Song of Exile
Enslen, Joshua Alma

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Chapter Four

“Onde canta o periquito”
The First Republic to the Vargas Era
(1889–1945)

From 1889 to 1945, Brazil passed through multiple regime changes, transitioning first from a nineteenth-century empire (1822–89) to a democratic state, known as the First Republic (1889–1930), and then to two authoritarian regimes, both under Getúlio Vargas (1930-1937; 1937-1945). In hindsight, the rise of authoritarianism in Brazil, a country already accustomed to imperial rule, seems almost inevitable. Vargas, a retired colonel and the Governor of Rio Grande do Sul, after failing to win the presidential elections of 1930, seized power with the support of a coalition of state-run militias. Re-asserting his rule in 1937, he stayed in control of the country continuously until 1945. Under the premise of a possible communist takeover, Vargas preempted the open elections planned for 1938, proclaiming Brazil’s Estado Novo in 1937, and the period between 1937 and 1945 is not just considered authoritarian, but dictatorial. Eventually, Vargas allowed for open elections, which saw the victory of former General Eurico Gaspar Dutra. Then, in 1950, Vargas regained power, this time elected democratically, only to commit suicide in 1954.

Authoritarianism was not unique to Brazil at the time. In fact, dictatorships were quite common throughout Latin America in the mid-twentieth century, a predictable regional response to a complex set of internal and external factors. Namely, in Brazil, there was the propensity for strong-arm military intervention in domestic affairs, a precedent set by the coup that ousted Dom Pedro II in 1889. But, even after the military handed over power to Prudente de Morais in 1894, Brazil’s first elected civilian president, the nation failed to establish a strong democracy due to the prevailing interests of oligarchs, their influence in rigged elections, and the large economic disparities among the regions (Skidmore 102–16). Then came the Great War, the Great Depression, and
the perceived failure of Western capitalism, along with the rise of alternative ideologies, especially communism, to further erode an already weak democratic state (Skidmore 102–16).

The political turmoil notwithstanding, modern-day Brazil, in terms of culture, identity, and demography, has its roots in this important post-imperial era. Accompanied by the mass adoption of the radio and intense migration to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, especially from the Northeast and abroad, one of the key questions facing Brazilian intellectuals at the time was the articulation of a national identity that could take into account Brazil’s diversity. Unlike in years past, intellectuals in the early twentieth century sought to celebrate the nation’s cultural milieu as a strength. Most famously formalized in the 20s and 30s by the anthropologist Gilberto Freyre and the Modernist poet Oswald de Andrade through their theories of luso-tropicalism and cultural anthropophagy respectively, the dominant idea was that Brazil was a stronger nation because of, and not despite, syncretism and miscegenation. During the 30s and 40s, this trend in identity politics would be normalized by Vargas through official state-sponsored cultural programs “designed to,” not only homogenize the culture, but to “help soften the dictatorship’s image of repression and censorship” (Skidmore 119).

The texts under consideration in this chapter shed further light on this crucial time in national history as they adapt Gonçalves Dias’s poem to a variety of contexts and forms. Played on the radio as popular song and published in periodicals across the country, the poem’s intertexts from the period evince a vibrant dialogue through which Brazilians become ever more mindful of their role in constructing an identity as a single nation. Gonçalves Dias’s poem is evoked to exalt the nation in sambas during Carnaval. It is used to promote consumerist culture through newspaper advertisements and for suggesting potential plays for the popular “jogo do bicho,” a gambling game begun in Rio which quickly spread across the country, while the trend of parodying the original as political satire also continued in earnest. Commentators of the burgeoning soccer culture, a national pastime with origins in the period, borrowed too from the poem to tell news of victories and defeats, especially for São Paulo’s Palmeiras team. “Canção do exílio” even found itself translated into other languages (Esperanto, Túpi, et al), and parodied in “caipira” and the satirical
pseudo-Italian “português macarrôncico.” The Modernists, following O. de Andrade’s lead, also articulated a number of canonical responses, guaranteeing the poem’s continued presence in literature throughout the twentieth century.

Among the variations from the 1889–1945 period, there is possibly no better example with which to begin than the national anthem. With lyrics written by the poet Joaquim Osório Duque Estrada in 1909, and music composed almost a century earlier in the 1820s by Francisco Manoel da Silva, the national anthem was officially adopted by the Brazilian government in 1922 on the eve of the centennial of independence (Decreto No. 15.671). One of only four national symbols ratified by federal law (Lei No. 5.700), including the flag, the presidential seal, and the Brazilian coat of arms, the anthem begins by narrating the “Grito do Ipiranga,” the speech-act that symbolically separated Brazil from Portugal on September 7, 1822. Along the banks of the Ipiranga River, Dom Pedro I of Brazil (born Dom Pedro IV of Portugal), son of Portuguese Emperor Dom João VI, surrounded by high-ranking state officials, ushered in a new era for his country, defiantly declaring, “Independência ou morte!” In the national anthem, Duque Estrada paints the scene: “Ouviram do Ipiranga as margens plácidas, / De um povo heróico o brado retumbante, / E o sol da Liberdade, em raios fúlgidos, / Brilhou no céu da Pátria nesse instante.” Praising the nation and all things in it, the anthem goes on to describe Brazil’s incomparable natural beauty, its brave people, and its destiny to be counted among the greatest nations of the world: “Gigante pela própria natureza, / És belo, és forte, impávido colosso, / E o teu futuro espelha essa grandeza / Terra adorada, / Entre outras mil, / És tu, Brasil, / Ó Pátria amada.”

The anthem also reiterates the central position of “Canção do exílio” within the national imaginary, seamlessly dovetailing its lines into the second stanza of the second verse: “Do que a terra, mais garrida, / Teus risonhos, lindos campos têm mais flores; / ‘Nossos bosques têm mais vida’ / ‘Nossa vida’ no teu seio ‘mais amores.’” Borrowing from the only verse in “Canção do exílio” that employs the first person, plural possessive (“nossos bosques,” “nossa vida”), these lines remind Brazilians not only of the beauty of their land, but also of their collective responsibility for it. In contrast to the original, however, Duque Estrada goes beyond the “cá” / “lá” binary, claiming that Brazil is not only more beautiful
than Portugal, but the most beautiful of all nations: “Do que a terra, mais garrida / Teus risonhos, lindos campos têm mais flores.” The anthem also personifies the nation throughout, using possessive adjectives based on the informal “tu”: “Teus risonhos, lindos campos,” “no teu seio” (emphasis added). In this way, Gonçalves Dias’s individual lament is transformed into a communal experience, turning the eyes of Brazilians of all backgrounds toward the nation which calls them to the singular task of bringing about its grand prefigured destiny.

