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# GILBERTO FREYRE

## The Reassessment Continues

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**Gilberto Freyre e os estudos latino-americanos.** Edited by Joshua Lund and Malcolm McNee. Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, Universidad de Pittsburgh, 2006. Pp. 399.

**Casa-grande e senzala.** By Gilberto Freyre. Critical edition by Guillermo Giucci, Enrique Rodríguez Larreta, and Edson Nery da Fonseca. Madrid: Acordo Archivos ALLCA XX, 2002. Pp. 1297.

**Gilberto Freyre: um vitoriano dos tropicos.** By Maria Lúcia Garcia Pallares-Burke. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2005. Pp. 484.

*Casa-grande e senzala* was published when Freyre, born in 1900, was only thirty-three years old. This precocious book dealt with a vast range of themes and a variety of sources, and its largely non-Brazilian intellectual precursors were beyond the physical and even intellectual range of Freyre's contemporaries, few of whom had traveled to the United States or even to Europe, as Freyre had done in the early and late 1920s. The mere length of the book, as Thomas Skidmore has noted, put off established publishers. *Casa-grande* probably drew on all the then-published historical writing on Brazil in Portuguese, English, and French, as well as on comparative medical and anatomical studies, travel literature, ethnographies of different parts of Africa, and published colonial reports, plus a sprinkling of quasi-ethnographic personal reminiscence. Already at that age, Freyre, though himself from an urban professional, rather than landholding, family, deployed his trademark patrician assuredness. He invented his own genre—a propensity for ex cathedra pronouncements and self-glorification, combined with an intellectual curiosity at once undisciplined and creative.

At first, as the essays in the volume edited by Lund and McNee often remind us, Freyre's book had the effect of an earthquake, though admittedly in a very small intellectual elite. In 2001, Antonio Candido recalled a friend from the left-wing branch of a prominent political family going to the mirror on reading it and musing, "Acho que sou mulato!" (Lund and McNee, 10). Lilia Schwarz elaborates by reminding us in the same

collection that the Estado Novo itself fell under the influence of Freyre, implementing official projects in which *mestiçagem* (racial mixture) was recognized as “a verdadeira nacionalidade,” Brazil’s true nationality (314), although on this one might also find contrary evidence, notably the notorious case of the sculpture “O homem brasileiro,” by Celso Antonio.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever individuals’ disposition toward the black population and the poor, the climate of public debate in Brazil at the time started from the assumption that the black skin and African descent of a large portion of the population was in some sense a problem; Freyre on the contrary told them it was a solution. Freyre had little knowledge of or interest in the recent European immigrants who were flooding into the South; for him the Portuguese were not white at all, their *mestiço* heritage shaped by centuries of Arab presence among them. Clearly *Casa-grande* is written by a confident member of the Northeastern elite, but is it written by a “white man”? In a telling passage quoted by Neil Larsen (Lund and McNee, 382), Freyre evokes almost voluptuously the black influence in “everything that is a sincere expression of life . . . the tenderness, the exaggerated mimicry, the Catholicism that indulges our senses, music, language, gait and the lullabies . . . the *escrava* who nursed us and fed us and told us our first children’s horror stories, the *mulata* who so deliciously extracted the first splinter from our feet and, finally and inevitably, the woman who initiated us into the delights of physical love and gave us our first sense of male completeness, to the creaking sounds of the chaise lounge” (Freyre, 301, my translation). Who is—or are—this “us”? The writer is reflected impersonally in the text like the artist in Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*.

