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MASSANGANA, BRAZIL: PROBLEMS IN PARADISE*

INTRODUCTION

It is therefore a singular error to present the individualistic ethic as the antagonist of Christian morality. Quite the contrary – the former derived from the latter. By focusing on the first, we are not denying our past; we are only continuing it.

Émile Durkheim (2016), *O individualismo e os intelectuais*

For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave.

(Bíblia de Jerusalém, 2002, 1 Corinthians 7, 22)

Massangana is a text written by Joaquim Nabuco, the Brazilian abolitionist leader, regarding his childhood at the Massangano plantation in Pernambuco. Caetano Veloso uses Nabuco's work in the title track of his album *Noites do Norte* (Northern Nights, 2000), which begins with "Slavery will remain for a long time the national trait of Brazil..." and ends with the expression that gives the album its title: "...it is the undefinable sigh that our *northern nights* exhale in the moonlight." Massangana is also the text in which this abolitionist leader, who advocated not only for the end of slavery but also for a series of reparation policies that could still be considered necessary today, confesses his "longing for the slave" (in the Portuguese version published in *Minha formação*¹ [1900] 2012). This is because although Massangana narrates a life, the text itself has had many lives: originally written as the opening chapter of

a French book on Nabuco's religiosity, made after his reconversion in 1892 (Foi voulue: *Mysterium fidei* [1893] 2010²), it was translated by the author to become the twentieth chapter of *Minha formação*, his mature autobiography, between the chapters "Election as congressman" (XIX) and "The abolition" (XXI).

In other words, after being written Massangana was edited, translated, and inserted into Nabuco's memoirs as a time reversal between the chapters presenting the peak of his political activity, for which he would be acclaimed both in life and posthumously. This narrative device allows Nabuco, in the midst of the most decisive moment of his portrayal as a political figure, to explore the moral and affective roots that led him to take up the "mandate of the Black race" (2000: 36) based on childhood experiences lived on the Massangano plantation and his return to that place at the age of twenty.

Massangana is therefore—and this is, in my view, its main interest—a fundamental piece in the narrative construction of the Brazilian White elite political actor in the context in which it was published. It can also be read as an index for interpreting a subjectivity of the past forged amidst relationships lasting beyond that original context. It is a text by an individual positioned between the State and society, the great halls and the streets, in the construction of the 20th-century struggle of the last country to abolish slavery in the Americas. It is a piece by an individual whose acts of speech, or writing gestures, can be analyzed based on the textual operations they perform as practices of the self: to account for oneself is to elaborate a figuration that serves as repertoire for converting individuals into actors.

In "The Mandate of the Black Race," a chapter in *O Abolicionismo* ([1883] 2000), Joaquim Nabuco justifies the representation established between the enslaved and his fellow abolitionist movement members, including himself, on political grounds. According to him, the Brazilian context was markedly different from similar movements in the global North based on religious, charitable, or philanthropic assumptions. This was because the relationship between abolitionists and the Black Brazilian population could not be like that of activists for whom this contingent would be composed of "victims of unjust oppression far from [their] shores" (Nabuco, 2000: 36). For Nabuco, speaking on behalf of the movement at that time, "the Black race [...] [is] an integral part of the Brazilian people" (Nabuco, 2000: 36).

For him, the abolitionist task could not limit itself to abolishing slavery but should extend to the destruction of its legacy—involving generations, if necessary. It would also be a political task, rather than religious or philanthropic, since it would require "rebuilding Brazil on free labor and the union of races in freedom" (Nabuco, 2000: 36). The "mandate of the Black race," the one that had given Brazil its people and built the country in the service of the race that does not work but obliges others to work, would impose not only "the end of the injustice of which the slave is a martyr but also the simultaneous elimination of the two contrary and fundamentally identical types: the slave and the *master*" (Nabuco, 2000: 36, original italics).

The challenge, then, would be to turn the master-slave complex into the citizen, this form of politicized collective identity (Botelho & Schwarcz, 2012) capable of supporting a nation-building project.

But how was this mandate conferred? For Nabuco, this was an “unconscious delegation on the part of those who make it” that would turn those who cannot renounce it into “the free attorney[s] of two social classes which, otherwise, would have no means of claiming their rights, nor consciousness of them. These classes are: the slaves and the innocents (*ingênuos*)⁴” (Nabuco, 2000: 35, original italics). The authorial pact constructed by Nabuco in this book, in fact a pamphlet agitating for the cause he dedicated himself to, and which I read here in contrast to *Minha formação*, is that he speaks for those who have no voice. To speak to the members of his own class, convincing them of the common evils of slavery and contesting the framing of the problem; to speak by constituting, in this process, a politicized public opinion capable of pressuring the monarchical State. In this regard, if *Minha formação* is a work of memory, *O Abolicionismo* is a testimony.

It is important, however, to nuance this duality. After all, it is at least curious that the same author rejects a religious foundation for his political testimony on abolitionism and includes, in the memorialistic narrative on the peak of his parliamentary activity, a fragment taken from a book about his religious reconversion. The use of the term “martyr” to qualify the injustice to which the enslaved would be subjected, in the above citation from *O Abolicionismo*, is not gratuitous.

In his analysis of *A escravidão* (2016), a book written by Nabuco at twenty-one⁵, Ricardo Benzaquen argues that the idea of natural law on which the abolitionist’s legal activism is based is rooted in the combination of classical virtues and the “defense of Christian ideas such as faith, hope, and above all charity” in recognizing the universality of rights to equality and freedom (Benzaquen, 2016: 10). According to Benzaquen, the association between Christian notions like charity and modern political principles is not an idiosyncrasy of the young bachelor, but his way of mobilizing a decisive branch of the liberal tradition as seen, for example, in John Locke (Benzaquen, 2016: 10).

In *Minha formação*, a political memoir written in response to the republican context (the originally planned project was to “tell [of] my monarchical formation” [Nabuco, 2012: 187, note 56]), the religious component is evident, especially in Massangana. Interestingly, with slight modifications, this text moves from the opening chapter in the religious memoir to the climax (or anticlimax?) of the author’s later memories. Many of the suppressed passages marks a shift towards secularization, as will be evident in the following pages; however, other additions subtly reintroduce elements of Catholic mythology into the narrative, almost invisibly. Could we thus suggest that, between Nabuco’s youth and maturity, there is a shift from one political justification to another, religious, for the fight against slavery?

Such a change is not so simple. Among the texts on his critical reception, some readings propose very defined periodizations for Nabuco's trajectory, differentiating a radical liberal phase from a conservative and religious one, for example. However, just in the examples briefly mentioned (which I will revisit later), the idea of charity, or *caritas*, especially in its Pauline aspect, is quite important for Nabuco's notion of natural law, as pointed out by Benzaquen. Likewise, the idea of charity is one that makes Paul a leader of a "moral revolution" in Christianity, crucial for the principle of equality among individuals to be asserted in the new religion in opposition to an aristocratic order of "natural" inequalities, typical of classical culture and disputed during the Roman Empire (Siedentop, 2014: 51-66)⁶.

