sin and promotes righteous living. It does not seek to absolve those who have committed an abomination such as incest. Incest would have rendered Stowe's happy reunion impossible. The reunion of Cassy, Eliza, Emmeline, George and his sister Emily De Thoux reconstructs a fractured group into an exemplary model of how the emancipated slave population might organize itself: in the style of the white American family. Here, the extended/adopted/multi-generational family is centered on the Christian marriage of George and Eliza, and single or widowed females are absorbed into the union, rendering them non-threatening and unthreatened. Cassy, Emmeline, and Emily are no longer potential concubines to white males because they now rely on a male of their own race for protection and sustenance. Their mixed-race bloodline is conveniently contained.

Stowe also provides the temporary option of a female-only adoptive household – the spinster Aunt Ophelia raising Topsy. A serious, severe New England Protestant, a woman of near-constant *action* and the 'absolute bond-slave of the "ought"' (165; emphasis in original), Ophelia is initially the quintessential racist abolitionist.<sup>104</sup> When the reader first meets Topsy (169), she

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that 'women intellectuals in the nineteenth century were committed to miscegenation themes', arguably '[b]ecause nation building depends on legitimizing state-sanctioned sexuality to assure the transference of inheritance and to create the proper citizenry'; in short, 'nationhood depends on the regulation of women' (12). These intellectuals included novelists, and the regulation of women overlapped with the regulation of slaves, 'with whom they frequently felt a common bond of subjugation' (13).

<sup>103</sup> For a socio-historical analysis of incest as a cross-cultural taboo, see Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women'. Rosenthal argues that incest is 'another type of taboo blood mixture' associated with miscegenation (8). It thus compounds the perceived unnaturalness of race-mixing.

<sup>104</sup> Ophelia is appalled at Eva's familiarity with Tom. When the girl sits on Tom's lap, Ophelia asks St. Clare, 'How can you let her? [...] it seems so dreadful!' St. Clare answers

personifies the extreme opposite of her golden mistress Eva, racially, intellectually, and spiritually. Yet Ophelia rises to the challenge St. Clare sets her;<sup>105</sup> she argues passionately that slaves have ‘souls’, and that they should have religion, and sets out to do her Christian duty and prove her position through Topsy (181-183). After the deaths of Eva and St. Clare, she brings the wild, ‘wicked’ young slave girl to the North to educate and indoctrinate her.<sup>106</sup> Topsy transforms from the ‘multiform and restless’ child she was (and under St. Clare’s lackadaisical Catholic indulgence would have remained)<sup>107</sup> into an upstanding Protestant woman.

In ‘Results’, Stowe writes that Ophelia’s New England community initially found Topsy’s presence ‘odd and unnecessary’, but Ophelia’s indefatigable ‘endeavor’ ultimately redirected Topsy’s inherent Protestant-valued energies of ‘intelligence, activity and zeal, and desire to do good in the world’ towards church membership and service (443). Her Vermont community finally embraces the former slave girl-turned-evangelist. As Gillian Brown argues, Topsy exists to receive and ‘fulfil Eva’s evangelical mission’ (83). Through witnessing Topsy’s repentance and metamorphosis, Ophelia is also transformed into the (temporary)

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‘I know the feeling among some of you northerners well enough... You loathe [black men and women] as you would a snake or a toad, yet you are indignant at their wrongs. You would not have them abused; but you don’t want to have anything to do with them yourselves’ (Stowe 184-185).

<sup>105</sup> When St. Clare presents Topsy to Ophelia, she asks ‘what in the world have you brought that thing here for?’ St. Clare answers that Topsy is a chance for Ophelia to prove her Christian principles of mission and education (246).

<sup>106</sup> Ophelia admonishes Topsy multiple times for being ‘wicked’ and ‘naughty’, labels that Topsy herself readily adopts as excuses for petty theft and other ‘mischiefs’ (252-260). However, Ophelia is confident in her project, and even St. Clare admits to her: ‘You find virgin soil there, Cousin; put in your own ideas,—you won’t find many to pull up’ (250).

<sup>107</sup> Ophelia considers ‘shiftlessness’ to be the ‘great sin of sins’ (164). Marie St. Clare is shown to be a shiftless housekeeper, and the cook Dinah is shiftless as well (213, 216). The visiting slave Prue is an alcoholic, and the servants Jane and Rosa are vain, flirtatious house slaves. These are the negative female influences available to Topsy in St. Clare’s ‘heathenish’ house.

adoptive maternal. It is a white mother's love that is in turn able to reform Topsy, a civilizing process that Ophelia's original, puritanical 'ideas of education, [...] the kind that prevailed in New England a century ago' were unable to yield on their own (250). Topsy is, through her conversion at Eva's deathbed and Ophelia's subsequent nurturing, finally 'born' (306), and accepts the missionary mantle. She is duty-bound to embark on her own evangelical enterprise, spreading American Protestantism in Africa. Stowe was thus a different kind of Jeremiah, working not only to warn or chastise, but to save. Despite her instruction to her readers to 'see to it that *they feel right*', this is not only a 'feeling' book; it is a *doing* book. The text is full of 'good' and 'bad' servants, cruel and moral masters, and of action and inaction that contribute to the further degradation of the American promise. Stowe wants more than tears; she wants a revolution,<sup>108</sup> and in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she offers her prescription for the ailing nation. Beyond the immediacy of national salvation, she also envisions a future marked by religious colonization – the budding of a Protestant empire rooted in the legacy of the American Puritan tradition.

The only female slave protagonist who does not undergo a transformation of faith or a physical relocation is Aunt Chloe. At the close of the novel, she awaits word from young George Shelby and anticipates the return of her husband, Tom. She is anguished to learn of his death but is comforted by Mas'r George's account of how he faced it bravely. When George manumits his slaves, Aunt Chloe chooses to remain in her cabin as a paid worker. Her relationship to Mas'r George is purely that of a devoted mammy; her devotion to him trumps her care for her

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<sup>108</sup> This reading is supported by Weinstein, who claims that 'weeping and acting need not be cast as mutually exclusive', but are rather 'inextricably linked' in American sentimental fiction (*Family* 6).

own biological children, and she stays at the Shelby home, foregoing the new opportunities that freedom might offer her family.<sup>109</sup> In doing so, she emerges as decidedly un-heroic, an anti-Eliza. But she is also safe to remain on US soil. She is uneducated and unrefined and Stowe harbors no anxiety over Chloe entering a miscegenous relationship with her heroic young master. Therefore, she does not need to be relegated to Canada, or even to the northern US, and certainly not returned to Africa. Her now-remunerated work as a servant is staged as a valid transaction. Freedom, though no small acquisition, does not change Chloe's daily life. In fact, she is now a widow without a responsible male party. She is husbandless, brotherless, and fatherless. This vulnerable solitude recurs in a later literary figure, Walt Whitman's Ethiopia. In 'Ethiopia Saluting the Colors' (1867), the 'dusky woman, so ancient hardly human' wears a turban of 'yellow, red and green'<sup>110</sup> – the colors of Ethiopia's flag – as she salutes the American flag and the marching Union troops. Barefoot and alone on the roadside, she is meek, obedient, and grateful to the nation that first enslaved then freed her. Her turban, like her skin, wagging head, and rolling 'darkling eye', clearly signify her non-white (un-American) origins and negate any potential of passing (Whitman 254-255). Because of her poverty and age, she presents no danger of race-mixing. Her position is perhaps more precarious following her emancipation, but it is this powerlessness that allows her to remain in the nation as a freewoman, rather than be returned to Africa. Though not yet 'so ancient' as Ethiopia, Chloe's dark black skin and heavy build – defining features of mammyness – help establish

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<sup>109</sup> Chloe's seeming preference for George Shelby over her own children emerges in the novel's first glimpse inside Uncle Tom's cabin. Chloe cooks first for young Mas'r George, ignoring the hunger of her own two sons to whom George throws his scraps (27-29). Her special treatment of him at the expense of her own children, even in her own home, marks Chloe as a stereotypical mammy (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 6, 42-43).

<sup>110</sup> Ethiopia's turban recalls Aunt Chloe's own 'checked turban' (26).

her as a prototype for later depictions of black female domestic servants in US literature.<sup>111</sup> Chloe's legacy is the mammy's perpetual servitude and sexlessness that mark her as inherently exploitable and non-threatening. Thus Stowe allows her to remain in the US as the only acceptable incarnation of black womanhood: the mammy.

The mammy proves the exception to Stowe's national purity project. Her three-step program otherwise rejects the permanent settling in the US of free black and mixed-race individuals, such as Eliza, George Harris, and Cassy, or competent, literate black women, like Topsy. Aunt Chloe, as a prototypical mammy, is the one slave that Stowe allows the masters to keep. Wallace-Sanders argues that instances of Chloe's 'loyalty to the slave community', such as her aid in Eliza's escape and her passionate speech to Mas'r George on slaves' family ties, reveal a certain complexity in her characterization that is overlooked by critics (*Mammy* 40). However, she also insists that Stowe falls into the 'mammy trap': an inability to transcend stereotyped readings of the black female body and its function in society. In Chloe's case, her behavior is depicted as that of a 'mammy-mother' who belongs to the 'cult of true mammyhood', not motherhood (44). Just as colonization offered Stowe a solution to slavery that might persuade reluctant slaveowners towards manumission or abolition, the retention of the mammy and the preservation of the young master's relationship with her, the special white child-black maid dynamic, is crucial to the potentially broader appeal of her abolitionist message. Stowe portrays a scenario in which

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<sup>111</sup> From the 1850s, mammy characters became more homogeneous in physical and behavioral representation. After *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the depiction of mummies as 'large or overweight' becomes standard; literary mummies had previously been more varied in appearance (Wallace-Sanders 7).

the end of slavery need not deprive white America of a beloved and treasured maternal figure. If the 'mammy trap' exposes Stowe's limitations as a writer, it also reveals the limitations to her abolitionism. The mammy, as Chloe's fate demonstrates, is not a slave who will be easily relinquished. She is a resilient and pernicious stereotype whose homogenization increased after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>112</sup> Even the ardently abolitionist Stowe allows her to continue in her eternal role as an inferior black maid devoted to superior white children, a woman whose very existence is absorbed into the family she serves, just as she is denied a place and a life of her own.

The political, social, legal, and especially religious contexts in which Stowe wrote were complicit in and perpetuated the denial of the racial subaltern's incorporation to the identity of the nation, especially the black and mixed-race female. Though the brutality of slavery was not necessarily tempered by more open approaches to race-mixing in Spanish- and Lusophone-American cultures (for example, the rape of slaves was not less frequent), these societies did not embrace such an absolutist ideology of exclusion. The US, however, was locked in a battle for the soul of its white New Jerusalem, in which a simultaneously pluralistic and puritanical religious paradigm comprised of multiple denominations vying for supremacy created its own rules about slavery and slaves. Catholic nations, on the other hand, were forced to accept that, slave or not, one had in fact been 'born' physically and spiritually and, especially in the case of Plantation-born slaves, belonged to the land on which they toiled. The subaltern, therefore,

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<sup>112</sup> After 1854, Wallace-Sanders argues, mulatto mammies 'virtually disappear', with the exceptions of Roxy in Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) and Mrs. Harper in Chestnutt's 'Her Virginia Mammy' (1899). However, these 'mammies' are not true mammies according to Wallace-Sanders's own definition: the children they care for are not white children, but their own mixed-race children (17).

was intimately woven into the fabric of Latin American societies – socially, spiritually, and biologically.

In Latin America, as shown in the two chapters that follow, the debate around abolition was grounded in philosophy and ethics, slavery was equated with tragedy, and emancipation meant a free, multiracial population. This context resulted in a fundamental literary departure from abolitionist literature in the US, in which miscegenation, the infiltration of black blood into the white population, is written out of fiction and history. Latin American literature documents the existence of mixed-race individuals, but that existence presents a challenge; it is a mixture achieved through abuse and concealment, tied implicitly to the trope of incest that is absent in Stowe. Incest and miscegenation together offer a vehicle for profound tragedy: they are a powerful combination in the authorial quest for tears, and jointly distinguish the sentimental-abolitionist texts analyzed next as expressions of national anxiety over Cuba's undeniable race-mixing and the social devastation that threatens a nation born of exploitation and secrecy.

## CHAPTER 2: *Mestizaje* and Incest in Cuba

In Cuba, slavery was a nationwide practice and race-mixing was widespread. The 1791 revolution in Saint-Domingue had resulted in a growing demand for sugar in the international marketplace that led to what Stanley M. Elkins calls a 'boom plantation area' and a slavery 'full of horrors' in Cuba, which further enriched the white masters and over-worked the slaves (227). Slave uprisings increased and were punished harshly, exacerbating tensions between slaveowners and anti-slavery advocates and slaves (Luis 4-5). The same Haitian rebellion which had contributed to the expansion of the Plantation complex in Cuba also served as a model to unsuccessful Cuban slave rebellions, and ultimately led to more oppressive measures from whites (13).<sup>113</sup> But the slave population was a substantial force: by the 1840s, non-whites comprised over 60 percent of the island's inhabitants (Davies 8).<sup>114</sup> Abolition had the numerical edge in terms of popular supporters, but not the backing of those in power. Thomas Jefferson's 1808 proposed offer to purchase Cuba from Spain and annex it to the United States appealed to Cuba's slaveowners who valued the continuation of the institution (6).<sup>115</sup> The British move to end the transatlantic slave trade in 1838

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<sup>113</sup> Luis notes several rebellions in 1843-44, for example, which were suppressed at sugar mills, ranches, and railroad construction sites (15). Among them was the 'Escalera conspiracy', an alleged planned insurrection with the goal to 'exterminate all whites', so named for the method of punishment in which the accused rebel slave or slave sympathizer was tied to a ladder and whipped. Following this threat, the whites consolidated their power and 'the slaveholding regime [...] fortified itself for decades to come' (Ellis xvii).

<sup>114</sup> Slaves accounted for 40 percent of the island's population in 1810; in 1817 black and mixed-race freemen comprised 21 percent of the population.

<sup>115</sup> 'As early as March 23, 1837, the *Herald's* editorial proposed a U.S. annexation of Cuba for fear of British takeover of the island. If necessary the United States would employ the same violent means the Texans had used to occupy Mexican territory. For liberal creoles, a U.S. nonviolent alternative became more acceptable than a British plan to incite rebellion. But whereas the British favored independence and abolition, the United States discouraged emancipation' (Luis 59).

also made the Cuban regime increasingly deaf to any abolitionist debate, whether reasoned or radical, so abolitionist writers relied on moral suasion in sentimental fiction to make their arguments.

The most provocative anti-slavery arguments in Cuba emerged during the 1830s from the Del Monte circle, which sought an end to slavery through abolitionist publications. Domingo del Monte, a literary critic who headed an influential salon, was a leading anti-slavery advocate and encouraged writers in his circle to contribute to the anti-slavery canon. Literature was considered a legitimate abolitionist tool, effective propaganda, because of what William Luis terms its “humanizing” effect’ (38). Del Monte encouraged Realism, rather than the contemporarily popular Romanticism, in hopes that Cuban slavery would be depicted genuinely – in all its horror. Anti-slavery novels from other nations circulated internationally, yet Luis argues that ‘for the most part, anti-slavery narrative is a phenomenon which developed in Cuba without external literary models’ (40).<sup>116</sup> The suggestion of a specifically national narrative seems dubious, especially given the growing global Abolition movement and Del Monte’s personal correspondence with prolific British abolitionist Richard Madden, so Luis’s argument is more effectively reframed through a recognition that the literary output of the Del Monte circle is a particularly ‘Cuban’ blend of sentimentalism and pragmatism that reflects the very real concerns and conditions of the nation’s complex race system under slavery.

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<sup>116</sup> Luis concedes that Victor Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal* (1826) should be ‘considered an inspiration’. It was influential to the Del Monte circle, especially in the way that Hugo ‘reacted to a spirit which fueled the French, American, and even Haitian revolutions, the same spirit which supported independence and romanticized those living at the margins of society’ (40).

As in the US, abolitionist writing avoided depictions of violent rebel slaves. Richard L. Jackson points out that, most frequently, the literary slave took the historically acceptable form of the Noble Savage – proud, long-suffering, heroic, subservient, and when possible, light-skinned (25).<sup>117</sup> This character was deeply sympathetic because within such an ideal slave there lay the potential for a productive, magnanimous freeman. Those who were active in the slavery debate were educated beneficiaries of the slavery system, directly or indirectly, even those in the Del Monte circle, and were concerned for their own economic well-being; they therefore argued for gradual rather than an absolute or immediate emancipation in the interest of political stability, and penned what Claudette Williams terms ‘reformist’ literature (156).<sup>118</sup> Del Monte and his protégés were working in opposition to a powerful establishment: the ‘bourgeois’ dialogue in which they were engaged pitted them against the ‘dominant discourse’ – proslavery (Luis 62). Anti-slavery writers understood the challenges of working against but within the establishment, and, like Stowe, wrote to persuade their audience through empathy and by appealing to concepts of common humanity. Unlike Stowe, they initially aimed to ameliorate rather than terminate slavery. This type of project required a protagonist who was deeply human but, most importantly, tragic – powerless to alter his or her sad destiny. Therefore, the slaves in this literature were denied absolute agency and remained at the mercy of their masters and mistresses.

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<sup>117</sup> In his chapter ‘False Tears for the Black Man’, Jackson cites Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688) and Victor Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal* (1826) as earlier texts which influenced a continuing tradition of the Noble Savage.

<sup>118</sup> See also Luis (58).

Interracial marriage and the resultant offspring of *mestizaje* concerned Cuban élites. Those writers interested in confronting slavery as an institution, advocating emancipation to slaveowners, or simply reinforcing their message to fellow abolitionists, were not necessarily interested in racial equality. Slaves may have been human according to Catholic doctrine, but according to the hierarchy of Cuban society, there were different kinds of humans. In her comprehensive demographic and anthropological-political study *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society*, Verena Martínez-Alier deploys numerous examples and case studies which paint a clear and vivid picture of the dehumanizing of non-whites through a rejection of race-mixing. While there was room for exceptions, a widespread rejection of interracial Christian marriage constituted the norm: a social consensus rebelled against the Church's insistence on matrimony (xiii)<sup>119</sup> and concubinage (a white man keeping a black or mixed-race mistress) was considered a socially acceptable alternative, especially due to a shortage of white women (50, 57). There was a desire on the part of non-white women to 'whiten' their offspring with a white father because the black and mixed-race people of Cuba recognized a hierarchy of color within their racial group (17-18, 98). As in the US, the inverse relationship involving a white woman and a black or mixed-race man was socially anathema (xiii, 117). Martínez-Alier points out that as abolitionist arguments took hold and the end of slavery looked increasingly inevitable (especially following the outcome of the US Civil War in 1865), racism

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<sup>119</sup> Rosenthal points to the paradox inherent to a 'repressive racialist state' that 'fostered a powerful church that preferred interracial marriage to cohabitation' (72). Here is evidence that political and religious ideologies about race-mixing were not always aligned in Latin America, and that the Catholic Church's stance was comparably more in favor of mixing.

increased, but paradoxically never led to a closed caste system. A central premise of her study illustrates how, throughout the nineteenth century in Cuba, 'legal and social discrimination of the free coloured community increased rather than diminished' (4).

In their quest to win abolitionist converts, those in the Del Monte circle and those inspired by their work faced no shortage of public opposition. As concern for Cuba's racial future grew, so did concern for its political future. Cuba was experiencing international pressure to terminate its slave trade and abolish slavery. As a self-appointed anti-slavery policing force in the Atlantic, Britain inspired fear and loathing in the Cuban population for its naval commandeering of merchant slave ships and the perceived threat to Cuba's economic health. Pro- and anti-slavery advocates could agree on a common enemy in the British fleet, and this shared anxiety was exploited by abolitionist writers in an attempt to root the literature in contemporary events, connect with a core readership, and expand the anti-slavery audience.

To broaden their reach, the abolitionist writers exploited another trend complementary to sentimentalism: romantic nativism. The initial stirrings of the nineteenth-century *independentista* movement coincided with a celebration of the Cuban *criollo* in literature. Despite the uncertain socio-political climate, there was an appreciation for native-born *criollos* enhanced by a growing distrust of Europe-born Cubans. Sympathetic *criollo* characters were often loving and generous, if occasionally over-indulgent, loyal, and trusting. Europeans were depicted as greedy, deceitful, and inspired by selfish or obscure motives. Such divergent and dramatic protagonists and villains found fertile ground in the Cuban setting. A local literary Romanticism with an emphasis on nature took firm hold on an island

praised for its lush and fecund landscape, and Cuban abolitionists fashioned their anti-slavery treatises within the generic conventions of the sentimental novel.

### **Sab**

*Sab* (1841) by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda is arguably a questionable text for inclusion in a study of representations of the female domestic slave's role in race-mixing. There are, however, a number of reasons this text merits analysis. First, *Sab*'s preeminence in the nineteenth-century Latin American canon supports its inclusion; Davies notes that *Sab* 'is possibly the only Spanish language example of the feminist-abolitionist genre published in the nineteenth century' (16).<sup>120</sup> Such a generic assignation is crucial, not only because of its specificity, but because of the oft-noted conflation of the writer's and title character's identities across gender and racial divides.<sup>121</sup> The theoretical union of the author and her subject occurs in two distinct but equally effective ways: one, *Sab* himself is 'feminized' through the trope of a sentimental hero(ine); and two, *Sab* is aligned with the females of the novel through his sympathy for them. His feminization is both applied and self-assigned, which allows Avellaneda to appropriate *Sab*'s experience, and vice versa. As Sommer suggests, what truly sets Avellaneda's text apart in the canon, and what makes it so relevant to this

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<sup>120</sup> Kirkpatrick also points out that *Sab* was 'the *first* abolitionist novel to be published in Spanish' (115; my emphasis). Hence, its significance and influence on depictions of femininity and interiority in subsequent abolitionist texts in Latin America cannot be overstated.

study, is that 'she was Sab' (Sommer 114).<sup>122</sup> This conflation of the female writer and her non-white hero is exceptional when compared to Stowe, for whom the suggestion of a shared experience of oppression and subjugation with a black slave is inconceivable.

The sentimental novel offered Avellaneda an outlet for her frustrated attempts at self-expression. As a young woman in Puerto Príncipe, the liberal political circles and salons of Havana were beyond her reach, especially as adulthood drew near and marriage loomed (she was decidedly excluded from the anti-slavery, reformist Del Monte salon). There is some disagreement about the actual date and location of *Sab's* crafting, but it is generally agreed that Avellaneda's writing of it coincided with her journey to Spain to visit her father's and stepfather's families.<sup>123</sup> In the conservative Spanish metropolises, Avellaneda's literary pursuits were ridiculed and she was pressured to adhere to social norms of upper-class femininity.<sup>124</sup> The sentimental novel's popular appeal to a wide readership, and its perceived moral qualities and ability to educate (thus

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<sup>122</sup> Davies and Sommer both designate *Sab* as a surrogate for Avellaneda, arguing the author used slavery as a metaphor for the repression of women. See also Barreto, who claims the 'novel represents Avellaneda's literary struggle against the injustices of slavery and the oppressive treatment of women' (1). Williams disagrees with the Avellaneda-as-*Sab* assessment: 'Avellaneda can be identified neither consistently nor exclusively with her protagonist [...]. On the contrary, there are moments when the novelist seems to deliberately distance herself from him by allowing other characters to critique his postures and to point the way to "right" thinking and action' (163). However, Williams does not account for Avellaneda's experience as a female author in being educated about 'right thinking and action'; Avellaneda was most likely often on the receiving end of such critiques and therefore parallels *Sab's* experience of social and intellectual instruction. Indeed, Pastor argues that 'the book *Sab* might almost be called "Avellaneda"' ('A Romance Life' 175).

<sup>123</sup> Davies says that the writing started in Cuba, while Kirkpatrick claims the writing of *Sab* commenced after arriving at her stepfather's ancestral home in Galicia (128). Barreto claims it was 'conceived in Cuba and adapted to a Cuban context', but published in Madrid (1).

<sup>124</sup> '[Her] relatives' main concern was that she conform to the Spanish ideal of womanhood and marry a local *hidalgo*. Firmly resisting all attempts to domesticate her, Gómez de Avellaneda expressed throughout her autobiography the "horror of marriage"' (Kirkpatrick 129).

making it acceptable, even recommended reading for women) provided Avellaneda with a literary structure that would see her published, read, and respected.<sup>125</sup> Sentimentality was also a framework that permitted the expression of her progressive feminist-abolitionist ideology, including a potential interracial romance.<sup>126</sup>

Sab himself is an archetype of sensibility.<sup>127</sup> He is human feeling personified; Avellaneda sets the boundaries of Sab's emotional range at the ends of a wide spectrum of feeling when she describes 'una alma superior [...] capaz de amar, capaz de aborrecer ... una alma que supiera ser grande y virtuosa y que ahora puede ser criminal' (Avellaneda 71). All human emotions are available to Sab, and he displays them throughout the novel; he knows despair, hope, and even rage, an emotional complexity which makes him *almost* authentic. In asking about 'The Problem of Avellaneda's *Sab*: Noble Black or Romantic Uncle Tom?', Jackson echoes Baldwin's criticism of 'arid' sentimental US fiction within Cuban anti-slavery novels, claiming that 'authors viewed the black from the outside, and an air of sentimental artificiality [...] surrounded their works' (22). Whether the perceived artificiality is a result of Avellaneda's ignorance of the reality of a *mulato*

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<sup>125</sup> Ellis argues that 'the genre of the novel was perceived to be widely accessible, especially to those who were anxious about their social and cultural position: that is to say, those in the middle station of life, and women' (8). Davies's introduction to *Sab* agrees that 'the genre was popular among a wide audience (mainly women and young people of the middle classes) and was thought of a means [sic] of self-improvement' (17).

<sup>126</sup> Since the sentimental novel's audience consisted largely of women, Avellaneda could be sure she was sharing her message with a sympathetic readership.

<sup>127</sup> Ellis defines sensibility as 'possessed of a complex aesthetic logic akin to the sublime, that discovers pleasure in distress and misery, albeit that sensibility is a sublime untouched by transcendence' (6). Sab is a perfect example of the 'sublime' in the spiritual and moral sense; he is possessed of a supreme patience and fortitude but is unwilling to give up his obsessive love for Carlota, choosing instead to enslave himself to her and ensure his continued suffering. According to Weinstein's assertion that 'sympathy thrives in the absence of family ties' (*Family* 1), Sab is also a sympathetic orphan in search of the bonds of kinship.

slave's lived experience (analogous to Stowe's lack of first-hand knowledge about the South), or of her effort to move her readers to a sympathetic response, Jackson's accusation of 'false tears' on the part of the novelist paints Sab as a flawed tragic hero: he feels too much. However, Jackson fails to register Rosenthal's conclusion that *Sab* is a 'miscegenous love story', where *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not (70).<sup>128</sup> Rosenthal's assertion is key to understanding the liberalism with which *Sab* and the other Latin American works in Part 1 of this study treat the theme of *mestizaje*, in comparison to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which miscegenation is abhorrent. Indeed, Sab surpasses reasonable expectations of human behavior and embraces his hyperbolic role as the ill-fated victim of impossible love when he sacrifices his own chance at freedom, and indeed his life, to his incestuous love for his white mistress Carlota, who views him only as a brother. The result is partly, as Jackson says, 'a romantic Uncle Tom, who, with his sad expression, goes through the novel sobbing and sighing' (27), but is also a sexualized Uncle Tom whose desire for his white owner frames his struggle.<sup>129</sup> Here we see the 'sentimental, almost feminized brand of heroism' that Sommer perceives in the work, the passive nature of sentimental fiction that ensured the 'cathartic effect that [the heroes] produced when they lost, inevitably, to unjust but unmovable laws of the state' (123, 125). But Sab's racial transgression

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<sup>128</sup> Pastor argues that *Sab* is now 'more commonly regarded as [a] pioneering [novel] rather than [a romance]' ('A Romance Life' 169). However, she also indicates the strong influence of Romanticism upon the author, 'a true romantic' (178), and highlights the 'uniformly romance-like' characters she creates (181). Pastor's definition of 'romance' relies on aspects of introversion, subjectivity, and the presence of distinct heroes and heroines (170-172), and ultimately undermines her own argument in support of Rosenthal's categorization of *Sab* as 'primarily a love story' (15).

<sup>129</sup> Sab's pining for Carlota recalls the Petrarchan paradigm of male adoration of an unattainable female (namely, Petrarch's Laura), a motif in which the male character is driven to misery by an unrequited love. See Petrarch, *The Canzoniere*.

creates a hero that rejects false tears and is more fully human than the asexual martyr offered by Stowe.

Sab can never win Carlota. Aside from the socio-political barriers to their union, Carlota's romantic desire is focused elsewhere. Sab is raised under the protection of Carlota's father, Señor Don Carlos de B-, as per the wishes of his brother, with the strong implication that Sab is Carlota's first cousin (Avellaneda 45-46).<sup>130</sup> As an illegitimate *mulato* slave,<sup>131</sup> Sab could not be further removed from romantic consideration in Carlota's eyes. Therefore, in practical terms Sab is almost a-gendered: he is not conceived of by his society as a masculine patriarchal figure. This denial of masculinity, however, is mourned by Avellaneda, who depicts true love as 'adult, heterosexual, and miscegenous' (Rosenthal 70). Sab's usurped role as lover is filled by Carlota's suitor and future husband, the Anglo-Cuban Enrique Otway, a self-interested and untrustworthy man whose weak moral character stands in stark opposition to Sab's. Kirkpatrick claims that Otway is not an 'evil man; he is simply the human embodiment of a social structure whose values the novel challenges' (Sommer 121). Otway is also 'closely associated with the material world, for he concerns himself primarily with business, commerce, and money – values inherently alien to the inner life of the other three main characters' (Kirkpatrick 120). Otway is the only one of the four central characters in the novel deprived of an 'alma superior', and the result is a

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<sup>130</sup> The conversation between Sab and Enrique in the first chapter introduces readers to Sab's undisclosed paternity, but suggests that he was passed to Don Carlos by his brother, Don Luis. Sommer states that Sab and Carlota 'are probably cousins' (135). Rosenthal points to Sab's desire as the 'confusing [of] family bonds with human bondage [that] articulates the threat of bodies merging in transgressive miscegenous desire' (15).

<sup>131</sup> Kristal argues that illegitimacy did not carry the same 'burden of a stigma' that incest did in literary works ('The Incest Motif' 392). The threat of incest therefore is deployed by Avellaneda as Kristal's barometer of 'the decline of [the] patriarchal family' (400); the traditional family is undermined by the past sexual exploitation of slave women leading to potential incest.

clear demarcation of male versus female, materiality versus sentiment.<sup>132</sup> According to Kirkpatrick, these three characters, Carlota, her illegitimate cousin Teresa, and Sab, are united in 'a new triad' at the culmination of the novel 'by shared values and common experiences of powerlessness within the social structure' (Kirkpatrick 120). Avellaneda combines Carlota, Teresa, and Sab as examples of innocence and sympathetic femininity. However, Kirkpatrick goes too far in morphing these three protagonists into a monolith. Sab, Carlota, and Teresa are fully realized entities that are indeed united by their capacity for sentiment, but separate individuals nonetheless.

Sab fills the role of a loyal, sisterly slave. From Carlota's perspective, both Sab and Teresa are marginal characters in her romance with Otway. Her primary goal is to marry him and reproduce the Plantation family, and the reader sees Sab and Teresa assist her in this objective.<sup>133</sup> Carlota and her 'servants' appear to share an innate powerlessness in their society with which Avellaneda was well acquainted. Sab is further feminized through Teresa's proposal, which he declines, and which is an act that raises the possibility of interracial marriage only to immediately reject it.<sup>134</sup> Teresa is an orphaned female and Sab is a former victim of chattel slavery (and still a slave to love), so their union is more

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<sup>132</sup> The narrator relates a 'truth': 'que hay almas superiores sobre la tierra, privilegiadas para el sentimiento y desconocidas de las almas vulgares: almas ricas de afectos, ricas de emociones...para las cuales están reservadas las pasiones terribles, las grandes virtudes, los inmensos pesares...y que el alma de Enrique no era una de ellas' (68). Enrique alone is singled out as a character exempt from sentiment.

<sup>133</sup> Kirkpatrick notes that Avellaneda 'reverses the gender positions in this paradigm: women become the subjects rather than the objects of desire' (120). Carlota actively works to build a relationship with Otway, while Sab makes their union possible by relinquishing his winning lottery ticket and providing the dowry, a plan executed with Teresa's help.

<sup>134</sup> Barreto claims that Teresa's proposal subverts 'to some degree the miscegenation taboo' (4). It indeed challenges the taboo in a way that Sab's unrequited love for Carlota does not; the proposal's effect of advancing miscegenation as latent in a white woman's desire, however, subverts it well beyond simply 'some degree'.

acceptable to class-conscious Cuban society than Sab's desired union with Carlota. This potential interracial marriage offers an alternative to death and the convent, an opportunity for both characters that is unthinkable in US fiction. Though possible in Cuban fiction, such a marriage can only be conceived of for already marginalized figures. Here, a respectable though poor and illegitimate white woman elects a mixed-race marriage with a former slave over taking religious orders, a suggestion that, at least for a woman of her position, *mestizaje* is preferable to the continuation of an unsatisfactory, marginalized existence that perpetuates white purity. Carlota, however, appropriately marries her white husband and becomes a victim of domestic slavery. Ellis argues, 'the most significant relation in the theme of slavery is the conjunction of race and gender: where slavery is made to figure gender relations such as the "bonds" of love or marriage' (55). But these "'bonds" of [interracial romantic] love', the love of the slave for the slaver, can exist only in Latin American sentimental-abolitionist texts. Sab himself seems to argue that marriage is the worst form of slavery, one from which the woman cannot be manumitted or freed:

[e]l esclavo al menos puede cambiar de amo, puede esperar que juntando oro comprará algún día su libertad: pero la mujer, cuando levanta sus manos enflaquecidas y su frente ultrajada, para pedir libertad, oye al monstruo de voz sepulcral que le grita: –En la tumba. (Avellaneda 194)

Both slave and mistress are aware of their impotence, but through the suggestion of Sab as husband to Teresa, Avellaneda imbues the feminized Sab with a masculinized agency through which, despite continuing by choice as a loyal slave, he endeavors to shape his destiny.

Sab is infinitely more than the lovesick weeper he first appears. His fate as a slave, as Jackson argues, is 'unavoidable' (23). However, he moves beyond

a mere tragic trope because is also defined by his private life, his inner rebellion, and the rare choices he is empowered to make. Avellaneda gives her readers a rounded, complex individual with very real connections to humanity and the natural world. Martina, Sab's poor 'adoptive mother' and her sickly grandson, Luis, serve two important functions. First, they are a vessel through which Avellaneda introduces her readers to the plight of the indigenous dispossessed of Cuba.<sup>135</sup> Sab's 'family' lives on the fringes of society; they are neither valued nor reviled, but ignored. In a bid for recognition, Martina questionably claims to be descended from the island's ruling autochthonous inhabitants, a population that was virtually decimated during early Spanish colonization (Davies 26).<sup>136</sup> Avellaneda adds these characters to the ranks of the disenfranchised, further demonstrating the tragic and brutal results of powerlessness and placelessness, which in Martina's case elicit a desperate bid for legitimacy in her native land. Second, Sab's exterior life, his social connections outside of his role as a slave, not only serves to promote his individuality, but to undermine his feminization and present him as a man of action in the new Cuba. He may be a sister to Carlota, and a victim of slavery, but Avellaneda points to his small but significant public persona, raising him as a representative of untapped social resources and as a metaphor for the direction the nation *could* take in the absence of slavery. Sab

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<sup>135</sup> Handley notes that the 'moralizing' of Cuban anti-slavery texts 'was also wedded to a critique of Spanish colonialism' (3). Avellaneda is addressing this violent history through Martina.

<sup>136</sup> Davies claims she has a 'hybrid appearance' but that her story of royal ancestry from Chief Camagüey is perhaps possible (26). A lengthy description of her indigenous features begins with the 'cierto aire ridículamente majestuoso' with which she receives Sab and his guests. The narrator concedes that she appears to be of indigenous descent, but not of a royal line: her 'color...era todo lo que podía alegar a favor de sus pretensions de india, pues ninguno de los rasgos de su fisonomía parecía corresponder a su pretendido origen' (Avellaneda 107-108). Barreto lists her 'immense wisdom, her knowledge of medicine, her storytelling abilities, and her prophecies' as formulaic to her 'idealization and [...] embodiment of the "noble savage" stereotype' (7). Her racial mixture, however, challenges her claims to an indigenous royal lineage.

assumes the traditionally masculine responsibility of providing material and emotional support, not to a wife and children, but to an elected family. He may have been raised and educated in the home of a wealthy *criolla* family, but his loyalties also lie with the subaltern members of the Cuban population. Martina sings his praises and Sab emerges infinitely more heroic.<sup>137</sup> Despite his undefined racial origins, his *mulato* countenance, and his birthright of slavery, Sab surprises the foreigner of the novel, Enrique Otway, with his well-spoken Spanish and his education.<sup>138</sup> He, like Stowe's George Harris, can effectively 'pass'. He is a man of the people, a hybrid – through birth and experience – of the highest- and lowest-ranking racial members of society, and he offers an alternative vision: a Cuban future of *mestizaje*.

Indeed, Sab's body *is* Cuba.<sup>139</sup> In the opening sentence, readers are introduced to 'los campos pintorescos', whose verdant greens and exotic, fragrant botanicals permeate the text. Two episodes establish Sab's psychic, almost supernatural attachment to the land. In both instances, Sab demonstrates agency through action. When he cultivates a plot of land for Carlota's pleasure garden, which Sommer compares to a miniature Eden (120), he crafts a space outside of established norms or accepted civilized modes. Her sanctuary is carved out by a native of the island, in a fresh, distinctly organic style; free from external influence or corruption, it is inspired by Sab's unique and innate

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<sup>137</sup> Martina's praise of Sab – 'Es Hermosa el alma de ese pobre Sab, ¡muy Hermosa!' – inspires Don Carlos to manumit him immediately (Avellaneda 112-14).

<sup>138</sup> Otway initially mistakes Sab for a neighbor of Don Carlos, citing his 'aire tan poco común' to the slave class (44), and Sab details his childhood and education alongside Carlota: 'Con ella aprendí a leer y a escribir' (46). Sab claims to be descended from an African princess, and an unknown father, whom Enrique implies is Don Carlos's white brother (45-46).

<sup>139</sup> Sommer calls Sab the text's 'racially amalgamated hero (also Cuba)' (21).

appreciation of beauty. Avellaneda claims 'no dominaba el gusto inglés ni el francés en aquel lindo jardinillo: Sab no había consultado sino sus caprichos al formarle' (77).<sup>140</sup> It is almost as if the land spoke to Sab and informed his work; he simply digs and plants by channeling nature's inspiration. Later, Sab sees the natural world respond to his manipulation in kind, though far more dramatically. It is almost as if Sab, through his rage, conjures the very storm from which he saves Enrique. The fury felt by Sab is 'echoed and magnified by nature [and] escapes the bounds of his character'. But he is not ruled by nature, and, as Kirkpatrick notes, 'Sab finally subdues the murderous storm in his breast and takes his rival to safety [... This] episode reveals great anger in Sab's soul, as if the character were the channel for a threatening energy latent in the atmosphere of the island paradise' (125).<sup>141</sup> Indeed, Sab constitutes a potential threat to the Plantation and its white inhabitants, as this quasi-allegorical episode shows. At another point, he explicitly confesses to Teresa a suppressed desire to take up arms, but he ultimately argues against violence and advocates Christian virtue and the rewards of the afterlife (el cielo) in a faint echo of Uncle Tom's passive resistance.<sup>142</sup> His fiery desperation awakens in her a temporary colorblindness, 'olvidaba el color y la clase de Sab', and she sees only the 'fuego que le

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<sup>140</sup> This sentence stands alone as a paragraph, perhaps to emphasize its value as a metaphor for Sab's originality and his inherent Cubanness.

<sup>141</sup> Rosenthal concurs on these qualities of a suppressed animalism and points to metaphorical ties between Sab and his horse, suggesting 'a possible animal nature, but one nonetheless tamed and servile' (87).

<sup>142</sup> Sab relates to Teresa his impulse to steal Carlota away from her father and society and flee to freedom, an action that would undermine the Plantation. He continues: '¡Oh, no es esto todo! He pensado también en armar contra nuestros opresores, los brazos encadenados de sus víctimas; arrojar en medio de ellos el terrible grito de libertad y venganza; bañarme en sangre de blancos; hollar con mis pies sus cadáveres y sus leyes' (Avellaneda 136). These desires, however, remain unrealized and Sab condemns himself to waiting for 'igualdad y justicia' in the 'otra vida' (137).

devoraba', an expression of his frustrated love and a suppressed desire for vengeance (Avellaneda 136). She bears witness to his humanity.

It is Sab's contemplation of the afterlife, his questions about equality, and the nature of man's soul that betray Cuban religious hypocrisy. As Rosenthal points out, whereas Stowe filtered her argument through the prism of Christian symbolism and mission, Avellaneda does not utilize religious imagery (71). Instead, Avellaneda bypasses metaphor and addresses doctrine directly. In his letter to Teresa, Sab ruminates upon the qualities of virtue, specifically Christian virtue. The passage is worth quoting at length:

Me acuerdo que cuando mi amo me enviaba a confesar mis culpas a los pies de un sacerdote, yo preguntaba al ministro de Dios qué haría para alcanzar la virtud. La virtud del esclavo, me respondía, es obedecer y callar, servir con humildad y resignación a sus legítimos dueños, y no juzgarlos nunca.

Esta explicación no me satisfacía. ¡Y qué!, pensaba yo: ¿la virtud puede ser relativa?, ¿la virtud no es una misma para todos los hombres? ¿El gran jefe de esta gran familia humana, habrá establecido diferentes leyes para los que nacen con la tez negra y la tez blanca? [...] Dios, cuya mano suprema ha repartido sus beneficios con equidad sobre todos los países del globo, [...] que ha escrito el gran dogma de la igualdad sobre la tumba, ¿Dios podrá sancionar los códigos inicuos en los que el hombre funda sus derechos para comprar y vender al hombre, y sus intérpretes en la tierra dirán al esclavo; –tu deber es sufrir: la virtud del esclavo es olvidarse de que es hombre, renegar de los beneficios que Dios le dispensó, abdicar la dignidad con que le ha revestido, y besar la mano que le imprime el sello de la infamia? No, los hombres mienten: la virtud no existe en ellos. (188-189)

Sab calls Cuba's religious leaders to account. According to the Catholic Church in 1838, one year prior to the publication of Sab, slavery was condemned as an excommunicable offense. The Church had already officially recognized slaves'

humanity, and therefore their equality.<sup>143</sup> Avellaneda uses Sab as a mouthpiece to condemn the corrupt, lying 'intérpretes' of the Cuban church for perpetuating a perverted doctrine, rather than the official position of the Holy See or the divine position of '[el] gran jefe de [la] gran familia humana [...] que ha escrito el gran dogma de la igualdad'. According to Sab, virtue cannot be relative, and a slave is still a man.

Sab's virtue lies in the power of his soul, like Uncle Tom. Yet unlike Stowe's hero, his passion and intellect underscore his refusal to be silent in the face of injustice. His passion is representative of the spirit of Cuba, and this spirit endorses him as a potential mate for his mistress. Davies points to the work as a counter-colonial project, a 'feminist-abolitionist antislavery novel',<sup>144</sup> but its ultimate success is achieved only through the character of Sab. To quote Davies:

[r]ead as a national allegory, it is clear that Carlota represents Cuba who, with the wealth apportioned by the slaves, is sold off to foreign hands. But Carlota only represents the outer shell, the beautiful exterior of the island and its traditional way of life. The Cuban spirit or soul, a dynamic blend of heightened emotion and sound good sense, is presented in the multicultural figures of Sab (the mulatto and adopted Amerindian man) and Teresa (the white woman). They too are Creoles, though marginal, dispossessed, and excluded from the discourses of power. Together they might have shaped a new future for Cuba, but there is no place for them and the occasion is lost. (28)

For Sab to constitute part of a potential new framework for an independent Cuba, Sab must be independently formed. The initial impression is of a sycophantic and

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<sup>143</sup> See the Introduction of this study (14).

<sup>144</sup> Pastor disagrees, noting the work contains 'several anti-slavery passages' but that Avellaneda 'was not an author obsessed by abolition' ('Symbiosis' 188). Yet, while Avellaneda does not posit options for emancipation, she does focus on the cruelty of the institution throughout the work to stir abolitionist sentiment.

weak character, but he demonstrates great self-control and freedom of mind. These traits make him worthy of mixing with a white woman but he is unable or unwilling to challenge social convention with even a declaration of love. He dies, like Tom, in torment, but it is a martyrdom to his impossible love for Carlota and his frustrations with a cruel world, not in service to the author's prioritizing of religious prerogatives. The only love for a white woman exhibited by Tom is his adoration of Eva, inextricably tied to his piety. Romantic interracial love, impossible in Stowe, is for Avellaneda an option that might strengthen her literary world, as well as her nation.

The denial of consummated race-mixing imperils everyone in *Sab*. The selflessness of Sab's actions and his ultimate sacrifice for Carlota drive the plot. He rejects his freedom; he wins a small fortune but hands the lottery ticket over to Carlota; he rescues Otway. Through these gestures, Sab reproduces the very paradigm he abhors. His sacrifices are astonishing, and ultimately disastrous for himself and the woman he is trying to save. In the end, no one is happy. Sab literally runs his horse into the ground and dies after carrying out his last act of devotion to Carlota, who is held in the bonds of a different slavery (according to Avellaneda, that of marriage) and Sab's actions are anything but vindicated. The reader is left with the aftermath of Sab's choices and forced to ponder the possible outcomes of a different story – one not pervaded with slavery, racism, and oppression, but with freedom. An alternative outcome presents itself: Carlota's happy (though quasi-incestuous) marriage to Sab. How would Sab, not a slave but a man of action in the new Cuba, able to fully utilize his individual talents, have shaped not only his destiny but the destiny of others in a way that led to a fulfilling and satisfactory ending? Sab's personal tragedy and the tragedy of the text lie in the denial of the 'igualdad' he believes to be a divinely sanctioned

right for all men. If *Sab is Cuba*, then the denial of equality on the very island that he metaphorically embodies stands as an indictment by Avellaneda of Cuban society's self-imposed identity crisis regarding its mixed racial and cultural composition. This is the abolitionist lesson Avellaneda teaches her readers through the enduring character of Sab, sacrificed to the institution of slavery. The emergence of a new racial paradigm of *mestizaje* is immediately forfeited, but the seeds of possibility are sown. This potential, though denied its realization, cultivates the abolitionist argument through a collective desire for justice, tragedy diverted, and society reimagined.