The inclusion of these lines from “Canção do exílio” in the national anthem further entrenched Gonçalves Dias’s already immensely popular poem in the culture, and at a time when that same culture was becoming more homogenous. Today, it is law that children ages 6–14 sing the anthem in unison once a week in school (Lei No. 12.301). But, in the 30s and 40s, not many years after Duque Estrada’s lyrics had become official, there was already an educational program that had children singing its lyrics in unison by the thousands along with other patriotic and folkloric tunes (Ferraz 164). Appointed as Getúlio Vargas’s director of music education, the modernist composer Heitor Villa-Lobos developed and implemented a nationwide program that gathered well-rehearsed schoolchildren in “concentrações orfeônicas” to sing the praises of their nation to the public (Ferraz 164). According to Villa-Lobos, these events served an important role in the education of young Brazilians during the populist and hyper-nationalist Vargas regime (1930–45): “Entoando as canções e os hinos comemorativos da Pátria … a infância brasileira vai se impregnando aos poucos desse espírito de brasilitade que no futuro deverá marcar todas as suas ações e todos os seus pensamentos” (qtd. in Ferraz 177). Through the success of this program and others during the Vargas period related to the “Reforma Campos” and the subsequent “Reforma Capanema,” Brazil’s educational program became highly standardized across its expansive regions, reinforcing uniformity in the national culture (Ferraz 167). In the words of Gabriel Ferraz, “Vargas fomentou, por meio de uma política nacionalista e populista, que promovia ‘brasilitade’ e os sentidos de dever cívico e disciplina, a ideia de uma sociedade homogênea, onde todos eram importantes para a edificação da nação” (163).

Among other Vargas initiatives to unify the culture was an effort to promote samba and Carnaval. By 1930, when Vargas
took power, the popular Brazilian musical genre and pre-Lenten festival already stood center stage in Rio’s cultural scene. Today, the Carnaval industry employs thousands year-round in response to the demands of the “foliões,” or party-goers, and many other Brazilian capitals, such as São Paulo and Salvador da Bahia, also host millions of tourists and locals alike during the celebration. But, the Vargas regime “was the first federal government to promote samba schools and the Rio parades,” seeking to fortify “the nation’s new sense of its identity as at least partly Afro-Brazilian” (Skidmore 119).

Regarding samba, the official genre of Carnaval, decades before assuming the role of director of musical education under Vargas, Heitor Villa-Lobos was already interested in its rise as a purely Brazilian art form. In the 1910s, in contrast to the elites of previous generations, such as Rui Barbosa, who had disparaged its popular rhythms, modernists like Villa-Lobos, Mario de Andrade, O. de Andrade, and Raul Bopp were witnesses to samba’s evolution as it made its way from the shantytowns to the main thoroughfares of Rio (Fernandes 40). These modernists and others focused on rearticulating a Brazilian identity for the twentieth century obsessed less with the nation’s lack of European-ness, or whiteness, recognizing the important role that samba, with African, indigenous, and European roots, could play in a hybrid American nation in search of its post-slavery, post-colonial identity.

One location in Rio particularly important to the popularization of samba was the home of Hilaria de Almeida, or Tia Ciata, “a gathering point for the musical talent that had migrated from Northern Brazil. At [her] parties, there was dancing in the sitting room, samba at the back of the house, and batuque in the yard” (Gilman 69). One of the many collaborations to result from these gatherings was “Pelo telefone,” which “tells a story of stolen love and a telephone conversation with the chief of police” (Gilman 70). This song, widely regarded as Brazil’s first recorded “samba,” was registered in 1916 by Donga, who was a mainstay at Tia Ciata’s parties along with Sinhô, João da Baiana, and Pixinguinha, and was a huge hit at Rio’s Carnaval the following year in 1917 (Gilman 70). Although “Pelo telefone” contains no traces of “Canção do exílio,” it serves as a key point of historical reference in Rio de Janeiro’s early twentieth-century music scene. Samba, through recordings and radio, would go on to deeply influence national culture.
In those early years of samba, a musical variation of Gonçalves Dias’s poem also made its debut at Rio’s Carnaval. Published in the *Correio da manhã* on January 30, 1910, an article describing the groups to be seen at that year’s festival, their floats, costumes, and songs, includes the playful lyrics of “As sete palmeiras.” The lyrics were an ode to the purported mystical powers of its colorful author Múcio Teixeira, poet-diplomat turned prophet, who would spend his time fortune telling and miracle working beneath the shade of “the seven palms” of the Mangue canal: “‘Minha terra tem palmeiras, / Onde canta o sabiá,’ / Algumas são verdadeiras / Mas, outras, quá … quá … quá … quá … / Por isso eu só quero as sete / Do Mangue, ó lá lá, lá lá … / Muita gente há que promete, / Mas não dá, não dá, não dá, não dá …” (“As sete” 8). In an article from 2017, Paulo Henrique Pergher writes that the prolific Teixeira, largely forgotten by literary critics today, using the pseudonym Barão Ergonte, eventually “transformed himself into … a prophet, hierophant … mainly active between 1911 and 1915” when he predicted numerous “national calamities … in editions of his almanac, the *Almanaque do Barão Ergonte*, which he sold alongside other texts and poems” (Pergher par. 10). A divisive figure in Rio’s popular culture, the newspapers from the time boast several references to the author for good and bad.