What exists between such different texts as *O Abolicionismo* and *Minha formação*, it seems to me, are modulations of politics correlated with different figurations of the subject—readable in distinct narrative forms and proposed by their own authorial pacts. The passage from testimony to memoir is a passage from exhortation to action in the world to discreet persuasion, almost solely through the presentation of the figure, related to meditation on oneself⁷. The pamphlet calls for action and addresses the future; the memories dig into the past. However, as everything is related, we know that any action in the world requires a figuration of its subject. In *O Abolicionismo*, we read the testimony of a heroic subjectivity: a movement leader, even if momentarily concealing his own face as a mere bearer of History, as Ulysses before Polyphemus, a Nabuco-Nobody (Nabuco, 2005: 110).

The action over oneself, likewise, also depends on a reading of the world. And here the idea of memory gains yet another layer, this time through recourse to another Catholic author, also responsible for the "moral revolution" that created Western individualism: Saint Augustine, a reader of Paul, and author of the *Confessions*. In short, for Augustine, one of the greatest constraints on human salvation are the appetites—tastes and sensibilities—acquired in human actions and repeated in each person's life through memories. For him, "the pleasure that springs from past actions is 'inflicted' on memory, a pleasure 'mysteriously' intensified by recollection and repetition" (Siedentop, 2014: 104). Freedom from these bonds (which the individual would create for itself) lies in retreating to an interiority that is not a space of silence, but of dialogue with God. A gesture of prayer, combining the close self-examination of past conduct, its appetites and pleasures, with a contemplation of the soul for knowledge of the inner truth that is also divine. This is what the textual matrix of the *Confessions* implies, among other things, in the web of this and other memoirs of the Western tradition.

The world reading correlated with the figuration of the subject in Massangana lies in the synesthetic repetition of the pleasures from the land covered with sugarcane pulp touched by the child's feet, the smells from the farm's stove and pans, the sight of the sea as a sheet of emeralds. *Minha formação* is a work of memory because, through these mediations, it opens a space of

communication between the writer and the reader, inviting the latter to a form of hospitality. But it does this by subsuming itself to an ideal of self-improvement and salvation with very particular and determining characteristics for the political formulation contained therein, especially in the arena of the politics of the self. It is this issue that I would like to explore in the next pages.

Before starting the close reading of the text that serves as my theme here, I want to make a note. Nabuco's personality and context are marked by many contradictions, which it is not the critic's role to smooth out in order to synthesize the character. Between praise and denunciation of actors and texts, there are social contradictions—and it is precisely this that sociology must unearth and explain. Radicalism and conservatism, continuity and rupture exist simultaneously in the figure, and it is essential for the reading to understand the relations and dynamics between these characteristics of both the individual and society. That is why Nabuco's legacy, in politics as in literature, is of fundamental importance for the understanding of interpreters of Brazil from political and intellectual lineages as distinct as, for example, Gilberto Freyre and Florestan Fernandes. Freyre and Florestan, a lord and a commoner, a conservative and a democrat, we could say, whose works—and perhaps, subjectivities—appropriate and deal with the same repertoire in radically different ways. For now, and sustaining the unfinished approach I want to enter the text with, it is worth pointing out that those interested in freedom inherit from Nabuco at least one task: to not only abolish slavery, but to destroy its legacy; to continue pushing against the master-slave complex, toward citizenship.

THE LITURGY OF WATER: *MON PAYS ET PARIS*

[landscape: piece of homeland you can see]

Marília Garcia (2023), Expedição: nebulosa

Nabuco's writing can be read as a somewhat creative and somewhat reiterative operation: it is the making of a textual space where authorship defines what it appropriates as heritage and what it abandons or destroys; a space where the relationships between these elements are manipulated, and decisions are made (or not) about what is left visible and invisible; where a series of conflicts and tensions constitutive of language emerge or submerge; where, in short, there is a bit of repetition and a bit of difference. And these are operations, contingencies and shifts that have even greater importance in contexts where the very status of individualism and individuality is the subject of heated debate, in part because it encompasses relationships as unequal as that between master and slave.

The first draft of *Massangana* dates from a period when Nabuco had already experienced a peak in his political activity: the legal abolition of

slavery by the *Lei Áurea* (Golden Law) on May 13, 1888. In the following years, the monarchy, weakened in its relations with the slaveholding rural elite and with positivists—specially the Brazilian army—, became a constant target of criticism postulating the Republic as a more suitable form of government for the nation's interests. But Nabuco, like other members of the abolitionist movement, remained a monarchist, seeing in a potential third reign of Princess Isabel the best way to continue the reforms advocated by the group. The result of such arrangement is that, once the 1889 coup is finished and confirmed by the promulgation of the 1891 republican Constitution, Nabuco and other prominent actors from previous years find themselves in a situation of political ostracism. Fighting against pressures for compensation from previous slaveholders and siding with the royal family, they not only lose space in the direct State administration but also find themselves in a very precarious situation for sustaining their critical positions against the new regime, whether in law firms or newspapers and periodicals, two of the most common occupations among the White Brazilian elite of the time.

Although writing a biography of his father and an autobiography had been in his plans since at least 1884, as interpreted from the first recording of this project in his diaries (2006: 233), it will be in this period of relative defeat and political isolation that this will become an actual practice of the author. This happens at a time that is generally interpreted by his critical accounts as one of his conservative reversals associated with political ostracism, when he turns his action toward a “domestic” or private sphere of his own existence. In 1889, little before the Republican coup, Nabuco marries Evelina Torres Soares Ribeiro, heir to a coffee-producing family in the Paraíba Valley linked to the Conservative Party (Alonso, 2007: 240). In the following years, he applies himself to the project of the two “blank books” mentioned in the 1884 diary. Together with his Catholic wife, he reconnects with religion which appears in diaries and memories between confessions in the Oratorians church in Brompton, London (Nabuco, 2006: 302), and the memory of the chapel of St. Matthew in Massangana (Nabuco, 2012: 188).

In general terms, the narrative arc of Massangana takes place between the reconstructed experience of the author-narrator-character's first eight years of childhood and his return, at the age of twenty, to that same place. The detailed, synesthetic, and idyllic description of the “lost paradise” landscape (Nabuco, 2012: 194) is interrupted by at least two events that contrast with the immobility of the welcoming rural space, only faintly interrupted by the slow flow of the Ipojuca River. First, the scene in which a young enslaved man, fleeing from a master who was punishing him, throws himself at the feet of the boy and godson of the sugarcane plantation owner, Ana Rosa Falcão de Carvalho, and asks to be bought to serve him. The second scene is that of the death of said godmother, portrayed as a pious motherly figure, caring for her protégés—among enslaved, tenants, dependents, and the boy himself—and whose physiognomy is crucial to the chapter. Faced

with this second event, the entire system that sustains the described landscape falls apart, causing the sugarcane plantation to change hands and the boy to leave for Rio de Janeiro where, at eight years of age, he starts living permanently with his parents.

