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"WHAT WE DESIRE IS AFRICAN": INTERTEXTUALITY OF NEGRITUDE IN CLARKE'S AND TRINDADE'S POETRY

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For Lúcia and Gabriela,
because of endless love.

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ABSTRACT

"WHAT WE DESIRE IS AFRICAN": INTERTEXTUALITY OF NEGRITUDE IN CLARKE'S AND TRINDADE'S POETRY

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This thesis addresses the intertextuality between African-Brazilian and African-Canadian poetry in the works of Solano Trindade and George Elliot Clarke. The study analyses the evidence of an enunciating-self which depicts the poets' struggle against the invisibility of the black self, the construct of black epic that retells history from a black standpoint, the reversing of values which reaffirms black culture and tradition, and the attempt to build a new symbolic order that is expressed by the rupture of stereotypes in the texts of both authors. The research reviews discourse of negritude and its presence in black poetry nowadays.

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RESUMO

“WHAT WE DESIRE IS AFRICAN”: INTERTEXTUALITY OF NEGRITUDE IN CLARKE'S AND TRINDADE'S POETRY

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Orientadora: Dra. Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins

Este trabalho investiga a intertextualidade entre as poesias de Solano Trindade e George Elliot Clarke. O estudo analisa o uso de um eu-enunciador que descreve a luta dos poetas contra a invisibilidade do “eu” negro, a construção de um anti-épico que reconta a história do ponto de vista do negro, a reversão de valores que reafirma a tradição e a cultura negras, e a tentativa de construir uma nova ordem simbólica que se expressa pela ruptura de estereótipos nos textos dos dois autores. A pesquisa revê o discurso da negritude e sua presença na Poesia negra hoje.

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INTRODUCTION

The present investigation is an attempt to provide acknowledgment to Canadian and Brazilian black literatures in academic studies at PGI. The cultures which resulted from the African diaspora have produced a variety of literary expression in all countries which had economies based on slave labor brought from Africa. However, greater visibility has been given to the literature of African descent which is written in the USA, Britain and the Caribbean. The current research states that literary activity composed by African-Canadians still struggles for legitimacy. Institutionalized practices of marginalization limit recognition of black writing in Canada. In the same way, African-Brazilian literature lacks careful reading and recognition by Brazilian readers and literary critics.

The general context of this investigation is literature resulting from the African diaspora. This work is compromised with the contemporary trend to relate literature and its social, historic, and political dimension. Literature in the west has been representative of dominant cultures. Europe has given the world a vast and important literary production. The power relations between colonized peoples and colonizers provoke the erasure of native cultural expression. In the same way, the cultures of enslaved peoples are marginalized and the rights to legitimize and recognize cultural expression are denied. However, literatures of dominated cultures have evidenced that poetry and fiction written by Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and their descendants are not mere imitation of the European literary tradition. The literary activity of minorities has mainly evoked resistance and fight for visibility, weaving writing (fiction, poetry, and drama) with historical and political dynamics.

The specific context of the proposed research is the contemporary poetry by the African-Canadian George Elliott Clarke and the African- Brazilian poetry by Solano Trindade. A wide variety of rich material concerning African-American, African-British and African-Caribbean literature has been published worldwide. Black culture and history in Canada, silenced by the white dominant culture, are marginalized. Clarke affirms in the preface of *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* that "[i]n their minds we are supposedly too poor to even have history" (6). To evidence the fact that black writing is invisibilized, Clarke goes farther by stating: "Or they pretend that black Canadian literature consists of two or maybe three writers, and, if pressed, will struggle to name Austin Clarke and Dionne Brand"(7). The Africadian poet, as Clarke names himself, rescues black history and culture in Nova Scotia through his literature.

Trindade's poetry is framed by black resistance, social movements against exclusion, and love. The African-Brazilian poet begins to write in the 1930s, period in which sociologist Gilberto Freyre publishes *Casa Grande e Senzala.* The main thought in Freyre's work points out Brazilian society as a racial democracy which stems from miscegenation. During the 1930 revolution and the rise of President Getúlio Vargas, the ideology of the New State permeates Brazilian cultural and political sectors; therefore education should have a "national" feature. In order to assimilate the ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities, education, as a matter of national security, preaches "cultural homogeneity" as the main characteristic of Brazilian nationality. The myth of the three races (blacks, native peoples, and whites) masks racial conflicts among the several ethnic groups and Brazilians start to rethink inter-ethnic relations from this perspective, featuring racial integration as the neglect of the conflicts in relation to blacks and native peoples. A comparative study including both Canadian and Brazilian literatures of

African descent is important to record the similarities and differences between the two literary activities. Both literatures are permeated by discourses of resistance against marginalization and assimilation.

The investigation concerns depiction of black experience in African-Canadian and African-Brazilian poetry. I attempt to describe particularities involving black Canadian identity such as the presence of African-American culture: “I knew I was Black Nova Scotian, yes, but I still considered Black America the Mecca of *tru*e 'blackness', that is to say, of Motown, Malcom X, and Martin Luther King, Jr, [. . .]”, states Clarke (4). In spite of the American presence, neither African-Canadian nor African-Brazilian cultures are merely reproductions of African-American cultural activity. However, commonality of experiences concerning confronting racial discrimination and the shared history of enslavement may give African hyphenated cultures similar discourses of resistance. Beyond commonality, black cultures present specificities in relation to gender, class, religious beliefs, just to name a few. Mark A. Reid affirms that specific differences among the cultures of the African diaspora are immediately perceived through terms such as Afro-British, Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Canadian, and Afro-Brazilian. Reid states that the terms “Negro” and “Black” do not indicate any qualitative divergence. In Reid's words:

> Racially hostile experience is what unites people of African ancestry. Yet and still, the experiences of class, ethnicity, sexuality and religion constitute additional factors in the self-esteem of black folk. These extraracial (sic) factors create problems for a single definition of blackness as simply founded on race. This is especifically true when race is not as static a term as one might wish to believe. Moreover, analysis of black self-esteem must include considerations of the extraracial factors. (2)

Franz Fanon is also concerned with the dangers of black essentialism; however, the back psychoanalist reminds that black people are discriminated against internationally and the issue of identity is crucial regardless of nationality. Fanon declares:

> In the beginning I wanted to confine myself to the Antilles. But regardless of consequences, dialectic took the upper hand and I was compelled to *see* that the Antilllean is first of all a Negro. Nevertheless it would be impossible to overlook the fact that there are Negroes whose nationality is Belgian, French, English; there are also Negro Republics. How can one claim to have got hold of an essential when such facts as these demand one's recognition? The truth is that the Negro race has been scattered, that it no longer can claim unity. [. . .]. In the universal situation of the Negro there is an ambiguity, which is, however, resolved in his concrete existence. This in a way places him beside the Jew. Against all the arguments I have just cited, I come back to one fact:*Wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro*. (172-173) (author's emphasis)

Smaro Kamboureli points out that writers who have a "common heritage" frequently present the same themes as just as indicate particularities and diverse concerns. Kamboureli writes that the frontiers among cultures can merge and that cultural depiction is woven with the author's "singularity of imagination." No single literary form can exemplify the complexity of a cultural group (7).

My thesis investigates blackness in African-Canadian and African-Brazilian poetry. By blackness I mean black people's awareness, pride and legitimation of their past, tradition, and culture as a struggle against discriminatory practices and assimilation. According to bell hooks, blackness nowadays is constrained by diverse social issues such as violence, unemployment (and its consequences), and racism. These problems affect the way black people view themselves and the white dominant group. African-Canadian and African-Brazilian poetry are noticeably compromised with rescuing and saving black tradition. The poems aim at rescuing, transmitting and legitimizing cultural values to African descendant communities. The poetry can be analyzed as an attempt to rebuild black consciousness in both countries.

Bearing in mind the differences in blackness, I choose to base my study on the principles of black poetry proposed by Zilá Bernd. I also review concepts of negritude as a cultural and political movement and its resonances in black poetry nowadays. The poems analyzed in the research convey the necessity of nationalizing Paul Gilroy's

theory which claims that “[. . .] cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world [. . .]” (15). Gilroy also claims that commonality among cultures resulting from the black diaspora is a legacy of brotherhood that goes beyond the frontiers of language, nation, and ethnicity (19). Gilroy omits African-Canada and African-Brazil as significant realms of the “Black Atlantic culture” pointing out that the triangle formed by the Caribbean, Britain, and the United States is the only legitimate site of black cultural activity. The “Black Atlantic” theory asserts common traits among black cultures; however the current investigation evidences that language, nation, class, gender, and ethnicity provoke differences in black experience. Literary depictions of Africa and the middle passage go from mythical return to irreversible exile. My study counterclaims the omission of cultures resulting from the diaspora in both Canada and Brazil.

African-Brazilian and African-Canadian poetry reflect constant worries about showing the various dimensions of black cultural activity. Instead of conveying an individual poetic voice the poems indicate a polyphonic and communal characteristic. Bakthin states that individual voices are “pre-requisites of poetic style”: “But we - repeat - in the majority of poetic genres, the unity of the language system and the unity (uniqueness) of the poet's individuality as reflected in his language and speech, which is directly realized in this unity, are indispensable prerequisites of poetic style”(264). However, there are various voices which depict the experience of black people in relation to nationality, gender, class and ethnicity.

I study the connection between the poetry of Clarke and Trindade as heritage of the past revealed in the discriminatory present. Benjamin Abdala Júnior points out that the depictions of black experience in poetry of African descend are an expression of the imagined future, the utopian desire for change and social revolution. Abdala Júnior

states that African-Brazilian poetry is aimed at popular classes. The poems raise social issues such as misery and abandonment (2-5).

In order to meet the needs of the community, Clarke and Trindade use language that depicts the oral expression of African cultures. The oral and performative tradition of African culture is present along the lines. According to Leda Maria Martins, new expressive forms of the cultures of the peoples from the diaspora convey memories that are residues of African experience of the separation during slavery. Thus performance as a ritual is an ingenuous process of bridging the various gaps in history and the feeling of exile of black people along the Atlantic shores. The use of voice and body language reveals the subjectivity and at the same time the commonality of African heritage (83).

The primary objective of my study is to research similarities and particularities such as nationality, class, and gender in the commonality of the experience of racism in the poetry of Clarke and Trindade. The secondary objective is to analyze the depiction of black experience in the poems of both authors. In the poetry of Clarke and Trindade the memories of slavery have shaped the depiction of black experience woven with the heritage of the diaspora. My research is motivated by the necessity to give visibility to black literary activity.

I begin with a study of the basic principles that characterize black poetry. The presence of an enunciating-self that asserts awareness of what means to be black culturally and politically speaking is in the first chapter. In addition, I describe the cultural and political movement of negritude and its resonances. The second chapter introduces the analysis of racial relations in Brazil and the processes of discrimination and assimilation to understand the depiction of blackness in black Brazilian poetry. David Brookshaw points out stereotyped blackness in Brazilian literature and the beginning of a new consciousness depicted in black poetry. Bernd and Brookshaw offer

careful studies of Trindade's poetry. The analysis of Trindade's poems reveals the discourse of the diaspora which counterclaims marginalization and assimilation. Trindade's desire to rescue African tradition and history is evidenced in the research.

The intricate panorama of cultural identities in Canada is described in the third chapter. Clarke's essays on blackness in Canada describe the formation of African-Canadian identities and the presence of African-American styles in black Canadian culture. Concerned with African-Canadian history, Clarke depicts black experience in Nova Scotia particularly. I discuss the meaning of Africville (an African community in Halifax, Nova Scotia) as a cultural site in Clarke's work. Maureen Moynagh explains that Africville is the rural idyll which confronts the perils of racism and modern capitalism. I study Clarke's poems according to literary criticism by Diana Brydon and Jon Paul Fiorentino.

I point out intertextual lines in Clarke's and Trindade's poems based on diasporic discourse and resonances of negritude as a political and cultural movement. The discourses chosen by both authors denote engagement to legitimize African descendant cultures confronting the European cancellation. The final remarks assert the necessity to proceed with further studies in the realm of African-Canadian and African-Brazilian literature.

CHAPTER I

A REVIEW OF THE CONCEPTS OF NEGRITUDE AND BLACK LITERATURE

1.1. Negritude

One of the main topics of the current work is the review of the concepts of negritude and its importance to the construct of black literature and black identity. The current chapter aims at studying the historical, political, and cultural implications of negritude so as to build a sound observation of the correspondences between Solano Trindade's and George Elliott Clarke's poetry.

Alvaro Luiz Hattnher[1] suggests a re-conceptualization of the term that can be applied to literary studies and the cultural research of the diverse manifestations of the African Diaspora (38). Black identities can be revisited from a point of view that considers the forced dispersion of Africans as a movement which can provide new possibilities of depiction. Thus, negritude is defined as an ongoing process that is woven with inter-discursive and inter-textual connections and has a broader meaning than the "special way to be black" proposed by Aimé Césaire (1913-2008) and goes beyond the triangle formed by Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001) and Léon Damas (1912-78) in Paris in the late thirties and early forties (39).

Hattnher proposes that negritude cannot be considered only as a movement whose center is in Europe with branches that reach Africa and the countries of the black

[1] Hattnher, Alvaro Luiz. *Uma Ponte sobre o Atlântico: Poesia de Autores Negros Angolanos, Brasileiros e Norte-Americanos em uma Perspectiva Comparativa Triangular* 'A Bridge over the Atlantic: Poetry by the Black Angolan, Brazilian and North-American authors in a Triangular Comparative Perspective'. Diss. U. of São Paulo. São Paulo, 1998.

Diaspora. The manifestations of negritude require the perspective of different historical events, of the places where they occur, and the connections among them. Thus, the possibility of evidencing a Brazilian negritude emerges with similarities and differences in relation to the movement that occurs in Europe. The evidence of several movements in countries that received African slaves reveals the existence of specificities that flow to a convergence among the struggles against institutionalized racist practices. The rejection of the white supremacy denotes the reaction against ideological assimilation of stereotypes as well as individual and institutional modes of racism. Thus, the endeavor against assimilation is the common ground on which negritude is based as much in Africa as in the Americas and depicts diverse possibilities of rescuing African cultural values in colonized countries.

The author rejects the conception of the European *Négritude* which celebrates the opposite poles of reason/emotion in the white/black counterpoint. Hattnher comments on Senghor's statement who affirms that reason is a quality of white civilization and emotion belongs to black culture which does not convey the truth because the several periods of human development pass through black Egyptian activity that produced science and technology which is recognized until these days.

The struggle for socio-cultural and political assertion rises against neocolonialist stereotyping and racist discourses. Consequently, new forms of identity construct and assertion are introduced to support the permanence and the expression of black peoples. Hattnher declares that "[i]n its essence, negritude depicts a dynamic process of conquest and preservation of a sense of cultural identity and of full inclusion in the interior of the socio-cultural systems"[2] (42).

[2] In the current work I translate poems and citations of originals in Portuguese. The original poems in Portuguese are in appendix A and appendix B.

Thus, it is essential to understand negritude in a wider perspective, considering the diversity of cultures of the black groups of the African Diaspora and the several manifestations of black identity in Africa and in the Americas. The historical context of negritude and its main expressions are briefly described in the current work based on the works by Professor Kabengele Munanga, Professor Zilá Bernd, researcher Benedita Gouveia Damasceno, and Professor Alvaro Luiz Hatnnher.

Munanga explains that when the colonizer arrives in Africa in the XV century, the social organization of most African monarchies had already developed a system of popular councils, where the social classes were represented. In spite of the remarkable social organization, the African technology of war was less evolved than the European. In the same period America was discovered with large extensions of land that demanded cheap labor. Therefore, Africa appeared as a vast source that did not offer many obstacles for the colonizer's purposes. The traffic of slaves became a profitable activity, before the Industrial Revolution, originating a new social order formed by masters and slaves (8-9).

The aforementioned researcher argues that the colonial occupation in the XIX century disassembled many African kingdoms. Some of them resisted for some time and others are still present, but in a very different context. The ignorance of the colonizer about ancient African history, the differences between the two cultures that were confronted for the first time, the ethnic prejudice, and the need of economic exploration made the European misjudge the morality of colonized blacks. In spite of all the wealth that was extracted from the African continent, the white colonizer took his superiority for granted. Black became a synonym of primitive, pre-logical thought. In order to justify the enslavement of Africans, a vast literature was written and colonialism was established as a means to civilize the primitive people. Biological

theories that suggested cultural differentiation between whites and blacks misstated the morality of the latter (6). It was said that blacks were “superior animals” with some talent for music (9). The deep roots of racism were implanted, but not without resistance.

Damasceno comments that the contemporaneity established a change in politics, economics and in human attitudes bringing new cultural impulses in Europe, Africa, and Asia. After World War II, there was an increasing reaction against the standards imposed by the Western culture mainly in non-European countries. The main reasons for the revolution were the resentfulness of the colonized towards the colonizer, the spread of concepts such as self-determination of peoples, the evidence of imperialism, and rivalry among the colonial powers (England, France, Belgium) whose force was fading (16).

In order to prevent economic loss and to profit from the achievements of the movement, the colonial powers attempted to find ways to maintain the dominance answering national claims at the same time. Thus, the British colonialism begins a policy of indirect government that supported local chiefs aiming at the maintenance of traditional societies as a form to fight Western standardization. In its turn, the French government starts to promote cultural assimilation through schools, which transmit Western cultural patterns so as to form educated elites that adhere to the colonial metropolis, resisting against conservative autochthonous societies.

Damasceno states that three important events arise from the actions taken by the colonizers: firstly, the dissolution of the traditional social order, then the significant economic change and the emergence of a black educated elite (according to the standards of the West) which finally turns the resentment against the colonizer into nationalist movements against foreign supremacy. The claims of the African

independent states make the West perceive Africa from a new point of view. Scholars from several disciplines evidence that the contradictory division of the colonies, separating peoples of the same ethnic group or causing diverse linguistic and cultural societies to join in the same country, turns Africa into a conceptualization that is more geographical than cultural (17). Munanga writes that "[. . .] the territories were arbitrarily divided with no other criteria than the interests of the colonial powers" (11).

According to Damasceno, along with the Western raise of awareness concerning the continent, the African elite start to detect cultural and racial exploitation. The alienation affects educated blacks who perceive the idea that the colonizer has of them and their ethnicity. African students in Europe search for actions to develop independence in diverse areas of human activity, especially concerning culture. The aim is to counteract cultural assimilation claiming for a review of values imposed by the European colonization. Literature, as part of the historical dynamics of the society, is also affected by the social, political, and cultural transformation. It has an important participation, mainly in the francophone Africa, by reversing the spiritual and cultural values, releasing the literary language, and serving as a tool for spreading ideals against colonization. Damasceno adds that the literary movement of Negritude is mainly produced between 1934 and 1948 (18).

Munanga reports that in the USA, black authors also start to counteract the complex of inferiority that has been indoctrinated for several years. The author refers to two significant names of the period: William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) and Langston Hughes (1902-1967). Du Bois, the American historian, rescues the African past which black Americans can be proud of. He is considered the father of Pan-Africanism who advocates in favor of an association of African colonized countries in order to fight for independence. The American historian also fended for the rights of

black Americans and urged Africans to struggle for freedom in their own land. Du Bois exhorted the return to the origins without proclaiming the return to Africa and inspired great African personalities[3] as well as black American writers. His book *The Souls of Black Folk* is considered the bible of the Black Renaissance movement (1920-1940) (37). The work of Du Bois gives a clear view of the principles that form Negritude as a process of ongoing relations, writes Hattnher (45). *The Souls of Black Folk* is one of the founding writings of Négritude in Europe and greatly inspires Sénghor and Césaire.

As Munanga notes, the Black Renaissance celebrates the color instead of lamenting it. The movement assumes the African origin and culture, the past of suffering, and claims for the right to employment, love, and respect. Hughes becomes one of the most important writers of the period. In Hughes's writing, the Western civilization is cold and harsh. The poet of the Black Renaissance does not abandon the struggle of the black people to produce poetry that is not socially engaged. On the contrary, the author stays in the USA and continues to write political poetry. During his visit to Paris, Hughes becomes friends with authors of Negritude, more specifically, of the Quartier Latin (38).

Hatnnher highlights that the writings of Hughes are essential to raise racial consciousness among blacks around the world. The main themes of the author include the feeling of exile, the dislocation concerning Western civilization, and the rupture of the symbols that stereotype blacks negatively. The same themes are present in the works by Damas, Césaire and Senghor. The Harlem Renaissance is not only one of the manifestations of Negritude, but it is one of the founding movements (47).

Senghor himself acknowledges the black American paternity of Negritude and the francophone authors in Paris admit the great American inspiration in their works.

[3] Munanga writes that Asikiwe Nandi, future president of Nigeria, Kwame N'Krumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, whose ideas are based on Pan-Africanism, and Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of the Republic of Kenya are among the African names who are inspired by Du Bois (37).

Although the term is coined in Paris, Senghor affirms that the principles of Négritude originate from Du Bois's reflections and the movement of Black Renaissance (48). The poets of Négritude search for inspiration in the echoes of Harlem Renaissance abandoning the mild tune of cultural assimilation. The influence of Afro-American claims crosses the Atlantic and also inspires the African writers of Portuguese language whose greatest exponent is Francisco José Tenreiro[4] (49). Hattnher highlights that the Afro-American inspiration is not mere imitation, but it reveals the inter-discursive practices of the African Diaspora in the struggle against exclusion and hostility (50).

Munanga explains that between the two great wars, the African francophones, who reside in Paris, make strong and straightforward socio-political claims that echo more loudly in Europe than in Africa. Thus, two Pan-African seminars are held in 1919 and 1921 in Paris. The Guianese writer René Maran (1887-1960) receives the Goncourt prize for the novel *Batouala*[5] whose preface is a direct attack against Western civilization. After receiving the prize and promoting the entrance of the black novel in Western Literature, Maran keeps working for the legitimacy of black culture. Black students in Paris find a rich source of memories of the African past in the works of Maran and in the Renaissance of the Haitian literary movement. Students also make their own efforts, counting on the interest of ethnologists and the good will of some Europeans and Africans to revisit the African cultural heritage (40-41).

According to Munanga, in 1906 the German scientist Leo Frobenius (1873-1938) asserts the existence of an African civilization with peculiar characteristics that convey a way of life. The African style is expressed through the manifestations of black peoples such as dances, religious rituals, masks, social organization. This assertion contradicts

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4 Hattnnher points out *Ilha de Nome Santo* as one of Tenreiro's works (50).

5 According to Munanga "*Batouala* is objective narration about the life of an ethnic chief", the black characters present positive and negative features, observing and criticizing the colonizer with undeniable logic (40).

the image of Africa as a continent inhabited by barbarians. The following events bring about the rediscovery of African arts which inspire cubist and abstract painters[6] (41).

Damasceno reports that the consequences of cultural assimilation and successive colonization cause Haitian and African claims to have common threads. Also, the convergence of events in America and in Europe brings about the revival of memory and historical scope. The Quartier Latin is enlivened by the political and literary discussion which proves that the movement has an answer to the negation of the African origin, in spite of the still present colonial ties. The black personality and consciousness has a new name, a concept, and vocabulary that arise from the context which is the aim of the debates: Négritude.

The future movement has an active participation of Haitian intellectuals who live in Paris. The works of Black American writers such as Hughes, Claude Mc Kay (1889-1948) and Alan Locke (1885-1954) are published in the magazine *Revue du Monde Noir* which is organized by the Haitians Paulette Nardel and Leo Sajous with the participation of Maran. The magazine has six issues only and Nardel leads a literary assemblage which the author Léopold Sédar Senghor frequently visits. The francophone writers of Negritude are motivated by the Black American authors mainly because of the literary gatherings organized by Nardel (18).

However, great researchers of Négritude point out the magazine *Légitime Défense* as the true precursor of the movement. The publication has only one issue and is organized by the Antillean students Étienne Léro, René Menil, and Jules Monnero (19). Hattnher comments that the discourse of the magazine asserts the need of freedom of expression of the black authors, opposing the European standards of style, form, and imagination. *Légitime Défense* also proposed a wider political activism of the black

[6] Professor Munanga asserts that Picasso and Braque are inspired by African sculpture.

intellectuals who take on the representation of the oppressed people. The magazine opened the doors to the next publication which is considered "the real workshop of Negritude": *L'Étudiant Noir* (44).

Two years later, in 1934, the publication *L'Étudiant Noir* proposes the union of all black students in Paris regardless of nationality. According to Munanga, the publication also suggests a revisit of African roots, and draws attention to surrealism and communism as tools or techniques for cultural liberation, refusing blind imitation. The magazine is organized by the three most important names of the movement: the Martinican Césaire, who coins the term Négritude, the Guianese Damas, co-definer of the movement, and the aforesaid Senegalese Senghor along with Léonard Sainville, Aristide Maugée, Birago Diop (1906-1989), Ousmane Soce (1911-1974), and the Achille Brothers. Considered the founders of Negritude, the authors orchestrate the greatest works of Black African literature of French language (43).

Damasceno adds two other movements that play an authoritative part in Negritude: Indigenismo[7] in Haiti and Negrismo[8] in Cuba. Indigenismo is widely inspired by popular African-American life seen as a rich culture that needs to be preserved. Negrismo develops at the same time as Indigenismo. The uttermost characterization of Indigenismo is the novel while Negrismo uses original rhythm that combines typical African sounds and words. Both literary movements are interwoven with the question of how to write about non-European feelings and thoughts in the colonizer's language (19-20).

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[7] Indigenismo was a doctrine characterized as part of the nationalist movement that originated in Mexico in the 1940s which preserved the rights of indigenous movements.

[8] Negrismo was a Creole movement that began in the 1920s. The movement was criticized for reinforcing negative images of the blacks and it was quite similar to the interest of the European scholars and artists in the primitiveness and exoticism of African cultures. Negrismo was not an organized aesthetical movement ruled by manifests and theoretical proposals.

Munanga observes that the diverse conceptualizations of the term Negritude can be divided into two opposite characteristics: the mythical and the ideological. The mythical interpretation refers to the reconstruction of the African past. It is the quest for origins in order to revive the African experience that has been dismantled by the colonial encroachment. The ideological interpretation proposes a belligerent Negritude as a response to historical, social, and psychological situations that are common to all colonized blacks. It suggests a black way of life and sets of actions (51).

Negritude as myth depicts the return to the past. It is idealist, visionary, self-sufficient, and self-centered. The mythical interpretation is not combative and is projected to the future. In Munanga's words "[. . .] the myth is important as it helps the new ideology to establish itself" (51). Furthermore, the ideology of struggle can benefit from the collective awareness that emerges from a real or mythical past, writes Munanga. Between the two interpretations other definitions are implied: the racial or biological, the socio-cultural class, the psychological, and the cultural. In the first definition, Negritude has a racial, merely biological dimension, referring to the sense of belonging to the black race. In Césaire's definition, Negritude is the feeling of solidarity among all blacks around the world leading to the maintenance of a communal identity. The term black may refer to peoples such as the Negroid groups in India, Papua New Guinea and the aboriginal in Australia which generalizes the complexity of the issue. The geographical range of Negritude is composed by Tropical Africa and the regions where the Africans are resettled (51-53).