In 1937, “Canção do exílio” appears again at Carnaval through a popular samba refrain heard echoing in the streets of Rio. In his article, “Minha terra tem palmeiras,” published in *A noite* on January 7, 1937, the young poet Raimundo Magalhães Júnior provides the lyrics, but first he describes the general delirium of Rio during the festival. According to him, even though there were those who disapproved of the excesses of Carnaval, resistance was futile: “O carnaval tem a força das avalanches e das inundações. É inútil tentar opor-lhe obstáculos, em artigos sentenciosos ou discursos cheios de virtude. Ele esmaga tudo, sobrepõe-se a tudo” (1). Not taking a personal position on the moral propriety of Carnaval (“não sou nem contra, nem a favor”), Magalhães Júnior still opines of the music presented during the festival. Complaining tongue-in-cheek that some “sambistas” should be jailed for their unoriginality, he calls their music “plagiary,” “falsely Brazilian,” and repetitive. He then ends the article by including the refrain of a variation of “Canção do exílio,” which he describes in contrast as “uma coisa notável, genial mesmo … entre todo
o imenso acervo de músicas carnaval escasas” (1). Considering that Magalhães Júnior was a poet, it is easy to understand his infatuation with the catchy refrain: “Minha terra tem palmeiras, / Onde canta o sabiá, / Oi, terra boa, / P’ra se farrear” (1). Showing his excitement for this lyric, he closes the article with instructions on how to sing it: “Cantem-na assim, com música de samba … e não haverá brasileiro que se aguente lá por fora.” He then suggests that this verse represents the first time that Gonçalves Dias had “touched” Brazil’s “popular soul,” seemingly unaware of the poem’s already long tradition of responses (1). Possibly more important is the fact that Magalhães Júnior does not recognize in this quatrain João de Barro’s lyrics recorded the previous year.

Carmen Miranda, the Brazilian singer and actress who would become famous for donning the tutti-frutti hat in Hollywood productions, was an active participant in the festival in 1937, being elected as Rainha do Carnaval Inter-clubs (“Um quinteto”). Singing João de Barro’s lyrics, her song “Minha terra tem palmeiras” was also popular that year. Between the choral refrains of “Oh, que terra boa para se farrear!” (slightly misquoted by Magalhães Júnior), Miranda sings variations of Gonçalves Dias’s first two lines: “Minha terra tem lourinhas, moreninhas ‘chocolat,’” “Minha terra tem Bahia, tem Ioiô e tem Iaiá,” “Minha terra tem pitanga, cajá, manga e cambucá” (Miranda). Praising the nation’s ethnic and biological diversity, the mention of “lourinhas” is a reference to the “blondies” of Southern Brazil; the “moreninhas ‘chocolat,”’ a reference to the chocolate-brown skin of the sexualized mulata, most readily associated with Rio; and “Ioiô” and “Iaiá,” colloquial terms for “senhor” and “senhora,” or “sir” and “ma’am,” not only point to the deferent dialect of the Northeast, but also to the nation’s African roots (and legacy of slavery). Then, referring to a variety of fruits found in Brazil, the song like the national anthem and “Canção do exílio” represents the greatness of the nation’s people by its flora, where the exuberance of life in Brazil’s forests is only matched by the Brazilians’ love of life.

By the mid-1930s, a general sense of the purpose of Carnaval and samba, one that continues today in themes of samba school parades, was understood to be the exaltation of national culture. In fact, around the same time as the recording of Carmen Miranda’s “Minha terra tem palmeiras,” Ari Barroso composed his famous “Aquarela do Brasil,” considered the official beginning
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of the “samba exaltação” subgenre. As the name implies, this type of samba places the nation above all else and its nationalist focus not only brought “samba exaltação” closer to “Canção do exílio,” but also conveniently matched with Vargas’s efforts to build “a new model of national identity … in which distinct cultural elements were selected from the already-existing regional models and recombined to form an official national culture” (Gilman 71). In the words of Lisa Shaw, “samba-exaltação,” “characterized by its patriotic lyrics which extolled the virtues of Brazil and its people, to a large extent endorse[d] the Vargas regime’s construction of populist mythology” (163).

Another variation from the period which hints at an additional role for Carnaval in Brazilian culture is a poem entitled “Divagando,” written by the “Bloco dos Acadêmicos Poetas,” described as “Um grupo de acadêmicos [que] não se canta e só se recita” (“Divagando”). Their humorous poem, published in the Jornal das moças for the 1917 Carnaval, opens with a complaint of economic woes, comparing the nation’s troubles to those of Senegal (possibly only because the latter rhymes loosely with “sabiá”): “Eu sei que a minha terra tem palmeiras / Onde canta o famoso sabiá, / E sei também, que aqui fazem-se asneiras / Que nem no Senegal ninguém fará” (“Divagando”). Then, instead of proposing a solution to the nation’s ills, this group of poets, led by “Marquez Humorista,” recommends that the “foliões” should simply forget their troubles and have fun at Carnaval: “Se nós só vemos grandes quebradeiras, / Desde os pampas do sul ao Grá-Pará … Deixemos todos, os males endenicos [sic] / E divirtamo-nos no Carnaval!” (“Divagando”). The group’s position on Carnaval as a time to forget troubles aligns perfectly with the celebration’s popular mythology. In a society exacerbated by economic disparity and inequality, the festival has historically offered a short reprieve from troubles of all types, whether personal or societal, and the overarching myth of Carnaval is that for three days, from Sunday until dawn on Ash Wednesday, all Brazilians are empowered equally to be happy and to partake of the festivities regardless of race, gender, or social class.

In the words of Robert Moser, in his Bakhtinian analysis of the figure of the dead in Brazilian literature, “During carnival, the social order is turned momentarily on its head, a reversal symbolized by the ritual decrowning of the king and the subsequent
crowning of the pauper. It is, in short, the ritual trading of social places” (136). This same Carnaval myth can be found in works of literature from the period, such as João do Rio’s short story “O bebê de tarlatana rosa” or Marques Rebelo’s “Uma senhora.” Dona Quinota, the protagonist of Rebelo’s story, after penny pinching all year long just to enjoy a few days of Carnaval, explains, “A vida era aquilo mesmo: três dias—falava. Mas pensava: por ano” (102). In the denouement of João do Rio’s story, as the dawn of Ash Wednesday shines into the alleyways of downtown Rio, the affair between a masked “bebê” of humble origins and the upper-class Heitor ends tragically when he forcefully removes the girl’s mask, exposing a horrendous physical defect, “uma cabeça sem nariz, com dois buracos sangrentos” (32). In response, the “bebê” exclaims, “Não me batas. A culpa não é minha! Só no Carnaval é que eu posso gozar. Então, aproveito, ouviste? Foste tu que quiseste” (Rio 32). Afterwards, Heitor returns to his comfortable life and parlor friends to recount his elitist cautionary tale while the “bebê,” her mask undone and Carnaval over, fades into the common masses of Rio.