Freyre is often credited—or blamed—for coining and spreading the myth of “racial democracy.” It is repeated with particular insistence, near unanimity, and no small dose of righteous indignation among those whom Brazilian writers describe as *Brazilianists*—not, note, *Brazilianistas*—as well as by several Brazilian authorities. In a 1996 article, George Reid Andrews (the quality of whose work on race in Brazil is otherwise not in doubt) seems to refer the reader to the 1946 English translation of *Casa-grande* in support of the claim that Freyre coined the term, but I could find no such

1. Although commissioned for the modernist Ministry of Education building in Rio de Janeiro, this sculpture was cancelled by Gustavo Capanema, Vargas’s powerful minister of education, because the sculptor did not agree with Capanema’s Arian conception of the typical Brazilian. The work, which was meant to be twelve meters high, was never finished, and the model was destroyed in what some regard as a suspicious accident. The correspondence and an instructive newspaper article from the *Correio da Manhã* (23 September 1938) are reproduced in Mauricio Lissovsky and Paulo Sergio Moraes de Sá, *Colunas da educação: a construção do Ministério da Educação e Saúde* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, 1996), 224–237.

thing on the page quoted!<sup>2</sup> More recently, to take but one of innumerable examples, Robin Sheriff states that *Casa-grande* “reconstituted the country as a *democracia racial*.”<sup>3</sup> Thankfully, in a 2002 paper published on the Internet, Levy Cruz provides the results of what must be the most exhaustive effort so far to uncover whether and when Freyre used the expression.<sup>4</sup> The results are a testimony to Cruz’s archaeological talents on the one hand, and unfortunately, on the other, to the capacity of academics sometimes to believe and propagate a malign fiction, like a slow-motion lynch mob. Cruz first reminds us not only that the belief has been attributed to Freyre that Brazil is a racial democracy, but also that he has been blamed for perpetuating racial discrimination in Brazil on account of the false consciousness engendered by the myth! But then he goes on to show decisively that there is *not a single instance* where Freyre stated that Brazil is a racial democracy. He did state several times, though mostly in lectures and statements for English-speaking audiences, that Brazil might be on a path toward an “ethnic or racial democracy,” and in the English translation of *Sobrados e mucambos*, he inserted in an additional final sentence the statement that “Brazil is becoming more and more a racial democracy, characterized by an almost unique combination of diversity and unity.”<sup>5</sup> The nearest he gets in Portuguese is in an interview from 1980 published very obscurely in Recife,<sup>6</sup> when he says that Brazil is far from a pure democracy in any sense (“racial, social or political”) but “is the nearest thing in the world to a racial democracy.” It is worth noting that here he uses the expression *democracia relativa*, which had figured in the vocabulary of the military government during its prolonged and tortuous “decompression” of the mid- to late 1970s. Freyre might have helped his own reputation on the left—if that had mattered to him—and among social scientists generally had he taken more care with his use of terms; but let us not forget how

2. George Reid Andrews, “Brazilian Racial Democracy, 1900–90: An American Counterpoint,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (1996): 487. At the expense of appearing pedantic, while Andrews says that Freyre directly contrasted Brazilian racial democracy to Nazi racism, the original text in fact refers to *social democracy*. See Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), xii. This is a reproduction in paperback of the second edition of Samuel Putnam’s translation of 1946, with (yet another) new preface by Freyre and an introduction by David Maybury-Lewis. For Andrews’s work on race, see his *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil 1888–1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

3. Robin Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race, and Racism in Urban Brazil* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 5.

4. Levy Cruz, “Democracia racial: uma hipótese” (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, 2002), <http://www.fundaj.gov.br/tpd/128.html>.

5. Gilberto Freyre, *The Mansions and the Shanties: The Making of Modern Brazil*, trans. Harriet de Onís (New York: Knopf, 1963), 431.

6. Lêda Rivas, *Parceiros do tempo* (Recife: Editora Universitaria, 1980). This interview is reproduced in part by Cruz.

much he became a political animal, more concerned to navigate different currents of opinion than to achieve analytical coherence. Indeed, one source of the “racial democracy” imbroglio is his practice of projecting different personae at home and abroad: a study of Freyre’s management of his translations and of his persona outside Brazil (*para inglês ver* . . .) would be of great interest. Overall, however, one can well sympathize with Hermano Vianna’s outburst about “the myth of the myth of racial democracy” (quoted in Lund and McNee, 40).