### ***Cecilia Valdés***

In *Cecilia Valdés*, Cirilo Villaverde crosses the line into consummated incest. Of the myriad elements that Villaverde ambitiously includes, it is his use of the incest motif running throughout which has garnered a large amount of the text's critical attention. The incest between Cecilia and Leonardo Gamboa at first seems counterproductive to all of Villaverde's other efforts to portray believable characters in the real Cuba. Their almost willful ignorance of their shared paternity requires a dogged suspension of disbelief; the idea that no one would acquaint them with the facts, especially Cecilia's own grandmother, Chepilla, is fully implausible.<sup>145</sup> Yet Villaverde steadfastly trails the shadow of incest from start to finish, as Avellaneda does to a lesser extent, leading Sibylle Fischer to pose the question, 'What *is* the connection between incest, slavery, and miscegenation?'

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<sup>145</sup> The obscuring of facts by the characters and their collective failure to disclose Cecilia's paternity is representative of society's implicit approval of white male/non-white female miscegenation. Chepilla's complicity is an extreme case of a non-white woman protecting a white man's reputation and his secret interracial sexual encounters, thus perpetuating exploitative race-mixing. Her loyalty lies not with her own granddaughter but with the granddaughter's white father.

She argues that miscegenation breeds fear of that which is too different (the opposite of Rosenthal's assertion that it is a fear of 'sameness'), whereas incest is tied to anxiety about 'excessive closeness' (xxi). Working through these definitions, Cecilia emerges as an incestuous possibility for all Cubans. As a free-thinking and free-living (to the extent that she is not a slave) woman, she is equally human, but as an illegitimate *mulata* descended from slaves she is definitively othered. Her physical freedom registers as a *de facto* slavery to circumstance; though she is not enslaved she is 'exploited and then abandoned at the whim of her white lover' (Rosenthal 84). This exploitation representationally ties her to abused female slaves and conflates the slave body and the *mulata* body. Cecilia exemplifies the 'tragic mulatta' trope, a 'stereotype [that] endures as a stock figure of romanticism and sentimentality so fraught with signification that she resists scientific discourse' (16). She may resist definition, but does not defy it; scholars have defined the tragic mulatta's origins and literary function, which is to represent an inherent division between the body and the mind.<sup>146</sup> Cecilia's history and lived reality, including her biological origins and her ignorance of them, produce a character simultaneously too similar and too different to be considered a viable agent for the reproduction of future Cuban society as it stands. The possibility of breaking such a powerful taboo also acts as a signifier of the 'moral debasement of Cuban society' and the 'equality of the races' simultaneously (Fischer xxiii, xxii). It is ultimately an ambiguous theme that

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<sup>146</sup> Sterling A. Brown and Clark both reference *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in their discussions of the tragic mulatta, but despite the torments faced by Cassy and Eliza, the two mixed-race women of the text, neither meet with a 'tragic end' through rejection of blackness or rejection by whiteness. Cecilia is the first mixed-race woman in this study to fulfill the tragic requirements of the type.

Villaverde deftly applies to the ambiguous and complicated discourse of anti-slavery in nineteenth-century Cuba.

Though *Sab* was Cuba's foundational national text,<sup>147</sup> it is Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* that is widely considered the most important, and the most representative, novel of Cuba's nineteenth century.<sup>148</sup> Fischer explains its contemporary appeal and its popular endurance:

[i]t is a story of masters, slaves, and free people of color, of sugar plantations, torture, adultery, incest, contempt born out of racial prejudice, and murderous revenge: a vast canvas of life in a slaveholding colony, at times horrifying, at times quaint, but extraordinary nevertheless, and without equal in nineteenth-century Spanish American literature. (xi)

Despite all it has to offer, it is in many ways an imperfect work; it meanders and lags, the prose is often weighed down in descriptive detail, and it is, at times, sentimental in the extreme. However, Villaverde defiantly attempted to craft a work that displayed his Cuba in all its beauty and ugliness, and with his inclusion of socio-political elements, the portrayal of the inequities of the racial caste system and the violent brutality of slavery, and, perhaps unwittingly, his own racial prejudices, that is what he produced.

*Cecilia Valdés* first began to take shape in 1839, when Villaverde was only 27 years old and still living in Cuba. The action in the novel also occurs around this time. Escaping a politically motivated prison sentence ten years later,

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<sup>147</sup> According to Sommer's analysis in *Foundational Fictions*, noted above.

<sup>148</sup> There is scholarly consensus: '*Cecilia Valdés* is the most important novel of nineteenth-century Cuba' (Fischer xi); 'Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés*, which I consider to be one of the most important, if not the most important, novel in nineteenth-century Spanish American literature' (Luis xi). Sommer recognized that *Cecilia Valdés* became 'Cuba's national novel after the period of abolition (1880-1886)' (126).

Villaverde settled into a self-imposed exile in New York where he would remain until his death in 1894. The second, extended version of *Cecilia Valdés* was published in New York in 1882. Villaverde's writing about Cuba from exile is interesting because of the unique perspective offered by the decades-long influence of his residence in the US, the Puritan-founded country that had endured a civil war to achieve abolition, and because, despite the lengthy separation from his homeland, Villaverde still writes about Cuba, and Cubans, with clarity and authority. He was raised on a sugar plantation in Pinar del Río, but unlike Avellaneda, he studied law in Havana and moved in politically active and literary circles, such as Del Monte's salon (Fischer xi-xiii).<sup>149</sup> He witnessed chattel slavery first-hand, but he also knew and understood the law that set the parameters of Cuban slavery and structured Cuban society. This knowledge is patent in scenes such as Don Cándido's unethical handling of his illegal merchant slave ship's seizure and the same character's appeal to a judge to have Cecilia placed in custody (Villaverde part 4, ch. 5). But Villaverde gave up the law; it is possible that the shady maneuvers and blatant manipulations of the legal code and trade agreements offended the author's humanist sensibilities. Here is a potential reason for him choosing not to undertake his anti-slavery project through a legal or philosophical treatise, but through a work of sentimental fiction.

In *Cecilia Valdés*, readers find a work of vast thematic breadth, peopled with an almost Shakespearean range of different races, classes, and genders, who in turn enjoy a range of social and political agency.<sup>150</sup> Villaverde writes

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<sup>149</sup> Fischer details his early life and education. Luis also writes that Domingo del Monte was Villaverde's most influential teacher' and that *Cecilia Valdés* was 'started in Cuba in Del Monte's literary salon' (103, 100).

<sup>150</sup> Jackson notes that 'the whole spectrum of color is represented in this novel [...] and within the races the sharp divisions between African-born blacks and creole black,

convincingly about all of it, even the Christmas Eve ‘colored people’s ball’ at which Cecilia, Nemesia, and José Dolores have their fateful encounter with Dionisio, and the produce vendor who befriends María de Regla. He artfully relates the beauty of the island’s rural areas and the juxtaposed violence and tragedy of slavery that is couched in those same regions. The violence depicted exposes Villaverde’s disgust with the institution of slavery. However, the fact that Villaverde, like Avellaneda, produced writing heavily imbued with his own inherent racism that never truly proposed a concrete alternative to the blight of slavery and the inhumanity of the racial caste system transforms the anti-slavery argument into an open-ended problem. Villaverde’s characterization is dramatically marked by his ascription of negative qualities to his mixed-race or black characters. In fact, the darker the character, the more likely he or she is to be portrayed as simple, hateful, sly, or tiresome. There is a clear adherence to the ‘pigmentocracy’ and darkness scale in *Cecilia Valdés*, though there are some notable exceptions (for example, the unfavorable portrayal of Spanish-born Don Cándido, which adheres to a pro-criollo, anti-peninsular mindset). Villaverde may have held strong anti-slavery views, but he was not anti-racist. In fact, racism was so endemic in Cuba, a slaveholding colony for centuries by the time *Cecilia Valdés* was published, that there was, it seems, no effective alternative discourse.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, sentimental fiction’s persuasive aspects and emotional appeals, rather than a reasoned, objective argument about racial equality, made

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between free of freed [sic] and slave black, between blacks and mulattoes’ (28). Villaverde displays the full complexity and diversity of the Cuban pigmentocracy.

<sup>151</sup> The Del Monte circle, as an island of resistance to slavery, still advocated gradual abolition. Their position was hardly a radical departure from slavery’s racial ideologies that denied the recognition of a slave’s inherent equality and humanity.

it the best available literary genre available to Villaverde, as it had been for Avellaneda, in formulating an argument against slavery.

Like *Sab*, *Cecilia Valdés* demands a sentimental hero(ine). Cecilia gives herself over to feeling and emotion, and this is ultimately the key to her undoing. Her tragic flaw is her penchant for jealousy, a feeling she harbors and feeds almost as strongly as Doña Rosa, her biological father's wife. Neither woman ends up happy, and both use devoted men to exact their revenge on the white man who has wronged them. However, they are not unsympathetic, nor does Villaverde mean for them to be; they shed an abundance of tears and face no shortage of humiliations.<sup>152</sup> Isabel Ilincheta, Cecilia's white love rival, on the other hand, is a paragon of virtue and feminine qualities. She is a polite guest, a magnanimous slaveholder, and a devoted Catholic, yet at the story's end she too has run out of options. Villaverde is not often credited with sharing feminist sympathies, and perhaps it was unintentional, but his depictions of female life sympathetically corroborate the dire picture painted by Avellaneda of the choices available to free Cuban women: unhappy marriage, prison, or the veil.

In this oppressive atmosphere, Cecilia's tragic fate is writ large. If white women are not guaranteed happiness, then it is completely out of reach for a *mulata* born of secret race-mixing. The themes of secrecy and incest are central to Cecilia and Leonardo's relationship.<sup>153</sup> In consummating their affair, they are

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<sup>152</sup> Both women are threatened with the public exposure of secret family shames, perpetrated without their control or consent, by men who are strangers to them, highlighting their innate female powerlessness. Dionisio accosts Cecilia at the colored ball and Doña Rosa is caught in a frank discussion regarding her husband's past mistress in front of her eldest daughter.

<sup>153</sup> Luis writes that the 'incest between Leonardo and Cecilia is at the core of the novel and has fundamental implications for a developing Cuban culture within a slave society'

unwittingly breaking the accepted forms of kinship ties and a the taboos of their society, while 'implicating' a corrupt Cuba in their transgression; Cuban social norms of secrecy in race-mixing are in turn responsible for the 'perpetuation of this sexual taboo' (Rosenthal 86). There is palpable anxiety about the relationship, communicated by both Don Cándido and Chepilla, and both will go to *almost* any lengths to prevent an incestuous physical union. They stop short of the obvious solution: explicitly informing Cecilia and Leonardo. Surprising, then, is Villaverde's seemingly passing notice of the product of their incest:

Volando había el tiempo con inconcebible rapidez. A fines de agosto tuvo Cecilia una hermosa niña; suceso que, lejos de alegrar a Leonardo, parece que solo le hizo sentir todo el peso de la grave responsabilidad que se había echado encima en un momento de amoroso arrebató. Aquella no era su esposa, mucho menos su igual. (267-268)

The narrator spends the length of the novel expressing his anxiety at the prospect of their incestuous union, and here their offspring appears almost as a footnote. The passion fizzles quickly and Leonardo finds himself suffering the consequences; he is bored and looking for an escape. His mother provides the excuse and the incentive:

Doña Rosa, además, había averiguado por aquellos días la historia verdadera del nacimiento, bautizo, crianza y paternidad de Cecilia Valdés [...] Espantada dicha señora del abismo a que había empujado a su hijo, le dijo con aparente calma:

- Estaba pensando, Leonardito, que es hora de que sueltes el peruétano de la muchachuela [...] ¿Qué te parece? (268-270)

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(117). He cites César Leante's assertion that Villaverde made Cecilia and Leonardo siblings to metaphorically suggest a relationship between the races.

With his mother's aid, Leonardo does just that, and his slaveowning family is condemned to infamy.<sup>154</sup>

Doña Rosa finally learns of the incestuous relationship through María de Regla, the downtrodden and scapegoated domestic slave of the Gamboa family. As a black slave, María de Regla was the personification of bodily difference and intellectual inferiority to her mistress, Doña Rosa, yet she was a vital part of the domestic space of the family, as her history shows. The figure of María de Regla echoes the Spanish Black Madonna<sup>155</sup> figure of the Virgen of Regla, the patron saint of the Bay of Havana. She is paired with the West African deity Yemayá, spirit of maternity and domestic labor, to create a hybrid worshipped by practitioners of the syncretic *Lucumí* and *Santería* religious cults.<sup>156</sup> Yemayá, according to Elizabeth Perez, is the 'most abused of spirits'; she is a maid and wet nurse who has endured rape and violence – commonly suffered among female slaves – and through the Catholic figure of La Virgen de Regla, '[encoded] both the productive and reproductive labor of women of color' (203, 207). María de Regla is, according to Luis, 'the "real" mother of all the children' in *Cecilia Valdés* (116). Though her milk sustains them, she is denied this status.

When tasked with nursing Doña Rosa's daughter Adela as an infant, she is included in the most intimate of familial relationships. Admonished against

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<sup>154</sup> Kristal argues that the 'indictment against the slave owning family represented by the young rake, his profligate father and his ruthless mother [...] condemns Cuba's slave owning society' through this text ('The Incest Motif' 398).

<sup>155</sup> For a cultural history of the Black Madonna trope, see Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, *The Black Madonna*. The Virgen de Regla's visual depiction is echoed also in the Virgen de la Caridad, a Black Madonna originating in the Canary Islands who was absorbed into Cuban *santería*, a syncretic Afro-Catholic cult. She, however, is depicted as a beautiful *mulata*, serving as the 'preeminent symbol of religious and cultural hybridity of the nation' (Perez 203). María de Regla, in contrast, is purely African.

<sup>156</sup> For a history of Afro-Cuban religious syncretism, see Ayorinde, *Afro-Cuban Religiosity*.

breastfeeding her own infant daughter, Dolores, María de Regla can only watch as her biological child weakens (151-152).<sup>157</sup> In what is dually perceived as the fulfillment of a mother's duty (from María's perspective) and an unspeakable betrayal (from Doña Rosa's), María brings both babies to bed with her to breastfeed simultaneously.<sup>158</sup> Her transgression is discovered and the consequences are severe. She is moved to the family plantation of La Tinaja, separated from her children and husband, and forced to work as a nurse in the infirmary. This punishment is deemed an excessively cruel overreaction, not only by modern standards, but by the female characters who comprise María de Regla's audience in the parlor at La Tinaja and are representative of Villaverde's contemporary readership. Doña Rosa is left no choice; over twenty years after her indiscretion, María is 'forgiven' and permitted to return to Havana. Doña Rosa's forgiveness is limited and conditional, and María de Regla is forced to hire herself out while she looks for a new master.<sup>159</sup>

Prior to her fateful lapse in judgment, María de Regla had already begun to lose some of her señora's faith in her. Doña Rosa, suspicious of her husband's past infidelities and convinced she does not know the whole truth, never trusts Don Cándido's version of events surrounding Cecilia's wet-nursing years before.

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<sup>157</sup> '[Q]ué era de mi hija Dolores? Figúrese su merced cómo no se me partiría el corazón de verla flaca, enfermiza, mocosa, sucia, casi desnuda, arrastrándose por el suelo...chupando en un muñequita el pan o el arroz mojado en leche que para entretener el hambre le envolvía en un trapo sucio la mujer que la criaba. Si lloraba...¡Jesús!...Me atormentan sus chillidos.' Dolores must suffer her 'pain' while María de Regla's acts are proscribed by the 'rules' of slavery. Her disobedience is a transgression within slave society.

<sup>158</sup> The incident is recounted in almost criminal terms: 'Armaron las dos tal pelotera, que despertó Señoría, vino al cuarto con una vela en la mano y nos pilló en el acto' (Villaverde 153).

<sup>159</sup> María de Regla tells her story to the Gamboa and Gámez sisters (129-156). Perez points to this monologue as an articulation of 'grievances [...] on behalf of slave women' (211). Doña Rosa's reaction displays an intentional blindness of white women to white male exploitation of slave women.

Though Doña Rosa is without definitive proof, she knows she is being deceived, and María returns to find her mistress waiting ‘con espada en mano’ (150). Don Cándido fails to defend her or give an explanation, and Doña Rosa feels distinctly betrayed. María’s feeding of Doña Rosa’s precious, white infant daughter and Dolores at the same time, in the same bed, proves the final affront. The legitimate white child has been nursed alongside the black child, a product of slavery, as well as an unknown, illegitimate child whom Doña Rosa suspects is the product of an adulterous union. The mistress is disgraced by such bodily mixing (a prejudice that echoes Aunt Ophelia’s disgust at Uncle Tom and Eva’s mutual affection and physical closeness) and deals with María de Regla the same way she, and Don Cándido, will deal with Cecilia at the end of the novel – by eliminating her.

The concurrent nursing of Adela and Dolores points to the incest taboo, articulated by María de Regla calling Adela ‘¡Mi hija idolatrada!’ (2:130). The two young women are also described as ‘milk sisters’.<sup>160</sup> Adela and Dolores, pure white and pure black, represent the future generation that will perpetuate the slavery paradigm, and this bond creates what Doña Rosa considers an undesirable intimacy between the two. Despite her efforts, the mistress’s attempt to banish the stain of incest from her home is ultimately unsuccessful because her home harbors the evil of slavery. Also, María de Regla will not be kept out. Villaverde writes her history with great detail, and portrays her as a woman who knows how to work upon the feelings of others to achieve her aims through her own version of ‘moral suasion’. María de Regla wants to return to her family in

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<sup>160</sup> When noting the girls’ shared appearance to Cecilia, María de Regla calls Adela ‘mi otra hija de leche’ (264).

Havana, and she uses all her cunning and her full range of performative emotion to manipulate white sympathy. She is a multi-dimensional character whose forbidden actions have scandalized her masters and tied Adela to further unsavory connections. The desired exclusive wet nursing of Adela is consistent with popular Cuban representations of the Virgen de Regla, as a black woman holding the 'idolatrado' white Christ child. The black woman's maternal energies therefore are designated by Doña Rosa as the exclusive reserve of worshipped white children, an opinion reinforced by local religious iconography.

Adela is also a 'milk sister' to Cecilia, her biological half-sister, whom she so closely resembles.<sup>161</sup> This strengthens the tie between the two and reinforces the notion of Leonardo unwittingly making love to his own sister(s).<sup>162</sup> María de Regla's act of nursing connects Adela, Cecilia, and Dolores – the pure white child, the free *mulata*, and the black slave of Cuba – in a type of incestuous web which revolves around Leonardo, the white male, and which is exploited by him.<sup>163</sup> Here, incest is highly representational of the connectedness of all Cubans and the potential degradation and damage that exploitation causes. Such exploitation's reproduction in another generation is the ultimate danger – both

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<sup>161</sup> Numerous instances exist in the text where their resemblance is noted by other characters, such as Isabel Ilincheta's mistaking of Cecilia for Adela when she knocks Leonardo off Isabel's carriage runner, and María de Regla's declaration that the two share 'la misma frente', that 'jimaguas no se parecerían más' (264).

<sup>162</sup> Sommer describes Cecilia as Leonardo's 'incestuous and finally narcissistic sibling substitute' for Adela (127). Villaverde makes explicit the affectionate and intimate nature of Adela and Leonardo's relationship in part 1, ch. 11: 'Ocupaba Leonardo en la mesa sitio opuesto al de su hermana Adela, y siempre que el padre se hallaba delante, mientras duraba el amuerzo, o la comida, se cruzaban entre ellos miradas de inteligencia, se sonreían a menudo, sostenían, en suma, conversaciones cariñosas y fraternales con los ojos y los labios, sin proferir una palabra. [...] A no ser hermanos carnales se habrían amado, como se amaron los amantes más célebres que ha conocido el mundo.'

<sup>163</sup> This web is a perpetuation of the one woven by Don Cándido to include María de Regla, Chepilla, and his own wife in a network of secrecy and complicity that obscures his paternity of Cecilia.

shameful and avoidable according to Villaverde. The shame is compounded by the needlessness of it. Luis argues that:

if both Leonardo and Cecilia represent the young Cuban culture, the novel proposes that the island's culture is based on the violation of a taboo; that is, on a neurosis. In the nineteenth century, slave culture was destined to destroy itself. The slave system was responsible for the incest between brother and sister. The sexual violation has an immediate effect and causes Leonardo's death and the destruction of his family; symbolically, it also causes the decay of the Cuban family, which had its origin in slave society. (118)

Luis assigns blame to the Plantation patriarchy for creating an unsustainable, inhumane, and fundamentally flawed system. Villaverde, however, appears to distribute the blame by also incorporating María de Regla in the web.

María de Regla does more than suspect the identity of Cecilia Valdés's father; she knows unequivocally that it is Don Cándido who visits Chepilla's little house where his daughter is being nursed. She fulfils the stereotype of the deceitful servant with her concealment, finally sharing her knowledge only tentatively at La Tinaja, apologizing profusely and claiming that it is only conjecture, her best guess. She provides the whole story to her mistress only in hopes that she can save Dionisio.<sup>164</sup> In working to regain her mistress's trust for self-interested purposes, María de Regla becomes the instrument of Leonardo's, and the family's, demise. Prior to relating the facts, she acts as a go-between for Leonardo and Cecilia, who is kept prisoner in a correctional house. Though she is in full knowledge of their incestuous intent, she still conceals the truth, vaguely warning Cecilia that 'los dos están en pecado mortal' (Villaverde 264). With

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<sup>164</sup> Doña Rosa learns the facts, 'contado ahora por María de Regla con el objeto de obtener el completo perdón de sus pecados y alguna ayuda en favor de Dionisio' (269).

access to the full truth, Cecilia would have chosen to end the affair. Leonardo would have married Isabel without inciting Cecilia's wrath and José Pimiento's vengeance, and Doña Rosa would have kept her son. Don Cándido is the (Im)moral Master, the original perpetrator and the initiator of series of events which led to a tragic end, but responsibility for the outcome also rests upon the contentious relationship between the mistress and her domestic slave. Slavery, according to Villaverde, ultimately corrupts the white family, society, and the slave.

In fact, María de Regla initiates cataclysmic destruction. A perfect mixture of simplemindedness and self-interest, a loving mother and wife, María de Regla is deeply flawed, but no more so than the family she serves. Sommer describes her importance to the characters and plot of the text, her dynamic role and her contribution to the discourse on slavery. María de Regla is:

the one who provided Cecilia with a mother's milk and knows who the father was, which explains her removal from the house in Havana; the one who witnesses the self-annihilating heroism of a field slave who swallows his tongue to make his forced silence felt; the one who now keeps the ladies of the house listening for hours about the nefarious effect of slavery when black families are separated and sold off in pieces; the Hegelian slave whose storytelling power over the enchanted mistresses comes from the knowledge gained in the work only she was fit to do. (129-130)

The cruel treatment she receives at the hands of Doña Rosa, and from all white society, 'makes monsters' of those responsible, draws symbolic tears from the reader and real tears from her listeners (128). No one weeps more robustly than Isabel Ilincheta, who emerges arguably as the true sentimental heroine – the innocent (127). Within this sentimental novel there is no viable solution offered to the morally perverse and corrupt Plantation built on slavery, so Isabel takes the single noble option available to her and, like Teresa in *Sab*, renounces society

and enters a convent. The novel is titled *Cecilia Valdés*, but María de Regla is at the center of events which result in every other character's death, misery, or disillusionment at the close of the novel. Villaverde invests her with agency but denies her full possession of her powers to exercise her privileged knowledge or to make herself fully heard without fear of reprisal. By inflicting rather than averting tragedy, she becomes a convenient and deserving scapegoat.

The tragedy in both *Sab* and *Cecilia Valdés* derives from each authors' inability to execute works that both acknowledge the extent of *mestizaje* that occurs under Cuban slavery and fully embrace it as the inevitable future course for the nation. The works depict 'impossible cross-racial sexual desire', but do not defend, validate, or promote it (Rosenthal 75). Race-mixing within the abusive paradigm of slavery is condemned, especially by Villaverde, but the representation of *mestizaje* between free equals is limited as well. Villaverde, unlike Avellaneda, sees the incest through, and it produces a child destined for tragedy. The daughter's birth (for it is a mixed-race *daughter* that prophesizes the endless repetition of the white master's web) is a scandal and a scourge. Yet while *mestizaje* is lamented, it is not omitted. Avellaneda's passing *mulato*, in a more just world, could have had the white woman of his thwarted desire, an outcome that averts both his death and Carlota's racially pure but loveless marriage. *Mestizaje* is suggested as a balm to the wound of centuries of exploitation, inequality, and suffering through Teresa's proposal to Sab, but the solution is rejected by the slave himself. The textual suggestion of interracial marriage, however, is demonstrative of vastly different considerations of race-mixing in slave societies in the Americas: in the United States, interracial sex and its progeny are ignored, condemned, or relocated overseas; in Cuba, there is interracial sex and sexual longing, but not marriage, and illegitimate, mixed-race

children encounter a hostile world and meet a sad end. Cuban bodies, black, white, indigenous, and mixed-race, remain in their native Cuba, dead or alive. Regardless of racial difference, they claim national belonging – interred in Cuba's soil, enclosed in its convents, enshrined in its literature.

### CHAPTER 3: *Mestiço* Brazil

In Brazil, Plantation race-mixing reached its zenith in both acceptable practice and social promotion. *A Escrava Isaura* (1875) by Bernardo Guimarães epitomizes the nation's acceptance of race-mixing within slavery. As part of the text's abolitionist agenda, it encourages not only interracial sex and the resultant *mestiço* offspring, but the social and religious bonds of marriage between partners of different races. Slavery contributed to Brazil's unique journey from *mestiço* colony to empire to republic. In *A Concise History of Brazil*, Boris Fausto points to Brazil's early importation of African slaves and argues that the Afro-Brazilian population grew earlier than in other colonies of the Americas (15), and Curtin nominates Brazil as 'the place where the characteristic elements of New World tropical slave plantations were first put together' (46).<sup>165</sup> The African was therefore an intrinsic and founding figure to Brazilian identity, influencing the character of the Brazilian Plantation and distinguishing the colony and later nation from its Spanish American neighbors, as well as from Portugal. The institutional norms of slavery also took exceptional forms. The Portuguese crown's explicit prohibition of indigenous enslavement in 1570 increased the demand for African slaves, and Brazil did not attract the indentured servants from Europe who constituted a greater part of the labor pool elsewhere in the Americas (Fausto 8).<sup>166</sup> Stuart B. Schwartz notes that slavery had 'molded the contours of Brazilian

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<sup>165</sup> Curtin also argues that Brazil was the first landing and disembarkation point for most slaves shipped to the Western hemisphere.

<sup>166</sup> The crown's prohibition was in line with the papal bulls condemning indigenous slavery (see this study's Introduction). However, Fausto also notes that the indigenous population did not escape exploitation in all forms. Some colonists, especially landholders in peripheral or frontier areas, simply ignored the royal decrees with impunity. It was, according to Curtin, the high indigenous mortality rates and low birth rates that caused *fazendeiros* to rely increasingly on more expensive African slaves (52). Another factor contributing to the Amerindians' status as free men was their conversion to Christianity.

life' from Brazil's inception (2), permeating the country's every socio-political aspect.

The specific characteristics of Brazilian slavery were structured by the colony's foundational ideas about race, racial mobility, and race-mixing. In his sociological tome on the creation of Brazilian identity, *Casa-Grande e Senzala* (1933), Gilberto Freyre charts the influence of Portugal's history of Iberian race-mixing<sup>167</sup> and global maritime mobility on the colony's flexible ideas about racially acceptable sexual partners. Richard Drayton argues that Freyre's 'nostalgic portrait of harmonious social and racial relations on the plantations [...] has long been discredited' (47), but it is Freyre's idealized version of history, which includes and values mixing, that is relevant to literary constructions of national identity, despite historical inaccuracy. The veracity of Freyre's account has indeed been called into question by other scholars,<sup>168</sup> but, as Gilberto Velho points out, Freyre was 'um dos maiores prosadores da língua portuguesa' whose body of work was 'de enorme riqueza literária' (11). This literary richness moves Freyre's work outside of the scope of scholarly history or sociology and establishes him as a storyteller whose approach in turn offers readers an intertextual approach to history and literary analysis. In effect, *Casa-Grande e Senzala* responds to abolitionist Plantation literature and its pro-mixing ideologies

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Amerindians did, however, continue to work side-by-side with slaves, often for a below-subsistence wage (Curtain 63-64).

<sup>167</sup> See ch. 1, 'The Portuguese Colonization of Brazil'; Freyre cites centuries of 'Moorish' influence and peninsular cohabitation, as well as the fetishizing of Moorish women by Portuguese men, as cultivating a sexual attraction to 'brown-skinned, black-eyed [women], enveloped in sexual mysticism, roseate in hue' who constantly combed their black hair and bathed in rivers (12). Freyre claims that the sexual desirability of the Moorish women was inscribed upon Amerindian women, who exhibited many of these traits. Drayton describes Freyre's approach to miscegenation as offering, rather than a 'whitening' program, 'a pleasurable and creative Brazilian *jouissance* in a browning' (45).

<sup>168</sup> See p. 21 of this study, which references critical responses to Freyre.

by reaffirming its message. He argues that early mixing with indigenous Americans was a result of both 'calculated policy stimulated by the State' and the 'violent instincts' of the male Portuguese settler, and that this sexual coupling often occurred within marriage (Freyre 10-11). European and indigenous mixing was not proscribed, but a prescribed method for peopling the new colony. As argued below, this is a guiding principle of Guimarães's work.

African women quickly found themselves subject to the same sexual 'appetites' and prerogatives of Portuguese men that indigenous women had. A 'sexual preference for' and 'glorification of the mulatto woman' emerged, initiating the whitening process of imported African slaves through the appropriated body of the black female (14). From these encounters between the Portuguese, Amerindian, and African sprang a class of *mestiço* men and women deemed physically robust – 'vigorous and ductile' – and more responsive to a tropical climate (8).<sup>169</sup> In the interests of environmental resilience and a whitening project of racial aesthetics, the seeds of mixing were sown. The Brazilian identity was established as incontrovertibly mixed-race, and the importation of slaves was justified as a fundamental population- and nation-building exercise. Race-mixing thus performed a dual function in Brazil by the nineteenth century: first, to absorb physical traces of the black population, and second, to use the absorbed black

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<sup>169</sup> Freyre cites a fear of European susceptibility to tropical disease (19), as does Curtin who argues the belief in African superior adaptability was mistaken:

[it] drew part of its strength from the correct observation that, though newly arrived Europeans and Africans both died in greater numbers than old residents did, the European death rate was much higher than the African. The apparent difference was race, but the effective difference was not so much heredity as immunities acquired in childhood. The West African disease environment included the normal range of Old World diseases of the kind that had killed off the Amerindians, but it also included a range of tropical diseases not present in Europe. (80)

Curtin argues this idea is 'barely dead today', which underscores Brazilians' continued commitment to their *mestiço* foundations and identity.

population to strengthen the white population. Whitening was a late nineteenth-century liberal prerogative that emerged in line with Republicanism, Abolition, and Positivism,<sup>170</sup> but it was rooted firmly in the earliest days of Portuguese colonialism.

Fausto notes that in 1755, marriages between Europeans and Amerindians were actively encouraged by royal decree, and their offspring were offered preferential treatment in socio-political spheres and legally protected from designation by 'injurious' racial epithets (e.g., '*caboclos*') (26). Portuguese Catholicism also initially legitimized many mixed-race unions performed as marriages *de juras*.<sup>171</sup> Prior to Brazil's foundation as the seat of the Portuguese empire in 1822 by Dom Pedro I, the Church was strictly wedded to the crown (Camara 302), but Freyre patriotically points to a difference between Lusophone *fazendeiros*, who railed against perceived abuses by church and state, and Spanish *criollos* who largely accepted Spain's terms.<sup>172</sup> In 1824, the Catholic Church in Brazil was 'reorganized' and incorporated by the Constitution. It remained the established church, but the state dictated its jurisdiction (Skidmore 3). The church of the empire, therefore, operated at the behest of a government which had a vested interest in race-mixing and socio-political integration. Exceptions and allowances were also mandated for a heterodox religious praxis

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<sup>170</sup> The positivists, with their scientific and evolutionary theories, focus on rational decision-making, and drive for development, equated economic and political success and stability with the Anglo-Saxon work ethic (Nichols 174).

<sup>171</sup> Freyre claims the Portuguese Church consented to these 'secret' marriages 'consummated by coitus' because there was 'great tolerance for any sort of union that [resulted] in an increase in the population' (254).

<sup>172</sup> This independent attitude toward the church is reiterated by Skidmore, who claims that the nineteenth century Brazilian church had 'inherited a less militant tradition than that of the crusading Spanish church' (4); it was a church less wedded to political conquest.

that permitted, for example, the practice of non-Catholic religions and spiritual rituals.<sup>173</sup>

In his comparative analysis, 'Afro-American Religious Syncretism in Brazil and the United States', Evandro M. Camara points to overlap in form, practice, and doctrine of Luso-Brazilian Catholicism and West African religions. He describes it as a 'late-medieval religious model', which included, similar to many of the transplanted African religions, superstitions regarding witchcraft and sorcery; magic was not merely believed, but practiced. Correspondence between Catholicism and other religions included shared features such as ritual and sacrament, divination, 'the cult of the dead', sacrifices and offerings, and a deity hierarchy (Camara 304-307). Luso-Brazilian Catholicism additionally possessed, according to Camara, a quality of 'religious eroticism', a tendency towards sumptuousness in ritual that expressed itself in song and dance, which was also integral to the African religions. This eroticism is markedly opposed to the strict censure of Protestantism (Camara uses the example of North American Calvinism), but, as in the United States, religion also occupied a practical role in the perpetuation of slavery. Hybrid Afro-Brazilian Catholicism framed life in the plantation home. The primary distinction between the two modes of worship in the American Plantation lies in the acceptance and absorption of traditional

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<sup>173</sup> Skidmore notes that, while non-Catholic religions were not entitled to give their meeting places 'the external appearance of the church', practitioners were permitted to congregate (3). Freyre cites the Abbé Etienne's assertion that Islam also became a 'powerful sect' in Brazilian slave quarters (315). Camara claims that Africans comparatively were permitted to practice their religions, including festivals and rituals, informally but openly. Such scenarios differ markedly from US practices, where slaves, for example, were forbidden to gather for worship in secret, and where supervision by a white master or clergyman, or a white-sanctioned black preacher, was required (302-303).

African rites into mainstream religion in Brazil, and the erasure of them in the southern US.<sup>174</sup>

It was this special blend of Luso-Catholicism and various African religions that pervaded and directed life in the plantation home and encouraged other forms of mixing. From the sugarcane fields of Bahia, to the coffee regions of the south and the mines of Minas Gerais, Brazil retained a distinctly rural character marked by mixing. Yet each *latifundia* was a kingdom ruled by its own supreme patriarch. Skidmore attributes sadism and megalomania to such men, landowners who reigned over their families, especially the women, and their slaves with hostility, brutality, and impunity (5).<sup>175</sup> Freyre severely questions the racial purity of even the earliest colonizers (owing to the lack of available white women from earliest settlement and a historical pattern of concubinage), but points to the widespread practice of sexual exploitation of slave women by these 'white' landowners and their sons. This exploitation is not notably different from other national contexts, at least not compared to Cuba or the United States, but the acknowledgement and approval with which it met resulted in an institutionalization of the custom. A white Brazilian man felt no shame in taking a

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<sup>174</sup> Freyre points to an important religious influence: African slaves who practiced Islam. He argues that Muslim slaves were more desirable as domestic servants and therefore wielded significant power in terms of influencing white perceptions of African civilization. Freyre emphasizes the historical Muslim influence upon and resistance to Catholicism, which predates colonial Brazil in medieval Portugal (11-12); this history of religious conflict influenced later Catholic syncretic practices. Freyre argues that Islam greatly influenced Brazilian Catholicism specifically, as did 'the animism and fetishism of the natives and the minor Negro cults' (315-316). Also, the Islamic practitioners were not isolated from their African roots; indeed, they continued a specialized religious and cultural trade of devotional objects and materials (318). Such established rituals performed by domestic servants would have brought a knowledge of, if not appreciation for, African traditions into the plantation house. Islam therefore is a relevant example of the heterodox acculturation that Catholicism underwent in colonial Brazil.

<sup>175</sup> Skidmore attributes these despotic qualities to the authoritarian structure of slavery as a national institution and as practiced on individual plantations.

black or mixed-race mistress; it was not something to be kept from his family, congregation, or society. Brazilian men stated plainly their sexual preference for *mulata* women in an 'old saying': 'White woman for marriage, mulatto woman for f—, Negro woman for work' (Freyre 13).<sup>176</sup> In fact, during colonization, autochthonous and African women were often made mistresses of the house.<sup>177</sup> The early practice of open race-mixing, when occurring outside of marriage, led to, as Freyre claims, jealous wives (Ibid.). (These wives, unlike those of Cuban and American slaveholders, had no recourse to the orthodox religious tenets of abstinence or marital fidelity upheld by a strong, centralized Catholic Church, or to a Puritanical religious community that condemned fornication and miscegenation.) The profound hybridity of Brazilian Catholicism in fact surpassed mere religious eroticism and cultivated an overt sexualization of the non-Catholic Other, especially in regards to the female African, Amerindian, or *mulata* which, according to Jerome S. Handler and Kelly E. Hayes, still dictates representations.<sup>178</sup> Freyre, though arguing throughout his history of Brazil for the

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<sup>176</sup> Freyre cites H. Handelmann's *História do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1931). This theme of female sexual gradation by race is echoed in Bush's article, titled 'White "Ladies", Coloured "Favourites" and Black "Wenches"'.  
<sup>177</sup> A shortage of white women in Brazil led to both casual and official unions between white men and indigenous or black women from the earliest days of colonization (Freyre 11). One specific example offered by Freyre is the case of the 'Negro Minas', light-skinned Africans deemed appropriate for domestic work who were either 'elevated' to 'mistress of the house', or kept as concubines and given lighter work as domestics and cooks in exchange for the sexual relationship (308-309).

<sup>178</sup> Handler and Hayes detail the emergence of a late twentieth-century religious cult centered on a misreading of a nineteenth-century illustration. Jacques Arago, a visiting French artist, sketched a male slave wearing an iron collar and a mask over his mouth as a punishment, ostensibly for attempting to escape, but later interpretations equate the image with a mythical tortured female slave named Anastácia. There are many versions of her represented in shrines throughout Brazil, but her suffering and martyrdom is always sexual in nature. Her origins are attributed to a syncretism of Catholic, Umbanda, and Candomblé deities and saints, to name a few, and her female devotees populate a wide religious spectrum. Devotional objects and icons are purchased and displayed by cult members in home shrines. The most significant assertion in Handler and Hayes' study is that the misreading of Arago's male figure amounts to an appropriation of an androgynous image to address and assuage female suffering that was 'endemic' in Brazilian slavery and that continues to pervade collective memory (49). She is also associated with voodoo

easy virtue of non-white women,<sup>179</sup> paradoxically argues that it is in fact the European descendant who is oversexualized: ‘in the case of civilized man the sexual appetite is ordinarily excited without great provocation. [...] Eroticism, lust, and sexual depravity’ are often mis-assigned to black and indigenous women, claims Freyre, when African and indigenous sexuality actually requires ‘constant excitation and sharp stimuli’ (323). He clarifies further that the woman is faultless in exciting white men’s desire – a clear rejection of the ‘temptress’ stereotype. It is the unequal dynamic that incites depravity. He states, ‘[t]here is no slavery without sexual depravity. Depravity is the essence of such a regime’ (324). Though this statement releases slave women of responsibility for forced or coerced interracial sex, it serves the dual function of retrospectively absolving their masters as well.

It is within the abolitionist literature of Brazil, the final country to emancipate its slaves in 1888 amid worldwide condemnation, that race-mixing, or *mestiçagem*, is treated – perhaps paradoxically – with programmatic legitimacy. More so, it is romanticized and employed as a literary device that simultaneously structures and supports the development of a new national identity. This *mestiço* identity was touted by nineteenth-century Brazilian literary critic and liberal Republican Silvio Romero, who acknowledged the race-mixing occurring in Brazil and argued for its continuation until the white race emerged

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practices, such as magic and exorcisms; see also Wood, ‘The Museu do Negro’; Burdick, *Blessed Anastácia*.

<sup>179</sup> In addition to enumerating several examples of how an interracial relationship bestowed material gain upon the woman, Freyre opens *Casa-Grande e Senzala* with a demeaning and highly speculative colonial anecdote: indigenous women, ‘for some trinket or other or a bit of broken mirror would give themselves, with legs spread far apart, to the “*caraibas*,” [indigenous term for Europeans] who were so gluttonous for a woman’ (13).

dominant, having absorbed the indigenous and the African populations. His interest in *mestiçagem* stemmed from his desire for a citizenry perfectly acclimatized to the Brazilian tropics. He expressed hope that '[w]ithin two or three centuries perhaps this ethnic fusion will be complete and the Brazilian *mestiço* well defined' (quoted in Skidmore 36). It is this national preoccupation with establishing a 'viable racial identity' that permeates the national literature (Haberly, *Three Sad Races* 2). Race-mixing is not simply recognized, but promoted as a national project; this socio-racial anomaly within the Plantation region was the product of centuries of Brazil's unique racial and political history. It is also the result of religious syncretism unmatched elsewhere in the Americas. However, the tolerance for and absorption of African religious features by mainstream Catholicism cultivated a blended spirituality that did little to mitigate slavery's worst abuses and nothing to establish a cohesive or unified anti-slavery religious effort. A tenuous abolitionism arose from other quarters – education, economics, and literature.

Bernardo Guimarães's work does not fit into Freyre's later theory of sexual depravity in which the slaveowner becomes the victim of his own institution.<sup>180</sup> But, like Freyre, Guimarães rejects the overt sexualization of the female slave, the 'temptress' trope, in his idealization of race-mixing. In *A Escrava Isaura* he offers symbolic anti- and proslavery characters through his hero and his villain, wealthy landowners he establishes at opposite poles on the moral spectrum; their attempted preservation or exploitation of female sexual virtue determine their claims to moral virtue. Guimarães's argument that a beautiful, genteel woman ought not to be enslaved renders his abolitionist vision

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<sup>180</sup> This theme also appears in *Cecilia Valdés*, in the unravelling of the Gamboa family.

exceedingly narrow, but the opposed concepts of morality and depravity as deployed in the text establish him as anti-slavery. The work, published thirteen years before Brazil's final emancipation of its slave population, is, of the works examined in Part 1 of this study, perhaps the least directly critical or condemnatory of slavery as an institution. This is arguably due to the fact that Brazilian slavery, though as brutal and prone to exploitation and excess as slavery elsewhere in the Americas, was also a slavery of loopholes. Manumissions and the Law of the Free Womb were two ameliorative measures available to the enslaved which offered an 'opening' or escape-hatch to freedom (Schwartz 46).<sup>181</sup> Loopholes also benefitted the slaveowners who could point to these more benevolent practices as paving the way to slavery's gradual end and thus avoid the demands for an immediate end that a more absolute, closed form of slavery would have occasioned. Politically active Brazilians were contending simultaneously with other questions of national importance, such as an emergent Republicanism,<sup>182</sup> so literary abolitionism ebbed before the 1880s due to competition with other causes (Haberly, 'Abolitionism' 39; Ramos xiv). These contexts contributed to what Maria Manuel Lisboa gently terms a 'tardy arrival' of abolitionism (97). Schwartz argues it was the inevitability of the Brazilian Republic that ushered in emancipation: the 'Golden Law' of 1888, finally terminating state-

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<sup>181</sup> Schwartz cites self-purchase as an opportunity for slaves (common in Bahia), especially those skilled as urban artisans with an income, which was seen as an "opening" or breach' in the institution. However, Fausto argues manumissions could be rescinded until 1865 (133). The Rio Branco Law, or the 'Law of the Free Womb', passed in 1871 and designated all future children born of slave women as free (Skidmore 16). Fausto argues that the law was rather an attempt at 'safeguarding order' by attempting to make emancipation gradual and palatable to the landowning class (107), and Curtin points to the continued exploitation that manipulation of specifics of the law enabled: for example, the children were held by their mothers' masters as '*ingenuos*', or minors, until their twenty-first year (192).

<sup>182</sup> Skidmore argues that a coherent abolitionist movement did not emerge until the 1880s, as most of Brazil's intellectuals and activists were 'caught up in other liberal movements' (17). See also Fausto, ch. 2.

sanctioned slavery in the Americas, was signed into law by Princess Isabel who was under pressure from the pro-monarchy landowning class.<sup>183</sup> This action did not save the empire, and Republicanism triumphed in 1889. Guimarães, a man of Republican leanings and abolitionist sympathies, did not live to see these events transpire, having died in 1884. However, his literary activism endures.

Guimarães was born in Minas Gerais in 1825, coming of age in the middle of the nineteenth century as part of 'la segunda generación romántica'. His poetry, according to Omelio Ramos, was 'amorosa, filosófica o, en ocasiones, humorística; todavía clásica' (ix). Romero, Guimarães's contemporary who advocated *mestiçagem* in pursuit of a *mestiço* identity, praised Guimarães's verse as 'poesía verdadera, hecha con lágrimas de la realidad, con las desilusiones de la vida' (ix).<sup>184</sup> Though true to sentimental fiction's generic conventions of tears, sympathy, and tragic circumstances, Guimarães's *A Escrava Isaura* uniquely refuses the programmatic tragic end for his heroine (such as the suicide of the passing mulatta), a slave whose manifold virtues earn her emancipation. She is a wholly sympathetic, if largely unrealistic, character. Guimarães uses Isaura as part of his pragmatic approach; abolition is not only morally right, but materially beneficial to the nation. His contemporaries worried over Brazil's reputation in the world and the harm that slavery was inflicting on its

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<sup>183</sup> Curtain (195) and Fausto (129) argue that the landowning and political classes recognized the inevitability of emancipation and supported the law. Haberly argues it was politicians themselves who applied abolitionist pressure, rather than literary or intellectual figures ('Abolitionism' 39). The 'three great abolitionist bills' were passed by a Conservative government, comprised of planters, which sought to secure its power and position, and eliminate ties between abolitionism and Republicanism (Skidmore 15-17).

<sup>184</sup> Romero was, according to Skidmore, a 'liberal reformer who struggled as honestly and continuously as any with questions of race and environment' (32), yet his conclusions were based on racist assumptions and framed by ideas of ethnographic superiority and inferiority. For Skidmore's full analysis of Romero's racial positions, see ch. 1 of *Black into White*.

prestige and potential; many thought ending slavery was imperative. But Guimarães goes beyond emancipation as a remedy for global disrepute and points to mixing, not only of the races but of free and slave, as the ultimate social enlightenment.