The music of carnaval was not the only place where “Canção do exilio” would find a foothold during the period in question. Among the 74 texts from the period (1889–1945) a multitude of themes and genres abound. Broken down by decade, there are 6 from the 1890s, 15 from the 1900s, 8 from the 1910s, 12 from the 1920s, 24 from the 1930s, and 9 published between 1940 and 1945, this final year seeing not only the end of Vargas’s Estado Novo, but also the end of World War II. On average these 74 texts demonstrate a textual similarity of 35% to the original, which is also the running average among the entire body of 500 (this calculation is based on a String Similarity Test, a computational operation discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6) and the most similar text was written by an author from Recife using the clever pseudonym K. Mões. His 1904 parody “Minha terra” (discussed below) was calculated at 67% similarity to the original.

In terms of narrative modes, of the 74 texts, thirty are classified in the positive, 28 in the negative, and 16 as other. As will be shown, the simultaneous reliance on the text of the original and the refutation of its central message are at the heart of the negative mode and negative variations have appeared in almost every decade since the 1840s. Critical of Brazil, negative texts play an
important role in the intertextual universe of “Canção do exílio.” Promoting an open dialogue about the country’s problems, they counter Gonçalves Dias’s mythical construction with a dose of reality while tracing the contours of the ideas, ideologies, controversies, and practices that have defined the nation over the decades since the original’s publication. All variations in the negative mode fall under the category of parody, described by Linda Hutcheon as “a double process of installing and ironizing” which “signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference” (93).

By way of definition, a variation in the negative mode parodies the original text while maintaining the principal referent, Brazil. Employing Gonçalves Dias’s poem against itself, texts in the negative mode emphasize that Brazil is not the utopia described in “Canção do exílio.” Importantly, however, not all parodies are in the negative mode. There are parodies among the 500 that qualify as being in the positive mode; for example, A.J. Ferreira’s 1847 Portuguese response discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, this response reverses what was originally “there” (Brazil) and “here” (Portugal) so that the Brazilian paradise is transplanted to Portugal. The main purpose of a text in the positive mode, as parody or pastiche, is to convey the same romantic ideal as found in the original, whether for Brazil or some other nation. On the other hand, the purpose of the negative mode is not to replace Gonçalves Dias’s paradise with another, but to empty it and refill it with varying degrees of pessimism. Like the original, texts in the negative mode are about Brazil, but not the same Brazil found in “Canção do exílio.” This other Brazil is a nation instilled with attributes textually mutated from the original so that only shades of Gonçalves Dias’s paradise remain.

K. Môes’s parody from 1904, “Minha terra,” while more textually similar than any other text from the period, is a classic example of the negative mode. Dedicating his variation to the citizens of Rio and Recife, K. Môes writes: “Minha terra não tem nada, / Nem cantos nem sabiá … / Eu nunca vi tanto lixo / Como se encontra por cá. / Nossas praças têm estrelas, / Nossos becos belas flores, / Nossas ruas têm mais gatos / E cães podres que doutores!” In 1907, from Maceió, the capital of Alagoas, another author writes on issues of personal hygiene and municipal sanitation, attesting to the wide attention that the topics received in
Brazil at the time: “Minha terra tem palmeiras / Onde nascem caranguejo / Minha cama tem colchãos [sic] / Onde mato persevejos” (Fute). Many Brazilian capitals, most famously Rio de Janeiro, suffered from similar public health problems and carried out sanitation and remodeling initiatives that would provoke their own variations. Teresa Meade writes that, in the first decade of the 1900s, “a far-reaching and innovative government sanitation, public health and urban renewal program … was the cornerstone of the Brazilian urban elite’s plan to transform Rio de Janeiro” (302). This initiative was an effort “to create a Rio compatible with the needs of merchants, planters, and British traders, at the expense of the city’s laboring poor” (302).

Alcino del Sino in “Charada antiga,” also published in 1904, writes about the extensive and seemingly unending renovations of downtown Rio: “Minha terra tem palmas, / Nem palmeiras há por lá … Minha terra tem apenas / Obras do porto, mais nada / Por outra, tem uma rua / Larga mas não preparada.” In November 1904, the same year that del Sino’s variation was published, Rio’s working class revolted upon learning that smallpox vaccinations would be made mandatory. Thousands marched in the streets and ransacked businesses. One week later, “the capital lay in shambles” (Meade 301). As Meade argues, these citizens had grown tired of the systematic marginalization they suffered for the elite’s economic progress (302). By the time Avenida Rio Branco was complete, the locals who had once inhabited the downtown area would be relocated to the hills of the periphery, populating the city’s nascent favelas, the realities of which, by the end of the twentieth century, would earn their own branch of negative variations discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Although negative responses were prominent in the 1900s, looking back even earlier, the first text to position “Canção do exílio” against itself is “Minha terra natal,” a text about Bahia published in 1853. Approximating Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s treatise on “ociosidade” and “cordialidade,” propounded decades later, this poem considers the dysfunction of Bahia and those responsible. The nobles, the church officials, the government and its deputies, and even the stereotyped women with their gossip as well as the shopkeepers with their greed are spared no quarter in the poet’s eyes for the sad state of Bahian affairs. According to the text, because of neglect and egoism, the nation is unable
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to develop adequately. This idea is one of the most prevalent recurring themes in the negative variations, if not in all Brazilian history. Similar to many other variations, “Minha terra natal” can easily be read as a prolonged extension of Gonçalves Dias’s first line: “Minha terra sendo rica / Tanto deu, que ficou pobre; / Tem terrenos sem cultura / E tem muita gente nobre. / Tem bachareis, como areia, / Uns letrados, e outros não” (“Minha terra natal” 2). The poem continues: “Tem Governos, que não tratam / De nos tirar da ruína. / […] Minha terra tem empresas, / Infeis aos seus contratos […] Minha terra tem uns padres, / Que se chamam formigões, / E mal o Bispo os ordena, / Vão meter-se em eleições; […] Minha terra tem seu berço / Muito ao pé da sepultura; / De todas as profecias / Esta é a mais segura” (2).