Already in 1978, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in an article in Brazilian *Vogue* no less, reflected the transition in Freyre’s reputation and in his own career, as Cardoso, at the time one of the most representative figures of a *marxisant* generation of intellectuals, was migrating from the academic to the political arena. Despite reservations about Freyre’s hidden prejudices and reactionary inclinations, Cardoso expresses admiration for him as a “myth-maker”: *Casa-grande*, he follows, “will continue to sail on . . . borne along on the sails of our own mythologized idea of ourselves, of Brazil, which is *necessary* to shape our national identity.”<sup>7</sup> In retrospect, we can see how these remarks, rediscovered by Raúl Antelo (in Lund and McNee, 74), foreshadow a softening of the ideological atmosphere and also the beginnings of a concern with issues of identity that has marked Brazilian and most Latin American debates since about 1990. Was Cardoso himself not the first president of Brazil to recognize the reality of racial discrimination and to give official support to affirmative action?<sup>8</sup>

So Brazilian social scientists began once again to evoke Freyre’s name with respect, giving rise to new commentaries<sup>9</sup> and to the monumental scholarly edition of *Casa-grande* edited by Giucci, Rodríguez Larreta and Nery da Fonseca, complete with all the prefaces, a history of the book’s reception at home and abroad, and contributions from leading Brazilians such as Darcy Ribeiro as well as from Roland Barthes, Fernand Braudel, and Lucien Febvre. There have been some noteworthy U-turns: Peter Fry issued a mea culpa after twenty-five years; Stuart Schwartz, the historian of slavery in the Northeast did likewise.<sup>10</sup> The “*esquerda festiva*” of the

7. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “A espera de *Grande indústria e favela*,” *Senhor/Vogue*, no. 2 (May 1978): 115–121, original emphasis.

8. Mala Htun, “From Racial Democracy to Affirmative Action: Changing State Policy on Race in Brazil,” *Latin American Research Review* 39, no. 1 (2004): 60–89.

9. Notably Ricardo Benzaquen de Araújo: *Guerra e Paz: Casa Grande e Senzala e a obra de Gilberto Freyre nos anos 30* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1994); and Joaquim Falcão and Rosa Barboza de Araújo, eds., *O imperador das idéias: Gilberto Freyre em questão* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Roberto Marinho/Top Books, 2001).

10. Peter Fry, “‘Feijoada e soul food’ 25 anos depois,” in *A persistência da raça: ensaios antropológicos sobre o Brasil e a África austral* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005), 147–148; Stuart Schwartz, “Gilberto Freyre e a história colonial: uma visão otimista do Brasil,” in *O imperador das idéias*, 101–117.

1960s and 1970s, as Carlos Lacerda sardonically called them,<sup>11</sup> are making their peace with this “other” they once despised and dismissed as a defender of the old order. Lund and McNee’s volume reflects this well, for it is written by authors from a later generation who with perhaps one exception seem quite comfortable with Freyre: if they disagree or criticize, they do so without a sharp edge of political or generational rancor—unlike the Brazilianists mentioned above.

Freyre shares with the other great theorists of Brazil the idea of hybridity and of the porousness, the almost nonexistence, in their country of the public–private divide. Lilia Schwarz (McNee and Lund, 325) enumerates the instances when Buarque de Holanda, DaMatta, José de Souza Martins, and Roberto Schwarz, like Freyre, emphasized this, together with the indistinct legal status of the individual in the face of the state or law, especially in Brazil’s more unruly, or simply unruly, hinterland. All these fuzzy frontiers, now so fashionable in writing on issues of identity, of literary style, and of sexuality, can, metonymically at least, be conjoined to Freyre, who managed somehow to sing the praises of mixture while making promiscuous use of ethnic, racial, national, and geographical labeling.