The definition of socio-cultural class, adopted by some authors, underestimates the relevance of race connected with Negritude. The reduction of race into class is a way of denying such a real social fact. Munanga points out that some studies highlight the great divergence among oppressed blacks and other excluded peoples, evidencing

that the former suffer aggression which is not only socio-economic, but also racial. The denial of race masks the mechanism of oppression that is originated in the colonial discourse. It is evident even in present times that the color of the skin suffers discrimination and causes blacks to live a specific situation (52). The psychological feature denotes Negritude as "traits of behavior", "emotion", "personality", and "spirit" which characterize blacks. Finally, the cultural definition promotes culture as an act of black assertion, from poetry to all cultural expressions. The double interpretation of Negritude may turn it ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. Thus, Negritude can be "real/mythical", "utopian/ideological", "political leitmotif", "semblance", "reaction", "the meaning of being black", and a "historical fact", concludes Munanga (54).

Bernd explains that it is more appropriate to point out different constructs of the term Negritude because there is no single definition that embraces the several significances. The researcher highlights that the word was coined more than fifty years ago, fact that makes it a neologism. The first definition presents Negritude as a stage of raising awareness, which may suggest that the movement is a temporary moment which needs to be replaced by another. In a general sense, negritude (with small n) is the perception and reaction against dominance and discrimination followed by the search for identity (27).

Therefore, it is right to say that the first movements against colonial practices and towards freedom and assertion of identity are the marronage[9] in the Caribbean, the cimarronage[10] in Hispano-America, and the quilombismo[11] in Brazil. All of these movements take place few years after the arrival of the first African slaves in the New World and depict the beginning of the struggle for an autonomous life apart from the

[9] Marronage was a rebellion against life and work in plantations in the Caribbean. It was an escape of a great number of slaves that were helped by other fugitives who lived in maroon settlements.

[10] Cimarronage is the Spanish Word for marronage.

[11] The equivalent of marronage and cimarronage in Brazil.

presence of the colonizer. Based on the reported events, it is possible to say that Negritude, as a means of self-defense against the norms created by the colonial supremacy, has always existed. On the other hand, Negritude (with capital N) delineates the route for the construction of an identity that wants to express itself in an original way, transforming the pejorative depiction of the term black into a positive symbolism (27-28).

Bernd affirms that in spite of undoing the myth of cultural universalism of the West and giving the colonized cultures a chance to claim for legitimacy, Negritude finds opposition and criticism. The activists Césaire and Senghor take diverse paths: the former keeps the revolutionary impulse of the beginning and the latter ends up serving the purposes of imperialism and, because of his great admiration for the Western culture, favors neocolonialism (28). This rupture in the base of the movement brings up the corrosion and the weakening of Negritude. On the one hand, Negritude takes historical steps towards anti-assimilation; on the other, it does not live up to the expectation of the masses because it insists on the particularity of race. Negritude emphasizes the cultural struggle separated from the political debate; it gives more importance to the black values than to social issues. Bernd observes that Negritude does not treat black values inside a political dimension (30).

Munanga observes that black and white intellectuals question the originality of Negritude: Stanislas Adotevi, Frantz Fanon, Cheikh Anta Diop, Alfredo Margarido, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Marcien Towa. Although critics work independently, the analyses arrive at the same conclusions. Negritude does not provide appropriate replies to the real problems of the black population because it uses the same methods of the colonial discourse and does not debate historical and socio-economic issues of blacks. The theory of Negritude, which is primarily based on a mythical depiction of white and

black races, does not counterclaim the colonial discourse (71). Mistakenly, Negritude reinforces the myth of science and technology as components of white biology and emotions as elements of black specificity (72-74).

Because of the extreme importance given to the concept of race, Negritude ends up being used by the dominant class with purposes that are different from the original goals. Bernd observes that it is even used to justify racist and discriminatory actions. The movement is criticized for not reintegrating blacks and for serving the interests of imperialism; it insisted on the specificity of race which turned the solidarity among oppressed peoples impossible (31). Bernd highlights that researches point out a consensus concerning the lack of relation between race and culture; the genetically inherited characteristics of race do not denote any connection with cultural aspects. Negritude invokes the essence of the black individual without taking into account the particularities of time and space. Thus, it becomes myth based on race. In relation to black literature it is possible to evidence diverse approaches delineating what means to be black concerning class, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

Hence, if there are authors who engage with the epidermal struggle that conveys the recognition of being black, on the other hand there authors who write about other aspects of diversity. Once Negritude encapsulates itself in epidermal awareness, it does not stand up for the fight between dominant and dominated classes. Bernd adds that the failure of Negritude is due to the bonds with the obscurity of race, instead of dealing with the issues of the oppressed community. The affirmation brings up tension between race and class. The concept of class is the center of the Marxist criticism which asserts that the oppression has to be opposed regardless of religion, nationality or race. However, Negritude is used as an ideological veil to mask the proletarian condition of blacks which turn the solidarity among oppressed groups difficult to consolidate. Thus,

it is necessary that Negritude deals with real problems denouncing the origin of stereotypes and raising the consciousness of being exploited in a collective situation (32).

Hattnher concludes that the criticism against Negritude has to be considered in a historical dynamics and the attacks do not condemn the movement to death. The deviation which became more serious because of the political posture of some African countries cannot mark the complete negation of everything that has been achieved during the struggle for socio-cultural and political assertion. The “self-acceptance” of the black individual, the “construct and assertion of identity”, the legitimacy of history, culture and the “existential experience” of black women and men are the threads that compose the ideology of Negritude (54).

Hattnher emphasizes that literature, especially poetry, favors the expression of Negritude because of the revolutionary characteristic of black poetry. The poem is not merely a depiction of the concept of Negritude in a diverse language (54). Bernd points out that the predominance of poetry in black literature (particularly African Brazilian literature) denotes that there is a gap in the studies which rescue African Brazilian participation in history and consolidate black identity in the country. African Brazilian identity still struggles with what means to be black in Brazil and also with the awareness of what is to be black in the Americas. For the construct of the novel, a narrow connection with history is required because “there is no society without history and no history without society” (76). Bernd also states that “the poetical discourse is the locus of creation of the concept of Negritude and the raise of awareness of what means to be black” (97). In this sense, black poetry opposes the established ideology and serves as the soil for new practices to be grown. Furthermore, Hattnher states:

> There is a process of continuous interrelation among ideology, discourse and social relations. Ideology is formed by reality and at the same time constitutes

> the same reality; the poetical discourse, as a vehicle of ideology, alters (explains and justifies) forms of social organization while it is created from the same forms. The organization of the poetical discourse, understood as a structure of signs, and the ways of insertion of the black individual in social organization appear as two sources of approaching the literary work. (55)

1.2. Black Literature

Hattnher asserts that the main reaction against the use of the expression “black poetry” is the observation of the color to characterize the writing, once it is not possible to apply the same formula to the writings/works of other racial groups such as “white poetry” or “yellow poetry”. Such assertion draws attention to an excessive division of literature. Nevertheless, the first counterargument is that the classification can be compared with other divisions like “Brazilian poetry”, “North-American prose”, “European Literature”, which, in spite of the wide application in literary studies, do not specify the great diversity of works (55).

In *Introdução à Literatura Negra*, Bernd explains that the legitimacy of the term has its origin in the authors’ wish to have the claims of the black population heard. The writers proclaim themselves representatives of the black community. By writing according to the frame of black literature, writers assert the commitment with the role of bringing up issues such as race and class through the literary work (20). For some scholars, the concept of black literature may seem ghettoizing and ethnocentric. It may appear as discrimination to classify authors using segregating terms, however when the desire to be classified as blacks comes from the authors themselves the fact cannot be underestimated because it denotes the movement towards making visible a reality that has been neglected.

Bernd points out that black literature is narrowly related to the self-assertion of authors as blacks because by naming themselves as blacks, writers attempt to rebuild a

lost identity due to the presence of the colonial discourse which considered black cultural activity worthless and marginal. By adopting the black standpoint, authors react against pre-established norms, start to unveil a black way of life and reject modes of discourse legitimized by the white dominant class. Particularizing black literature is part of the process of naming and taking possession of a new reality, expressed by the rupture with situations created by the white colonization and the emergence of a new world from the black point of view.

According to Bernd**,** the definition of black literature is neither based only on the color of skin nor on the theme which the authors write about. Black literature brings up the enunciating-self who claims to be black by using the first person in the discourse (22). Damasceno also asserts that the epidermal feature of black poetry does not convey the most important aspect of this literary activity (64). Nevertheless, Hatnnher points out that Damasceno contradicts herself when she adds that the color provides the writing with a diverse expression and that the writing of the authors of different races presents particularities. Furthermore, Damasceno highlights that black literature depicts the search for black identity and its affirmation (59). The essence of black writing stems from the reaction against depictions of the black race by the white dominance. The core component of black texts is made up of assertion along with political rhetoric.

Hattnher explains that the definition of black literature lies on the fact that the black writer rejects the supporting role to take over the leading part. The black writer is the subject of the discourse and the owner of the speech. Hattnher affirms that the passage from being “other” to become “self” requires the historical experience of being black. In Hattnher’s words:

> It is less probable that any “white” author expresses even a light motivation to “assert his black identity”, which seems to confirm our statement that black poetry is written by the black poet, with the black man/poet’s view of the world,

> with the experience of the historical subject who recognizes and asserts himself/herself as black. (59)

Bernd observes that black literature denotes a common standpoint which conveys the experience of being black in a white world which excludes, discriminates and subjugates the other[12]. Black writing applies a marked language and symbols which show the attempt to rescue tradition and memories of the past of peoples who were forced to silence their culture to sustain the white cultural hegemony. Thus, the authors rewrite the current situation of blacks breaking up with canonized modes of creation which have been established by the European colonization (22).

Bernd explains that "black literatures of the New World emerge from the "crisis of consciousness of the dominated (colonized) individual who desires the change of the colonial statute through the access to poetical discourse" (29). The author of black literature is the "subject who gazes" instead of accepting to perform as "the one who is gazed" by the white culture. The author is concerned with examining and writing about black imagination, that is, the way the black subject experiences reality and feels about it. Therefore, it brings about a new discourse which provokes the rupture against racialized and normalized stereotyping.

Bernd asserts that black literature confronts legitimizing standards because it hoists the banner of a new order and has a revolutionary and disrupting grievance. Consequently, black writing is treated by the canon with oblivion and marginalization. The impact of certain literary discourses of the oppressed may jeopardize the dominant culture because it reverses roles in social relations. Thus, institutions which are in charge of legitimizing new forms of literature may exclude writings that disrupt the current order and the works may be put aside for decades. Bernd writes that "[. . .] the

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[12] According to Bernd the word "other" conveys the person who is in a position of strangeness in relation to a dominant culture that discriminates and excludes difference.

aesthetic value is not the only determinant of the establishment of a work, neither of the banishment to regions of shadow and oblivion (40)".

The dominant elites have different institutions that support the permanence of the ideology without violent confrontation. The press, the educational system, family and literature are components of the ideological apparatus. Writings which present revolutionary points of view reversing social roles and the current order may be labeled minor literature. Bernd explains that the main features of minor or marginal literatures are also present in black literature such as:

a) Deterritorialization as a strong feeling of loss of cultural references resulting from destruction of cultural territories and as the desire of rescuing and reconstructing the meaning of these territories.
b) Political predominance which connects individual cases with collective issues. An isolated fact that depicts racism does not report the single event but it reveals the stains of the society that allows it to happen.
c) Birth of subversive enunciation which denotes literature as an interpreter of national and collective awareness and as a leader of solidarity among excluded members of the society. The writer owns the appropriate conditions to express a probable community that may recover and repossess lost references. The author of black literature uses means to weave projects for a new society based on rescued values of black culture through writing (43).

Bernd argues that the term minority literature does not convey a certain type of writing which comes from minorities, but a literature that is underestimated by legitimizing institutions. The option of writers to be recognized as representatives who self-declare blacks and the wish to make the black culture visible cause a strong impact on ethnocentric practices (41).

According to Bernd, the word minor is not loaded with pejorative meaning in this case, but conveys the innovative and revolutionary action of the writing that counterclaims the established pattern. Authors of minor literature sometimes do not use the same style of contemporary writing taking old-fashioned models to compose the work. However, it cannot be considered late imitation. On the contrary, it is a way to appropriate and subvert elements which are the heritage of the literary canon (43).

Bernd concludes that the term counter literature is the most appropriate to define the literary action that is critical and counterclaims the principles of the dominant culture. Counter literature denies optimistic views of social relations, denounces issues such as misery and racism, and challenges society to look at itself and confront its own sins (44-5).

1.3. Black Brazilian Literature or African-Brazilian Literature

The current state of researches on black literature in Brazil reveals a gap that needs to be bridged. It is possible to find a vast material about blacks in the areas of Sociology, History, and Anthropology. However, concerning Brazilian literary studies the situation is quite the opposite. A wide range of material is found about African-American literature in libraries and research centers even in Brazil, but in relation to black Brazilian literature the search can be frustrating.

It is necessary to take into consideration the different contexts that promoted African-American and African-Brazilian literatures to avoid the risk of an essentialist standpoint of the cultural activity permeated by the African Diaspora. In *African-Brazilian Studies*, Roger Bastide states that in the United States the color line, which

keeps African descendants apart from the white way of life, embodies the ingenious black writing and its refinement. It is not possible to conceive such literature without the social boundary which separated blacks and whites in North America. There has not been legal segregation in Brazil as it existed in the U.S. before the Civil Rights Movement, and the mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion act in more subconscious and cloaked manners. Racial relations in the Brazilian territory are within a deceptive racial democracy which prevents armed conflicts and social revolutions. Bastide argues that the lack of revolts could have numbed the black Brazilian literary activity; however, it made an original poetry emerge (11).

In researches about the topic of this chapter, two different forms of characterizing the writing can be noticed. Bernd explains that the variation of the term denotes the hesitation of criticism that has not defined the object of the study and the diverse ways through which authors view the search for identity in Brazil. The difficulty in establishing the term is related to the complexity of the conceptualization of black literary activity. On one hand, to assert the recognition of theme, lexis, and style that particularize the literary discourse, the term black literature is chosen. On the other hand, Afro-literature evidences rescue and assertion of African ancestry. The term black writing is wider and refers to other components such as political assertion, visibility, reversing values, struggle against discrimination, black experience, and retelling history which can be noticed through literary discourse. Black literature goes beyond the frontiers of race, nationality, time, and geography transmitting the notion of “territory in which authors constitute the same community [. . .].” (80). Bearing in mind the works of Clarke and Trindade and the task the poets perform with their literatures I choose the term black literature to be applied along the thesis as an attempt to evidence the

similarities between Trindade's and Clarke's writing which cross the frontiers of nationality, language, and class.

1.4. Black Brazilian Literature: Four Basic Principles

1.4.1. The Enunciating-Self in Black Brazilian Literature

From colonial times up to the present the great majority of Brazilian literature has presented blacks as secondary and stereotyped characters in novels and poems whose heroes and heroines are constructed according to Eurocentric patterns. Thus, what is the turning point in the literary activity of the country that marked the beginning of Black Brazilian literature? Bernd replies that black Brazilian writing starts when an "enunciating-self emerges from the process of becoming aware of what it is to be black among whites" (48). The self embodies a new quest in black Literature. It reveals the "semantics of protest" where black identity takes on the standpoint and the speech in History, and rejects being the "other" to be the "self". The enunciating-self counteracts stereotypes and marginalization (50).

Eduardo de Assis Duarte argues that this standpoint denounces a world view and moral and ideological values that determine the choices concerning even vocabulary. The standpoint allows the author to convey history from a black Brazilian point of view, breaking up with stereotypes, depicting the perspective and experience of the colonized black. When a canonized text is parodied in black literature, it reflects the desire to appropriate and subvert the dominant culture. It goes beyond the assimilation that caused black people to adopt white standards of social behavior. The black Brazilian perspective in literature is depicted by authors who take off the "white masks" and

reject pejorative terms such as “negro de alma branca,” “black with a white soul,” reviving the African ancestors’ culture. The standpoint along with the choices concerning language in Afro-Brazilian writing reveals a black soul in the search of a black aesthetic (105-06). This project aims at providing the black population with new forms of identity altering the meaning of old signifiers through the use of a particular language.

Duarte explains that literature is the work with language above all. The aesthetic of the text grants its permanence. However, the act of writing may contain another objective rather than mastering language, such as denouncing oppression and cruelty like slavery. In that case, the goal of the author is to provoke immediate reaction against injustice. The literature studied here is engaged with a project against inequality but it is woven with an original language which transforms the meanings of vocabulary that stereotype black Brazilians and provides it with another dimension. For instance, the word Negro “Black” is no longer a symbol of shame and incapacity; it is redressed with pride and strength. As well as cabelo pixaim ‘frizzy hair’ (which has been a pejorative term celebrated by a Brazilian popular song) denotes one of the features of black beauty. The Brazilian researcher also argues that an ingenious writing is established through the original use of rhyme, rhythm and intonation providing the black Brazilian experience with a new significance which opposes the cultural hegemony. The use of vocabulary from African descendant languages to write to black Brazilians is one of the greatest evidences of the authors’ concern with the audience (107).

Duarte asserts that the reception of the audience depends on the success of black Brazilian literature in raising blacks’ self-esteem, reversing the dominant values by destroying stereotypes, and forming a reading black society. The desire to take the literature to poor teenagers and children is an ambitious task taking into account the

difficulties in forming a reading audience in a country where reading is believed to be a habit of the elite. The political project of the Afro-Brazilian Literature requires different ways to approach the audience, such as performances on the streets, readings, and popular festivals.

It is the aim of the writer to put the black community into contact with new modes of identity proposed by the black Brazilian literature through its diverse expressions and to lead the black readers to recognize their experience in the literary works that oppose discriminatory writing. It is the literature that wishes to introduce African descendants as subjects of a culture of their own, denouncing the ethnocentric practices that exclude non-whites from the literate world. It is often called marginal because it uses the discourse of difference which threatens the canon.

Bernd writes that black poetry is the space that favors the construction of subjectivity. It is where alienation is attacked by the consciousness which is achieved in the consolidation of the subject of enunciation as the agent that rewrites History from a black standpoint. However, black poetry is not only fated to protest, but also conveys the retake of an existential space which has been denied to descendants of slaves and ex-slaves. The use of the first person transmits the author's claim to be visible and to refuse anonymity in a society which does not acknowledge the active participation of blacks. With the emergence of the enunciating-self, the black is the subject who speaks and not the object which is spoken of. This concerns the rejection of remaining as objects of colonial judgment and stereotyping playing walk-on parts in the Brazilian literature as well as in the Brazilian cultural activity as a whole claiming for legitimacy of the contribution of blacks to the building of the nation.

Bernd adds that the individual self merges into <u>we/us</u> expressing the desire to be part of a communal identity where all the other identities are based. The poet's identity

is interwoven with the community celebrated by the author (78). Not constrained to merging with we/us, the real effectiveness of the self is also connected with the call to the interpretative ability of the reader (you) whose support provides black people "with assertion and expansion" of solidarity "as well as victory against racism and discrimination" (79). The role of spokesperson enables black poets to reflect the present and call union and transformation like the Black Antillean literature which since 1920 has produced literature that is compromised with disrupting the stigmatization of the black epidermis (80).

1.4.2. Building the Black Anti-Epic

The reconstruction of black History in Brazil is a constant topic in black poetry. Nevertheless, not many poets celebrate African descendant heroes, heroines, and the brave feats in the fight for freedom and equality. The genre requires that the poet bridges the gaps of the traditional historiography which projects a shadow on the manifold revolts and individual acts against slavery. Solano Trindade is the first Afro-Brazilian poet to create what Bernd calls "anti-epic". According to Bernd, Trindade's "anti-epic" retells facts of the quilombos[13], which were marginal and out-law communities, and celebrate the quilombolas[14] as the true Black heroes. In Trindade's *Canto dos Palmares,* "Song of Palmares"[15] (A-*iii*)[16] the defeated slaves are depicted as victorious reversing the traditional epic where the winners are the dominant heroes:

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[13] Quilombos are settlements mainly formed by runway and free-born slaves. The widest known Quilombo is Palmares which is led by Zumbi, the greatest hero of black resistance in the XVII century. Palmares lasts for almost a hundred years before being dest royed by the Portuguese expedition commanded by Domingos Jorge Velho in 1694.

[14] Quilombolas are the inhabitants of the quilombos. The descendants of the first quilombolas still live in some settlements.

[15] Song of Palmares is made up of 194 lines which narrate life in the Quilombo dos Palmares, the interpersonal relationships of the quilombolas and the events of resistance and fight against the oppressor. .

I am still a poet

my poem

lift my brothers

My lovers

get ready for the fight,

the drums are no longer peaceful(1-6)

even the palm trees

love freedom…[. . .] (77-85)

In the poem, fugitive slaves are celebrated and Zumbi's voice is heard, glorified, and kept in the minds of African descendants forever.

The oppressor could not shut my

mouth,

neither hurt my body

my poem

is sung through the centuries,

my muse

clarifies consciousness,

Zumbi has been redeemed… (187-94)

The black anti-epic aims at unveiling the black history that has been told with several misstatements. Differently from the traditional epic, black poetry may introduce old as well as every day conflicts denouncing marginal aspects of black experience. The verse bridges the historical gaps that have been reproduced in canonical writings celebrating deceased black heroes and their insurgent feats (85).

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[16] The complete poems by Solano Trindade, George Elliott Clarke, Luiz Gama, and Luís Guedes are in the appendixes which are indicated by letters A, B, C and page numbers.

1.4.3. Reversing Values: “Negro Love Is Good”

Negritude is permeated by the desire to turn negative stereotypes into positive assertion of black cultural values. Besides the crisis of consciousness of the 30s and the search for black identity, there is the struggle for disrupting the dominant ideology which denies black culture. Negritude is the assertion and praise of black values that counteract Eurocentrism and the depiction of the author’s wish to witness the construction of a fairer society. The writer wants to erase the several stains of assimilation and appropriation that victimized earlier black Brazilian writers particularly before Modernism, fact which is studied along the current work.

Negritude does not suggest self-segregation. On the contrary, it is inserted in a wider perspective of blackness that may concern Brazilian or Latin American consciousness. Therefore, Negritude is the awareness of what means to be black in Brazil or in the Americas as a whole. Bernd argues that literature is a path to understand ourselves and the others. Yet, the path is only taken when the essence of experience is applied. Concerning black literature, the experience is related to the meaning of being black in a world of whites (87). The rage that seems to orientate the poet’s speech conveys the refusal to exclusion and denial of black identity. To reverse the prevailing discourse, the poet rebuilds terms such as nigger/negro with a new significance turning negative stereotypes into positive signifiers. Trindade employs the word “black” in most of his poems using a different meaning as in the poem entitled “Ballad” (A-*vi*): “Black good black that I am / How good how good / Like a moonless night I am,” [. . .] (1-3)

1.4.4. New Symbolic Order

Bernd writes that in order to rescue black historiography and transgress values, the disruption of the symbolic depiction is necessary. The association of the color white with adjectives as purity, and the color black with savagery is reversed in black poetry. Thus, Black writers use a new symbolism that associates the word "night," for example, with protection, peace, and coziness. Trindade writes about peaceful nights when black people can honor gods and celebrate the tradition with joy like in the poem entitled "Macumba"(A-*vii*): "Yeamanjah's night / Black eats acasah / Yeamanjah's night." (1-3)

The poems also refer to musical instruments brought by slaves or created by African descendants in Brazil. The allusion of the instruments connects the descent to an ancestry that black people can be proud of. The musical memory, which is a rich source of identity, reaffirms the call for union and resistance (90-91). Trindade depicts the musical instrument as storyteller of the African descendant culture in the poem "Old Atabaque" (A-*vii*):

Old atabaque[17]

how many things you told me

how many poems you announced

How much poetry you inspired me [. . .] (1-4)

Bernd comments that the act of breaking up with the order is also revealed by the new dimension given to objects used to subjugate African slaves. The poets firmly

[17] The atabaque is a tall, wooden instrument of percussion. It is covered with the skin of animals on the top.

revisit the past of suffering, instead of repressing the memories of "senzalas"[18] and the apparatus that was used to prevent and suffocate escapes and revolts, with the intention to provoke a move towards freedom. However, the allusion to painful memories is not a negative impulse; on the contrary, it depicts the need to remember the atrocities to keep searching for a better future (91). The poem "Talk" (A-*v*) is an interview in which the ex-slaves retell the suffering and pain of the enslaved past:

- What about you, brother, what did you do?
- I planted cotton

in southern fields

for the blue-blooded men

who paid my labor

with a beating of a piece of wood.[. . .] (9-14)

Bernd points out that the poet inverts the symbolism that involves the memories of slavery and interweaves it with new significance. The enslaved past is revisited instead of forgotten and denied. Words that convey weapons, attack, and defense are associated with the poetic discourse coloring the speech that is threatened by the dominant culture. Because the author believes in the strength of the words as powerful devices in search for black identity, the poet combines terms which depict weapons with new signifiers (92). Bernd concludes that the four principles of black poetry are interwoven by the resistance against assimilation. It is the project that embodies black culture with new myths, symbols and values which are necessary to particularize black experience and make the rise and establishment of black identity possible.

[18] Collective shelters that all the same master's slaves inhabited.

CHAPTER II

BLACK BRAZILIAN POETRY

2.1. Slavery, Abolition and Assimilation

The study of black Brazilian poetry evidences the diversity of purposes of authors and varied forms of understanding black experience. The differences emerge from the direct resonance of the specificities of racial relations in Brazil. The past of slavery is a crucial point that determines the tension between whites and blacks and also permeates the way blacks view themselves. The condition of black Brazilian writers is completely different from the poets of the Négritude who are students in Europe. In Brazil, the current situation of the black population still concerns issues related to the struggle for survival, illiteracy, low salaries, unemployment, and marginalization. Thus, it is not possible to notice a systematic literary movement that can be named Brazilian negritude.

Damasceno writes that during slavery and after the abolition the few blacks who achieve better socio-economic standards encounter the white society based on Eurocentric values. The white hegemony is not questioned and the African presence of language, culture and society does not fit the dominant rules. Therefore, African descendant authors put the culture of origin aside and obey the white dominant canon in a process of cultural assimilation. Before analyzing the poetic production of Afro-Brazilian authors, a study of the socio-historical conditions that permeate black writing in the country is presented (35).

The stains of slavery are visible up to the present. The abolition originates a situation where blacks and whites are legally equals (in the condition of freedom), but blacks do not have access to social mobility, once illiteracy and low qualification prevent real citizenship. That fact contributes to make up the stereotype of the black individual as a lazy, immoral, dishonest person who lives in slums. The emergence of the favelas is the result of the unfair competition with European immigrants soon after May 13 1888 when the Golden Law, which abolished slavery, is passed. Damasceno asserts that the transition from the condition of slavery to freedom requires the reconstruction of social awareness of blacks and racially mixed people and the change of standpoint of whites towards ex-slaves. Thus, the abolition demands a new understanding of interracial relations. The 1888 Golden Law suddenly equalizes the legal rights of free whites and ex-slaves, but at the same time it does not reverse the values that consolidate the colonial situation. In spite of being free, blacks and racially mixed people are socially, psychologically, and economically restrained by the dominant order. The assertion of the economic status of blacks is a slow process that is not complete yet. Damasceno states that: "[t]he social conditions of economic exploitation of the slave labor favored the appearance of social symbols or directly opposed standards of race and color which connected with determining the dynamics of adjustment between whites and blacks; these standards have been slowly modified" (36).