Another poem to let us know that all is not “palmeiras” and “sabiás” in nineteenth-century Bahia is João Nepomuceno da Silva’s “Belezas de minha terra.” The poem appears in Belém do Pará’s Gazeta oficial on April 21, 1860. Written for Dom Pedro II on the occasion of his official visit to Salvador, the text spends most of its time praising Bahia in typical fashion, but the reader is told from the beginning that some problems will be exposed as well: “Se narro, senhor defeitos, / Que a minha província tem, / Em seus primores me cumpre / Elogiá-la também” (J. Silva 3). At the end of the poem, he makes his appeal to the emperor with Gonçalves Dias’s “lá” pointing an accusatory finger at the administration: “Minha terra não floresce, / E num paradeiro está, / É porque a proteção / Falta das gentes de lá” (4). The footnote to this last line reads: “Refiro-me às más administrações, que tem tido esta infeliz província, pelo que ela jaz abatida” (4).

The words of S. B. de Holanda contextualize these variations with broad strokes as he contemplates the nature of Portuguese colonization: “Essa exploração dos trópicos não se processou, em verdade, por um empreendimento metódico e racional, não emanou de uma vontade construtora e enérgica: fez-se antes com desleixo e certo abandono. Dir-se-ia mesmo que se fez apesar de seus autores” (Raízes 43). Although a far cry from the defiant desperation of negative texts from later generations, especially from the dictatorship period (1964–85), these two poems about Bahia, the first published only seven years after the original, contain the beginnings of the negative mode, explicitly countering the original with a pessimistic evaluation of a nation with a history of haphazard and uneven development.6
In 1862, an author by the name of Muribeca published, supposedly from St. Petersburg, Russia, a variation about Fortaleza entitled, “Gente dos cajuais alerta!!!: Canção popular.” After opening with the lines, “Minha terra tem um foro, / Onde gira um cajuá / Animal tão bruto assim / Não tem aqui como lá” (3), his poem, complaining of a corrupt judge in the Northeastern capital, also follows closely the wording of Gonçalves Dias’s second stanza to convey the message: “Nosso país é mui quente / Nossa praça faz calor; / Nosso foro todo clama / Contra um juiz oppressor [sic]” (3). Similar poems complain of a general ineptitude among the ruling class in Fortaleza during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Scevalo wrote his “Canção do exílio” in 1873 which directly insults a certain Nogueira family: “Minha terra tem Nogueiras / Onde canta o Manquitó / Tém caninanas (sem rabo) / Das bandas do Cabrobó. / Nosso céu está nublado / Nossas várzeas ressequidas / Por causa dos persevejos / As carnaúbas … roídas” (3). One year later, in 1874, criticisms of the wealthy nobility continue in Recife with João Francisco’s “Canção do exílio,” which contains the line: “Minha terra tem fidalgos / Que mal sabem o B-a Bá” (5). Published in Bahia’s Binóculo: Jornal satírico, chistoso e literário in 1877, Pimpolho’s “Lá vai obra” riffs negatively on Casimiro de Abreu’s “Minha terra” (an 1856 response to Gonçalves Dias’s original): “Todos pintam a sua terra, / Também vou pintar a minha” (2). Afterwards, the author calls a certain unnamed viscount a thief and womanizer: “Das Marinhas da cidade / É o Visconde o primeiro; / Quem quiser apreciá-lo / Venha à terra do dinheiro. / Esse ladrão, esse ínfame, / Que faz tudo quanto quer, / Não respeita a virgindade / Da mais incauta mulher” (2). He then closes with a warning to all nobles who abuse their power: “Mosquitas, Condes, Viscondes, / Barões, Mureiras também, / Todos eles reunidos / Em forças acabar vêm” (2). The century then ends with Lúcio’s “O Bezouro.” Published in 1892 in Rio, already after the abolishment of the Empire, the playful poem directed at the governor of the state of Alagoas, Gabino Suzano de Araújo Besouro, repeats the phrase “Minha terra tem coqueiros / Onde canta o bezourinho” various times (Lúcio 8). In the fourth stanza, Lúcio offers his opinion of the governor: “É Bezouro e é Suzano / Pequenino, zunidor, / É jeitoso para tudo / Menos para Governador” (8).

These nineteenth-century parodies, complaining of bad faith governance and other imperial abuses, remind us of the general
Chapter Four

resistance to the Empire that played out in the Northeast through numerous nineteenth-century revolts. And even though the reign of Dom Pedro II, a generally beloved figure, brought positives to Brazil, especially in terms of intellectual institutions, political discontent grew as the century progressed, eventually leading the nation’s elite to oust the emperor and tentatively embrace an American-style democracy. The Republican Party, established in Brazil in 1871, expressed this sentiment in their manifesto: “National sovereignty can only exist, can only be recognized and practiced in a nation whose parliament has the supreme direction and pronounces the final word in public business … We are from America and we want to be Americans” (qtd. in Skidmore 72).

Two decades later, on November 15, 1889, a group of military officers led by Deodoro Fonseca would exile the Emperor Dom Pedro II and establish Brazil’s First Republic, originally called The United States of Brazil. Five years later, in 1894, the military delivered the government to Prudente de Morais, Brazil’s first democratically elected president.

During the First Republic, a major shift in demographics from rural to urban took hold while at the same time the economy, especially in the Southeast, moved toward greater industrialization. Industrial development had been generally stymied during the nineteenth century by the continuation of colonial policies favoring agricultural exports in exchange for manufactured goods, especially from Great Britain. But in the First Republic, greater economic liberalization and positive legislation quickly incentivized national industry (Hanley 253–58). “It was innovation in corporate law after the fall of the Empire and the declaration of the Republic (1889) that opened up capital markets to industrialists and allowed Brazil’s hallmark large-scale industrialization to develop” (252).

Coincidentally, this was the beginning of a century of intense demographic change and economic development that, in a few short decades, would transform Brazil’s population from majority rural to majority urban (Thery 6). Prompted not only by the abolition of slavery in 1888, but also by unemployment and cyclical droughts, migrants, or “retiradas,” from the agricultural Northeast began moving to the Southeast in search of new beginnings while immigrants from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East also flocked to São Paulo and Rio by the thousands.