Romance, not abolition, is the novel's central focus, and the plight of the individual slave is highly personalized. Isaura's enslavement is wrong not because of her humanity, but because of the special reason of her loveliness. Lisboa argues that *Isaura*:

could be said to amount to no more than an instance of special pleading on behalf of one single individual and one, moreover, uniquely undeserving of an enslaved destiny, while leaving uncontested the fate of the other slaves in the novel, and the moral tenability of the institution as a whole. (105)

However, Guimarães's anti-slavery message can also be framed as one against an institution whose existence makes possible the enslavement of a woman like Isaura; in short, because slavery enables the ownership of such a woman by a man like her evil master, Leôncio, it is a fundamentally illegitimate institution. Guimarães is hardly making a bold, moral demand for abolition based on principles of common humanity. He was a lawyer, judge, and literary critic, but he was also a poet who was prone to lyricism. In fact, *Isaura* is widely criticized today for its unwieldy style and substantially problematic abolitionist message. Hence, there is scant critical material on the text itself in Inter-American scholarship, and only passing notice compared to other works in the Brazilian anti-slavery canon.<sup>185</sup> However, its advocacy of race-mixing and its plot centered not only on

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<sup>185</sup> Anti-slavery and post-slavery writers on race, such as Antônio de Castro Alves, Joaquim Machado de Assis, and Joséf Lins do Rego receive broader scholarly attention

the acceptability of sexual mixing, but on mixing within a legally permitted and religiously sanctioned marriage, marks the text as a significant departure from other abolitionist works in the Americas. Isaura represents the most desirable qualities of a *mulata* heroine to a white slaveowning readership: docility, accomplishment, and a physical perfection that is already whitened. Her marriage to the rich, white Álvaro demonstrates how far the idea of *mestiçagem* could be taken. The fact that the marriage is desired by both central characters, the author, and a sentimental readership, and that the match does not result in tragedy but rather averts it bears testimony to Brazilians' unique notions about their racial identity and race-mixing's function within their society.

Through the figure of Isaura, Guimarães rejects not only the stereotype of the temptress, but also the eroticized *mulata* of easy virtue who fails to actively resist her own exploitation. David T. Haberly argues, in 'Abolitionism in Brazil: Anti-Slavery and Anti-Slave', that Brazilian abolitionist literature was formulaically unique in its use of 'highly effective racial stereotypes'. Haberly deems the literature 'limited and late' and without a national tradition, but with foundations in contemporary Romanticism (30, 39).<sup>186</sup> Abolitionist writers faced a burdensome

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(see Haberly, 'Abolitionism' and Armstrong, 'The Brazilian Novel'). *Isaura* is stylistically, Armstrong argues, a mere 'melodrama' (105). Haberly condemns the central message of the text as 'not really about slavery at all; it is, rather, the chronicle of a soap-opera heroine against various obstacles – one of which, in this case, happens to be her enslavement – in the course of true love' (34, footnote). Haberly's criticism is arguably supported by the popularity of *Isaura* as a Latin American telenovela (see the Introduction to this study, p. 31). However, it is the television production which retrospectively injects 'soap-operaness' into the narrative; the text itself, as argued here, is unquestionably about slavery.

<sup>186</sup> See also Ramos and Stephen Hart, *A Companion to Latin American Literature*. Hart argues that the novel is a 'rather curious mix of Realism and Romanticism', the Romanticism 'broken' by Álvaro's assumption of Leôncio's debt (119). The logistical workings of acquiring Isaura's freedom, as well as the attention to slave legislation, do apply real-world limitations to the love story and shape its outcome. However, as Hart also notes, the ending upholds the Romantic prescription that 'true love can conquer all'. That this 'true love' means literal emancipation for Isaura is a secondary consideration.

task of appealing to an apathetic readership unfamiliar with anti-slavery activist prose. While arguing that some tropes were drawn from international canons, Haberly acknowledges two distinctly Brazilian archetypes: the Immoral Slave and the Violent Slave. The Violent Slave was a black man driven to violence as revenge for his own abuse and the abuse of black women. He served as a warning. This archetype stands in clear opposition to the Christian meekness of Uncle Tom or the resignation of Sab, for example. The Immoral Slave, a literary trend dating prior to 1850, was a black or *mulata* slave, and the charge of immorality was always sexual in nature (34-36). Haberly paints a character portrait of the always-willing woman, a wantonness suggested also by Freyre's depiction of indigenous women and the non-white 'mistresses of the house'. Haberly ultimately argues the use of these anti-slavery tropes was paradoxically anti-slave, demonizing or belittling the very subjects of concern – an argument that recalls Baldwin's charge of sentimental fiction's 'violent inhumanity'.<sup>187</sup> Though the Violent Slave shows a level of autonomy and agency, and the Immoral Slave is a white male Brazilian's cherished fantasy, neither is suited to elicit sympathy through purity and blamelessness as the heroine of a sentimental novel must.

Guimarães's heroine, though whitewashed and unrepresentative of Brazil's slave population, advances beyond the racist 'anti-slave' portrayals, breaking with traditional essentialized depictions of slave women as possessing easy virtue. Isaura is juxtaposed with Rosa, another *mulata* slave of the *hacienda*, who previously acted as Leôncio's concubine. His interest, redirected to Isaura, incites her jealousy and leads Rosa to manipulate her mistress Malvina into

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<sup>187</sup> See part 1 of this study (38).

becoming one of Freyre's jealous wives. Malvina's departure leaves Isaura unprotected and Leôncio is free to pursue her without interference from either his spouse or former concubine.<sup>188</sup> Rosa is doubly villainized; she is an architect of Isaura's increased suffering, rejecting a potential slave alliance and further isolating the heroine from a benign mistress. She is a model of the Immoral Slave. Dário Borim cites the necessity of Rosa's 'representação ignóbil porque se permite ter relações sexuais com o senhor'. According to his analysis, Rosa's transgression marks her as Isaura's antagonist: '[e]nquanto Rosa (como Leôncio) é a incontestável vilã, Isaura (como Álvaro) é a super-heroína' (71). Isaura is a super-heroine, doubly heroicized through her characteristic virtue but also through her comparison to the Immoral Slave. Álvaro defeats Leôncio, but Isaura also defeats Rosa and the negative typology she represents.<sup>189</sup> Isaura's perfection is thus literarily subversive rather than typical, and Guimarães's and his male characters' appreciation for her virtues exceeds carnal eroticization and settles upon almost sacred fetishization. Isaura becomes the novel's, and the nation's, female racial ideal.

Fetishization of whiteness opens *Isaura*. We are first introduced to her at the piano in the plantation home, her face 'como o marfim do teclado, alva que não deslumbra, [...] calma e lisa como mármore polido, [...] di-la-íeis misteriosa lâmpada de alabastro guardando no seio diáfano o fogo celeste da inspiração' (11-12). Guimarães's description immediately establishes her as white in

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<sup>188</sup> As Leôncio confesses to Isaura during a confession of his desire, 'Malvina me abandona!...tanto melhor!' (Guimarães 52).

<sup>189</sup> Guimarães presents Isaura and Rosa as rivals (despite Isaura's rejection of Leôncio's attentions), establishing the females' relationship primarily through their white male master's sexual attentions (41). Isaura ultimately defeats not only Leôncio through her resistance, but Rosa as well; she is a 'Moral Slave' victorious over the Immoral.

appearance; so white, in fact, that she is as ivory as the keyboard upon which she plays and as polished as marble. However, this description also imbues her with solidity and strength. Her moral character and virtue are as resolute and immovable as the sturdy materials which define her complexion; she is a woman of substance. Isaura is dressed simply in 'azul-clara' and '[u]ma pequena cruz de azeviche presa ao pescoço por uma fita preta constituía o seu único ornamento' (12). Her small crucifix hangs about her neck, signifying her piety but also her status. The jet of the cross and the black ribbon lay across her diaphanous chest, lit by the 'fire of celestial inspiration', partially obscuring that light and effectively tagging her as a slave. The body is white, but there is blackness within, a dichotomy which marks her *mulata* beauty with an innate sexuality. Her simple vestments emphasize purity and a rejection of worldly possessions, recalling representations of the Virgin Mary. Isaura's fetishized, whitened body locates her in the tradition of the devotional object.

Leôncio fails to register the 'divinity' of Isaura, and is ultimately punished for it. He is doubly wicked, a two-fold villain through his own licentious, abusive behavior and his status as a slaveowner. He is the son of a man whose cruel treatment killed Isaura's mother, but he also watched his own mother raise Isaura as her own daughter. The undertones of incest resound,<sup>190</sup> but Isaura's purity demands total victimization and forbids blood ties to someone as monstrous as

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<sup>190</sup> The threat of incest's 'stigma', as identified by Kristal, here points to Freyre's notions of social depravity under slavery. However, Guimarães will not countenance it; Leôncio is not a victim of incest but a perpetrator of abuse. His licentiousness and harassment of Isaura, like his incestuous intentions, are what Kristal terms 'symptomatic of the decline of [the] patriarchal family'. Leôncio rejects his wife in pursuit of his slave and is therefore the primary threat to his own patriarchal, landowning family. Incest thus extends beyond kinship ties and to the household and the female slave who is 'one of the family'. Here, Guimarães opens the potential of master-slave sexual relationships to be read as quasi-incestual. Outside this relationship, the patriarchy retains dominance: Isaura will reproduce the paradigm with Álvaro as patriarch.

Leôncio, who pursues her in spite of their quasi-familial ties. When Leôncio's mother fails to manumit Isaura at her death, her father Miguel offers to purchase her freedom and Leôncio refuses. In an effort to ingratiate himself with his vulnerable domestic slave, he assumes the mantle of a lover, telling her: 'Livre és tu, porque Deus não podia formar um ente tão perfeito para votá-lo à escravidão' (52). Leôncio echoes Guimarães's suggestion that Isaura is too special to be a slave. However, following this failed attempt at seduction, he admonishes her: 'Lembra-te [sic], escrava ingrata e rebelde, que em corpo e alma me pertences, a mim só e a mais ninguém. Es propriedade minha; um vaso, que tenho entre as minhas mãos, e que posso usar dele ou despedaçá-lo a meu sabor' (52-53). Guimarães acknowledges the degradation suffered by the whole slave population as Leôncio argues that a slave is a slave, regardless of appearance, charm, or merit. Even Isaura's loveliness and 'divinity' will not save her from such institutionalized despotism.

Leôncio's claim to Isaura, 'corpo e alma', recalls the body-and-soul ownership that so troubled Stowe and signifies his function as the Cruel Master, a Brazilian Legree. The same fundamental criteria of 'possession' thus apply, according to the villain – but not to Isaura. Her crucifix displays her piety, one rooted in a heterodox Afro-Brazilian Catholic context that celebrates and incorporates a multiplicity of religious elements. Isaura's 'soul' is therefore not conceived of as subject to the same absolute and alien ownership of US slaves in which the soul is a convenient construct of white patriarchy that makes demands upon it;<sup>191</sup> Leôncio's error lies in his demands for submission from the text's devotional object. Her soul is independent and impervious to despotic

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<sup>191</sup> See this study's discussion of Susan's soul in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in ch. 1 (51-55).

assertions of ownership. Leôncio is displeased to discover the extent of her agency and determination (she will not be made an Immoral Slave) and is obliged to remind her of her enslavement, a cruel declaration that significantly weakens his potential as a seducer. Thus threatened with the exercise of his physical ownership, in short, rape, Isaura flees with her father to Recife,<sup>192</sup> a center of intellectual, progressive thought that promoted the dissemination of Positivism, which in Brazil encouraged whitening through selective breeding of white and mixed-race individuals.<sup>193</sup> Here she encounters Leôncio's opposite, Álvaro.

Álvaro's ability to discern the divine in Isaura is the justification for his successful suit.<sup>194</sup> Álvaro is worthy, his motives pure and his appreciation of her complete, whereas Leôncio only lusts for her body, which he endeavors to control rather than revere. While she is passing as a free woman, Álvaro falls in love with Isaura instantly and immediately converts her into his own devotional object.<sup>195</sup> Even prior to discovering her identity as a runaway slave, he is an abolitionist in feeling and practice, having emancipated his slaves but also established an administrative colony where they can continue to work as free men and women

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<sup>192</sup> Isaura's escape both echoes and contradicts particular features of Eliza's flight in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Both women flee north with a family member, but Stowe's heroine does so to avoid separation from her child (whom she had with a racially similar partner) and to facilitate her eventual departure from the nation. Isaura flees to avoid sexual exploitation by her white master (a threat with which Stowe's Mr. Shelby never threatened Eliza) and encounters a white man who is an acceptable match.

<sup>193</sup> By the time the abolitionist movement consolidated, traditional imperial ideas about race and national identity were under attack. The influence of the Brazilian Catholic Church was also weakened by debate surrounding new scientific theories (Skidmore 10-12). It was the syncretic nature of the Catholic Church which had enabled such debate and openness to positivist ideas of race-mixing, or whitening.

<sup>194</sup> It is critical to note that when Álvaro meets Isaura (disguised as Elvira), he is unaware she is a runaway slave. He is thus attracted purely to her beauty and virtue. Guimarães makes the argument that the label of 'slave' is not manifested in the slave's physical person.

<sup>195</sup> Álvaro describes Isaura as 'uma fada, [...] um anjo, [...] uma deusa' (Guimarães 57), emphasizing her superiority and divine traits.

(notably under an 'administrador', or overseer).<sup>196</sup> Guimarães's inclusion of these abolitionist sentiments in his hero, a pragmatic yet enlightened man disillusioned with the proslavery laws and customs of Brazil, enables the author to suggest a programmatic alternative to slavery – a potentially smooth transition that will preserve the Plantation but end depravity. Álvaro strongly condemns slavery after Dr. Geraldo explains the extent of Leôncio's claims over Isaura: 'Infame e cruel direito é esse [...]. É já um escárnio dar-se o nome de direito a uma instituição bárbara, contra a qual protestam altamente a civilização, a moral e a religião' (130).<sup>197</sup> When Isaura is reclaimed by Leôncio himself, the institution advances from the barbarous to the inhumane.<sup>198</sup> Álvaro's pain is that of the true Christian whose treasured sacred object has fallen into the hands of the wicked.

Leôncio's revenge progresses along peculiar lines: rather than return to Pernambuco with his prize and pursue his previous attempts at seduction, or escalate to physical assault, he temporarily relinquishes his designs on Isaura in favor of domestic harmony. To reunite with Malvina, he establishes Isaura as the guilty party, depicting her as an Immoral Slave and a temptress. Together, they conspire to a forced matrimony between Isaura and Belchior, the lecherous hunchbacked gardener. Thus released from the pressure of Leôncio's sexual

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<sup>196</sup> Álvaro embodies the ideal 'republicano e quase socialista' man of Recife, though Guimarães concedes he is '[o]riginal e excêntrico como um rico lorde inglês, professava em seus costumes a pureza e severidade de um *quaker*' (63). Álvaro is an exception among Brazilian *fazendeiros*. The author expounds upon the positive aspects of his character: 'Com tais idéais Álvaro não podia deixar de ser abolicionista exaltado'; '[c]onsistindo em escravos uma não pequena porção da herança de seus pais, tratou logo de emancipá-los todos [...e] organizou para os seus libertos em uma de suas fazendas uma espécie de colônia' (62).

<sup>197</sup> Álvaro's recognition of civilization's protest against slavery articulates a popular argument among positivist-abolitionists, concerned about Brazil's reputation as a slave society in a civilized world that had largely abolished the institution. See Skidmore, ch. 1, for discussion on Brazil's defense of slavery in the nineteenth-century anti-slavery world.

<sup>198</sup> Guimarães adopts a polemic similar to Stowe's: 'Deplorável contingência, a que somos arrastados em conseqüência de uma instituição absurda e desumana! (106).

advances, she is instead to be the plaything of a freak. Her consent is required for the marriage, a chance for Guimarães to promote her tenuous agency. Isaura, convinced by her father and master that Álvaro has married, selflessly agrees to ease her father's debt to Leôncio following their escape and recapture. Miguel supports Leôncio's plan, thus playing his part in a transaction centered on Isaura.<sup>199</sup> Leôncio's confession on the day of the wedding, that he intends to keep Belchior and Isaura on the plantation indefinitely and that his reconciliation with Malvina was purely financially motivated, proves his determination to transform the heroine into a doubly Immoral Slave, one who not only sleeps with her master but is unfaithful to her husband. Guimarães sets the stage for Isaura's tragic end.

While Avellaneda or Villaverde, perhaps even Stowe, ostensibly would have ended the story with the culmination of this marriage or Isaura's death to fulfill their sentimental mission and reveal the horrific depths of slavery's depravity, Guimarães refuses to do so. He opts for a triumph of love over evil; he proffers an escape-hatch to the heroine and delivers just punishment to the villain. His novel envisions and performs the desired marriage which only Brazil's unique racial context allows: Isaura, the racially othered slave, unites virtuously with the white hero. Leôncio, distraught at Álvaro's ultimate victory over him and the loss of his autonomy and property, commits suicide. It is his final godless act and a strategic reversal of the tragic mulatta motif by Guimarães. *Isaura* weakens Haberly's accusation against Brazilian anti-slavery literature as being 'anti-slave' by making a distinctly 'pro-slave' choice. There is no justification, according to the text, for the *mulata's* death; instead, it is Freyre's oversexualized, sadistic European that must be removed from the national register. Only moral white men

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<sup>199</sup> See Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women'.

may live and flourish and contribute to the continued development of *mestiço* Brazil. Isaura and Álvaro's union submits to the reader a potential prototype of the perfected Brazilian identity. Their offspring will be the ideal end-product of whitening: Álvaro is a moral, liberal man of education in possession of white credentials; Isaura is a virtuous, obedient feminine ideal, already white in appearance. They represent purified origins for the future generations of Brazil, wholesome not only in countenance but in spirit. Both are impervious to depravation and their union is sanctioned by both Church and state. Through the interracial relationship of these characters, Romero's estimate of three centuries for the completion of national *mestiçagem* of the nation is dramatically shortened. The whitening mission is already underway, underscored with a fresh urgency.

In this neatly wrapped package, Guimarães suggests not only a victory for Álvaro and for Brazil, but also for Isaura. She is presumably free to live legitimately with the man of her choice. This reading, however, is problematic in its romanticizing of white male hegemony and its obfuscation of true subaltern agency. Marriage with the noble Álvaro is arguably favorable to concubinage under Leôncio, forced wedlock with Belchior, or the despair of suicide. It is an 'opening' out of slavery, but it is fundamentally limited and limiting. Paradoxically, once freed, Isaura's independence of spirit does not extend to corporeal independence. When her body was enslaved, her mind and soul were free. Emancipation effects a reversal. The marriage signifies, on one level, a mixing by choice rather than exploitation, but the extent of that choice is curbed by Isaura's rescue and emancipation as conditional upon her love for Álvaro. Ownership of the heroine is merely transferred from one man to another, her destiny still reliant on the benign or malignant nature of her master. She is not emancipated and then free to pursue her marriage to Álvaro, but freed only to

marry him. Whether she desires this marriage or not, her freedom requires her to make up her mind to go through with it, and then take a binding religious oath. Guimarães fails to acknowledge the shortcoming in his narrative: Isaura is not deserving of freedom because of her humanity, but because her virtue will benefit the ruling class. She is reduced to a damsel in distress, and her rescue prefigures the rescue of the nation. Here lies the fundamental weakness in Guimarães's anti-slavery argument: his abolition works through his appropriation of the female slave's body to reproduce the Plantation.

Another weakness in his argument is the means of the Cruel Master's demise. Guimarães, like Álvaro, encounters a dearth of legal options and has few narrative alternatives at his disposal in saving Isaura. Álvaro's dramatic victory over Leôncio succeeds in creating catharsis,<sup>200</sup> but only because, unlike Stowe, Guimarães is not constrained by a readership's limited imagination about race-mixing. The Cruel Master is annihilated not only because he is cruel, but because he stands in the way of a Brazilian *mestiço* destiny achieved through the saintly mixed-race female. Fetishization of the *mulata* figure does not amount to equality; indeed, Fausto suggests that the manumission of a female slave depended on her sexual or romantic appeal.<sup>201</sup> Though flawed in terms of a sound

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<sup>200</sup> Stephen Hart argues that Guimarães applies a *deus ex machina* to the ending (*Companion to Latin American* 119). Indeed, the climax of events is arguably contrived as Leôncio's debt is only mentioned once Álvaro has acquired it to defeat him. Through this narrative manipulation that results in Leôncio's suicide, Álvaro emerges more heroic: he bested his adversary strategically and non-violently; the godless Leôncio takes his own life and the hero's hands are clean.

<sup>201</sup> Fausto claims that, 'when one looks at the sex of people freed, women are in the majority', and suggests that 'reasons of the heart may have weighed heavily on many liberating acts' (133). Though this statistic benefits the chances of manumission for slave women like Isaura, it articulates that their emancipation was contingent upon their beauty, sexual availability, or an existing physical relationship with their master, and therefore, upon the relationship's continuation once 'freed'. Isaura's limited choices therefore do not appear quite so contrived, but rather as a truthful representation of sexual politics within slavery.

moral and humanistic argument for abolition, Isaura's predicament and the terms of her freedom are based in reality. Her narrative offers an alternative to the rejection or marginalization of the mixed-race population found elsewhere in the Americas. The mixing Guimarães promotes is a practice that owes its roots to the earliest days of colonization, as well as syncretic Brazilian Catholicism's legitimation of interracial marriage. Positivism would proliferate throughout the Americas into the next century, but in Latin America and the United States, its racial ideologies were manipulated and appropriated to fulfill different literary agendas regarding race-mixing and to revise the memory of slavery.

The national memory, as Plantation literature reveals, embraces or erases historical race-mixing and the abuse it implies. *Sab* presents *mestizaje* as a possibility: it is not consummated but considered. Sab dies tragically, and part of that tragedy is that of a missed opportunity. Though a slave and mixed-race, he was a preferable alternative to the Anglo-Cuban interloper Otway. Avellaneda posits mixing through Sab's racial, political, and romantic appeal as the quintessential Cuban. Villaverde's work takes a different approach in *Cecilia Valdés* by including not only race-mixing but incest, demonstrating that the mixing between two races is not always the meeting of two beings wholly alien to one another (i.e. historical race-mixing has produced a Cuban population more alike than different). *Mestizaje* in Cuban abolitionist novels is not celebrated, nor is it obliterated. It is, however, at least addressed and its outcomes testify to the limited options for the representation of the female slave. Isaura, Guimarães's perfectly white, mixed-race slave, bears witness to historical Brazilian race-mixing, recognized and promoted by her author. His happy ending – a union of slave and free – is Brazil's potential happy ending achieved only through the appropriation of the non-white female. In short, *mestiçagem* was Brazil's past,

present, and future. Stowe's work, on the other hand, is wholly devoid of any such union. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* does not simply lack representations of miscegenous unions as offering future national promise, but banishes its characters who evince a miscegenous past back to Africa. For Stowe, miscegenation occurred outside of the US, in the distant past, or, ideally, not at all. Her configuration of interracial relationships sees them written out of the national narrative, and the actual mixed-race population of the antebellum US written out of history. Race-mixing in the post-slavery literary projects examined in the following section remained rooted in these traditions and carried the Plantation into the twentieth century.

## **PART 2: Plantation Nostalgia – Mixing and Memory, 1929-1936**

The eradication of Plantation slavery in the Americas after 1888 was not universally celebrated. Masters mourned the loss of property, labor, and capital, but arguably mourned more the loss of their way of life. The strict hierarchy that had sustained a life of leisure and stability for the slaveowners was over, and they needed to restructure not only their businesses and livelihoods, but also their worldviews. Increasingly industrialized and modernized, the Americas marched steadily into an uncertain future. The socio-economic specifics of American countries varied, but the changes often inspired nostalgia for a 'simpler time'. After the turn of the twentieth century, writers began to look backwards. The 'foundational fictions' had been written and were ensconced in their respective national canons; the new nation had long been written. An interwar malaise indicative of dissatisfaction with large-scale change and a 'collective trauma' following the machine-wrought horrors of World War I led to a longing for the past (Su 18). It was often for an idealized past that had not been lived by those re-writing it, though those re-writing it grew up in the shadow of those who had,<sup>202</sup> but it was always a nostalgic past – a homesickness for a time and place that no longer existed but that once had been full of possibilities now lost.

Nostalgia, first diagnosed in the seventeenth century as a medical condition affecting soldiers who longed for home, was, according to John J. Su, by the twentieth century 'a form of amnesia', a 'social ailment that [led] to

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<sup>202</sup> The theory of 'postmemory' (Hirsch) is applicable here in terms of memory transfer through generations, but is not broadly applicable in this section because the literary works included do not attempt a revision to the Plantation's legacy. Rather, they are pro-Plantation.

obsession' with no solution (1-2). Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* argues that nostalgia is a sentiment, a feeling of displacement, and is 'at the very core of the modern condition' (xvi). Nostalgia is a longing for the past, but it is also a means of reimagining the present. When utopian ideals and promises for the future remain unfulfilled, when the author's lived experience proves a 'disappointment' (Su 9), the mind turns to a time when those ideals and promises were still possible. This re-imagining provides a means for unpacking what went wrong, when, where, and how: the return to the beginning of a perceived decline to find alternative routes.

The nostalgic expression of these alternative routes, according to Boym, takes one of two forms. Boym differentiates between reflective and restorative nostalgia. While noting they 'are not absolute types, but rather tendencies', she defines 'reflective' nostalgia as 'dwell[ing] in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance' (41). It is also a 'form of deep mourning' and a way to work through the loss (55). In doing so, it arrives at a clearer understanding of the present. Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, dwells on *nostos* and 'proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps' (41). Boym argues the restorative nostalgia 'takes itself dead seriously' (49). It is, therefore, a *doing* nostalgia; in restorative nostalgia, construction is underway. The rebuilding of a lost home, a lost past, does not serve only a better understanding of the present or a cathartic letting-go, but the restoration of a bricks-and-mortar illusion of a past world, a rebuilt starting-point from which the present can be viewed at a distance, as a lesson taught and a future to be avoided. Restorative nostalgia recreates the lost world only to tear it down again, piece by piece, and examine up-close and first-hand the destruction. Restorative nostalgia, then, goes beyond Boym's definition of '[evoking the] past and future'

(49) and works to change not only the *understanding* of the present, but to create a revisionist parallel, or an alternative reading of it.

Nostalgic literature does more than fill in gaps in collective memory, or rebuild to re-destroy the past. As Susan Stewart argues, nostalgia 'like any form of narrative, is always ideological' (23). The ideology of nostalgia, and nostalgic literature, therefore depicts not what the past was, but what it *should* have been.

Stewart continues:

[t]he prevailing motif of nostalgia is [...] a return to the utopia [within] the walled city of the maternal. The nostalgic utopia is prelapsarian, a genesis where lived and mediated experience are one, where authenticity and transcendence are both present and everywhere. (Ibid.)

It is also an erasure of the gap between fact and fiction, between people and caricatures. In crossing the prelapsarian divide back to a golden age, nostalgic Plantation writers grasp at an age of innocence. They depict innocence as embodied in childhood, wrapped in the maternal, the domestic, the home. The plantation home represents a safe retreat from the confusing realities of violence and conflict of their post-war world, a place from which they can recover and reaffirm simplified binaries of good and evil, nature and culture, black and white.

What is invariably recovered from these binaries are 'essentialized portrayals of identity [...] that never existed historically'. Caricatures, then: heroes and villains, who range in complexity but nonetheless fulfill a prescribed role. Ethnic characters and communities suffer from such literary essentialism, the 'assertion of a timeless and unchanging essence' (Su 7). They are reductive and derivative, because they are subalterns written from outside of the subaltern experience, but also because such essentialism conveniently shapes the

nostalgic definition of whiteness through contrast. The racial caricatures – the mother-mammy, the violently lustful negro, the piccaninny – reinforce positive typologies of white characters – the child pure as snow, the resourceful heroine, the steadfast Moral Master – and do not inhabit the same contested space they did in abolitionist literature. Slavery is in the past and the anxieties over the consequences of race-mixing in nineteenth-century anti-slavery literature are examined in this early twentieth century as if from a distance. Writers in the Americas reach very different conclusions. *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* by Teresa de la Parra (Venezuela) and *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell (US) offer prime examples of race-mixing ideologies that lie on extreme ends of a spectrum. Nostalgia is looking for the past, for reasons, and it is also looking for fault. Nostalgic literature wants to learn who or what is to blame for the present, and these texts provide answers that contradict each other but also reach an accord. The racist caricatures of the black slave or servant in nostalgic literature point to the obvious culprits, and condemn them to a stereotyping that is validated and repeated in the minds of readers.<sup>203</sup> The specific qualities of black caricatures, however, act as partial signifiers of a society's or nation's conceptualized identity, and are therefore among the strongest indicators of how its people – its upper classes, its workers, and those on the periphery – live, or do not live, together.

Nostalgic literature is dependent not only upon essentialized portrayals of a nation's people, but of the nation's land itself. Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the

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<sup>203</sup> Boym argues that twentieth century nostalgia was 'shrunk to the longing for one's own childhood' (53). Readers, then, turned to these nostalgic novels for catharsis and were met with familiar, essentialist portraits of subalterns that they internalized and used to reinforce a racist worldview.

'idyll' is paramount to an ontological understanding of the driving emotional forces that conjure nostalgia and the impulse to recall a vanished world, one specifically constituted by time and space. Time and space combine in an 'impermanent unity of folkloric time'; '[i]dyllic life and its events are inseparable from this concrete, spatial corner of the world' that is 'limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world' (225). Bakhtin elucidates the nostalgic world – the place and age – as an internalized diorama, a walled-in frozen moment in time both protected and excluded from that which lies outside. The idyll becomes the primary location of nostalgia, a site that is cyclical, non-linear, and destined to repeat eternally. Mundane events and daily struggles are treated with urgency and gravity, and humanity and nature are locked in a symbiotic, rhythmic relationship.<sup>204</sup> Bakhtin denotes four types of 'pure' idylls: the love/pastoral, the agricultural-labor, the craft-work, and the family. These pure types often overlap (224). This is particularly true of the agricultural and family idylls (226), and it is this convergence of theoretical idyll-types that is most relevant within post-slavery nostalgic texts.

The social turmoil of the post-slavery era fueled nostalgic longing for the lost plantation in Plantation writers. The literary family experienced the loss of its personal idyll, a homestead tied generationally and irrevocably to a parcel of land. The white family itself may not have worked the land physically, but their 'labor' was directed towards the land's fiscal success and material productivity.<sup>205</sup> On

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<sup>204</sup> These are the three main characteristics of an idyll, according to Bakhtin: unity of place (especially over generations), an emphasis on 'common everyday life', and the intertwining of human and natural life (225-226). These features are common across the four types of idylls.

<sup>205</sup> Bakhtin argues that, where no labor is specifically depicted, the 'plane of everyday habit' is sufficient to the agricultural idyll (228).

their plantation, these families were royalty, the top tier of a feudal network. The word of the master, as seen in the literature explored in Part 1 of this study, was law. Emancipation strips from them not only power but place-belonging. Their idyllic existence is shattered – the family is divided, broken, or wounded, and their relationship to the land, if they maintain a hold on it in any form, is dramatically altered. A deep symbiosis is revealed in that the family struggles desperately to hold onto the land, but the land exacts a terrible emotional hold upon the family in return. Emancipation destroys their paradise, but through literature they can attempt to reclaim it. The land is a birthright that the outside world has confiscated. The nostalgic novel offers a chance to recover it.

However, the outside world in nostalgic literature is not quite as excluded from the idyll as Bakhtin suggests. The idyll *is*, in contrast to Bakhtin's assertion, linked in an intrinsic way to the outside world, which is both alluring and menacing to those within its quasi-safe confines. The residents of any plantation are of course aware of life beyond its borders. There is society and commerce, as well as the city and the wider world upon which the continuation of the Plantation depends. The idea of what lies beyond is often tempting to the idyll-dwellers (e.g., the City: Caracas, Atlanta), and temporarily transforms the cozy plantation into a suffocating obligation. But this external world which exceeds the plantation in grandeur also threatens it. The spread of technology and industrialization – 'civilization' – marginalizes the Plantation as a historical curiosity. The lifestyle of the plantation house is depicted as increasingly out-of-touch with and superfluous to its contemporary world. It is not simply a shifting economic paradigm that puts the literary plantation in danger; seismic changes in society and political upheavals threaten it as well. The result of these changes is an unrecognizable idyll – the time or the place has been irreversibly altered. The characters attempt

to adapt and, while they succeed to varying degrees, they are never successful in fully re-realizing or replacing the idyllic connection to the land, nor can their families be made whole again.

Writing the lost idyll from the future, as Plantation writers of the early twentieth century aspired to do, was as futile an exercise as the effort to hold on to slavery in the mid-nineteenth century. The re-writing does not satisfactorily remember or recreate the agricultural-family idyll because the writers know its demise is inevitable, even when it is depicted in all its glory and strength. In effect, the writing is on the diorama wall. The idyll's very essence is nostalgic, its end in sight from the beginning. This literature then is incapable of constructing Bakhtin's diorama, because everyone – the characters, the author, the reader – watches as a destructive destiny approaches. The texts examined in this chapter do not establish their unity of place behind high walls, but under glass. They exist not in a diorama, but in a bell jar. The threat is fully visible as it looms ever closer, the true Plantation in its sights, until the glass is smashed. Nostalgic literature attempts to re-inhabit, in one form or another, the inside of that fragile bubble. The inscrutability of the original idyll within the bell jar is irrelevant; it is the imagined nostalgic world that reads as intrinsically superior to the real world of the present.

What form the nostalgic Plantation took in national literature depended on several factors, one of which was how the true Plantation lost its claims to supremacy. How, specifically, did slavery end? To what extent was the paternalistic household brought down? Is the resurrection of the true Plantation still possible? The answers depend largely upon whether slavery had ended peacefully or violently, and whether those reading or writing these nostalgic works had, in their opinions, suffered or prospered since emancipation. However, the

strongest influence in early twentieth-century Plantation novels on the type of nostalgia and the degree of dissatisfaction they expressed was contemporary race relations. Nostalgia was deployed to '[make] racial domination appear innocent and pure' (Rosaldo 68), to search for the benign roots of white racial hegemony. Of course, new socio-racial relationships did not spontaneously germinate following emancipation. Rather, whatever ideologies about mixing or segregation societies had held under slavery (tolerance or hatred, violence or peaceful co-existence) largely continued after abolition. A population's ability or inability to conceive of itself as a collective racial entity greatly determined how that nation mourned the Plantation (its heyday and death) more than half a century later. This mourning focused on the plantation home, but also upon the figures of black or mixed-race female servants who, in the nostalgic imagination, came to symbolize the true Plantation in its absence.

## CHAPTER 4: Remembering Piedra Azul: *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca*

*Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* (1929) by Venezuelan author Teresa de la Parra is a nostalgic narrative of lost innocence. The fictional memoir ends with the protagonist's loss of her idyllic childhood home, but her fragile childhood innocence is shattered prior to the loss of her family's sugar plantation, Piedra Azul. Blanca Nieves, the younger version of the memoir's narrator, suffers a painful exile that prefigures the loss of the home when her sister Violeta defies Evelyn, the girls' black Trinidadian nanny. The standoff acts as a metaphorical struggle for control: Violeta aggressively exercises her privilege while Evelyn counters with ordered severity. The confrontation begins with Violeta's land-grab game. Using branches from the orchard trees as stakes, Violeta declares: 'Estos son mis tabloncitos de caña; estos otros, son mis cafetales, aquí están mis jardines, todo esto es mi hacienda: ¡que nadie se acerque!' (Parra 121). This otherwise innocent air of make-believe takes on a more sinister note since Violeta is wielding a weapon: a forbidden knife used to sharpen the branches into spears. She dismisses her nanny's demands that she relinquish the knife. Evelyn matches Violeta's determination with a display of her own powers: an unfaltering adherence to discipline. She wrests the knife from Violeta, her authority '[pasando] de las palabras a los hechos'. Violeta responds with impotent rage, an outburst of profanity that leads to further sanctions: '¡ . . . !' (122). In the space of a single ellipsis, 'un calificativo inesperado, rotundo, sobrio, [...] acordado en cuanto a género y número', Evelyn's illusory authority is nullified. This word, specifically female, shocking, and dirty, can only be *puta*: whore.

Violeta's linguistic assault upon Evelyn inducts Blanca Nieves into a new realm: the adult world that includes division, racism, and exploitation, as well as their consequences. It is this adult world that the story's narrator, Mamá Blanca, endeavors to escape through her 'memoir'. Nostalgic writing acts most powerfully and personally in the genre of autobiography;<sup>206</sup> *Memorias*, though not a true autobiography, is heavily based on Parra's youth, and she uses her own childhood experiences to evoke an extinct way of life. Its setting in the 1850s<sup>207</sup> heightens the sense of nostalgic evocation in a text which prizes the emotive power of memory. Mamá Blanca examines her memories carefully, undergoes epiphanies only informed by a lifetime of experience, and handles the mistakes of the past, her own and those of others, with an acceptance and maturity that only hindsight can offer. Parra's 'eccentric old lady' (Sommer 291), equal parts sentimental and analytical, idealistic and realistic, condemning and forgiving, recounts the full pleasures and bitter ending of her childhood, but retains much of her inner child. Here, then, is a text filled with longing and looking for answers: what brought about the end of her childhood, and was that ending right or wrong?<sup>208</sup> It does not, however, seek to amend that ending. *Memorias* is reflective and ideological; it draws conclusions about ambiguous events, people, and

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<sup>206</sup> Sylvia Molloy defines autobiography as 'that which has been repressed, denied, forgotten', and a 're-presentation, that is, a retelling [... that] does not rely on events but on an articulation of those events stored in memory' (*At Face Value* 2, 5). It is a 'narrative construct' (5), a feature that directly ties it to nostalgic writing as a story the writer tells him or herself. Molloy notes that personal history is only remembered satisfactorily, that 'the past evoked is molded by a self-image held in the present' (8). Also important to autobiography are collective (perhaps national or social) and family memories, especially 'maternal reminiscence' (9), all elements employed to nostalgic purpose in *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca*.

<sup>207</sup> See Kelley Swarthout, 'Gendered Memories' (49). Elizabeth Garrels argues that the memoir spans from the legal end of slavery to prior to the Federal Revolution of 1859 (138).

<sup>208</sup> This phrase draws from Sommer's chapter, "It's Wrong to Be Right" (290-321), in *Foundational Fictions*.

situations in the past, but does not attempt to enact change. There is only an attempt at understanding events and filling in gaps, so that what is lost may be properly mourned.

The Venezuela of Parra's novel was a land written from a distance, yet intimately known.<sup>209</sup> It was also a country of contradictions and extremes at the core of which resided a vague consensus of ideals. These ideals included a preoccupation with how the nation viewed its own racial identity. In *Café con leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela*, Winthrop R. Wright seeks a definitive answer to the question of Venezuelan racial self-conceptualization, beginning in the nineteenth century. The answer proves elusive, not least because of metonymical shortcomings and methodological limitations.<sup>210</sup> He provides numerous examples of the 'myth of racial democracy', but also supplies significant evidence of systematic attempts to encourage real racial democracy.<sup>211</sup> Anecdotal material and compelling policy history,<sup>212</sup> while unsuccessful at articulating a single national race or obliterating race as a signifier

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<sup>209</sup> Parra wrote *Memorias* from her home in Paris during self-imposed exile from the Gómez dictatorship and the socio-political influence of the Venezuelan positivists. Parra was born in Paris in 1889 to Venezuelan parents and resided in Venezuela for only 8 years as a child. The Venezuelan plantation indeed represented a lost agricultural/family idyll for the author.

<sup>210</sup> Wright emphasizes the mixed-race interracial population (especially black-white mixture) as grounding Venezuela's racial identity. This population is the focus of his thesis. Angosto-Ferrández's analysis of Wright's work in relation to the 2011 Venezuela census, and his criticism of '*café con leche*' as a largely academic term (392, footnote 2), favors '*moreno/a*' and '*criollo/a*' (at odds with this study). Individuals self-identify with these racial signifiers, which Angosto-Ferrández argues offers a better terminology for discussing Venezuelan *mestizaje* (387-390). Venezuelan racial terminology is therefore neither fixed nor organic, but evolving and vulnerable to socio-political agendas and personal preferences.

<sup>211</sup> See ch. 1 in Wright for a discussion on the cultivation of '*café con leche*' as a national project. Race-mixing was not only spontaneous, but a cultural directive.

<sup>212</sup> The poet Andrés Eloy Blanco referenced the Venezuelan penchant for 'preparing "café con leche"' as a metaphor for intentionally practiced race-mixing (quoted in Wright 1). Angosto-Ferrández points to the paucity of listed 'races' as categorical options in national censuses between 1873 and 2011 (373).

altogether, demonstrate a conscious nationwide effort to do so, for good or ill. Though such a metaphorical construct indicates a reinforcement of racial division – it is clear who constitutes the coffee and who the milk – it claims that *mestizaje* is desirable.

The desire for mixed Venezuelanness exemplifies, more perhaps than in other nations of the Americas, Anderson's theoretical design of the nation 'imagined' because Venezuela, 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation' that prevailed, 'conceived [itself] as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (7) due to a unique othering practice. Unlike elsewhere in much of Spanish America, by 1700 the indigenous populations (less centrally organized and less technologically developed than the Inca and Aztec empires, for example) had already been expelled from urban centers and the developing coastal regions (Wright 15-22). African slaves, on the other hand, were introduced to colonial Venezuela in the early 1600s and began mixing with Spanish *conquistadores* and settlers immediately (Nichols 173). This mixing did not include the Venezuelan élite *criollos* who jealously guarded their racial purity and systematically degraded the rights of non-white citizens, slave or free, black or indigenous, *mulato* or *zambo* (Wright 22-23).<sup>213</sup> Notably, the *pardo*, or 'colored', population's service in the wars for independence earned some recognition (27-28).<sup>214</sup> The indigenous, however, were notably and paradoxically absent from national consideration. As Simón Bolívar's 1819 Address to the Congress of Angostura indicates, the

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<sup>213</sup> '*Zambo*' is the racial category for a person of African and Amerindian ancestry (Wright 24).

<sup>214</sup> Wright translates *pardo*, his preferred term, as 'colored' (3).

indigenous were not considered part of Venezuela's past or future. The Venezuelan people were:

[un] compuesto de Africa y de América, que [emanó] de la Europa; [...] Es imposible asignar con propiedad a qué familia humana pertenecemos. La mayor parte del indígena se ha aniquilado, el europeo se ha mezclado con el americano y con el africano, y éste se ha mezclado con el indio y con el europeo. (13-14)

According to Bolívar, those *indios* who had not been 'annihilated' had already been or would be absorbed into the converging bloodlines of Venezuelan *mestizaje*. The native Americans, therefore, provided an extinct autochthonous legitimacy to their mixed New World identity. White Venezuelans were ostensibly flexible on permitting exceptional *pardos* to enter political and social positions of esteem, but the pure-blood Amerindian was excluded from the racial panoply.

Bolívar, in the same address, articulated another distinguishing feature of Venezuelan identity: 'nuestro pueblo no es el europeo, ni el americano del Norte' (13). His contention that Venezuelans were not European would be challenged during the subsequent century as Venezuelan officials strove to whiten the nation through European immigration initiatives, but Venezuelan collective identity accepted and internalized his rejection of North America – specifically the United States. Though slavery was not abolished in return for *pardo* and black troops' participation in Independence, as Bolívar had originally promised, the wars were the catalyst for the crumbling of the institution (Wright 27).<sup>215</sup> Slavery ended by José Gregorio Monagas's presidential decree in 1854, in a bid to reduce

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<sup>215</sup> The use of non-white troops during the independence movement undermined slavery as they were fighting for 'freedom'. The movement also provided ample opportunity for runaways to abscond, and returning them was not a political priority.

perceived racial tensions (35). This action and its resultant celebratory demonstrations, when compared to the divided reaction to Abraham Lincoln's emancipation of the slaves, qualify the radical ideological differences between Venezuela and the US. In matters of race, Venezuelans actively imagined their community as the opposite of the US, its violence, segregation, and institutionalized racism.

Rejection of US racial ideology did not, near the turn of the century, necessarily also lead to a rejection of the concepts of modernity and progress popular in the US. Economic stagnation was a serious concern for the Venezuelan political class, and the tenets of Positivism offered a potential solution.<sup>216</sup> Venezuelans notably declined to espouse some of the more racist principles of Positivism, but they did follow a line of reasoning that considered factors such as climate, race, hygiene, and technology as determinants of progress and modernity (53). Unable to change the tropical climate of Venezuela, intellectuals sought to craft a race that would best suit the ecological conditions – one that would thrive. Whitening the black population became a virtual obsession, considered the only way out of the country's dark origins. Venezuelan historians, intellectuals, and politicians rewrote Venezuela's history.<sup>217</sup> Venezuelans officially became *mestizos*.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> For a theoretical history of Positivism in Venezuela, see Vallenilla, 'Venezuelan Positivism and Modernity'. Vallenilla argues that Positivism was not opposed to modernity in Venezuela and defines the particularly national brand as an essential means of self-analysis applied to answer the questions of Venezuelan identity.

<sup>217</sup> For example, José Gil Fortoul, a leading politician and advocate of Positivism, pronounced Venezuelan society to be comprised of mixed ancestry (Vallenilla 339).

<sup>218</sup> Vallenilla points to the Venezuelan positivists' 'double perspective' on race: they 'denounc[ed] the absurdity of the "pure race" concept' and established the Venezuelan character as decidedly mixed.

This pseudo-scientific socio-political environment produced Teresa de la Parra, a conservative daughter of the Venezuelan Plantation.<sup>219</sup> She wrote against what Sommer calls a ‘world that is doomed by positive and rational change’ (293). The fact that she spent much of her life as an expatriate may challenge the authenticity of her ‘Venezuelanness’, but her attitude towards racial and ethnic diversity – ambiguous, naïve yet studied, tolerant and even celebratory – mark her as the unquestioned progeny of Venezuela. Venezuelans conceived of population whitening in inverse terms. Rather than negatively ascribing ‘blackness’ to anyone with African ancestry, Venezuelans ascribed ‘whiteness’ to anyone with a white ancestor. By the early twentieth century, Venezuelan positivists were celebrating *mestizaje*; through it, the citizenry was ‘on the way to creating a white nation’ (Wright 84). The positivists, therefore, theorized that Venezuela needed to become white, unlike the positivist school of thought in the US that argued for a preservation of its founding whiteness. In other words, in Venezuela, *mestizaje* was a colorful past, a heritage that could not be denied and that had enriched the cultural fabric, but now an identity to transcend in pursuit of a modern, whitened nation.