The sexual exploitation of the slave woman by the white master originates the mulattoes as the intermediary group who provokes unstable relations and prevents the consolidation of class awareness among the poor black masses. According to Munanga, the white masters openly interfere in favor of the children they have with black women, and in spite of the different status in relation to the white descendants, the free

mulattoes experience a diverse situation from the condition of blacks. By the end of the XVIII century, only four percent of mulattoes are slaves compared to ninety-five percent of blacks. In the XIX century, seventy-six percent of the free population is made up of racially mixed people. Around 1872, thirty-two percent of slaves and seventy-eight percent of free individuals are mulattoes. The fact that mulattoes have a different treatment contributes to the conflicting attitude towards blacks which weakens the solidarity between the two groups (93).

The role that mulattoes (as an intermediary group in racial tension) perform in the Brazilian society distinguishes the racial relations in Brazil from the United States racial conflicts. In the North-American country the racial boundaries are not open to the intermediary group (the mulattoes); the color line divides the American population in blacks and whites. However, in the Brazilian society the mulatto has more possibilities of social mobility which contributes to soften the racial tensions between blacks and whites. Consequently, soon after the abolition, some blacks hope that their descendants cross the racial barrier if they marry people with a fair complexion (93).

Thomas E. Skidmore points out that the whitening ideology is a creation of the white elite. The scholar quotes documents and the study of Brazilian sociologists that suggest the increasing of European immigration to prevent blacks from penetrating into the social spheres of the country. The documents affirm that the black race would disappear naturally because of diseases and social disorganization. Presenting the white color as the ideal, the whitening ideology permeates Brazilian literature as well as folklore (64). Damasceno concludes that the ideology provokes two different reactions from black individuals. Blacks may assimilate the ideal of whitening and search for partners with fair skin or experience the inferiority which causes alienation and revolt and start to build a new ideology that asserts negritude (37).

According to David Brookshaw "[a] stereotype is the pre-judgment of an individual or group of individuals concerning the category which they belong to. The category is commonly ethnic" (9). Stereotypes denote rivalry that emerges from the cultural contact among different ethnic groups, depict a game of opposites, and delineate the image a group has of another based on the idea that the same group has of itself. The fixed set of ideas conveys the need to compensate economic or technological deficiency with moral and cultural superiority. Consequently, pre-judgments do not have to be ethnic only. In terms of social mobility, stereotypes function as mechanisms of social control. Brookshaw writes that "stereotypes freeze personality, erase individuality, qualifying the receptor with characteristics that fit the standpoint of the perceiver in relation to social or ethnic class, or the sexual category of the victim"(10).

Brookshaw argues that the stereotyped person is the delineation based on the myths that the perceiver thinks as his own and the receptor's social role. Stereotypes embody the rejection of the receptor by the perceiver, "hence, a negation of acceptable socio-cultural standards" (10). Concerning colonialism, stereotypes depict the notion that the colonizer is "civilized, rational, decent, religious, and educated"; and the colonized native is barbarian, irrational, immoral, and superstitious.

Brookshaw explains that the prejudiced mind is based on stereotypes that can be flexible, but sometimes contradictory. The manifold of observations that a white person makes about a black individual are a confusing and difficult problem. In this manner, the submissive attitude of a black person may confirm the racial superiority that is believed to belong to the white. On the other hand, the move towards self-assertion may qualify the black individual as arrogant. In both circumstances racial discrimination is evident. Therefore, the black individual who is accepted in a higher social class is

considered an exception. The strategies that categorize blackness fence all the opportunities that can be open to black social mobility (11-12).

The flexibility of stereotypes copes with the advances in society, technology, and economy. The idea that blacks are savages who can play rudimentary musical instruments is replaced by the notion that blacks are constantly happy, even in hard times, and have a natural talent for music. African art, primarily considered a barbarian expression, is called exotic and exhibited in the main art galleries and museums around Europe. Slavery in Brazil lasted for more than three centuries and the prejudice against blacks has its cultural roots in the stereotyped depiction of dark-skinned people that is used to justify domination. Brookshaw adds that "[t]he black, even before being enslaved, had a defect that for many served as a justification for slavery, and such defect was his color" (12). Munanga, in his turn, observes that it is a mythical mistake to state that the oppression of blacks is due to race. "Blacks were not colonized because they are black; otherwise, blacks became niggers because of the expropriation of land and labor with the objective of colonial expansion" (79). In both statements, because of skin color or because of colonization blacks suffer the consequences of racism.

Brookshaw asserts that the Euro-Brazilian and the Afro-Brazilian cultures are rivals that compete for the formation of national identity. In Brazil, the strategies of control are not just social, but also ethnic. The conflict between the two ethnic identities is based on the signifier which depicts white as morality and black as immorality resulting in a cultural division between the European tradition and the African heritage. Brookshaw writes that the line that separates the two antagonistic cultures is the line of comporting. Above the line of comporting is the white bourgeoisie dwelling in urban industrial centers and maintaining European rationality and tradition. It is the dominant class that follows the colonizer's culture. Below the line there is the Afro-Brazilian

tradition whose axis is the merging of the culture of slums and inner cities with the culture of rural areas (18). Brookshaw adds that the white Brazilian is a colonialist who identifies with important cultural and economic centers and sees the nation as a reflection of the white middle-class superego. The colonialist class is not aware of its true nationality and constantly searches for a society, which is somewhat mythical, trying to imitate European culture. At the same time, the colonialist rejects the present social picture. The society that the colonialist desires goes from France to Portugal and during the years that follow the Abolition the dreams of the white metropolitan are connected with the fear of the socio-cultural dominance of the colonized. Nevertheless, Brookshaw points out that there is an increasing process of cultural nationalism which is inspired by the Afro-Brazilian tradition. Opposing the metropolitan ideals, the spokespersons of the cultural nationalism are not necessarily Afro-Brazilians. White writers who counterclaim institutionalized norms take part in the movement that can be defined as disassimilation and as the construct of national identity. (18).

Thus, the native is pointed out as the first emblem of national identity in Latin American countries. However, this signifier is abstract in Brazil because the remaining natives in the XIX century live distant from the social life of the cities, differently from some Spanish-speaking countries. The literary nationalism of the XIX century is inspired by a mythical native, instead of being stimulated by the presence of the colonized African in a period in which slavery is the base of the Brazilian economic activity. In the twenties and thirties, a new nationalism starts to point out the Afro-Brazilian culture in literature, especially in the Northeast where slavery was larger and longer. An alternative Brazilian nativism emerges in the poetry of some modernists and in Jorge Amado’s fiction integrating the African component of the Afro-Brazilian culture (19).

Brookshaw argues that stereotypes are related to the processes of assimilation and disassimilation of the metropolitan culture. Obviously, both processes demand that the roles of stereotypes change subtly. The racist or colonialist characterizes blacks as savage, primitive, and as the people who need to be subjugated to be educated. The attitude denotes the aspiration for a white Brazil. On the other hand, the white nativist suggests elements of the Afro-Brazilian culture like spirituality and instinctive qualities, as positive aspects that the white tradition lacks. Therefore, the presence of the Afro-Brazilian culture in literary works is a path for the white nativist to reject the values of metropolitan culture (19).

Brookshaw affirms that the complexity of the colonized race makes the identity of the black/mulatto writer difficult to construct. In search for legitimacy, the black writer may adopt white social values. The black author who wants to disrupt the negative stereotype of the savage and be accepted by the metropolitan culture may play the role of the loyal black like the loyal slave (Pai João[19] in the Brazilian context) who respects the institution that enslaved him. In the opposite way, blacks or mulattoes may reaffirm their cultural heritage, and counterclaim the colonizer's culture.

This brief historical view is an attempt to explain why not many black writers assert negritude before Modernism. Damasceno states that mulatto writers such as Manoel Ignácio da Silva Alvarenga (1749-1814), José da Natividade Saldanha (1796-1830), and Tobias Barreto de Menezes (1839-1889) do not refer to blackness in their works. The rupture of the color line can only be possible through the adoption of a white aesthetics. Before Modernism, European cultural standards dominate Brazilian writing. Most of the black authors of that time avoid themes related to the black race which is stereotyped in great part of the literary works of the period.

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[19] Pai João is the Brazilian depiction of Uncle Tom who is the main character in the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Hattnher points out that the legitimacy of black literature is prevented by official criticism and historiography from the period that precedes abolition up to present. When there is some reference, the lines about black writing are quite superficial. Domingos Caldas Barbosa[20] and Luís Gonzaga Pinto da Gama are scarcely quoted in literary research as Alfredo Bosi's work[21].

2.2. Luís Gama's Self-Defense: Black Brazilian Poetry before Modernism

Black Brazilian poetry before Modernism presents examples of assimilation of canonized standards of European culture. Considering the great assimilation process which African descendants have been through in Brazil, few poets apply the main characteristics of black poetry in poems written during pre and post abolitionist periods. The first poet who uses the enunciating-self to assert awareness of what means to be black is Gama (1830-1882) whom I briefly introduce in the current work[22]. Son of a white Portuguese father and an African slave mother, Luisa Mahin (who is arrested several times accused of participating in movements for the slaves' liberation), Gama is sold as a slave by his own father. The poet is taken to Rio de Janeiro and then to São Paulo. Tireless abolitionist, Gama becomes a lawyer.

Bernd states that, in spite of writing in the same period as Castro Alves (celebrated as "the poet of slaves"), Gama is rarely mentioned (17). However, his poetry is the founding work of a quest for identity of the black population in Brazil. His writing opens the path which has been taken by black Brazilian poets until these days.

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[20] Cf. Oswaldo de Camargo, Barbosa is the only poet of the eighteenth century that can be named a black poet because of the topics of his poetry.

[21] Bosi, Alfredo. *A História Concisa da Literatura Brasileira.* São Paulo: Cultrix, 1979.

[22] I choose not to mention other poets of black literature of the period before Modernism because it would require a wider research. Bearing in mind the objective of this study, I mention the most representative authors according to the basic characteristics of black poetry studied hitherto. For this reason I do not include poets such as Castro Alves because the poet does not use the enunciating-self to assert negritude.

Compared to Gregório de Matos (because of his satirical verse) Gama disrupts the traditional perspective which employs black experience as mere object. The poet writes in the first person, presents the black individual as subject, and asserts the African heritage entirely. In poetry, Gama parodies the literary tradition of the time, reverses signifiers of the elite, and suggests the destruction of social inequalities and racial issues. In the poem "Who am I?[23]" (B-*ii*) (known as "Flock of Goats"), the author returns the offensive term which is used to refer to blacks and satirizes the ideal of nobility and racial purity.

If black I am, or a goat

It does not matter. What does that mean?

There are goats of all caste

Because the species is vast … [. . .] (81-84)

Gama is also the first black poet to celebrate black women's beauty and reject fair-haired and blue-eyed ladies as inspiring muses. Damasceno asserts that the poet "does not copy, neither imitates, being original and aware in defense of his African blood and heritage" (47). In the poem "There goes verse!"[24] (B-2), the author praises black beauty and employs words of African origin blending love for a woman of his race and rescue of African tradition:

Oh! Guinean Muse, black amber,

Denigrated granite statue

Before whom the Lion surrenders

Undressed of the rage of atrocious bravura

Lend me the calabash of urucungo[25]

Teach me how to shake your marimba[26]

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[23] In Bernd, Zilá, ed.*Poesia Negra Brasileira*. Porto Alegre: Igel, 1992.

[24] In Bernd, Zilá, ed. *Poesia Negra Brasileira*. Porto Alegre: Igel, 1992.

[25] Berimbau. A one-stringed musical instrument in the shape of a bow used in capoeira.

Inspire me the science of candimba

Lead me to the path of high greatness. [. . .] (9-16)

Gama's works have not been studied appropriately and his poems have not been celebrated as much as they should. Nonetheless, he is the first author of black Brazilian poetry. Gama's famous statement denotes his persistent search for freedom: "Every slave who murders his master, whatever the circumstance is, kills in self-defense"[27]

João da Cruz e Sousa (1863-1898) is considered the greatest Brazilian symbolist by some critics. Though the author obeys cultural norms of the period, the son of freed slaves is not acclaimed by the criticism of his time. According to Damasceno, Cruz e Sousa presents "the synthesis of a black culture that struggles to assert itself in the world of whites" (49). The poet uses terms such as night as a signifier where black means beauty. Thus, the writer overcomes the sense of frustration and incapacity before the cultural ideal of the society. In spite of being an educated man, Cruz e Sousa suffers the constraints of prejudice. Criticism of the XIX century does not acknowledge his poetical work due to racial and color matters. In this context, the poet begins to question the perspective of the society which refuses to see him as a true great author.

Bernd writes that the poet's text reveals the beginning of a raising awareness of the situation that involves black experience in a white hegemonic society. Revolt and denouncement are expressed mainly through signifiers in Cruz e Sousa's work. In *Missal* and *Broquéis* his poetry is compared to Rimbaud's and Mallarmé's. In comparison to Baudelaire, it is possible to notice the same themes concerning the poet's curse, the feeling of frustration, the sense of being victimized and insulted leading the poet to revolt. Although it has been said that Cruz e Sousa does not write black poetry, his work does not neglect racial issues. The prose-poem entitled "Walled up" reveals his

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[26] A musical instrument of percussion of African tradition. Marimbas are also found in the Caribbean musicality.

[27] In Camargo, Oswaldo de. *O Negro Escrito*. São Paulo: IMESP, 1987.

critical standpoint concerning the situation of a black individual who is fenced by a wall of white cultural dominance: "If you walk to the right you will hit and stumble anxious, upset, against a horribly unfathomable wall of Selfishness and Prejudices" (33).[28] The poet writes about the isolation he is exposed to due to his social origins. According to Bernd, Cruz e Sousa "(…) metamorphosed his social protest into an aesthetic revolt, his ethnical isolation into a poet's isolation, the color line into the Philistines' line against pure artists" (31).

2.3. The Singing of the Black Swan[29]: Black poetry in Modernism

The period before Modernism can be considered a moment when racial consciousness is beginning to be molded. In the 1920s and 1930s black population is silenced, made invisible, and numbed by two strong mechanisms of social control. The whitening ideology, as one of the mechanisms, becomes the ideal of the bourgeoisie based on the imitation of a white style concerning moral and physical characteristics. Also, the myth of racial democracy originates a strong belief in a nation free of racial prejudice with equal opportunities for everyone.

In spite of the ideologies used to silence Afro-Brazilian culture, black poets begin to write about themes related to the experience of the black population who after the abolition remained excluded. Thus, black writings of this period are attempts to remind blacks of the African origins after the frustration caused by the disillusion of the slavery abolition and to preserve African heritage through poetry. Also, the emergence of the black press in São Paulo starts a movement towards the integration and active participation of blacks in the Brazilian society.

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[28] In Bernd, Zilá, ed. *Poesia Negra Brasileira*. Porto Alegre: Igel, 1992.

[29] Guedes, Lino. *O Canto do Cisne Negro*. São Paulo: Áurea, 1927.

Bastide argues that "[t]hese papers firstly search for uniting blacks, providing them with the sense of solidarity, guiding and educating them to struggle against complex of inferiority by overestimating black values, celebrating great athletes, musicians, black movie stars. […]". (130). In spite of not lasting much (most of the papers end before a year), the black press plays an important role in the process of raising black consciousness and self-esteem in the 1920s and 1930s. Damasceno adds that in the middle of Aryan ideals of the elite, Modernism opens the doors to movements which are not centered in dominant cultural values. One of the important newspapers of that period is *Leite Criôlo*, which is a literary supplement of the *Estado de Minas*. *Leite Criôlo* introduces black poets who are concerned with rejecting prejudice and stereotyping using a combative language which reminds blacks of the sufferings of slavery (59).

After World War I, an increasing interest in African arts in Europe motivates Brazilian intellectuals to pay attention to Afro-Brazilian culture. Along with Modernism, studies about the presence of black culture originated from Africa begin to consolidate. The most important contributors are Artur Ramos, Gilberto Freyre, Florestan Fernandes, and Roger Bastide. The atmosphere created by Modernism originates intellectual movements of black activists that claim for the legitimacy of African tradition and culture as well as the respect for dark-skinned people.

In 1924, the newspaper *O Clarim da Alvorada* is published to call blacks for a real Brazilian citizenship. In 1939, black intellectuals reunite in São Paulo and create the Black Brazilian Front (FNB – Frente Negra Brasileira) which publishes *A Voz da Raça*. In the following years, more organizations are created as representatives of the claims of the black population. In 1944, Abdias do Nascimento, Edson Carneiro and Guerreiro Ramos found the Black Experimental Theater Company (Teatro

Experimental do Negro-TEN) which aims at providing Black actors with leading parts in plays where black experience is depicted. The company is a cultural as well as a political movement which promotes resistance against discriminatory practices.

Black Brazilian poetry encounters a more favorable atmosphere inside Modernism that provides a revisit of African Brazilian culture. The two events bring the desire to reverse norms and to rescue the primitive ethnic elements. Damasceno explains that although main modernist artists tend to use native themes, "[…] the increasing interest in the ordinary man in social issues and the wish to rediscover Brazil […]" turns necessary to acknowledge the participation of a racially mixed population in Brazilian cultural life. Modernism rescues components of national culture that are considered marginal including black poetry.

Modernism allows the author to create from personal experience and feelings without obeying pre-established frames because there is a revision of norms established by the canon during the Semana de Arte Moderna. Increasing interest in ordinary people's culture and the desire to discover an original way to depict Brazil as a racially mixed society permits marginal sectors to become visible. Therefore, writers are free to compose using a new perspective and language and also to try new rhythms. The poetry which is made up of black themes may disrespect canonized literature. Thus, the freedom proposed by Modernism can give black poetry new chances to be known in the Brazilian literary scene.

However, not many studies about the poetic production of black authors of this period have been done. As mentioned before, Cruz e Sousa is largely published and cited, but works of the poet which approach black themes are rarely found. Bastide publishes *Afro-Brazilian Poetry* in 1943. The work is a psychoanalytical study of black writing which intends to point out the specificities of the black soul and the amount of

inspiration that can be attributed to African origin mixed or not with European blood (11).

Hattnher writes that some works about black literature in Brazil show blacks as object rather than subject. The works by Brookshaw, *Race and Color in the Brazilian Literature* in 1983, and Bernd's *Negritude e Literatura na América Latina* in 1987 come to break thirty years of silence about black writing. In 1988, when the hundredth anniversary of the abolition is celebrated, Damasceno and Bernd publish *Poesia Negra no Modernismo Brasileiro* and *Introdução à Literatura Negra* respectively. Both works evidence the common search for an identity in the writings of black authors. For this reason, it is important to name some of the most important black Brazilian poets who write before and during the modernist cultural period. From Gama to Cruz e Sousa and up to Trindade, the road taken by black Brazilian authors reveals rescue and reconstruction of black identities.

Twenty-eight years after the death of Cruz e Sousa (therefore twenty eight years of silence in black writing) Lino de Pinto Guedes (1906-1951) is born in São Paulo. As mentioned before, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the emergence of a black press begins to express the necessity of building awareness of racial relations in Brazil. The black press is also responsible for introducing Guedes as a black poet. Having in mind the ideologies of the period after the abolition which prevent blacks in Brazil from living up to their African heritage, the ideals of white hegemony take over the cultural standard. Guedes intends to provoke cultural revolution inside the black community. The poet understands that only a change in behavior and education can lead to social mobility.

Hattnher points out that Guedes refers to the folkloric loyal slave Pai João and "[…] criticizes the generation after the abolition (Pai João's grandchildren) and their

friendly attitude in relation to the socio-economic system which […] developed other ways of domination […]" (69). In Guedes's poems, blacks are advised to change, avoiding alcoholism and sexual relations outside marriage. For the poet, the adoption of a puritanical behavior, hard work, and the institutions of marriage and nuclear family can reverse stereotyped perspectives concerning race and color. In the poem entitled "New Route," (B-3) Guedes's lines show the anxiety of a leader who wants to guide the community to a better condition:

Pitch-black, pitch black

Be a straight man

[. . . . . .]

It is only from your conduct

That certainly will give birth to

the star of the new route! (7-12)

The author has rather hard fixed standards of social conduct and criticizes blacks who marry white women as in the poem entitled "Hard with hard" (B-3):

But for a white woman

You give it all, even life

May she be good or bad

Just for the pleasure to hear

– He is married to a white […]. (8-12)

As discussed before, racial awareness until the XX century depends primarily on the construct of racial identity. Therefore, black literature depicts the search for a project of identity which involves the rejection of assimilation, the achievement of citizenship, and the opportunity of social mobility. From different standpoints, black authors attempt to weave this project either calling for a revolution inside the black community or

promoting the renaissance of African values and tradition and the refusal to assimilation. Trindade proposes a revisiting of the ancestors' culture and points to a diverse path in relation to Guedes's project, writing poems that can be considered depictions of negritude in the XX century. While Guedes suggests assimilation of white puritanical behavior as well as oblivion of the African heritage (religion, social customs, etc.), Trindade claims for the revival of everything Guedes denies.

2.4. Trindade, the People's Poet

Brookshaw emphasizes that both poets want freedom for the black population, but in diverse ways. On the one hand, Guedes recommends that blacks should start the change by adopting white standards of moral and culture. On the other, Trindade's claims are against the status quo. His writing is concerned with oppression of all excluded peoples. The poet's project does not involve only the specificity of race; however, it is based on black experience. In such a manner, it is not an easy task to attempt to separate the struggle of class from the endeavor of race in Trindade's work. Since the great majority of the black population in Brazil belongs to less privileged classes, the claims of the socioeconomically oppressed population are in direct contact with the racial issue.

Florentina Souza highlights that Trindade is a poet who metamorphoses black Brazilian memory and history. Born in São Paulo, Trindade is aware of his role as a cultural mediator whose task goes beyond writing poetry. Thus, the author works as a poet, writer, playwright, actor, painter and cultural researcher, participating in diverse black movements and cultural events from the early thirties on. He is one of the founders of the Afro-Brazilian Cultural Center and the Black Brazilian Front in

Pernambuco in 1936. Trindade also takes part in the TEN with Nascimento in 1945 and starts the Brazilian Popular Theater with Edison Carneiro in 1950.

"The People's Poet," as Trindade is known in black Brazilian literature, has many of his poems published in anthologies that present Afro-Brazilian texts. His publications include *Poemas Negros* (*Black Poems*, 1936), *Poemas de Uma Vida Simples* (*Poems of a Simple Life*) (1944), *Seis Tempos de Poesia* (*Six Seasons of Poetry*) (1958), and *Cantares ao meu Povo* (*Songs to my People*) (1961). Trindade's cultural and literary works evidences a yearning for reducing inequality among Brazilians. The author writes plays that revive folkloric expression such as bumba-meu-boi[30], and maracatu[31], celebrates the candomblé as the true Afro-descendants' religion, provides drama workshops, writes poetry, and promotes Afro-Brazilian poets.

The Vermelhinho bar, in Rio de Janeiro, is where "The People's Poet" meets young poets, intellectuals, artists and journalists in the 1950s. In his journey for the promotion of Afro-Brazilian culture, the black poet lives in Pernambuco, Minas Gerais, and Rio Grande do Sul where he promotes his own work as well as the regard for popular culture.

Souza adds that the poet is an activist author who becomes an important character of Brazilian cultural and political life. In Souza's words: "Mixing biographical facts, literary events of the time, and revisiting aspects of African culture, he publishes poems framed by Western culture and popular cultures; texts which circulate among black and popular groups in general from the forties to the sixties" (283).

Trindade receives positive criticism from important intellectuals such as Roger Bastide, Nestor de Holanda, Sergio Milliet, Otto Maria Carpeaux, José Louzeiro, and Carlos Drummond de Andrade. In the poetry collection *Solano Trindade, The People's*

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30 Bumba-meu-boi is a folkloric Brazilian festival.

31 Maracatu is an Afro-Brazilian dance.

Poet there are comments by these intellectuals giving a clear view of the importance of the poet. Bernd affirms that Trindade is the Brazilian representative of negritude and that the author writes with the same sense of belonging to the Americas and Marxist engagement as Guillén and Hughes. Bernd argues that "[t]hese authors view the culture of the three Americas as a whole: to be black is one way to be American, to be a black American is to participate, by the mediation of the poetical discourse, in the deconstruction of the negative image which the society conceives of him" (87).

Trindade conveys the same awareness of being American in the poem "I am also a friend of America's!" (A-*viii*) when he writes about the contribution of blacks to the history of the continent. The poet affirms the pride to be black and American:

America
I am also your friend
In my poet's soul there is
Great love for you

In my veins a black's blood runs
Who helped to build you
Who gave you a song,
As intense as freedom! [. . .] (1-9)

Bernd comments that it is Trindade's Marxist ideal to join oppressed blacks in America and to share the search for liberty, equality and identity as exposed in the poem "Nicholas Guillén"(A-*viii*):

NICOLAS
Nicolas Guillén
My brother from Cuba

Nicolas Guillén

Welcome to the Earth

Nicolas Guillén

Great beautiful Earth

Nicolas Guillén

But with so ugly life

Nicolas Guillén

Famine killing people

Nicolas Guillén

Freedom fading away

[. . . . . .]

Where's the bourgeoisie

Nicolas Guillén

Fearful without calmness

Nicholas Guillén

Well nourished bourgeoisie

Nicolas Guillén

Afraid of new things [. . .] (1-13, 25-31)

The poet goes beyond the frontiers of race and calls "brothers" all those who are excluded by the capitalist system (88). Brookshaw notes that "[e]qually significantly, like Guillén, Trindade was an exponent of a universal humanism [. . .]" (218). The Afro-Brazilian poet considers universal humanism a possibility of black solidarity in the Americas. The author as a spokesperson of the black community is the announcer of a socio-ethnic movement against all forms of injustice. The poem entitled "Blacks" (A-*v*)

is an example of Trindade's standpoint concerning brotherhood which crosses the borders of race and color:

Blacks who enslave
And sell blacks in Africa
Are not my brothers

Black bosses in America
At the service of capitalism
are not my brothers

Black oppressors
anywhere in the world
are not my brothers

Only oppressed and enslaved blacks
fighting for freedom
are my brothers

For these I have a poem
Long as the Nile (1-15)

Trindade revisits the past of slavery in poetry. One of the characteristics of his poetry is not to permit the memories of slavery to fade, but to rescue those signifiers in order to rebuild and retell history from a black perspective. Bernd suggests that in the poem "Who's that groaning?" (A-*v*) the poet transforms suffering (groaning) into positive signifiers such as ballad and poem (90). For Trindade there is no shame in

being oppressed but there is a need of change and expansion connecting the individual with the universal dimension.

Who's that groaning?

The negro or the ox cart?

An ox cart groans when it wants to,

The negro doesn't,

The negro groans because he's beaten

He's beaten not to groan…

The negro's groan is a ballad

The negro's groan is a poem…

There is a groan in my soul,

The soul of the Congo,

Of Niger of Guinea

Of the whole Africa at last...

The soul of America…

The Universal soul…

Who's that groaning?