A survey of the newspapers and periodicals of the period attest to how “Canção do exílio” accompanied this transition as
variations of its simple and highly imitable phrases expand into a variety of new contexts, industrial and otherwise, reflecting the societal changes afoot. Indeed, in the early twentieth century, “Canção do exílio” makes its way into the day-to-day life of Brazilians, touching on subjects of popular culture and mass consumption. By the early 1900s “Canção do exílio” was recognizable by most readers and, in a pre-radio and pre-television culture where print still served as the primary outlet for disseminating information, the poem was easily adaptable. We find instances of its use in advertising, in the “jogo do bicho,” in “futebol,” didactic translations in Tupi, and even performances in Esperanto.

In terms of advertising, usage of “Canção do exílio” does not expand much beyond the period in question, or even constitute a robust trend during it, but the examples found are still noteworthy, showing evidence of a growing consumerist culture and of a new focus on national products. An advertisement published in the Estado de São Paulo on May 13, 1923, entitled “O 13 de maio atual!” in reference to the 25th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, suggests that no Brazilian is truly free until accompanied by a glass of “Guaraná Espumante.” Complementing the text is a cartoon showing two Afro-Brazilian men dressed in suits, sitting at a table, smoking cigarettes, both sweating profusely and in obvious need of refreshment. Soliciting their order from the white waiter, the ad reads: “O freguês ao garçom: / ‘Venha, venha o Guaraná!’ / Porque a velhíssima história / Da liberdade, por cá, / É uma burla ilusória, / Desque não regada / Com esse refrigerante … Nossa terra tem palmeiras / Onde canta o sabiá, / Mas só fulge entre as primeiras / Porque tem—o ‘Guraná’! [sic]” (“O 13” 8). Calling “guaraná” the “national drink,” the advertisement’s accompanying testimonials from three doctors all confirm its goodness and its viability as an alternative to alcohol. To wit, the testimony of Dr. A. de Paula Santos claims: “Não tenho dúvidas em declarar que o ‘Guaraná Espumante’ de par com seu sabor agradável, apresenta a vantagem de substituir bebidas alcoólicas, sempre prejudiciais à saúde” (8).

There are at least two other cases of the use of “Canção do exílio” in advertising during the period. The Casa Muniz, a variety store located in the bustling Rua do Ouvidor in Rio, published the following rhyme in the Correio da manhã on May 4, 1919. Between advertisements for bank services and a perfume shop, we
read: “Minha terra tem mangueiras / Onde cantam bem-te-vis / A primeira entre as primeiras / —A antiga CASA MUNIZ” (“Casa” 2). More than a decade earlier, in Pernambuco, a candle shop embarked on an ad campaign, publishing dozens of quatrains, some with literary references, to sell its product. With advertisements scattered throughout various issues of the *Província*, one from January 29, 1904 reads: “Minha terra tem palmeira / Onde canta o sabiá, / Mas coisa melhor tem lá, / Que é a VELA BRASILEIRA!” (“Vela” 1). In all of these advertisements, “Canção do exílio,” the most Brazilian of poems, was not only meant to convince readers that they should consume the products advertised, but that doing so also made them better Brazilians, a clear sign of the developing twentieth-century relationship between consumerism and modern nationalism.

“Canção do exílio” can also be found a few times in reference to the “jogo do bicho,” or the animal game, a popular lottery that “began as a legal raffle intended to fund Rio de Janeiro’s privately-owned zoo, but soon slipped irretrievably from state control” (Chazkel 536). “At the beginning of Brazil’s First Republic (1889–1930), the clandestine lottery … gained enormous popularity in Rio de Janeiro, the city of its origin, and soon in the whole of Brazil” (535). Machado de Assis’s short story “Jogo do bicho” (1904), which follows the “carioca” protagonist Camilo’s manic experience with the game, explains how to play: “O jogador escolhe um número, que convencionalmente representa um bicho, e se tal número acerta de ser o final da sorte grande, todos os que arriscaram nele os seus vinténs ganham, e todos os que fiaram dos outros perdem” (“Jogo” par. 13). The same story mentions that contributors to local periodicals would offer suggestions, or “palpites,” for the day’s winning animals. Camilo “[n]ão queria ir pelos palpites dos jornais, como faziam alguns amigos” (“Jogo” par. 15). It is in this context that the following two variations were both published in the satirical weekly *O malho*. The first from October 14, 1916 suggested that the best plays for the eighteenth of that month were the monkey and the butterfly: “Minha terra tem palmeiras, / Onde canta o sabiá,’ / Tem Borboletas faceiras / Tem Macacos d’alto lá!” (“Bis-charada”). Years later, Dr. Zootechnico suggested the ostrich and the rabbit as plays for the twenty-fifth of May in the May 19, 1923 edition: “Minha terra tem palmeiras / Onde canta o meu conselho, / Um Avestruz de perneiras / E um ligeiríssimo Coelho.”
“Canção do exílio” adaptations also follow the early rise of Brazil’s most popular sport, “futebol.” Soccer was introduced in Brazil in 1894 by Charles Miller, son of a Scottish father and Brazilian mother, who famously returned to São Paulo from his studies in England with “two soccer balls, two uniforms, one book of rules, one pair of cleats, one air pump and one needle” (Murad 118). The first Brazilian soccer league was established in that city in 1901 and the second in Rio in 1905. During this early period, which lasted until about 1920, participation by blacks, mulattoes, and poor whites was extremely limited (120). But, due to the immense popularity of the sport, the working classes began to put together teams and eventually win the leagues. Vasco da Gama, “champions in the second division in 1922,” won Rio’s first division in 1923, by “recruit[ing] the best players from the working-class suburbs, whether they were white, black, or mulatto” (J. S. L. Lopes 247). In São Paulo, “Palestra Itália,” later known as Palmeiras, “and Corinthians Paulista, both of which had more popular origins than the elite clubs that had created the football league, were admitted to the first division of the city’s league after some of the elite clubs had left” (253).