The undeniability of *mestizaje* was rooted in the lived experience of Venezuelans. Physical racial signifiers abounded; African, indigenous, and European cultural practices merged; popular religion incorporated multiple deities and dogmas. However, creating a whitened nation became not only a goal of the

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<sup>219</sup> Sommer describes Parra’s pride in her ‘illustrious forebears’ [sic], an ancestry that included colonial landowners and high-ranking political figures (including a former president), and an almost ‘reactionary’ response to progressive ideals – including women’s suffrage (310). Her definition of a ‘decent’ woman was an upper- or middle-class (read: white) wife and mother (Garrels 147), a woman who lived ‘an honourable life’ (King and Hart 60).

positivists but a real possibility, at least on paper, due to Venezuela's historical racial record-keeping, or lack thereof.<sup>220</sup> It was against this ideological vision that Parra rebelled, choosing instead to rejoice in the racial (cultural, bodily) national diversity that was so uniquely desired compared to elsewhere in the Americas. Wright argues that non-white Venezuelans actively engaged in the religious life of the nation as priests and religious cult members (14). The Catholic church, especially in urban centers, was a social glue, and its non-white members took seriously their value in the eyes of God. Wright recounts a singular unpleasant incident in Caracas following emancipation: the first Sunday, newly freed slaves refused to carry the prayer rugs of their former masters' wives and daughters to mass. The practice had been 'one of the most humiliating aspects of slavery', a secular coercion that flew in the face of the Church's declared spiritual equality. Threats against former slaves came not from their former masters who were angered at carrying their own rugs, but from other free blacks who collectively condemned the practice, an indication of the strong belief that religion was, or at least should be, fully integrated (35).

Religious cults were common and often incorporated or centered on representational deities from across the racial spectrum. One such cult, ascendant during the writing of *Memorias*, was that of María Lionza, a racially heterodox group that rejoices in difference. Its particular type of *mestizaje*, as Peter Wade argues, breaks from Wright's definition of a 'whitened *mestizo* who

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<sup>220</sup> Following abolition, the national censuses neglected to collect racial data on the citizenry in an effort to leave behind the painful history of slavery (Wright 4). However, as Angsoto-Ferrández points out, racial categorization in the censuses did exist in the guise of an oversimplified binary: 'general' or 'indigenous' (the same indigenous allegedly 'annihilated' at the time of Bolívar) (373). If an individual was not purely indigenous, then, regardless of racial ancestry, he or she was now generally Venezuelan.

represents the irretrievable fusion of three racial origins' (252). The mystical properties associated with the María Lionza deities comprised a transcendent power that arose from the three 'potencias' – a vivacity resulting from ethnic diversity. *Las Tres Potencias* themselves, María Lionza, (normally a white female),<sup>221</sup> El Indio Guaicaipuro (an indigenous male named for a sixteenth-century chief of the Caracas tribe), and El Negro Felipe (a black male) were the central deities in a network of spirits, the belief in whom manifested in worship of the natural world (Wade 250-251). For its followers, there were no origins to be 'retrieved' because nothing had been lost: the natural spirits that resided in rivers and forests derived from Amerindian tradition; the belief in magic, healing, and supernatural beings reflected West African religious folklore; and the use of the cross's symbolic power, incense, candles, altars, and a Christian moral code, as well as the conflation of María Lionza with the Virgin of Coromoto (the patron saint of Venezuela) testified to the strength of Catholic ritual in the proudly syncretic cult (Wright 20). In a profound example of the conjoining of politics and religion, Simón Bolívar – the only white man represented in the cult's iconography – is considered one of the guiding 'spirits of the Queen's kingdom' (Placido 210).

The black female's position in María Lionza is more complex: La Negra Francisca is 'much-loved' according to Barbara Placido, but is excluded from the *Tres Potencias*. She is also 'loud and vulgar', and interested primarily in 'men and

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<sup>221</sup> Placido notes that María Lionza may descend for the ritual of human possession in the form of the India Yara, a bilingual spirit who speaks and understands Spanish, but prioritizes her native language (213). She is the indigenous surrogate for María, but they differ characteristically in many ways; Yara is a 'sexy', full-grown woman, often represented mounted upon a tapir, a wild animal native to Venezuela. This incarnation is less common than that of María Lionza, depicted as a young white virgin, cloaked in blue and reminiscent of the Virgin Mary. However, Yara, though less common as a spirit manifestation than María, is equally respected within the cult (209). She is an unorthodox version rather than an inferior substitute.

sex'. She self-defines as a whore, but cautions women to avoid following her example. La Negra Francisca is the fun foil to the serious, intellectual, compassionate, and genteel María Lionza (Placido 213). Nichols states that '[in] many nations, including Venezuela, the term "la negra" [...] has historically been synonymous with the [...] description: a woman without honour, an erotically charged plaything, or a woman of lower social standing who is used for the pleasure of men or as a servant of white women' (175). Nichols overlooks the fact that, rather than being depicted as either a plaything or a servant, she can also be depicted as both. In Parra's novel, Evelyn falls prey to this mixed stereotype, a vulnerability which causes Violeta's epithet to reverberate as more than an insult: it is personally damaging. Despite the black female's negative characterization in María Lionza, she is still included in a social *mestizaje* that rejects Wright's biological 'café con leche', a designation which conjures a nation of caramel-colored citizens, all the races neatly filtered into one (cream-heavy) cup. Instead, the *mestizaje* resides not in the individual but in the nation in macro; Venezuela itself, not the Venezuelan, is the *mestiza*.

*La Venezuela Mestiza* is at the conceptual heart of *Memorias*. Parra offers this alternative vision to her contemporary, Rómulo Gallegos, whose *Doña Bárbara* was also published in 1929. Though it focuses on the conflict between civilization and barbarism,<sup>222</sup> urbanism and ruralism, and the mixing of races in Venezuela, *Doña Bárbara* is decidedly invested in whitening and Positivism. The

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<sup>222</sup> The ideological conflict between civilization and barbarism predates Parra, and was a Latin American preoccupation since Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo: civilización y barbarie*, an early nineteenth-century Argentinian text. Sarmiento's ideas on whitening (through European immigration) anticipate Positivism, and the author condemns the 'barbarism' of Latin America compared to European and Anglo-American societies and their legal/political paradigms.

text, which prominently features indigenous figures and themes, follows the ideological path of Guimarães's *A Escrava Isaura* in actively promoting *mestizaje*, first between the *mestiza* Doña Bárbara and white Lorenzo Barquero, then between their daughter and the white Santos Luzardo. Doña Bárbara, embodying barbarism, is defeated and disappears when Santos chooses her whiter daughter who is more capable of being 'civilized' and therefore more acceptable for inclusion in Venezuelan identity. Gallegos's text soundly rejects nostalgic longing and exploits the past as an origin story that looks to a whiter future; it does not reflect upon the past as culturally significant or worthy of preservation or celebration.<sup>223</sup>

The celebrated characters that populate young Blanca Nieves's little world of Piedra Azul, the sugar plantation named for the precious lapis lazuli, offer an alternative fairy-tale vision to the prescriptions of Positivism. Blanca Nieves rejects the prescriptive gender roles and narrative orthodoxy in the stories her Mamá recites while she sculpts her daughter's disappointing hair, and instead insists upon unconventional unions and unorthodox endings. The blurring of genres and of secular with liturgical traditions produces a new, private literary corpus:

en mis libres adaptaciones se veía por ejemplo a Moisés vencido por d'Artagnan o a la dulce Virginia naufragando tristemente en el arca de Noé y salvada de pronto, gracias a los esfuerzos heroicos e inesperados de la Bella y la Fiera. (41)

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<sup>223</sup> See Sommer (290-321) for a comparison of *Doña Bárbara* and *Memorias*. Sommer contrasts not only their 'narrative trajectories' and 'ideological implications', but the "personifications" of barbarous dissemination in one book and [the] playful permutations in the other'. Doña Bárbara is serious, whereas Mamá Blanca teaches Sommer to 'meander' along a narrative path (294-95). That path is nostalgia.

Blanca Nieves's two favorite stories, *Paul and Virginie* and *The Beauty and the Beast*, are appropriated to function locally. France becomes Caracas, Virginie's carriage becomes Mamá's *calesa*, and the surrounding landscape transforms into a flood-soaked tragedy that inspires 'devoción y [...] cariño' while satisfying a 'voluptuoso deseo de bañarse en la tristeza'. The Beast becomes Marquesa, the family Newfoundland dog, to whom Blanca Nieves's outraged sense of justice denies the expected transformation. The Beauty marries not a prince, but 'la Fiera con su rabo, su pelo negro, sus orejotas y todo', a case of marital mixing that elevates '[e]l noble impulso de la Bella' to the extraordinary (Parra 42-43). Blanca Nieves demands a heterogeneous world in which traditional romance and marriage are suppressed in favor of new unions and the struggles of these characters are supported by a cast of biblical figures. Acceptance of and desire for diversity play a key role in the character's (and author's) vision of a more perfect, updated fairy-tale nation, a nation in which the application of alien European traditions (literary, social, etc.) are reconfigured through mixing.

Blanca Nieves is a determined romantic, though unlike her mother, in an unconventional sense.<sup>224</sup> *Memorias* achieves the romance of nostalgic longing through the celebration of the Rousseauian idyll, but also, critically, through its destruction, as demarcated by Bakhtin.<sup>225</sup> The Rousseauian idyll is one of

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<sup>224</sup> Mamá Blanca describes her mother as 'una romántica avanzada de la más pura estirpe' (Parra 25). Mamá's romanticism relies on generic purity, while Blanca Nieves/Mamá Blanca's derives from mixture and re-creation. Mamá's insistence upon convention, however, is challenged by Venezuela, a place that refuses to provide her with daughters that match the origins of their European fairy tale names.

<sup>225</sup> Elena Grau-Lleveria disagrees with the designation of *Memorias* as idyllic literature. She states that, according to Bakhtin's own theoretical definition, the text 'no es un idilio pues no presenta ninguno de estos elementos completamente': the elements of 'unity of place', cyclical time, and the representation of 'realidades básicas (amor, nacimientos, muertes, etc.)' (48). However, Grau-Lleveria's reading of Bakhtin is incomplete; Bakhtin himself, in outlining the idyll-type, claims that 'the elements [...] most often appear in the idyll in sublimated form; one or another element is partially or entirely omitted' (227).

reflective nostalgia in that it elevates ‘the ancient sense of the whole, makes of it an ideal for the future and sees in it above all the basis, a norm, for criticizing the current state of society’ – that of ‘inequality and absolutism’ and ‘the anarchy of greed’ (Bakhtin 231). The mundane and basic, ‘nature, love, the family and childbearing, death [...] undergo sublimation at a higher philosophical level, where they are treated [...] as forms of the great, eternal, wise force of earthly life’ (230). Mamá Blanca’s memories indeed center on these very events; they are the beating heart of her story. The sisters, Blanca’s fellow protagonists, also follow Bakhtin’s methodological prescription to ‘heal themselves through contact with nature and the life of simple people, learning from them the wisdom to deal with life and death’ (231). Chapters in *Memorias* are dedicated not to an event, but to a person and the lessons they impart. Timings overlap or are indistinguishable, characteristic of the Bakhtinian idyll. These lessons often rely on natural occurrences (for example, Daniel’s replacement of Nube de Agüita with another calf wearing his hide teaches the girls that love need not die with its object, but that it can be redirected, and Cochocho’s two ‘wives’ prove that love and families may take unorthodox forms). The Rousseauian elements of the idyll seek to recall the ancient and recreate the whole from the parts, and to denounce what is missing from the present. Parra mourns not only what is gone but laments what has replaced it. Parra, Mamá Blanca, and the ‘Editor’<sup>226</sup> of Blanca’s memoirs

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Whatever Grau-Lleveria believes is missing from *Memorias* that would enable it to sufficiently constitute Bakhtinian idyllic literature is already explained and allowed for by the theory’s author.

<sup>226</sup> The Editor is a fictional friend of the elderly Mamá Blanca, who is bequeathed the memoirs for her own use. She admits to editing the pages, ‘cortando aquí, añadiendo allá’, actions that reveal her alignment to Mamá Blanca’s pro-mixing ideology. What the Editor selects for inclusion – the final ‘published’ memoir – promotes a nostalgic vision of Venezuela’s idyllic past. Molloy considers use of the Editor to be a ‘tired device’ used to ‘highlight the *relation* between women’ (‘Foreword’ xi-xiv, xiv; emphasis in original). However, the fictional editor achieves more than emphasizing inter-female relations; she points to a shared vision between female generations and indicates that nostalgia for the

unite in their rejection of progress for progress's sake, the trappings of a perceived superior economic and cultural modernity, and value above all a culture and a life of pastoral beauty. Parra championed this life and wrote to undermine the threat of an emergent national identity devoid of mystery, ritual, and nature.

Perhaps consistent with Parra's Rousseauism,<sup>227</sup> much of *Memorias* initially appears to champion a traditional colonial aesthetic. Yet, as Kelley Swarthout argues, the text was in fact influenced by an 'autochthonous aesthetic' (48). As the daughter of a sugar plantation owner, Parra was undoubtedly a member of 'la clase aristocrática' (Grau-Lleveria 53), but she was not quite the patriarchy-loving, slavery-mourning elitist that Elizabeth Garrels endeavors to portray in her chapter 'Piedra Azul, or the Colonial Paradise of Women'. Her early life spent on a plantation<sup>228</sup> parallels much of Blanca Nieves's until they are both removed from the beloved utopia of their childhoods. The text, as a fictional memoir written by a woman and filled with memories of women, is rife with contradictions (from the earliest pages the Editor expresses her desire to prune the memoir to a standard deemed publishable by male editors and a male readership<sup>229</sup>). But despite her political conservatism, Parra displayed her true

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Venezuela of Piedra Azul is inherent in national consciousness. For a discussion on the Editor's 'proyecto político-literario' and constructed literary inheritance, see Grau-Lleveria.

<sup>227</sup> Parra is not alone in her Rousseau-inspired approach; according to Mariano Picón-Salas, Rousseau was widely read by Venezuelans and his 'fundamental ingredients of sensitivity and melancholy [... and] innocence' were formative to the national literature and the idea of the 'sentimental Utopia' (205). This 'sentimental Utopia' is in essence the Rousseauian idyll.

<sup>228</sup> Parra's first-hand experience of plantation living separates her nostalgic work from the sphere of 'postmemory' (see this study's Introduction) as the memories that inform her representation of the Plantation are not exclusively inherited, but are her own.

<sup>229</sup> She authors the 'Prólogo', explaining her editorial involvement 'según el capricho de biógrafos y editores' and her responsibility for any resultant loss of the memoir's 'primera

feminism and social liberalism in the pages of *Memorias* through the value and complexity ascribed to her characters, and by constructing an ‘espacio simbólico, inexistente antes, que reconocemos en las voces de las mujeres[,] de los niños, de los campesinos’ (Bohorquez 27). Though she essentializes and caricaturizes these figures to an extent (Daniel’s intellectual simplicity, Cochocho’s dirtiness), Parra’s sympathetic portrayals celebrate their diversity. In her loving manipulation of a treasured homestead, the harmonious time and symbolic space of the Plantation, Parra creates an idealized fictional setting for the people she cherishes.

Prominent among her cherished characters are the workers. In *House, Garden, Nation: Space, Gender, and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Latin American Literatures*, Ileana Rodríguez claims that the presence of servants in post-slavery literature is reduced to ‘a citation, a phrase, a wordless existence, clear examples of subaltern cultures and repressed and marginalized epistemologies [...] they are witnesses [...] relevant in moments of decay [...]’. But their track is brief’ (80-81). While Rodríguez may have grounds for this appraisal of the servant archetype, her analysis does not apply uniformly to the inhabitants of Piedra Azul, who often contradict such simplistic, essentialized roles. Evelyn, whose broken, article-less Spanish is so central to her characterization, and Vicente Cochocho, her nemesis, whose Golden Age Spanish so impresses the children and transforms him into an unlikely and timeless hero, are hardly condemned to a wordless existence. It is their speech that so often defines them. When Daniel sings to his cows (and they are proven, through their loyal obedience, to be his

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frescura’ and its ‘pretensión helada y simétrica’ (Parra 13). The suggestion is that Mamá Blanca’s unedited female prose would not have widespread or intellectual appeal.

and his alone, regardless of any misguided proprietary claims made by Papá [139, 141-142]), he creates with language – songs, stories, milk. These characters do not merely witness; they have histories and an existence outside of Piedra Azul and Blanca Nieves’s immediate sphere, as the text makes clear. Mamá Blanca writes her memoir to keep their memories alive, for she will not suffer the dead to die again with her.<sup>230</sup>

There are, however, limits to Parra’s embrace of the marginalized. The characters outside of Blanca Nieves’s biological family are restricted by political, social, and cultural factors – they are poor, landless, non-white, and illiterate. They can never be the equals of the family. Yet much like Avellaneda does in *Sab*, Parra conflates all non-whites and non-males as outsiders joined in the same struggle for autonomy and worth. Garrels argues that Parra locks ‘[c]hildren, the common people (slaves and laborers), and women [in] a holy alliance’ dedicated to the return of the colonial and a group identification with the feminine (140). Sylvia Molloy argues more generously that, while it is ‘perhaps patronizing’, Parra’s grouping of the ‘other marginals, the African slave and the dispossessed Indian’, is less opportunistic than sympathetic (‘Disappearing Acts’ 250). The most complete consideration of Parra’s use (or appropriation) of the Other in *Memorias* is comes from Sommer; she writes of an author who ‘most cleverly keeps us (and herself) at a safe distance from a hegemonic Hispanic culture’, of which she was part, while being ‘the one who seems to have fit in most effortlessly’, despite her outsider (female/expatriate) perspective (320). It is this

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<sup>230</sup> Mamá Blanca bequeaths her memoirs to the Editor: ‘Me dolía tanto que mis muertos se volvieran a morir conmigo que se me ocurrió la idea de encerrarlos [en este manuscrito]’ (13). This is Mamá Blanca’s and Parra’s indication that *Memorias* is conscious act of preservation.

paradox, Sommer argues, that unfolds the fan of Mamá Blanca's text 'a bit wider with every page to make room for the next speaker [... in] an acknowledgement of the mutual dependence of every fold on the others' (321). This mutual dependence is a crucial element of *Memorias* and Parra's nostalgic remembrance of the Plantation, a promotion of *café con leche*, the *mestizaje* that creates *La Venezuela Mestiza*.

It does not stretch the imagination to consider the inhabitants of Piedra Azul as members of María Lionza. The 'potency' of Piedra Azul lies in the richness of its rural life and the nourishment it provides to those who tend it, as well as its mystical properties derived from the power of Venezuela's three races. With the plantation itself as the foundation, there is the tripartite temple of home, barn, and land. Home is Mamá's domain, the domestic interior of books, stories, and beautification. Mamá cultivates a small, exclusively white civilization propped up by the labor of Evelyn, Candelaria the cook, and other black domestic servants. Mamá's marriage was appropriately Catholic;<sup>231</sup> she raises her daughters (with imperfect results) to have the requisite *criolla* 'decent' manners and 'good hair'.<sup>232</sup> Mamá resides in a perpetual state of untarnished virtue, despite the contrary evidence of her many daughters. There is no birthing in Piedra Azul – it happens in Caracas – so the plantation home and the young girls inside it remain innocent, or unaware, of the physicality of conception and childbirth. Mamá becomes the text's requisite virgin as María Lionza, the Virgin of Coromoto, and the Virgin Mary united in a monolithic white womanhood.

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<sup>231</sup> Mamá and Papá, according to Primo Juancho's tale, were married by the archbishop and Mamá was presented by her *padrino*, the current President of Venezuela (Parra 84).

<sup>232</sup> See Nichols, "Decent girls with good hair".

Daniel the Indian reigns over the barn. As a *llanero*, he is ‘a person with a heroic past, but who was [by the 1920s] regarded as a burden’ (Rivas Rojas 185). Yet he still has a gift to bestow: his voice.<sup>233</sup> Parra claims that ‘[a]unque su vena fuese con preferencia epigramática, también sabía ser lírica cuando la ocasión se presentaba’ (134). His lyricism finds occasion in his communion with nature. The cows, ‘bautizadas por Daniel’, respond only to his song and touch. He is El Indio Guaicaipuro, The Chief of the Cows, and his intuitive ability to speak to the animals, to earn their trust and loyalty, and to understand them is demonstrative of his connection with the spirits of the natural world. Without Daniel and his gifts, the cows cease to produce morning milk for Blanca Nieves and her sister princesses of Piedra Azul. El Negro Felipe is conjured through the beloved figure of Vicente Cochocho.<sup>234</sup> Technically a *zambo*, Cochocho’s lowly status as a field hand and ditch digger suggests the manual labor of a former slave. He leaves the plantation of his own accord only to go to war, but always returns to the family. He is tied to the earth, a barefoot creature whose elaborate speech defies the expectations of his employers. As a soldier he possesses an almost supernatural prowess, and his vocation as a healer, though inconsistently producing the desired effect of healing, is as equally valued as Papá’s modern brand of medicine by the local population. He is also, paradoxically, the coffin maker. He presides over life and death. Cochocho, like Daniel and Mamá, imbue Piedra Azul with magic, but it is the fragile magic of a Bakhtinian idyll which ultimately, tragically, cannot withstand the steady approach of the outside world.

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<sup>233</sup> ‘Siendo llanero Daniel, era poeta’ (Parra 134). *Llaneros* have a strong musical tradition. For *llanero* culture in 1920s Venezuela, see Rivas Rojas.

<sup>234</sup> Kimberly Ann Nance argues that ‘Vicente Cochocho is Blanca’s (and apparently de la Parra’s) favorite’ (48). As a mixture of black and indigenous Venezuela, he embodies the remaining two-thirds of María Lionza.

If, as Bohorquez claims, *Memorias* is the ‘nostalgia y melancolía de la infancia, [una] infancia-paraíso que la escritura ama y desea recuperar’ (26), then it is a paradise inevitably lost. It is not only Blanca Nieves’s, or Parra’s, memories of a lost world that are at risk, but a past-future for Venezuela that is dangerously slipping away. Parra works through her text to retrieve it, to breathe life again into what Garrels dismisses as an ‘anachronistic colonial fantasy’ (136), but what is, though perhaps imperfectly executed on the author’s part, better described as the author’s best future vision for a still-young Venezuela. Her efforts to preserve a culturally heterodox mysticism from the encroaching racist intellectualism of Anglo-Saxon Positivism (read: Puritanism) exhibit a deep respect for the diversity of spirituality found in nature, ethnicity, and the feminine. Though she was not a member of the María Lionza cult, by the 1920s the movement was gaining traction and Parra, recording her memories of a rural homeland from the sanitized environment of European Catholicism, concurrently and fondly recalled the *mestizaje* of Venezuela that supported this mixed spirituality. Mamá Blanca herself designed a composite God – ‘el Dios de Mamá Blanca’ – and worshipped with fervor.<sup>235</sup> Catholicism in Venezuela not only permitted religious and ritualistic

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<sup>235</sup> The Editor recounts Mamá Blanca’s zealous adoration of an approachable, amalgamated deity: ‘Llena de fe cristiana, trataba a Dios con una familiaridad digna de aquellos artífices de los primeros siglos de la Iglesia, [...] Pero el Dios de Mamá Blanca no se indignaba nunca ni era capaz del menor acto de violencia. A menudo sordo, siempre distraído, presidía sin majestad un cielo alegre, lleno de flores en el cual todo el mundo lograba pasar adelante por poco que le argumentasen o le llamasen la atención haciéndole señas cariñosas desde la puerta de entrada’ (Parra 10-11). This is the Catholic God whose origins date from the church’s inception, but Mamá Blanca inscribes selective features upon his figure. Conceived by Parra’s heroine as a hapless old man, gentle, flexible, and surrounded by flowers, this God forgives and conserves. Incapable of the slightest ‘acto de violencia’, he considers all creation safe and sacred – including the indigenous, the natural, and any alternative manifestations of the spiritual. Parra’s character crafts her own religious perspective, and the church of mestiza *Venezuela*, so removed from Catholicism’s ‘primeros siglos’, allows for spiritual acculturation and the derivation of its practices and dogma into a heterodox religiosity.

mixing, but in fact facilitated it with the state's support.<sup>236</sup> Parra's apparent social and political conservatism, then, in fact works to preserve Venezuela's spiritual heterogeneity in a celebration of *mestizaje* that permeates her writing.

In the pages of *Memorias* reside many threats to such preservation. Chief among them is Evelyn, a symbol of the excluded, even from María Lionza's inclusive pantheism. Evelyn, a typical nanny figure in form and function, exists, from the girls' point of view, to bathe, clothe, and discipline them in poor Spanish, all while looking clean and tidy. The owner of 'rebelde pelo lanudo' and an 'espíritu positivista adherido continuamente a la realidad como la ostra está adherida a la concha', she embodies both the black woman physically and the Anglo-Saxon intellectually. Neither of these types has earned a place in Blanca Nieves's harmonious circle of beloveds. Evelyn is devoid of magic and works to maintain the 'orden, simetría, [y] don de mando' of her appearance through constant use of corsets, belts, starch, and oil (Parra 18). Despite her failure to capture the imagination of Blanca, she earns the admiration of Mamá, who could not live without her.<sup>237</sup> She stands as a named representative for so many 'rostros negros' who leave no distinct impression (19); it was the job of the collective Black Woman to scrub the children and put them to sleep. These mundanities comprise the daily business of life, of time passing and children aging, and therefore threaten the idyllic childhood of Parra's construction. Evelyn's early introduction

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<sup>236</sup> In her study on spirit possession in the María Lionza cult, Barbara Placido argues that 'the preaching and the ethos of the spirits [of María Lionza] are certainly opposed in style to that of mainstream society and of the Catholic Church, but not in terms of message and of lived experience' (219). Many of the practitioners Placido included in her 2001 study, in fact, simultaneously identified as Catholic and as a potential vessel for 'pagan' spirit possession. Sorte, a mountain site sacred to the cult, was declared part of the María Lionza National Park in the 1980s.

<sup>237</sup> Balza describes Evelyn as the girls' 'plaything' and 'an instrument of power for the mother [who is] made fun of at every turn' (156). She is therefore appropriated by white Venezuela for its amusement and/or to provide labor.

in the text indicates not her elevated status in the memory of Mamá Blanca, but rather her role as an obstacle to be overcome.

If María Lionza, the subversive, feminine, collective symbol of inclusive marginality and natural, mystical conservatism, is embodied by Mamá, Daniel, and Vicente Cochocho, then its reverse is found in the patriarchal progressivism represented by Papá, Violeta,<sup>238</sup> and Evelyn – the excluded white man and demeaned black woman. Don Juan Manuel, the white patriarch of the family, is the lone symbol of the landowning class in *Memorias* and is undisputed master in the traditional sense. Still, his rule is consistently subverted; his wife and his daughters conspire to deny him a male heir, Daniel handles the cows by means of his choosing, and Vicente Cochocho comes and goes when military duty calls. These characters all undermine his authority, but the balance of power is ultimately decided when he sells the plantation and moves the family to Caracas in patriarchal triumph.<sup>239</sup> Though Parra celebrates a Plantation past, Papá stands for its very authority that she seeks to destabilize. His is a reign bereft of association with the natural world and is the enemy of mysticism. He is implicitly responsible for Mamá's corruption through sex and childbirth, for the devaluing of Daniel's special *llanero* gifts,<sup>240</sup> and the humiliation of Vicente Cochocho,<sup>241</sup> an

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<sup>238</sup> Violeta is not merely aggressive, but the female vessel for the spirit of the son who was never born (Parra 46).

<sup>239</sup> Garrels disagrees; she argues that the sale of the plantation is representative of the 'aggressive masculinity of Evelyn and Violeta prevail[ing] over Papa's [sic] milder variation' (149). On the contrary, Papá's action is in pursuit of positivistic ideals of commercial success, modern education for his daughters, and an urban lifestyle. He makes this decision without input or influence from Evelyn or Violeta, who would much rather have stayed at Piedra Azul and continued to enjoy their 'aggressive masculinity'. His choice to sell reasserts his masculine authority.

<sup>240</sup> Papá accuses Daniel of 'explicaciones' and 'abusos', publicly sends him away, and announces he has hired a new *vaquero* – one that is honest (Parra 141). Papá is later forced to recant when Daniel proves irreplaceable.

<sup>241</sup> Cochocho suffers many verbal indignities at the hands of Papá: threats, accusations, and lectures (Parra 89-120). However, Papá's scornfully delivered formal address to the

unintentional emasculation so absolute that the loyal laborer disappears, unable or unwilling to face his employer again. Papá's insistence on establishing dominance leads to discord and the dismantling of an otherwise collaborative paradise.<sup>242</sup>

Evelyn aids Papá in his destruction of life at Piedra Azul. If Papá holds the highest authority, then Evelyn acts as his representative in the daily dealings of the household. Evelyn is not the only black female aligned with Papá. If Evelyn is Papá's lieutenant, Candelaria is his pet. Candelaria the cook may not be mistress of the house, but she runs the kitchen and inspires a devotion from Papá that sees her crowned as its most important inhabitant; he frequently states, 'De aquí se puede ir todo el mundo menos Candelaria' (Parra 20). Cochocho may leave, Daniel is fired, even Mamá is turned out to perform her reproductive duty elsewhere, but Candelaria, queen of the kitchen, is assured of perpetual employment and housing security. Hers is a unique position that testifies to a socially perceived alliance between the white male and black female. Candelaria prepared the girls' meals and spent each day in their home, but specific memories of Candelaria are circumscribed in Blanca's memoirs.<sup>243</sup> Even more restricted are

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'ilustre capitán Don Vicente Aguilar' is the final blow. Cochocho is '[a]paleado por su propio apellido como perro apaleado por su amo', an insufferable humiliation that the 'pequeñas', the little girls, can comprehend but that a grand figure like Papá cannot (119-120).

<sup>242</sup> According to Garrels, Papá is the benevolent, feminized God of Piedra Azul – a 'creole God, pampered and agreeable' (143). It is this soft God – 'el Dios de Mamá Blanca' who she nostalgically worships (Parra 10) – that allows the development of alternative spiritualities and necessitates the rebellion inherent in María Lionza, a simple and organic religiosity. If Papá is feminized during his time at the plantation, it is this feminization and tolerance he throws off in favor of the fundamentalism of conventional masculinity. In this way, he is representative of *mestiza* Venezuela choosing Positivism over centuries of *mestizaje*, a move responsible for exiling the nation from its paradisiacal birthright.

<sup>243</sup> For example, Candelaria had 'un latón oxidado en la mano a guisa de soplador' (19) and is otherwise remembered as absent from important events because the 'mal humor la tenia generalmente amarrada a su fogón como al perro la cadena corta' (56-57).

descriptions of the 'cuidadoras' who form 'una especie de estado mayor', a parade of women working under Evelyn whose existence and labor are reduced to a single mention in an unsentimental list appropriate to record-keeping. 'Hermengilda...Eufemia...Pastora...Armanda...' ('nombres tan familiares como inusitados'), these faceless and indistinct women are designated by Hispanic names that, when attached to a black female, mark them as exotic imposters (19). The black women, like their names, are both familiar and unusual; they are unremarkable curiosities simply passing through. In a list punctuated by ellipses, only the name remains, and the individual is wiped from memory. These women care for the children until they are replaced.<sup>244</sup>

In the female-child world of Blanca Nieves, Papá is a nebulous presence. His decisions often spell disaster for his free-reigning daughters, but his alliance with the masculinized, anglicized Evelyn allows his program of discipline to proceed uninhibited in his absence. She is – paradoxically – a non-English, English mammy,<sup>245</sup> determined to transform an unruly brood into perfect little ladies fit for Venezuelan society and the serious, play-less future that awaits them. Evelyn often acts not only as Papá's representative but as an autonomous extension of his authority. Evelyn means business, just like Papá, but she saves him the trouble of being the villain. Mamá, left otherwise on her own with her tribe of daughters, is therefore able to retain her ethereal aesthetic, moving gently and unhurried from library to hammock on a cloud of lace ruffles. Her femininity is

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<sup>244</sup> Altagracia, 'que servía la mesa', and Jesusita, 'que tendía las camas y "le andaba en la cabeza" a Mamá' while she swung in the porch hammock are remembered specifically for their labor and their contributions to the aesthetic pleasures of Piedra Azul. Jesusita is mentioned a second time, helping Mamá to rise from the hammock effortlessly (19, 22), and a third time as a silent witness of Violeta's punishment in 'Maria Moñitos' (55).

<sup>245</sup> Evelyn is introduced as a 'mulata inglesa de la isla de Trinidad' – a mulatta who speaks English, rather than an English woman who happens to be mixed-race (18).

preserved by her 'Excelente Evelyn' (128), another duty in which she has made Papá redundant.

This usurpation of Papá's masculine authority, as well as the balancing act it performs with Mamá's feminine energy, establishes Evelyn in the father's position and suggests the potential for Molloy to 'read [a] lesbian' subtext. The Editor, in an effort to sculpt the memoir to a publishable standard, would have cut any direct reference to lesbianism ('Disappearing Acts').<sup>246</sup> As Molloy argues, scenes of 'oblique vision' populate the text (236); Blanca Nieves possesses only a child's understanding of adult situations, and her potential misreading of the relationship between Mamá and Evelyn – the emotional and physical support for which the mistress relies upon her servant – emerges ambiguously from the fictional memoir. Indeed, Evelyn's starchy exterior could be concealing Harris's 'hot mamma black woman'.<sup>247</sup> The sexualization of black servants undermines all of Evelyn's careful corseting and supports Violeta's accusation of potential transgression. The suggestion, a quietly subversive thread that winds through the female story, finds some confirmation in Evelyn's ultimate dismissal, when Papá moves the family and takes up a full-time residency at the new home in Caracas, unceremoniously casting Evelyn aside. Evelyn's status, though one of authority, is therefore a precarious one. She is an outsider, not only at Piedra Azul, but in Venezuela. Parra wrote *Memorias* at a time when the Venezuelan political class was increasingly concerned with limiting black Caribbean immigration (Wright 77-78).<sup>248</sup> Parra, then, envisions Evelyn as temporary labor; she is in Venezuela

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<sup>246</sup> Molloy claims that 'lesbianism in particular seem[ed] to give [Latin American] critics a hard time' (237).

<sup>247</sup> See p. 28 of this study.

<sup>248</sup> After emancipation, the free black population was viewed as a threat to future racial nationhood. The Caribbean coast was home to an '[obvious] visual presence' of black

to perform a specific job – to teach the girls how to be English while upholding the (Venezuelan) status quo – an unlikely mixture. She works at the behest of the white household, charged with upholding its primacy, and when her employment is terminated Papá (and Parra) returns her to Trinidad. Here, Evelyn's alliance with Papá breaks down. Her deportation is not an explicit rebuke for homosexual transgression, but it is a possibility considering the 'oblique vision', now an oblique hindsight, that hinders Mamá Blanca's memories. Evelyn's departure is simply the less disruptive and less interesting of two simultaneous life events. The concurrent loss of Piedra Azul overshadows Evelyn's leaving, an event recounted even more dispassionately because any love Blanca Nieves and her sisters may have felt for their mammy seems to have been forfeited prior to the family's move to Caracas.

Despite the suggestion of transgressive sexuality, Evelyn is never depicted as sensuous, wanton, or even sexually available. Violeta's charge of 'puta' eventually proves unprovable but the consequences are dire: Evelyn forbids the girls to visit their beloved mill due to its negative influence upon them. In doing so, she anticipates their exile from Piedra Azul and the realm of arcadian innocence. Both Evelyn and Violeta, masculine allies of patriarchy, are responsible for the sisters' expulsion from the paradise of the mill.<sup>249</sup> The mill is a sanctuary of freedom, openness, and mixing; '[en] el trapiche no había misterios ni había escondites. Todo pasaba a la vista de todos. Cada cual sabía por qué ocurrían las cosas y había entrada libre para el que se presentara: elementos,

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Venezuelans and immigrants (Wright 4). These settlements and communities were largely undocumented.

<sup>249</sup> Balza designates Evelyn's punishment a 'wicked law', framing discipline and authoritarian rules as extreme and corrupting (156). The severity of Evelyn's reactions are an argument against the perceived superiority of positivist tenets.

animales o personas' (123). Though there is nothing mysterious or mystic in this description, the passage that follows elucidates a natural magic that permeates the very grounds of the mill. 'La primera, la gran capitana, la madre del trapiche era el agua' (Ibid.): the female force of water is life-giving to every natural element as well as each mechanical apparatus of the mill. This mystical evocation of a nature spirit enables both work and play in a place in which 'nada se encerraba; ¡adelante todo el mundo! Entraba el sol; entraba el aire, entraba el aguacero', followed by wasps, oxen, and mill workers' children: 'a nadie se decía no' (124). The mill is the perfect antidote to the positivist, increasingly narrow Venezuela Parra encountered on her visits home from Europe, and offers Blanca Nieves and her sisters a glimpse of the 'other' Venezuela and an opportunity to immerse themselves in the alternate nation embodied by María Lionza. But the celebration of this alternative Venezuela precludes Evelyn, who both rejects and is rejected by it. The mill is a fictional precursor to the cult site Mount Sorte, where María Lionza cult members mix harmoniously<sup>250</sup> – except the black woman, La Negra Francisca, the whore. Violeta therefore simply voices an already circulating stereotype and reinforces the isolation of the non-white female, even in *La Mestiza Venezuela*.

This stereotype is the source of Evelyn's abhorrence of Cochocho's domestic arrangement. It may be Evelyn's morality that is so offended, but it is also her instinct for self-preservation. Cochocho's women, sharing a man and living beyond the boundaries of the one man-one woman convention, are described by Mamá Blanca as 'situadas al mismo nivel de Vicente' (111). They are most likely his racial equals. Evelyn perceives two black or *zamba* women

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<sup>250</sup> See p. 152 in this study.

living in a brothel situation and is outraged. Despite 'el amor libre' being permitted at Piedra Azul, there are limits (110). That these women should be the willing mistresses of a non-white man increases Evelyn's disgust.<sup>251</sup> These women undermine Evelyn's starched morality and support of white patriarchal norms, and threaten to validate Violeta's designation of the black woman as a 'puta'. Evelyn rushes to inform Mamá of the trio she considers so 'depravado' (113) to demonstrate the strength of her shared values with the white Plantation family. The stereotype of black women as harboring an inherent sexual corruption forces a panic in Evelyn, La Negra Francisca, who feels compelled to insist on her own respectability. Mamá, as María Lionza, the patron saint of mixing, does not care about Cochocho's transgression. But it is a potent symbol of Piedra Azul's uncivilization.

Papá sells Piedra Azul and moves the family to the capital. As Blanca notes, it was time for the girls to pass through a door to the 'Valle de Lágrimas' (149);<sup>252</sup> it was time for them to become civilized white ladies. In Caracas, Evelyn is replaced by '[una] nueva sirvienta o cuidadora, ya entrada en años y medio asmática, incapaz de empuñar con mano diestra aquellas riendas que Evelyn llevaba tan sobria y magistralmente' (155), who, after the girls enter a church shouting, informs Mamá of their uncivilized behavior and quits. In Caracas, some nostalgic feeling for their nanny begins to surface. Evelyn has returned to Trinidad, and there is no one left to '[salar] o [aderezar] con prohibiciones del desabrimiento inmenso del vivir' (154). Much like the 'sencillos y ligerísimos

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<sup>251</sup> Evelyn describes Cochocho to Mamá as 'el más pequeño, el más cabezón, el más feo y el más sucio de los peones de la Piedra Azul' (Parra 113).

<sup>252</sup> Psalm 84.6-12. This is a reference to the biblical Vale of Tears through which one must pass to enter Heaven. Its use is ironic as the girls are departing their idyll for the commercial, political world of civilization.

sombreros' of Piedra Azul, designed by Mamá and enforced by Evelyn to protect the girls from the sun, these prohibitions served a valuable function. They were largely gentle and sensible admonitions that seasoned daily life, providing the girls with both a sense of authority and a secure space in which to challenge it.<sup>253</sup> Just as the new, elderly nursemaid is no match for Evelyn, the cathedral proves a poor substitute for the mill; it is an alien space – no cane, no paning for treasures, all cold wooden pews. Whereas the mill welcomed the girls' shouts and their hatless, curly heads, the cathedral shuts out nature and replaces its rhythms with a deprivation of 'libertad y [...] panoramas', epitomizing the general sense of loss the girls experience in Caracas (153). Even Mamá, María Lionza herself, succumbs to the civilizing imperative of the city, admonishing her daughters: '¡civilicense!' (157). She is determined to see her daughters flourish in their new urban home.

The girls are then turned over to 'dos señoritas distinguidas', who pinch and slap in an attempt to educate and cultivate them. The girls undermine the teachers' efforts, and when Blanca Nieves's brief truancy and a mouthful of cake result in a classroom skirmish, Violeta appoints herself defender of the family's honor. She not only bloodies a fellow classmate, but when one of the 'señoritas' denounces the girls as backwards – a bitter truth – Violeta returns the insult in spectacular fashion.<sup>254</sup> The masculine authority and manipulation of power dynamics she honed at Piedra Azul equip Violeta with a certain hubris in facing the city's challenges (161-163).<sup>255</sup> Parra demonstrates the inevitability of

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<sup>253</sup> Mamá Blanca expounds: '[...] no hay que respetar demasiado las leyes. Es sabiduría burlarlas con audacia ante los propios ojos de la autoridad [...]' (Parra 160-161).

<sup>254</sup> Violeta answers her 'que un becerro, un pollino y un burro era ella' (163).

<sup>255</sup> Garrels argues that, with the sale of the plantation and Papá's reassertion of his masculine authority, Violeta 'lose[s her] freedom to adopt [a] masculine [identity]' (149).

‘civilization’ and the negative power of positivist doctrine upon young minds, whether naïve and gentle or fiery and warlike, and gestures metaphorically to all that is lost in the individual and the nation: innocence, spiritedness, mystery, and magic.

Under this new authoritarian regime of the urban center, which rejects nature and its simplicity through an ‘ausencia de tierra y de agua’, the girls are surrounded by walls, discipline, and structure for its own sake (153).<sup>256</sup> The city home is the obverse of Bakhtin’s diorama (and Stewart’s ‘walled city of the maternal’ [*On Longing* 23]); from within these opaque walls the girls cannot see their lost idyll. The absence of nature and the loss of Piedra Azul is keenly felt, and two years after the move to Caracas memories of life there begin to take on ‘una aureola de melancolía’, a distinctly reflective nostalgia (Parra 165).<sup>257</sup> A reluctant Mamá takes the girls back to their old home, now practically unrecognizable:

Todo estaba cambiado: era el triunfo del revés sobre el derecho. [...] donde había antes una puerta ahora tapiado y en donde estaba una pared lisa había ahora una puerta nueva acompañada, si era posible, por una ventana. Sobre la tierra que llevó nuestro huerto ameno, talados los árboles, se alineaba geométrico un jardín a la inglesa, y en el terreno que ocupaba nuestro jardín oloroso había un huerto rasurado en donde crecían, párvulos raquíticos, multitud de árboles exóticos. [...] ¿Dónde estaban los guayabos, la acacia grande, los árboles de poma rosa, guanábanas y guayabitas arrayán? ¿Dónde estaban los bambúes cantadores con sus zapatos de terciopelo,

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She is now subject to the same positivist ‘civilizing’ as her sisters. But Violeta shows no signs of civilizing.

<sup>256</sup> The city has dirt and water, but they are part of a built environment, not fecund or naturally flowing.

<sup>257</sup> The girls long to visit Piedra Azul and to check the reality of the place against their memories and constant questioning of each other: ‘¿te acuerdas?’ (166).

donde escondían pícaros la maldad de sus ‘pelitos’? ¡Como Aurora, como Evelyn, como nosostras, todos ellos se habían ido! (167)

Piedra Azul’s new owner has made a number of ‘improvements’ including replacing the overgrown foliage, the jumble of flowers, fruits, bushes, and trees, with an orderly English garden.<sup>258</sup> The beloved fragrance is gone, replaced with newly planted ‘exotic’ trees that are fragile in the native soil. Gone too are the hiding places employed by mischievous young girls to escape Evelyn’s watchful eye. Gone too is Evelyn, the Plantation nanny. Piedra Azul has fallen prey to Positivism, like Papá and Mamá, like Venezuela itself, and all that Parra considers noble and sacred about her nation is quickly disappearing.

Upon leaving the agricultural idyll, the family idyll was also destroyed. Aurora – golden dawn itself – was the city’s first victim upon the family’s relocation. Her role as the eldest daughter, to preside ‘muy breve tiempo el florido jardín de Mamá’, is made redundant when they leave Piedra Azul (147). The literal garden is abandoned to its new owners, and the garden of little girls is no longer left to grow wild. Aurora symbolizes the dawn of the nation, a beginning that can continue to grow and flourish through organic and inclusive development. Aurora thrived among the unique spirits of Venezuela’s natural landscape, in a way of life and among a people that were harmonious and spontaneously *mestizo*. However, in the arid prison of the city,<sup>259</sup> she succumbs

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<sup>258</sup> The motif of the English garden recalls Sab’s (and Avellaneda’s) rejection of its inorganic order, imposed upon a natural fecundity. See p. 81 of this study.

<sup>259</sup> The girls’ experience of the city is rather limited, but Mamá Blanca likens the city home to a prison built on scorched earth: ‘Lo primero que echamos de ver al llegar a Caracas fue la ausencia de tierra y de agua, [...] grifos inconscientes de su ridículo, puesto que ellos nunca habían visto el chorrerón del trapiche. [...] aquellas paredes que por todos lados nos robaron el horizonte eran verdaderos muros de prisión’ (153). After the plantation, playing outside ceases to be pleasurable or liberating.

physically to disease, but metaphorically to the spirit-crushing paving-over of nature and freedom and the isolation and seclusion to which the girls are subjected in the name of 'civilization'. As the first-born daughter, she is also the natural heiress to the María Lionza throne occupied by her mother at Piedra Azul. But Mamá forfeits her crown when she finally aligns herself with Papá, whose prescient concern about the city's infestation is surmounted by his desire to pursue commercial success. María Lionza has abandoned El Negro Felipe and El Indio Guaicaipuro. Venezuela's organic, *mestiza* foundations are denied, and the nation looks set to march forward at the cost of its spiritual, idyllic heart that Parra and Mamá Blanca believe should be valued and preserved.