The negro or the ox cart? (1-16)

Trindade perceives black culture in all its complexity. The poet does not advocate change in behavior and strict moral rules such as marriage and nuclear families. The People's Poet does not suggest assimilation of puritanical and Western values in the same way as Guedes does. The writer is engaged with universal signifiers of fraternity

and the struggles of social class and color. The poem “My family” (A-*ix*) illustrates the author’s wide sense of love:

My family is uncountable

I have brothers all over the world

my wife lives in all continents

in the East and in the West

my children are all the kids in the universe

my father are all the men who are worthy of love… [. . .] (1-7)

Furthermore, Trindade writes about sensuous love, celebrates sensuality and eroticism. The poem entitled “My Great Love” (A-*ix*) offers an instance of the author’s freedom to write about such themes:

[. . .] I attempt to love

The way I love life

in a yearning for great eternity

pleasing my flesh

like I please my soul

fearless, without hypocrisy,

in search of pleasure

that your body can give:

the heat of your breasts

the glow of your eyes

the smell of your armpits

the odor of your mouth

the warmth of your lips […]. (7-19)

Trindade represents a turning point in black Brazilian poetry. The author unveils new forms of black expression that is free from the constraints of stereotyping and standardization. His poetry is a sincere attempt to reach marginalized communities regardless of race and color. The People's Poet writes about his own experience as a black individual and successfully interweaves personal matters with political issues. The project he proposes is not merely a set of pamphlets concerning racism and exclusion. The poet's soul links beauty and passion in African-Brazilian way.

III - African-Canadian Literature

3.1. What means to be black in Canada: Nuances of African-Canadian Identity.

Before speaking of African-Canadian literature, it is crucial to have an important view of Canada as a vast and dynamic cultural site and of the intricate panorama of Canadian identities. In the current chapter, I attempt to describe the specific social and political environment where diverse ethnic identities are in contact and in conflict disputing visibility and acknowledgement. Firstly, I describe the position of post-colonial Canada in relation to Britain and the heritage Canadians have received from English culture. Along with the description of the post-colonial relations between Canada and Britain, I briefly explain the presence of American neocolonialism[32]. The effort to assert the multi-ethnic, multicultural Canada as a nation still stumbles over the Anglophone and Francophone cultural and political clash. African-Canadian identity cannot be delineated outside the vast and specific political and cultural pressures that include Anglophone and Francophone conflicts, but it has to be highlighted from the perspective that evidences the moving frontiers among identities.

In his essay *What was Canada?*, Clarke explains that the country is a post–colonial society in relation to Britain; however the presence of American culture is observed in different sectors of the Canadian society originating specific characteristics that may evidence neocolonial practices and cultural imperialism (39). Rejection of British Victorian moral code and its serious, monotonous culture is present in Canadian literary activity and political sector of the last century. Thus, writers, scholars, and

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[32] According to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam neocolonialism is "[. . .] a conjuncture in which direct political and military control has given way to abstract, semi-indirect, largely economic forms of control whose linchpin is a close alliance between foreign capital and the indigenous elite" (17). The term used here appears in the essay by Clarke,*What was Canada?*(27)

politicians begin to report class discrimination, narrow-minded religious practices, and sexual oppression sown by the British Empire (28). Nevertheless, the post-colonial experience in Canada displays differences from the West Indies', Africa's, India's and even Brazil's post-colonialism.

Aboriginals, Francophones, Anglophones, diverse European groups, Asians (Japanese, Chinese, Indians), and Africans (African-Americans and West Indians) are the cultures that form the Canadian society that is "never pure", "never homogeneous" since its origins (What was Canada 33). However, English racism towards minority groups of several ethnic origins and the annihilation and marginalization of First Nation Peoples are part of the heritage of British colonialism. Practices of racial discrimination and impoverishment also permeate Canadian social relations.

The particularity of the Canadian identity reflects the "fusion" and "fission" of various minority groups. The contact among diverse ethnic groups and different cultural expressions resulting from a constant process of assimilation or even resistance against pressures of assimilation originate cultural transformations. Clarke argues that "creolization" is also observed in Canadian culture:

> [. . .][F]or the Métis emerged from liaisons and marriages between the French and First Nation Peoples, Irish Catholics became francophones in Quebec, and francophone and aboriginal demands for equality have served to shape the Nation's constitution. In the end, Canadian "creolization" is reflected in the adoption of a federal multicultural program in 1971 [. . .]. (What was Canada 34)

Although Canada can be named a post-colonial territory concerning the British Empire, the constant presence of United States culture through neocolonial practices reflect the current cultural situation. Canada and the US share common values and political views. However, Clarke observes that Canadians refuse and criticize America's radicalism "[. . .] in religion, in political disputation, in citizenship, in the practice, yep, of racism" (28).

Clarke also reports that Canada has forgotten Pierre Elliot Trudeau's[33] "participatory democracy" to give opportunity to the "free market". The "Americanization" of Canadian politics and economy results into harmonizing with US concerns. The adoption of American policies after the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 and the destabilization of the Canadian dollar causes more Canadian citizens to be in favor of coalition with their neighbors. Furthermore, Clarke states that the presence of Britain in Canada is neither completely negative nor totally repressive because it has permitted temporary social democracy and social values to emerge. Nowadays, the cultural, social, and economical imperialism of the US threatens the permanence of a Canadian identity. In Clarke's words: "When Canada ceases to exist, the irony will be that it succumbed, not to political pressures created by a long-feared split with Quebec, but to political and economic pressures created by its accommodation to US interests" (What was Canada 34)

Along with the definition of the Canadian identity apart from the American, well-demarcated Anglophone and Francophone cultures apparently promote the only visible conflict for the dominant culture, leaving the recognition of other ethnic issues behind. However, as Smaro Kamboureli puts it, "[. . .] any discourse about ethnicity inevitably confronts the tension between absence and presence, visibility and invisibility" (131). Fragmented and discrepant, the so-called Canadian "mosaic" is far from presenting a neatly woven patchwork. With the increasing claims of immigrants, first Nation Peoples, and black populations, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act is the social fact that attempts to conduct the nation in terms of an ideal of tolerance and unity. Multiculturalism is a thought, a desire of harmonic coexistence among groups of

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[33] Pierre Elliot Trudeau (1919-2000) was Canada's Prime Minister from 1968 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1984. As Prime Minister Trudeau supported participatory democracy as a way to make Canada a just society. Though the politician provoked controvert reactions in Canada, both supporters and oppositionists think he left a decisive mark in Canada's political life.

different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Notwithstanding, the state-sponsored act is target for praise and criticism arousing a lot of controversy. Concerning the political sector, Multiculturalism refers to government actions which aim at keeping harmony among heterogeneous ethnic groups and mediating the power relations between the state and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, to assert the Canadian status of nation is another goal of Multiculturalism counteracting the threat of “Americanization”.

Kamboureli emphasizes that many ethnic anthologies of Canadian literature emerging in the 1970s and 1980s depict the first examples of ethnic writing made visible. In this period, ethnic writers reflect the cultural and political sphere and abandon the condition of being silenced and written about to become the ones who speak for themselves (132). The texts, when read individually, denote the experiences of separate ethnic groups; considered collectively, they point out Canadian cultural heterogeneity. The common ground of ethnic writings has the objective to reveal the differences specified by the authors themselves and the introduction of standpoints that are often marginalized. The acknowledgment of ethnic writings points out the long disregard of the tradition for ethnic literature.

To remodel power relations, authors focus on ethnicity as the main point of cultural production. Kamboureli adds that there is no uniformity in presenting ethnicity in the texts. The writers can condemn or celebrate, search for or deny, build and rebuild ethnicity turning impossible to spot a single definition of what ethnicity means. If there is no regular pattern among the messages, one thing is true: the discourse of the diaspora cannot be separated from the conflicts and forces that delineate it (134). Ethnic subjectivity is an intricate set of identities which oscillate according to the pace of relations. Diverse cultural and political particularities permeate ethnicity; some of these specificities are observed in the current research.

Canadian society is formed by the white majority, First Nations Peoples, many ethnic groups from several origins (Europe, Asia, Latin America) Blacks from West Indies and Africa and African-Canadians. In such a complex society, culturally speaking, being African-Canadian means more than the racial discourse may depict. The study of African-Canadian history discloses events of slavery, erasure, marginalization and racism. The historical permanence of an invisibilized African-Canada is essential so as to understand the socio-cultural context which surrounds the literary activity of this ethnic group.

The scope of the current chapter concerns African-Nova Scotian history. Clarke, as the spokesperson of African-Nova Scotian community, is an Africadian author. The term Africadian may seem confusing. Apparently, it may convey a compound adjective formed by the words African and Canadian. Actually, the term coined by the poet himself is formed by African and Acadian. Acadia was the name given by the French to the colonial territory in North America where Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia are located today. Before the arrival of the French colonizers in 1604 the territory was occupied by Mik'maq First Nations People. The Scottish settlers arrived in 1620 and were removed by treaty in 1624. In the mid 1700s the French took over the territory again. Later they were defeated and then expelled. Following the American Revolution, Nova Scotia received black loyalists and freed slaves who had fought for the Crown in exchange for land.

British North America signified the Promised Land for black loyalists, black refugees, fugitive, freeborn, and freed slaves. The Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman illegally helped slaves to escape to the Northern US and Canada. America's Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 increased the African-American perception of Canada as haven. For many blacks who managed to escape, Canada meant a place where they

could be free if they resisted the horrible journey. Thus, the formation of African-Canadian identity is also connected with the African-American presence and the struggle for freedom and equality.

In the introduction to *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, Clarke states that Canadians criticize American slavery once the Revolution was the struggle for freedom and egalitarian rights. These rights were granted only for white, Bible follower males (10). Both old and contemporary depictions of Canada as a land of freedom and multiculturalism present contradictory facts. At first sight, it may appear that there is no trace of slavery and racism in the Canadian territory. Actually, slavery in Canada was much smaller than in the US, the Caribbean and South America; and it is abolished in 1834 throughout the British Empire (12). Events of racial tension, slavery, discriminatory practices, and laws that prevent black immigration reveal a nation which is not a totally egalitarian society yet.

- **"To carry the Atlantic into Montreal in epic suitcases with Harlem accents": The African-American presence in African-Canadian experience**

Three of Clarke's essays study the issue of the African-American presence in African-Canadian identity. In *Must All Blackness be American? Locating Canada in Borden's "Tightrope Time", or Nationalizing Gilroy's The Black Atlantic*, the author observes that Euro-Canadian criticism ignores African-Canadian literature as well as the literary activity of immigrants in Canada. Furthermore, African-American writers consider African-Canadian literature as an extension of their own productions. Nevertheless, black authors in Canada have always produced original Canadian writing

that conveys the experience of African descent, even though these authors occasionally apply intertextuality with African-American texts (71-72).

Clarke proposes a reflection on the real Canadianess of African-Canadian literature. The author points out the undeniable presence of African-American and Caribbean patterns of literary expression in African-Canadian writing. As the current work has observed, African-Canadian origins are interwoven by the memories of slavery and with the African-American quest for freedom and equality. However, it is a mistake to consider African-Canada as just a derivative of the African-American move towards liberty. In the essay *Contesting a Model Blackness: A Meditation on African-Canadian African Americanism, or the Structures of African-Cadianité*, Clarke declares that black American standards are inserted into African-Canadian culture with alterations that adapt values from origins to African-Canadian experience. Thus, African-Canadian identity does not merely mirror black America's signifiers.

Black America has adopted a hegemonic posture in relation to African-Canada following the same attitude maintained by the US concerning Canadian culture. Though Black America has been a model of blackness that has helped to shape black culture resulting from the African Diaspora in the Americas, African-Canadian artists and intellectuals insist on separating identities (28). Besides African-American intellectuals having annexed black Canadian culture, African-Canadians are perceived officially by the dominant culture as visible minorities, which means that this group is invisibilized and that the white majority insists on denying Canadian past of slavery, exclusion, and racial discrimination. Clarke writes that most Anglophone historical accounts do not include a single reference to legalized slavery in the country which causes people to believe in a past of equal opportunities for all (35).

Blacks make up approximately two percent of the Canadian population. This percentage contrasts with approximately thirteen percent of the US inhabitants and about forty-eight percent of the Brazilian population. African-Canadians resist intense pressure of assimilation, forced emigration, and marginalization. In such a context of erasure, African-Canadian literature emerges between the Euro-Canadian persistent denial of its existence and the insistence of African-American literature on considering African-Canadian writing as a branch that indicates North (36).

The current chapter is not an attempt to disrupt the bonds between African-American and African-Canadian identities. The examples of black American presence in Afro-Canadian cultural activity are many and range from religion (African Baptist churches) to music (blues, jazz, gospels), artists (James Brown, Nat King Cole), language (Black English), writing, and African-American styles in general.

The similarities between African-American and African-Canadian social issues enable constant borrowing. The common past of slavery, segregation, and colonialism as well as the experience of a black minority in a context of white hegemony contribute to approximate both cultures. Clarke points out that African-Canadians look up to black America as a site of "self-conscious construction of a civilization" under constant oppression. The author states that "[. . .] [f]or African-Canadians, African-America signifies resistance, vitality, joy, "nation", community, grace, art, pride, clout, spirituality, and soul. It is a cluster of attractive qualities that we crave for ourselves" (Contesting a Model Blackness 39).

Since African-Canada is too far from Africa and too close to the powerful presence of Black America and its achievements in the realm of assertion and legitimacy, what may characterize African-Canadian identity? Clarke argues that African-Canadian identity is not merely "dualistic", that is, it does not simply mean to

be or not to be African-American oriented. African-Canadian identity has more particularities than the Black American. Besides being black, the African-Canadian is an inhabitant of a certain region, a speaker of a language, has his or her own religious beliefs, and is a member of an ethnic group (Contesting a Model Blackness 40).

To demarcate identities in a multi-ethnic society is not a simple task. The author writes that in the middle of cultural challenges, African-Canadian identity is split into many features making it as indefinite as Canada itself. It is possible to say that a few know what blackness is in Canada: "[. . .] forty-three percent of African-Canadians do not identify themselves as black on Canadian census documents" (Contesting a Model Blackness 41). When answering questions for the census, some African descendants refer primarily to bonds of ethnicity and homeland. Thus, some Jamaicans consider themselves British and some Haitians call themselves French. Therefore, these blacks are counted as people of European origins. The conflicting identity is depicted in African-Canadian literature. Some authors write about ambiguity, confusion, and anxiety concerning racial identity.

The particularity of Canadian racial awareness with its ambiguities and anxieties promotes Black Nationalism. Such movement reacts against the depiction of Canada as "[. . .] a Northern, white, wanna-be empire, a pseudo-imperial self-image that reduces blackness to the status of pitiable other" (Contesting a Model Blackness 45). Black Canadian nationalism rejects stereotypes of black masculinity as a signifier of brutality and rape as well as the depiction of black females as submissive and passive. American literary examples of such stereotypes have been rejected in African-Canada like Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1984). These literary works do not challenge traditional stereotypes of blacks. The rejection denotes how blackness

is understood and how African Canadians react against stereotyping (Contesting a Model Blackness 46).

African-Canada is formed by a complex diversity. Blacks from various cultural backgrounds, language, and ethnicities live in different parts of Canada. The heterogeneity of African-Canadianité[34], as Clarke names it, prevents its coherence. Thus, the model of blackness proposed by African-American culture suffers transformation and needs to be constantly adapted to the multi-faceted African-Canadianité. Hence, it is possible to say that African-Canadian literature is compromised with the heterogeneity of African-Canadian identity, the legitimacy of cultural expression and nationalization of black experience.

3.3. Africville: Nationalizing the African descendant resistance

In the essay *Africville, an Imagined Community*, Maureen Moynagh points out how race and nation are interwoven with recent African-Nova Scotian writing and arts. According to Moynagh, Africville is a cultural site whose belonging signifies an act of resistance against "disavowal, exclusion and displacement" (15).

Though nationalism may appear as an old-fashioned system, the still present practices of racism, violence and relations of power require resistance with nationalist characteristics. Moynagh explains that the invention of Africville emerges from the necessity to create a site of resistance against modern capitalism and racial discourse. As an imagined community, Africville is a romanticized depiction of African-Nova Scotian rural life. Africadian nationalism is framed by African-Nova Scotian depictions

[34] Clarke uses the term African-Canadianité to refer to "[. . .] a constant self-questioning of the grounds of identity". Though Negritude and Pan-Africanism are also important to many African-Canadians, the author highlights that the term African-Canadianité marks the heterogeneity of the African-Canadian community which is also observed in other communities in Canada (Contesting a Model blackness 48).

of Africville. Moynagh points out that delineations of this cultural site begin in the 1970s with Frederick Ward's *Riverlisp: Black Memories*[35], a short novel written in Black English. Other literary forms such as poetry, film, drama, painting, museum exhibits, fiction, and essays denote the anti-modernism image which highlights rural and pre-industrial life.

The artists' engagement in the invention of Africville is carried out with the absence of state subsidization and with the refusal of any constructions of Africville which can be state-sponsored. Moynagh declares that:

> The embrace of anti-modernism in African-Nova Scotian cultural practices is a reformulation of the state-sponsored discourse, a kind of critical *détournement*, that foregrounds the construction of social difference and its attendant economic and political violence at the core of nation-state (or in this case, local state) nationalism. (16)

Affiliates of Africadian nationalism consider processes of exclusion and social dispute of identity building as the core components of the construction of Africville. Homogeneity and essentialism are strategies to challenge exclusion of black people and to rebuild Africville as a simple happy rural site.

Moynagh explains that Africville is historically marginal. Geographically speaking, it is located on the periphery of Halifax. Settled in the 1850s, it starts as a rural community, indeed. However, urban expansion begins to encircle the site and the City of Halifax starts to sell property it owns to the south, east, and west. Habits and common practices have to be abandoned, like raising animals, because they contravene city laws. Fishing, once commercialized, is threatened by pollution. Excluded from the white economic interest, this black community is left behind in the process of modernization during the twentieth century. Municipal and commercial structures begin to invade and surround Africville in order to build CNR tracks, an incinerator, and a

[35] Ward, Frederick. *Riverlisp: Black Memories*. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1974.

landfill site. Moreover, the community is denied sewerage and running water. Houses, school, church, and the map made by the community contradict the city's imaginary delineation of the site. Africville is proclaimed a residential neighborhood by its inhabitants.

However, the community does not possess adequate means to resist against modes of violence promoted by the government such as exclusion. By the 1960s, Africville is considered a slum, a social issue that requires the paternal intervention of the state. Consequently, relocation (camouflaging real expropriation of land) is done to improve Africvillers' quality of life (17). The claims to maintain a rustic way of life are due to lack of modern conveniences and social assistance, like fire brigade and police protection, more than to the desire to keep the rural site. Contemporary African-Nova Scotian authors depict the history of modernization and the dispossession of rural inhabitants by modern urban industrialists.

The account of the struggle between residents and the representatives of urban development is particularly present in Clarke's poetry (20). In "Campbell Road Church" (C-*ii*), the opposition between the attractive images of natural beauty and the ghostly modern urban site depicts the loss of rural Africville as the loss of the Promised Land:

> At negro point, some forget sleep
> to catch the fire-and-brimstone sun
> rise all gold-glory
> over a turquoise harbour
> of half-sunken, rusted ships
> when it was easy to worship
> benin bronze dawns,
> to call "hosanna" to archangel gulls…

but none do now.

rather, an ancient, CN[36] porter lusts for Africville,

shabby shacktown of,

shattered glasses and promises,

rats rustling like a girl's loose dress.

he rages to recall

the gutting death of his genealogy,

to protest his home's slaughter

by butcher bulldozers

and city planner's molesting statistics

at negro point, some forgot sleep,

sang "oh freedom over me",

heard mournful trains cry like blizzards

along blue bedford basin…

none do now. (1-23)

The moment of worshipping nature peacefully is interrupted by the perception conveyed in the line "but none do now" (9). Modern urbanization devastates the dream of freedom transforming the site into numbers which feed the industrialists' greed: "rather, an ancient, CN porter lusts for africville" / [. . .] and city planners molesting statistics". (10-18)

Hence, Africville is the site of construction of national consciousness resisting modes of racial oppression which permeates the relation of the community with other black communities in Nova Scotia. Moynagh states that "[. . .] the remapping of

[36] The acronym for Canadian National, a recently privatized company which runs the largest railroad network in Canada.

Africville explicitly refutes hegemonic constructions of the community which are marked by the structural racism [. . .]" (24). Homogeneity is an alternative political strategy in relation to hegemonic depictions of blackness and a response to processes of exclusion, marginalization, and dispossession. As a cultural site and an imagined community, it serves as the framework for subjective identification refuting the racist discourse which depicts the community as a slum and provides an emergent literary activity with signifiers and cultural corpus.

3.4. "While sable, sassy poets preach I ink": Clarke, the Africadian Wordsmith

Born in Windsor, Nova Scotia, Clarke is an Africadian word artist with multiple voices. The African-Canadian writer is also an essayist, blues singer, preacher, cultural critic, librettist, and novelist. He is the inaugural E.J. Pratt Professor of Canadian Literature at the University of Toronto. His writing guides the reader through a revisit of African descendant tradition. The poet's work is compromised with negotiation of cultural space and legitimacy of African-Canadian, more particularly, African Nova Scotian culture. The lines are interwoven with history, political rhetoric, and polyphony which reflect the cultural diversity of black experience in Canada. The author unveils an African-Canadian past and denounces events of slavery, racism, violent exclusion, and the struggle for freedom.

Clarke's poetical work presents intertextuality with canonical presences such as Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Amiri Baraka, and Derek Walcott. However, the canonical nuances act along with the emergence of voices given to the Africadian community in Halifax. Clarke tells that an unsuccessful reading in front of the community marks the encounter with the Africadian voice that is present in most of his

texts[37]. The audience yells at him, telling him to leave the stage in a very direct way. The poet simply reads the poems from his first collection *Saltwater Spirituals ad Deeper Blues* without performing. The poet realizes that the oral tradition of African descent is not present in his poetry; consequently it cannot be echoed in the community. Fiorentino affirms that to provide a response, Clarke creates *Whylah Falls*, a polyphonic work that denotes "multivocal verse" (2). Jon Paul Fiorentino points out that in *Whylah Falls* (Clarke's bestselling work and a major text in Canadian literature) the poetical voice uses "[. . .] iambic pentameter, the Mississippi Delta blues, and modernist vers libre" (1).

In the introduction of *Blues and Bliss*, Fiorentino explains that although Clarke's poetry reveals the "anxiety of influence", a closer analysis of the poet's work denotes the author's "fluency and scholar acuity" (xi). Diana Brydon asserts that the "anxiety of influence" which permeates post colonial and modernist works should be considered as a musical note in the polyphonic universe of Clarke's poetry (par. 1). It is more important to highlight the Africadian poet's aim at legitimizing the community's culture, counterclaiming erasure and misreporting of Africville's history. In Brydon's words: "Far more powerful is Clarke's desire to write his people and his place into historical memory, through creating a literature that proclaims itself as conscious mythology"(par. 2).

The experience of blacks in Canada is the core component of the poet's ingenuous text. Voices of black men and women loudly denote what means to be black in Canada and the implications of the consciousness of being left behind in a white hegemonic society. In the Poem entitled "The Symposium", the voice of Cora advices Missy through a reflection of Cora's own previous experiences as a black woman. The

[37] Clarke described the event during the course given at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil in October 2009.

female voice weaves a standpoint in black male/female relationship. The lines bring up the advice of an experienced black woman concerning female assertion in the power relations of a heterosexual relationship: “I’m gonna learn you ‘bout the mens so you can scape the bitter foolishness I’ve suffered” (2-4). According to Fiorentino, the recommendation “[j]ust sit back, relax and be black” (37), may depict a lyrical internal dialogue (2). In Clarke’s poetry polyphony performs the task of delineating diversity in black experience.

Brydon observes that language is the cultural site which Clarke chooses to negotiate legitimacy and counterclaim erasure of the Africadian culture in a white dominant society. The author mixes canonical resonances with black Canadian cultural tradition. The past of slavery and contemporary racism denounced in the poetry contradict the discourse of a nation which claims to be proud of the absence of extreme practices of inequality. In his writing, Clarke pays homage to the canon, legitimates the African descendant tradition, validates his poetry, and provides an answer to white cancellation (par.4). In the poem “Onerous Canon” (C-*xxix*) from *Blue*, the poetic voice denounces the canonical presence while asserts legitimacy

> your voice your own (Auden in the margins,
>
> Eliot, Yeats, and Pound in the dungeon),
>
> A veriloquous, unadulterated voice,
>
> extracting black blues from a yellowed Oxford. (23-26)

The act of “answering back” indicates Derek Walcott’s imprint in Clarke’s poetic creation. Fiorentino writes that the crisis of exile is a common and important starting point in the literary lives of the two poets. In an open letter, Clarke refers to Walcott as

the "Commonwealth Bard" and defines Walcott's "blackening of English as a movement out of exile" (2).

> I write in a cold place where I possess beleaguered rights. Canada wants nothing to do with any combustible sorrow or inflammatory blues. It demands a clipped, precise speech, some tone of majesty to restrict American slovenliness, republican vulgarity. It demands a metre akin to its own War Measures Act. The climate will hardly let you spark any fire. But your books are portable infernos I use to and illuminate this hostile, killing environment. I write to you and I have no right. Commonwealth Bard, born thirty years before I was born, born in another backwater province (but warmer than where I was born), born in an era of war, I thank you for pioneering a way of blackening English, of roasting syllables upon the righteous fires of your anger and your love until they split and crack. You cannibalize the Canon and invite your brethren and sistren to the intoxicating, exhilarating feast. (1-2)

Fiorentino explains that by referring to Walcott as the Commonwealth Bard, Clarke exposes the canonical resonance and the appropriation of Eurocentric standards which is observed in postcolonial and modern literatures. Besides being a postcolonial characteristic it is also a Canadian specificity (3).

Furthermore, Fiorentino comments that the climate where Walcott writes most of his celebrated work (New England) is not different from Nova Scotia's weather. The geographical sites of Saint Lucia (for Walcott) and Nova Scotia (for Clarke) have Atlantic shores and are both mythologized territories in poetry. In Fiorentino's words:

> The poets desire the poetics of exile – the negotiation/renegotiation of the community from the position of the exile (in the case of Walcott and Clarke, the exile is self-determined) and the inevitable revision of the community to integrate a new poetics or world view". (2-3)

The main differences in the two poets' works reside in the depiction of African-Caribbean and African-Canadian experience. In the poem entitled "Look Homeward, Exile" (C-*iv*), Clarke delineates the literary sites of home and exile described with evocative details. The exiled X is a nostalgic voice that quotes aspects of the community's life and black cultural tradition like spirituals and blues: "I can still see

that soil crimsoned by butchered / Hog and imbrued with rye, lye and homely / Spirituals everybody must know, [. . .] (1-3)

In the poem, exile is a painful, cold state of body and soul. X's voice seems hopeless, powerless, and deserted:

> I remember my Creator in the old ways
>
> I sit in taverns and stare at my fists,
>
> I knead earth into bread, spell water into wine
>
> Still nothing warms my wintry exile – neither
>
> Prayers nor fine love, neither votes nor hard drink: [. . .] (27-31)

The experience of exile implies prevention of citizenship. Discriminatory practices and exclusion deny access and acknowledgment of human rights. The voice in the poem is the cry of an individual who is excluded by acts of subtle but not less harmful violence. The line "[w]hose loves are smashed by just one word or glance" (33) alludes to mechanisms of marginalizing the difference.