In the 1940s, a time when the sport had already gained universal popularity in Brazil, especially with the help of Vargas’s cultural policies, the fortuitous coincidence of the Palmeiras name with the poem began to inspire variations. Published in the sports section of Curitiba’s O dia on May 11, 1941, this quip from Di Pino is found among others on the subject of soccer: “Minha terra tem Palmeira, / onde canta o sabiá, / No Palastra tem Palmeira / mais quem canta é … ‘periquito.’” The “Palastra,” or Estádio Palestra Itália, is the name of the stadium where Palmeiras played until the 2000s and the “parakeet” that sings there in place of Gonçalves Dias’s “sabiá” is the mascot for the team. A similar rhyme appears when Palmeiras defeated the famed Italian club Juventus in the Copa Rio in 1951. In a short text entitled, “Fim de festa,” published in São Paulo’s O governador on August 2, 1951, a certain Castro Barbosa shows his national pride, providing this response regarding the “vitória brasileira”: “Minha terra tem PALMEIRAS / onde cantam os PERIQUITOS” (“Fim” 12). On March 4, 1943, in the Jornal dos sports, an author going by the pseudonym Keeper published “Off-side poems.” This text includes the prediction of another Palmeiras victory by a player nicknamed “Fish”: “‘Peixe,’
do Palmeiras, declarou / Estar ‘certo de poder cantar vitória …’ / E eis aí, meus amigos, meus leitores, / Como o Diabo tece o fio de uma história … / Amanhã um paulista escreverá / Este poema, e que ninguém se queixe: / ‘Minha terra tem Palmeiras, / Onde canta o Peixe …’ (Keeper).

After the Vargas era, the variations continue with texts such as “O que o locutor não disse,” published on May 19, 1955 in the Jornal das moças, in reference to Palmeiras’ dominance over Rio’s Flamengo: “Minha terra tem palmeira / Onde canta o sabiá / Em S. Paulo tem o ‘Palmeira’ / Que faz o Flamengo ‘pará’” (“O que” 70). A satire published in O governador on August 30, 1951 and written in the “caipira” dialect associated with rural São Paulo’s less educated agricultural population begins by also making reference to the famed club: “Minha terra tem Parmêra / Onde canta o periquito” (Taquara 10). The text goes on to complain of politics among other troubles: “E tem muita ladroêra / E na Assembréia tem conflito” (Taquara 10). However, the first time the parakeet is associated with the poem is not in relation to soccer, but in a “caipira” variation preceding the creation of the Palmeiras Club by a few years.

Published in Curitiba’s O olho da rua on June 8, 1907, and signed by Dominguinho Trancoso, the first two stanzas of “Cartas de um caipira” read: “Minha terra tem Parmera / Nas Quar canta o periquito / Cuando vejo Moças feia / Sempre tenho faniquito. / Noço séu tem mais Estrela / Noças Mata mais Pavão / Não hai nada neste mundo / Como um prato de Fejão.” The figure of the “caipira” in Brazilian culture is a longstanding trope associated with rural backwardness, bad manners, ignorance, and an inability or unwillingness to change. Most famously represented in the early twentieth century as the character Jeca Tatu in the works of the pre-Modernist Monteiro Lobato, and later in the films of Mazzaropi, in opposition to the state and its institutions, the anti-heroic “caipira” serves as a dialectical counterpoint to the discourses of national progress and modernization. In the words of Eva P. Bueno, commenting on Jeca as he is portrayed in the works of Mazzaropi, “even though he is ugly, awkward and speaks a most undistinguished version of Brazilian Portuguese, [he] weaves his way through Brazilian history, Brazilian problems, Brazilian religion, and especially Brazilian popular culture” (56).
“Canção do exílio” variations appear not only in “caipira,” but in other languages and dialects too during the period. There are didactic translations in Tupi, performances in Esperanto, and even a variation in Juó Bananère’s pseudo-Italian “português macarrônico.” An article on the Tupi language, published on February 1, 1930 in the Jornal do Recife, proposes the following translation, interspersing the indigenous language with the original: “Minha terra tem palmeiras / ‘Ce retama orecô pindóctá’ / Onde canta o sabiá / ‘Mámé çabiá onheen’ / As aves que aqui gorgeiam / ‘Guirá onheengare iké uaá’ / Não gorjeiam como lá / ‘Inti aetá onheen aepe ianê’ (Sampaio 2). The newspapers of the time also mention numerous performances of the song “Minha terra tem palmeiras” in Esperanto: in the Gazeta de notícias on September 19, 1910, in the Gutenberg on August 14, 1910, and again in O imparcial on June 1, 1926. Both Tupi and Esperanto were popular linguistic subjects of the time, the former due to a renewed interest in folk and indigenous culture and the latter as a novel language invented by Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof with hopes to one day unite the world.9

In the 1910s, “Canção do exílio” was parodied in another “invented” language commonly referred to as “português macarrônico,” a pseudo-Italian dialect used in the satire of Alexandre Marcondes Machado and O. de Andrade. These authors’ creation of this dialect was intended to humorously chronicle the politics, culture, and daily life of São Paulo through the eyes of the many first-generation Italian immigrants of the city who, while still learning the nuances of the nation’s language, culture, and history, were transforming its social landscape. According to Vera Maria Chalmers, the Italian-Portuguese dialect first appeared in O pirralho in 1911 with O. de Andrade’s “As cartas d’abax’o pigues,” published under the pseudonym Annibale Scipione (33). In 1912, when O. de Andrade left for Europe, Marcondes Machado, using the pseudonym Juó Bananère, took over the dialect from O. de Andrade, publishing numerous texts in the O rigalegio section of O pirralho and creating an entire lexicon to accompany the pseudonym’s personality (Chalmers 33). Bananère’s parody of “Canção do exílio,” entitled “Migna terra,” appeared in O rigalegio on May 3, 1913. This poem, jokingly called a “sunetto do Camonhes” (soneto do Camões), supplements a satirical recounting of the “discovery” of Brazil by “Pietro Caporale” (“Pedro Cabral”) called “A invençó do Brasile” (“A invenção do Brasil”):
Migna Terra
Migna terra tê parmeras,
Che ganta inzima o sabiá;
As aveses che stó aqui,
Tambê tudos sabi gorgeá.

A abobora celestia tambê,
Che stá lá na mia terra,
Tê muitos mais strella
Che o céu da Ingraterra.

Os rios lá sô mais grande,
Dos rio di tudas naçó;
I os matto si perdi di vista
Nu meio da imensidó.

Na migna terra tê parmeras
Dove ganta a gallinha d’angolla;
Na minha terra tê o Vap’relli,
Chi só anda di gartolla. (Bananère)

Conflating numerous currents and historical timeframes to include modern-day São Paulo with Portugal’s Age of Discoveries, Bananère’s article, and accompanying poem capture the festive and chaotic optimism of a catachrestic São Paulo.