About the composition of that landscape, which serves as the initial setting of the text, it is worth saying one simple, perhaps obvious thing: there is no neutral description, especially when dealing with memory. More than *what* is described, the *form* of the description is what composes the figuration. In our case, the portrayal of the sugarcane plantation is readable through the rhetorical *topos* of the lost paradise⁸. The expression, clearly of biblical affiliation, appears in both versions of the text (MF and FV) and is preceded, in both, by long descriptions of a landscape in relation to the narrator's body which will support an *origin* of the subject from which it is impossible to escape.

After a general statement, according to which “[the] whole trace of life is for many a child’s drawing forgotten by man, but to which he will always have to cling unknowingly” (Nabuco, 2012: 187), Nabuco portrays a scenario of his childhood:

During the day, because of the great heat, people took naps, breathing in the scent of the large pans on which the sugarcane honey was cooked. The decline of the sun was dazzling, whole chunks of the plain turned into a dust of gold; the mouth of the night, the time of the boninas and the bacuraus, was pleasant and balmy, then the silence of the starry skies, majestic and profound. None of these impressions will ever die with me. Fishermen’s children will always feel the crunch of the sands at the beach under their feet and hear the sound of the waves. I sometimes believe I’m stepping on the thick layer of pulp fallen from the mill and I hear the distant creaking of the great ox carts... (Nabuco, 2012: 188).

But there are problems in paradise. Slavery emerges on the scene, revealing the violence that maintained the order, producing the enchanted garden in which the narrator forges his first impressions. Later, or rather *during* the description in the best style of romantic landscaping made famous by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Chateaubriand or José de Alencar (Bosi, 2012: 12), the contradiction appears in an “unforgotten picture of childhood” to which the author attributes the decision “of the further employment of [his] life” (Bosi, 2012: 190). This is the moment when “an unknown young Black man, about eighteen years old, [...] hugs my feet begging me for the love of God to make godmother buy him to serve me” (Bosi, 2012: 190). In this contradiction, the critical and reflective position of the author-narrator-character shows up, describing this as “the unexpected trait that revealed to me the nature of the institution with which I had lived familiarly until then, without suspecting the pain it concealed” (Bosi, 2012: 190).

Bosi, in the aforementioned 2010 article that serves as the introduction to the latest Brazilian edition of *Minha formação* (2012), hones on a fact noted by Evaldo Cabral de Mello, according to which the old name of the plantation

featured in the memoirs was Massangano, a place name of Angolan origin, and not Massangana, the term preferred by Nabuco. Recalling an interpretation of this creative gender bending by Lélia Coelho Frota, the critic repeats that this implies the association of the fabled space with the “maternal lap, and the boy, like so many of his faithful slaves, had no father, only a mother, or rather, a godmother” (Bosi, 2012: 13). Thus, for Bosi, the dramatic contrast reconstructed above can be read as one in which “the African Massangano, perhaps repressed, reappears in the figure of the escaped slave who seeks shelter in Massangana’s womb” (Bosi, 2012: 13).

The association between the image of paradise lost and a mother’s lap is not limited in the text to the inflection of the plantation’s name. It also relates to the construction of aquatic images, such as the sea, which appears as an element connecting the land of childhood and the world:

Many times have I crossed the ocean, but if I want to remember it, I always have before my eyes, instantly stopped, the first wave that rose before me, green and transparent like an emerald folding screen, the day that, crossing an extensive coconut grove behind the rafters’ hut, I found myself on the edge of the beach and had the sudden, fulminating revelation of the liquid and moving land... it was this wave, fixed on the most sensitive plate of my childish *kodak*, that remained for me the eternal cliché of the sea. Only underneath it could I write: *Thalassa! Thalassa!* (Bosi, 2012: 188).

The Greek word that closes the paragraph is repeated in reference to the “cry of joy of the Greek soldiers at the sight of the sea after their defeat by the Persians in 401 BC” (Bosi, 2012: 188, note 58). But it is also the title of a book by Sándor Ferenczi that Fernando Fábio Fiorese Furtado mobilizes in his interpretation of the “unfolding of the maternal figure” in another classic of Brazilian memorialistic literature, *A idade do serrote*, by Murilo Mendes (Furtado, 2001). The reading, which can be taken in with a grain of salt, locates the *topos* of *regressus ad uterum* as one of the motifs of memorial writing which, in its process of “thalassic regression,” figures the ocean as the “ancestor of all mothers” (Furtado, 2001: 118). The association here is between water, vitality, fertility, and uterine origin, continued by the bond between mother and baby, after birth, through breastfeeding. But most babies of the Brazilian manorial and bourgeois classes—in Murilo’s time as well as Nabuco’s—were not breastfed by their mothers, but by a wet nurse most often Black⁹. The one who served Nabuco was called Rosa (Alonso, 2007: 21).

Perhaps for this very reason the sea is a nexus in which many contradictions of the author’s memoirs manifest themselves, as Benzaquen noted in his reading of *A escravidão* (2016). There, what he analyzes is the simultaneity of the law graduate’s condemnation of the slave trade and its repression based on the violation of Brazilian sovereignty by the British navy following the Aberdeen Act¹⁰. At this point, the sea appears as a scenario common to both phenomena, marked by “mobility, inconstancy

and irregularity”; a space of total contingency where disrespect for natural law allows all kinds of arbitrariness motivated either by the desire for personal enrichment or by inequality between sovereigns (Benzaquen, 2016: 20).

But the sea in Massangana is not exactly that. Although described in the passage quoted above as “liquid and moving land”—and here the fixity of the land already appears in counterpoint to its adjectives—the scene focuses on the wave that rises like an “emerald folding screen,” a relatively static object, except for the hinges. Not only is the wave “fixed” in the child’s perception, but the waves in the sea are synonymous with repetition, with a certain serial predictability. A common, shared sea navigated by the enslaved people taken from their place of origin and by the future diplomat, who sells the inactivated plantation he inherited from his godmother to travel to Europe, and reminisces about his childhood in maturity. The sea, the womb: figures of a situated universality, epic or maternal; of a Christian and Eurocentric cosmopolitanism; of a common origin of humanity¹¹.

The word Massangano, as I wrote earlier quoting Alfredo Bosi, is a place name of Angolan origin. It designates a town and commune at the confluence of the Kwanza and Lucala rivers, in the Kwanza Norte province, in the municipality of Cambambe, where in 1580 Portuguese forces defeated the Ndongo kingdom and set up the Massangano fort, completed in 1583 and used for territorial defense and slave exploitation. The word, from its Quimundo origin “masanganu,” means confluence, river mouth. In Massangana, Nabuco shares with the enslaved not only the similarity of not having a father, but a mother, and a motherly-godmother, as Bosi points out. But, above all, he shares the experience of having partaken in the wet nurse’s milk with them. And to have that from a nanny called Rosa, as his godmother was called. Ana Rosa. Ama Rosa¹². Scenario and support for the subject constituted in, by and against the master-slave relationship.