Clarke explains that *Whylah Falls* is the mythologized Weymouth Falls, Nova Scotia and the murder of Othello Clemence mythologizes Graham Cromwell's[38] murder. In addition, the Sissiboo is the mythologized Sixhiboux River. However, *Whylah Falls* does more than mythologizing sites. The writing reinvents Africville in two hundred years of a people's history. Fiorentino concludes that:

> In other words, Weymouth Falls is the historical/geographical home place; *Whylah Falls* is its fictional/mythic analogue. The Sissiboo is the historical/geographical home place; Sixhiboux River is the fictional/mythic analogue; Cromwell's death is the historical/sociological event; Othello Clemence's death is the fictional/mythic analogue. (3)

Many studies have been done to elucidate Shakespearean presences in postcolonial and modern literatures. The presence of Othello in different literary productions is

[38] Cromwell's murderer was acquitted by an all-white jury, proving the injustice of a white dominant system.

object of many investigations. In *Whylah Falls*, Clarke's Othello reveals more than an homage paid to the canon. Brydon declares that the murder of Clarke's Othello is the consequence of envy and betrayal as well as it evidences erasure. While Shakespeare's Othello is a black man inside a white society and distant from his own culture, Clarke creates his character inside the black community. The relationship among blacks is more important than the contact blacks might have with whites. Based on a true event (the murder of a black man whose agent is not punished) the story exposes a yearning for blackness (5-6).

The poet is compromised with addressing Africville's signifiers. In "Love Letter to an African Woman" (C-*x*), the author sings proud for black values and tradition: "[…] teach me the pride of our Blackness, our Negritude; [. . .] (61). In the poem entitled "On June 6th" (C-*xi*), the poetic voice engages in a collective awareness depicted by the possessive "our" and turns negative signifiers into positive meanings:

Had he dreamt his soon death,
he would have contemplated
carbon culture:
how skin and bones
become diamonds
after so much pain.
It is our fate
To become beautiful
only after tremendous pain. (6-14)

Fiorentino emphasizes that the Africadian poet allows himself to write poems which can be performed, but also revisits conventional writing without the primary concern of performance and oral tradition. In *Blue*, Clarke is inspired by poets like

Ovid, Ezra Pound, and Amiri Baraka. Clarke appropriates and transforms the canon combining memories of slavery with romanticism and blues vernacular to denounce the failure of the system to fulfill the promise to provide an egalitarian society. The author ingenuously creates polyphonic voices which cause deep political impact (4). In the poem entitled "Calculated Offensive" (C-*xviii*), the poetic voice counterclaims the canon asserting African cultural legitimacy: "To hell with Pound / What we desire is African: / Europe is so septic it seeps poisons (1-3).

Fiorentino asserts that the poet skillfully creates polyphonic poetry that moves from the lyric "I" to the more collective "we". In the line "[w]hat we desire is African" (3), "we" either excludes or includes the reader depending on the latter's ethnic group. Fiorentino observes that in *Blue,* the poet succeeds in delineating poetic difference, that is, "[. . .] the ability to perform the difference between the self and the other, the subject and object [. . .] within the subjectivity of one poetic voice" (4). In the poem "Onerous Canon" (C-*xxix*), the lyric I openly confronts Yeats and Pound: "Imbibing libretti and bleak liqueur, / I dread the dim shade of dour, spectral Yeats- / And defrocked, unsavoury Pound, who liked / To put "negroes" in lower case (in their place)". (1-4)

Clarke applies hyperbolic language and polyphonic lines to provoke emotion, thought, and anger in poems which have political tone (4-5). In addition, the poet succeeds in creating image that reveals romanticism and idyll as in the poem "The River Pilgrim: A Letter"[39] (C-*viii*):

> At eighteen, I thought the Sixhiboux wept
>
> Five years younger, you were lush, beautiful
>
> Mystery; your limbs – scrolls of deep water.
>
> Before your home, lost in roses, I swooned,

[39] Clarke explains that the title of the poem concerns a revisit of American poet Ezra Pound's 1915 poetry entitled "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter" which is a translation of Chinese poet Li Po's poem, "Song of Chang-Kan."

Drunken in the village of Whylah Falls, (1-5)

Clarke's hybrid poetic voice uses sonnet and free verse to weave personal and political narrative to reveal the Africadian experience. In *Whylah Falls*, the author translates and revises Petrarchan poetic images. However, the depiction of black women as models and inspiration has aroused a lot of criticism. Fiorentino affirms that while revisiting and translating Petrarchan and neo-Petrarchan concepts, the poet's hybrid voice takes its most problematic form. For the critic, "there is gender trouble in both *Whylah Falls* and *Blue*" (5). In "The Argument"(C-*xii*), Pablo's passion for Aramantha is delineated through gender matters. The Petrarchan poetical images of "golden hair" and "alabaster skin" are revised and translated to accommodate Africadian reality: "Aramantha Clemence, twenty, a contemporary quilter, wears apple blossoms in her silky, sable hair that spills – pagan-like – down her back to her thighs. "Her skin is indigo accented by white silk" (75). In "Love Letter to an African Woman" (C-*x*), the poetic voice exposes black women in poetic images that fluctuate from inspiring muses and superior human beings who possess divine qualities to sensual and seductive characteristics. The poem ends in an explicit desire to fusion with the "Black Madonna":

> Black Madonna! I love your African essence, your faith in children, your insatiable desire for freedom, your swift intelligence, your sharp passion, your secret strengths, your language that tells no lies, your fashion that is colour, your music that is gospel-lullaby, your lips like crimson berries, your skin like soft, moist night, your eyes like dusk, your hair like dark cotton, your scent like rich butter, your taste like raisins and dates and sweet wine.

Let us join. My love, let us join. (28-36)

Before reaching further conclusions, it is necessary to consider the long record of sexual abuse, violence and extreme subjugation that black women suffered during slavery. The black female essence is disrupted by the impossibility to maintain dignity and to assert status as a subject. Black females (as slaves) are denied the right to take possession of their own bodies, to raise their own children, and are labeled inferior to white women in the sense of beauty, morality , and virtue. The poem returns to black women the place deserved in African-Canadian culture as agents of history.

Clarke is also criticized for depicting, and consequently perpetuating traditional female roles. A closer look at the poet's work evidences that the lines aim at constructing difference in black female experience. In *Beatrice Chancy*, a play, the poet delineates the oppression that imperiled female ascension in the XIX century. Depicting traditional heterosexual roles, Clarke exposes the sexual oppression and violence that the black female body suffers during slavery. Furthermore, the author denounces the social condition of the black female slave in relation to the standard of morality and virtue that was believed to belong to white women.

The character Beatrice Chancy is a mixed-race woman who is born to an African slave mother raped by her white master Francis Chancy. After the mother's death Beatrice is raised in the master's household. Because Beatrice is clever, beautiful, kind, and educated, she is considered Francis Chancy's most valuable possession. Sent to a convent to learn the white ladies' manners and religious virtues, Beatrice returns when she is sixteen: "Honey-tint Beatrice, who's been gone three years / to a Halifax convent to copy / White ladies' ways, as Massa always dreamed (1.1.88-90). Beatrice's confession of her love for a slave culminates in a horrendous event: the rape of Beatrice

by her own father. From violence to violence, Beatrice ends up killing Chancy with the help of her stepmother Lustra. Both women are hanged for Chancy's death. The play denotes the degrading cruelty committed against young black females who are victims of white male arrogance as well as the white women's submission. According to Maria de Deus Duarte, by killing her oppressor, Beatrice rescues her own sense of self and power. The young black woman refuses to accept patriarchal and racial control of her body and assumes the resistance against slavery: "White men, you took away my freedom / and gave me religion. / So be it: I became a devout killer" (4.2.250-52). Clarke gives the African-Canadian female experience the cultural space that is denied in canonical literature (444).

In *Whylah Falls*, further textual evidence exposes the poet's concern in inscribing black female experience. The polyphonic characteristic of the poet's work is enhanced by the ability to give voice to different characters in *Whylah Falls*. The female voices depict a clearer standpoint concerning feminine signifiers. According to Fiorentino, Clarke skillfully succeeds in revisiting Petrarchan conceits in the poem "Rose Vinegar" (C-*iii*). Here, Shelley transforms the poetic image of roses into vinegar: "But Shelley trusts in reason; thus, though she admires the / blossoms for their truthfulness to themselves, she does not / hesitate to distill a delicate and immortal vinegar from what / she considers the ephemeral petals of X's desire. An / ornament becomes an investment. (4-8)

Although X's passion is romantically signified by the roses, Shelley seems not to conceive the typical heterosexual involvement. Shelley's practicality and skepticism opposing X's romanticism counterclaims criticism concerning Clarke's perpetuation of traditional female roles. Another textual evidence in the poem entitled "The Wisdom of Shelley" (C-*v*) exposes the female voice's refusal to accept role models:

I can't.
I heard pa tell ma
how much and much he
loved loved loved her
and I saw his fist
fall so gracefully
against her cheek,
she swooned.
Roses
got thorns.
And words
do lie.

I've seen love
die. (12-25)

Laura Mulvey explains that in a patriarchal society women play the roles of providing the male other with signifiers. Thus, women are captive in a "symbolic order" that gives men the space to imagination and fixed and unreasoned ideas which are imposed on the silent image of the female. In this sense, women perform as simply bearers of signifiers (15). The unequal poles of passive/female and active/male delimit pleasure in looking. The female appearance is considered to be the reason for looking and eroticism; "[. . .] she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire" (19).

Mulvey states that the split between active/passive has traditionally delineated "heterosexual division of labour". Dominant ideology and its psychical bases prevent

men from being sexually objectified, supporting male role as the active one who is capable to make events happen and to advance narrative (20). According to psychoanalysis, the female figure displays a more problematic characteristic: the absence of a penis and the consequent feeling of castration and lack of pleasure.

Mulvey asserts that woman means sexual difference. The visual evidence of the lack of a penis determines the "complex of castration" that marks "the entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father" (21). The castration provokes anxiety which the male unconscious may confront in two different manners. The first is connected with discovering the guilt (associated with castration), affirming power and dominating the guilty individual by castigation or acquittal. The second coats the object with beauty and considers the object as something pleasant in itself. The beauty of the woman becomes the perfect outcome and the content of the narrative (22).

Fiorentino comments that because most of the poetic narrative of *Whylah Falls* is done through the voice of X, Clarke's poetics indulges in a constant male gaze. The critic asserts that as a depiction of Africville, the poetic narrative in *Whylah Falls* is not open to diverse realizations (6). The character Selah seems to have her female role and condition of lover imperiled by infertility. The poem "In the Field" (C-*xi*) is the example pointed out by the critic as one of the delineations of Clarke's male gaze: "Selah glares at me / impatiently, not seeing / the apples blossoms" (1-3). In the "The Argument" (C-*xiii*), Selah's rejection of the rose signifier may reveal her impossibility to affirm her feminine status as capable of having children: "When she finds her / bedroom, she places pine branches in her dresser to perfume / her clothes that otherwise would smell of roses" (3-5). In the poem "How long can love go wrong?" (C-*xv*) her pain and sorrow stem from the fact that she does not have a womb: "You could never dream / my womb is gone, / hollowed by scalpels / and Casanova cancer. (5-8)

However, Selah's pain is more constantly observed in the poems as a result of betrayal and disillusion provoked by unsuccessful relationships. The poetic voice depicts hopelessness and bitterness. In "The Argument", the lyrical voice describes the character's sorrow: "She is a modern martyr for love, bearing witness to its / betrayal by men who fear their own nakedness" (19-20). In "Prelude" (C-*xiv*) the voice in the poem reaffirms Selah's distrust: "She don't trust words: / men lie / to lie on top of you" (3-5).

Fiorentino emphasizes that the poetic image and terminology which refer to "traditionally feminized tropes" is chosen according to the male gaze as well as the female body (as a trope) is evoked: "Shelley's a garden / enclosed" (1-2). The critic explains that Clarke does not succeed in a polyphonic construction concerning female voices. In *Blue*, the male gaze permeates the depiction of the beloved in the section entitled "Gold Sapphics". The lyrical I exposes male sexual desire in the poem "April 19, 19--: A Sonnet" (C-*xi*): "This sorrow-stricken canal, pent-up sea, / April-fierce water welling, ferries old, / Harsh news: *I'll love her down to extinction*" (10-12). Fiorentino declares that the "[. . .] verse is striking and strikingly phallocentric dependent on Pound and Petrarch as much as it is resistant of them" (7). The beloved and the desire are described through a male standpoint of pleasure.

Fiorentino points out that Clarke's performative poetics is better achieved in political nuances than in sexual discourse. The critic highlights that "Gold Sapphics" does not present lines constructed according to the Sapphic frame. Sapphic desire is woven in poetic images that evoke incandescence and indefiniteness. The textual evidences of the Africadian poet concern male desire which is more present than the poet's construction of voices that can inform female desire in relation to sexual discourse.

In an e-mail message, Clarke's response[40] to criticism concerning the issue of his male gaze applied to black women is direct. The following arguments paraphrase and quote Clarke's viewpoint. The author declares that the comments made by "some" white women academics are due to their lack of knowledge concerning the difference in "black (hetero) sexuality" and its assertion. The criticism is delimited by standards of white racism and patriarchy. The poet observes that the response is not to deny the existence of neither black sexist men nor black chauvinists. Clarke affirms that "some" of the celebrations of black women's beauty are considered too radical for a society whose white women have always been the standards of aesthetics, moral and inspiring muses. The poet received criticism on the poetry collection *Illuminated Verses* which celebrates black women's beauty and strength with words and images photographed by Ricardo Scipio. In Clarke's words:

> These are actually two different debates. First, I should say that I would be foolish as a heterosexual male, to deny that I do not appreciate the 'good looks
>
> of a woman--or women--I think attractive. I do appreciate such 'visions', and I am very happy that the female sex is so wonderfully, marvellously different and mysterious and powerful (birth-giving, delight-giving), etc. Too, as a black man (without saying I speak for all black men and without denying that some black men--like many men--are violently misogynist and exploitative), I also feel that part of my 'responsible freedom', since slavery and racist oppression, is to be able to express sexual desire openly in print. (That discourse was often suppressed out of fear that it would make black people look lascivious--or dangerous--to whites). (author's emphases)

The author claims that men have looked at women's beauty for thousands of years and observes that even "the Bible's Solomon" had a male gaze. Black discourse does not signify sexuality with the same hypocritical delineation observed in Caucasian and Eurocentric religions and culture. Celebrating black beauty does not subjugate, neither represses, nor denies equality to black women. Clarke considers the argument

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[40] Clarke, George Elliot. "Re: Male Gaze." E-mail to Maristela Campos. 04 Nov. 2009.
- - -. "Re: Male Gaze". E-mail to Maristela Campos. 05 Nov.2009.

repressive. Moreover, the poet states that his work brings a variety of roles concerning women:

> [. . .] In *Whylah Falls*, Cora has suffered abuse, but she is a wise matriarch: Such women do 'exist' in the black community--at least in those that I know. Shelley is a student teacher; Selah works, but likes to party, and suffers in love and will have a bad marriage. Beatrice Chancy, my heroine is a well-educated young woman who insists on marrying the (black) man she loves—then murders her father to free herself and the other slaves. In *Quebecité*, Laxmi is a student architect; Colette is a student lawyer; both are wiser than the male characters. In *George and Rue*, India is a beautician who leaves Rue to make better life for herself in Halifax; Blondola, George's wife, is a homemaker who has to struggle to keep food on the table…In *Illuminated Verses* I have at least a dozen heroines from an anti-Roman warrior queen, to a Brazilian slave liberator [. . .]. I'm only writing very generally here, but I don't think a careful reader of my work (one not blinded by ideological necessity) should find that I recognize that women are oppressed, but that I show examples of women who struggle and strive, just as I show men and women desiring each other [. . .].

Furthermore, Clarke explains that as an author he has not written about homosexuality because he does not consider himself empowered to do so. However, one lesbian/bisexual couple is depicted in the writer's forthcoming novel which is based on his father's diary. These characters are recreated from accounts of real life. In a 1991 review of *Whylah Falls*, a white female scholar criticizes Clarke for writing in defense of Saul Clemence who sexually abuses his stepdaughter Missy. Nevertheless, the line "[. . .] there is no defense for these social crimes [. . .]" (C-*ix*) (33) counterclaims the criticism. Clarke laments that criticism has had an ideological standpoint to comment on his work. Criticism states that Clarke fails to write about women like James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, and Usher[41]. The poet responds that the critic's statement is loaded with ideological iniquity and ignorance: "Even if he were right about me, he is surely

[41] Usher Raymond IV is an American pop and R&B singer, dancer, and actor born in October 14 1978.He has been awarded five Grammies. 26 Feb. 2010 <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Usher>

wrong about Baldwin and Hughes; and why did he include a rap singer in the sentence? Yes, as I've written in a poem in *Blue*, criticism is never innocent…"

Dionne Brand declares that black female sensuality cannot be suppressed:

> Black women's body are so sexualised, avoiding the body as sexual is a strategy. So is writing it in the most conservative terms, striving in the text for conformity to the norm of monogamous heterosexual male gratification. Leaving pleasure to men, that's a strategy, too. I know that not talking about the sexual black female self at all is as much an anti-colonial strategy as armed
>
> struggle. But what a trap. Often when we talk about the wonderful black women in our lives, their valour, their emotional strength, their psychic endurance overwhelm our texts so much so that we forget that apart from learning the elegant art of survival from them, we also learn in their gestures the fine art of sensuality, the fleshy art of pleasure and desire. (93)

Thus, *Whylah Falls is* a polyphonic and hybrid work. The author creates poetry that combines blues, historiography to mythologize the murder of Cromwell, the encounter with an Africadian poetics that may rescue the poet from the "modernist Walcottesque exile", and the challenging of Petrarchan gender trouble and its unavoidable presence as a consequence of the complexity of the female voices. In *Blue*, the poem entitled "I. *i*" (C-*xxii*) evidences the pluralism in the poet's complex conceits of "blue":

> Blue is a noose strangling the vulnerable sky
>
> Blue is a generic nigger, a genre nigger, an angry nigger
>
> Blue is Della Robia blue – and fatal, as in Tennessee Williams
>
> Blue is sapphire magenta violet sable diamond dead fur green
>
> Blue is a white body drowned in a glacier and helicoptered to
>
> a morgue (1-6)

The poem crosses the borders of ethnicity and exposes not just the Africadian reality, but the African-Canadian experience and the protest against erasure. There is an elegiac longing in the line that evokes death and mourning. It seems that the poetic

voice laments the gap caused by the negation of African-Canadian tradition: “Blue is a hole in a bucket that the Atlantic can’t fill” (16). Besides referring to regional issues as in *Whylah Falls*, the section “Blue Elegies” describes global problems such as the devastation caused by modern capitalism: “Blue is your worthlessness in the eyes of the Royal Bank” (30).

The complexity of black female experience is not an easy issue to address. The stains left by the African diaspora turn the topic difficult to conclude. However, it cannot be treated without weighing all the nuances of black (hetero) sexuality and the repressive mechanisms which hinder expression of desire and pleasure. If the author’s self-determined role of spokesperson and writer of Africadian cultural tradition is carefully observed, then the poet’s celebration of black beauty achieves its goal. The poet gives black women the roles (queens, heroines, muses) they are denied by Eurocentric literature. The necessity to negotiate cultural space includes acknowledgment of all the possible roles men and women can perform regardless of sexuality. Desire cannot be hypocritically rejected by moral standards and delimited by racial discourse. The core component of Clarke’s work is to give visibility to African-Canadian experience through revision of tradition.

CHAPTER IV-

A COMPARATIVE READING OF CLARKE'S AND TRINDADE'S POETICS

4.1. Diaspora and Intertextuality of Negritude in African-Canadian and African–Brazilian Poetry

The African Diaspora is the common ground which performs a major role in shaping black poetry in the Americas. Shared histories of enslavement, oppression, exclusion, racism, cultural resistance, and political unrest are conflicts suffered by African descendants in the New World. James Clifford states that diaspora does not simply signify movement and transnationality; the term conveys political conflicts and the endeavor to delimit frontiers in situations of displacement (252). These are the topics that I want to focus primarily in the comparative study of the poetics of Clarke and Trindade. I attempt to establish a parallel between the authors' poems from the perspective of a common past of slavery and a present of erasure or silencing of African descendant culture. Nevertheless, the poets' differences in social and cultural backgrounds are not underestimated in the analysis. The poets' cultures, social conditions, geographical sites, and unique individual differences provide the writings with diverse nuances which are the expression of black experience in Canada and in Brazil.

Clifford affirms that diaspora consciousness emerges from the positive identification with historical, cultural and political forces such as Africa and China. The feelings of loss, exile, and marginality are counterbalanced by adapting strategies and

constant “visions of renewal”. Deprivation and hope define the tension in diaspora awareness (256-57). The discourse of the African diaspora in Brazil frequently depicts the sense of belonging to a mythical Africa which is not simply left behind but is the counterpoint to the hindrances of modernity and capitalism. The African continent is the signifier of a mother who comforts the divided and dispersed children in the Americas. The Afrocentric posture is an escapist and ahistorical attempt which reconnects Africa and the individuals of the diaspora.

The commonality of black experiences issues stems from enslavement, racialization, and exploitation. These structures are interwoven in the construct of modern hegemony. Black diaspora awareness does not have a linear temporality. The conceptions of “here” and “there” are disrupted by the middle passage. The present is constantly veiled by a past which also signifies a desired future and a renewed craving for rebuilding memory. In spite of being hostages of politically dominant and economically unequal regimes, diaspora peoples do not abandon the ability to maintain distinct communities which are politically and culturally resistant. The examples are Africville in Canada and the rural community of Cafundó[42] in Brazil. Clifford’s observation that “[. . .] the mix of destruction, adaptation, preservation, and creation varies with each historical case and moment” is particularly important to analyze the black diaspora consciousness in Brazil and Canada and its implications concerning black writing.

The concept of negritude is present in a variety of texts that convey the common experiences of black men and women in the diaspora. Thus, it is essential to have a brief

[42] Carlos Vogt, poet and linguist, and Peter Fry, anthropologist and professor at UFRJ write about the rural community of Cafundó which is situated at 150km from São Paulo. In spite of being close to the metropolis, the community maintains the lexis of an African language called cupópia. The majority of the population is made up of blacks who are divided in two families: the Almeida Caetanos and the Pires Cardosos. According to Vogt and Fry, Ifigênia and Antônia (two slave sisters and ancestors of the present inhabitants) received the land as donation from the former slave master some time before the abolition. The permanence of the African language and tradition evidences political and cultural resistance (16).

theoretical view about intertextuality in order to help establish the connection between the poets' works. Mikhail M. Bakhtin states that a text depends on the contact with another text (context) to survive. Therefore, the text cannot be read as a single detached unit. The contact between two texts, for instance, allows both to come alive and to provide one another with meaning. The juxtaposition between text and context is never static. The primary stage of understanding a text concerns the "mechanical contact of 'oppositions'". The stage is important to study structural definition; however it cannot be applied to understand meaning. The approximation of personalities is "behind" the contact of text and context (Speech Genre and Other Late Essays 162). Hattnher comments that a work cannot be conceived outside the relationship with a certain context and the relationship the context may have with different systems (14).

Bakhtin asserts that an utterance is never isolated. Utterances carry impressions received from other utterances. An utterance is not self-validating; it is connected with others in verbal communication in an interdependent relationship. The utterance is a response that may either confirm or refute other utterances that have preceded it (The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin 316). According to Hattnher, the concept of intertextuality conveys not only the contact between text and context. Texts that individuals bring with themselves also permeate the interpretation of what is intertextual (17). Intertextuality prevents the final period of the text. Intertextual events give the texts a dynamical characteristic and allow the continuity of meaning.

Intertextuality mediates the construction of texts through other texts. Social events and practices of discourse permeate the construction; therefore; texts depict social practices and discourse. Consequently, texts are not mere representatives of social practices, but are relevant components of discourse. Practices of discourse are dependent on each other in an institution as well as in society (20).

Michel Foucault asserts that the margins of a book are not clearly defined. There are components that delimit and particularize the book: title, first lines, period, cover, etc. However, the book is inserted into a system of allusions to other writings. It is not possible to determine the "unity" of a book because it is "variable and relative." The unity cannot sustain itself because it emanates from a "complex field of discourses" (26). Foucault highlights the diffusion of events of discourse: its promptness and its possibility to be echoed, known, transformed, erased, or even veiled and hidden in books through time. For Foucault, it is not essential to point the origin of the discourse, but it is crucial to consider its occurrences (28).

It is possible to affirm that negritude is a formation of discourses which issue from common social and cultural practices originated from the African diaspora. The practices are interconnected and can be reproduced, transformed, transmitted, depicting and providing each other with meaning independently of time. In spite of the complexity of the experiences in blackness, negritude can be considered the formation of discourses that counterpoint racism. Negritude permeates the discourse which counterclaims racist postures and exposes processes of assertion and construction of identity.

The brief study of intertextuality and discourses of diaspora permits a starting point to compare the poetries of Clarke's and Trindade's. Diaspora is primarily a common framework which embodies the discourse of negritude in poems by the two authors. From this specific standpoint, textual evidence presents shared characteristics. In the current work I attempt to evidence similarities and differences in Clarke's and Trindade's writings concerning the discourse of diaspora in poetry. The main characteristics to be discussed are the use of the enunciating self, the historical reconstitution, and the reverse of values. The poems "I am black" (A-*v*) by Trindade

and “Negation” (C-x*vii*) by Clarke provide evidence of similarities and differences between the writings of the poets. Consider the poem “I am Black” by Trindade:

I am black

my grandparents were burned

by the African sun

my soul was baptized by the drums

atabaques, gonguês and agogôs[43].

I was told my grandparents

came from Loanda

as commodities at low price

they planted cane for the new sugar mill master

and danced the first Maracatu[44]

Later my grandfather fought bravely

in the lands of Zumbi

oh he was brave

[. . . . .]

Left in my soul

the samba

the batuque[45]

the bamboleio[46]

---

[43] African musical instruments of percussion.

[44] Maracatu is a parade of African-Brazilian percussionists and dancers. The origins of maracatu date back to slavery when it was a form to homage blacks who performed leadership among slaves. The parade follows a woman who carries a doll which depicts African deities.

[45] A rhythm produced by instruments of percussion.

[46] The act of swinging in dancing.

and the yearning for freedom. (1-14, 23-27)

Now, consider the poem “Negation” by Clarke:

Le négre negated, meager, *c’est moi*:

Denigrated, negative, a local

Caliban, unlikable and disliked

(slick black bastard – cannibal – sucking back

[. . . . . .]

Masticated scripture. Her Majesty’s

Nasty, Nofaskoshan Negro, I mean

To go out shining instead of tarnished,

To take apart Poetry like a heart.

So my black face must preface your finish,

Deface your *religion* – unerringly,

Niggardly, like some *film noir* black guard’s. (1-4, 8-14)

In Trindade’s work the discourse of diaspora is presented in poetry by memories of slavery, denouncement of practices of racism and social exclusion, and the allusion to African heritage. The poetic voice constantly asserts and claims for legitimacy of African ancestry. The poetic voice reverses the route of the middle passage to rescue African origins. The line “I am black” (1) exposes the desire to make blackness visible and counterclaim negative delineations of negritude. The poem brings the timeless movement between “here” and “there” to reconstruct the present in which Africa signifies the source of fragmented pieces of memory which are necessary to rebuild diasporic identity. The poet highlights the ancestors’ virtues and the achievements in spite of the harsh conditions of inequality under colonial oppression.

In Clarke's poem, the enunciating-self calls for black awareness. The line "*La nègre* negated, meager, *c'est moi:*" (1), and "So my black face must preface your finish," (12) depict the assertion of black identity inside the Anglophone and Francophone conflict. The poet does not weave a timeless return to Africa like Trindade does, but there is a reference to Black Loyalists' past: "Nasty, Nofaskoshan Negro, I mean" (9). The poem exposes the reconstruction of memories to rebuild consciousness and identity. As a discourse of diaspora, the writing denounces exclusion in words that delineate negation (the title speaks for itself) of the presence of African descendants and practices of racism in Canada. It is possible to affirm that both poems counterclaim negation of African descendant culture. The assertion of blackness emerges from the need of direct confrontation with the process of invisibility.