At Piedra Azul, the mill is closed, the water dried up, the congregating people of the plantation scattered, the gentle disorder of the place put in order.<sup>260</sup> The girls mourn the news of Vicente Cochocho's disappearance upon their return to the plantation. What became of him is unclear and undocumented, the case of many ethnic Venezuelans in the hinterland. Whether dead from illness, accident, or violence, he is gone and though Mamá Blanca remembers him, the nation's official history surely will not. However, Parra does not subject him to a Christian burial, but permits her own El Negro Felipe the final act of nourishing the natural world in which he thrived: 'se lo comieron los zamuros' (169). Cochocho's demise is an act of defiance against 'civilization'; he quite literally vanishes into the air, like Doña Bárbara, but, unlike Bárbara, he does so without leaving a mixed-race child to be wielded further in the national whitening project. Instead, he

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<sup>260</sup> The cows suffer as well; their 'santo corralón' has been replaced by a stable with individual 'divisiones', cells where each cow dwells in isolation. Mamá goes to the 'chorrerón', the source of the mill waters, to seek answers and Aurora but instead is met with a newly erected stone wall (167-168).

symbolizes only himself as part of collective, non-whitened *mestizaje*. The unknown fate of his mortal remains reinforces the spiritual naturalism of María Lionza and its *mestizo* membership.

In the closing passage, the girls and their mother endure a joyless picnic. When it is over, the girls are ready to leave. The visit proves to Blanca Nieves what her mother has told her: ‘Los recuerdos no cambian y cambiar es ley de todo lo existente’ (169).<sup>261</sup> Everything at Piedra Azul is different, wrong, and the memories that surface are painful in the light of so much change. Blanca Nieves and Mamá Blanca are in agreement that the past is past and cannot be altered. Both versions of Blanca indulge only in reflective nostalgia – that dwelling in loss, the exquisite mourning for an idyllic history. They do not attempt a reconstruction or recreation, but merely a more complete understanding. The girls expect Evelyn on their arrival at the plantation, anticipating one of her rebukes as she lovingly lowers them from the carriage.<sup>262</sup> But Evelyn, like Aurora, is a shadow of the past. Nostalgia for her nanny finally rises up in Mamá Blanca in this final passage, connecting Evelyn not to the family but to the plantation home in which she worked. Unlike Cochocho, whom Blanca eulogizes, Evelyn simply disappears because she never belonged. Her alliance with Papá, her work ethic and starched skirts and strictures, do not overcome two factors: her foreign birth and, most importantly, her black femaleness. Mamá, forever soliloquizing on the indispensability of Evelyn, takes her place as disciplinarian and civilizer to her daughters. The white wife joins the white husband, and the black female

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<sup>261</sup> Nance claims that Mamá Blanca (and Parra) ‘[refuse] to sentimentalize’ the loss of Piedra Azul (49), but in fact the detailed catalogue of changes to the physical plantation and its people are demonstrative of grief and longing.

<sup>262</sup> ‘Cuiden vestidos bonitos de Caracas, no se sienten en suelo’ (Parra 166).

interloper is removed. Neither Evelyn nor Candelaria (also gone) ever belonged to María Lionza, and now white, male Venezuela does not need them either. Despite the unceasing infiltration of all things English – the gardens, the politics, the progress – Evelyn is a trace of Englishness forbidden to remain in Venezuela. Parra, who is otherwise attempting to preserve *La Mestiza Venezuela's* potency and the national origins of a paradisiacal mixture, denies Evelyn a place. There is no room for the black woman.

Despite *Memorias's* celebration of the Venezuelan landscape and its people, and its attention to the fringe – the ethnic, the poor, the laborer – Parra succumbs to the same failings of openness to an alternative national identity as does the touted *café con leche* mantra: black women are not included. Piedra Azul may have been a 'Colonial Paradise of Women' as Garrels claims, but not for *all* women. Evelyn in fact epitomizes Rodríguez's 'witness [...] of decay'; her tenure is brief and her purpose is to stand testimony to and evidence of a lost way of life. Her purpose expires when this role is fulfilled. Even María Lionza, which seemingly embraces everyone else, denies value, affirmative representation, and independent legacy to black women. Of course, the alternative reading to Evelyn's departure is one of choice.<sup>263</sup> The details of her departure are unclear because the terms of her presence in the home and nation were always ambivalent. Did she choose to return to Trinidad? It is unlikely considering Trinidad's historical devaluation and mistreatment of domestic

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<sup>263</sup> For example, Garrels states that 'Evelyn suddenly abandons both the family and the novel to return to Trinidad' (149). This is not suggested by Parra, but Parra also does not have Papá or Mamá explicitly terminate Evelyn's employment. Evelyn's departure is as ambiguous as Parra's opinions about black women's place in Venezuelan society.

servants.<sup>264</sup> Yet, when faced in Venezuela with systemic racism, alienation as a foreigner, sexist accusations of ‘¡puta!’, and expulsion from Parra’s paradise of women, she may well have left by choice to continue her search for place-belonging elsewhere in the Plantation. Parra reflects upon and preserves Piedra Azul and its other characters – those that comprise the *Tres Potencias* of María Lionza – and claims them as true Venezuelans. *Memorias* does offer recognition of the role Evelyn played in the home, but compared to Mamá, Daniel, and Cochocho, it is a role devoid of meaning, symbol, or magic. In the end, Evelyn embodies only her physical self: a transitory black servant who may or may not be a whore.

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<sup>264</sup> ‘The Industrial Relations Act (1972) of Trinidad and Tobago decrees that “household workers” are not workers under the law’. This legal proclamation formalized a history of denial of rights and status to domestic workers (Mohammed 161).

## CHAPTER 5: Going Back to Tara in *Gone with the Wind*

*Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell shares a nostalgic impulse for the homestead with *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca*, but differs from Parra's comparatively modest narrative in terms of intent. It is social rather than personal, a consciously crafted epic instead of a 'private' memoir, but its greatest difference lies in its intention: to rebuild. Mitchell's impulse stems from a perceived failure of Reconstruction, the post-Civil War era of rebuilding the decimated South which, from her perspective, further decimated the southern (white) way of life. Instead, Mitchell attempts to offer a 'New South' – postbellum, twentieth century, supposedly healed – in a new kind of foundational fiction. This is not nostalgia for a way of life that gradually disappeared, but one that was abruptly and, according to southerners, violently and shamefully taken from them. Though it reflects Mitchell's 'conservative agenda' (Cook 50), the New South is a new place. For Mitchell, looking back at slavery from the 1920s when she began work on her novel, the slave South seems an unrecognizable lost idyll. The nostalgia acting on her text is predicated upon a visceral dissatisfaction with the present that demands a rebuilding of the postbellum Plantation.

Mitchell has a mission: to restore the lost homeland. Like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Gone with the Wind* is a *doing* book, and Mitchell, like her heroine Scarlett O'Hara, takes her vocation seriously. Scarlett seeks first survival, then wealth. She witnesses the demise of Dixie and pragmatically equips herself for what comes next. A threatened homestead, the loss of the agricultural-family idyll, financial hardship, death – these threats lead Scarlett down a path of selfish, often ethically dubious behavior, but she does not waste time mourning or reflecting. Rather, she gets to work rebuilding what she can and her actions are

a blueprint for others to follow, a primer of achievement in the jeremiad tradition. *Gone with the Wind* represents restorative nostalgia through, as defined by Boym, its 'gravitat[ion] toward collective pictorial symbols [read: typologies] and oral culture' (49). Unlike Parra, Mitchell is not drawing on her own experiences or memories of the plantation home, but relies heavily on a popular post-Reconstruction narrative of disillusionment, injustice, and blame.<sup>265</sup> The text prompts the reader to the nostalgic action of 'relinquish[ing] critical thinking for emotional bonding' (xvi); it is politically and racially charged, and designed to draw together the disenfranchised whites of the region and prompt them to collective action: reclaiming their southland.

It is this concept of action that fundamentally separates Mitchell's nostalgic mode from Parra's. Rousseau's influence is almost wholly absent. Indeed, inequality and greed appear in *Gone with the Wind* as necessary pragmatism in the South's reclamation of its past glory. This 'glory' is framed by the Bakhtinian idyll: the land itself plays an important role and acts almost as a character itself – something beloved that is integral to the family. Yet the story's focus is Scarlett's journey from the loving domesticity of her antebellum nuclear family to an independent woman of means. Scarlett begins at Tara, the cotton plantation run by the firm hand of her fiery Irish father, Gerald, who is tempered by her gentle mother, the devout, creole Ellen. The Civil War, the burning of Tara's lands, and her parents' deaths conspire to destroy the family idyll. Scarlett is left as head of the family, charged with maintaining Tara and making it, and

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<sup>265</sup> Mitchell's narrative relies on a inheritance from the point of view of 'perpetrators' of slavery (Hirsch 3). However, because her writing does not attempt 'acts of repair and redress' to the traumatic events of slavery, unlike the works included in part 3 of this study, her work does not fit within the 'narrative reconstruction' requirements of postmemory (3, 16). It is instead a nostalgic remembrance of atrocity.

herself, financially solvent. To do so, she must face the 'abstract world' outside, find her place within it, and earn a new kind of education.<sup>266</sup> The brutal, capitalist world she encounters in postbellum Atlanta is a challenge, but Scarlett not only survives but thrives in it. Rousseau's single representative, in the form of the noble Ashley Wilkes, is crushed by the 'real world' in which his philosophy has become obsolete. Mitchell, contrary to what many scholars argue, is not wistful for the plantation or its inhabitants; as Alexandra Cook attests, 'Mitchell believes that the planter-knight of the Old South is doomed to extinction' (43). In fact, Scarlett complains of the frivolity and uselessness of old customs: 'Better that I'd learned to plow or chop cotton like a darky!' (Mitchell 410).<sup>267</sup> Nor does Mitchell idealize that which replaces it: a society that is cutthroat, vengeful, greedy, positivistic. She does, however, acknowledge that the post-idyllic world is the reality, and through *Gone with the Wind* offers a manual for survival within it. The reconstruction and re-destruction of the idyll traces the necessary steps for building and navigating the New South.

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<sup>266</sup> The abstract world is described by Bakhtin as a world:

[where] people are out of contact with each other, egoistically sealed-off from each other, greedily practical; where labor is differentiated and mechanized, where objects are alienated from the labor that produced them. It is necessary to constitute this great world on a new basis, to render it familiar, to humanize it. It is necessary to find a new relationship to nature, not to the little nature of one's own corner of the world but to the big nature of the great world, [...] to the wealth excavated from the earth's core [...]. A man must educate or re-educate himself for life in a world that is, from his point of view, enormous and foreign; he must make it his own, domesticate it [...]. Here the process of man's re-education is interwoven with the process of society's breakdown and reconstruction, that is, with historical process. (234)

<sup>267</sup> Mitchell argues that '[i]t did not occur to [Scarlett] that [her mother] could not have foreseen the collapse of civilization' and thus raised her to be 'gentle and gracious, honourable and kind, modest and truthful' in keeping with antebellum southern expectations of feminine behavior. Scarlett feels only that 'everything her mother had told her about life was wrong', or rather, valueless in the New South (Mitchell 410).

Margaret Mitchell was raised in post-Reconstruction Georgia as the daughter of Scots-Irish Catholic parents (Higgins 35).<sup>268</sup> Ethnically and religiously, she manifested her own experience in *Scarlett*, one which segregated her from the Anglo-Saxon Protestant ancestry long considered inherent to American identity.<sup>269</sup> *Scarlett*'s Irishness and Catholicism work beyond developing her characterization as an outsider; they are benchmarks for shifting racial categories in the US following emancipation. Nineteenth century Irish-Americans, or 'niggers turned inside-out', were rejected initially from the white American race until embarking upon a campaign to align themselves with the rest of the white nation (McGraw 127).<sup>270</sup> Their postbellum insistence on their whiteness found approval in a society that was grateful for clearer racial distinctions and the reification of a 'piously unified America' (Fessenden 253).<sup>271</sup> As Fessenden notes, '[t]he relative ease of assimilating Catholics under the heading of "Christian," and European ethnics under the heading of "white," contrasted sharply with the difficulty of accommodating emancipated slaves under the third of these overarching signifiers, "American"' (251).<sup>272</sup> Racial identity's reliance on a black *ancestor* offered a foundation on which Mitchell relied to further separate black Americans from white Irish-Americans: mixed-race Americans were increasingly identified

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<sup>268</sup> For Mitchell's biography, see Pyron, *Southern Daughter*.

<sup>269</sup> McGraw notes that Mitchell's Catholic grandmother allegedly provided the basis for the character of *Scarlett* (124).

<sup>270</sup> See also Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* and Moynihan, "Kissing the Rod That Chastised Me". Moynihan argues that in the 1840s abolitionists had encouraged Irish-Americans to equate themselves with the black and mixed-race population and work to oppose slavery. This alignment did not manifest and by the 1850s, even 'free mulattoes were becoming blacker' (126).

<sup>271</sup> See Fessenden for a discussion of Catholicism's absorption into American Christianity (248-254).

<sup>272</sup> Fessenden further argues that the antebellum negative associations of Catholics with the 'thematics of captivity, conspiracy, and bodily excess' (in short, superstitious misunderstandings of denominational difference) transferred on to post-emancipation blacks (252).

as 'black' Americans.<sup>273</sup> Because of this emergent binary, black characters became increasingly essentialized and stereotyped – especially the mammy.

Scarlett, like Mitchell, meets the racial and religious ambiguities of the New South with mixed results. Mitchell's nostalgia expresses itself through Scarlett's final return to the plantation in the final pages. Tara, where she first fled 'in fear and defeat [and] emerged from its sheltering walls strong and armed for victory', is where she turns again at the close of the Mitchell's narrative to recover from her miscegenous transgressions, their consequences, and her abandonment (Mitchell 983). At the end, Tara offers none of the charms or comforts it did during Scarlett's childhood – except Mammy, the 'last link with the old days' (984). Initially, Scarlett's longing for Mammy reads as explicitly nostalgic,<sup>274</sup> but this reading ignores the services Mammy performs for her white mistress. Scarlett is not interested in merely obtaining emotional comfort from the 'broad bosom' and 'gnarled black hand' (Ibid.). Rather, she continues to require Mammy's active services as her accomplice. She requires the special devotion

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<sup>273</sup> Sollors notes that 'proof of "full-blooded" Africanness had to be given for the decisive ancestor from whom [fractional] counting proceeded' (for designating an individual 'one-fourth' African, for example) (6). Evidence for full-bloodedness was circumstantial. Moynihan argues that:

[until] the middle of the nineteenth century, [...] Irish Americans and free mulattoes in South Carolina and Louisiana [...] shared the dubious honor of being racially ambiguous. They defied America's racial binary in that they weren't deemed to be black, but neither were they regarded as completely white. By mid-century, however, this situation was changing and the two groups were embarking, voluntarily or not, on divergent paths: the Irish were pursuing their claims to whiteness and free mulattoes were being consigned to the category of blackness. This process continued until the 1920s, by which time, any lingering notions of *degrees* of whiteness or blackness has virtually disappeared. (126)

Moynihan's suggestion of 'voluntary' racial alignment is clarified by the 'consignment' of mulattoes to the black side of the binary. Her assertion is that free mulattoes would have preferred to be categorized as white.

<sup>274</sup> McPherson argues that Mitchell and her Scarlett are simultaneously 'repelled [...] and powerfully attracted' to Mammy's blackness and that for the writer and her heroine 'blackness becomes a shadowy source of comfort and security' (58).

that only a black mammy can give to a white child. Tara McPherson argues that Mammy exists simultaneously as a foil to Scarlett's whiteness and as a support to ensure the reproduction of that whiteness.<sup>275</sup> Scarlett's mammy so fully embodies black mammyhood and its support of white womanhood that she relinquishes her own name in personifying her role, advancing from Aunt Chloe's prototypical mammy to the archetypal Mammy.<sup>276</sup> She is 'reduced to a comical caricature', 'not just fat [but] grossly obese' and 'monstrous' (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 125, 127). Despite Mitchell's crafting of a 'New South', Mammy still fills the old role. Mammy's support remains essential to the success and happiness of her white charge, her mistress whose need for a mammy is eternal. This image of a mammy as 'the faithful black retainer' amounts to a 'post-Reconstruction "mammy worship"', according to Wallace-Sanders (Ibid. 94). Mammy acts as a surrogate mother while strictly adhering to the mammy stereotype which she not only perpetuates, but consecrates in the American imagination.

In Atlanta, for example, Mammy acts as Scarlett's bodyguard, 'protecting her from "a black buck" and impudent "black trash"' (McPherson 55); white

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<sup>275</sup> Adams's analysis of the corset-lacing scene before the barbeque at Twelve Oaks frames the victimization of women and slaves (or, more specifically, white women and their domestic servants) as 'mutually complicit agents of the other's oppression' (72). The physical discomfort Mammy inflicts on Scarlett as the corset tightens begins to read like Mammy's revenge. However, Mammy is working for what she believes is Scarlett's benefit. McPherson stresses that Mammy's blackness emphasizes Scarlett's whiteness, and that Mammy 'is content to serve white power, always working to ensure it' (60). McPherson relates the anecdote of what she terms a 'lenticular' postcard found in a Mississippi shop; it is a hologram bearing two scenes reminiscent of the *Gone with the Wind* film: the head-on image contains a white-columned plantation house and 'hoopskirted' white woman, the other, viewed at an angle, depicts a 'grinning, portly mammy' (26). This card represents the intrinsic divisions and connections between the white southern woman and her mammy in that one is the opposite of the other but also exists only in relation to the other, and that the mammy is secondary.

<sup>276</sup> According to Wallace-Sanders, it was 'not unusual for white southerners to describe her as the most influential force in their childhood, and yet not know her real name' (*Mammy* 7).

femininity is under assault from black men, a fact that Mammy (as a black woman) recognizes. Mammy also spends much of the text reproaching Scarlett for poor behavior, but she encourages that poor behavior when necessary. Mammy's support of Scarlett's plan to lure Frank Kennedy away from her sister Suellen is one of the more surprising passages in the text, beaux-stealing being one of Scarlett's favorite past-times and a habit that has earned her the ire of her well-bred female peers, isolating her from good society. However, Mammy is both sentimental and practical: as a 'good servant' in the Aunt Chloe tradition, she refuses to leave Miss Ellen's family in need, and recognizes the dependence of the O'Haras (including their freed ex-slaves) upon the maintenance of Tara. Yet, when faced with a question of survival, Mammy's preoccupation with Miss Ellen's moral code is subverted to her pragmatism and self-preservational instincts. After emancipation, Mammy continues to rely on the O'Hara family. Scarlett returns to Tara at the novel's close not only for succor, but to gather reinforcements from the one person unable to cut ties with her. The mistress and slave reunite in the nostalgic plantation home but, like Piedra Azul at the end of *Memorias*, it is a changed home.

Mammy is perhaps the most famous American mammy, owing to the immense popularity of *Gone with the Wind*. The bestselling text sold 1.7 million copies in the first year following publication. Critical reception was mixed, and charges of racism were immediate,<sup>277</sup> but a large passionate and devoted

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<sup>277</sup> Contemporary reviews of the novel charged it with racist and essentialist portrayals of black characters. In February 1939, the *Los Angeles Sentinel* condemned it as a 'novel that stinks with the preachment of racial inferiority', full of 'age-old slanders that Negroes did not want their freedom' and that they were 'rapists and murderers' and 'little less than brutes' (Selznick Archive, BK 360, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin). The Communist *Sunday Worker* published a piece by

readership led to the release of a film version in 1939 (Porter 706). The film is iconic, an American classic,<sup>278</sup> and source material exclusively focused on the text version is scarce. It is the film version that is most commonly associated with *Gone with the Wind*, and it is in many ways unfaithful to some of Mitchell's literary constructions. The film celebrates the Old South:

[it is] heavily tilted [...] toward the nostalgic end of the spectrum, largely ignoring the constitutive ambivalence at work in the novel between the traditional legend of Southern ladies and courtiers and the reality of the capitalist entrepreneurial spirit that actually drives Scarlett, and with her the novel's plot. (707)

The Old South in Technicolor is infinitely more visually appealing than Mitchell's hard-worked red earth or the reality of a burnt Atlanta and lawless shanty towns after the war. The heroine, physically unremarkable in the novel (her 17-inch waist and green eyes the exceptions), is a glamorous beauty on screen.<sup>279</sup> The Tara of the film is a magnificent, white-columned mansion, not Gerald's 'clumsy sprawling building', 'built by slave labour' (Mitchell 46). Mitchell is therefore accused of promoting a positive commemoration of the South under slavery to an extent that is unjustified; her praise is focused not upon slavery but upon Scarlett's 'capitalist entrepreneurial [read: positivist] spirit'. Indeed, many of the elements that venerate the Old South, that lend the film such a glittering, mythical nostalgia – its 'moonlight and magnolias' (Higgins 31) – are products of the

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African-American *Daily Worker* board member Ben Davis, Jr., in which the novel is charged with inciting racial hatred (Lukenbill 203).

<sup>278</sup> The film adaptation won eight awards including Best Picture at the 1940 Academy Awards and is ranked sixth in the American Film Institute's '100 Greatest American Films of All Time' list (2007). <<http://www.afi.com/100years/movies10.aspx>> (accessed 4 December 2015).

<sup>279</sup> The novel opens, 'Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm' (Mitchell 3).

studio, not Mitchell.<sup>280</sup> In fact, at the time of publication Mitchell was concerned chiefly about alienating her southern white audience.<sup>281</sup> She considered her portrayal of antebellum life less than complimentary; the Old South was an ideal that many southerners still clung to and she was, through Scarlett's journey, criticizing it as charming but antiquated. The film omitted some of the arguably more racist elements from the book, and the result was a whitewashed production which erased the harsher, grimmer racial and socio-economic facts of Reconstruction depicted by Mitchell in favor of a glittering, chivalric romanticism. This whitewashing entailed a total obliteration of race-mixing, already treated with significant anxiety in Mitchell's text.

Miscegenation both fascinated and terrified Mitchell. Prior to her decade-long writing of *Gone with the Wind*, Mitchell produced a work called *Ropa Carmagin*. At her husband's suggestion it was never published and the manuscript was burned. The plot centered on the romantic relationship between a white woman and free mulatto (Moynihan 124). Mitchell, eager to appeal to a wide audience, minimized references to or descriptions of miscegenation in *Gone with the Wind*. She could not, however, omit the theme entirely. Mixed-race sexual relationships were a fact of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction South, but were a topic undesirable in a potential bestseller. Rather than neglect miscegenation in the text altogether, she couched it in language that was as

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<sup>280</sup> Mitchell wrote that she had 'been embarrassed on many occasions by finding [herself] included among writers who pictured the South as a land of white-columned mansions whose wealthy owners had thousands of slaves and drank thousands of juleps. [...] North Georgia was certainly no such country – if it ever existed anywhere – and I took great pains to describe North Georgia as it was' (Porter 706). Mitchell's nostalgia was not for a picturesque, prelapsarian society, but for the clear social and racial paradigms under slavery.

<sup>281</sup> Porter argues that Mitchell feared the novel would offend 'white Southern dowagers [rather] than Northern liberals' (706).

ambiguous as it was suggestive, thus demonstrating how pervasive and omnipresent a concern it was to her contemporary society: never discussed, constantly considered. Mammy's sexlessness, key to erasing miscegenation, further obfuscated the sexual exploitation of black female slaves and enabled a new narrative of victimhood. Mitchell manipulated the gendered facts of miscegenation to support a reading of the black man as predator: the 'rape myth'.<sup>282</sup> Rhett Butler – the outsider, the dashing figure, the libertine – is the seductive threat to Mitchell's (and America's) emergent heroine, and embodies the threat of potential social fluidity for mixed-race individuals that came with emancipation. Mitchell uses Rhett Butler, the proof of miscegenation, to shift focus from the female subaltern to the male and effects an erasure of master-slave miscegenation. It is through this new paradigm of race-mixing, one that turns black men into rapists and white women into their victims, that her characters come to loss, alienation, and tragedy. This recasting of race relations echoed segregationist shifts in southern religious communities that, in turn, influenced ideologies of race-mixing.

As a Catholic of Irish descent, Mitchell strove to distinguish her lineage from that of an inside-out African, but also to recognize a 'compartmentalization of ethnicity [that] suggests a more complex matrix' (McGraw 124). The complexity in her depictions of white ethnicity are, for the most part, not applied to her non-white characters. Mitchell depicts Irishness as historically '[reaching] the very

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<sup>282</sup> McPherson references the 'popular myths of the black male rapist' that underpinned southern lynching campaigns (22). Sheley argues that 'the lynching of black men for real or actual assaults on white women was much more characteristic of twentieth-century lynch law' than nineteenth-century lynching, which was more political in scope (13). It was arguably more of a preoccupation for Mitchell and her contemporaries than it would have been for *Scarlett*.

bottom of the white social continuum' (126). Indeed, Scarlett has more in common with the miscegenous Johnnie Gallagher than she does with any members of the white plantocracy,<sup>283</sup> and to ignore these parallels oversimplifies Mitchell's racial and religious motives. Through Scarlett's rejection by Atlanta society, Mitchell provides a history and lamentation of Irish-American othering and lays charges of the resultant miscegenation at the feet of the white, Protestant nation that perpetuated their isolation and exclusion.<sup>284</sup> The Irish, then, walked a line of hybrid identity politics, working to establish their place in white America while participating in interracial unions due to practical concerns of available companionship, as well as romantic love and sexual desire. This relatively syncretic approach rejects a doctrine of racial absolutes. Southern Catholicism, however, rather than syncretizing with African or indigenous religions, bowed to the vested interests of regional socio-political discourse and adopted the proslavery positions of the dominant southern Protestant and evangelical denominations.<sup>285</sup> In Mitchell's restorative vision of religion and ethnicity in the US, 'Catholic' signifies 'Christian', 'Irish' denotes 'white', and racial segregation informs religious segregation. An example of southern Catholicism's

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<sup>283</sup> India Wilkes tells Scarlett, 'Yankees don't know that you aren't one of us and have never been. [...] you haven't any gentility' (Mitchell 757).

<sup>284</sup> Mitchell's memory retains the painful exclusion of ancestral Irishness from Anglo-Protestant America and the distrust in which Catholics were held. An example of this religious isolation occurs during Gerald's funeral:

[the] gathering joined heartily in the Lord's Prayer but their voices trailed off into embarrassed silence when he began the Hail Mary. They had never heard that prayer and they looked furtively at each other [...at] the response: 'Pray for us, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.' (674-675)

Mitchell joins the liturgical practices in an effort to symbolically fuse the Catholic rites into the broader American Christian tradition, but highlights the ritual differences and their 'furtive' reception.

<sup>285</sup> The Catholic Church in the United States, operating in this environment of extreme competition unlike in Latin America, succumbed to local pressures regarding race. See Bailey and Snedker; see also Boles for regional theological disparities regarding slavery and the clergy's positions, especially Touchstone, 'Planters and Slave Religion', for political pressure applied by local landowners and secular community leaders.

capitulation to the proslavery narrative of slaveowners' pastoral mission to their slaves appears early in the novel. Ellen leads the household in prayer while the 'house servants' kneel in the hallway, denied the white family's space of shared spiritual communion. For the slaves, evening prayers 'with their white folks was one of the events of the day'. The message of the liturgy itself falls on ignorant ears, but it is the ritual and repetition the slaves enjoy (66). The slaves are thus excluded not only from the meaning and salvation of the Rosary, but from the very room in which it is recited. As at Tara, the absorption of the black population into the American religious fold had never been a popular option: hence, Stowe's colonization. However, as regional and racial tensions soared prior to the Civil War, the urgency for distinction and segregation increased.<sup>286</sup> All race-mixing became an abomination – social, religious, and sexual – and miscegenous transgressions often led to violence.

By the 1920s, when Mitchell began writing *Gone with the Wind*, the 'chamber of horrors' of slavery had burgeoned into a horrifying vigilante crusade: lynching. Black and white met at the end of a rope. In their extensive sociological study on the correlation between racial mixing in houses of worship and lynching, 'Practicing What They Preach? Lynching and Religion in the American South, 1890-1929', Amy Kate Bailey and Karen A. Snedker find that lynching<sup>287</sup> was

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<sup>286</sup> The pamphlet 'Miscegenation', mentioned in the introduction of this study (18) testified to white anxieties and the search for racial labels. In 1850, the category of 'mulatto/a' was added to the US census (Moynihan 126) – in direct contrast to the Venezuelan example of promoting mixture as the 'general' signifier of national identity. The 'one drop' rule inscribed itself upon the national political consciousness.

<sup>287</sup> 'Lynching', according to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is the 'extralegal killing perpetrated by three or more individuals who claimed their murderous actions were intended to uphold justice or tradition'. Hanging is not explicitly stated as the mode of murder. White men were lynched during this period, and lynchings occurred throughout the US, but in the South 90 percent of victims were black (Bailey and Snedker 845-847). For a comprehensive analysis of postbellum lynching by state,

most prevalent in southern counties with greater denominational diversity and where black churches were led by black pastors.<sup>288</sup> Black southerners, newly freed, no longer looked to their masters or their masters' clergymen for spiritual instruction. The biblical defense of and validation for slavery played no part in these black churches and the congregations looked to build their own traditions. Black worshipers, in religiously segregated communities, were therefore outside of what Émile Durkheim terms the dominant 'moral community';<sup>289</sup> they were now definitively excluded from the Citie Upon a Hill. White southern churches continued in their work of promoting racial hierarchy and maintaining white supremacy, which they had begun in the earliest days of slavery.<sup>290</sup> Black churches and their teachings were direct challenges to these imperatives and such conflicting beliefs fostered racially motivated violence at the local and regional level (852). Members of black-only churches could no longer be monitored (or controlled) by the white population.

What Bailey and Snedker term 'religious pluralism' denotes a context of competition in the South, such as that between evangelical factions, in which denominations worked to assert their legitimacy and supremacy (851-853). Following emancipation, church leaders continued to adapt religious teachings to popular ideologies in an effort to fill the pews. Continuing to deny universal personhood, spirituality, and concepts of individual value and sacredness to black

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especially Georgia, see Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*. See also Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*.

<sup>288</sup> The study's quantitative analysis concluded that these counties experienced an 82 percent higher incidence of lynching than counties without black-led churches (870).

<sup>289</sup> See Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* for a discussion on collective morality in relation to organized religion.

<sup>290</sup> See Touchstone, 'Planters and Slave Religion'; Miller, 'Slaves and Southern Catholicism'.

American lives, southern US churches contributed to lynching – it was not explicitly condoned, but it was not expressly or effectively condemned. White southern political leaders were highly influential in the region’s powerful Protestant churches, and their racist influence, predicated upon the support of preserving Jim Crow laws, infiltrated church doctrine to an extent impossible in Venezuelan Catholicism, for example. It is important to note that southern Catholicism did, in fact, affect a lower incidence of lynching in communities with large, mixed-race congregations.<sup>291</sup> Otherwise, the churches and clergymen in the region answered to no one but their own congregants. However, the greatest anxiety around race-mixing was not religious – indeed, counties in which white and black church members worshiped together, regardless of denomination, demonstrated a reduction in racial violence.<sup>292</sup> The chief concern in the US was still sexual mixing and the mixed-race offspring that polluted white America. Miscegenation could not be tolerated or ignored as it had been under slavery. Instead, it was condemned and punished.

Within the walls of Tara, there is no evidence of master-slave miscegenation, but there is a mixed-race presence. Dilcey, an Afro-indigenous slave, performs the functions of mammyhood which Mammy herself is unwilling

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<sup>291</sup> Southern white members of ‘non-Southern denominations’ (e.g., Catholics and Quakers) were found in the study to partake in ‘lower levels of lynching’ (Bailey and Snedker 863, 874 footnote).

<sup>292</sup> Boles states that, under slavery, biracial churches provided the ‘normative worship experience’ (‘Introduction’ 1-18, 10). James’ contention that ‘life within the [antebellum southern] churches provided whites and blacks with experiences that were warmer and more personal than the common perception of slave society would lead one to expect’ (‘Biracial Fellowship’ 40), though vague, nonetheless supports Bailey and Snedker’s empirical findings of ‘lower incidence of lynching’ in counties comprised largely of mixed-race congregations (855).

or unable to execute: childbirth and breastfeeding.<sup>293</sup> Dilcey occupies a less-dark step on the darkness scale, populating murky racial waters. She is noble as a result of her Cherokee blood: '[she] was self-possessed and walked with a dignity that surpassed even Mammy's, for Mammy had acquired her dignity and Dilcey's was in her blood' (60). Dilcey's inherent dignity and proven fertility presents the potential for miscegenation with a white man; this racially ambiguous threat to white purity is a potential cause of her omission from the film version. Dilcey's marriage to Pork in the text, however, reinforces Mitchell's assertion that white male sexuality was reserved for white women only. Dilcey's only choice in marriage is to marry darker. In fact, it is a choice she has made before. Prissy, also technically the offspring of a mixed-race union, is the daughter of Dilcey and a black, unnamed father. Prissy exclusively exhibits the racist black characteristics that she inherits: laziness, shiftlessness, difficulty with the truth; Scarlett deems her a 'sly, stupid creature' (30). None of her mother's more noble ethnic traits have passed to her. Prissy is an inarticulate, childlike, sexless caricature, a 'mammy in training' (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 129). Dilcey and Pork's baby, a birth which conveniently enables Melanie's starving baby to be suckled at a more noble breast than that of a black wet-nurse,<sup>294</sup> perpetuates the movement of Indian and black mixed-race progeny irrevocably towards black, ensuring that, in another generation, the noble characteristics and features of Dilcey will be erased from memory, leaving only a clear binary of white and black

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<sup>293</sup> Dilcey's motherhood contrasts with Mammy's childlessness to emphasize Mammy's total and exclusive devotion to Scarlett, whom she 'nearly nurtures [...] to death' (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 126).

<sup>294</sup> Dilcey's nursing of two children, her own and a white woman's, recalls Villaverde's 'milk sisters' Cecilia and Adela. Mitchell selects a more racially acceptable breast than Mammy's, whose black skin recalls that of María de Regla. Melanie's baby is raised at Tara during his early years alongside his milk-sibling, Dilcey and Pork's unnamed baby who does not appear again in the text.

– all evidence of southern race-mixing, especially that of forced miscegenation and the abuse of the black and mixed-race women, erased.<sup>295</sup> This erasure enables the reverse motif of black male-white female miscegenation to fill the void.

*Gone with the Wind* punishes Rhett Butler for his efforts at passing and miscegenation. This reading of Rhett as the non-white party in a mixed-race relationship establishes Scarlett as incontestably white. Though Mitchell endeavors to emphasize Irishness as difference, it falls within the racial category of whiteness by Mitchell's time, and she praises it as a strengthening agent in the new southerner.<sup>296</sup> An infusion of new Irish blood – in Scarlett's case through Gerald's paternity – enriches the aristocracy and enables its white offspring to rebound and thrive.<sup>297</sup> Scarlett, as the product of a *mésalliance*,<sup>298</sup> though not miscegenation, is excluded from the pure lineage of southern aristocracy which surrounds Tara and performs, as McGraw contends, the role of 'tragic mulatta figure' (129).<sup>299</sup> The literal 'mulatta' is erased and replaced by a more racially palatable figure: the tragic Irish belle. Scarlett seeks to emulate her white

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<sup>295</sup> Johnnie Gallagher and Rebecca are Mitchell's only reference to the real demographics of miscegenation and exploitation exercised on subaltern women, and their relationship carries two important caveats: it only occurred among the lowest class of white men, and it resulted in no children. Both of these contentions, of course, were historically false.

<sup>296</sup> McGraw argues that 'Scarlett [ultimately] succeeds because her blended identity contains a visible amount of traditional and valued Southern whiteness as well as other-tainted strength' (130).

<sup>297</sup> Higgins argues that Mitchell 'undercuts racial essentialism with her Irish heroine as a survivor' (42).

<sup>298</sup> McGraw uses this term (130), as does Cook (51, footnote 45). Cook argues that Mitchell includes a 'shadowy criticism of race relations', though it is directed at the white race's '[need] to reformulate the way it conceives racial purity'. Gerald and Ellen's marriage was originally opposed by her Charleston society family due to their age difference, social class and Gerald's Irish ethnicity.

<sup>299</sup> See McGraw for a theoretical reimagining of the nineteenth-century 'tragic mulatta' plot in which Scarlett is originally imagined via a 'blended identity', but avoids ultimate tragedy through her white credentials (128).

aristocratic mother, but is ruled by the Irish passions of her father. Ellen and Gerald's different white ethnicities inform the limits to Mitchell's ideas of acceptable mixing. While Scarlett does not die as a result of tainted origins or her miscegenous relationship, she is ultimately punished for her transgression through rejection and abandonment. It is the racially problematic Rhett who rejects her, yet simultaneously frees her to return to her mammy and the familiar, endangered hierarchy of the nostalgic Plantation.

From Rhett's first introduction in the novel, his exclusion from 'good' society mars his reputation; as Scarlett learns, 'he is not received' by his family or in his native Charleston. The reasons are numerous: drinking, gambling, and 'that business about the girl he didn't marry' (Mitchell 95). Rhett's history casts doubt upon his racial origins: Sinéad Moynihan posits that Rhett is a 'free mulatto' and actively working to disguise that fact.<sup>300</sup> He is "'passing" for white' (123), a trope that depends upon 'seeing and not seeing, knowing and not knowing' (130). His incentive for this deception is his pursuit of the white(ned) Scarlett. Rhett regularly dismisses the social norms and practices of southern white gentility,<sup>301</sup> which is also a rejection of the Plantation. Only his mother communicates with and receives him. This fact, coupled with a general paucity of detail regarding Rhett's unknown past and his antagonism towards white society, suggests that,

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<sup>300</sup> Moynihan argues that a 'free mulatto class [was] not uncommon in antebellum Charleston and New Orleans' (125).

<sup>301</sup> Rhett's initial contempt for the 'Old Guard', his insistence on dancing with Scarlett while she is mourning, his stated refusal to marry, and his affairs with marginalized women like Belle Watling demonstrate his general unwillingness to adhere to the gendered conventions practiced by other upper-class white men in the text. Scarlett believes that much of what Rhett says about money, society, and the Confederacy 'makes sense'. She shares his opinions, and is critical only of his unwillingness to conceal them.

as the product of a darker *mésalliance* (miscegenation), he symbolically rejects his white father in preference for his black mother.

Rhett's physical appearance others him immediately. At Twelve Oaks, Scarlett registers his height and powerful build:

[she] thought she had never seen a man with such wide shoulders, so heavy with muscles, almost too heavy for gentility. When her eye caught his, he smiled, showing animal-white teeth below a close-clipped black moustache. He was dark of face, swarthy as a pirate, and his eyes were as bold and black as any pirate's appraising a galleon to be scuttled or a maiden to be ravished [...] She felt that she should be insulted by such a look [...] but there was undeniably *a look of good blood in his dark face*. It showed in the thin hawk nose over the full red lips, the high forehead and the wide-set eyes. (Mitchell 92; my emphasis)

Rhett is no gentleman, as Scarlett informs him (and he counters that she is no lady) (115). Compared to the golden-haired Ashley Wilkes, a cultured man of studied gentility whose irrefutably white lineage was protected and cultivated over generations of incestuous coupling, Rhett's swarthy and animalism condemn a hyperactive, sub-human sexuality. Scarlett regularly describes him as 'impudent' and 'insolent', words she also uses to describe the freed ex-slaves she considers dangerous.<sup>302</sup> It is only the presence of 'good' (read: white) blood which mitigates his appearance and permits Scarlett to accept his lustful smile without offense.

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<sup>302</sup> Moynihan analyzes Mitchell's use of language with regards to Rhett and the 'newly freed Negroes[s]' laughter (128), and Mitchell also points to his 'impertinent' or 'insolent' gaze throughout the text. These terms are often used to describe his gaze at Scarlett's, for example, during their first meeting where he 'looks as if [...] he knew what [she] looked like without [her] shimmy' (92-94).

Mitchell's lost story of miscegenation in *Ropa Carmagin* survives in *Gone with the Wind's* central relationship. Here, then, is a core theme and obsessive concern of Mitchell's. She offers a distillation of the rape myth through Scarlett and Rhett that is consensual and bound by the safe confines of marriage; it is a more palatable, less violent version of the myth, one through which Mitchell can argue the illegitimacy of such unions without disgusting or offending her white readers (a concern that recalls Stowe's 'veil'). Perhaps the most significant aspect of the rape myth is not what it mythologizes, but what it refuses to recognize: the actual rape of black and mixed-race women by white men. Post-slavery society, in refusing to acknowledge this violence against slave women (which Stowe had condemned through Legree, Cassy, and Emmeline), silences this history and denies the justice for subaltern women that it demands while creating white female victims of a largely imagined sexual violence. The facts are flipped, and the racial identities of the victims and perpetrators are exchanged. The victimization of the black female or the 'tragic mulatta' is transcribed onto the body of the 'tragic white female', thus crafting an appropriated victim-symbol of the South. The true violence and sexual abuse suffered by slave women under slavery disappears, and in its place remains only the obsessively imagined (re)enactment of the vengeful reverse occurring: after slavery and the manifold abuses inflicted upon slave women, is it now the white woman's turn? In Mitchell's and Scarlett's postbellum reality, a world irreconcilable to the gentle, protected white life of the true Plantation which preceded it, it is a legitimate, terrifying possibility.

Mitchell initially addresses the threat indirectly. Will Benteen informs Scarlett that 'a nigger can kill a white man and not get hung', causing them both to remember (privately, silently) 'what had happened to a lone white woman on

an isolated farm' (Mitchell 495). In truth, black men were lynched at a rate of one per week in the years between 1890 and 1929,<sup>303</sup> often for perceived affronts to white female virtue. For Mitchell's characters, the threat of rape extends not only from black men, but from marauders and scavenging Yankee troops. The imagined scenario of 'the lone white woman' is perhaps more horrifying, and tantalizing, to Mitchell's audience than a detailed recounting of the attack, especially since the rapist is a black man. Within the text, Rhett's engagement with the topic of rape and the assault on white female virtue is the most conflicted. He alone articulates the fear of white southern women, simultaneously voicing and contradicting Scarlett's fear that a Yankee would rape her: 'I think not. Though, of course, they'd want to [...] No use getting mad at me for reading your thoughts. That's what all our delicately nurtured and pure-minded Southern ladies think. They have it on their minds constantly' (319). His point is confirmed by Mitchell's text; though Yankees attack, provoke, and threaten, they do not rape.<sup>304</sup>

Black men in the text, however, do. Scarlett is increasingly paranoid about the threat of black rape during her time in Atlanta after the war. She believes that she 'could be raped and, very probably, nothing would ever be done about it' (616). The example of the lone white woman stands as testimony to the inherent sexual dangers of the new population of free black men. Such is their increasing 'insolence' that Rhett commits murder, exacting revenge on a black man who was

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<sup>303</sup> This amounted to a total of 'at least 2,500 blacks [...] in former Confederate states' over five decades (Tolnay and Beck 17).

<sup>304</sup> The idea of a Yankee rape is largely symbolic. McPherson points to the South's 'feminized position vis-à-vis the North'. The North's dominant, victorious role, the South's subjugation under Reconstruction, and the decimation of the southern white male population and traditional notions of southern male gentility led to the 'hyperfeminiz[ation]' of the South (19). Sheley also points to a conflation between the sexual vulnerability of white women and the legal vulnerability of the former Confederacy (12). The South has become a land of women, with 'the land itself being figured as feminine as well' (Ibid.). Even the plantation homestead is named Tara.

'uppity' to a white woman. When recounting the murder to Scarlett, he states plainly, 'I did kill the nigger. [...W]hat else could a Southern gentleman do?' (591).<sup>305</sup> Such a murderous impulse is surprising in Rhett, who previously did not subscribe to conventional notions of southern gentility or femininity. His reaction appears almost visceral; he lynches the man impulsively. In turn, Rhett faces execution by hanging for his crime but is released; he is a (passing) white man who goes unpunished for killing a black man – the reality of lynching.

Rhett's seemingly uncharacteristic committal of murder for a breach of racial etiquette is merely a continuation of his efforts to pass for white. These efforts take on new urgency before the end of the war. Ben Railton attributes Rhett's 'growth from cynical, self-absorbed critic of the Old South to nostalgic southern gentleman' to 'his deepened sense of the possibility and consequently the dangers of miscegenation in the Reconstruction South' (41). The loss of Atlanta signals the crumbling of a racial hierarchy which, through his endeavor at passing, he has indirectly bolstered and from which he has directly benefitted. Railton argues that for Mitchell, miscegenation since emancipation was the 'ultimate tragedy of the South' (53). For the mixed-race Rhett Butler, it is not the 'dangers of miscegenation' that threaten the South, but the growing public obsession with and awareness of it that threaten him. His motivation for murdering a black man who was 'uppity' was not to stop miscegenation, but to limit public awareness of it and protect his racial identity.

Scarlett is horrified by suggestions of miscegenation. When Tony Fontaine tells her that Jonas Wilkerson 'had the gall [...] to say niggers had a

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<sup>305</sup> He also confesses to killing a Yankee cavalryman following an altercation.

right to – to – white women’, her reaction is such that he comments, ‘I don’t wonder you look sick’ (Mitchell 614). Tony, despite having violently murdered Wilkerson and a black man who entered the family kitchen and spoke to his sister-in-law, displays difficulty in even articulating the idea of miscegenation, and Scarlett begins a lengthy rumination on the racial state of affairs under Reconstruction (614-624). The impudence and laziness of the blacks, the suspension of habeas corpus, the exploitation by the Scallawags and Carpetbaggers, the suffering and ‘terrorization’ of the southern whites – ‘these ignominies and dangers were as nothing compared with the peril of white women, many bereft by the war of male protection’. Mitchell here uses this ‘peril’, the rape myth, to provide historical reasoning for the creation of a racist vigilante organization dedicated to lynching: ‘[i]t was the large number of outrages on women and the ever-present fear for the safety of their wives and daughters that drove Southern men to cold and trembling fury and caused the Ku Klux Klan to spring up overnight’. Mitchell notes that the:

North wanted every member of the Ku Klux hunted down and hanged, because they had dared take the punishment of crime into their own hands at a time when the ordinary processes of law and order had been overthrown by the invaders. (623)

Mitchell’s duplicitous history of the emergence of the KKK as a justified reaction by victimized white southerners, and the hypocrisy of her sympathetic portrayal of its members being ‘hunted down and hanged’, when this was their preferred

method of terrorizing the black community, evidences a pro-Plantation revisionist history and a total rejection of historical miscegenation.<sup>306</sup>

The threat of black male rape manifests in the attack on Scarlett at Shantytown, which is racially ambiguous in several ways. First, Scarlett's peers hold her partially responsible; she was, in fact, riding alone past Shantytown in the evening. The suggestion is that an unescorted white woman is inevitable prey to black male attackers. However, Scarlett's journey is necessary to her financial survival, and Shantytown itself, populated by black men, white men, ex-convicts, and prostitutes, is presented as a powder keg of criminal activity, implicitly sanctioned by the Yankee occupiers who do nothing to eradicate it. Scarlett's action, though unwise, is justified. Second, her attackers are not exclusively black. The attackers, a black man and a white man, are primarily interested in robbing Scarlett. Yet, the black attacker's assault is framed sexually: he was 'a squat black negro with shoulders and chest like a gorilla' who, rather than search the buggy for cash or valuables, immediately insists 'She's probably got her money in her bosom!' His motive differs from the white man's. His assault reads as a violation of her essentialized whiteness:

What happened next was like a nightmare to Scarlett...As the negro came running to the buggy, his black face twisted in a leering grin, she fired point-blank at him...The negro was beside her, so close that she could smell the rank odour of him as he fought madly, clawing at his face, and then she felt his big hand at her throat and, with a ripping noise, her basque was torn open from neck to waist. Then the black hand fumbled between her breasts, and terror and revulsion such as

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<sup>306</sup> Railton argues that Mitchell 'blames' the Yankees for the introduction of miscegenation to the South, a position demonstrated by the absence of explicitly mixed-race characters and children in the novel prior to Reconstruction (54). This belief, for Mitchell, explains away pre-existing racist motives for the KKK's emergence and reframes its rise as a moral imperative, forced on southern men by external factors.

she had never known came over her and she screamed like an insane woman. (750-751)

The struggle is primitive and animalistic – the odor, ‘clawing’ – and the assailant, unimpeded by a gunshot, breaches the barrier of her basque, a shield for the forbidden white female form but also one that serves to make it desirable. The fumbling black hand is alien against white breasts, and the juxtaposition, the abomination of skin-mixing, drives Scarlett temporarily mad. Her only recourse is to then ‘bit[e] as savagely as she could’, matching the attacker’s beastly aggression. Scarlett is animalized and debased by the contact.