The topic of the return to the womb (*regressus ad uterum*) in these memoirs is not only due to the composition of the godmother’s physiognomy in the Massangano landscape, as a matriarchal figure who regulates all the relationships of an extended domesticity in an inactivated sugar plantation. It also comes from the association with what, in classical and Christian culture, is a common origin of humanity, the womb, and its continuation through the bond of breastfeeding and affection figured in the aquatic images of the prose, its coefficient of “thalassic regression.” Just as Dona Ana Rosa was his motherly-godmother without being his own, since her figure set the tone for everyone in that landscape of a “patriarchal tribe isolated from the world,” “ama Rosa” was his “Black mother” (“mãe preta”)—in the language of the time (Carneiro, 2006)—without being only his, as is always the case with a wet nurse. These are the two waters of Massangano/a: the mother-origin and her double; the first traces, determined and ambiguous, that impel the subject to both the abolitionist struggle and the reproduction of inequalities

of a master-slave pattern; the simultaneity of change and permanence. Landscape, a piece of homeland you can see.

One of the characteristics that makes the analysis of a life and work such as those of Joaquim Nabuco worthwhile, especially in the context of political sociology research of the individual in Brazilian social thought, is its profound relationship with the contradictions that structure a common experience, from social criticism to the subjectivity of those who write. Here, first of all, it is based on the idyllic narrative of an origin linked to a terrestrial paradise that is immobile and isolated from the world, made up of relationships typical of northern or northeastern plantations run by many generations of the same family and deactivated. Different, then, from Southern farms, rationally oriented toward profit and depersonalization of labor and directly criticized in the text. At the same time, he does not fail to recognize that this landscape is sustained by violence that offends the dignity of those who maintain it, distorting the figure of the master and the slave: one through abuse and the other through exploitation. The insult directed at the latter, then, is what the narrator takes for himself as constitutive of his interpretation of the world, political representation via the “mandate of the Black race” and, finally, abolitionist action.

The Christianity that serves as the moral backdrop and symbolic matrix of the story is also riddled with ambiguities. It is on this basis that the “selfishness” of the master is opposed to the “generosity” of the slave, interpreted in the chapter, as Ricardo Benzaquen (2017, 2009; Martins, 2019) observes, in terms of an imitation of Christ. In a scenario in which the Church is an associate of Empire and slavery, Nabuco resorts to the origins of his religiosity servicing it to a cause that recognizes the dignity of those who sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others, and never for themselves. In an excerpt from the version of Massangana published in *Foi voulue*, he states that “the two great feelings of the creature, which constitute the substance of religion, [are] dependence and recognition” (Nabuco, 2010: 12). He does so, however, by performatively confusing—by acknowledging recognition—the terms of what one would expect from a legitimizing formulation of the master-slave relationship based on these elements. In his interpretation, “recognition was on the side of the giver” (Nabuco, 2012: 13-14).

TWO DIGNITIES

To what end does one conjure the ghost of slavery, if not
to incite the hopes of transforming the present?

Saidiya Hartman (2008), *Lose your mother*

The interpretation I would like to propose here is that the writing in Massangana evinces a displacement inherent to the relationship between processes of individuation and subjectivation in Brazilian society, with

contemporary reflections. By individuation, based on the reading of Danilo Martuccelli's project of a Sociology of the individual, I understand the long-term process through which macro-historical structures determine the production of variants of individualism in different and unequal social experiences. That is, the way in which societies structurally produce types of individuals or become, differentially, societies of individuals. By subjectivation, following the same reading, I refer to the process by which individuals are converted into actors who then become political subjects oriented toward emancipation, based on ethics that work on the social relations of which they are themselves constituted (Martuccelli, 2007: 25-30).

The portrayal of the sugarcane plantation and the type of slavery evident in Massangana is, in Nabuco's words, typical of "very old properties, managed for generations with the same spirit of humanity, and where a long heredity of fixed relations between the master and the slaves had made both a kind of patriarchal tribe isolated from the world" (Nabuco, 2012: 191). The counterpoint, as written above, is with the "new and rich *fazendas* (farms) of the South, where the slave, unknown to the owner, was only a harvesting tool" (Nabuco, 2012: 191). This is especially the case whenever a Northeastern sugarcane plantation, like Massangano, is inactive, making almost its entirety something of a domestic environment (Alonso, 2007: 21). It is in this scenario of more personal than impersonal domination that the individual from the White slave-owning elite—as was the case with Nabuco—recognizes the dignity of the enslaved, comparing their sacrifice to that of Christ.

In this contradiction, the common salvation, which would redeem the debt of those who lived off the exploitation of that form of labor, of the dependents of slavery, could only come from abolition and implementation of the series of reparative policies advocated in pamphlets like *O Abolicionismo* ([1883] 2000) and the speeches of the abolitionist campaign in Recife in 1884 (2005), among others. In this series, to mention just one of the policies, is the idea of rural democracy: a notion borrowed from André Rebouças and which would, in current language, equate to agrarian reform.

In *Homens livres na ordem escravocrata* ("Free men in the slaveholding order" [1970] 1997), Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco draws attention to the ambiguously affirmed and denied assumption, in relationships of personal domination, of recognizing the other as a similar subject. The dynamic is studied in interactions between landowners and tenants or comrades in which inequality between these actors is eclipsed by a common dignity, partially of religious origin, which serves the reproduction of a set of services and counter-services that make up that same inequality. At the same time, it is this dignity that, as a germ of autonomy of the exploited, allows for occasional challenges to the order. Thus, "the same conditions responsible for a real state of subjection are also, in their reverse, responsible for a real state of autonomy" (Franco, 1997: 108). That is why, in her interpretation, "tenants

and comrades were the most destitute of free men and the most qualified to confront the established order” (Franco, 1997: 108).

Evidently, the situation that supports Franco’s analysis is distinct from that of Nabuco: the relationship she studies occurs between free men, although in unequal positions, on farms “of the South” located in the Paraíba Valley. I bring this data, however, as a way to qualify that displacement undertaken by the author of Massangana: by relying on a Christian evaluative and symbolic matrix, recognizing the dignity of the enslaved, even within a pillar of imperial society, what Nabuco seems to mobilize is precisely this constitutive ambiguity of the notion of humanity necessary for personal domination and which can, however, be an element of its contestation.

Another especially fine formulation of the constitutive dilemmas of the relationship between subjectivity and power based on Christian assumptions is found in the work of Michel Foucault, particularly around his conceptualization of pastoral power (1979, 2008, 2016). In “*Omnes et Singulatim*” (1979), the author differentiates pastoral techniques from antiquity and Christianity as part of his genealogy of modes of subjectivation correlated with the development of a governmentality that has simultaneously groups and individuals as objects. For him, one of the distinctive features of Christian pastoral is the conception of the relationship between shepherd and sheep as a form of individual, personal, and absolute dependence. The Greek figuration in this regard would be opposite: in it, obedience would be legitimized by adherence to the general law or the will of the polis. In antiquity, submission to the will of a particular other, such as a doctor, orator, or pedagogue, could still happen, but only through persuasion and if oriented toward a specific goal: healing, acquiring a skill, making the correct choice in a concrete situation (Foucault, 1979: 237).

In Christianity, however, the bond of personal dependence for the direction of conduct would require the observation of obedience as a value in itself. The submission of the sheep—of all and each one, hence the Latin title—would be a permanent state. Salvation could be achieved through the most absurd determinations, as long as they emanated from the competent hierarchical superior, as Foucault reads in edifying anecdotes from authors like Saint John Cassian or in the monastic rules of Saint Benedict of Nursia (1979: 237).