Thus, the common starting point of the poems is the enunciating-self that affirms negritude. From the assertion, the poets engage in a reformulation of what means to be black. Trindade revisits the middle passage to retell events from a black perspective. While the voice in the poem narrates the saga of ancestors, resistance and fight for freedom get more evident. Therefore, black identity receives wider meaning: it abandons obscurity and becomes agent of history; the slaves sold at low prices reject submission and begin to organize towards a better future: "and founded the first Maracatu" (9-10).

Clarke applies different strategies to rebuild black meanings. The poet revisits negative terms believed to depict black experience in hegemonic discourse: "Denigrated, negative, a local / Caliban unlikable and disliked" (2-3). The words taken from racial discourse and used to answer back to oppressive practices reverse the situation of the opposite poles of the racial conflict. The line "To go out shining instead of tarnished" (10) extends the meaning of what is to be black to a positive dimension.

The poetic voice recreates black trajectory and consolidates current cultural and political struggle.

Clarke and Trindade are compromised with bridging the various gaps in African descendant history in Canada and in Brazil. The authors write poetry that can be considered anti-epic. The appropriation of the epic retells history from the African standpoint depicting oppressed blacks as the real heroes and heroines is an act of subverting the dominant order. The poems celebrate fugitive slaves and martyrs of the struggle for freedom. The poems "III – Poetry" (C-*xvi*) by Clarke and "Song of Palmares" (A-*iii*) by Trindade evidence historical reconstitution from the standpoint of negritude:

Madame Zajj was first Zeferina –

a Yoruban warrior

weighted down by *Slavery*'s shadows.

[. . . . . .]

Bullets came at her but couldn't hit her.

She was a zephyr; her steed breezed lyrical.

Her squads of machetes mashed and swished;

her Amazon phalanx forked pallid bellies.

Still, the slavers' shots slowly bled them

And veered them back –

[. . . . . .]

Surrounded Zeferina coolly dismounted;

stood disdainfully atop the pale, piled dead,

making their reddened bodies her royal dais.

Dazzled, Salvadorans had to shout, “Queen!”

(Poetry is like *Beauty*: what remains after dying,

After the falling away, when flesh becomes song.) (1-4, 19-24, 27-32)

Consider Trindade’s lines:

And now we hear the cry of war,

in the distance we see

lighted torches,

it is the bloodthirsty civilization,

which is approaching.

But my poem

was not killed.

Stronger

Than any forces

Liberty… [. . .] (177-186)

In “III – Poetry” Clarke refers to a heroine of the struggle for freedom in Brazil. Though most of the Africadian’s work concerns depiction of African Nova Scotia, the poems in *Illuminated Verses* revisit black female’s contribution and participation in the political resistance in countries that received African slaves. Trindade, on his turn, tells events that marked the fight in Palmares, the most important site of African resistance during slavery in Brazil. It is possible to affirm that the authors believe in the power of poetry to reconstruct consciousness and hope and to redeem the oppressed. Clarke's line “Poetry is like beauty: what remains after dying” (31) and Trindade's “My poem /

was not killed" expose the poetic voice that reminds the continuity of struggle against racism in present days.

The reconstitution of history and identity originated from the assertion of blackness through the enunciating-self makes the reverse of values possible. The reverse is an attempt to transform negative depictions of blackness into positive delineations of black physical characteristics. The color of the skin becomes the poetic image of pride to be black. "Black" is no longer a synonym of savage, violent, ugly, evil and primitive. In the poem entitled "*IV. iii*," (C-*xxvi*) Clarke does not only reverse the negative meaning of the term, but inscribes the dimensions of black experience:

Black is black and black and black

Black is a nègre nigger, a negrita nigger, a *schwartz* nigger

Black is mulatto, sambo, negro, quadroon, octoroon

Black is Africa, darkest Africa, as photographed by Leni Riefenstahl

Black is the best Scotch, the best chocolates, the best sex

[. . . . .]

Black is the highest standard, highest caliber, of white [. . .] (1-5, 21)

In the poem entitled "Love," (A-*vi*) Trindade uses the term "negro" as a positive signifier. The poem associates "negro" with the adjective "good" to characterize blackness.

Negro love is good

long lasting and cheap

if you have not tasted it

take the chance

There is a lot

But it may end.

Negro love

is a national product

with calcium and vitamin

with all the ABC

abandon your conventions

take a negro for yourself

Negro love is tasty

Negro love is good! ... (1-14)

Trindade's line "Negro love is tasty" (13) is similar to Clarke's "Black is puritanical sex, which is good, and depraved sex, which is very good" (24). The lines are a provocative allusion which responds to stereotypes of black sexuality.

The poets proceed with reversing signifiers by celebrating black women's beauty, strength and participation in black cultural and political stand against exclusion. Clarke and Trindade as spokespersons of the black community engage in evidencing female roles in maintaining African tradition and resisting against racial violence. More than mere depictions of African physical beauty, black women in Trindade's and Clarke's poetry are queens, warriors, matriarchs, martyrs, homemakers, mothers, muses, and lovers. There is plenty of textual evidence. In the poem entitled "Black Aesthetic," (A-*vi*) Trindade depicts African descendant females as builders of their own freedom:

Black woman in dreams insulted

Black woman in dreams oppressed

Always love…

Black woman's love always aesthetic

Her first liberation

Was in the Songs of Solomon

The second one was the sculpture by Picasso

The third one she achieved on her own (1-8)

In the beginning of the poem, the lines 1-3 depict oppression that black women have suffered. However, the poem ends with an unexpected move towards black women's freedom and independence: The third one she achieved on her own" (8).

Clarke's heroines have already been commented in the third chapter of this study. The poets similarly refer to positive depictions of black beauty in the Bible. In "Love Letter to an African Woman," Clarke quotes Songs of Solomon 1:5: "Are you not Sheba, 'black but comely,' who enlightened Solomon; [. . .] (10). The poem "Songs of Solomon" (C-*xv*) also exposes Clarke's ability to translate Shakespearean tradition to depict Africadian experience:

Yea, thou art black

but comely –

like the Sixhiboux River,

like Mount Eulah's pines.

I have compared thee,

O my love,

to soft, black night

and raisins and sweet wine. [. . .] (1-8)

Trindade uses the same reference to celebrate black female participation in search for liberty: “Her first liberation / Was in the songs of Solomon” (5-6). Black women’s experiences are revisited through depictions of heroism, beauty, and love.

The rescue of history and culture as well as the reverse of values requires the destruction of stereotyped depictions of blackness. The allusion to suffering and oppression during slavery is an effort to raise consciousness concerning the enslaved past. The horrors of the largest forced movement in the world are not denied. The revisit of such events aims at pushing black identity towards a better future. The new symbolic order is a determinant of resistance against assimilation. In Trindade’s poetry, the poetic image of the slave ship receives a completely opposite delineation. According to Paul Gilroy, ships allude to the middle passage, to the African continent as an idyllic return, and the transportation of cultural information and political concepts that form the discourse of diaspora (4). In the poem “There comes the slave ship,” (A-104) the craft becomes a signifier of circulation of cultural and political organization:

There comes the slave ship
There it comes on the sea
There comes the slave ship
Let us look, my folks

There comes the slave ship
Through Brazilian waters
There comes the slave ship
Bringing human load…

There comes the slave ship

Crowded with melancholy

There comes the slave ship

Crowded with poetry…

There comes the slave ship

Crowded with resistance

There comes the slave ship

Crowded with intelligence… (9-16)

Trindade refers to slave ships as the means which transport cultural and political resistance. The voice in the poem invites people to observe the ship and reformulate the signifier of suffering into a vehicle of transmission of culture. The line "Let us look, my people (4)" is an invitation to understand the middle passage from a positive standpoint. There is more than horror and death on board. The line "Crowded with resistance" and "Crowded with intelligence" (14, 16) depict Trindade's warning that slave ships bring peoples who are the agents of their own histories in spite of the condition of slaves.

Clarke also refers to ships in his poetry. The poetic voice denounces the practice of denial and erasure of events of slavery in official history. In the poem entitled "Tobago" (C-*xix*) the author applies the oral tradition of African culture to reconstitute the middle passage and the suffering of slavery:

A black man, lean, grey, clear,

preaches,

"Signs don't tell you

man nothing,

but slaves was shipped

to that fort here, then whipped.

[. . . . . .]

(But *History* has not

recovered some –

sum

of our loss.) (9-14, 23-26)

Leda Maria Martins distinguishes the terms “oralitura” and orature to define the characteristics of oral tradition in African descendant cultures. According to Martins, “oralitura” concerns body and vocal expression. The term is wider than the set of forms and cultural practices of oral tradition. “Oralitura” is connected with performance of voice or body movement which exposes “knowledge, values, concepts, standpoints and styles”. Literary studies apply the term orature concerning “classic and contemporary oral traditions” which specifically distinguish verbal textuality in African cultures. Orature is also used to point out practices of oral rhetoric in written literature of several African authors (83-84).

In Clarke’s and Trindade’s poetry the presence of oralitura is observed. As discussed in Chapter III, Clarke begins to write poetry that can be performed after the unsuccessful reading in front of his community. Clarke writes poems in non-standard English interwoven with spirituals, jazz, and blues. In the introduction to *Blues and Bliss,* Fiorentino highlights that Clarke writes “[. . .] poems that combine abstract, intellectual, and specific literary content with a home-place vernacular” (xii). The poem entitled “King Bee Blues” (C-*xiv*) reveals Clarke’s ingenuous use of musicality and language:

I’m an ol’ king bee, honey,

Buzzin’ from flower to flower.

I’m and ol’ king bee, sweets,

Hummin' from flower to flower.

Women got good pollen;

I get some every hour. [. . .] (1-6)

The prose poem "The Symposium" (C-*vi*) is rich in evidences of Clarke's use of home-place vernacular: "So don't put no business on the streets that's conducted 'tween your sheets. But if some big-mouth humbugs you, tell the black bitch not to mess 'cos she's terrible lookin' anyway; a knife gash 'cross her face would just be improvement" (38).

Trindade writes popular poetry that emerges from black rhythms (samba, frevo, and maracatu), socio-political claims, and love. The author rescues vocabulary of African languages and non-standard Portuguese to create verse which can be understood by the uneducated working class. Trindade considers that poetry needs to be intertwined with performance. The poem "Olorum Ekê[47]" (A-*vi*) depicts the cadence of African rhythms:

Olorum Ekê

Olorum Ekê

I am the People's poet

Olorum Ekê

My flag

Has the color of blood

Olorum Ekê

Olorum Ekê

Has the color of revolution

[47] Olorum is the African Yoruba divinity believed to be the creator of heaven and earth.

Olorum Ekê [. . .] (1-10)

Besides African-Brazilian rhythms, Trindade alludes to African-American music as well as the Cuban rumba in the poem entitled “America’s Singing” (A-*ix*). The kinds of music in the lines of the poem are the rhythmic expressions of protest and resistance:

Blues! swings! sambas! frevos!
  macumbas! jongos!
Rhythms of anxiety and protests,
Are hurting my ears!...
They are secular groans of the wounded
  humanity,
Impregnated in aesthetic
  emotions,
of the American soul…

It’s America that sings…
This rumba is a manifesto,
against racial prejudices
This conga is a cry of revolt,
against social injustices,
This frevo is an example of proximity
and equality… [. . .] (1-16)

The works of the poets expose common concerns with a kind of poetry that may reveal black experience in its several dimensions, inside African-Brazilian and African-Canadian cultural sites. The poets apply common strategies to approach their communities: through polyphonic and performative lines. Clarke’s and Trindade’s

poems apply the African verbal textuality and performance of voice along with rhythm and musicality.

Clarke and Trindade refer to the canon to establish a dialog with the European tradition. However, Trindade does not reveal anxiety for appropriation. Souza explains that Trindade's allusions to the canon are delineations of a hybrid discourse that transmits the claims of an underprivileged group. The poet's main concern is to rescue almost forgotten African tradition in rhythm and storytelling as well as aspects of popular culture (291). The poem "Warning" (A-*x*) depicts the discourse of a poet who searches for transmitting a message to his community:

There are poets who write love poems only
There are hermeticist and futurist poets
while hydrogen and atomic
bombs are manufactured
while armies
are getting ready for war
while famine annihilates peoples…

Eventually
they will write lines of horror and remorse
and will not escape from punishment
because war and famine
will reach them too
and poets will fall into oblivion… (1-13)

Here Trindade warns intellectuals to perform active roles in standing against injustice. He criticizes "hermeticist and futurist" poets as writers of the elite not

connected to social struggles. It is possible to point out similarity with Clarke's "Nu(is)ance" (C-*xx*) :

Jabbering double-crossing double
Pale-assed poetasters void my "blues-caucused,
Raucous lyrics"—too Negroid and rowdy,
While sable, sassy poets preach I ink
Too blankly, *comme les blancs*, my bleached-out verse
Bleating too whitey-like—worse in they ears.
What can I say?
All this blather about
"Black" and "white" is blackmail and white noise.
Cripes! English—fallacious—be finished here!
I'd rather stutter a bastard's language
Only spoken in gutters, a broken,
Vulgar, Creole screech, loud with bawling, slurring,
Balderdash, cussing and caterwauling,
A corrupt palaver that bankrupts all meeching speech
Because it be literal, guttural *Poetry*,
I.e. *Hubbub*. (1-17)

In the two poems, the poetic voices assert commitment with social change. Trindade's universal concerns in the poem are poverty, famine, and war. In Clarke's poem, the poetic voice criticizes the intellectual elite disconnected from political engagement: "While sable, sassy poets preach I ink" [. . .] (4). Furthermore, the poem counterclaims linguistic assimilation: "I'd rather stutter a bastard's language" [. . .] (11).

By rejecting language standards, the poetic voice legitimates African culture. However, it is possible to affirm that Clarke's mastery of language permits appropriation, translation and revision of the canon to accommodate African-Canadian experience. On the other hand, Trindade's concern is to maintain the resonances of African languages to preserve African-Brazilian tradition and to use non-standard language to reach a working-class audience. The short poem "Lady Grammar" (A-*x*) evidences the poet's rejection of linguistic standards: "Lady grammar / forgive my grammatical trespasses. / if you won't forgive me / lady / I shall sin more. (1-5)

The poem permits further juxtaposition with Clarke's poetry. In the poem "Language," (C-*xxiv*) the poetic voice maintains the posture of anti-assimilation:

I

I hate this language that *Hate* dictates to me.
It gusts the tang and bray of a savage civilization –
Violent words violently arrived at.
[. . . . . .]

2

This homely poem's a queer nigger rig,
A botch of art in slovenly English,
Bad grammar, bad everything;
It cannot perform ethically.
It even fucks up Black English badly:
The metre harries, but the words refuse to fit.
[. . . . . .]

5

[. . . . .]

My black, “Bluenose” brogue smacks lips and ears

When I bite the bitter grapes of Creole verse –

Or grip and blab like a Protestant pope

So rum-pungent Africa mutes perfumed Europe. (1-3, 10-15, 35-38)

The poetic voice confronts the colonizer's language and the violence of linguistic prejudice: “Violent words violently arrived at” (3). Language again is the cultural site for negotiation of legitimacy: “So rum-pungent Africa mutes perfumed Europe” (38).

In the anti-epic poem “Song of Palmares” (A-*iii*) Trindade quotes canonical poets acknowledging European tradition. As already mentioned in chapter II, Trindade appropriates the canon to reverse historical standpoints. There is no rage against Western culture in Trindade’s lines, but the lines celebrate the struggle of the race for freedom:

I sing to Palmares

I do not envy Virgil Homer

and Camões

For my singing

is the cry of a race

in the fight for freedom! [. . .] (1-6)

Clarke and Trindade denounce violence through poetry. The poets clearly expose events when blacks are unfairly judged by the color of skin. Clarke’s *Execution Poems* tells the story of Clarke’s cousins, George and Rufus Hamilton, who are hanged for the

murder of a taxi driver in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The two black men are sentenced by an all-white jury. The lines expose racism and poverty and their tragic consequences. The lines of the poem entitled “Ballad of a Hanged Man” (C-*xxvii*) provide textual evidence for the despair caused by poverty:

> [. . .] I sidled in, easy, the taxi with a hammer,
> harsh, in my pocket. See as a wed man,
> I don’t care if I wear uglified overalls.
> But I ain’t gonna hear my child starve.
>
> I had the intention to ruck some money.
> In my own heart, I had that, to rape money,
> because I was fucked, in my own heart.
> I took scared, shaking inside of me.
> [. . . . . .]
> Have you ever gone in your life, going
> two days without eating, and whenever
> you get money, you’re gonna eat and eat
> regardless of all the bastards inn Fredericton
> [. . . . . .]
> I ain’t dressed this story up. I am enough
> disgraced. I swear to the truths I know.
> I wanted to uphold my wife and child.
> Hang me and I’ll not hold them again. (9-12, 17-20, 37-40)

Trindade writes about miserable conditions of the low classes in Brazil. The lines of the poem “There are people dying, Ana” (A-*x*) point out extreme inequality and famine in the Northeast, a region that is considered to be the poorest in the country:

There are people dying

In the dry Northeast

There are people dying

Of hunger and thirst

There are people dying

Ana

There are people dying [. . .] (1-9)

Trindade also alludes to crimes committed by individuals in extreme need. Moreover, he writes about oppressed people who lead ordinary lives and suffer in silence. The poet is the spokesperson of the excluded that cannot stand up for their rights. However, the poem entitled “White civilization” (A-*vii*) clearly denounces racial violence:

A man was lynched

Among skyscrapers

(Read it in the paper)

I searched for the man’s crime

The crime was not in the man

It was in the color of his epidermis (1-6)

The poems presented reflect an attempt to point out intertextual evidences of negritude in Clarke's and Trindade's poetry. The most important of these elements of negritude is the presence of the enunciating-self which permits the authors to affirm blackness and establish a discourse which counterclaims hegemony. Black experience

becomes the theme of poetry. From this significant move, a major change becomes possible concerning the reverse of values. Black is no longer a synonym of savagery; black is a signifier of beauty. From the assertion of blackness, the poets initiate a rescue of African descendant culture. The poems convey the desire to rebuild history and destroy stereotyped depictions of negritude. Clarke and Trindade search for legitimacy of African tradition. Both poets rely on linguistic resources that derive from oral African tradition. Trindade, as the spokesperson of the community, applies a simple language which can be heard and understood by his audience. Trindade writes about social issues concerning Marxist ideals. His poems expose the desire of universal brotherhood that goes beyond the frontiers of race and nation. Clarke appropriates canonical forms, translates and revisits Eurocentric tradition to depict African Canadian experience. Clarke's claims possess a nationalist concern of exposing what means to be black in white dominant Canada. The poems in the thesis convey cries for justice and the urgent need of change and construction of less prejudiced societies.

FINAL REMARKS

This thesis is an attempt to contribute to the studies of African-Brazilian and African-Canadian poetry in Brazil. It is a research about existent relations between black literatures produced in both countries. These countries historically present common points concerning colonialism, slavery and diaspora. Black populations of African-Canada and African-Brazil share the forced dispersion through the Atlantic shores.

The research evidences that negritude (as a set of discursive practices) is in constant process of reformulation and accommodation to diverse black experiences. Negritude is an ongoing attempt to rebuild identities which have been fragmented since slavery. In Brazil, negritude is the search for rescuing identities counterclaiming assimilation and whitening ideologies. It is a concrete expression of Diasporic cultural practices and points out several discursive strategies which counterclaim racism and fragmentation of the black identity in the country. The several nuances of negritude characterize it as a dynamic process whose norms are in continuing change. Therefore, the movement is an original and legitimate means of blacks' claims and desire.

Though large, black population is not visible enough in important sectors of the Brazilian society such as government and universities. Nevertheless, black Brazilian literature has brought up evidences of responses to racism especially in poetry. The history of black literature in Brazil begins with black authors who proclaim their blackness and pride to be black. Black poets, who are conscious of racism and exclusion, begin to apply an enunciating- self which is the assertion of the color of the epidermis. In this sense, I agree with Hattnher when he states that the color of the skin plays a crucial role in the construct of black poetry because it is intertwined with black

experience. The search for black aesthetics and the assertion of black individuals as agents of history are the main concerns of black authors who desire negritude inscribed in literature. In this manner, Luiz Gama is considered to be the precursor of black literature in Brazil.

Black literature is concerned with the ideological vein of negritude and the core component of black literary creation stems from black consciousness raising. The authors studied in this work write the reconstruction of black experience. Their concern with rescuing history and tradition counterclaiming the hegemonic discourse, the presence of the enunciating-self which asserts the desire to be seen as a black individual, and the reversing of the symbolic order (which turns negative terms used to characterize blackness into positive depictions of black culture) are common characteristics in the literary activity of both poets. Those features denote the search and assertion of identity as well as the presence of discursive practice that compose negritude. While reading both authors, it is impossible not to hear the cry for justice of the Black Nova Scotian and the Black from the Baixada Fluminense who both suffer the stigmatization of the skin color.

Black Brazilian writing begins to be engaged with black movements in the 1930s and 1940s when Trindade produces his work of raising black people's awareness. Trindade's poems evidence the assertion of African identity and the heritage of the struggle and revolt against slavery which counterclaims passiveness and conformist postures concerning racism. The presence of African culture and tradition in Trindade's poems reveals the desire for freedom which has not been achieved completely and the need to maintain black people's struggle.

Black Brazilian literature does not call attention of the academy and criticism yet. It is not visible in courses of Brazilian literature at universities and it is not part of the

list of texts required for the entrance exams of undergraduate courses. According to Paulo Vinícius Batista da Silva and Fúlvia Rosemberg, Brazilian literature published between 1990 and 2004 is produced by 94% of white authors, 3,6% of authors who do not declare race and color, and 2,4% of non-whites (90). Concerning the situation of black literature in Brazil, Clarke's line is particularly meaningful: "Black is the critical neglect of [insert name of favourite writer here]" (13).

The comparative study attempts to find different approaches to the concept of negritude and to answer the criticism that affirms the death of the movement. The works of both writers in different periods and places reveal the continuing dynamism of discursive practices of negritude as a legitimate expression of black cultural and political activity. Also, the parallel between both writings extends knowledge about what black literature is and attempts to unveil (a little) black literary activities in Canada and Brazil. In the case of black Brazilian literature, acknowledgment and legitimacy of black literary activity may reveal the need of reformulating our understanding of Brazilian literature and different periods of literary production in the country. It is necessary to establish the relationship of black Brazilian literature and different national literary movements. Furthermore, the study may point out possible analysis about the relationship of our literature and the writing of diverse nations.

The study evidences commonalities of diasporic discourse and resonances of negritude in the poetry of Clarke and Trindade. The poets reconstruct African descendant history in Canada and Brazil. Clarke is directly compromised with preserving African-Nova Scotian culture. Trindade, on his turn, is as engaged with African-Brazilian values as with marxist projects to counterclaim inequality. The poet affirms that all oppressed peoples should unite to confront exclusion.

As poets, Trindade and Clarke perform the role of spokespersons taking on the responsibility to expose the experiences of African-Brazilians and African-Canadians, to raise awareness of racial conflicts, to confront assimilation, and to legitimate African cultural values and tradition. The enunciating-self confronts white cancellation which permeates discriminatory discourse in Brazil and Canada.

Language is the cultural site that the poets use to negotiate legitimacy. Clarke appropriates, revises and translates European tradition to legitimize African-Canadian culture. Deeper investigation on Clarke's appropriation and translation can be developed in future studies. The “anxiety of influence” in Clarke's poetry indicates hibridity which is a trace of post-colonial cultures (another point that can be studied in a possible dissertation). Trindade's strategy to legitimize African-Brazilian culture is diverse. His poetry with clear message and popular language echoes oppressed masses' cries. Therefore, the poet weaves dialogs with the canon highlighting his desire to address the matters of low classes. Trindade affirms that he does not “[. . .] envy Virgil, Homer or Camões” (2). Language is also Trindade's site to negotiate legitimacy.

Trindade and Clarke abandon individual poetic voices to weave polyphonic lines to expose black experiences concerning gender, class, and nationality. Clarke's ability to apply polyphony to depict the particularities of black female experience has been questioned by criticism. Trindade's depiction of black women's sensuality seems not to provoke any negative response. The poets express male heterosexual desire in poetry; however Brazilian literary criticism about Trindade's seems not to have observed this characteristic from a negative perspective. Further investigation can point out a study on depictions of black female sexuality and socio-political status in African- Canadian literature and African-Brazilian writing.

The evidences of intertextuality between the poetries of the two authors are many considering the specificities of black experience in both countries. It is possible to point out intertextuality that connects Clarke's and Trindade's poems with African-Caribbean, African-American, African-British, and African texts., Furthermore, the intertextuality in Trindade's poems with popular musical expressions such as samba, frevo and maracatu; and the presence of jazz and blues in Clarke's poetry indicate another possible research. The possibilities of developing further investigation denote the dynamic character of the study.

This thesis is one of the opposing claims to white cancellation of African descendant literatures. The research affirms that African-Canadian and African-Brazilian literatures exist, reflect discourses of Diaspora and negritude and are in constant dialog with other African-descendant expressions.

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APPENDIX A

Solano Trindade

Canto dos Palmares

Eu canto aos Palmares
sem inveja de Virgilio de Homero
e de Camões
por que o meu canto
é o grito de uma raça
em plena luta pela liberdade!

Há batidos fortes
de bombos e atabaques
em pleno sol
Há gemidos nas palmeiras
soprados pelos ventos
Há gritos nas selvas
invadidas pelos fugitivos...

Eu canto aos Palmares
odiando opressores
de todos os povos
de todas as raças
de mão fechada
contra todas as tiranias!

Fecham minha boca
Mas deixam abertos meus olhos
Maltratam meu corpo
Minha consciência se purifica
Eu fujo das mãos
Do maldito senhor!

Meu poema libertador
É cantado por todos,
até pelo rio.
Meus irmãos que morreram
muitos filhos deixaram
e todos sabem plantar
e manejar arcos;
muitas amadas morreram
mas muitas ficaram vivas,
dispostas para amar
seus ventres crescem
e nascem novos seres.

O opressor convoca novas forças
vem de novo
ao meu acampamento...
Nova luta.
As palmeiras
ficam cheias de flechas,
os rios cheios de sangue,
matam meus irmãos,
matam as minhas amadas,
devastam os meus campos,
roubam as nossas reservas;
tudo isto, para salvar
a civilização
e a fé...

Nosso sono não é tranquilo
mas o opressor não dorme,
seu sadismo se multiplica,
o escravismo é seu sonho
os inconscientes
entram para seu exército...

Nossas plantações
estão floridas,
nossas crianças
brincam à luz da lua,
nossos homens
batem tambores,
canções pacíficas,
e as mulheres dançam
essa música...

O opressor se dirige
a nossos campos,
seus soldados
cantam marchas de sangue.

O opressor prepara outra investida,
confabula com ricos e senhores,
e marcha mais forte,
para meu acampamento!
Mas eu os faço correr...

Ainda sou poeta
meu poema
levanta os meus irmãos.
Minhas amadas
se preparam para a luta,
os tambores
não são mais pacíficos,
até as palmeiras
têm amor à liberdade...

Os civilizados têm armas,
e têm dinheiro,
mas eu os faço correr...