On the other hand, the privatization of power—a central issue in the understanding of Brazilian politics at all levels for generations and especially in Freyre’s own Northeast—goes unmentioned in an account that sees in the patriarchal family the crucible of a civilized level of racial coexistence but omits the *coronelismo* of patriarchal politics. It is not by accident that Freyre does not, in *Casa-grande*, translate his virulent and detailed denunciation of the effects of the *latifundio* and its accompanying monoculture on nutrition, health, and ecology (70, 104–105) into a description, let alone analysis, of the mechanisms of state power that perpetuated it. That would have come too close to an attribution of responsibility to identifiable political families, threatening his status as Recife’s supra-political guru.

When he came to write *Casa-grande*, Freyre had no doubts about the existence of racial differences of habit, character, and attitudes to nature, and regarded these (after Franz Boas) as the cultural product of long-term climatic, economic, and ecological adaptations, miscegenations, conquests, and migrations, adopting something like a folk ethnology. Lund and McNee speak in their introduction of the notions of race and culture playing hide-and-seek (10), and in their collection several commentators describe Freyre’s approach as “neo-lamarckian.” Laura Cavalcante Padilha remarks how in later chapters of *Casa-grande* Freyre portrays a hierarchy of slaves in which more recent arrivals are kept in the fields while “the

11. Carlos Lacerda, *Depoimento*, ed. Claudio Lacerda Paiva (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1977), 196.

cleanest, the prettiest and the strongest" are "promoted" to domestic service (150). But Freyre utterly and eloquently rejected the use of cultural differences to explain, let alone justify, differences in economic well-being and achievement. He also repeatedly denounced the evils of slavery and monoculture, and readily acknowledged the deleterious effect of slave experience on the post-abolition fate of the black populations of the Western Hemisphere. Today's readers must reconcile Freyre's references to sexual abuse and sadism as an inevitable corollary of slavery, to the prevalence of syphilis, to the atrocious nutrition of the Brazilian family, and to the nefarious effects of land concentration in the Northeast (compared to São Paulo) with his other remarks about the intimacy and lubricity of relations in the slave house. They must also absorb the idea that Portuguese men were oversexed in any case and captive to an image inherited from their contact with the Saracens: "the delicious brown-skinned and dark-eyed Moorish enchantress enveloped in sexual mysticism" (38). As Ricardo Benzaquen de Araújo observes, Freyre knowingly leaves these contradictions unresolved (Freyre, 1058).

The book by Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke about Freyre's early intellectual development continues this relatively recent scholarly interest and brings both new material and new perspectives to the subject. It probably also sets a new standard in Brazilian intellectual history because of the thoroughness of the research and the author's remarkable talent as a highly erudite literary detective ranging across European and Brazilian literature. This is not the first time Pallares-Burke has applied this talent: she once demonstrated that large chunks of a magazine of social commentary published in Recife in the 1830s and 1840s were in fact lifted from the eighteenth-century London *Spectator*, and she also showed that the first translation published in Brazil of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) was in fact a translation of an anonymous—and itself partially plagiarized—pamphlet of 1739!<sup>12</sup>

The fascination of Pallares-Burke's book lies in its intricate documentation of the sequence of Freyre's influences and, as a result, its demonstration of their incoherence; for they emerge as uneven, haphazard, and ill-digested. The intellectual trajectory uncovered by Pallares-Burke—which resembles island-hopping more than a trajectory—casts Freyre in a new light by questioning the whole notion of influence in his work: do the many authors whom he mentions really influence him by affecting his approach and his analysis, or is he rather invoking them and sprinkling his text with their names? Freyre quotes Spengler, Fustel de Coulanges, Her-

12. Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke, "A Spectator in the Tropics: A Case Study in the Production and Reproduction of Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36 (1994): 676–701; *Nisia Floresta, O carapuceiro e outros ensaios de tradução cultural* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 1996).