In this sense, the transformations of pastoral techniques between antiquity and Christianity would involve different dimensions. First would be the transformation of obedience into a personal relationship. Second would be the accountability of the shepherd for the sins of the sheep, which would require constant surveillance and recording of each of their actions, current or potential. This notation would produce, in turn, an individualizing knowledge of the subjects: among them, that of a truth accessible only to the individual about themselves, through self-examination and confession of the minimal movements of the soul to the director of conscience. And finally,

this new pastoral technique would elect mortification of the body as the goal of action upon oneself, a sacrifice for the sake of individual salvation. The idea of original sin, or the fall (as Nabuco prefers in FV), would establish an experience of guilt that could only be expiated through mortification for the return to an original state prior to birth (Foucault, 1979: 236-240).

In this configuration, the shepherd's omission in the face of responsibility for each of his sheep—called by Foucault “analytical responsibility” due to the emphasis on meticulous surveillance of individual actions—would be seen as a form of ingratitude toward God, for creation, and toward the flock, which would ensure the maintenance of the leader's own life. This is a double debt, which could only be redeemed by common salvation: of the shepherd and the flock, individual and group. Recognizing the dignity and uniqueness of the sheep is one of the needs of this analytical posture, as well as one of the motives that restore hierarchy and unevenly distribute the roles of redemption, be it individual or collective.

The shepherd lives off the flock, and that is why he sacrifices himself for its salvation. Nabuco feeds on the milk of Rosa, a parallel mother, and writes *Massangana* as a physiognomy of the feminine, a return to the primordial liquid before the birth of the body and the body political: womb, sea, milk. The relationship with the divine here is mediated, depending on representation, as in the “mandate of the Black race”—which ultimately retains the agency of the represented. The legal and theological vocabulary here also converge, moreover, since the attorney who performs a mandate does so because he is constituted in this way by those who confer this duty-power. The “Black race,” its ‘slaves and innocents’ (*ingênuos*), constitute Nabuco like the lion which is made of assimilated sheep. Among the letters of Saint Jerome, there is one mentioned by Foucault in the lecture of February 22 in *Security, Territory, Population*, which reads: “make the salvation of others *lucrum anima sue*, the profit of your soul” (Foucault, 2008: 170).

The figuration of the White Brazilian elite actor in *Massangana* occurs in the twilight of Nabuco's life and is part of a series of funeral acts that he performs in preparation for his own death. The self-writing in this text, aside from containing the recognition of the dignity of the slave, which we can interpret with Franco and Foucault, is a practice of mortification of the body for the salvation of the soul through consecration to glory, to the eternity of political action, and to History with a capital ‘H.’ It occurs shortly after the author's marriage to Evelina Torres Soares Ribeiro (Alonso, 2007: 240) which, in addition to interrupting decades-long correspondence between Nabuco and the investor and philanthropist Eufrásia Teixeira Leite, carries out an institution directed, in Christianity, to this same mortification (Foucault, 2016). The overcoming of death occurs through control and self-administration, as well as the possibility of narrating one's own story as a revelation of political action and History, both Brazilian and global. But this “conquest” of death, in the model presented by the life of Christ, occurs also through another effect of

marriage in which mortification and natality are intertwined: the continuity of the legacy projected at his children, to whom *Minha formação* is dedicated.

Christian obedience is not owed to the general law. It does not aim for the autonomy of the one who obeys. It is the opposite of Greek pastoral, in which the overcoming of the master by the pupil is possible if, and when, he becomes a master of himself. Christian obedience aims for a state of submission that holds humility as its purpose. And humility is the mortification of one's own appetites for the liberation of the will (Augustine) toward salvation through a dialogical and contemplative relationship (of prayer) with God. Its ultimate goal is the mortification of volitions until their elimination (*apathea*) as a way to free oneself from the domination (slavery) of passions.

Nabuco recognizes in the slave the dignity of the free man, created by the divine breath itself, since “[i]f there is a moral truth visible in nature, it is that the Creator did not want slavery in his work. Freedom merges with the very breath that made it from nothing; it is a principle that must extend, in creation, as far as the ether goes, wherever the light goes. [...] It was the fall that brought slavery” (2010: 9). The autonomy of the exploited, which would free them even from the political representation by a White elite lord in debt to their services, would be materially possible by associating abolition with the reparative policies advocated by the abolitionist movement. This second element, however, as we know, did not come to be in Nabuco's context.

This is how, from my perspective, one can position Nabuco's late contribution between the previously mentioned processes of subjectivation and individuation. Starting from a concrete situation in which a configuration of social relations presses for the structural production of a type of individuality that reproduces a system of domination, he mobilizes an available cultural repertoire in favor of a relative rupture with this system. If this rupture still leaves, however, the marks of certain continuities, it seems to me that we can attribute this both to the inherent limits of the mobilized repertoires and to the consequences of political choices that determined the physiognomy of a society that did not repair the violence of its past-present. The postponed encounter of this society with democracy (Botelho & Ferreira, 2022), therefore, seems to be also a postponed encounter with citizenship, understood as autonomy and a struggle against inequality, as a form of respect and appreciation of work and life.

Aligning the interpretation with another cue given by Bosi (2012: 14), and in conclusion of this section, we might understand in another way the controversial issue of the “longing for the slave” for which the text is known. Let us see the original citation:

I fought slavery with all my strength, I repelled it with all my conscience, as the utilitarian deformation of the creature, and at the time when I saw it end, I

thought I could also ask for my freedom, say my *nunc dimitis*, for I'd heard the most beautiful news that in my day God could send to the world; and yet, today that slavery is extinct, I experience a singular nostalgia, which would greatly amaze a Garrison or John Brown: the longing for the slave (Bosi, 2012: 190).

On the one hand, there is nostalgia for the forms of a past that one seeks to resume, which is unequivocal given the relationship with memory performed by the text, expressed in the topic of the lost paradise. On the other, there is the subjective limit, determined by the socialization of the White elite lordly class, to Nabuco's abolitionist emancipation project. The task of self-work that he proposes, by adhering to Christian and Enlightenment principles of self-improvement and coherence, does not envision a rupture with the past, but a continuity. This can be read in passages like "[t]here are spirits that would like to break all their chains, and preferably those that others would have created for them; I, however, would be unable to break the smallest of the chains that ever bound me, which makes me endure contrary captivities and less than others one that has been left to me as an inheritance" (Nabuco, 2012: 188).

Yet, there is still the possibility of interpreting this expression as a valuation of the concrete person of the enslaved, with whom the boy lived, in contrast to the condemnation of the institution of captivity¹³. This sentiment "would greatly astonish a Garrison or a John Brown" (Nabuco, 2012: 190), North-American abolitionists after which Nabuco modeled his own subjectivity, but who could not experience the feeling because they belonged to a different context, marked by other relations of domination. The relationships with the enslaved and with slavery are described by the author from a very particular experience, ultimately referring to a figuration of the personality of his godmother, Dona Ana Rosa Falcão de Carvalho (and her double, Ama Rosa), which extends to the entire childhood landscape, transforming Massangano into Massangana. This space appears in recurrent opposition to the world, as an exception that ultimately prevents generalizations.