Meu poema
é para os meus irmão mortos.
Minhas amadas
cantam comigo,
enquanto os homens
vigiam a Terra.

O tempo passa
sem número e sem calendário,
o opressor volta
com outros inconscientes,
com armas
e dinheiro,
mas eu os faço correr...

O meu poema libertador
é cantado por todos,
até pelas crianças
e pelo rio.

Meu poema é simples,
como a própria vida,
nascem flores
nas covas de meus mortos
e as mulheres
se enfeitam com elas
e fazem perfume
com sua essência...

Meus canaviais
ficam bonitos,
meus irmãos fazem mel,
minhas amadas fazem doce,
e as crianças
lambuzam os seus rostos
e seus vestidos
feitos de tecidos de algodão
tirados dos algodoais
que nós plantamos.

Não queremos o ouro
porque temos a vida!
e o tempo passa,
Sem número e sem calendário...
O opressor quer o corpo liberto,
mente ao mundo,
e parte para
prender-me novamente...

- É preciso salvar a civilização.
Diz o sádico opressor...

Eu ainda sou poeta
e canto nas selvas
a grandeza da civilização – a Liberdade!
Minhas amadas cantam comigo,
meus irmãos
batem com as mãos,
acompanhando o ritmo
da minha voz...

- É preciso salvar a fé,
Diz o tratante opressor...

Eu ainda sou poeta
e canto nas matas
a grandeza da fé – a Liberdade...
Minhas amadas cantam comigo,
meus irmãos
batem com as mãos, acompanhando o ritmo
da minha voz!...

Saravá! Saravá!
Repete-se o canto
do livramento,
já ninguém segura
os meus braços...
Agora sou poeta,
meus irmãos vêm ter comigo,
eu trabalho,
eu planto,
eu construo,
meus irmãos vêm ter comigo...

Minhas amadas me cercam,
sinto o cheiro do seu corpo,
e cantos místicos
sublimam meu espírito!
Minhas amadas dançam,
despertando o desejo em meus irmãos,
somos todos libertos,
podemos amar!
Entre as palmeiras nascem
os frutos do amor
dos meus irmãos,
nos alimentamos de fruto da terra
nenhum homem explora outro homem...

E agora ouvimos um grito de guerra,
ao longe divisamos
as tochas acesas,
é a civilização sanguinária,
que se aproxima.

Mas não mataram
meu poema.
Mais forte
que todas as forças
é a Liberdade...
O opressor não pôde fechar minha
boca,
nem maltratar meu corpo,
meu poema
é cantado através dos séculos,
minha musa
esclarece as consciências,
Zumbi foi redimido....

Navio Negreiro

Lá vem o navio negreiro
Lá vem ele sobre o mar
Lá vem o navio negreiro
Vamos minha gente olhar...

Lá vem o navio negreiro
Por água brasiliana
Lá vem o navio negreiro
Trazendo carga humana...

Lá vem o navio negreiro
Cheio de melancolia
Lá vem o navio negreiro
Cheinho de poesia

Lá vem o navio negreiro
Com carga de resistência
Lá vem o navio negreiro
Cheinho de inteligência...

Quem tá gemendo?

Quem tá gemendo
Negro ou carro de boi?
Carro de boi geme quando quer,
Negro, não,
Negro geme por que apanha,
Apanha pra não gemer...

Gemido de negro é cantiga
Gemido de negro é poema...

Geme na minh'alma,
A alma do Congo,
Do Níger da Guiné,
De toda África enfim...
A alma da América...
A alma Universal...

Quem ta gemendo?
Negro ou carro de boi?

Negros

Negros que escravizam
E vendem negros na África
Não são meus irmãos

Negros senhores na América
A serviço do capital
Não são meus irmãos

Só os negros oprimidos
Escravizados
Em luta por liberdade
São meus irmãos

Pra estes tenho um poema
Grande como o Nilo

Sou Negro
À Dione Silva

Sou Negro
meus avós foram queimados
pelo sol da África
minh'alma recebeu o batismo dos tambores
atabaques, gonguês e agogôs.

Contaram-me que meus avós
vieram de Loanda
como mercadoria de baixo preço
plantaram cana pro senhor do engenho novo
e fundaram o primeiro Maracatu.

Depois meu avô brigou como um danado
nas terras de Zumbi
Era valente como quê
Na capoeira ou na faca
escreveu não leu
o pau comeu
Não foi um pai João
humilde e manso.

Mesmo vovó
não foi de brincadeira
Na guerra dos Malés
ela se destacou.

Na minh'alma ficou
o samba
o batuque
o bamboleio
e o desejo de libertação.

Conversa

- Eita negro!
Quem foi que disse,
Que a gente não é gente,
Quem foi esse demente,
Se tem olhos não vê...

- Que foi que fizeste mano
Pra assim tanto falar?
Plantei os canaviais do nordeste

- E tu mano o que fizeste?
- Eu plantei algodão
Nos campos do sul
Pros homens de sangue azul
Que pagavam o meu trabalho,
Com surra de cipó-pau?
- Basta mano,

Pra eu não chorar,
E tu Ana,
Conta-me tua vida,
Na senzala, no terreiro

- Eu...
Cantei embolada,
Pra sinhá dormir,
Fiz tranças nela,
Pra sinhá sair,

Tomando cachaça
Servi de amor,
Dancei no terreiro,
Pra sinhozinho,
Apanhei surras grandes,
Sem mal eu fazer.

- Eita quanta coisa,
Tu tens pra contar...
Não conta mais nada,
Pra eu não chorar

- E tu Manoel,
Que andaste a fazer
- Eu sempre fui malandro
Ó Tia Maria,
Gostava de terreiro,
Como ninguém,
Subi para o morro,
Fiz sambas bonitos,
Conquistei as mulatas,
Bonitas de lá...

- Eita negro,
Quem foi que disse,
Que a gente não é gente?
Quem foi esse demente,
Se tem olhos e não vê.

Amor

Amor de negro é bom
dura e é barato.
Quem não o provou
aproveite a ocasião
É muito
mas pode acabar.

Amor de negro
é produto nacional
tem cálcio e vitamina
com todo o ABC
Deixe de convenção
tome um negro pra você

Amor de negro é gostoso
Amor de negro é bom!...

Olorum Ekê

Olorum Ekê
Olorum Ekê
Eu sou poeta do povo
Olorum Eké

A minha bandeira
É de cor de sangue
Olorum Ekê
Olorum Ekê
Da cor da revolução
Olorum Ekê

Meus avós foram escravos
Olorum Ekê
Olorum Ekê
Eu ainda escravo sou
Olorum Ekê
Olorum Ekê
Os meus filhos não serão
Olorum Ekê
Olorum Ekê

Plástica Negra

Negra no sonho insultada
Negra no sonho oprimida
Sempre amor...

O amor de negra sempre plástica
A sua primeira libertação
Foi os cantares de Salomão
A segunda foi a escultura de Picasso
A terceira ela conquistou sozinha

Cantiga

Negro bom negro que sou
Que bom que bom
Como noite sem lua sou,
Negro bom! ... que bom!
Alma de poeta.
Em mim se criou
Que bom! ... Que bom!
Poeta e negro sou
Que bom! ... que bom!

Em mim serve qualquer cor
Que bom! ... que bom!
Minh'alma canta de amor.
Que bom! ... que bom!
Se unirá qualquer cor
Que bom! ... que bom! ...

Velho Atabaque

Velho atabaque
quantas coisas você falou pra mim
quantos poemas você anunciou
Quantas poesias você me inspirou
às vezes cheio de banzo
às vezes com alegria
diamba rítmica
cachaça melódica
repetição telúrica
maracatu triste
mas gostoso como mulher...

Triste maracatu
escravo vestido de rei
loanda distante do corpo
e pertinho da alma
negras sem desodorante
com cheiro gostoso
de mulher africana
zabumba batucando
na alma de eu...

Velho atabaque
madeira de lei
couro de animais
mãos negras lhe batem
e o seu choro é música
e com sua música
dançam os homens
inspirados de luxúria
e procriação
Velho atabaque
gerador de humanidade...

Civilização Branca

Lincharam um Homem
Entre os arranha céus,
(Li no jornal)
Procurei o crime do homem
O crime não estava no homem
Estava na cor da sua epiderme

Tem Gente com Fome

Trem sujo da Leopoldina,
Correndo correndo,
Parece dizer:
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome...

Piiiii!
Estação de Caxias,
De novo a correr,
De novo a dizer:
Tem gente com fome;
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome...

Vigário Geral,
Lucas, Cordovil,
Braz de Pina
Penha Circular
Estação da Penha,
Olaria, Ramos,
Bom Sucesso,
Carlos Chagas
Triagem, Mauá,
Trem sujo de Leopoldina,
Correndo, correndo
Parece dizer:
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome...
Tantas caras tristes,
Querendo chegar,
Em algum destino,
Em algum lugar...

Trem sujo da Leopoldina
Correndo correndo,
Parece dizer:
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome,
Tem gente com fome.

Só nas estações,
Quando vai parando,
Lentamente,
Começa a dizer:
Se tem gente com fome,
Dai de comer...
Mas o freio de ar,
Todo autoritário,
Manda o trem calar:
Psiuuuuu....

Macumba

Noite de Yemanjá
negro come acaçá
noite de Yemanjá
filha de Nanan
negro come acaçá
veste seu branco abebé

Toca o aguê
o caxixi
o agogô
o engona
o gã
o ilu
o lê

o ronco
o rum
o rumpi

Negro pula
negro dança
negro bebe
negro canta
negro vadia
noite e dia
sem parar
pro corpo de Yemanjá
pros cabelos de Obá
do Calunga
do mar

Cambondo sua
mas não cansa
cambondo geme
mas não chora
cambondo toca
até o dia amanhecer

Mulata cai no santo
corpo fica belo
mulata cai no santo
seus peitos ficam bonitos

Eu fico com vontade de amar...

Também sou amigo da América

América,
Eu também sou teu amigo,
Há na minh'alma de poeta,
Um grande amor por ti!

Corre em mim,
O sangue do negro
Que ajudou na tua construção,
Que te deu uma música,
Intensa como a liberdade!

Eu te amo, América,
Porque de ti, também
Virá a Vitória Universal,

Onde o trabalhador
Terá recompensa de labor
Na igualdade de vida!

Eu te amo América,
E lutarei por ti,
Como o amante pela amada!
O teu inimigo
É meu adversário...

Nicolas Guillén

NICOLAS
Nicolas Guillén
Meu irmão de Cuba
Nicolas Guillén

Bem-vindo sejas è Terra
Nicolas Guillén
Terra bonita bacana
Nicolas Guillén
Mas com a vida tão feia
Nicolas Guillén
A fome matando gente
Nicolas Guillén
Liberdade se sumindo
Nicolas Guillén
A tísica comendo o povo
Nicolas Guillén
Nicolas
Nicolas Guillén
Meu irmão de Cuba
Nicolas Guillén

Cantiga ó minha cantiga
Nicolas Guillén
Embalando a minh'alma
Nicolas Guillén

Onde está a burguesia
Nicolas Guillén
Cheia de medo sem calma
Nicolas Guillén
Burguesia bem nutrida
Nicolas Guillén
Com medo de coisa nova
Nicolas Guillén

Nicolas
Nicolas Guillén
Meu irmão de Cuba
Nicolas Guillén

Batuque macumba samba
Nicolas Guillén
Batendo meu coração
Nicolas Guillén
Onde estão os defensores
Nicolas Guillén
Da vida de escravidão
Nicolas Guillén
São uns homens bem vividos
Nicolas Guillén
Com medo da evolução
Nicolas Guillén

Nicolas
Nicolas Guillén
Meu irmão de Cuba
Nicolas Guillén

Minha Família
Á Dione Silva

Minha família é incontável
eu tenho irmãos em todas as partes do mundo
minha esposa vive em todos os continentes
minha mãe se encontra
no Oriente e no Ocidente
meus filhos são todas as crianças do universo
meu pai são todos os homens dignos de amor...

Por que chorar pelo amor de uma mulher?
por que estreitar o mundo a um lar
por que prender-se a uma rua
a uma cidade, a uma pátria?
Por que prender-se a mim mesmo?

Oh! bandeiras,
Enfeitai os meus caminhos
Oh! músicas
Ritmai os meus passos
Oh! pares, vinde para que eu baile
e possa conhecer todos os meus
parentes

Meu Grande Amor

Eu procuro amar numa ternura imensa
empregando um amor que só eu sinto
que só eu quero
que só eu posso
pois eu não sou o amante banal
de romance vulgar de fátua história
Eu procuro amar
como amo a vida
num desejo de eternidade imensa
agradando a minha carne
como agrado a minh'alma,
sem medo e sem hipocrisia,
em busca do prazer
que teu corpo pode dar:
o calor de teus seios
o brilho de teus olhos
o cheiro de tuas axilas
o odor de tua boca
a quentura de teus lábios.

Eu quero amar
agradecendo a minha velhice criadora
o meu sonho de guia
fazendo de meus cabelos
uma nova bandeira de beleza
construindo um mundo
para minha indestrutível
poesia negra...

Canto da América

Blues! Swings! Sambas! frevos!
macumbas! jongos!
Ritmos de angústias e de protestos,
Estão ferindo os meus ouvidos!...
São gemidos seculares da humanidade
ferida,
Que se impregnam nas emoções
estéticas,
Da alma americana...

É a América que canta...
Esta rumba é um manifesto,
contra os preconceitos raciais,
Esta conga é um grito de revolta,
contra as injustiças sociais,
Este frevo é um exemplo de aproximação
e de igualdade...

Canta América,
A tua voz irá do Ocidente para Oriente,
E do Oriente para o Ocidente,
Por que no futuro,
Só teremos uma forma de arte...

Canta América,
Não o canto de mentira e falsidade,
Que a ilusão ariana,
Cantou para o mundo,
Na conquista do ouro,
Nem o canto da supremacia dos
derramadores de sangue,
Das utópicas novas ordens,
De napoleônicas conquistas,
Mas, o canto da liberdade
dos povos,
E do direito do trabalhador...

América teu nome é um poema
de libertação
É o mundo que libertará o mundo,
Canta o poema sublime de
redenção humana,
Destrói os algozes fascistas,
Para a felicidade de gerações
vindouras
E salvação dos puros
Que se confundiram na
massa nazista...
Canta América,
Que se fará um coro de vozes
Por todo o Universo...

Advertência

Há poetas que só fazem versos de amor
Há poetas herméticos e concretistas
enquanto se fabricam
bombas atômicas e de hidrogênio
enquanto se preparam
exércitos para guerra
enquanto a fome estiola os povos...

Depois
eles farão versos de amor e de remorso
e não escaparão ao castigo
porque a guerra e a fome
também os atingirão
e os poetas cairão no esquecimento...

Senhora Gramática

Senhora gramática
perdoai os meus pecados gramaticais
se não perdoardes
senhora
eu errarei mais.

Tem gente morrendo, Ana
À Ana Montenegro

Tem gente morrendo
No seco Nordeste
Tem gente morrendo
Nas secas estradas
Tem gente morrendo
De fome e de sede
Tem gente morrendo
Ana
Tem gente morrendo

Tem gente morrendo
Nos campos de guerra
Tem gente morrendo
Nos campos de paz
Tem gente morrendo
De escravidão
Tem gente morrendo
Ana
Tem gente morrendo

Tem gente morrendo
De angústia e de medo
Tem gente morrendo
De falta de amor
Tem gente morrendo
Ana
Tem gente morrendo

Tem gente morrendo
Nas prisões infectas
Tem gente morrendo
Porque quer trabalho
Tem gente morrendo
Pedindo justiça
Tem gente morrendo
Ana
Tem gente morrendo...
Sim Ana
Tem gente morrendo...

APPENDIX B

Luiz Gama and Luís Guedes

LUIZ GAMA (1830-1882)

Quem sou eu?

> *Quem sou eu? que importa quem?*
> *Sou um trovador proscripto,*
> *Que trago na fronte escripto*
> *Esta palavra – Ninguém! –*
> A. E. Zaluar – *Dores e flores*

Amo o pobre, deixo o rico,
Vivo como o Tico-tico;
Não me envolvo em torvelinho
Vivo só no meu cantinho
Da grandeza sempre longe
Como vive o pobre monge.
Tenho mui poucos amigos,
Porém bons que são antigos,
Fujo sempre à hipocrisia,
À sandice, à fidalga;
Das manadas de Barões?
Anjo Bento, antes trovões.
Faço versos, não sou vate.
Digo muito disparate,
Mas só rendo obediência
À virtude, à inteligência:
Eis aqui o *Getulino*
Que no plectro ainda mofino.
Sei que é louco e que é pateta
Quem se mete a ser poeta;
Que no século das luzes,
Os birbantes mais lapuzes,
Compram negros e comendas,
Têm brasões, não – das Calendas,
E, com tretas e com furtos
Vão subindo a passos curtos;
Fazem grossa pepineira,
Só pela *arte do Vieira*
E com jeito e proteções,
Galgam altas posições!
Mas eu sempre vigiando
N'essa súcia vou malhando
De tratantes, bem ou mal
Com semblante festival.
Dou de rijo no pedante
De pílulas fabricante,
Que blasona arte divina,
Com sulfatos de quinina,
Trabusana, xaropadas,
E mil outras patacoadas,
Que, sem pinga de rubor,

Diz a todos, que é DOUTOR!
Não tolero o magistrado,
Que do brio descuidado,
Vende a lei, trai a justiça
- Faz a todos injustiça
Com rigor deprime o pobre
Presta abrigo ao rico, ao nobre,
E só acha horrendo crime
No mendigo que deprime.
- Neste dom com dupla força,
Té que a manha perca ou torça.
Fujo às léguas do logista,
Do beato e do *sacrista* –
Crocodilos disfarçados,
Que se fazem muito honrados,
Mas que, tendo ocasião,
São mais feros que o Leão
Fujo ao cego lisonjeiro,
Que, qual ramo de salgueiro,
Maleável sem firmeza,
Vive a lei da natureza;
Que, conforme sopra o vento,
Dá mil voltas num momento.
O que sou e como penso,
Aqui vai com todo o senso,
Posto que já veja irados
Muitos lorpas enfunados,
Vomitando maldições
Contra as minhas reflexões.
Eu bem sei que sou tal Grilo
De maçante e mau estilo;
E que os homens poderosos
Desta arenga receosos
Hão de chamar-me – tarelo,
Bode negro, Mongibello;
Porém eu que não me abalo,
Vou tangendo meu badalo
Com repique impertinente,
Pondo a trote muita gente.
Sou negro sou, ou sou bode
Pouco importa. O que isto pode?
Bodes há de toda a casta,
Por que a espécie é muito vasta...
Há cinzentos, há rajados,
Baios, pampas e malhados,
Bodes negros, *bodes brancos*.
E, sejamos todos francos,
Uns plebeus, e outros nobres,
Bodes ricos, bodes pobres,
Bodes sábios, importante,

E também alguns tratantes...
Aqui, nesta boa terra
Marram todos, tudo berra;
Nobres Condes e Duquesas
Ricas Damas e Marquesas,
Deputados, senadores,
Gentis-homens, vendedores;
Belas Damas emproadas,
De nobreza empantufadas;
Repimpados principotes,
Orgulhosos fidalgotes,
Frades, Bispos, Cardeais,
Fanfarrões imperiais,
Gentes pobres, nobres gentes
Em todos há *meus parentes*.
Entre a brava *militança*
Fulge e brilha alta *bodança*;
Guardas, Cabos, Furriéis,
Brigadeiros, Coronéis,
Destemidos Marechais,
Rutilantes Generais,
Capitães de mar e guerra,
- Tudo marra, tudo berra –
Na suprema eternidade,
Onde habita a Divindade,
Bodes há santificados,
Que por nós são adorados.
Entre o coro dos Anjinhos
Também há muitos bodinhos.
O amante de Syringa
Tinha pelo e má catinga
O deus Mendes, pelas contas,
Na cabeça tinha pontas;
Jove quando foi menino,
Chupitou leite caprino;
E, segundo o antigo mito,
Também Fauno foi cabrito.
Nos domínios de Plutão,
Guarda um bode o Alcorão;
Nos lundus e nas modinhas
São cantadas as bodinhas:
Pois se todos têm *rabicho*,
Para que tanto capricho?
Haja paz, haja alegria,
Folgue e brinque a bodaria;
Cesse pois a matinada,
Por que tudo é *bodarrada*!

Lá vai verso!

Quero também ser poeta
Bem pouco ou nada me importo
Se a minha veia é discreta.
Se a via que sigo é torta
F. X. de Novaes

Alta noite, sentindo o meu bestundo
Pejado, qual vulcão de chama ardente,
Leve pluma empunhei, incontinenti
O fio das ideias fui traçando.

As Ninfas invoquei para que vissem
Do meu estro voraz o ardimento;
E depois revoando ao firmamento,
Fossem do *Vate* o nome apregoando.

Oh! Musa de Guiné, cor de azeviche,
Estátua de granito denegrido
Ante quem o Leão se põe rendido,
Despido do furor de atroz braveza;
Empresta-me o cabaço *d'urucungo*,
Ensina-me a brandir tua marimba
Inspira-me a ciência da *candimba*,
Às vias me conduz d'alta grandeza.

Quero a glória abater de antigos vates,
Do tempo dos heróis armipotentes;
Os Homeros, Camões – aurifulgentes,
Decantando os Barões da minha Pátria!
Quero gravar em lúcidas colunas
Obscuro poder da parvoíce,
E a fama levar da vil sandice
Às longínquas regiões da velha Bactria!

Quero que o mundo me encarando veja,
Um retumbante *Orfeu de carapinha*
Que a lira desprezando por mesquinha, ao som decanta de Marimba augusta;
E, qual outro Arion entre os Delfins,
Os ávidos piratas embaindo –
As ferrenhas palhetas vai brandindo
Com estilo que preza a líbia adusta.

Com sabença profusa irei cantando
Altos feitos da gente *luminosa*.
Que a trapaça movendo portentosa
À mente assombra, e pasma a natureza!
Espertos eleitores de *encomenda*.
Deputados, Ministros, Senadores,
Galfarros Diplomatas – chuchadores,
De quem reza a cartilha da esperteza.

Caducas Tartarugas – desfrutáveis,
Velharrões tabaquentos – sem juízo,
Irrisórios fidalgos – *de improviso*,
Finórios traficantes – *patriotas*;

Espertos maganões de *mão ligeira*,
Emproados juízes de *trapaça*,
E outros que de honrado têm *fumaça*,
Mas que são refinados agiotas.

Nem eu próprio à festança escaparei;
Com foros de *Africano fidalgote*,
Montado num *Barão* com ar de zote –
Ao rufo do tambor e das zabumbas
Ao som de mil aplausos retumbantes,
Entre os netos da Ginga, meus parentes,
Pulando de prazer e de contentes –
Nas danças entrarei d'altas *cayumbas*.

LUÍS GUEDES

Novo Rumo!

"Negro preto cor da noite",
nunca te esqueças do açoite
Que cruciou a tua raça.
Em nome dela somente
Faze com que nossa gente
Um da gente se faça!

Negro preto, negro preto,
sê tu um homem direito
como um cordel posto a prumo
É só do teu proceder
Que, por certo há de nascer
a estrela do novo rumo

Duro com Duro...

Coisa que nunca que se viu
Um preto de outro gostar;
Por isso não me admiro,
De você me abandonar
Por aquela deslambida,
Que vive o rosto a pintar.

Pinta sim reboca mesmo:
Mas vocês por uma branca
Dão tudo, tudo, até a vida.
Seja boa ou seja tranca.
Só pelo gosto de ouvir:
- É casado c'uma branca

- Não faz mal, da minha vida
Sorverei todo o seu travo,
Lamentando esse teu fraco
Meu único amor, meu bravo
Que deixa de ser senhor
Para viver como escravo!

APPENDIX C
George Elliott Clarke

Campbell Road Church

At Negro Point, some forgot sleep
to spy the fire-and-brimstone sun
blaze all gold-glory
over a turquoise harbour
of half-sunken, rusted ships,
when it was easy to worship
Benin bronze dawns,
to call “hosanna” to archangel gulls…
But none do now.
Rather, an ancient CN porter lusts
for Africville –
beautiful Canaan of stained glass and faith,
now limbo of shattered glass and promises,
rats rustling like a mayor’s robe.
He rages to recall
the gutting death of his genealogy,
to protest his home’s slaughter
by homicidal bulldozers
and city planners molesting statistics.
At Negro point some forgot sleep,
wailed, “Oh freedom over me,”
heard mournful trains cru like blizzards
along blue Bedford Basin….
None do now.

Rose Vinegar

In his indefatigable delirium of love, Xavier wires rugosa rose blossoms to Shelley. Deluded by his quixotic romanticism, he cannot yet appreciate the practical necessities of friendship. But Shelley trusts in reason; thus, though she admires the blossoms for their truthfulness to themselves, she does not hesitate to distill a delicate and immortal vinegar from what she considers the ephemeral petals of X's desire. An ornament becomes an investment. She fills a cup with the fresh rose petals; then, stripping off their heels, (the white part), she pours the petals into a quart sealer and add two cups of white vinegar. Then, she seals the jar and places it on the sunny livingroom windowsill for sixteen days, seven hours, and nine minutes. When the vinegar is ready, she strains it through a sieve and then pours it back into the bottle.

Rose vinegar. It's especially good on salads.

Look Homeward, Exile

I can still see that soil crimsoned by butchered
Hog and imbrued with rye, lye, and homely
Spirituals everybody must know,
Still dream of folks who broke or cracked like shale:
Pushkin, who twisted his hands in boxing,
Marrocco, who ran girls like dogs and got stabbed,
Lavinia, her teeth decayed to black stumps,
Her lovemaking still in demand, spitting
Black phlegm – her pension after twenty towns,
And Toof, suckled on anger that no Baptist
Church could contain, who let wrinkled Eely
Seed her moist womb when she was just thirteen.
And the tyrant sun that reared from barbed-wire
Spewed flame that charred the idiot crops
To Depression, and hurt my Granddaddy
To bottle after bottle of sweet death,
His dream beaten to one, tremendous pulp,
Until his heart seized, choked; his love gave out.
But Beauty survived, secreted
In freight trains snorting in their pens, in babes
Whose faces were coal-black mirrors, in strange
Strummers who plucked Ghanaian banjos, hummed
Blind blues – precise, ornate, rich needlepoint
In sermons scorched with sulphur and brimstone,
And in my love's dark, orient skin that smelled
Like orange peels and tasted like rum, good God!
I remember my Creator in the old ways:
I sit in taverns and stare at my fists;
I knead earth into bread, spell water into wine.
Still, nothing warms my wintry exile – neither
Prayers nor fine love, neither votes nor hard drink:
For nothing heals those saints felled in green beds,
Whose loves are smashed by just one word or glance
Or pain – a screw jammed in thick, straining wood.

The Wisdom of Shelley

You come down, after
five winters, X,
bristlin' with roses
and words words words,
brazen as brass.
Like a late blizzard,
You bust in our door,
talkin' April and snow and rain,
litterin' the table
with poems –
as if we could trust them!

I can't.
I heard pa tell ma
how much and much he
loved loved loved her
and I saw his fist
fall so gracefully
against her cheek,
she swooned.

Roses
got thorns.
And words
do lie.

I've seen love
die. (12-25)

The Symposium

Don't gimme nothin' to jaw about, Missy, and I won't have nothin' to holler for! Just sit back, relax, and be black. I'm gonna learn you 'bout the the mens so you can 'scape the bitter foolishness I've suffered. A little thoughtful can save you trouble.