Big Sam, Tara’s former foreman, rescues Scarlett. When he sees her exposed breasts, he quickly averts his eyes, rushes her home in the buggy, and tells her ‘Ah hope Ah done kill dat black baboon. [...] ef he hahmed you, Miss Scarlett, Ah’ll go back an’ mek sho of it’. Sam tells Frank Kennedy, ‘Ah got dar fo’ dey done mo’n t’ar her dress’, confirming that rape was not only possible but inevitable (752). These would-be rapists, according to Mitchell, are the justification for the KKK: white female flesh is a temptation to black men and only white men can defend or avenge it.<sup>307</sup> When Rhett warns the Klan of the Yankee ambush, his association moves him beyond a single incident of (unpunished) vigilante lynching into an organized anti-miscegenation campaign. Still passing through this charade, Rhett fully commits to bolstering southern whiteness. His motivation is no longer limited to evading discovery and playing the ‘gentleman’, but extended to creating an alliance with the very society he previously professed

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<sup>307</sup> Sheley notes that ‘Scarlett’s bodily sovereignty is avenged by the reclamation of sovereignty by the emasculated white male characters’ against black men (16). Scarlett is therefore ultimately victimized and her white femininity is externally ‘reaffirmed’; blame rests with her assailant.

to despise in order to defend the general virtue of white women and the exclusive sexual privilege white men claim over them, as well as to validate his white credentials. To obtain Scarlett, Rhett ultimately rescinds his prior rejection of the white South to achieve miscegenation. He turns his back on blackness and commits to a program of passing with new energy.

Rhett's successful passing is also critical to the passing of Bonnie Blue. Bonnie, named for two queens of England, is whitewashed by her life of privilege and the merciless campaign for white respectability upon which Rhett embarks.<sup>308</sup> However, Bonnie, like her mixed-race father and Irish mother, embodies what Mammy refers to as a 'mule in horse harness' (805). Mammy's accusation that both Scarlett and Rhett are mules (read: mulattoes) in horse harness suggests that both are selectively identifying with their whiter parent (McGraw 130). Throughout the text, mules are symbols of degradation and hybridity. When escaping Tara, field slaves steal the mules (Mitchell 387). Following Scarlett's return to Tara and a ravaged landscape, Mrs. Tarleton, the county's legendary horse breeder, laments that she has 'nothing but a damned mule on the place', continuing, 'It's an insult to the memory of my blooded darlings to have a mule in their paddock. Mules are misbegotten, unnatural critters and it ought to be illegal to breed them' (467). Mules, like mixed-race children, represent impurity and have no place in America.

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<sup>308</sup> Bonnie's given name is Eugenie Victoria, but she is christened Bonnie Blue by Melanie in recognition of her whitest feature – her blue eyes (847). (The Bonnie Blue Flag was a Confederate banner and the subject of a popular wartime anthem, which Scarlett sings on her honeymoon [810]). The cultivation of 'Bonnie' as a southern white lady thus commences from her infancy.

Scarlett's second pregnancy with Rhett, terminating in miscarriage, is the result of what Mitchell euphemistically terms a 'wild' night. In short, it reads like a rape that Scarlett enjoys,<sup>309</sup> ending a long abstinence initiated by Ashley's disapproval. After Bonnie's birth, he had admonished Scarlett about the blackening influence of her 'contact' with Rhett:

Everything he touches he poisons. And he has taken you who were so sweet and generous and gentle [...] and he has done this to you – hardened you, brutalized you with his contact. [...] If it were any other man in the world, I wouldn't care so much – but Rhett Butler! [...] I tell you I can't bear it, seeing your fineness coarsened by him, knowing that your beauty and your charm are in the keeping of a man who— When I think of him touching you, I—[...]. (849)

That Scarlett has never possessed generosity nor gentleness is lost on Ashley. Scarlett perceives his miscalculation of the situation, but does nothing to remedy Ashley's error in judgment, deciding that 'another black mark on Rhett could do him no harm' (Ibid.). Rhett is already sufficiently blackened, and the thought of him touching the whiteness of Scarlett, Dixie incarnate, 'rouse[s] a fury in [Ashley] that she did not think possible' (850). This passage could be read as simple jealousy on Ashley's part if not for his passive acceptance of her first two marriages and their resultant offspring.<sup>310</sup> Moynihan argues that the 'pointed emphasis on Scarlett's fertility in these marriages renders the *loss* of Scarlett and

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<sup>309</sup> Rhett becomes a 'mad stranger' full of 'a black darkness she did not know, darker than death'. He kisses her with 'savagery', and Scarlett experiences a 'hot swirling darkness' which should fill her with 'shame' but instead floods her with the 'memory of rapture, the ecstasy of surrender' (893-894). This passage is suggestive of a collectively subconscious attraction to mixing, illustrative of McPherson's claim of a southern 'latent desire for cross-racial alliance' (40).

<sup>310</sup> Cook acknowledges Mitchell's characterization of Ashley as a medieval knight, arguing he 'gets married and proceeds to long for someone else' (40), and that his 'aristocratic heroism' and 'adherence to honorable standards makes him Scarlett's ethical superior' (45). Yet his heroism only emerges to combat miscegenation: to protect Scarlett from further blackening through 'contact' with Rhett or to avenge her attack at Shantytown.

Rhett's two children all the more meaningful' and that it 'unequivocally confirm[s] Mitchell's absolute refusal to countenance miscegenation' (129; emphasis in original). Scarlett's conceiving of Rhett's baby by rape is a transgression that threatens to 'brutalize' what remains of Ashley's antebellum dream world.<sup>311</sup>

That Ashley should reject Rhett and Scarlett's marriage as unnatural is perhaps expected – his determination to remember the past in what Amanda Adams qualifies as 'mythic terms' (69) blinds him to potential alternative racial alliances. His reading of miscegenation as unnatural, a belief shared by many of Mitchell's contemporaries, led to the enactment of legislation during the early decades of the twentieth century that criminalized interracial marriage and that redefined racial categorization. Mixed-race offspring, Mrs. Tarleton's 'mules', were the products of such criminality, and it indeed becomes illegal to breed them. The 'one-drop rule', for example, in Virginia, was, as Sollors argues, extended 'to an almost mystical level' of exclusion – whites could have 'no trace whatsoever' of non-Caucasian blood (6).<sup>312</sup> Such exclusionary definitions testify to the anxieties surrounding what Randall Kennedy terms 'problems of proof' (147): unnatural black blood could be lurking, undetected, in anyone.

Rhett's black blood reveals itself to Melanie in an episode of physiological transformation. When Rhett turns to her for comfort following Scarlett's

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<sup>311</sup> This was a world Ashley eulogizes to Scarlett in the Tara orchard, one in which Ashley had 'carefully selected [his] few friends, and [which] is now gone'. Rhett, categorized as one of the new world's 'people with whom [he has] nothing in common', further desecrates the memory of Ashley's world of dreams, carrying them all towards a fate 'worse than war and worse than prison, [...] worse than death' – a future devoid of clear hierarchy, patterns, and distinctions and mired in miscegenation (Mitchell 499-502).

<sup>312</sup> Sollors cites the 1924 Virginia 'Act to Preserve Racial Integrity', as well as contemporary legal definitions of race from Louisiana, Texas, and Arizona that influenced prohibitive laws on miscegenation and interracial marriage (6-7).

miscarriage, Melanie sees him 'so like a damned soul waiting judgment – so like a child in a suddenly hostile world'. However, 'her pity changed to horror for she saw that he was crying. Melanie had never seen a man cry and of all men, Rhett, so suave, so mocking, so eternally sure of himself' (915-916). His emotional display betrays his innate primitivism and compounds her horror:

Before she knew how it happened she was sitting on the bed and he was on the floor, his head in her lap and his arms and hands clutching in a frantic clasp that hurt her.

She stroked his black head gently and said: 'There! There!' soothingly. 'There! She's going to get well.'

At her words, his grip tightened and he began speaking rapidly [...] baring himself mercilessly to Melanie who was, at first, utterly uncomprehending, utterly maternal. [...]

'You don't understand. She didn't want a baby and I made her. This– this baby– it's all my damned fault. We hadn't been sleeping together–' [...]

'Melanie suddenly went white and her eyes widened with horror as she looked down at the black tormented head writhing in her lap. The afternoon sun streamed in through the open window and suddenly she saw, as for the first time, how large and brown and strong his hands were and how thickly the black hairs grew along the backs of them. Involuntarily, she recoiled from them. They seemed so predatory, so ruthless and yet, twined in her skirt, so broken, so helpless. (916-917)

His 'clutching, [...] frantic clasp that hurt her' recalls the attack on Scarlett at Shantytown and aligns Rhett's behavior to that of Scarlett's black assailant.<sup>313</sup> It is, however, his admission of rape ('I made her') that finally exposes his blackness to Melanie. She further whitens as she discerns Rhett's dark features in a stream of revelatory light: 'the black tormented head writhing', the dark skin on the hands thickly covered in fur-like black hair. He transforms fully into the predatory, ruthless 'ape' from Shantytown, confessing to an assault on a white woman. It is

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<sup>313</sup> This comparison reinforces an earlier one drawn by Ashley: the idea of Scarlett's sexual contact with Rhett disgusts Ashley just as contact with the black assailant disgusted Scarlett. Melanie's 'horror' further equates the two men's contact with white women as transgressive.

only his love that renders him 'broken' and 'helpless', that separates him from other black rapists, and that ultimately allows Melanie to cling to her belief in his fundamental goodness.

Rhett's claims to whiteness, however, are now absolutely undermined. With his blackness exposed he is unable to continue passing effectively. As Stowe banished her mixed-race characters to Canada and Liberia, Mitchell quickly eliminates any existence of miscegenation in the South following Melanie's discovery. Bonnie's 'unnatural' origins dictate the manner of her death. Bonnie's horse is a mule-like Shetland pony, not a thoroughbred, and as such is incapable of the equestrian maneuvers Bonnie attempts; Bonnie is ejected from her saddle and the charade of gentility. Rhett is disconsolate, his only legitimate child and an opportunity for a whiter future forfeit to his deceit. His childlessness as a mixed-race parent suggests a comparison to the legendary infertility of mules, completing the mule/mulatto parallel. Rhett, as a mule, breaks the laws of nature in attempting to breed another 'misbegotten', mixed-race child. For Scarlett, Bonnie's death is more than a loss; it is the punishment for miscegenation. Her true transgression, however, is not the marital 'contact' with Rhett that produced Bonnie, but the 'rapture' she experienced at his sexual aggression and upon which she continued to fixate. Scarlett's professed pleasure in Rhett's assault, rather than her repulsion at it, punishes her dually: she loses the baby and Bonnie – the baby through miscarriage because of the violent manner of its conception, and Bonnie because of the illegitimacy of her parents' interracial union. This is the price for acting upon miscegenous desire. The price for encouraging it is even higher. On her deathbed, Melanie pleads with Scarlett to 'be kind to [Captain Butler]', hoping his love for Scarlett will arouse her compassion (961). Melanie therefore acquiesces to miscegenation, and dies.

Scarlett and Rhett, defeated in their efforts to conform to Atlanta society, retreat to their native homes and the comforts of the past: family, connections, privilege. Rhett voices his intention to 'make peace with [his] people' in Charleston and to recapture 'the clannishness of families, honour and security, roots that go deep' (981-982). His attempt at a whitened family failed, and his only recourse is to return to his mixed-race family and his '[black] roots that go deep'. He paradoxically claims to be 'sentimental' and 'too old to believe in [...] sentimentalities' and states he is 'too old to shoulder the burden of constant lies that go with living in polite disillusionment' (982-983). What he is sentimental for, then, is life lived in truth with his family and freedom from the rigors of passing. His return is not nostalgic, but necessary, as he has nowhere else to go. It is in Rhett's home-going that Mitchell's restorative, active nostalgia triumphs in crafting a revisionist parallel idyll. Rhett returns willingly to his black community through self-exile. His departure atones for his blurring of racial lines that ultimately destroyed his and Scarlett's bloodline. While leaving, he shows his true 'colors', famously telling Scarlett he does not 'give a damn' about what will happen to her.<sup>314</sup> Rhett plainly demonstrates his racial unfitness for being woven into the fabric of white America's *Citie Upon a Hill*. His coarse behavior, rebellious attitude, and selfishness culminate in a final expression of his unsavory genetics, revealed through a linguistic slippage that helps Mitchell establish him once and for all as outside the boundaries of 'good' society.

Rhett's coarseness suggests a stereotyped indecency that appears in another mixed-race male character of the US nostalgic Plantation. Charles Bon

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<sup>314</sup> This harsh utterance shocked audiences when the original line was included in the film. Producer David Selznick was fined \$5000 because the line was considered 'so risqué' that it violated the Hollywood Production Code (Judd, 'Rhett Butler').

in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, also published in 1936, shares Rhett's unfitness for white society.<sup>315</sup> The text is nostalgic in that, like Mitchell's, it looks back at slavery. Faulkner's narrative approach, however, confronts miscegenation by name. Yet the disastrous outcome for mixed-race characters is consistent. The text catalogues the life of Sutpen, a poor white who, like Gerald O'Hara, embarks on a program of empire-building through his plantation, Sutpen's Hundred, in antebellum Mississippi. Unlike Gerald, Sutpen is denied even the respect and recognition from the plantocracy he attempts to join. His efforts, recounted by his sister-in-law Rosa to Quentin Compson after the Civil War, depict a tyrannical, amoral miscegenator interested exclusively in the acquisition of wealth. Sutpen's daughter Judith's engagement to Charles Bon, his own undisclosed son of dubious racial origins from a previous marriage, leads his legitimate son Henry to challenge the union. Henry's problem with the match is not that Charles is his brother, but that he is his *mixed-race* brother, leading to Charles's accusation that 'it's the miscegenation, not the incest, which [Henry] can't bear'. Henry kills Charles when he threatens, 'I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister' (Faulkner 358). Years later, Quentin relates the Sutpen story to his Canadian Harvard roommate, spreading the South's anti-miscegenation inheritance through oral tradition.

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<sup>315</sup> Porter cites the extreme disparity in popularity of *Absalom, Absalom!* (an initial printing of 6000 copies) and *Gone with the Wind* (1.7 million copies sold in the first year) as evidence of different literary approaches and intended readerships (706). Miscegenation is a recurrent preoccupation for Faulkner who, unlike Mitchell, does not seek to erase its historical factuality but rather textually obliterates it through the termination of miscegenous relationships and characters. For example, Charles Bon's death in *Absalom, Absalom!* is refigured in the castration and murder of Joe Christmas in his 1932 *A Light in August*. Christmas, who believes himself to be mixed-race, is lynched following an affair with a murdered white woman. For sources on Faulkner and miscegenation, see Sundquist, *Faulkner*; for miscegenation in *Absalom, Absalom!* see Andrews, 'White Women's Complicity' and Peterson, 'The Haunted House of Kinship'.

Porter argues that Faulkner's novel 'turned the American success story of Sutpen into a racial tragedy' (710). Yet for Faulkner the 'ultimate tragedy' is not the racism or anti-miscegenous feeling prevalent in the antebellum and postbellum South, but miscegenation itself.<sup>316</sup> Charles Bon, like Bonnie Blue, dies; miscegenation leads to degeneracy and death. A racial connection runs between Rhett and Charles, two southern sons who attempt to miscegenate and fail.<sup>317</sup> Both mixed-race men attempt to marry into a white, landed family: Rhett succeeds briefly, but the termination of his lineage leads him to break ties and return his wife to her ancestral home. Charles is murdered at the gates of the plantation, unable to consummate his intended interracial union, and Sutpen's Hundred is burned to the ground, the stain of the patriarch's miscegenation too blackening for Faulkner. The narrative styles and textual scales are vastly different – whereas Mitchell's mixed-race hero goes willingly and (somewhat) quietly back to where he belongs, Faulkner's novel resolves in a climax of violence, murder, and flame – but both are able to 'disrobe and then re-enshrine the South' (708) through a documentation of southern racial politics focused on miscegenation that constitutes a restorative, revisionist nostalgia. In short, Mitchell and Faulkner agree with Stowe that miscegenation and miscegenators have no place in America.

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<sup>316</sup> Railton argues that the 'ultimate tragedy of the South is the same' for Faulkner and Mitchell – race-mixing (53).

<sup>317</sup> Railton draws a parallel between Rhett Butler's 'detachment' and Quentin Compson's 'distance' regarding southern attitudes towards race, arguing that these characters 'reflect their respective authors' attempts to convey their own understanding of and attitude toward the role of race in the southern past' (45). The characters share a certain disillusionment, but where race-mixing is a primary theme, Rhett and Charles best reflect the region's anxieties.

In the US, the plantation home is a shrine of whiteness and a symbol of the Plantation's persistence. Scarlett's miscegenation has consequences for Tara. Mammy is central to critical analysis of *Gone with the Wind*. From the beginning of the novel, the land is linked to Scarlett. Before the war is a golden age of adolescence over which Ellen reigned as the supreme maternal. Confident in her lineage, position, and material comfort, Scarlett pursues Ashley, a gentleman with 'blond hair [...] like a cap of shining silver' whom she later hopes will help her reproduce the golden age (Mitchell 24).<sup>318</sup> When the Bakhtinian agricultural-family idyll is shattered, so are Scarlett's illusions. Eventually Mammy, Scarlett's dark mother, takes Ellen's place. Initially she insists on guarding the white femininity that Ellen cultivated and that was imperative before the war, but with her aid in Frank's seduction, Mammy's commitment to Scarlett's gentility begins to crumble. Her failure to safeguard white female virtue is compounded when she helps Scarlett make the dress from Tara's curtains. Though originally distrustful of Rhett and resistant to the marriage, she is reconciled through his efforts for assimilating Bonnie – his sheer commitment to his and Scarlett's whitened child. Mammy keeps candles burning in the room where Bonnie's body lies because she and Rhett know the child is afraid of the dark – a symbolic fear of her black ancestry. After the funeral, Mammy returns to Tara with Rhett's approval, as both are in agreement that without Bonnie the Atlanta house has nothing to offer.<sup>319</sup> Mammy insists it is Ellen's voice telling her:

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<sup>318</sup> Rhett asserts that 'the [antebellum] Southern way of living is as antiquated as the feudal system of the Middle Ages' (Mitchell 227). Scarlett's pursuit of Ashley reads as a latent desire throughout the text to return to this southern feudal golden age.

<sup>319</sup> McPherson claims that Mammy acts as 'a chief coconspirator in the production of a system of femininity' that promotes whiteness and rejects blackness (55). However, Mammy's increasing alignment with Rhett after Bonnie's birth demonstrates a marked shift in allegiance. She becomes Rhett's co-conspirator and thus a promoter of miscegenation.

'Mammy, come home' (952). Mammy, ensconced at Tara, dons the vacant maternal mantle and occupies the center around which Tara orbits in Scarlett's mind. Just as she had fled home to Tara and Ellen after the siege of Atlanta, she flees home to Tara and Mammy at the novel's end. The plantation, no longer a site for white reproduction, now plays host to a different cause. The Black Tara of the future draws a line leading from the land, to Mammy, and ultimately to Rhett, whom Scarlett is determined to 'get back'. Scarlett is forever tainted by the 'rapture' she experienced under his sexual aggression and is stuck in a loop of miscegenation, which has now blackened even the white walls of her ancestral home.

Mammy constantly plays at virtue: she accompanies Ellen when she nurses slaves and poor white neighbors, though she disapproves; acts as accomplice to Scarlett in some of her more extreme schemes; and succumbs to her own vanity in proudly donning Rhett's gift of the red silk petticoat. Mammy is earthy and tied to the material world and the physical plantation home, whereas Ellen, like Blanca's Mamá, had been ethereal and eternal. In *Memorias*, the lateral alliance between the white feminine and the subaltern at Piedra Azul precludes spiritual segregation such as Ellen's exclusion of the slaves from the room during evening prayers. This scene demonstrates the effects of segregation on the white American imagination: Mammy's lack of religion stems from Mitchell's ignorance and incomprehension of black spirituality.<sup>320</sup> But it also stems from the requirements of the mammy stereotype: the mammy must 'adopt

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<sup>320</sup> As Wallace-Sanders notes, 'Mammy never goes to church, not in a thousand pages; her Christianity may be implied by her strong moral sense, but it is never indicated by religious practice' (*Mammy* 131). Mitchell, due to religious segregation, was arguably unaware of black religious practice and unable to depict it.

[the white family's] entire belief system, which insists on her inferiority' (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 125). When the 'white family' comes to consist of only Scarlett, Mammy indeed adopts a fluid morality, proving that her spiritual and intellectual beliefs depend upon those of her mistress. The exclusion of black Americans from white Christian America perpetuated negative black stereotypes and caricatures. In *Gone with the Wind*, illiterate former slaves were susceptible to rumor and manipulation in their religious beliefs as '[word] had been spread among the negroes that there were only two political parties mentioned in the Bible, the Publicans and the Sinners' (Mitchell 858).<sup>321</sup> The former slaves are reduced to puppets of an occupying regime and religion is twisted for political purpose. The result is a fictional history that reframes the slaveowners' scriptural manipulation as a nefarious Yankee practice and constructs an essentialized portrait of a godless race. According to Mitchell's novel, black Americans, even Mammy, never really had religion. They are and always have been outside of Christian America.

This broken spiritual landscape holds the nostalgic idyll to which Scarlett returns. The alternative paradigm of Mammy's Tara is an unsatisfactory replacement for Ellen's Tara. Mammy may seem like 'one of the family', but in truth she is not. She is and remains a servant, a conspirator, and a consolation. The family disintegrates but Mammy is steadfast, a symbol of the multitudes of readily available black help; as Stowe's Aunt Chloe discovered, emancipation does not alter a mammy's daily existence. Mammy returns to Tara because she is physically bound to it; like Chloe, she is tied to the land and the family she

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<sup>321</sup> According to Elkins, Maryland and Kentucky were the only southern states that permitted literacy education to slaves. Several states also forbade the education of free black and mixed-race individuals (60).

served, but she builds no family of her own and leaves no progeny. Wallace-Sanders argues that Mammy's childlessness makes her the 'perfect mammy'; 'her heart and soul [belong] to the O'Haras – because she has never belonged to her own race or to herself in any way' (*Mammy* 126). Yet her failures as a mammy are made more extreme by this ownership; Mitchell therefore demands she make restitution. After Scarlett and Rhett's interracial union fails, Mammy divests herself of what limited agency she possessed and returns to the land in self-imposed exile. In encouraging a mixed-race family, Mammy contributed to the degeneration of her white family. Scarlett's return offers Mammy a second chance to correct her errors and fulfill her potential as a 'perfect mammy'. The mammy typology strips black and mixed-race women of their individuality and humanity, rendering them increasingly homogeneous and stereotyped: they are sexless and bear no children themselves. Instead, they raise white children and relinquish their names while being 'celebrated again and again as all that was ideal between the races before the destruction of the Civil War' (131). The mammy, the 'most recognizable symbol of the mythic South' and what had been lost (125), sits at the center of nostalgic longing for the Plantation. Mammy casts a long shadow under which more complex or ambiguous depictions of non-white domestic servants disappear. The restored Plantation relies upon both the mammy and the eradication of mixing.

Mitchell's erasure of black female sexuality answers the question: nostalgic or not? McPherson contends that Mitchell believed the novel 'debunked old "moonlight and magnolia" myths, moving away from plantation mythologies', but that 'her break from [that] past is neither clean nor total' (48). Indeed, Mitchell relies on this myth to offer a literary escape from southern disillusionment, but also employs it as a point of departure for a reimagined past that erases

miscegenation and perpetuates another myth: the rape myth. She de-centers mixed-race children's racial designation from the mother and transfers it instead to the black parent. The long-held practice of assigning mixed-race children to the racial fate of their mother – that the child of a female slave was born into bondage – is directly challenged by Mitchell's insistence on the 'one drop' rule over considerations of maternity. The charge of blackness is thus extracted from gendered considerations and formulated purely as a biological, racial extrapolation. Mixed-race children, therefore, are not born of sexual dalliances between white *men* and black *women* exclusively, but from the mixing of black and white in all its forms – an important distinction for Mitchell. *Gone with the Wind*, through its re-crafting and re-documenting of the facts of miscegenation in the antebellum and Reconstruction South, constitutes a restorative nostalgia uninterested in dwelling in loss or working through emotive issues to arrive at universal truths about humanity. It is a primer for surmounting the challenges of the 'real' world,<sup>322</sup> such as the threatened loss of the mammy. Nostalgia is only worthwhile for what it teaches in relation to the present. For Mitchell, an important lesson is the degenerative effect of mixing.

Scarlett and Blanca Nieves are both eternally ejected from their homesteads, Tara and Piedra Azul, as locations of identity and birthright. The original incarnations of both plantations are mourned by their white mistresses, but the remembered, longed-for homes fundamentally differ along racial lines:

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<sup>322</sup> Adams argues that the strain of 'anti-intellectualism' that permeates the novel and characterizes Scarlett exists 'not for its own sake, but for what it means in terms of people's ability to survive in the "real" world' (67). Scarlett's obsession with money, material goods, and food, in contrast to Ashley's and Rhett's contemplative soliloquies on human nature and civilization, demonstrate that Mitchell also values pragmatism and action in meeting physical needs.

Mamá Blanca mourns the harmonious mixture that abounded at Piedra Azul while Scarlett returns to a second-rate Tara, no longer a bastion of white supremacy and gentility. Mixing enhanced the Piedra Azul of childhood; at Tara, it sullied the postbellum plantation. Unlike Parra's work, and the Latin American texts examined in Part 1, *Gone with the Wind* continues *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* work of strengthening an anti-miscegenation message in the American canon and continues a rewriting of historical race-mixing in the US that embraces an absolutist black-white binary. Religious heterodoxy plays its part in the revisionist history: US Catholicism adapts to join an exclusionary, dominant Protestantism and cultivate a white Christianity, and its practitioners deny their peripheral, ethnicized origins. Mitchell pens a text in which Irish Catholics are othered whites, but whites regardless. This limited religious pluralism pales in comparison to the more inclusive, broadly syncretic tradition found elsewhere in the Americas (for example, Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba) – one that absorbs elements of African religious practice into mainstream Catholicism.

From Parra's and Mitchell's nostalgic texts emerge a clear cultural distinction rooted in either the normalization or denunciation of race-mixing. In Venezuela, there is historical commitment to hybridity in which *mestizaje*, though threatened by emergent positivist political and social trends, is considered foundational and is, indeed, proliferating by the 1920s. Parra's determined nostalgia for syncretism, her acknowledgement of race-mixing and desire for a *mestizo* future reflect a cultural commitment to *café con leche* identity. Alternately, in the US, anti-miscegenation was enshrined in law. White Christianity absorbed Catholicism into the dominant Protestant fold, excluding indigenous or African elements and forcing its exclusionary message onto black Americans in the South. Following emancipation, a proslavery message

transformed into a narrative of white supremacy in white churches.<sup>323</sup> Mitchell's erasure of centuries of mixing is paradigmatic, continuing Stowe's practice of evasion and relocation (colonization), and perpetuated in later American literature. The mulatto is expunged and the black becomes blacker. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that, in the 1980s, the Mitchell estate sought to commission a sequel to *Gone with the Wind* with clear stipulations: 'no homosexuality, no miscegenation, and no killing off Scarlett' (Higgins 42). The estate's racial politics echoed the demands of a post-Plantation readership hungry for more of the moonlight and magnolia South. Miscegenation had become an unspoken and unspeakable American taboo. Mammy, Prissy, and the sexless black American women which they represent join the 'cult of true mammyhood' (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 44, 129). The rape myth is exploited to emphasize the fragility of white womanhood and criminalize black men. Such revisionist race history does not appear in Parra, where an ideology of social race-mixing protects *mestizaje*. Evelyn, however, like Mammy and Prissy, faces a childless, marriageless existence of servitude in which she cares for other (whiter) people's children. These women, black nannies and mammies of nostalgic Plantation works, are the 'pictorial symbols' mentioned by Boym that expose their white writers' nostalgic longing for slavery, as well as the ideological limits of their imaginations.

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<sup>323</sup> See Bailey and Snedker (878-880), for a discussion of the legacy of religious segregation on racial violence in the twenty-first century South. The authors argue that one consequence of congregational segregation is 'an increase in social distance between the races' (879).

## **PART 3: Post-Plantations, or, How to Be Friends with Your Maid, 1988-2009**

If the nostalgic literature analyzed in Part 2 remembers the black woman as a nanny or mammy who is tied to the house and the family she serves, the late twentieth- and twenty-first-century fiction in this section exploits that inheritance in distinct ways. *Como agua para chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (Mexico) and Mario Vargas Llosa's erotic novels *Elogio de la madrastra* and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto* (Peru) experiment with the re-sexualization of the servant and black female. *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett (US) testifies to the persistence of the sexless mammy in US literature. These post-Plantation writers,<sup>324</sup> working over 100 years after the end of slavery in the Americas, seek a revisionist history, a mode through which the subaltern speaks, and their efforts towards demolishing stereotypes inform their insistence upon subaltern agency and complexity. Cultural movements that defined the second half of the twentieth century, such as feminism and Civil Rights, inform contemporary narratives through a 'multiplicity of cultural relationships unheard of in the age of empire' (Gikandi 629). Yet despite these cultural shifts, and despite the fact that the true Plantation is outside of living memory for post-Plantation writers, their revisionist efforts are undermined by the persistence a specific Plantation figure and their inability to transcend its Plantation typology. The body of the black and mixed-race female domestic servant continues to internalize and project Plantation race ideologies that have marched headlong into post-Plantation literature of the Americas.

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<sup>324</sup> See the Introduction of this study for a definition of post-Plantation (8).

The American post-Plantation still bears the scars of the Plantation; the same paradigms of power and powerlessness, populated by the same (racial) actors, apply. Post-Plantation writers, the racial and cultural descendants of the perpetrators of American slavery,<sup>325</sup> are ultimately left to dismantle the colonial legacy with colonial tools, such as established ideologies, dominant languages, generic preoccupations, and the long-running impetus to (re)write the nation. Yet, their attempts ultimately slip into ‘traumatic reenactment [and] repetition’; this is especially problematic within the ‘intimate familial space’, the location of female domesticity (Hirsch 83).<sup>326</sup> Authors of the Americas cast their versions of history and contemporaneity onto the colony’s coffin; their relative national canons and the global literary corpus accept these works eagerly having been offered a fresher, better, and more diverse history. Yet, as the contemporary works examined in this chapter demonstrate, they are not a break from colonial literature’s legacy, but rather a continuation or ‘a special part’ of it (Boehmer 5).<sup>327</sup> The patriarchy, the family, sexuality, and even magic are summoned and reconfigured in an effort to expose a secret national past and to champion equality and diversity, but they are all still operating within the established frames of colonizer and colonized, dominance and exploitation. However, this is not the wistful nostalgia of the early twentieth century. In the last quarter-century, the ‘multivocal, mongrelized, and disruptive’ (4) pens of writers of the Americas have

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<sup>325</sup> See the discussion of perpetrators and victims of trauma in this study’s Introduction (31).

<sup>326</sup> Hirsch specifically mentions ‘mother/daughter transmission’, but her definition of the familial space is transferable to the parameters of the household, especially in regards to the mistress-servant relationship, informed by the ‘one of the family’ myth. Instead of disrupting the Plantation’s racial constructs, this literature reenacts it.

<sup>327</sup> Boehmer describes such writing as ‘deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire’, undertaken by ‘historical agents’ (3). The post-Plantation writer’s energies are not focused forwards, but backwards towards (a nostalgia-infused) reinvention in pursuit of historical understanding.

set out to reinvent its Plantation past and to revise centuries of white Europhile narratives. And yet, such narratives retain their critically and commercially hegemonic profile.

Today, the peaceful coexistence of races, classes, and creeds in the New World is the new narrative, and race-mixing is another thread in the predictable pattern of the everyday. The texts discussed in the previous chapters demonstrate the markedly different positions taken on race-mixing between Latin American countries and the United States after the turn of the twentieth century. Whereas in Latin America religious syncretism flourished and the writings of Vasconcelos, Paz, and Retamar were *de rigueur*, the United States saw no such debate espousing the benefits of race-mixing to American identity. The mammyfication of the black woman, the central figure in representations of miscegenation, culminated in the slovenly, simple-minded but rash-tongued Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*. The ambiguously masculine Evelyn, on the other hand, suggested a latent, transgressive sexuality. Yet, as a black woman, Evelyn still proved the exception to Venezuelan *mestizaje*. The contradictions between these women laid foundations for later depictions of female servants and the miscegenous possibilities they presented, but also drew a line of comparison: the black female servant is excluded, regardless of specific national race-mixing ideologies. The representations of the female servant in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century fiction examined in this chapter offer either a correction to the nanny figure that sees the character re-sexualized (in Latin America) or a proliferation of the de-sexed mammy stereotype (in the United States).

Before discussing the works of Esquivel, Vargas Llosa, and Stockett, one mid-twentieth-century work of Plantation literature warrants mention as it is relevant to this study in its revisionist treatment of the black domestic servant.

Jean Rhys's 1966 *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s protagonist offers a rebuttal to *Jane Eyre*'s nineteenth-century mad Bertha in the attic, and as such offers a prime example of what this study considers 'post-Plantation' literature. The Jamaican creole Antoinette Bertha Mason is a corporeal metaphor for the metropole's exploitation of its colonial subjects. Though neither southern American nor Latin American, and thus beyond the comparative scope of this study's analysis thus far, the text evidences hemispheric, Plantation-wide prejudices against black women and that degradation of black female servitude is a New World tenet. As a post-Plantation text that explores the significance and complexity of the mistress-servant relationship, its representations of subalterneity and female power dynamics greatly influenced the figure of the black maid in later works. Christophine, Antoinette's maternal mammy, fills a void left by the unloving mother. In this, she departs from Scarlett O'Hara's Mammy or Blanca Nieves's Evelyn, who merely dispensed parent-approved discipline, and she is therefore more intimately involved in the white mistress's development. Yet, as a servant, she does not possess the authority of a mother figure. Christophine derives from the 'good slave' trope but, as Shakti Jaising notes, she is actually an 'exceptional' black servant (816).<sup>328</sup> Her loyalty to Antoinette and rejection of local blacks who call her mistress a 'white cockroach' and burn the white family's home indeed depict her as the exception to the type rather than demonstrative of it. Christophine's disavowal of her black community extends beyond Brathwaite's lamentable 'mimic-men' (203), from imitation (such as Mammy's vocal self-identification with the O'Hara family and disregarding of ex-slaves as 'black trash',

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<sup>328</sup> The text as an 'anti-colonial' effort is limited by its '[reliance] on the racialized typologies of liberal colonialist discourse'; as Jaising notes, it 'perpetuates a typology that simultaneously recognizes and constrains black personhood and that is therefore crucial to maintaining colonial control over black labor' (816-817).

and Evelyn's distancing of herself from the lifestyle and practices of Vicente Cochocho) to alliance at the expense of her own black son. The alliance, however, is not with a white family, but with a disgraced creole family of dubious racial lineage. Christophine's blackness serves to enhance the 'white cockroach's' whiteness.

Christophine epitomizes the asexual mammy. There is no dalliance with Antoinette's father – a scenario as unimaginable as a liaison between the wife-worshipping Gerald O'Hara and mistress-worshipping Mammy. Mammy, Evelyn, and Christophine support their mistresses by strengthening the bonds of the white marriage and family. The threat of the lascivious black female, however, reemerges with Amelie, 'a kind of darker twin to Antoinette' who suggests 'the possibility of miscegenation in the family line' (Handley 154), recalling Cecilia Valdés's resemblance to her milk sister (and real sister), Adela. The easy virtue of Cecilia and the residual specter of black whoredom that resides in María Lionza's Negra Francisca and hangs menacingly over Evelyn materialize in the flirtatious advances of Antoinette's young servant girl towards her husband. Competition with Amelie destroys Antoinette's marriage and is the catalyst for her descent into madness. Rochester, admittedly, is also to blame, but Rhys permits him an opportunity at narration; Amelie is silenced. Jaising notes the juxtaposition of the 'hypersexual and desexualized black women' depicted by Rhys (822). Yet the difference is not limited to mere characterization – Christophine's maternal virtue against Amelie's treacherous wantonness – and left as a labyrinth of types for the heroine to navigate. Instead, Christophine actively sides with her mistress against a younger black servant girl encroaching on sexual, marital harmony; it is a step Mitchell did not require Mammy to take by omitting black female sexuality altogether, and an action that truly renders Christophine 'exceptional'.

Christophine touts an anti-miscegenation message, aligning herself with the slighted white mistress and opposing the history of white master exploitation of black domestic servants.

Christophine's support of Antoinette's marital claims and her bolstering of white femininity serve Rhys's claims of whiteness for creole women. In many ways, *Wide Sargasso Sea* functions merely to reconfirm the pigmentocracy inherited from colonialism: Rhys, a creole Dominican, touts Antoinette's white credentials through comparison with her non-white servants. Rochester considers Antoinette an un-European, uncivilized match, but Rhys offers the seductive Amelie and voodoo-practicing Christophine to help distinguish how white Antoinette (and the author) is in comparison.<sup>329</sup> Miscegenation is depicted and repudiated to show how interracial sex and infidelity cause great harm to the heroine. This British-Caribbean text stands at a crossroads of New World attitudes about race-mixing, incorporating it as historical practice but still condemning it roundly. Miscegenation for Rhys is not quite taboo, but is also extremely damaging. Her ideal does not lie in race-mixing; for her, it is a social ill rooted in colonial exploitation and racial paradigms that continue to proliferate. In regards to the black and mixed-race female, these ideologies assign a fundamental character flaw. Charges of African hypersexuality effect a learned belief in a lasciviousness that bubbles under the surface of the black female, especially the servant, always threatening to boil over. This irrepressible sexuality features in the Latin American texts discussed in the following chapter: *Como*

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<sup>329</sup> Christophine initially withholds her voodoo (*obeah*) power from Antoinette, claiming that '[bad], bad trouble come when *béké* [white people] meddle with that', but ultimately casts a charm in the earth and instructs Antoinette on how to reignite Rochester's interest (71-74). Christophine is racially and religiously non-white in the extreme.

*agua para chocolate, Elogio de la madrastra, and Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto.*

## CHAPTER 6: Mixing at the Border and in the Bedroom –

### *Como agua para chocolate* and Vargas Llosa's Erotic

#### Novels

The post-Plantation works examined in this chapter apply narrative revision to types and tropes from Latin American works analyzed in Part 1 and Part 2.<sup>330</sup> The title of Mexican author Laura Esquivel's *Como agua para chocolate* (1989) is a euphemism for female frustration with sexual oppression that reaches boiling point, but it is also laced with the same themes of the shameful yet inevitable nature of race-mixing, as well as the inherent threat of incest, that bubble beneath the surface in *Cecilia Valdés*. Whitening and mixed-race offspring feature prominently as thematic considerations, affecting both characterization and plot. *Elogio de la madrastra* and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto*, on the other hand, exchange the innuendo and suggestion of lesbianism found in *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* for explicit homosexual lovemaking. Vargas Llosa's emphasis on sexual pleasure denies primacy to traditional concerns of interracial reproduction; fornication is its own end.<sup>331</sup> Such a focus stands counter to the preoccupation with the child born of *mestizaje*, the concern of the nineteenth-century Latin American novel.<sup>332</sup> If there is no generational whitening project, then race-mixing cannot be appropriated for nation-building. The interracial sex act itself, and not the mixed-race individual, may indicate a *mestizo* society. This is

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<sup>330</sup> These works are not explicitly rebuttals of specific works, but rather offer attempted rewritings of the paradigms and typologies that characterize the true Plantation and the nostalgic Plantation.

<sup>331</sup> The text's focus on sex follows Vargas Llosa's contention that '[s]ex occupies a central place in the novel because that is the place it occupies in life' (Booker 162). Sex in *Los cuadernos* carries neither the attendant hopes for nor fear of resultant offspring that mark other works examined in this study.

<sup>332</sup> See Sommer.

the mixed social utopia that enables mixing in Vargas Llosa's erotic novels: sexual pleasure for its own sake. The three works in this chapter offer readings of race-mixing that are particular to Latin American literature of the Plantation.

### ***Como agua para chocolate***

Esquivel's highly popular and commercially successful fiction centers on Tita de la Garza and Pedro Muzquiz's forbidden love and the succor Tita finds in practicing and perfecting traditional recipes.<sup>333</sup> In what is commonly considered a late, weak attempt at the magical realism popularized by the Boom novelists,<sup>334</sup> the novel chronicles Tita's tribulations as her emotions imbue her food with mystical properties that provoke reactions in those that eat it, a plot-driving device in the literary voodoo tradition.<sup>335</sup> Although it is set on a *hacienda* during the Mexican Revolution at the turn of the century, *Como agua para chocolate*, like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, eschews idyllic nostalgia in favor of alternative history. Esquivel strives to portray an unrecorded Mexico, the domestic, female Mexico, by exploiting the generic conventions of female periodicals popular during that time. These magazines, which instructed on etiquette and domestic craft and

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<sup>333</sup> In 1993, following the international success of the novel and film, Esquivel was named Mexico's 'Woman of the Year'. By June of that year, *Como agua para chocolate* had sold 200,000 copies in Mexico, was translated into 18 languages, and appeared on the New York Times bestseller list (Saltz 30). For an analysis of thematic and content differences between the film and text, see Finnegan. However, since Esquivel wrote the novel and the screenplay, and her husband produced and directed the film, criticism of the text is sufficient; as Martínez notes, any 'analysis could apply to both' (28).

<sup>334</sup> See Ibsen for a discussion on *Como agua para chocolate*'s magical realism. She rebuts several unfavorable scholarly comparisons with Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* and characterizes Esquivel's work as 'parodic appropriation', rather than mimicry. She argues that the 'playful nature' of the appropriation does not seek to 'undermine the canon' (134; emphasis in original).

<sup>335</sup> For example, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Christophine gives Antoinette an *obeah* potion for Rochester to drink, which initiates the heroine's downfall.

included serialized romances,<sup>336</sup> provide a foundation which marks Esquivel's work as a palimpsest. Susan Lucas Dobrian calls the novel a 'postmodern parody [that] represents a pastiche of genres. It is all-in-one a novel of the Mexican Revolution, a cookbook, a fictional biography, a magical realist narrative, a romance novel, and serial fiction' (56). These generic ingredients combine in an ambitious yet arguably too-seasoned narrative, laced through with socio-racial undertones. Dobrian overlooks the fact that the novel is also a border narrative, set outside Piedras Negras on the banks of the Rio Grande; its setting allows for the inevitable international transference of people, cultural practices, and ideologies, such as the strong current of US positivist thought that persists from earlier in the century. Despite her efforts to, as Helene Price suggests, '[introduce] the notion of Mexico as a heterogeneous nation', the Anglo-American taboo of miscegenation infiltrates the narrative and supports continued racial segregation.<sup>337</sup> Price argues that the work 'almost promotes racial stereotypes' (187). This analysis is perhaps over-stated, as Esquivel's effort at female and subaltern narrative is undoubtedly consciously and carefully constructed, but though her 'kitchen tale'<sup>338</sup> endeavors to carve an alternative space, it does not

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<sup>336</sup> See Ibsen (137-141) and Valdés (78-79). Esquivel explicitly references an etiquette manual popular at the turn of the century, Manuel Antonio Carreño's *Manual de urbanidad y buenas maneras*, which Tita rejects.

<sup>337</sup> Price suggests Morning Light and John Brown are representatives for the two nations: 'The White American [...] stands for science, materialism and reason, whilst his grandmother, representing neighbouring Mexico, symbolises magic and myth, as two opposing world viewpoints are placed in juxtaposition' (190).

<sup>338</sup> Zubiaurre distinguishes between 'kitchen' and 'table' narratives, arguing that *Como agua para chocolate* relegates women to the historical 'magic-domestic realm' and perpetuates their marginalization. According to Zubiaurre, the kitchen 'mirrors an authoritarian and segregationist society, instead of fostering an alternative sense of community, solidarity, and equalitarian [sic] justice among women'. Table narratives, on the other hand, depict women 'sitting at tables [...] actively reclaim[ing] their right to the public domain'; they are consumers as well as producers (30-31). Saltz considers the text 'a profoundly feminine if not feminist novel' (30); central female characters in a text do not make it a feminist work.

effectively challenge the racial legacies of the Plantation. Rather, it reinforces them.

Esquivel raises the issue of race explicitly, ostensibly to give voice to the subaltern – especially the indigenous woman through the simple-minded Chenchá and the enduring posthumous influence of Nacha. Chenchá's literal voice is marked by colloquial, racial signifiers, which weakens Esquivel's efforts. Like Prissy's lazy, regional dialect, Vicente Cochocho's Golden Age grammar, and Evelyn's article-less Spanish, Chenchá's speech is 'broken' (Price 188), exaggerated and overdone, and therefore depreciated within the national discourse. Chenchá's situation typifies Latin American domestic service in several ways: she is a live-in servant despite having her own relatives who live in town; she performs a variety of personal tasks; and her compensation never increases to reflect an increased workload.<sup>339</sup> Chenchá assists Tita in cooking for crowds, both at family weddings and for Gertrudis's troops when they take military leave at the ranch. She is seemingly content with her position but, unlike Tita, finds neither inspiration nor release in this culinary work. Indeed, she is assigned menial preparatory tasks while Tita reaps the glory for her immaculate and powerful food.<sup>340</sup> Chenchá also has a loose relationship with the truth, a common trait in servant typology shared by *Cecilia Valdés's* María de Regla and *Gone with the Wind's* Prissy. After her visit to Tita at John Brown's home,<sup>341</sup> Chenchá is terrified to pass on the message of Tita's refusal to return to the ranch, so instead she fabricates a tale of poverty, madness, and desperation that will satisfy the

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<sup>339</sup> See Chaney and Garcia Castro, *Muchachas No More*, especially 'A New Field'.