bert Spencer, and Weber incidentally, never Marx! Certainly no one has yet claimed that he engages with any of them in an even half-sustained way. But Pallares-Burke does establish the leading influences: certain Brazilians, notably the antiracist anthropologist Roquette-Pinto and the diplomat Oliveira Lima, did encourage him intellectually and career-wise. Franz Boas was the first to shift him from racial to cultural labeling, and Freyre loved invoking him and his period as his student. Pallares-Burke makes a major discovery about the role of the sad but erudite German scholar Ruediger Bilden, whom Freyre met in New York. Bilden had the grand idea of writing a comparative study of slavery and race in the Americas, but his career never took off; he did, however, teach Freyre the importance of the economic basis of plantation society. Freyre emerges from Pallares-Burke's book as a voracious but indiscriminate reader and listener, easily moved by the opinions and works of individuals who appealed to him.

As is well known, Freyre left Brazil for the United States at the age of eighteen, studying at the Baptist Baylor University in Texas and proceeding in 1921 to Columbia, where he spent two years before going to England, France, and then Portugal. At twenty he was a correspondent for the *Diário de Pernambuco*. His intellectual trajectory is traced with care bordering on devotion by Pallares-Burke, who has revealed the turning point in Freyre's life represented by his brief period as a sort of intellectual tourist in Oxford in 1922—hence the book's title. She pinpoints one or two moments when Freyre steered himself away from his own prior assumptions and those prevalent in Brazil in the 1920s. One apparent turning point was the scandal over the award of the Prix Goncourt to the Martiniquais writer René Maran in 1922, which Freyre wrote about in the *Diário de Pernambuco* even before traveling from New York to Paris, expressing his indignation at the bigoted opposition to the verdict, praising the book's anti-colonial and antiracist message, yet describing the author as a “a pure black man with such a snub nose that people are astonished to see a *pince-nez* perched upon it!” (305). Yet four years later he was still expressing admiration for the traditions of the Deep South, writing with benevolence about the Ku Klux Klan and its colorful rituals in the name, *inter alia*, of showing Pernambuco sugar planters the way to technical progress. This twenty-something-year-old was in a state of constant intellectual *disponibilité*.

In fact, Freyre's reminiscences seem designed both to demonstrate that he had experienced a type of conversion away from a prejudiced outlook and also to confuse us all as to when it happened. For example, both Pallares-Burke and Lund and McNee in their introductory essay recall Freyre's account of a moment, in about 1922, when he saw a group of Brazilian sailors in Brooklyn—or was it on the Brooklyn Bridge? At the time, as he later recalled in the opening pages of the preface to *Casa-grande*,



they had reminded him of an (unknown) American visitor's description of the "fearfully mongrel aspect" of the Brazilian population, looking like "caricatures of men, . . . the sort of thing to which miscegenation led." But later, in retrospect, he realized that they were just "sickly," which is not a very pleasant image either.<sup>13</sup> He writes as if the guilt associated with that perception had fixed it in his memory, and only the teaching of Boas and the courage of Roquette-Pinto in standing up to the Arianists at a congress in Rio in 1929 had brought him to realize the difference between race and culture.

Indeed, the incident so preoccupied him that, in accordance with his shameless habit of rewriting his publications in the light of changing dispositions and fashions, the "bando de marinheiros nacionais" disembarking from a ship "pela neve mole de Brooklyn" in *Casa-grande* became, in the English translation of 1946, "a group of Brazilian seamen . . . crossing Brooklyn Bridge": a painterly evocation of dark-skinned men set against the soft white snow is swapped for a harsh monument to modernity. But Pallares-Burke (273) believes that the true occasion was the inauguration of a statue to Simón Bolívar in Central Park, where a group of mulattoes and *cafuzos* (individuals of mixed Amerindian and African descent) sat incongruously amidst the assembled dignitaries! It is impossible to tell whether the changes in the story were just a whim or reflect a more considered intent.