COLORS AND NAMES OR TO SNATCH EQUALITY FROM THE FUTURE

Slavery will remain for a long time the national trait of Brazil

Caetano Veloso (2000), *Noites do Norte*

In Massangana, the name of Nabuco's godmother, Dona Ana Rosa Falcão de Carvalho, is written in full at the end of the chapter when the young bachelor visits her tomb in the chapel of St. Matthew. Among the enslaved individuals mentioned in the text, the only one expressly named is Elias, the "servant of greater trust" (Nabuco, 2012: 193) of the matriarch. She delegated to him not only the care of the boy she called her "son" but also entrusted him with passing onto Nabuco her "*invisible*" (Nabuco, 2012: 193, original italics): gold

coins that she “kept without anyone knowing except her freed confidant to deliver [to Joaquim] when of age” (Nabuco, 2012: 193).

This passage about the godmother and Elias is an insertion in the text version published in *Minha Formação* and is not included in *Foi voulue*. In it, there are two transcribed fragments of letters addressed to Nabuco's mother reporting Elias's death. Dona Ana, the author of the fragments, complains about his absence, stating that he “took charge of everything,” leaving her house “in the same condition as it was in the time of [her] husband” (Nabuco, 2012: 193), the late Joaquim Aurélio de Carvalho¹⁴.

She entrusted the child to the slave “[d]espite having relatives,” meaning that she preferred this bond to others of consanguinity for that care. At the end of the second transcribed passage, the godmother asks God to give her more life and health so that she herself can give to “our little son” “something invisible,” “for I only trusted that to Elias” (Nabuco, 2012: 193).

After the transcriptions, we see Nabuco's reflection on the transmission at play in the scene. He writes addressing the reader: “Ah! dear and blessed memory, the treasure accumulated bit by bit did not come into my hands, nor could it have come through a transmission devoid of legal forms, as perhaps you may have thought...” (Nabuco, 2012: 193). What remained, and now the narrator addresses the godmother, was to “accompany you in your conversations with your faithful servant, in this concern of love of your last years, [which] will always be a sensation so inexpressibly sweet that it alone would be enough to destroy any bitterness of life...” (Nabuco, 2012: 193).

The inheritance to be left to Nabuco by the grandmother, devoid of legal forms, determined by filial affection resulting from contingency, was a secret kept by Elias. The gold coins did not reach the author, but so did the care and devotion of this person, who is not only the only enslaved named in Massangana but is also called, on the same page, a “freed confidant” and a “faithful servant.” The ambiguity regarding his freedom is illustrative, as is the etymology of his name: Elias (in Hebrew: *אֵלִיָּהוּ* or Eliyahu, literally “My God is Yahweh”) is an Old Testament prophet described as the one who would come before the day of the Messiah (Bible: Bíblia de Jerusalém, 2002, Ml 3:23). In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the saint who gives his name to the chapel of Massangana and the author of the first book of the New Testament—marked by an extensive figuration of the life of Christ—the Son of God describes Saint John the Baptist as a return of Elias (Bible: Bíblia de Jerusalém, 2002, Mt 11:14). Among the divine works said to have been performed through the prophet, the first of them is the resurrection of a boy, the son of a widow (Bible: Bíblia de Jerusalém, 2002, 1 Kings 22).

Elias is, therefore, a named figure covered in exceptionalities. He is a caregiver of the boy who surpasses familiar kinship through his labor; he is the transmitter of wealth, material or moral, beyond legal forms of succession. Someone who precedes the Messiah and mediates the resurrection of a boy, a figure without which there could be no emotional and memorial foundation

for the White Brazilian elite abolitionist leader, and who simultaneously defines the possibilities and limits of a bourgeois revolution in the declining sugar society devoured by the coffee civilization.

But if naming is eloquent, so is silence. Elias is accompanied in the chapter by at least two more absences worth mentioning. First is the wet nurse, Rosa. Mentioned twice without her given name, in the same passage that narrates the godmother's death, she is a phantasmatic double of the maternal function transposed from the figure of Dona Ana Rosa to the scenario of the sugar plantation. Joaquim was sleeping in his room with the "old nurse" when he received the news (2012: 194). It is she who features in the passage copied from a letter from a friend of his father who, having gone to fetch him to take him to Rio de Janeiro, says "the boy is more satisfied [...] since I told him that his nurse would accompany him" (Nabuco, 2012: 194). Ama Rosa, Ana Rosa, "mãe preta," mãe Rosa: "Slavery will remain for a long time the national trait of Brazil. [...] As for me, I absorbed it in the Black milk that nursed me," he writes (Nabuco, 2012: 191).

But there is an even less visible absence that, it seems to me, is equally important for the set of relations figured in this self-writing. Marcos and Vicente, the "playmates" with whom the boy Quimquim used to bathe in the Ipojuca River (Alonso, 2007: 22). Not only did the interaction with these boys seem to structure the childhood experience in Massangano, but according to Alonso they joined Nabuco's (2007: 23) entourage to Rio de Janeiro, "freed, as was customary, upon the death of their owner." Massangana is not just the Quimbundo signifier of a confluence, river mouth, femininely inflected as an extension of the absent motherhood of the one who, having given birth biologically, handed the baby to the godmother who, in her turn, entrusted him to Rosa (and Elias). It is also the river, the source of prime vitality, where the boys used to play.

Georg Simmel, especially in Levine's reading (1971: xliii), had a particular interest in what he called "play forms of sociality." The interest was because, in this type of dynamics, interactions would be oriented not toward a practical purpose, but the enjoyment of their own forms. In them, the absence of practical content would refer to a desire to participate in society as an end in itself. "Instead of the systematic pursuit of the satisfaction of erotic interests, one can play with them in the form of flirtation. Instead of the serious pursuit of political or economic goals, one can play aggressively in a sports competition," Levine exemplifies (1971: xxvi), referring to forms of socialization notably taken up by Simmelian sociology. "The form of sociability, thus, exists as the archetypal playful form of all human socialization. In all these modes of interaction, the emphasis is on *good form*" (Levine, 1971: xxvii, original emphasis). And in playful forms of sociality, as in sociability in general, it would be possible to perceive modes of association in which "the dominant note is a feeling of personal freedom" (Levine, 1971: xliii).

Perhaps playing in the river was not considered serious or sublime enough to make it to the author's memoirs and the composition of his religious or political figure. But it might not be an exaggeration to say that the form of this socialization survived as an artificial situation of experimental equality; a contingent balance, the kind necessary for the existence of any game. This equality does not resolve, elevate, or triumph over the preexisting inequalities with which a plantation heir and two enslaved boys interact. But it is the fragile product of a displacement that, temporarily changing the rules allows different, contingent things to happen. A glimpse of common life, of recognition of the dignity of the other, the fold in a repertoire used for oppression repurposed for freedom. With limits, evidently, because once the game is over its subjects may have been displaced; but what about the world?