<sup>340</sup> During the party given in honor of Gertrudis's return, Chenchá remains resentfully inside the kitchen stirring chocolate for the troops (Esquivel 164).

<sup>341</sup> His name is a possible allusion to the US abolitionist John Brown, considered extreme in his abolitionist views for promoting armed conflict against slavery; see Sinha (550-563).

vengeful Mamá Elena and excuse her failure; she 'pensaba cubrirse de gloria con esta mentira' (114). Lying is a pastime for Chenchá, 'una práctica de supervivencia' that she learned from her first days at the De la Garza home; '[d]esde niña había oído hablar de lo mal que les va a las mujeres que desobedecen a sus padres o a sus patrones y se van de la casa. Acaban revolcadas en el arroyo inmundo de la vida galante' (112). Esquivel points to a system of indoctrination and superstition that reproduces exploitation, a cycle that arguably mitigates Chenchá's dishonesty. However, she is unable to tell her lie. She crosses the border back into Mexico, and is brutally raped by bandits upon arrival at the ranch.

Mamá Elena is attacked '[tratando] de defender su honor', but as the white matron she is spared violation (114). Only Chenchá, as a lowly domestic and indigenous female, is subjected to sexual violence. The details of the rape itself are omitted, but Esquivel does take pains to examine the attack's aftermath. Chenchá's trauma and suffering are, according to N. Finnegan, 'meticulously' recorded (319). However, while Esquivel does offer insight into Chenchá's anxieties about sexual stigma following the assault, such as her worries in finding a husband, Chenchá returns to work almost immediately. There are no details of her convalescence and she is cooking and serving Mamá Elena's meals before her stitches are even removed. The arrangement suits Tita perfectly as she has the 'libertad' to continue her needlework for her dowry to John Brown (Esquivel 118). Chenchá thus aids her mistress's campaign for a husband even while her own search for one is imperiled. Tita finally releases Chenchá back to the village and her family to heal emotionally, suggesting that psychological trauma makes an ineffective domestic servant and that the ranch, her workplace, is not an appropriate site for recovery: Chenchá is decidedly not 'one of the family'. Her

later return to the *hacienda* functions as a *deus ex machina*: '[como] siempre Chenchá llegaba caída del cielo, en el momento en que Tita más lo necesitaba' (132). Chenchá atones for her absence by conveniently (for Tita and the plot's momentum) resuming her role as the 'good servant'. Moreover, she brings additional manpower. Chenchá has married Jesús Martínez, 'un hombre honrado y callado', who informs Tita that he is 'para servirle a [ella]'. He has valiantly overlooked the fact that Chenchá 'no fuera virgen' and hopes to find work at the ranch. After Jesús 'había logrado [borrar]' all signs of suffering from Chenchá, they are both fit for service again (133). Chenchá returns to the De la Garza's kitchen to fill the supporting role left vacant by Nacha.

Nacha dies early in the novel, but her lessons, both practical and sentimental, run through the work and testify to an influence that far surpasses that of other servant characters in this study. It is the 85-year-old Nacha, not Mamá Elena, who feeds the infant Tita and dries her tears; it is Nacha who knows of Tita's secret passion for Pedro; it is Nacha who teaches Tita to cook. Nacha is Tita's earliest playmate and her go-between. Nacha represents the shaman priestess, one of the indigenous magic practitioners whose reputation was fostered by centuries of *criollas* who relied upon them as 'dangerous guardians of the erotic arts' (Franco xiv). The obstacles faced by Tita and Pedro remind Nacha of her own forbidden betrothal, which Esquivel briefly summarizes, and Mamá Elena's mother's role in Nacha's separation implicitly criticizes the colonial dynamics of slavery that persist through generations in such power imbalances.<sup>342</sup> The culinary skills she bequeaths affect her through the wedding

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<sup>342</sup> Mamá Elena's mother's refusal to let Nacha marry is not necessarily an undermining of the 'one of the family' myth, since Mamá Elena refuses to let Tita marry as well as part of the family 'tradition'.

cake icing Tita prepares, initiating a powerful longing. Her commitment to and connection with Tita are so absolute that she dies on the day of Pedro's marriage to Tita's sister, Rosaura, clutching a picture of her own lost fiancé.

Mamá Elena, the mistress, is Esquivel's central villain, and Nacha, more than Mitchell's Mammy or Parra's Evelyn, fills a devastating maternal void in the style of Rhys's Christophine. But unlike Christophine, Nacha is internalized by the heroine and her society. Tita literally hears Nacha recounting recipes; she feels and hallucinates her presence. To preserve Nacha's inherited knowledge, she records her recipes, transferring them from the realm of oral tradition to documented cultural history. Zubiaurre equates this transcribing as an 'abuse', claiming that Tita appropriates traditional indigenous wisdom from its 'illiterate' practitioners (46). However, Esquivel frames Tita's efforts as part of an ongoing, mystical conversation. During her recovery at John Brown's, she enters a medical laboratory he maintains in his home to find 'una agradable mujer como de 80 años de edad. Era muy parecida a Nacha'; '[su] rostro tenía claros rasgos indígenas' (97). Tita does not speak to her as 'se estableció entre ellas una comunicación que iba más allá de las palabras' (98). Gradually the woman disappears, and John appears in her place. The woman is a hallucination not of Nacha, but of John's grandmother, a Kickapoo Indian named 'Luz del amanecer' (Morning Light) who had been abducted by and married to John's grandfather. It was a union unacceptable to his 'norteamericana' family who referred to her only as 'kikapú'. Esquivel employs this narrative detour as a segue to criticism of US racial history, resonant of Vasconcelos.<sup>343</sup> The grandmother's story:

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<sup>343</sup> See the introduction of this study (20).

era solo un pequeño ejemplo de la gran diferencia de opiniones y conceptos que existían entre estos representantes de dos culturas tan diferentes, y que hacía imposible que entre los Brown surgiera el deseo de un acercamiento a las costumbres y tradiciones de 'Luz del amanecer'. (98-99)

This opinion underpins the novel. It also focuses attention on how ineffectively Esquivel demonstrates this 'gran diferencia' in her own work.<sup>344</sup> *Como agua para chocolate* is a border narrative, and the US's generic (jeremiad) and thematic (racial segregation) influence is undeniable. In fact, the domestic servant figures of Chenchá and Nacha are not fundamentally revelatory: they bend to the old mistress's will, instruct and care for the younger mistress, and repeat the cycle of oppression – the novel comes full circle when Chenchá helps prepare the wedding banquet for Pedro's daughter Esperanza. Esquivel gives a voice, a backstory, and a private life to her subaltern domestics, but their positions remain unchallenged and unchanged within the Plantation.

Esquivel is perhaps more susceptible to 'norteamericana' aversion to miscegenation than she realizes. At the very least, she holds clear ideas about whitening: who may mix, how it is to be done, and what the results should be. Gertrudis, the second of Mamá Elena's daughters, functions to reveal the racial prejudices in Mexican culture, which is so ostensibly accepting of indigenous-white unions like those of John Brown's grandparents. His grandmother, like Nacha and Chenchá, is embraced and their indigenous culture fetishized by Esquivel.<sup>345</sup> The indigenous forms an important part of Esquivel's mysticism and

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<sup>344</sup> Morning Light conforms to the figure of the 'noble savage' (Martínez 35), an archetype inherited from sentimental fiction and Rousseau. Like Sab, Morning Light is depicted as intimately tied to nature – noble in her non-violent assimilation to 'civilization', but a savage nonetheless.

<sup>345</sup> Price claims the text fetishizes Mexican identity (182), but it is in fact a mixed cultural identity – white and indigenous – that is fetishized and presented as 'Mexican'.

relationship to the land, food, and customs. Yet Gertrudis is a passing *mulata*, a secret source of shame that Tita, so celebratory of Amerindian traditions, conceals from her. Gertrudis's sexuality is intimately tied to her race and proves uncontrollable. A dish served by Tita, containing the blood pricked from her finger by Pedro's roses, drives Gertrudis into a sexual frenzy. For relief, she attempts a cold shower in the outdoor stall,<sup>346</sup> which quickly bursts into flames. Her rosy scent attracts Juan Alejandrez, a rebel soldier, who perceives her as 'una síntesis entre una mujer angelical y una infernal' (52) – a black/white angel/devil. He abducts her, prefiguring and repeating Morning Light's abduction in a circular narrative, and takes her virginity on horseback. This nonlinear sequence of abductions claims as its victims two subaltern women to whom Esquivel fails to adequately assign victimhood. Gertrudis welcomes her abduction,<sup>347</sup> and by John Brown's account of Morning Light's campaign to win the Browns' approval, the kidnapped Kickapoo is no victim either. Both women are made complicit in their abductions, but where Morning Light's traditional knowledge and indigenous roots are ultimately revered by the Brown family, Gertrudis proceeds to earn her reputation as a whore, reinforcing notions of aggressive sexuality in black women and exposing a persistence of race-mixing panic where the African is involved.

Her desires still unquenched following her abduction, the insatiable Gertrudis takes up residence in a bordertown brothel and is disinherited fully by Mamá Elena. Eventually, her lust is sated and she turns her energies towards the revolution, her sexual experience having denied her the possibility of returning to

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<sup>346</sup> Dobrian calls this a 'typically male gesture', cold showers traditionally associated with a male desire to 'quench' sexual arousal (59).

<sup>347</sup> Dobrian designates Gertrudis 'a damsel in *erotic* distress', undermining the chaste femininity traditionally required for victimhood (59; emphasis in original).

a feminine, genteel existence and sentencing her to a career of violence. She becomes Jean Franco's 'masculinized woman' (147). General Gertrudis emerges in line with the traditional Mexican warrior-mother figure of the *soldadera*, a pre-Columbian deity known as Toci. Toci was depicted as carrying a broom and a shield, and later manifested as the Virgin of Guadalupe, a maternal intercessor and 'battle icon' during the Spanish American wars of independence (Dobrian 64).<sup>348</sup> This representation of dichotomous harmony is the product of centuries of religious syncretism, mixed Catholic and indigenous praxis that provides contemporary *mestizaje* with a universal religious underpinning. Yet despite her ethnic and symbolic hybridity, and her association with a foundational Mexican figure, Gertrudis's blackness undermines her place in *mestizo* Mexico and excludes her from Esquivel's effort at collective whitening. When Gertrudis bears a *mulato* son with her *mestizo* husband, she takes a retrograde step on the darkness scale – the same offence committed by Mamá Elena (and Don Cándido with the mother of Cecilia Valdés). Tita is compelled to reveal Gertrudis's true racial origins to save her marriage.<sup>349</sup> The passing black female, now exposed, is no longer a risk to the nation.

Tita learns of Gertrudis's paternity following Mamá Elena's death. José Treviño, the son of a white Mexican and black woman fleeing the US Civil War, was 'el amor de su vida', a fact that horrified Mamá Elena's parents. Marriage was forbidden, but clandestine correspondence between José and Elena

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<sup>348</sup> This metamorphosis recalls another pagan deity's transformation into a Catholic saint: the West African Yemayá becoming María de Regla. See ch. 2 of this study. For a history of *soldaderas*, see Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*.

<sup>349</sup> The birth confirms Gertrudis's latent 'animalistic side', 'her bodily interior proving conclusively the existence of [her] inner blackness' (Finnegan 318). This blackness recalls notions of *limpieza de sangre* and passing – the idea that one drop of black blood is sufficient to designate an individual as racially impure, despite appearances.

following her marriage to Tita's father divulges the truth: 'ilícito', interracial love and sex repeated in the next generation (Esquivel 121). Gertrudis then continues this pattern as a *mulata* engaged in a whitening project, albeit unknowingly. Esquivel exposes the judgments made by her characters – Elena's parents, Juan, even Tita – in a way that seems to distance her from their inherent racism and establish her as pro-*mestizaje*. However, anxieties about race-mixing and the black female character continue in the text. Esquivel relies on a well-trodden narrative path with roots in sentimental fiction: the threat of incest.<sup>350</sup> Gertrudis's assistant, Sergeant Treviño, is devoted to her to the point of slavishness. Though she marries another military man, Treviño dedicates his life to serving her, simply to be near her, 'el amor de su vida'. Esquivel continues in the tradition of the taboo, without explicitly acknowledging it: the dancing,<sup>351</sup> violent, sexually profligate Treviño, who gains the confidence of every prostitute in town and possesses a reputation as a 'mujeriego empedernido', can only be Gertrudis's half-brother (168). Mamá Elena's transgression and subsequent concealment sets the stage for a repeat outcome of Leonardo and Cecilia's incestuous union.

Unlike Villaverde, Esquivel rejects the consummation of incest. But reminiscent of another Gertrudis – Gómez de Avellaneda – Esquivel exposes her anxieties about sexual taboos by portraying Sergeant Treviño as an unwitting, mixed-race slave(-like) romantic pining for his female relative. Esquivel's motivation for introducing the incest motif is unclear. She does not, as Villaverde

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<sup>350</sup> See this study's discussion of Latin American fiction's use of the incest motif, informed by Kristal (57, notes 95-96).

<sup>351</sup> Dancing is a signifier of African blood for Esquivel. Gertrudis's dancing ability is highlighted several times in the text, most notably in connection with Tita's discovery of her paternity: Tita 'sabía perfectamente de quién había heredado Gertrudis el ritmo' (156).

and Avellaneda do, use it to advance an anti-slavery argument and condemn the exploitation of slave women by their masters that led to individual and collective tragedy. Mamá Elena was the white party, and her miscegenation was an act of love. It is perhaps Esquivel's chosen method of denouncing racism in matchmaking; if Elena had been permitted to marry José, his son would not be in love with his sister. Elena's backstory also serves to humanize her, as it leads the lovesick Tita to a greater understanding of her mother's anger and suffering. Most importantly, the author's characterization of both Gertrudis and Sergeant Treviño evidence the limitations of *mestizaje*. Gertrudis does not return Treviño's love. Instead, she actively participates in whitening. Her son is whitened through his father – the prerogative of the black female – and Treviño fathers no children. Yet Esquivel's portrayals of Gertrudis and Treviño, both prolific brothel-dwellers who dance with a natural rhythm and embrace warfare, who, despite their high military rank, show no elitism in entering the kitchen to cook for themselves (demonstrating an inherent comfort with domestic labor), portray them as suited to each other's blackness.

Gertrudis's blackness leaves a trail through the text. When Pedro and Tita finally consummate their affair, it is in a spare room, the 'dark room' where Mamá Elena has stored Gertrudis's bed. After years of abstinence and control, the bed provides the motive and the means for an eruption of suppressed sexual passion, enabling the lovers to 'recolverse voluptuosamente' in a physical union that conjures a supernatural aura of '[v]olutas fosforescentes' (139-140). Despite this transgression, Tita, a Madonna figure who, unlike Villaverde's María de Regla, had acted as wet nurse to her nephew without the taint of sexual defilement, remains pure and chaste in her monogamous and devoted love to Pedro; their

extramarital affair does not diminish her sacred gifts.<sup>352</sup> Tita's purity is also maintained because the encounter 'approximates rape' (Martínez 31). Pedro throws Tita down upon the bed, fulfilling the historical exploitation of the kitchen servant by the master and absolving her. This pre-conjugal 'dark' room, an obscure realm in which the protagonists perform their clandestine, parallel lives, hosts many secret meetings between Tita and Pedro in the years that follow, culminating in a mystical, explosive night that both extinguishes the lovers and engulfs the ranch in flames. Following Rosaura's death and on the night of Esperanza's wedding to John Brown's son Alex (raised in the US, Harvard-bound,<sup>353</sup> 'un excelente muchacho' [Esquivel 205]), Pedro and Tita find the dark room empty except for the silk-draped bed, and filled with lit candles. Each attribute this romantic gesture to the other, when it is in fact the last spectral act of Nacha, fulfilling her duties as her mistress's matchmaker. Their sexual ecstasy is such that Pedro dies at orgasm, evidence of Morning Light and John's superstition that:

[si] por una emoción muy fuerte se llegan a encender todos los cerillos que llevamos en nuestro interior de un solo golpe, se produce un resplandor tan fuerte que ilumina más allá de lo que podemos ver normalmente, y entonces ante nuestros ojos aparece un túnel esplendoroso [...] que nos llama a reencontrar nuestro perdido origen divino. (208)

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<sup>352</sup> Zubiaurre claims Tita's wet nurse role 'perfectly suits the patriarchal order', noting there is 'no purer [...] mother than the one unblemished by sexual intercourse' (45). Tita's miraculous, virginal lactation simultaneously upholds patriarchal Christian paradigms and usurps a role normally preserved physically for subaltern women.

<sup>353</sup> Martínez argues that the Positivism of the previous century is redirected from socio-political theory into educational practice; John Brown's laboratory and Alex's Harvard education promote American science and replace an established liberal Euro-Hispanic educational tradition (37).

This lofty divinity is undermined two paragraphs prior by the ‘golpeteo de la cabecera de latón contra la pared y los sonidos guturales que ambos dejaban escapar’ – undoubtedly the influence of Gertrudis’s dark bed (207).

Tita rushes to die with Pedro, gathering her enormous knitted bedspread (‘a dialogic quilt’ [Escaja 573], one that records her yearning for Pedro and acts as a quasi-dowry) and consuming matches until one finally catches on ‘la luminosa imagen’ of Pedro. The tunnel, and Pedro, appear before her. They embrace in a final ‘clímax amoroso’ and depart for ‘el edén perdido’ – heaven. Their ‘cuerpos ardientes’ set a blaze, and ‘el cuarto oscuro se convirtió en un volcán voluptuoso’ (209-210). Tita’s self-immolation recalls the *sati* that informs Spivak’s central question on subaltern speech and transforms the dark bed into a funeral pyre.<sup>354</sup> Tita, as Pedro’s ‘widow’, is unwilling to live without him. Unlike the *sati* widow, Tita’s actions are neither influenced nor governed by Mexican social custom. However, Esquivel’s ending is more than unbridled mysticism and spectacle; it also reaffirms Esquivel’s exploitation of racial and gender politics to elucidate a core theme found in Avellaneda a century-and-a-half earlier – that of the female’s enslavement to Hispanic patriarchal traditions.<sup>355</sup> Tita’s servitude is Esquivel’s *modus operandi* for converting the white Mexican female into the oppressed subaltern.

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<sup>354</sup> See Spivak’s analysis of the Hindu *sati* tradition in ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in which surviving widows join their husbands on their funeral pyres. Refusal to perform this rite leads to alienation from their community (from 297).

<sup>355</sup> Franco mentions Peruvian Clorinda Matto de Turner and Stowe as female writers who align themselves with the exploited laboring/slave class, but claims in *Plotting Women* that no parallels exist in Mexico (92-93). *Plotting Women* was published the same year as *Como agua para chocolate*, and while Esquivel’s text may not be considered the literary equal of and is not subject to the same scholarly attentions as Turner, Stowe, and Avellaneda, the text’s intended alignment of white women’s subjugation with that of the subaltern classes is undeniable.

Despite being the youngest daughter of landed privilege,<sup>356</sup> raised in a household devoid of a patriarchal figurehead, Tita usurps the roll of domestic servant. The De la Garza family tradition of the youngest daughter caring eternally for her aging mother, forfeiting her own life and freedom in support of the maternal, is a perversion of the patriarchal paradigm. Mother and daughters also shun association with traditional femininity: Tita's talents stretch into the realm of the supernatural; Gertrudis's strength and aggression earns her power and the dedication of an army; and even Rosaura's determination to have her own way transcends all reason and turns her into a tyrant. *Como agua para chocolate* is a female book that refuses to capitulate to expected representations that support male hegemony.<sup>357</sup> For this reason, Tita and Pedro never marry.<sup>358</sup> It is not, however, a narrative of female solidarity. As Zubiaurre notes, 'Tita exerts her power not only over men, but also over women and, particularly, over her female indigenous servant, thus reproducing within the kitchen the social and racial injustice prevalent outside its walls' (35). Price argues that the dynamics 'condone the master-slave dialectic' (181-182). However, through collapsing the historic hegemonic structure and erasing traditional distinctions, Esquivel remodels Tita as mistress-and-servant in one. She is the abused heroine (and

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<sup>356</sup> Zubiaurre contends that Tita is a 'white affluent woman' (46). There is no indication of this in the text, but she is undoubtedly *whiter* than Chenchá, Nacha, and Gertrudis.

<sup>357</sup> Ibsen argues that, 'rather than emphasizing issues of sexual domination and violence upon which the Americas were founded, Esquivel "feminizes" her novel through the exaggeration of [female] traits [...] such as irrationality and sensitivity' (135). In fact, Esquivel raises issues such as sexual violence through Chenchá's rape and Gertrudis's 'abduction', but in ways that subvert male dominance: Chenchá is not a ruined woman and Gertrudis is sexually dominant. Though patriarchal paradigms ultimately retain their hegemony in the text, there is a paucity of dominant male figures.

<sup>358</sup> In this study's reading of the text as informed by Rubin's 'Traffic in Women', Tita's non-marriage to Pedro stands as an authorial refusal to 'traffic' her to the Muzquiz family. In fact, Pedro's incorporation into the matriarchal De la Garza household after his marriage to Rosaura reverses patriarchal traditions. Saltz also argues that Pedro is 'not [Tita's] equal partner in the defiance of [Mamá Elena's/society's] autocratic power' (36); Tita's extramarital transgression in fact surpasses his.

the master's sexual exploit) whom Esquivel manipulates into the mold of the oppressed woman and who, through a dramatic, Macondoan extinction of the ranch,<sup>359</sup> effects the end of the De la Garzas' warped tradition. The outside world, however, retains a gendered political structure unfit for Tita's gifts, so she elects a widow's sacrifice. The final scene is the culmination of the author's careful manipulation of subaltern identity resulting in a transfiguring moment of agency.

In her Avellanedan narrative choice to equate female oppression with subaltern oppression, Esquivel fails to account for the experience of racial subaltern women in the text who are not offered an opportunity to liberate themselves.<sup>360</sup> Nacha has died of a broken heart, her own attempts to focus on her fiancé's 'luminosa imagen' unsuccessful (she does not cross through the tunnel, but remains spiritually tied to earth in pursuit of securing Tita's union with Pedro). Chenchá's husband builds them a home she must inhabit. Even Gertrudis, as a wife and mother to a 'mulato escultural' (Esquivel 200) with blue eyes, is now stripped of her prior masculine agency; her absorption into the patriarchal household paradigm condemns her to pass in the guise of a society woman, consumed by fashion trends. She arrives at Esperanza's wedding wearing a dress that is 'lo más moderno y llamativo' (Ibid.). Gertrudis's blackness – her aggressive sexuality – has been contained, though not neutralized. To some extent, the fates of these women demonstrate a normalization of sexual

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<sup>359</sup> The spontaneous fire recalls García Márquez's fatal hurricane at the end of *Cien años de soledad*, another destructive act of nature that obliterates a multigenerational homestead.

<sup>360</sup> According to Oropesa, no women in the text achieve liberation, only 'nuevos límites que la nueva sociedad patriarcal les han marcado' (259). The new patriarchy may permit sexual freedom, but is not a large-scale paradigm shift that promises full incorporation of the female, the subaltern, and the female subaltern. Martínez argues that the reader is led to expect a liberation, and then denied that catharsis (29).

and social race-mixing in the text. The family, as well as Mexican society, emerges undeniably *mestizo*. Yet Tita's appropriation of the subaltern female role indicates a lack of historical and socio-political awareness on her (and Esquivel's) part.<sup>361</sup> Tita emerges 'aloof, a little racist, a little sexist' (Zubiaurre 46);<sup>362</sup> so does Esquivel. *Mestizaje* has objectives, and to achieve and expedite them, Esquivel establishes Tita as a prototypical Mexican Woman to the exclusion of the subaltern. Tita embodies all women: mother, daughter, sister, lover, servant, virgin.<sup>363</sup> She is loved and ignored, worshipped and abused. She eliminates the traditional place of the subaltern female in the Plantation, because when the mistress becomes the cook, the servant becomes altogether superfluous.

Beyond the US border, Esperanza ('Hope') and her American husband begin a new family and the whitening project continues. Their daughter, the 'first [generation] of the "new" intercultural mix' – and the new interracial mix – is the narrator of Esquivel's story (Martínez 39).<sup>364</sup> Tita's great-niece closes the text by returning to Mexico and revealing her desire to record the romance of Tita and

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<sup>361</sup> During the Mexican Revolution, the indigenous and 'peon' classes – the laborers – faced food shortages and untenable living conditions (Martínez 33). Esquivel omits any reference to these hardships, suggesting the socio-political concerns of the subaltern classes are beyond the remit of her novel, and her own interest. She only references cultural signifiers – food, traditional healing practices, etc. – to construct a marketable autochthonous aesthetic.

<sup>362</sup> Zubiaurre draws comparisons between the marginalization of indigenous servants in the text and the wider socio-political exclusion of the indigenous in Mexican public life: 'we do not want any "indios" in our government, nor do we want them in our kitchens' (46).

<sup>363</sup> Saltz designates Tita 'a new woman', 'the late twentieth century Western model of not-virgin-not-whore' (36). She is Esquivel's attempt at what Zubiaurre terms the novel's 'proto-feminism' (47).

<sup>364</sup> Martínez notes that the novel is set during and after the Revolution and argues Esquivel used this period to 'redirect Mexico toward a new appreciation and recognition of its need of American interests' (38). Indeed, Esperanza and Alex's union is the only one Esquivel approves: the daughter survives, is whitened, and is tasked with recording a fetishized Mexican history as a curiosity. Esperanza lives in an apartment built on the former ranch site, a metaphor for intercultural modernization: American-style living on Mexican soil.

Pedro for posterity. Neither Chenchu nor Gertrudis, as non-white women who bear a history of sexual exploitation, are sufficiently whitened to leave Mexico for Anglo-America. Yet race further separates these two women from one another, as events at Esperanza's wedding demonstrate. When the passionate effects of Tita's cooking begin to take hold, Chenchu merely asks permission to return home. But the feast elicits in Gertrudis a repeat performance of her sexual awakening:

Gertrudis fue la primera en sentir nuevamente los síntomas. [...] De inmediato reconoció el calor en las piernas, el cosquilleo en el centro de su cuerpo, los pensamientos pecaminosos, y decidió retirarse con su esposo antes de que las cosas llegaran a mayores. (205-206)

Gertrudis should be a figure of liberation, a woman thriving in a male occupation, the warrior-mother Toci of legend, but in her fashionable clothing and American car, she remains a black woman endowed with a hyperbolic sexuality, the inexhaustible prostitute at the bottom of the pigmentocracy still trying to pass. Mexican *mestizaje* does not necessarily negate racial hierarchies and heterogeneity does not equate to '*café con leche*'.<sup>365</sup> This border novel, by inhabiting the geographic space of first contact between the US and Latin America, also resides on the fence between competing ideologies of taboo miscegenation and desired *mestizaje*. Esquivel portrays Mexico in the 1980s as an oil-and-water mixture: socially integrated but inherently, racially separate. In a late twentieth-century Spanish American work that ostensibly challenges traditional power paradigms of gender and incorporates social and sexual race-mixing into an interior female world, the black female delimits the collectively

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<sup>365</sup> See ch. 2 of this study for an etymological discussion of this term and its theoretical application to identity politics.

imagined *mestizaje* identity, and ultimately reemerges over-sexed and ideologically relegated to the brothel.

### The Erotic Novels

Mario Vargas Llosa's *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto*, a text at once vastly different from but rich in motifs shared with *Como agua para chocolate*,<sup>366</sup> is the Peruvian Nobel Laureate's 1997 work that pushes depictions of race-mixing and the mixed-race servant into transgressive territory. If *Sab*, *Cecilia Valdés*, *A Escrava Isaura*, and *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca* may be plotted on a continuum approaching social and racial *mestizaje* (a concept either fundamental to a Latin American population that pursues whitening as a collectively desired ideal, or as an inevitability of historical race-mixing that has rendered racial segregation impractical and detrimental to constructed Latin American national identities), then *Los cuadernos* occupies an extreme point that claims *mestizaje* as culturally desirable, surpassing prerogatives of the crafted 'café con leche' citizen and an emphasis on whitening *en masse*. *Mestizaje* may emerge anywhere at any time, including in eccentric sexual fantasy. Don Rigoberto, a wealthy Limean<sup>367</sup> insurance executive, is engaged in a quest for spiritual

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<sup>366</sup> Where Esquivel offers an 'all-in-one' cookbook romance of forbidden sexual passion, *Los cuadernos* is an erotically sophisticated, intertextual exploration of marital love in distress. Yet, both develop as a 'text-within-a-text' – Tita's/her great-niece's cookbook and Rigoberto's notebooks. Köllman outlines Vargas Llosa's thematic spectrum: 'voyeurism, [...] obsession with [...] bodily functions; sex across the boundaries of race, age and social status; bodily odors and synaesthesia' (205). *Como agua chocolate* shares these thematic elements with *Los cuadernos* (and Vargas Llosa's *Elogio de la madrastra*).

<sup>367</sup> Chaney and Garcia Castro argue that domestic servants in Lima testify to 'persisting feudal-like work relations' ('A New Field' 8), a socio-political feature that argues for the inclusion of the city within the theoretical Plantation framework as outlined by Curtain. This urban paradigm arguably persists due to the large numbers of poor, subaltern women who migrate from rural areas to Latin American cities in search of employment. Domestic service's informal and undocumented nature permits exploitation of workers familiar with rural agricultural systems; see Jelin, 'Migration'.

transcendence through pleasure. In this vein, the text follows from its earlier sister narrative, Vargas Llosa's *Elogio de la madrastra* (1988), as both are ontological studies that explore ideas of idiosyncratic sexuality, as well as the breaking of sexual taboos. Vargas Llosa argues that '[eroticism] has its own *moral* justification because it says that pleasure is enough for me; it is a statement of the individual's sovereignty' (Boland, "Erotic Novels" 102; my emphasis). Pleasure as a moral imperative is a tendentious claim that requires Vargas Llosa to craft a ritual practice that supports it, one that lends the fabricated moral code its structure and legitimacy.

Despite Rigoberto's 'sneering agnosticism' (104) and rejection of the Catholic activism he practiced as a young man, a zealous, almost fanatic impulse remains within him and drives his search for a substitute deity. Rigoberto, like Vargas Llosa, seeks his own religion to fill the void, and he settles upon the pursuit of pleasure through sexual fantasy. What Rigoberto seeks through pleasure, Vargas Llosa seeks through literature.<sup>368</sup> Sabine Köllmann draws distinct parallels between Vargas Llosa and Rigoberto, albeit 'parodistically exaggerated' ones (205). Vargas Llosa's denouncement of the Catholic Church, his career-spanning literary condemnation of its repressive, corrupting influence

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<sup>368</sup> In his doctoral thesis, *García Márquez: historia de un deicidio* (1971), Vargas Llosa argues that 'each novel is a secret deicide, a symbolic assassination of reality'. His assertion that the author becomes the new creator – a 'substitute for God' – establishes literature as Vargas Llosa's divine kingdom in which his characters model or challenge competing ideologies (Forgues 160). In the Rigobertan novels, Vargas Llosa trials eroticism, pleasure, and individual sovereignty over the established Catholic morality, which he, in line with Marx, considered an 'opiate of the masses' (Boland, "*Pantaleón*" 25). The author's reading of Georges Bataille (his argument that breaking taboos is pleasurable [Marting 232]) and the Marquis de Sade, among others, structures Rigoberto's ethical journey. For a discussion of French philosophy and Vargas Llosa, see Forgues, Boland ('Erotic Novels'), Booker, and especially Kristal's *Temptation*.

on Peruvian society,<sup>369</sup> impels his experimentation with alternative spiritual paths. His rejection of Catholicism perhaps initially calls into question the institution's influence over his depictions of the female subaltern. However, Rigoberto and Vargas Llosa both find their searches unavoidably shaped by Catholicism's foundational dogmas; just as Rigoberto's quest is shaken by his deeply held (and hidden) boundaries of morality, Vargas Llosa's challenge to the strictures of Catholicism is limited by his dependence on Catholic archetypes and tropes. M. Keith Booker argues that Vargas Llosa's reliance on Catholic imagery is intentional and that it seeks to destabilize institutionalized dichotomies through linking the supposedly opposed institutions of Catholicism and sex, and subverting the attendant stereotypes. Indeed, it is the context of Catholicism's historical syncretism in Latin America that enables Vargas Llosa to appropriate its heterodox motifs for his own use. However, the legacy of his quest is crippled by straightforward and stereotypical depictions of the *zamba* servant, Justiniana, and her implicit association with Mary Magdalene.

Both *Elogio* and *Los cuadernos* employ religious iconography and a theological lexicon: Rigoberto worships his wife and endeavors to make himself worthy of her through painstaking 'abluciones'. The author takes great pains to establish Rigoberto's rigid doctrine in *Elogio*, dedicating each day's grooming attention to a different part of his unwieldy body. Rigoberto feels pride in his attempted obstruction to the corporeal ravages of time, but the anguish with which he attends his habitual trimmings, pluckings, and chafings reads as a mortification of the flesh. He inflicts extreme discomfort upon himself through

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<sup>369</sup> For a discussion on Vargas Llosa's 'scathing satire' against the Church in his other works, as well as his belief in the attendant 'moral and spiritual decay' it has inflicted upon ideologies of sex, see Boland ('*Pantaleón*', especially 23-25); Booker (23-29).

hygiene rituals that precede intercourse and function as a replacement for ecclesiastical cleansing rites (for example, holy water). As Efraín Kristal notes, these practices '[constitute] his particular religion and way of bringing about a utopia', yet they are at odds with the 'conventional social codes of his society' (*Temptation* 169).<sup>370</sup> Rigoberto initially appears to construct his alternative moral and sexual code with conviction, but abandons it when his allowances for individual sovereignty are tested by incestuous infidelity. The ideological adjustments he subsequently makes further eschew conventional sexual morality and reaffirm his unique code. The betrayal of his wife Lucrecia and son Alfonso's (Fonchito) affair allows Vargas Llosa to critique the common forms that the Good-versus-Evil dichotomy takes and pose more profound metaethical questions about the nature of sex: normalcy and perversion, corruption and innocence.<sup>371</sup> For Rigoberto (almost) anything goes, and this philosophy infiltrates the moralities of his wife and son. Lucrecia embarks on the affair in *Elogio*, resulting in her expulsion from the home. In *Los cuadernos*, the couple reconciles with secret help from Fonchito himself – he provokes 'un intercambio de ideas [que modifica] los rígidos parámetros del padre' (Habra 84). The first text challenges Rigoberto's dedication to his personal doctrine, but the sequel reinforces it through an ethical shift in which Rigoberto adjusts his moral worldview to allow for Lucrecia's transgression and open a path for her absolution.<sup>372</sup> The couple's

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<sup>370</sup> Much scholarly analysis of the erotic novels focuses on utopian principles, the chief of which is achieving balance between the private and public spheres. See especially Kristal, *Temptation*, and Forgues. The challenges and ultimate failure of Rigoberto to maintain this utopian 'dualidad' in *Los cuadernos* are explored in Martí-Peña.

<sup>371</sup> Vargas Llosa's interest in incestuous relationships and unorthodox couplings could stem from his own experiences. At 18 he married his aunt-by-marriage, ten years his senior; following their divorce he married his first cousin (Köllmann 3).

<sup>372</sup> Habra argues that *Los cuadernos* can be read as a parody that skewers not only collective utopias (which Rigoberto does explicitly) but also 'la exagerada exaltación individual del personaje', the cult of the individual, that campaigns for a life outside of

highly erotic encounters, or those upon which Lucrecia embarks with a third party, derive from Rigoberto's imagination, but it is the element of worship (reminiscent of Álvaro's worship of Isaura) which infuses the episodes with spiritual transcendence. Despite the unreality of these encounters, they draw on elements of the real, on history and on stereotype. They are simultaneously abstract and concrete, a derivation of magical realism.<sup>373</sup> Lucrecia, recalling the Roman Lucretia whose rape by her husband's young relative drives her to suicide, is transformed into figures from art (ancient, Renaissance, and modern) but also participates with Rigoberto and a prostitute in a Mexican motel, dressed as a man. Through a rigid narrative structure,<sup>374</sup> Rigoberto's fantasies in *Los cuadernos* follow visits between Lucrecia and Fonchito, and a related critical vignette from his own notebooks.<sup>375</sup> Lucrecia takes many forms (she is always Lucrecia), as does Rigoberto or his proxy (a professor, an ambassador's wife). Ultimately, perversion and fetish emerge as commonplace, made mundane through their multiplicities and 'grounded in the intimacy of a bourgeois home' (Kristal and King 2). The deployment of artistic settings and religious typography undermine Rigoberto's affectation of eccentricity via his studied intellectualism,

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society's constraints (82). Rigoberto's hypocrisy is revealed first through his crisis, and his fixation on individual sovereignty is exposed through its resolution.

<sup>373</sup> Boland defines the 'outstanding characteristic' of magical realism as a 'coexistence of objective reality and imaginary reality' ("*Pantaleón*" 29), an extraction from Vargas Llosa's distinction between 'lo real objetivo' and 'lo real imaginario' which join in 'la realidad total' (*García Márquez*, 426-456, 480-538). The overlapping of reality and the imaginary is a chief characteristic of the Rigobertan novels. For a study of magical realism, see Hart and Ouyang's *A Companion to Magical Realism* and Faris's *Ordinary Enchantments*.

<sup>374</sup> *Elogio*'s structure is comparatively simplistic to *Los cuadernos*'s and consists of 14 chapters and an epilogue that alternate ekphrastic fantasies with events in the home. *Los cuadernos* consists of nine chapters and an epilogue, the chapters each divided into four parts.

<sup>375</sup> Fonchito's visits to Lucrecia are narrated from her point of view through third-person omniscience. Rigoberto's narrative thread controls the following two sections, and the fourth part of each chapter is formed by Fonchito's anonymous letters. Despite her transition from 'witness' to 'active participant', Justiniana's voice is notably omitted from *Los cuadernos*.

resulting in a parody of pretentious, frustrated male domesticity seeking refuge in the exotic.

Don Rigoberto's family of three forms the core of his household of four.<sup>376</sup> Rigoberto's artistic fantasy and Lucrecia's impulsive behavior divorce them from daily reality, while Fonchito grows only more inscrutable throughout the narratives.<sup>377</sup> Yet, Justiniana the maid is only ever herself: a *zamba*. With Justiniana, Vargas Llosa's attempted normalization of fetish and his challenges to stereotype break down. While the other members of the household speak and fantasize lyrically about sex, Justiniana's erotic utterances are comparatively crass and centered on the corporeal, rather than the aesthetic. Like Gertrudis, Justiniana needs to cool down. In *Los cuadernos*, she tells Lucrecia: 'necesito una ducha de agua bien fría. [...] Estas conversaciones con usted, a mí me encantan. Pero, me dejan medio turumba y cargada de electricidad. Si no me cree, póngame la mano aquí y verá qué sacudón recibe' (328). In *Elogio*, Justiniana is Lucrecia's personal maid who serves her meals, draws her baths, and informs her of Fonchito's growing infatuation. When the affair is exposed, Justiniana indirectly defends Lucrecia, implying to Fonchito that he should feel remorse. His response, 'Lo hice por ti' (197), and the perceived sexual advance

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<sup>376</sup> Rigoberto also employs a butler and cook, unnamed and unseen. Their exclusion from the erotic fantasies of the family suggests that they are not as desirable as the mixed-race Justiniana.

<sup>377</sup> Fonchito's motives for the affair with his stepmother are unclear. Booker argues he seduces Lucrecia and exposes her so that 'he could pursue his sexual interest in Justiniana unimpeded by stepmotherly interruptions' (181), while Kristal argues Fonchito's utterance is merely 'another seduction', the latest in a series (171). It is more likely Fonchito simply wanted his father's exclusive attention, based on his intrusion into his father's private notebooks. In fact, Fonchito may only be seeking to prove that Lucrecia is not the Virgin Mary (he succeeds), but a wicked stepmother, a corrupting and evil presence the child must defeat. For a discussion on the stepmother in literature originating in oral tradition, see Bacchilega's *Postmodern Fairy Tales* and (for a Spanish-American focus) Kushigian's *Reconstructing Childhood*.

stun Justiniana and highlight her 'vulnerability [...] as a maid' (Marting 245). She flees the house, but resurfaces in Lucrecia's new home in *Los cuadernos*, still employed as Lucrecia's personal maid. Justiniana initially appears to reject traditional representations of an alliance between the maid and the master through a sexual relationship; she loyally follows her mistress, acting as the paragon of the 'good servant'. She also challenges Spanish American stereotypes of the young master gaining sexual experience with the maid.<sup>378</sup> However, she maintains a certain fondness for and naiveté about Fonchito's character and ultimately acts as matchmaker by encouraging Lucrecia to reconcile with Rigoberto. Through this action she realigns herself with the master; like Evelyn, she works to protect the white home and reproduce the white family. She is also drawn into the family's incestuous vortex.

Justiniana figures in two fantasies (one Lucrecia's, one Rigoberto's) and is sexually subordinated to Lucrecia in both. In *Elogio*, Lucrecia transforms into Diana-Lucrecia, the Roman goddess at her bath.<sup>379</sup> She is on the banks of a river, and Justiniana, her 'favorita', has brought the young goatherd Foncín, enamored of Diana-Lucrecia, to view their sexual encounter from a safe distance. Diana-Lucrecia describes Justiniana, who is denied an alternative classical moniker, as a '[gozadora] innata', 'nunca se equivoca en asuntos que conciernen al placer' (71). She continues: '[es] lo que más me gusta de ella [...]': su fantasía rápida y

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<sup>378</sup> Vargas Llosa stated in an interview that, as a young man, his friends' sexual experimentation with their maids had been 'repugnant' to him (cited in Marting 245). García Márquez's *Cronica de una muerte anunciada* also references master/servant sexual initiation. Vargas Llosa rejects the practice through Justiniana's rejection.

<sup>379</sup> This ekphrastic fantasy derives from François Boucher's *Diana Leaving the Bath* (1742). Boucher's sensualized, leisurely depiction departs from traditional visual representations of Diana actively hunting. However, Diana was also eroticized by Keats in his poem *Endymion* (1818), which centers on a young man's love for the goddess.

su instinto certero para reconocer [...] las fuentes del entretenimiento y el placer' (71-72). Justiniana is depicted as innately sexual, though Lucrecia has no knowledge of her sexual experience or practices. The stigma of matchmaker attends her in this fantasy as well, for Diana-Lucrecia condemns her as a 'cómplice [...] de ambos y sobre todo de sí misma', suggesting that Justiniana is responsible for fostering the growing tension between Lucrecia and Fonchito and does so for her own pleasure or gain (72). This dream-fantasy of Lucrecia's occurs after Justiniana informs her of Fonchito's nightly vigils at the skylight above her bathtub, to which Lucrecia responds by performing an elaborate, prolonged, nude toilette in an effort to punish and excite her audience. Justiniana is portrayed as everyone's co-conspirator, a go-between with an ulterior motive who obstructs, titillates, and facilitates in equal measure.

The Diana-Lucrecia fantasy ends with a premonition of the encounter repeated:

[a]llí estará él y ahí nosotras, inmóviles otra vez, en otro instante eterno. Foncín, lívida la frente y las mejillas sonrosadas, sus ojos abiertos con asombro y gratitud, un hilillo de saliva colgando de su boca tierna. Nosotras, mezcladas y perfectas, respirando a la par, con la expresión colmada de las que saben ser felices. Allí estaremos los tres, quietos, pacientes, esperando al artista del futuro que, azuzado por el deseo, nos aprisione en sueños y, llevándonos a la tela con su pincel, crea que nos inventa. (75-76)

This prophecy bears fruit during one of Fonchito's visits to Lucrecia's home-in-exile. The setting of the fantasy lesbian encounter is demythologized in *Los cuadernos* through the artistic direction of Fonchito. Obsessed with the life and works of Egon Schiele, Fonchito has taken to carrying a book of reproductions with him, and is successful one day in convincing Lucrecia and Justiniana to

reenact *Two Girls Lying in an Embrace*. He instructs their movements in a *tableau vivant* as they seek to replicate the image and fulfill his fantasy:

[e]llas callaban y obedecían, plegándose, desplegándose, ladeándose [...]. ¿Dóciles? ¿Embrujadas? ¿Hechizadas? ‘Derrotadas’, admitió doña Lucrecia. Su cabeza reposaba sobre los muslos de la muchacha y su diestra la asía de la cintura. De tanto en tanto, la presionaba, para sentir su humedad y la calidez que emanaba de ella; y, respondiendo a esa presión, en su muslo derecho los dedos de Justiniana se hundían también y la hacían sentir que la sentía. Estaba viva. Claro que lo estaba; ese olor intenso, denso, turbador, que aspiraba ¿de dónde iba a venir sino del cuerpo de Justiniana? ¿O, vendría de ella misma? ¿Cómo habían llegado a estos extremos? [...] Se sentía muy a gusto dentro del cuadro. Con ella, con su cuerpo, con Justiniana, con la circunstancia que vivía. (82)

The women literally contort themselves to appeal to the male gaze and satisfy the aroused young master. Yet the sexual direction Justiniana receives is doubled: Lucrecia squeezes her and she reciprocates. The mistress initiates and the servant responds in kind. Lucrecia takes it for granted that she would do so, insisting that ‘of course’ the maid was aroused by her double subjugation and that the proof is in the smell, intense and disturbing, of what can only be Justiniana’s bodily secretions. Lucrecia is content with the physical call-and-response pattern established and reads Justiniana’s actions as delight in transgression.