Fifteen years later, in 1925, O. de Andrade would follow the lead of Bananère by writing his own variation, a Modernist ode to the city entitled “Canto de regresso à pátria.” This variation would eventually become one of the most recognizable parodies of Gonçalves Dias’s original. In 1973, commenting on Caetano Veloso and the Tropicália movement, the poet Affonso Romano Sant’anna considers the role of O. de Andrade’s parody: “A paródia retoma a linguagem comum de maneira assimétrica e invertida denunciando ái a ideologia subjacente” (2). In “Canto de regresso à pátria,” O. de Andrade reworks the original, questioning the monolithic imperial designs hidden in its subtext. It begins in this manner: “Minha terra tem palmares / Onde gorjeia o mar / Os passarinhos daqui / Não cantam como os de lá” (144). As often is the case, O. de Andrade’s first line of the poem is borrowed verbatim from the original, but with an important token modification: the fourth word is changed from “palmeiras” to “palmares,” a different although similar sounding noun. This subtle substitution constitutes a post-colonial critique, alluding to an early historical conflict between
the colonial army and a community of freed and runaway slaves in northeastern Brazil called Palmares. In the second stanza, the poem further exposes the economic motivations and geopolitics of positioning behind the “invention” of Brazil. As a counter-reading to Gonçalves Dias’s paradisiacal paradigm, O. de Andrade reminds us of the materialistic underpinnings of Caminha’s letter to the king. The possible existence of gold in Brazil was, as previously mentioned, one of the first issues considered in Caminha’s letter. In O. de Andrade’s parody, Brazil does not have more life, loves, or stars, but more land and gold: “Minha terra tem mais rosas / E quase que mais amores / Minha terra tem mais ouro / Minha terra tem mais terra” (“Canto” 144). Still, in the closing lines of “Canto de regresso,” the poet somewhat ironically embraces the industrial milieu of progress of the early Republic by wanting to return to São Paulo’s financial center, Rua 15 de novembro, instead of Gonçalves Dias’s garden paradise. Rua 15 de novembro, in this case, becomes an ambiguous symbol for either modernization and progress or for the reformulation of the oppressive project of colonization under a capitalist banner.

João Accioly’s “Pauliceia” from 1937 is an equally tumultuous anthem of early twentieth-century São Paulo. In futurist fashion, the poem conveys the madness of a city in constant motion: “São Paulo é São Paulo! / Ou aqui ou no inferno / São Paulo é São Paulo! / —Cale a boca doido. / Deixe o povo trabalhar” (121). The poem then touches on themes such as mass immigration, unhinged economic development, and unwieldy urbanization: “Automóveis, Bondes. Caminhões, Carroças e o diabo. / Gente. Italiano. Judeu. Banqueiro. Tudo!” (121). In his closing lines, Accioly replaces the tokens “palmeiras” and “sabiá” with “arranha-céus” and “Zeppelin” as symbols of modern technology: “Minha terra tem arranha-céus / Por onde voa o Zeppelin: / As fábricas que aqui gorgeiam / São muito diferentes dos sabiás de Gonçalves Dias!” (123).10

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who may have written more variations than any other canonical poet,11 expresses a similarly critical view of romanticized national narratives. In a line from his unpublished “Eu protesto” from 1926, he observes: “A literatura em minha terra é oficial como as palmeiras” (qtd. in T. I. Castro 266). He would return to Gonçalves Dias’s text many times during the course of his career, most notably in 1930 in “Europa, França e Bahia.” In this poem, C. D. de Andrade surveys the
whole of Europe before directing his thoughts to his home nation. After more than a century of independence, the poet considers that Brazil has lost the innocence and promise of its youth. The fact that the author is unable to remember “Canção do exílio” is tantamount to questioning the reality of its message: “Meus olhos brasileiros se fecham saudosos. / Minha boca procura a ‘Canção do exílio.’ / Como era mesmo a ‘Canção do exílio?’” (C. D. de Andrade 19).

Modernist variations from the 1930s would continue to question the existence of any Romantic national essence. Bringing into relief Brazil’s foreign dependencies, Murilo Mendes begins his “Canção do exílio” with the following two lines: “Minha terra tem macieiras da Califórnia / onde cantam gaturamos de Veneza” (M. Mendes 33). In a lesser known variation from the same year, an author going by the name of Guy writes: “São Paulo tem ainda uma pequena alma brasileira … entre a trama nervosa destes fios elétricos canadenses, destes explosivos automóveis “yankees,” desta mercantil ópera-lírica fascista … Minha terra tem palm … Tem cedros, lindos e tristes cedros, onde canta o sabiá” (“A sociedade” 2).

Faced with tremendous cultural shifts, Brazil emerged from the nineteenth-century, the abolition of slavery, and the end of the Segundo Império to embrace industrialization, consumer capitalism, and a new urban immigrant reality. In the 1920s and 30s, Modernists like O. de Andrade and others led the way in re-articulating national identity in light of these changes, questioning the dependencies of the present as much as the relevance of a colonial past. In the 1920s, as the nation celebrated its centennial of independence from Portugal, its relationship with the US emerged for the first time among the variations. In the short “Trovas” section of O careta published on July 2, 1921, an unknown author hints at the dependency of the economy on the US dollar: “Minha terra tem palmeiras, / Ónde canta o sabiá: / Pois até onde ele canta / O tal dólar subirá” (“Trovas”). The Modernists eventually found a way to understand how Brazil could leverage both the realities of its syncretic past and the inevitability of foreign influence as strengths.

In 1928, O. de Andrade’s Manifesto antropófago famously employed a cannibalistic cultural metaphor grounded in the history of the indigenous warrior who devoured vanquished foes in order to assume their powers and attributes. The syncretic ideal
behind this metaphor, which famously begins, “Só a antropofagia nos une: socialmente, filosoficamente, economicamente,” would influence Brazilian intellectuals for generations to come. Demonstrating its incredible versatility and adaptability, variations of “Canção do exílio” from the period also embody this syncretic ideal, assuming a multitude of forms and in varied contexts to consolidate its continued presence in the ongoing discourses of national identity, its keywords and phrases serving as the connective tissue to conjoin Brazil’s past and present. Subsequent generations, especially the counterculture Tropicália movement of the 60s and 70s, would take up both O. de Andrade’s Manifesto and Gonçalves Dias’s poem to successfully oppose the military regime despite an atmosphere of censorship and oppression (the subject of the next chapter).