As I wrote in the introduction, my objective in this article is to analyze Massangana as a piece of narrative construction of a political actor from the White Brazilian elite in its context, by which the assumption of the "mandate of the Black race" described in *O Abolicionismo* is justified. I do this, I repeat, by reading the writing elaborated in Massangana as evidence of a displacement of the relationship between processes of individuation and subjectivation in Brazilian society, with contemporary reflections. This means that the concrete case, no matter how focused on the practices of one individual, is a resource for interpreting "individual life as the basis of the conflict between the individual and society," as Simmel (2006) proposed¹⁵. That is why Nabuco's life writing allows us to read structuring dilemmas of the political dimension of a social relationship (subjectivity) in a diachronic manner, enriching problematizations ranging from the idea of *formation* to the meaning of the political principle of freedom to the (sometimes uncomfortable) association between moral individualism, Christianity, and human rights.

On this note, and already heading toward the end, there is one last difference between the versions published in *Minha Formação* and *Foi vouluê* I'd like to explore.

In this latter book, on Nabuco's religiosity, the memories of the plantation appear in the opening chapter. It features a long paragraph suppressed from its widely circulated version. It is the passage from which I took the previous citation, "[i]f there is a visible moral truth in nature, it is that the Creator did not want slavery in His work" (Nabuco, 2010: 9).

In it, the narrator defends the principle and feeling of freedom, confused with the divine and vital breath, of which the Christian religion would be the "supreme affirmation," being "the fall that brought slavery." However, at the same time, he considers that "man's domesticity will be the renewed source of all goodness in the world," a goodness of which even Christianity seems an affluent. The interpretation of self-denial and self-giving to the other as a form of love is what makes him describe a supposed contribution of slavery to religion, which would have taken a very different path if some of its sources did not derive from that form of labor and

relationship with the other. Christianity, then, would be “a religion of slaves and freedmen long before it became the religion of emperors, and, in the mixture of its distant origins, much of its essence was borrowed from the congenital soul of the slave, for both had to be the ascension of the humble and the oppressed. It would be said that, for the religion of human redemption, it was necessary to have slaves as first clients” (Nabuco, 2010: 9).

The relationship of the slave to his master, therefore, appears as a model for the relationship of the faithful to Christ: humble, selfless, absolutely obedient. “It is from the humblest contact with slavery that the supreme ambition of the saint has arisen: to be a slave of God.” And the Church, in its “highest dignity,” would respond to the principle presented in the Latin adage *servus servorum Dei*, often presented as one of the titles of the supreme pontiff in papal bulls: servant of the servants of God. Paradoxically, then, despite qualifying the Christian religion as the “supreme affirmation of freedom,” for which slavery would be the result of the fall, the author concludes the paragraph by stating that the “aspiration to the total loss of freedom means that the love of the slave has been judged as the love *par excellence*. The slave is a symbol like the lamb. In this way, Christianity made, from the coarsest of plants, the most sublime flower of humanity to ever scent the earth” (Nabuco, 2010: 9).

To be as dignified as a Christian can be, for Nabuco, is to be a servant of servants, devoting oneself to the cause of emancipation in favor of freedom, as compared to the divine breath. But it is to do this by learning from the “essence” of the enslaved’s soul—from a representation of the slave produced and repeated in the text by the author, it is worth noting. The dignity of the White master who confronts the violence of domination is to save himself from the immorality of the world by representing the one who suffers and cannot fight or express himself, and who unconsciously delegates the mandate of his race to the savior to do this for both. This is politics with a capital P for Nabuco, who combines in Massangano his parliamentary action, his own story in the “native land,” and the most universal of matters: that of salvation (Benzaquen, 2017: 599).

However, if this salvation comes by as a re-subjection that presupposes and produces continuity and self-improvement, coherence on the path toward God, how can it break with the master-slave relationship? How could it “make the citizen out of the master-slave complex”? In contradiction to this task proposed by himself in the abolitionist campaign, Nabuco writes in *Foi voulue*, in a passage also suppressed from the translation in *Minha Formação*: “With the soul of the slave, as the children of my generation knew it, the sweetest and freest of human bonds would be made, if it were possible to imagine a master’s soul with equal affinities” (Nabuco, 2012: 8-9). The freest of human bonds: a master who has affinities with the slave’s soul, who represents his essence—or the essence of the representation he makes of the slave, to be more precise. A master who aspires to the dignity of

someone with no name, except as the bearer of the legacy of compassion passed on by his godmother in secret, of the invisible; except as the one who comes before the Messiah, announcing and preparing his coming, and with whom Christ himself is confused.

It is visible here how the narrative construction of this actor from the White Brazilian political elite supported by the “typically Christian and Renaissance theme of human dignity” (Benzaquen, 2017: 597) recognizes and nullifies, in one stroke, the dignity of the other with whom he relates. This relationship is a form of representation, politically justified by a citizenship project related to a certain idea of a nation founded on the “union of races in freedom.” To assume this mandate, the individual must present the represented as incapable of making themselves heard: not in a negative key, but as a manifestation of a humility worthy of the saints based on sacrifice. “The future feeling of equality is the true buttress of the city of God; it is the one that, within Christian communities, raises the servile condition to the level of the first places” (Nabuco, 2010: 10). Equality will be future, otherworldly and, in the imperfect present, it demands servitude.

Perhaps the tragedy and paradox of Nabuco, then, was to effectively carry out the task he set for himself. To make citizens out of the master-slave complex, without rupture, reforming it and cultivating the survival of a form of relationship that—however condemned it may be in the text—serves as support for a political theology of the author and actor. A passage from two to one, our citizenship: success or failure?

In *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (2014), Larry Siedentop analyzes the work of Augustine of Hippo, better known as Saint Augustine, in the conclusion of the second part of the book—in which he interprets the “moral revolution” inaugurated by Christianity for the Western idea of the individual. Titled “the weakness of the will,” the chapter has as one of its axes the emphasis of the Christian philosopher on human fallibility and its relationship with the difficult combination between autonomy and dependence of the believer. For Augustine (and also for Kant), in Siedentop’s words, “none of us can consider ourselves a success in moral terms. We all fail, and it is this—tragic but humble—failure that contains an important egalitarian message” (Siedentop, 2014: 107). But if the believer is fallible, the commentator asks (with political and theological accent): why believe?

Larry Siedentop suggests that, according to Augustine, a faithful person is someone who sees themselves as a sojourner on Earth. This does not mean that they refuse to participate in public affairs or cooperate for specific interventions and improvements. Instead, they are someone “who identifies themselves differently” (Siedentop, 2014: 110). They are neither “slaves” to worldly ambitions and pleasures nor guardians of social conventions or legal limits. “They [the faithful] have a higher hope, a hope they carry in their relationships with others. It is a hope that can make

them severe judges of themselves. But it is also a hope that can nurture charity towards others” (2014: 110).

At this point, the ethical dimension of Augustine’s project becomes clear in the sense of a cultivation of individual personality and its interaction with other subjects and the world. Transitioning from a “metaphysics of the soul” to an “aesthetics of existence,” to borrow Foucault’s polarities in his discussion of *parrhesia* (2011), Christians are not supposed to turn their backs on the world but to “bring to this world the attitudes of what Peter Brown—in a happy phrase—called ‘resident aliens’” (Siedentop, 2014: 110). The goal is to become otherworldly in this world, understanding the imperfection and incompleteness of the effort to build the “city of God” in human institutions.