Freyre's opposition to ideas of racial superiority, or to notions about the degenerative effects of race mixture, coexisted with his attachment to "keeping in keeping," the desirability for a society of remaining in tune with its heritage. Thus, he would express reservations about the aloofness of German immigrants vis-à-vis Brazil's tradition of mixture, and indeed his attraction to Southern supremacists in the United States was due to a perception of them as upholders of tradition. This nostalgic inclination is related to two sides of Freyre's Victorianism evoked by the title of Pallares-Burke's book: on the one hand William Morris's advocacy of a society changed by a reevaluation and reconstruction of its past, and on the other hand a decadent style of Victorianism—Walter Pater, the Pre-Raphaelites—that could be described as an offshoot of *l'art pour l'art* sensibility, premodernist and self-indulgent, and glorifying of the subjective response as the core of art appreciation. The two point in different directions, as does Benzaquen de Araújo, who sees in Freyre's "chatty style" ("o tom de conversa, de bate-papo") a device enabling him to take the opposed positions we have mentioned or, stated more politely perhaps, giving an "antinomic character" to his arguments.<sup>14</sup> Yet Freyre also fell, slightly earlier but enduringly, under the spell of the very different Lafcadio Hearn,

13. Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, xvi–xvii.

14. Benzaquen de Araújo, *Guerra e Paz*, 208.

a travel writer and social commentator of remarkable talent, who stood up to the preconceptions and prejudices of his time, wrote enthusiastically and feelingly, but without sentimentalism, about blacks and mulattoes in the United States and in the French Caribbean, took sides against injustice, and eventually lived for many years as a professor in Japan. Hearn shared absolutely nothing with Pater.

*Casa-grande* turned out to be the first of what is known as Freyre's trilogy, including *Sobrados e mucambos* (1936) and *Ordem e progresso* (1959), books frequently passed over, which further reassessments will have to consider in detail. To judge by the fertility of recent research, this reassessment is bound to bring surprises. Indeed, Pallares-Burke's husband, Peter Burke, is the only contributor to Lund and McNee's volume who ranges across Freyre's entire life work—most of the others having stopped at *Casa-grande*, save Schwarz who focuses on *Novo Mundo nos trópicos*. Coming from a long and deep involvement in European cultural history, and unique among historians for the range of his interests and contributions—from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation, to the iconography of Louis XIV and far beyond—Burke found the multifaceted aspect of Freyre's historical sociology rewarding and creative. It is no accident that he is the most unqualified admirer in this volume, because it is social scientists who find Freyre so slippery. Burke, who was a pioneer in convincing English-language historians of the merits of *Annales*-style total history, admires Freyre's unrestrained inquisitiveness about any aspect of life: cuisine, dress, language, symbolism, religion, even gait. He compares him to the great pioneers of European cultural history, Huizinga and Burckhardt, and notes how he foreshadows later figures such as Braudel and Philippe Ariès, the historian of the family. Interestingly, the leading British social historian Asa Briggs warmly acknowledges Freyre's influence in leading him to pay attention to the details of domestic life, such as jewelry and furniture.<sup>15</sup>

But Freyre's randomness and lack of discipline, the propensity to indulge in those "antinomies" rather than resolving them, infuriates Brazilianists like Skidmore and David Maybury-Lewis.<sup>16</sup> Certainly one glaring omission from his theory is a sustained consideration of religion: in *Casa-grande* it is simply absent; ignored are the Muslim heritage of the slaves from West Africa, the Yoruba cults, and all those traditions that, despite the "Afro" label, were "deaficanized" over the centuries, as Schwarz says (315). Yet these cults provide a vast field for the exploration of cultural

15. Asa Briggs, "Gilberto Freyre and the Study of Social History," in *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs*, vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985).