Missy, you gotta lie to get a good man. And after you gets him, you gotta be set to hurt him to hold him, so help my Chucky! 'Cos if you don't or won't or can't, you're gonna be stepped on, pushed 'round, walked out on, beat up on, cheated on, worked like a black fool, and cast out your own house.

Don't suck your teeth and cut your eyes at me! I be finished in a hot second. Bu you'll hear this gospel truth so long you, my oldest, eat and sleep in my house. Best cut your sass!

Pack a spare suitcase, one for him. If he proves devilish, it be easier to toss him out that way. Put one change of clothes into it so he can't beg and bug you for nothin'!

If he be too quiet, he'll ruminate and feel that bottle more than he will you. Rum'll be his milk and meat for months. It'll spoil him for anything. Won't be fit to drive his nail no mo.' So when he's sleepy drunk, smack the long-ass son of a gun in the head, tell him to wake his black-ass body up, and drive him out. If the fair fool don't come back sober, he don't come back. Am I lyin'?

And if he be sweet-lookin', a heavy-natured man, always pullin' on women, and he takes up with some spinny bitch all daddlied up from the cash he's vowed to bring you, just tell him right up and down that you ain't his monkey in a dress, and raise particular devil. Don't give him no shakes. And if that don't work, don't waste another black word, grab yourself a second man.

Watch out for two-faced chroniclers. These women will grin in your face, lookin' for news 'bout you and your man. And just when you trust their trashy talk and make your man groan and grump and get all upset, these gold-dust whores creep behind your back, crawl right in your bed, and thief him away. That's how they act. I know: I've been gypped so bloody much. And they don't care if it's a used love, a second-hand love, a stolen love, 'cos it's love all the same. And if it's good to you, they'll try to kick some too. So don't put no business on the streets that's conducted 'tween your sheets. But if some big-mouth humbugs you, tell the black bitch not to mess 'cos she's terrible lookin' anyway; a knife gash 'cross her face would just be improvement.

Missy! Gimme some of that bottle! Preachin' parches the throat.

Besides, my eyes feel kinda zigzaggy today.

If some bitch is grinnin' at your man, tell her straight: "If it was shit that I had, you'd want some of that too." Make her skedaddle. If her fresh fool follows, take everything he got and don't give a single black penny back!

Missy, life's nothin' but guts, muscle, nerve. All you gotta do is stay black and die.

The River Pilgrim: A Letter

At eighteen, I thought the Sixhiboux wept.
Five years younger, you were lush, beautiful
Mystery; your limbs – scrolls of deep water.
Before your home, lost in roses, I swooned,
Drunken in the village of Whylah Falls,
And brought you apple blossoms you refused,
Wanting Hank Snow woodsmoke blues and dried smells,
Wanting some milljerk's dumb, unlettered love.
That May, freights chimed xylophone tracks that rang
To Montréal. I scribbled postcard odes,
Painted *le fleuve Saint-Laurent comme la Seine –*
Sad watercolours for Negro exiles
In France, and dreamt Paris white with lepers,
Soft cripples who finger pawns under elms,
Drink blurry into young debauchery,
Their glasses clear with Cointreau, rain, and tears.
You hung the moon backwards, crooned crooked poems
That no voice could straighten, not even O
Who stroked guitars because he was going
To die with a bullet through his stomach.
Innocent, you curled among notes – petals
That scaled glissando from windows agape,
And remained in southwest Nova Scotia,
While I drifted, sad and tired, in the east.
I have been gone four springs. This April, pale
Apple blossoms blizzard. The garden flutes
E-flats of lilacs, G-sharps of lilies.
Too many years, too many years, are past….
Past the marble and pale flowers of Paris,
Past the broken, Cubist guitars of Arles,
Shelley, I am coming down through the narrows
Of the Sixhiboux River, I will write
Beforehand. Please, please come out to meet me
As far as Gilbert's Cove.

The Argument

Saul Clemence. May God have mercy on his soul. His love has become a series of effortless mistakes. He aged a labourer in a century that hates work. He spent all he is gouging gypsum from a hillside, so his lungs are silver–coated with sickness and his heart dries now to bone and his conscience is rusted metal. Who dast blame this man if he makes his stepdaughter his lover and his wife his foe? Yet, jury of readers, there is no defence for theses social crimes. These sins are Mr. Clemence's own. True, he has been sinned against: fifty years is too long to spend, a hunchback, stooped in a damp, vicious cave, dark with smoke and tuberculosis, shoveling gypsum just for the pennies to fix one's shoes. So folks, our hands are dirty. As surely as iodine or gypsum dust, we've helped to poison him. But it's too late for our tears. Besides, he is tired of hope. His nerves are calloused. He has shoveled his life away like gypsum.

So, study his face as lined as the page of a book. Feel his hands: rough gloves that heft gypsum and do easy harm. He resembles our dream of Samson. His speech is gravel.

The curtain parts to reveal the interior of a modest, hidden home. Mississippi John Hurt pries "Black Snake Blues" from the first radio. Old Saul Clemence appears, lying in a disturbed bed beside his young stepdaughter missy Jarvis. Having abandoned Cora – his wife and her mother - years before, he sits up in a panic. The radio shifts abruptly into anything by Billie Holiday.

X discovered this florilegium of bad love encoded in five years's worth of Shelley's elegant epistles that he carried in his satchel alongwith volumes of verse by Hardy, Bridges, Roberts, Carman, Johnson, Dunbar, and Yeats. With Shelley exiled, he Began to realize the fragility of desire.

Love Letter
To An African Woman

Beloved:
In my miserable weakness, I disparage you; in my childish fear, I ignore you; in my profound self-hatred, I lash out at you; in my gross ignorance, I use you, abuse you, but then can't understand why I lose you. I am stupidly contradictory – rude, when I should be respectful; cold, when I should be caring.

I want you to obey me. Why won't you? I want you to be who I think you should be. Why are you so stubborn? To ask such questions is to confess that I have lost our history.

Are you not Sheba, "black but comely," who enlightened Solomon; Nefertiti, who brought glory to Egypt; Harriet Tubman, who brandished a pistol and pledged to shoot any slave who tried to abandon her freedom train; Lydia Jackson, who fled Nova Scotian chains to found Sierra Leone; Portia White, who enthralled the world with song; Carrie Best, who gave us a *Clarion* voice; Pearleen Oliver, who brought our history on home; Marie Hamilton, whose steadfast compassion uplifted many? Are you not these heroines and a hundred more?

African daughter, forgive me my several trespasses. I have been so weak, so scared!

Black Queen, teach to cherish children, teach me the pride of our Blackness, our Negritude; teach me that manhood is not the dumb idolatry of muscles but the impassioned sharing of love in battling injustice.

Let us make a pact: I will cease my fear; you will cease your despair.

Black Madonna! I love your African essence, your faith in children, your insatiable desire for freedom, your swift intelligence, your sharp passion, your secret strengths, your language that tells no lies, your fashion that is colour, your music that is gospel-lullaby, your lips like crimson berries, your skin like soft, moist night, your eyes like dusk, your hair like dark cotton, your scent like rich butter, your taste like raisins and dates and sweet wine.

Let us join. My love, let us join.

On June 6th

Othello stood with friends
amid lush, fiery leaves,
tested intricate white
lightning, writhing like lithe
vipers in cages of glass.
Had he dreamt his soon death,
he would have contemplated
carbon culture:
how skin and bones
become diamonds
after so much pain.
It is our fate
to become beautiful
only after tremendous pain.

In the Field

Selah glares at me
    impatiently, not seeing
        the apples blossoms.

The Argument

Pablo Gabriel, thirtyish, a flamenco poet and art pedlar, sports a slanted beret and wears rainbow cottons. His guitar is a crescent moon. His muscular skin is orange. Amarantha Clemence, twenty, a contemporary quilter, wears apple blossoms in her silky, sable hair that spills – pagan-like – down her back to her thighs. Her skin is indigo accented by white silk.

The music of Pablo and Am segues from the Moorish mood of duke Ellington's "Dusk on the Desert", with its Arabic saxophone, sobbing through oases for want of love, to the soul cry of Bessie Smith, wailing in the Churrigueresque temples of ecstasy. These lovers depict the struggle between desire and despair.

A magnet hounding iron, Pablo pursues Am. Their courtship is tense and ugly with desire. To him, her beauty is, though clothed, always evident. Her long skirts are slit to the thigh; her blouses are filmy. She walks in the Hollywood, feminine way, a slight lilt in her posture, her right arm, swinging stiffly extended from her waist. She notices Pablo noticing her because she is ready to sew their marriage quilt. She vanishes into a room; he lingers outside. She leaves, brushing past him. Later, she spies him from a window and turns away. He glimpses her, rushes into the house, chases her up the stairs. Stumbles, almost falls. She gropes her door and, quick, slams it, wrenching the key in the lock. Click. He leans back, silent, then crashes through the door, collapsing into a thunder shower of blossoms or pillow feathers. Amid tears and quiet breath, their clothes flow from them, eddy, form whirlpoolls on the floor or cascade from the bed. Their marriage is pure Beauty. Afterwards, they cling together, forming a binary star. The radio bleats Ellington's "Crescendo and Diminuendo in Blue." Am pictures their love as the marriage of topaz and lapis lazuli.

Leaving for his old home in States County, X recognizes the soul harmony of his love. However, Jack Aurelius Thomson, former member of Parliament, famed ally of Hepburn and Duplessis, and nominated liberal candidate for the constituency of South West Nova, yearns to make Am cry. That's his idea of music – something martial, carnal, and cacophonous.

The Argument

Stars are bread crumbs. Selah Clemence wonders, “Is this all there is?” she stumbles, in a delicate drunk, a green path. The man fidgets like a maniac. When she finds her bedroom, she places pine branches in her dresser to perfume her clothes that other wise would smell of roses. Pablo Gabriel calls her “Gatito,” Spanish for “little cat.” She is that lithe. Queen Nacthal. How could she be otherwise? She stages a pageant of colours - silver, crimson, and yellow – against the backdrop of her dark skin.

She soaks in bright scents of *chypre*, coconut, and honey so that she is consciously sweet. She indulges in such extravagant gestures as her hands nonchalantly stroking her voluptuous hair and other Romantic acts such as draping her red silk panties on the edge of a bathtub where a choice explorer can find them. A brash innocent, always she is dying for love of some no-count man who abandons her always after month of epic scandals that forever brand him a bastard and the most miserable dog in Jarvis County.

She is modern martyr for love, bearing witness to its betrayal by men who fear their own nakedness. Thus, she has made alcohol her one true love. She has wedded liquor because men betrayed her sexuality as they have betrayed their own. Public songs stolen from crackling radios, warped records, and tavern performances are her refuge, her dowry, her diary of hurt, her modernism, her lyric beauty already become tragic although she is only twenty-nine. When a camera squints upon her, it x-rays her flesh, discovering keyboards, guitar strings, and flute holes hidden in her bones. Selah is Beauty oppressed because of its perfection. She quotes Bessie Smith.

You can’t trust nobody,
You might as well be alone;
Found my lost friend,
And might as well stayed at home.

Because Shelly is absent, X – a bee hunting nectar – stumbles upon Selah. When he kisses her, her clothes dissolve like cotton candy. In the beginning, their love is artless, a duet between acoustic guitar and saxophone. Later, it is the ugly sound of innumerable bottles of Scotch and rum and beer being incessantly filled and emptied in the basement of the twentieth century. Oh, reader, our lives are the tombs we build around ourselves.

KING BEE BLUES

I'm an ol' king bee, honey,
Buzzin' from flower to flower.
I'm an ol' king bee, sweets,
Hummin' from flower to flower.
Women got good pollen;
I get some every hour.

There's Lily in the valley
And sweet honeysuckle Rose too;
There's Lily in th valley
And sweet honeysuckle Rose too.
An there's pretty black-eyed Susan,
Perfect as the night is blue.

You don't have to trust
A single, black word I say.
You don't have to trust
A single, black word I say.
But don't be surprised
If I sting your flower today.

PRELUDE

Shelly's a garden
enclosed.
She don't trust words:
Men lie
To lie on top of you.

X, I know languages –
Music or Silence,
Touch or Absence –
that need no words.

My gate's open.
My fruits are pleasant.
Come and taste.

HOW LONG CAN LOVE GO WRONG?

You call me “serif,
lacy curlicues,
a baroque belladonna
critical men hallow.”

You could never dream
my womb is gone,
hollowed by scalpels
and Casanova cancer.

I flood myself with rum,
blue smoke, and blues
to try to forget
how I’ve been cut.

So, tell me,
fool,
how can any poem
picture my beauty?

SONGS OF SOLOMON

Yea, thou art black
but comely –
like the Sixhiboux River,
like Mount Eulah’s pines.

I have compared thee,
O my love,
to soft, black night
and raisins and sweet wine.

Behold thou are perfect,
yea, excellent:
thou hast raven’s hair;
also, our bed is pine.

-- Pablo

III – Poetry

Madame Zajj was first Zeferina –
a Yoruban warrior
weighted down by *Slavery*'s shadows.

In Bahia, Brasilia, she looked from calaboose, vamoosed
to the *Urubu* ("Vulture") conclave of livid ex-slaves,
craving a Paradise of savvy, festive *Revolt*.

So Zeferina unleashed a cyclone of guerillas–
machete-toting men, pitchfork-hoisting women–
and rode to sack the City of Salvador
and destroy every white face in reach.

But her troops lunged too soon,
hacking up surprised planters
while *en route* to the city,
on Christmas Day, 1826.

Alarmed the Salvadorans scared up an army
to sic *Terror* on Zeferina and her 'Vandals'.
But she, brandishing only a bow and arrow,
yelled, "Death to tyrants! Long live blacks!"

Bullets came at her but couldn't hit her.
She was a zephyr; her steed breezed lyrical.
Her squads of machetes mashed and swished;
her Amazon phalanx forked pallid bellies.
Still, the slavers' shots slowly bled them
And veered them back –
a hurricane returning to the green cane-sea
where first it stirred and pooled.

Surrounded, Zeferina coolly dismounted,
stood disdainfully atop the pale, piled dead,
making their reddened bodies her royal dais.
Dazzled, Salvadorans had to shout, "Queen!"

(Poetry is like *Beauty*: what remains after dying,
After the falling away, when flesh becomes song.)

Negation

Le négre negated, meagre, *c'est moi:*
Denigrated, negative, a local
Caliban, unlikable and disliked
(Slick black bastard--cannibal--sucking back
Licorice-lusty, fifty-proof whisky),
A rusty-pallor provincial, uncouth
Mouth spitting lies, vomit-lyrics, musty,
Masticated scripture. Her Majesty's
Nasty, Nofaskoshan, Negro, I mean
To go out shining instead of tarnished,
To take apart *Poetry* like a heart.
So my black face must preface your finish,
Deface your *religion*--unerringly,
Niggardly, like some *film noir* blackguard's.

Calculated Offensive

À la maniére de Baraka

To hell with Pound!
What we desire is African:
Europe is so septic, it seeps poisons.

Why abet the mass murderers
and the famine- and munitions-makers?
All Plato and Aristotle ever did
was waste Nat Turner's time.

Europe?
A machine spewing
fat-assed assassins,
piss-sipping whores,
Chaplinesque Napoleons,
Porcine professors analyzing feces!

Who needs all those hymns printed on toilet paper?

Put Europe to the torch:
All of Michelangelo's dripping, syphilitic saints,
All of Sappho's insipid, anorexic virgins.

Use the *Oxford English Dictionary,*
and the *Petit Robert* for kindling.

Tobago

For M. NourbeSe Philip

Bacolet Bay
bleeds
sapphire elegies,
rum–dark lore.

I dredge these lines:
A coffle surfaces.
Next, a bullwhip tears my face:
History's saltspray hurricane.

*

A black man, lean, grey, clear,
preaches,
"Signs don't tell you
man nothing,
but slaves was shipped
to that fort here , then whipped.

"And don't plunge in the water.
Not because of sharks,
but because currents
will swipe you away.

"I get summoned
a few times each year,
to be the morgue,
to grapple bodies."

(But *History* has not
Recovered some--

sum
of our loss.)

*

Combers wash in as relentless
as a slave coffle.

Speech leeches.

Nu(is)ance

For Wayde Compton

Jabbering double-crossing doubletalk,
Pale-assed poetasters void my “blues-caucused,
Raucous lyrics”-- too Negroid and rowdy,
While sable, sassy poets preach I ink
Too blankly, *comme les blancs*, my bleached-out verse
Bleating too whitey-like--worse--in they ears.
What can I say?
All this blather about
“Black” and “white” verse is blackmail and white noise.
Cripes! English--fallacious--be finished here!
I’d rather stutter a bastard’s language
Only spoken in gutters, a broken,
Vulgar, Creole screech, loud with bawling, slurring,
Balderdash , cussing, and caterwauling,
A corrupt palaver that bankrupts all meeching speech
Because is be literal, guttural *Poetry*,
I.e. *Hubbub.*

April I, 19-

Air smells purely of wine
where I have fallen--
an allegro Negro--

sueing brunette paleness.
Unused to beauty, I
catch the blush of stars,

run my brain along
a line’s razor edge,
Basho being sharpest--

or her arrogant thinness!
I draft wrecked words, gulp
draughts of wrecking wine.

To hold her is to told
perfume-- whitest breath
of lilies, or fathom

gold-dark eyes, fierce as Sade.
A brief kiss-one brief kiss--
And I’ll breathe the future.

April 19, 19--: A Sonnet

I trespass by the sad, welling canal;
Rain and exploded ice swell feverish,
Entrenching despair in the Ottawa
River. It's April, I'm ferrying gold
Wafers and songs in my leather satchel;
I'm off to caress Q., clandestinely,
After five harsh years. I'm dreaming, fearful,
And married. *Married*, but I've loved only
Her these feverish, grief-bedeviled years….
This sorrow-stricken canal, pent-up sea,
April-fierce water welling, ferries old,
Harsh news: *I'll love her down to extinction.*
I home to the dusk'd café, where she'll be--
Snow and crocuses now mingling with the rain.

I. i

for David Odhiambo

Blue is noose strangling the vulnerable sky
Blue is generic nigger, a genre nigger, an angry nigger
Blue is Della Robbia blue—and fatal, as in Tennessee Williams
Blue is sapphire magenta violet sable diamond dead fur green
Blue is a white body drowned in a glacier and helicoptered to a morgue
Blue is a guitar in a Wallace Stevens sonnet carved from *The Cenci*
Blue is *Bombay Sapphire* gin when it's lapped direct from the bottle
Blue is Hitler in bed with Chamberlain in Munich with Eva Braun
Blue is a *saltimbanque* mountebank confusing Scotia Bank with a blood bank
Blue is Duke Ellington recording *Indigos* while reading *Gold Indigoes*
Blue is Tory, pot-bellied, smug—just like the *Oxford English Dictionary*
Blue is a hole in a bucket that the Atlantic can't fill
Blue is secular, worldly, mundane, global, vulgar, popular, plebian, and folksy
Blue is Bessie Smith's murder, still unsolved, though her murderer's dead
Blue is John Coltrane—immortal Coltrane—recording *Blue Trane*
Blue is the hippy starved to death by the lucre-hungry yuppy
Blue is ballad recitals by poets praised by *The National Enquirer*
Blue is Jackie O helping out JFK's back by getting on top
Blue is the final Canadian dollar bill
Blue is a field of lavender near Arles, in France, where love is *bleu*
Blue is Bellagio in the rain and Banff is snow squalls
Blue is a Gypsy whose beautiful, tan skin conjures up Three Mile Plains, NS
Blue is your worthlessness in the eyes of The Royal Bank
Blue is Chet Baker trying to cop *Blue Moon* after Miles Davis has snookered it
Blue is licorice manufactured from liquor and rice
Blue is what happens when you sleep through your moment of truth
Blue is snuff films screened in classrooms for literary reasons
Blue is coffee from the Blue Mountains of Jamaica
Blue is a moth huddled in the middle of a sugar bowl as the spoon is plunged in
Blue is *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues, Lush Dreams, Blues Exile,* and *Blue*
Fatal, foolhardy poetry.

Africadian Experience
(For Frederick Ward)

To howl in the night because of smoked rum wounding the heart;
To be so stubbornly crooked, your alphabet develops rickets;
To check into the Sally Ann – and come out brain-dead, but spiffy;
To smell the sewer anger of politicians washed up by dirty votes;
To feel your skin burning under vampire kisses meant for someone else;
To trash the ballyhooed verses of the original, A-1, Africville poets;
To carry the Atlantic into Montreal in epic suitcases with Harlem accents;
To segregate black and white bones at the behest of discriminating worms;
To mix voodoo alcohol and explosive loneliness is unsafe bars;
To case the Louvre with raw, North Preston gluttony in your eyes;
To let vitamin deficiencies cripple beauty queens in their beds;
To dream of Halifax and its collapsing houses of 1917
(Blizzard and fire in ten thousand living rooms in one day);
To stagger a dirt road that leads to an exploded piano and bad sermons;
To plumb a well that taps rice wine springing up from China;
To okay the miracle of a split length of wood supporting a clothesline;
To cakewalk into prison as if you were parading into Heaven;
To recognize *Beauty* when you see it and to not be afraid.

Language

I

for Wendy "Motion" Braithwaite

I hate this language that *Hate* dictates to me.
It gusts the tang and bray of a savage civilization –
Violent words violently arrived at.

Balderdash and *braggadocio*: what English is –
Squabbling cabals in Bibles and newspapers –
A tongue that cannibalizes all other tongues.

Speculate on the words still bottled blackly
In placid ink –
Fear what may leap from that *Innocence* …

2

This homely poem's a queer nigger rig,
A botch of art in slovenly English,
Bad grammar, bad everything;
It cannot perform ethically.
It even fucks up Black English badly:
The metre harries, but the words refuse to fit.

3

For Evelyn Shockley

That bang, blackening, of English syllables
In my black-black mouth hurts,
Them syllables hurt,
So I can vomit up speech –
Half digested English –
Soiling it with virulent Negro stomach juices.
Ma voice ain't *classique!*

4

Grammar is pollution, some poison in my lungs,
So what emerges from my mouth – spit, phlegm –
Looks tubercular.

My lopside tongue spoils Her Majesty's English.
The jawbreaker words wad my mouth with blood,
Even busted teeth.

I spit out *vers* – rudy larvae, red writhing worms –
Like a TB victim hawking scarlet phlegm into a sink.

5

A “herring-chocker” Negro with a breath of brine,
I grabble a *garrote* argot, guttural, by rote
A wanton lingo, taunted and tainted by wine,
A feinting *langue* haunted by each slave boat.

My black, “Bluenose” brogue smack lips and ears
When I bite the bitter grapes of Creole verse –
Or gripe and blab like a Protestant pope
So rum-pungent Africa mutes perfumed Europe.

IV. iii

for Clifton Joseph

Black is black and black and black
Black is a *négre* nigger, a *negrita* nigger, a *schwartz* nigger
Black is mulatto, sambo, negro, quadroon, octoroon
Black is Africa, darkest Africa, as photographed by Leni Riefensthal
Black is the best Scotch, the best chocolates, the best sex
Black is lilies, isles of lilies, and their gold, trumpeting perfume
Black is purple prose, blues movies, red flags
Black is white turned inside out until it shows its true colours
Black is Bessie Smith's black bottom you are invited, politely, to kiss
Black is Winton Marsalis trying desperately to equal Miles Davis
Black is what "the definition of is *is*"
Black is fiascoes of perversion after failures of imagination
Black is the critical neglect of [insert name of favourite writer her]
Black is a listing in the Montréal phone book
Black is black *Parker* ink in a *Hauser* black metal fountain pen ejaculating words
Black is almost 5h with a bottle of *Bença* Brazilian rum behind you
and a bottle of *TUMS* before you
Black is glass splinters in your sphincter
Black is Othello, Aaron the Moor, Caliban, and Falstaff
Black is the English Queen of Canada lisping Pig Latin in Paris, Ontario
Black is the highest standard, highest caliber, of white
Black is roses turned to sorrow
Black is confusing Carole Laure with Laure Sainclair
Black is puritanical sex, which is good, and depraved sex, which is very good
Black is maple brass coffee iron mahogany copper cocoa bronze ebony
chocolate
Black is Henry Dumas, Conrad Kent Rivers, Robert Hayden, and
Wanda Coleman
Black is Grit-commissioned sin and Tory-committed crime
Black is *Lover's Labour*, *Measure for Measure*, after *Much Ado About Nothing*
Black is your ass, your bowels, your morals
Black is your love of mere words
Black is the future of *Blue*
Black is *Whylah Falls*, *Beatrice Chancy*, *Execution Poems*, and *Black* –
Choirs of light.

Ballad of a Hanged Man

Geo: Their drinks to my drinks feels different.
I'll stomach a stammering teaspoon full,
but Roach laps up half the half bottle.
He slups glass for glass with the best.

I sidled in, easy, the taxi with a hammer,
harsh, in my pocket. See as a wed man,
I don't care if I wear uglified overalls.
But I ain't gonna hear my child starve.

I had the intention to ruck some money.
In my own heart, I had that, to rape money,
because I was fucked, in my own heart.
I took scared, shaking inside of me.

I knows Fredericton reporters can prove
zoot-suit vines style not my viciousness
I was shaking all that evening, my mind,
shaking. But my child was hungered.

Have you ever gone in your life, going
two days without eating, and whenever
you get money, you're gonna eat and eat
regardless of all the bastards in Fredericton

was bust in the head, skull jimmied open?
This is what I'm sermonizing in English:
homemade brew, dug up fresh, tastes like
molasses. We had some. Some good.

Logic does not break down these things, sir.
If I hadn't dropped the hammer, laughing,
Silver would be laughing now. Laughing. Silver
moon and snow dropped on the ground.

Two pieces of bone driven two inches
deep in his brain. What's deeper still?
The bones of the skull were bashed
into the brain. Blood railed out.

I was so mixed up, my mind bent crooked.
Silver's neck, face, and hand bleached cold.
Inside the sedan 19-black-49 sobbing Ford.
Outside, snow and ice smelling red-stained.

I ain’t dressed this story up. I am enough
disgraced. I swear to the truths I know.
I wanted to uphold my wife and child.
Hang me and I’ll not hold them again.

Onerous Canon
for Derek Walcott

I

Imbibing libretti and bleak liqueur,
I dread the dim shade of dour, spectral Yeats –

and defrocked, unsavoury Pound, who liked
to put “negros” in lower-case (in their place).

For clarity and charity, I plumb
John Clare, his sugar fire of port and rum.

(But shut away whiny, beseeching Keats,
Who should’ve drunk some *Alexander Keith’s*

India Pale Ale!) What can any late
Maker make of literature, painter?

II

O poet, I suspect you’ve ogled blues
golds, greys—adrift in a Venetian sky—

gondola over sodden New Scotland,
and sink in muddy Impressionism—

gilt, scuzzy water in tufted, brown fields,
or gooey ice, drooling with too-soon spring—

what all our reading comes to—a canon
of depression, sorry as January.

Words should vacillate in lascivious postures,
or in notorious incestuous rhyme. Poet:

One great poem, that’s all, but you never fail—
Composing lines blustery, yet tender,

Your voice your own (Auden in the margins,
Eliot, Yeats, and Pound in the dungeon),

A veriloquous, unadulterated voice,
Extracting black blues from a yellowed Oxford.