The Rigobertan fantasy that follows casts Lucrecia and Justiniana as nervous first-time lovers after a cocktail party in his home. The family home is a setting unremarkable for its domesticity yet transgressive in its undermining of the master and mistress’s relationship in their marital bed. Additionally, Rigoberto’s version of the lesbian fantasy entails a prerequisite of sexual violence. Lucrecia recounts the drunken aggression of a guest, Fito Cebolla, who assaults both women. The extent of his violence to Lucrecia, however, is mitigated by her status as married mistress of the house. In an echo of Mamá

Elena's preserved chastity, Lucrecia evades violent sexual assault. Whereas she is subjected to an unsolicited 'mano masculina en la parte inferior de su nalga izquierda' (93), Justiniana is 'arrastrada, [forzada]' to the kitchen table where Fito Cebolla 'besuqueaba [a ella] y gargarizaba unos ruidos que eran, que tenían que ser groserías' (99). This assault is foreshadowed by coarse and racist sexual comments Fito Cebolla makes to Lucrecia; Justiniana is '[u]na zambita de rompe y raja' and he informs her, 'Tu zambita me ha gustado, en serio [...]. Yo soy democrático, vengan negras, blancas o amarillas, si están bien espachadas. ¿Me la regalas? O, si prefieres, traspásamela. Te pago un juanillo' (93, 97). Lucrecia's foreknowledge of Fito Cebolla's aggressive sexual interest in Justiniana makes her complicit in the attack for not warning her, but also exposes the continued association of domestic servants with private property. The maid, like everything else in the home, belongs to the mistress and is for sale.

Lucrecia atones for her underestimation of Fito Cebolla by avenging violence with violence. She rescues Justiniana before he is able to do more than tear her dress – a blue uniform marking her as the servant – and beats him with a rolling pin. Justiniana, her agency finally unleashed following her rescue, comes to her own defense by breaking a stool on his head. With the would-be rapist defeated and in retreat, Lucrecia turns her attentions to soothing her maid and a mutual seduction ensues. Lucrecia, 'ardía de pies a cabeza' and overwhelmed by 'un sentimiento de cariño y compasión' (103, 101), dresses Justiniana and herself in robes and offers her a drink. Without the distinction of a uniform, and with the inversion of the server/served dynamic, the two women are on more equal footing. Rigoberto's fantasy casts Lucrecia as the romantic hero and Justiniana as her desired heroine. The maid accepts the mistress's advances 'con gracia, con esa malicia que pone en todo', marking her as both acquiescing

and complicit. When Justiniana confesses to having harbored erotic fantasies for her mistress (Rigoberto's dream-within-a-dream), Lucrecia installs her in the marital bed and the women consummate their first lesbian experience. The mistress praises the maid's beauty and '*café con leche*' skin to her husband and describes the encounter as a transcendent yet terrifying sexual epiphany. In this representation, Vargas Llosa frames race-mixing as the antithesis of taboo. It is something to be celebrated, fetishized, and savored. Though the explicit interracial sex acts of the text are relegated to the realm of the imaginary, the corporeality of the subaltern woman – her thighs and waist, her smell, her nipples, the look in her eye – much like her speech ('*me mojabá*' [109]), grounds the fantasy in her physical body.

Justiniana's exploits give the initial appearance of an authorial challenge to racial hierarchy and an entrenched caste system. Yet such a reading is superficial in its failure to account for Justiniana's appropriated sexuality. In each scenario she is depicted as a willing and enthusiastic participant, but these qualities are attributed to her by third parties wishing to lend legitimacy and authenticity to their socially, racially, and homosexually transgressive fantasies. In reality, the portrayal of Justiniana as a damsel in distress, as well as representations of her perpetual sexual availability, do not challenge stereotypes, but cast her in a familiar biblical role. Like Gertrudis, her blackness virtually seeps out of her and fulfills its destiny in the guise of the whore.<sup>380</sup> Lucrecia, Rigoberto, and Fonchito could be associated with the scriptural figures of the Virgin Mary,

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<sup>380</sup> Fito Cebolla's attack on Justiniana frames her as another of Dobrian's 'damsel[s] in erotic distress' (this study 222).

God, and Lucifer, respectively.<sup>381</sup> Vargas Llosa subverts these archetypes through an undermining of the tidy binary of Good-versus-Evil and the oversimplification of human nature and relationships it implies. These characters ultimately reject such easy categorization, but Justiniana stands as a static yet ambiguous Mary Magdalene. Within the fantasies, she is willing and acts with agency, but her performance never changes her relationships with Lucrecia – simultaneously her savior and tempter – or Fonchito (or Rigoberto). Each scenario merely serves to satisfy an impulse that is not Justiniana’s and to develop the complexity of her partner, just as Mary Magdalene’s acceptance by Christ emphasizes his goodness, rather than her worthiness. Justiniana’s body is inscribed with the desires, obsessions, and anxieties of the Rigobertan triumvirate. Following the completion of her employers’ fantasies, she returns to her post, unchanged. The *tableau vivant* does nothing to alter her relationship with Fonchito, the young master, whom she still teases, coddles, and reprimands. The outcome of Rigoberto’s imagined lesbian encounter, a highly transgressive act across normative gender, class, and race barriers, results only in silence; like a ‘good’ maid, Rigoberto is happy to hear Lucrecia report, Justiniana demonstrates ‘una naturalidad y una discreción’ and acts as if nothing happened (110). In short, she is silenced and then praised for her silence, and content to continue being only the maid. Justiniana therefore escapes the fate of Evelyn in *Las memorias de Mamá Blanca*: dismissal and exile. As a hypersexualized

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<sup>381</sup> Booker connects Lucrecia to the Virgin Mary through both mothers’ exemption from ‘the dirty physicality of [...] childbearing’ (172), while Kristal highlights the connection between Lucrecia and Mary in Fra Angelico’s *Annunciation* in *Elogio* (172-173). Rigoberto, as the constructor of fantasy and creator of an alternative, private world, is Vargas Llosa’s ‘substitute for God’ (note 347, above) working to craft his utopia. Fonchito is deemed a ‘devil’ and ‘Lucifer’ by Lucrecia, Justiniana, and Rigoberto; he also challenges Rigoberto’s (sexual and patriarchal) dominance, a parallel to Lucifer’s challenge to God before the Fall.

mixed-race maid who pleasures the boss(es), then returns to cleaning the kitchen, Justiniana is Rigoberto, Lucrecia, and Fonchito's ideal domestic servant. Her mixture facilitates further mixing as part of a trend rooted in pleasure and seductive transgression, one that this text promotes.

Both *Como agua para chocolate* and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto* embrace transgressive themes found in earlier works. The threat of incest that shaped the Cuban abolitionist texts examined in chapter 2 of this study – *Sab* and *Cecilia Valdés* – is intimately bound to anxieties about race-mixing, and Esquivel's work continues the tradition of locating these dangers in the African bloodline, specifically the black female. Vargas Llosa's work takes Parra's insinuation of transgressive lesbianism to its erotic, and explicit, culmination in *Los cuadernos*. The sturdy, stoic Evelyn transforms into the flamboyant and promiscuous Justiniana, proof that the white patriarchal household faces danger from hypersexualized black women on all fronts: neither master nor mistress is safe from seduction. In the US, however, sexual race-mixing (marital, procreative, or pleasure-based) continues to repel the Protestant post-Plantation.

## CHAPTER 7: *The (Helpful) Help*

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* (2009) is perhaps the most famous and best-selling post-Plantation work about black maids in the United States. Set in Jackson, Mississippi, in the early 1960s, the novel unfolds against the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement. Early in the novel, the portly, opinionated maid Minny dismisses the prototypical literary mammy, Scarlett O'Hara's Mammy, as an accomplice in proslavery nostalgia:

I sure didn't like that movie [*Gone with the Wind*], the way they made slavery look like a big happy tea party. If I'd played Mammy, I'd of told Scarlett to stick those green draperies up her white little pooper. Make her own damn man-catching dress. (50)

Through Minny's narration, Stockett rejects the mammy stereotype in a direct, revisionist gesture. But Minny is more like Mammy than she or Stockett are willing to acknowledge. Minny is a wife and mother, but domestic scenes focused on interactions with her own family are outnumbered and overshadowed by the burgeoning relationship between her and Miss Celia Foote, her mistress. Minny, like Mammy, is a physical laborer charged with supporting her white employer's femininity and safeguarding her marriage. While Minny cooks and cleans, Miss Celia takes up bedrest to encourage her several doomed pregnancies; both women play their part in the reproduction of the white family. Just as Mammy helped Scarlett pursue Rhett Butler to save the O'Haras and Tara, Minny devotes herself to the Footes' domestic harmony. Minny hides her employment from Mr. Johnny and conspires with Miss Celia to pass her cooking off as her mistress's. Therefore, Minny's fried chicken recipe can be read as a man-keeping dish.

Mিনny is not quite the childless, sexless workhorse that Mammy is, but her multiple children fathered by her abusive husband are the result not of love, libido, or the desire for a family of her own, but, as Stockett suggests, a defense against violence: whenever she is pregnant, her husband's beatings temporarily cease. Neither the abuse nor her pregnancies, however, disrupt her work – she is indeed a 'good servant'. Her children, like Aunt Chloe's, annoy her and are regularly scolded. A final scene in the Foote home reaffirms the mistress-servant paradigm, and is rife with allusions to antebellum mammyhood and white femininity – the same types with which Mitchell worked. Miss Celia's confession to her husband of her multiple miscarriages and infertility occurs in the dining room: Celia seated, receiving comfort from her worshipful husband kneeling before her. Mr. Johnny promises Minny lifetime employment as Minny gazes upon the couple from a distance: pregnant, standing, weeping. Celia and Mr. Johnny weep, too, a clear effort by Stockett in cross-racial sympathy and reconciliation, especially since Minny wonders 'how it is that I have so [many children] when she doesn't have any' (405). Mae Miller Claxton argues that this 'redemptive relationship' resolves neatly (157). Yet it is a false equation between two members of a non-cohesive womanhood. Celia weeps for the child she will never give to the gentle husband who loves her; Minny weeps for the thwarted reproduction of the white family and out of pity for her mistress, while leaning against a sideboard, heavy with the baby that will stay her husband's violent hand. Her babies will grow to be black maids, a fate already entered into by her eldest daughter, Sugar.<sup>382</sup> Quite a number of differences remain between these

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<sup>382</sup> Sugar begins her life of service at the Jackson League Benefit, a choice Minny approves because it will '[b]e good for her to start learning party serving' (312). Minny's youngest daughter Kindra, also destined for service, already displays attributes of the

two women, and Minny ultimately reinforces, rather than revises, Mammy's legacy.

Stockett's narrative does provide some revisionist challenges to the stoic, helpful mammy type. Halfway through the novel, Gretchen, a black maid being interviewed for the protagonists' sociological manuscript of servant narratives, titled *Help*, speaks out. During her interview with Sweeter, the novel's white heroine, Gretchen questions the project's motives and purpose:

Look at you. Another white lady trying to make a dollar off of colored people. [...] They hate you. You know that right? Every little thing about you. But you're so dumb, you think you're doing them a favor. [...] You know the nicest thing a white woman's ever done for me? Given me the heel on her bread. The colored women coming in here, they're just playing a big trick on you. They'll never tell you the truth, lady. [...] Say it, lady, say the word you think every time one of us comes in the door. *Nigger*. (258-259)

Skeeter's subsequent 'trembling' and 'chills' testify to Stockett's own unease on the subject and reticence about *her* project<sup>383</sup> – can a white woman ever know, and trust, a black woman? Or is every word a 'big trick'? These anxieties are able to flourish in the US, a nation founded on principles of segregation, in which those pursuing the ideals of white Protestant America inevitably 'other' those outside its remit. When Gretchen takes the payment offered – she is the only interviewee to do so – Stockett's verdict is passed. The 'bad servant' withholds the truth, refuses to play matchmaker, talks back, and takes the money and runs. Gretchen's

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'sassy black woman' personified by Minny (Wallace-Sanders, 'Every Child Left Behind' 72).

<sup>383</sup> Donaldson argues that Stockett's epilogue, in which she states she has 'spent years imagining' what Demetrie would say about her life as a black maid and that this question informs her writing, is 'one of the most disturbing aspects of *The Help* and its staggering success' (39). The epilogue reads as an admission of both appropriation and literary shortcoming (it is titled 'Too Little, Too Late') designed to encourage the reader's forbearance and evade criticism.

actions are condemned by Aibileen, Stockett's other black heroine, establishing Gretchen's outburst not as a demonstrative of agency, but as harmful, negative, and abnormal. The 'bad servant' is rare, but she does exist, and she is to be feared. Gretchen is the embodiment and the source of mistresses' anxieties about their servants, a manifestation of the particular divide between white and black women in the United States.

If one feature of black or mixed-race servant representations marks this divide in US post-Plantation fiction (in comparison with its Latin American counterpart), it is the treatment of miscegenation. This taboo is so embedded in US culture that even literary attempts to redress other aspects of subaltern exploitation fail to adequately acknowledge its history. *The Help*, a publishing sensation in the US, its sales later boosted by an award-winning film,<sup>384</sup> endeavors to chronicle a history of domestic labor, largely silent and ignored, with roots in antebellum slavery.<sup>385</sup> In her postscript, the author addresses the myriad challenges of writing a book about race in the US, as well as her impetus for writing the novel: her experience of growing up in Jackson with her family's black maid, Demetrie, and her own unanswered questions about Demetrie's experience working for a white family. The challenges referenced are those faced, in a more immediate sense, by the characters whose points of view structure *The Help* as they secretly meet to plan and produce their own racially

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<sup>384</sup> *The Help* was the *New York Times* number one bestseller for over a year following publication; the film was number one in the US upon its release in 2011. Between publication and the film release the book sold three million copies domestically (Jones 8).

<sup>385</sup> According to Claxton, the history of southern white ownership over black servants left a legacy, an 'attitude' based on 'historical precedents', that remains and pervades Stockett's work, as well as the literature of other southern white writers, such as Eudora Welty (147, 150). This claim echoes Harris's assertion that the white mistress/black servant dynamic represents 'the way things are' (p. 24 of this study).

explosive tome. Thus, Stockett approaches her fiction with historical insight, some nostalgia, a revisionist sensibility, and a personal mandate, claiming ignorance of black experience but asserting that 'trying to understand is *vital* to our humanity' (451; emphasis in original). What is also vital to Stockett is the familiar principle of doing something, changing things, making a difference. What Stockett proves ultimately unable to understand, or depict, is the sexual life of black women. It is a theme whose exploration in *Como agua para chocolate* and Vargas Llosa's erotic novels concludes with charges of black and mixed-race female hypersexuality, but it is explored nonetheless. In US literature, however, the taboo of miscegenation locates the black female as a source of anxiety so profound that the safest solution is to keep her thoroughly de-sexed.

Stockett populates her text with portly, coal-black women whose un-sexy features she describes in detail. Aibileen confesses to 'big fat legs' (2). Minny is thick and strong; she weighs 165 pounds and stands at five feet, as wide as she is tall (35), and she sweats through her clothing year-round. The naked, white drifter who masturbates outside Miss Celia's house is not interested in the 'fat nigger' who challenges him with a broom handle and a knife. Minny valiantly defends her mistress, but when Miss Celia emerges to aid Minny, the scene pivots its focus towards the mistress's bravery, rather than the maid's. Celia, like Lucrecia in her defense of Justiniana, is a 'good mistress' to her 'good servant', both of whom comprise a model of post-racial sisterhood that also reinforces the mistress-servant paradigm. Stockett endeavors to level the social barriers that structure this relationship when Miss Celia sits down at the kitchen table to eat her lunch with Minny. This narrative choice moves the text beyond Esquivel's 'kitchen tale', instead working as a 'kitchen table tale' to undermine the mistress-servant imbalance. The author's attempts to foster a budding sense of equality

between the women highlight her message: ‘*We are just two people. Not that much separates us. Not nearly as much as I’d thought*’ (emphasis in original; 418, 451).<sup>386</sup> However, the results are limited as Celia, a poor white rejected from elite Jackson society, occupies a halfway point between the society women and their servants. A more impactful representation towards equality would have been a white mistress inviting her servant to share lunch at the dining room table – a fanciful portrayal and a missed opportunity for Stockett.

If Stockett fails to eradicate barriers, she perhaps succeeds in blurring lines. Minny and Aibileen explicitly discuss these blurred lines, concluding that they ‘don’t exist’: not the lines between male and female, nor black and white. Stockett’s argument through Aibileen that the lines are an invention, however, belittles the actual segregation, exploitation, and oppression suffered by black Americans as ‘philosophy’, rather than cultural realities that structured their lives (307-312).<sup>387</sup> Only the black woman suffers from this historical and literary erasure, which enables the exclusive archetype of the mammy to emerge. With their sexuality eradicated and black men positioned as violent rapists, mammies turn their attentions to their mistresses, even at the expense of their own biological children. Wallace-Sanders’s argument that the mammy must favor the white child over her own informs a reading of *The Help* as a text that reinforces, rather than undermines, the mammy stereotype. She notes that Aibileen devotes

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<sup>386</sup> Stockett references this message as one she ‘truly prize[s]’ in her epilogue. It is the theme which underpins her work. However, it is worth noting that it appears in the text during a meeting between Skeeter and Lou Anne Templeton – two white women (418).

<sup>387</sup> Segregation dictated social race-mixing customs in ‘public schools, [...] rest rooms, on buses (but not in elevators); in theaters, restaurants, and churches (but not in every shop); and at some public drinking fountains’ (Hall 496). Given the selective nature of segregation, its application to houses of worship in the 1960s, continuing from the previous century, demonstrates that religious segregation was an established norm, and the separation of black and white congregants was of great social relevance.

her first 'seven paragraphs to the white child Mae Mobley', a passage striking in comparison to her later, truncated memories of her own son Treelore, and argues that Minny is not very 'maternal' to her own children in comparison to her patient nurturing of Celia ('Every Child', 66, 72). Minny's preference for Celia manifests when she hits Sugar for 'talking bad' about Celia (Stockett 334). The Plantation's legacy appears in these passages that uphold the legacy of mammyhood.

As a post-Plantation, pro-female text, the focus of Skeeter's ambition transfers from catching a husband to launching a career. Minny and Aibileen's insistence that Skeeter move to New York signals a mere reworking of the mammy's matchmaker function. Here, the women insist that Skeeter think only of her future, not their safety, and accept the publishing job. Aibileen and Minny forego a relocation of their own and stay behind, tied to Jackson and the Plantation in the tradition of Mammy and Aunt Chloe. Minny even points out that Skeeter 'ain't *never* gone get another boyfriend' in Jackson as additional incentive (424). Their encouragement, as well as their contributions and commitment to *Help*, procure Skeeter the escape that marriage traditionally offered. They may not have helped her make a 'man-catching dress', but they help her write a job-catching book. This result, and the revolutionary cross-racial relationship it purports to depict, is the best Stockett can offer.

Yet Stockett's efforts to draw parallels and encourage empathy between her characters is genuine. Skeeter and Aibileen enter the text frustrated and restless. On page ten, Skeeter asks Aibileen 'Do you ever wish you could...change things?' By page 28, Aibileen has conceded: 'something's gone have to be done'. Minny, an archetype of the sassy black woman, at first stubbornly refuses to participate as *Help* would expose them all, but especially the black women, to social outrage and physical violence. Told from the

perspectives of these three women, *The Help* has attracted scholarly attention not only on problems of authorship, but also of linguistics.<sup>388</sup> Preoccupation with Stockett's choice to adopt dialects for her characters extends beyond academic circles and, as Suzanne W. Jones argues, informs the work's reception among a general readership whose demographics and reactions defy expectations based on race. The premise of a drive to action, coupled with the text's 'reconfigur[ing of] the conflict as one not so much between blacks and whites but as between good versus evil' (18), place *The Help* squarely in the American jeremiad tradition. However, Jones is short-sighted in limiting the text's appeal to its themes of 'personal transformation' and activism (17).<sup>389</sup> *The Help's* appeal, as a consciously constructed, revisionist, female work, is also in its reconfiguration of the romance genre – the union of two parties despite obstacles. As Skeeter's mother quips: 'They say it's like true love, good help. You only get one in a lifetime' (Stockett 372). The obstacles to this 'love' are collective (racial, social) and individual (abilities, personalities), and the tragedy of this 'romance' resides in the disintegration of the mistress/servant bond – the gap that continues to exist

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<sup>388</sup> See Ruzich and Blake for a discussion on constructed racial identities and Stockett's use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), as well as authorial limitations. Ruzich and Blake apply quantitative analysis to the text's dialogue and assert that Stockett's extreme application of AAVE in comparison with her moderate use of white southern dialect is informed by a 'racial divide that continues to exist in America' (543); in short, inauthenticity results from a lack of integration that contributes to racialized ideals of linguistic normalcy. Charges of racial tone-deafness are unintentionally boosted by native white Jacksonian H. Gaston Hall's praise of Stockett's black speech: 'Bravo!' (498). Ruzich and Blake designate Stockett's extensive 'marking' of black speech a creation of 'a metadiscourse of constructed foreignness' (543). The line Stockett crosses is partly of her own making, as she favors a 'nostalgic, backwards-looking version' of American racial history (544). For Stockett, however, her linguistic choices reside not in national nostalgia but the personal limitations of a southern white childhood marked by *de facto* racial segregation; she claims 'I wouldn't know *how* to write it differently. [...Everyone] has their own version of normal. [...] The dialect plays back like a tape recorder' (Weaver). Her 'recording' of her own memories plays back like a tourist's log of a trip to a foreign land.

<sup>389</sup> Redemption and reconciliation also figure strongly in Donaldson's analysis of the work. Donaldson (45), like Jones, focuses on 'white redemption' to the exclusion of the personal transformations of Aibileen and Minny.

between white and black women.<sup>390</sup> Stockett attempts to bridge this gap through moral conviction, a sense of righteousness, and the American determination to eternally improve.

*The Help* is a revisionist narrative of black female labor that recognizes the domestic servant's place in society. Stockett's motivation, however, echoes Skeeter's; indeed, Stockett's claim that intellectual curiosity and un-silencing Demetrie drive her writing is mitigated by Skeeter's search for a new angle that will impress publishers, a factor that could have influenced Stockett as well.<sup>391</sup> Stockett's endeavor is nonetheless well intentioned and she directly confronts the primary pitfalls of denying agency to the subaltern. The clearest examples of this are found in her equally omniscient treatment of her black and white protagonists and her treatment of hypocrisy in regards to literacy and religion. Though the book project is Skeeter's (she develops and pitches the idea, interviews the subjects, and collates the material), it is undeniably a joint venture between her and Aibileen. Skeeter's initial skepticism about Aibileen's own writing abilities gives way to respect and trust in her as a writing partner. The project relies heavily on Aibileen's ability to recruit more maids, and over time Skeeter and Aibileen make important editorial decisions together. Skeeter facilitates the submission, but the final publication is attributed to 'Anonymous', a choice that protects the women and denies the claims of single authorship that a pseudonym would have

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<sup>390</sup> Jones attributes *The Help*'s commercial success to its being set 'during a time marked by racial violence and social upheaval, but [being] published during a time some have prematurely termed "post-racial"' (23). Stockett's acknowledgement that she does not share or comprehend the black female experience, contemporary or historical, goes some way in absolving her from accusations of prematurely constructing a 'post-racial' narrative in a decidedly non-post-racial society.

<sup>391</sup> Skeeter attempts to persuade Aibileen that the book would be 'breaking new ground' (Stockett 102). *The Help*, written because Stockett 'spent years imagining' Demetrie's untold story (451), garnered the same popular and critical acclaim as *Help* despite, and arguably due to, the literary market's historical paucity of servant narratives.

staked, but that also effaces any evidence of Aibileen's contribution. The intimation is that Aibileen's 'anonymous' efforts are for the sake of the project, not for herself. Yet Aibileen's intellectual life blossoms as the work unfolds. The books Skeeter borrows from Jackson's white library for her are classics of the American canon.<sup>392</sup> She has a clear opinion of which writers are worth reading. Stockett argues that Aibileen's pursuit of a literary education has only been stunted by segregation, not laziness, illiteracy, or lack of interest. At the end of the novel, Aibileen embarks on an anonymous journalistic career for a white newspaper and considers a literary career, proving she is the intellectual equal of educated whites, or, at least, of Skeeter, even in the absence of recognition. But given Aibileen's literary tastes and awareness of literary reputations, she is unlikely to remain complacent in her anonymity for long.

Aibileen's new newspaper job is writing the domestic advice column she inherited from Skeeter. As it is the very column that she assisted Skeeter with at the beginning of *The Help*, the novel comes full circle. Skeeter's bequeathing of her role reads ostensibly as a depiction of white benevolence in line with Skeeter's thought: 'Being white, I feel it's my duty to help them' (254). However, a crucial reciprocity develops between Aibileen and Skeeter; whereas Skeeter enables Aibileen's literary progress, Aibileen performs what is best described as a spiritual mentorship. As a woman in her fifties, Aibileen possesses life experience and maturity that complement Skeeter's youthful energy and enthusiasm. She is also devout and an active member of her church, and her nightly written prayers are rumored to be 'some kind a power prayer', a

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<sup>392</sup> Aibileen's request list includes works by Harper Lee (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, a rare literary acknowledgment of the rape myth), W. E. B. Du Bois, Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, and Henry David Thoreau. She also requests a text by Sigmund Freud.

suggestion of 'the black magic' that horrifies her (23-24). Though she denies any connection with voodoo, the strength of Aibileen's belief gradually transmits to Skeeter, a disinterested church-goer who thinks black people go to church too much (154), and repeatedly uses church as an alibi for time spent at Aibileen's home. She even conceals her work on *Help* from her mother by claiming to write about the life of Jesus. Yet, after spending time with Aibileen, Skeeter's spiritual need is awakened. She realizes:

[I]ately I've found myself praying, when I've never been a very religious person. I find myself whispering long, never-ending sentences to God, begging for Mother to feel some relief, pleading for good news about the book [...]. Often I catch myself praying when I didn't know I was doing it. (376)

Aibileen's keen spirituality and reliance on prayer has rubbed off on Skeeter who, at the end of the novel, is gifted a copy of *Help* signed by the black congregation of Aibileen's church. Aibileen relays her Reverend's message, 'that [Skeeter] is part of our family' (436). Skeeter weeps in gratitude at this redemptive reversal of the 'one of the family' myth and embarks on her career in New York with the support of a (black) religious community behind her.

Stockett portrays the black religious community as more authentically devout than the white community in Jackson by exposing the hypocrisy that informs the mistresses' 'good works'. The white society women, including Skeeter for much of the novel, support the Junior League's annual fundraising benefit, as well as cash drives, bake sales, and canned good drives, for the Poor Starving Children of Africa fund. The fund is denounced as a philanthropic front for what is essentially a social club, and Skeeter explicitly charges Hilly with hypocrisy by pointing out that her calls to feed African children ring hollow when compared to her treatment of African-Americans at home. Hilly, Stockett's villain, is in most

respects a typical white southern mistress: affluent, educated, married. However, she devotes significant energy to harassing the help – spreading lies about Minny’s ‘theft’, encouraging women to fire their maids, and threatening Aibileen with exposure. Her obsession with the Home Health Initiative, which encourages the construction of a separate bathroom for the help in the mistress’s home, is the original catalyst for Aibileen’s desire to challenge the status quo. When Hilly’s maid Yule May is caught stealing to pay for her sons’ tuition, Hilly’s insistence on a four-year rather than six-month prison sentence ignites the wrath of Yule May’s friends, who finally agree to contribute stories to *Help*. The black church also answers Yule May’s extreme punishment with a collective contribution for her sons. However, the key dialogue which recognizes the legacy of the white antebellum South’s perverted religious morality occurs when Yule May first requests a loan from Hilly. Hilly declines saying, as Aibileen recounts, that ‘a true Christian don’t give charity to those who is well and able. Say it’s kinder to let them learn to work things out theyselves’ (251). Hilly’s rationale works within the American religious tradition that enabled southern antebellum churches to justify slavery through scripture and write their own moral religious code, predicated on racism and the preservation of white supremacy.

Southern whites like Hilly descended from the heterogeneous denominational tradition that, as argued in Part 1 of this study, claimed scriptural legitimacy for slavery and, as argued in Part 2, fostered a racially segregated religious environment that permitted a lynching culture to flourish. The ‘lynching’ murder of Civil Rights activist Medgar Evers, for example, features in the text (195), foregrounding the heightened racial tensions in Jackson. Aibileen’s congregation stands in solidarity with the Evers family, while white society remains conspicuously silent about the murder. Stockett thus highlights the racial

and spiritual segregation characteristic of Jim Crow. In the US, no central religious authority demanded recognition of the humanity of black Americans or actively syncretized African religious traditions into mainstream practice as the Catholic Church in Latin America had done.<sup>393</sup> Thus, black religiosity was ranked as inferior to white, and theological ideologies of inequality and segregation extended to secular beliefs about race. Whites like Hilly felt entitled to contort and 'explain' Christian tenets to black Americans. Skeeter's awareness of racial injustice grows as she bears witness to this racial and religious segregation and the social damage it perpetuates. Yet her awareness contains a blind spot: miscegenation. Stockett's depictions of race-mixing remain couched in the language of secrecy and aversion. The literary tradition of erasure that contributes to the rape myth informs Stockett's portrayals of her mixed-race maid Constantine, Constantine's light-skinned daughter, and various black men in the text.

Constantine's mixed-race origins feature early in the novel, when Skeeter recalls a revelatory conversation between them years before. Skeeter views Constantine's admission that her father was white as a 'gift', a dangerous secret with which she has been entrusted (67). When Skeeter returns from university, Aibileen discloses the details of Constantine's departure: she moved to Chicago to be with her 'high yellow' daughter, the daughter of Constantine's black boyfriend who left them following the birth. The daughter, Lulabelle, was delivered to a northern orphanage since the Jim Crow-era south was deemed no place for a white-looking black woman. Skeeter's first reaction to this information is shock

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<sup>393</sup> See Part 1 of this study for discussions on the Cuban Black Madonna and West African-Catholic syncretism in Brazil.

– the ‘ugly thought’ that occurs to Skeeter is that Lulabelle could be her father’s child – followed by shame at her assumption, ‘for having thought the worst’ (86). In this instance, miscegenation, specifically that between the male head of the household and the mixed-race domestic help, constitutes ‘the worst’ possible scenario; it eclipses the illegitimacy and subsequent paternal abandonment that marks Lulabelle’s early childhood. Lulabelle’s whiteness, inherited only from Constantine, is an inversion of the one-drop rule and exposes continuing preoccupations with passing. Here, minority white ancestry manifests in a black child ‘pale as snow’ with ‘hair the color a hay. [...] Straight it was’ (375). Lulabelle is so proficient at passing that, as an adult returned to Jackson, she enters Skeeter’s family home, a cotton plantation outside Jackson, in the guise of a white woman pursuing membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her deception and the ensuing confrontation with Skeeter’s mother, Mrs. Phelan, see her expelled from the home after a defiant outburst. She returns to Chicago, bringing Constantine with her.

Skeeter is angry with her mother for exposing Constantine’s fabricated history of poverty to Lulabelle, but does not challenge her mother’s choice to expel Lulabelle. Neither, indeed, does Stockett. The author’s characterization of Lulabelle, a passing mulatta raised in the north who is involved in some ‘under the ground group’ (ostensibly Civil Rights), fulfills the trope of the uppity black woman. Mrs. Phelan’s argument, that Lulabelle ‘needed to know the truth [and] needed to go back to Chicago where she belonged’ recalls the exile of Stowe’s colonization, tinged with hostile southern racism: Lulabelle did not behave like a ‘good servant’ and therefore has no place in southern society. As Mrs. Phelan reasons, they ‘are not like regular *people*’. Stockett wastes no subtlety in painting Mrs. Phelan as an archetype of the racist mistress, but Mrs. Phelan, Skeeter, and

Stockett all agree that Lulabelle's attitude and behavior warrant condemnation. Lulabelle is indeed a poor fit in the southern black community that serves, and has no place in white society either. The south's century-long imposition of post-slavery segregation denies a place to mixed-race individuals, especially those who, like Lulabelle, '[try] to act white' by daring to use the plantation home's front door (363-364). Passing remains a primary social anxiety for southern whites but, as Lulabelle demonstrates in an echo of Rhett Butler's final outburst, black behavior ultimately reveals itself.

The portrayal of Lulabelle's absent father, Connor, also recalls Rhett Butler's departure and legacy of abandonment. The black male characters of *The Help* are narrowly defined; they are negligent, abusive, or dead. Minny's husband Leroy is a violent alcoholic. Stockett suggests that the abuse is Leroy's campaign to curb Minny's sassiness. He justifies the abuse, telling Minny 'if I didn't hit you, [...] who *knows* what you become' (413). Eventually he beats her 'for the pure pleasure of it' (304). She does not leave Leroy until she secures the promise of life-long employment from the Footes. Stockett's indictment of domestic servitude references its instability, which condemns black women to positions of dependence in their personal lives, as well as economic and physical vulnerability, but she does not condemn the nature of the work itself or the dynamic it fosters. An offer of lifetime employment is the extent of Stockett's revision to the Plantation's mistress-servant relationship, and one that eliminates the black man altogether. Leroy is derived from Demetrie's real-life husband Clyde, whom Stockett assumes was violent. Aibileen's former husband, a philandering drinker, is also named Clyde. Their son Treelore, the bookish, quiet antithesis to Leroy, dies young in a workplace accident, and his friend Robert is blinded in a racist attack. Robert is forced to abandon his plans for university and

any hopes of bettering the family's economic situation. Perhaps Stockett neglects to populate *The Help* with educated, stable black men, potential husbands and fathers to the next generation of black Americans, as an intentional choice in an effort to highlight the extreme volatility of the lives of many domestic servants. However, the real-life, shadowy presence of Demetrie's Clyde in Stockett's imagination and the rape myth's prevalence in the south expose the author's racial ideologies as undeniably influenced by a white woman's learned fear of black men. Skeeter displays this fear at the mailbox: 'The Negro in the [passing truck's] passenger side leans out and stares. I've forgotten I am a white girl in a thin nightgown' (71). The legacy of the rape myth manifests in an unknown black man inevitably ogling a scantily clad white woman. Robert's unrelated attack follows, but his blinding produces a black man incapable of such transgressive voyeurism. Robert later learns to read Braille, but his handicap has rendered him non-threatening. The text eradicates young black men who are 'the thinking kind' (2).<sup>394</sup> Minny leaves Leroy in the final pages, bringing her children to her sister's home. The solution to the degradation of black male influence that Stockett offers is an alternative female collective initiated by white women. Black women are better off with their mistresses.

The rape myth's vicious legacy remains two-fold. While black men are slandered, white men are exonerated and black women are denied due recognition of their exploitation and justice against the historical perpetrators.

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<sup>394</sup> Stockett includes the assassination of Evers to both ground her narrative in historical context and as a barometer for rising racial tensions. The risks taken by Skeeter and, moreso, by the maids she interviews are sharpened by the atmosphere of racial violence. The Evers assassination, like that of Martin Luther King, Jr., provide historical, cultural precedents for Stockett's eradication of the black male intellectuals in *The Help*. Only Reverend Johnson, a decidedly apolitical clergyman, stands as a foil to the author's otherwise violent or victimized black men.

Stockett mentions sexual exploitation only once, through Skeeter's narration as she transcribes maid testimonies:

[a]ngry stories come out, of white men who've tried to touch them. Winnie said she was forced over and over. Cleontine said she fought until his face bled and he never tried again. But the dichotomy of love and disdain living side-by-side is what surprises me. (258)

The 'love' in 'love and disdain' is later characterized by maids attending white family weddings in their uniforms. Further examples of sexual exploitation are not forthcoming, and there is no hint of harassment by the white male employers of the novel. Yet sexual exploitation, according to Katzman and Barnes, remained a hallmark of the domestic service industry in the 1960s.<sup>395</sup> The only slightly eroticized maid in the text is Yule May, described as possessing a slim figure that is the envy of her mistress, Hilly. Hilly's husband and Yule May are not portrayed together in the text, a fact that distinguishes sexual from purely physical jealousy; Hilly's resentment is due solely to her own plumpness, not fear of her husband's temptation. The white men of *The Help* are, according to Stockett, blameless of miscegenation, and the black women are sexually undesirable, both representations that are at odds with historical reality.

*Help*, the book-within-the-book, offers perhaps the strongest blow to Stockett's attempt at authentic subaltern speech. *Help*'s anonymous publication refuses to prioritize from among the contributions of the many women involved, but the introductory chapter from Skeeter's perspective, in a text published by an New York publishing house, designates the work as an élite-authored project of racial sociology. The maids may initially be speaking out, but are again silenced

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<sup>395</sup> See the Introduction of this study (22-28).

when Jackson society reads their testimonies. The white mistresses' obsession with exposing the maids' identities appropriates each testimony as evidence, a clue the white women use to assign authorship – sometimes accurately, sometimes not – to the women who are then powerless to confirm or deny. Despite Stockett's narrative emphasis on her black heroines, their lives are not improved by the publication in any measureable economic or socio-political way. Susan V. Donaldson charges Stockett with being 'all but oblivious to the long sad history of narrative theft' in racial reconciliation fiction (45). Stockett's theft allegedly extends beyond theoretical appropriation. The myth of co-authorship, a touchstone of *Help*, was challenged after the novel's publication. Ablene Cooper, a maid working for Stockett's brother's family, filed a lawsuit alleging Stockett appropriated her name and image for the work (James, 'Black Maid Sues'). The case split the Stockett family in a bitter divide, lending credence to Cooper's claim. The case was ultimately dismissed, but not before Cooper publicly denounced Aibileen's saintly characterization as 'embarrassing'. Cooper took legal action to recover her own narrative. Like Aibileen and Minny, Cooper (unwittingly and allegedly) provided inspiration, but unlike Skeeter, Stockett claimed sole authorship for her individual literary effort. Ablene Cooper sought a settlement of only \$75,000, which, as Stockett's father noted, 'can't buy that much' (Ibid.). Nor can Aibileen's pay from the newspaper, which she will still need to supplement with additional employment. The litigation exposed the pervasive othering that still afflicts domestic servants in the US. Indeed, Stockett's denial of Cooper's charge and Cooper's efforts to exact compensation establish Cooper as a 'bad servant' in the typology; she is Gretchen come to life. Cooper's accusations and her financial demands demonstrate just how much still separates black servants and white mistresses, and that the author's good intentions and her appropriation of the black domestic experience do not alleviate

the sharpness of this divide between two groups of women who often still meet and communicate only as employer and employee.

Fact meets fiction in this strange parallel that undercuts Stockett's core message and, whether due to a lack of awareness or to unapologetic hypocrisy, enables her to continue capitalizing on the life stories of black maids. Stockett, like Skeeter, is searching for redemption, is working and 'doing' towards reconciliation, but the Plantation's legacy holds firmly to American life and letters. For Cooper, some recognition and \$75,000 was all she could hope to gain from Stockett's spectacular financial and popular success, before her suit was dismissed.<sup>396</sup> It is a situation that reflects the persisting racial stratification in the US, the continuation of the pigmentocracy. In the anti-miscegenation US since slavery, white has become whiter and black blacker. Racial ideologies inform and are reinforced by historical 'one-drop rule' legislation that denied recognition to an 'intermediate racial caste' (Kennedy 147); mixed-race individuals cease to formally exist. The Miss Celias invariably identify with white America racially and culturally, while the nation's Constantines and Lulabelles struggle to find a place among the black community, where white America has decided they belong.

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<sup>396</sup> The contrasting terms of authorship between *The Help* and *Help*, in both recognition and earnings, supports Claxton's assertion that *Help* is 'more authentic' than the actual work of fiction by Stockett (162).

## Conclusion

The works analyzed in Part 3 demonstrate that the Plantation is not a dead colonial paradigm, but a living construct that continues to organize relationships among its inhabitants and inform ideologies about race. The true Plantation has bequeathed its toxic legacies, first to the nostalgic Plantation and then to the post-Plantation. It continues to structure societies of the Americas socially, politically, and culturally, and it touches most profoundly those who suffer from its centuries-old hierarchies of repression: slavery, the pigmentocracy, the denial of full political personhood and citizenship. In post-Plantation literature, even of the self-consciously written, revisionist kind, a history of enslavement, poverty, and illiteracy did not elicit sympathy in the form of complex characterization of non-white characters, but rather continued authors' reliance upon essentialized typologies and stubborn, pernicious tropes. That these racialized types and motifs lie upon a broad spectrum of representation marks the Plantation as a flexible entity, one that retains its supremacy because of its ability to conform to unique racial contexts. The Plantation allows for both the exotic, erotic mixed-race servant and the sexless mammy because it allows for black and mixed-race women's sexuality to be manipulated by the white households they continue to serve.

The Plantation allowed for race-mixing, but did not require it. White colonizers, wielding power from the Plantation's earliest days, dictated the extent of race-mixing, and their religious beliefs played a significant role in informing cultural norms. Regardless of the acceptability of its practice, however, the sexual exploitation of black women – slave women – that formed what Bush termed the 'moral climate' (251) of the Plantation from its inception, roots both the syncretic

Catholic plantation and the exclusionary Protestant plantation in depravity and abuse. Such a legacy led also to a broad spectrum of representation of interracial relationships as Plantation writers struggled with historical sexual violence. From the abolitionist texts in Part 1 of this study, which recognized the inherently unequal power dynamics and potentially tragic consequences of race-mixing under slavery, a pattern emerges that binds literary approaches to interracial relationships with concepts of national identity. Cuban writers, such as Avelleneda and Villaverde, tolerated *mestizaje* as a sad, inevitable fact of the Plantation, a practice that led only to suffering; in Brazil, more fluid ideas about race-mixing allowed Guimarães to celebrate it and enshrine it in marriage. Catholicism's tradition of syncretism exercises its influence culturally in the practice of racial syncretism in Latin America: if an illegitimate Cuban mixed-race baby is born, so be it; if a Brazilian mixed-race baby is born within a Catholic marriage, the nation may even benefit. Whether religious, social, or sexual, mixing is, for better or worse in *Sab*, *Cecilia Valdés*, and *A Escrava Isaura*, accepted as a part of life.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, race-mixing, specially termed 'miscegenation' in the US, is seen as a rejection of white national identity and a threat to the nation's foundational spiritual purity project. In a nation whose earliest literary output included the jeremiad, a language of fire and brimstone characterizes depictions of miscegenation marking it even in Stowe's sympathetic work as shameful and sinful, a deviation from the Citie Upon a Hill that must be terminated and erased if the nation is to survive and fulfill its destiny. Racial and religious segregation perpetuated a dehumanizing cycle that created the prototypical mammy, a stereotype reinforced in literature. Mitchell's Mammy, an obese, dark-mother figure, emerges as the nostalgic embodiment of the

plantation home; she is the consolation for the mother who is lost. As a surrogate whose sole function is to care for her white mistress and her white mistress's daughter, her sexlessness is a prerequisite. Mammy is available at all times in all ways, but never sexually. She is physically undesirable, even monstrous, but a helping hand – still the Plantation mammy of slavery assisting her mistress as she makes her way in the New South. Slavery is ended, but Mitchell embraces a positivistic nostalgia – one obsessed with actively restoring the Plantation's racial clarity. Scarlett is an independent postbellum woman, but Mammy remains the 'good slave', an Aunt Chloe, the picture of perfect American mammyhood that 'looms over the American imagination' (Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy* 9). For black female characters in the US, the mammy's shadow becomes inescapable.

In contrast, Parra's nostalgic reflection upon the Venezuelan plantation makes room for the starched, orderly Evelyn, whose masculine energy, careful personal grooming, and authority over the children rejects total sexlessness, suggesting instead a suppressed, potentially homosexual eroticism. Yet despite her self-discipline and insistence on upholding the values of the patriarchal Plantation, as a black woman she cannot escape accusations of being hypersexuality. Evelyn is no Mammy, despite her childlessness. She is simply a black woman for hire. Parra's indigenous and black male characters are beloved, lyrical figures who are misunderstood by the increasingly positivistic society in which she lives, but Evelyn possesses no such inner lyricism or tie to nature. Mixing, a concept Parra embraces at Piedra Azul, precludes Evelyn, the black woman who, as a potential whore, threatens the white family even as she seeks to protect it. She does not belong as 'one of the family', but is an ambiguously remembered presence unable, despite her best intentions, to fully conceal her inherent sexuality.

It is Evelyn's repressed sexuality in Parra's interwar text that surfaces in characters of late-twentieth Latin American works. Non-white female servants in *Como agua para chocolate*, *Elogio de la madrastra*, and *Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto* suffer violence. They are powerless women of color subjected to the sexual exploitation made commonplace by the Plantation. Where Chenchu, Esquivel's indigenous servant, endures trauma and a painful recovery, Vargas Llosa's *zamba*, Justiniana, narrowly escapes her male attacker only to seek comfort in a lesbian encounter with her mistress. The chief difference between these women lies in the hypersexualization of the mixed-race woman, a trait that also characterizes Esquivel's *mulata*, Gertrudis. Gertrudis and Justiniana share black ancestry; it is therefore the presence of black blood that marks these mixed-race women as sensual, promiscuous, and perpetually sexually available. These characteristics are universal. For example, though Justiniana and Isaura may seem total opposites, they in fact stand at two ends of a spectrum. One is a mixed-race woman who is so whitened as to almost *be white* – her feminine accomplishment, her appearance, and her moral fortitude are in perfect agreement, working to deny her black blood – a woman whose purity transcends her biology and improves the national identity. The other is a lascivious servant of black and indigenous lineage, evidence of mixing that completely excludes whiteness. She is thus capable of breaking multiple taboos; she sleeps with her white female employer and encourages incest. Justiniana is a facilitator of vice, the opposite of Isaura, a standard of virtue. Though stereotypes, these very different female characters each find a place in the Latin American social imagination and in Latin American fiction.

In contrast, *The Help* testifies to the undiminished power of the mammy. As sexless creatures, black women are no longer potential victims of sexual

exploitation by white men, which raises a new stereotype for black men far more damaging than that of Uncle Tom: they are now the perpetrators of sexual violence. The black American community has been subjected to a historical rewriting that demonizes the black man as a rapist and de-sexes the black female into a non-threatening, lumpen anti-temptress. A collective refusal in the US post-Plantation to properly recognize centuries of miscegenation and rape of non-white women works to deepen a racial divide in which much of one side deems the other to be sexual untouchables. Historical harassment and abuse is carefully written out of the nation's literary history. Though Stockett admits to being 'scared, a lot of the time, that [she] was crossing a terrible line, writing in the voice of a black person', she does so regardless (451). In her conscious decision to excise the true scale of sexual exploitation experienced by the black female servant while purporting to speak *in her voice*, she reproduces this erasure in her fiction which offers more a re-telling of than a revision to *Gone with the Wind*. The taboo mindset surrounding race-mixing manifests in all three iterations of the US Plantation; its literature documents an eradication of black female sexuality, an erasure unparalleled in Latin American Plantation literature, and though the rape myth condemns black American men to a perpetual criminal status, black women face an arguably more dehumanizing fate: unwanted, ignored, silenced, unpersoned. It is an imposed literary silence that allows Stockett and other post-Plantation writers to continue to speak, however inauthentically, on their behalf. It is also a silence that continues to deny them recognition, respect, and a place in the nation, the Plantation, the Americas.

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