16. Thomas Skidmore, "Raízes de Gilberto Freyre," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34 (2002): 1–20; David Maybury-Lewis, introduction, *The Masters and the Slaves*, reproduced in *Casa-grande e senzala*, critical edition, 1111–1116.

hybridity, cultural *mestiçagem*, transculturation, and allied concepts arising from Freyre's concerns. The self-evident and self-conscious borrowing of Catholic symbols by the cults, the occasional introduction of "Afro" practices and personages into churches, the evident "dual use," especially among Evangelicals, of practices like exorcism, and the corresponding belief in the reality of possession by an evil spirit—all this and doubtless much more would be powerful grist to the Luso-tropical mill. Instead we find only two chapters in *Ordem e progresso* that focus almost entirely on the institutional church. The reason for this apparent facultative blindness may well be that, as a principally urban phenomenon, the cults stand apart from the agenda of *Casa-grande*. But the omission may also reflect Freyre's insensitivity to the self-awareness of race and racial origins associated with the cults.

Modern Brazilian anthropologists—such as Fry in his famous essay "Feijoada e soul-food," Beatriz Gois Dantas in describing the elaborate self-projections of *mães de santo* in the urban settings of Sergipe and Bahia, or Patricia Birman in her writings on the interface of possession cults and Pentecostalism—go to great lengths to explore the reflexiveness of African identity and of Africa-derived religious involvement in Brazil.<sup>17</sup> For Freyre, in contrast, racial mixture is an unconscious affair, a matter of instinct, especially among slaves and their descendants, who are given no protagonic role at all: strategies and purposes are the preserve of the *senhores de engenho*, the slave owners, bishops, and so on. No wonder *can-domblé* barely caught his notice.

Freyre avoided any intellectual arena save that which he could control, namely his own state-funded Instituto Joaquim Nabuco in Recife, the pages of the *Diário de Pernambuco*, where he was able to publish anything he wished, and the endless prefaces in which he systematically denigrated any who criticized him. He was a highly political animal, but not one who would align himself with a particular ideology or party—at least not in public, keeping on good terms with governments of all stripes. For long more admired abroad than at home, he had few students (though many underlings), did not inspire a school of thought, and for decades was attacked or at best ignored by Brazilian academics, especially the postwar generations of historians and social scientists of the University of São Paulo. They knew little of the Northeast, which inspired Freyre's macro-model of Brazilian social relations, and through to the 1980s, they tended to espouse an economics-based approach to history; for many of them Freyre was no more than the pompous defender of an unjust and discriminatory social order. It is perhaps not by chance that the more appreciative

17. Beatriz Gois Dantas, *Vovó Nagô e Papai Branco: usos e abusos da África no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1988); Patricia Birman, "Cultos de possessão e pentecostalismo no Brasil: Passagens," *Religião e Sociedade* 17 (1996): 90–108.

Southern assessments have come from Rio—namely from Benzaquen de Araújo and the compilers of the critical edition gathered around Giucci. For his part, Freyre had already from the 1930s regarded São Paulo as enemy territory. But he was just a little too lazy as a thinker, aloof from the tussle of intellectual argument.

The books here reviewed could hardly have come into the world under more contrasting circumstances. The critical edition is a triumphant start to what could be a wonderful new international series of modern Latin-American classics, so long as the sponsoring governments stay the course. Lund and McNee's collection arrives in an eccentric presentation which will not help to get its authors' often valuable contributions into the public eye. It is written mostly in Portuguese, but with three out of sixteen chapters in Spanish, and published in-house by the Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana at the University of Pittsburgh. Pallares-Burke's book, in contrast, comes crowned in glory, having won the Premio da Academia Brasileira de Letras and the Premio Jabuti. If Freyre is emerging in a clearer light, it is thanks to Pallares-Burke's magisterial biography of his early years. It is far from a hagiography, but on the contrary remarkably judicious, and avoids the temptation of polemics, which its subject invites. We can only hope that she continues with further volumes on Freyre's later life.