The dialogue of memories in Massangana with Augustine’s project and its contribution to the Western notion of the individual begins with the idea of self-investment as a form of action in the world. This action creates interiority as a dialogical space, where the effects of past bodily pleasure are repeated while prayer meditates on the salvation of the soul through contact with God. Its existential effect, so to speak, or the aesthetics of existence associated with this metaphysics of the soul, is a sacrificial mortification of the body for the salvation of the spirit, either by returning to the thalassic origin or by narrating the political figure’s story, integrating it into a national narrative in a moment of martyrdom and failure.

This existential effect is also based on this ‘misfit’ relationship by which the individual figures as a resident alien, as an exiled in their own land, as a stranger in this world. This banishment, finally, is perhaps a bit of the “mal de Nabuco” (Nabuco’s disease) for which Carlos Drummond de Andrade was maliciously criticized by Mário de Andrade in one of his best-known letters, and it is also what creates a possibility of differentiation of the individual in relation to the family, the official religion, and the law through culture. A liminality, whose potential perspective serves the differentiation of the gaze, but also the possibility of displacement and criticism of the present. Massangana, a place from which one speaks, in Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Pernambuco, a geographical accident considered one of the last points of rupture between South America and Africa south of Pangea¹⁶.

The article could end at this point, offering as its main conclusion the articulation between the techniques of the self legible in the empirical data and their consequences for the interpretation of individual subjectivity as an arena of social conflict in the Brazilian experience. But to close in a *coda*, even if unfinished, I revisit the thread of political and intellectual lineages with which Nabuco’s legacy relates, and with which I concluded the introduction paragraph of this text. In Gilberto Freyre, an enthusiastic reader of Massangana (Freyre, 1998), the otherness of the enslaved almost disappears. They are like an extension of the landowning class, which has the patriarch as the subject of the basic unity of Brazilian social life: the patriarchal family. There is neither representation nor recognition of the

other's dignity—however ambiguous it may be. At most, an undermined contribution under the so-called unity of “Brazilian culture.” Very differently from Nabuco, in Freyre the individual does not exist: only the types of the patriarchal complex exist.

In Florestan Fernandes, citizenship made “from” the master-slave complex seems to be exactly the object to which the author dedicates himself in *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes* (“The Inclusion of the Negro in Class Society” [1964] 2021). In this book, originally his chair thesis, he studies the trajectory of the Black population in post-abolition São Paulo and the inequalities to which one is (or of which one is the) subject in the face of a “rustic socialization” combined with the simultaneous need for integration into modern “competitive society.” By bringing actors from the Black movement (Medeiros da Silva & Brasil Jr., 2021) as his interlocutors for research, one of Florestan's ruptures with Nabuco's perspective is the rejection of that authorial pact of *O Abolicionismo* according to which the speaker is the representative of a class that cannot speak for itself. One of his conclusions, on the contrary, is that horizontal solidarity based on racialization is essential for the people to emerge as subjects of democracy; for the people to emerge in History. Against the master-slave complex, citizenship.

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NOTES

- * This text is based on the second chapter of the author's doctoral thesis which contains the results of the research "Figurações do indivíduo no pensamento social brasileiro: grafia de vida e teoria social em Joaquim Nabuco, Sérgio Buarque De Holanda e Florestan Fernandes," funded by Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (Faperj), through its Nota 10 Scholarship (Faperj Call No. 04/2022), process 202.365/2022. The research also benefited, at different times, from a PhD scholarship granted by CNPq under process n. 140785/2020-5 (GM/GD-Cotas do Programa de Pós-Graduação) and from CAPES funding for period as a visiting scholar at the New School for Social Research (process n. 88881.846513/2023-01). The author thanks the careful readings of the anonymous reviewers of Sociologia & Antropologia, his advisor Professor André Botelho, and the co-advisor of the research abroad, Professor Andrew Arato, in addition to the suggestions of Antonio Brasil Jr. and Elide Rugai Bastos in the thesis qualification committee which, although not addressing this text, contributed to the conception of its theoretical problem. Any flaws and inaccuracies are the sole responsibility of the author.
- 1 From here on, MF.
 - 2 According to Evaldo Cabral de Mello, at least two of the author's diary entries correspond to the writing of *Foi vouluê*: one on January 18, 1893 ("Today I started writing the book") and another on May 4 of the same year ("Today I can say that I finished the book. What remains to be reviewed, polished, embellished literarily, could be done by someone else") (Nabuco, 2006: 13-314). Despite being written in 1893, the book was only published posthumously in the 1970s in France and later translated into Portuguese. The edition I mention, published in Brazil in 2010, is titled *A Desejada Fé: Mysterium Fidei* thereby referred by the acronym FV.
 - 3 Attention to the association, in the quotation, between injustice and martyrdom which I will revisit later.
 - 4 By "innocents" (*ingênuos*), in the language of the day, the author refers to those emancipated by the 1871 "Free Womb Law" which was materially insufficient to guarantee the freedom of those born to enslaved mothers.
 - 5 *A Escravidão* was written in 1870, the year Nabuco completed his studies at Recife Law School, after transferring his

enrollment from São Paulo in the previous year, as was the custom at the time. The composition also happened after the young bachelor's involvement in the defense of the enslaved man Tomás, accused of two homicides and sentenced to death in Pernambuco. The defense succeeded in commuting the sentence to "perpetual hard labor" by mitigating the individual responsibility of the accused by relating it to the institution of slavery. As Benzaquen points out (2016: 8-9), the book was only published posthumously, but several of its arguments reappear and are reworked in later publications by the abolitionist such as *O Abolicionismo* (1884) and *Campanha abolicionista do Recife* (1885).

- 6 For another, more recent interpretation, which also considers the importance of Pauline ethics in Nabuco's writings, see Martins, 2019.
- 7 Once again, while presenting the duality, I propose some nuance: despite *O Abolicionismo* being indeed a call to action in the world, we cannot forget the tasks suggested at the end of the book for the intimacy of the readers, far from the applause of theaters, as an instrument for individual struggle against slavery and its legacy (Nabuco, 2000: 169-170).
- 8 For one of the few interpretations of Massangana that works with the topic, in a study of the biblical references in the text, while emphasizing the theme of the "fall," see Martins, 2019.
- 9 In Murilo's case and in Furtado's analysis, the question is expressly posed relating to the figure of Etelvina, the wet nurse presented as the cosmic origin of the subject of enunciation, who articulates the differentiation between night and day, white milk and black skin, with a tone reminiscent of the biblical Genesis. Coincidentally or not, Etelvina is also the name of the cook in *Menino sem passado*, a memoir by Silviano Santiago, in which the author takes up and problematizes the tradition of modernist memorialism from Minas Gerais, starting by the book's title (Botelho & Hombreck, 2022).
- 10 The Aberdeen Act of 1845 was an Act of United Kingdom's Parliament (8 & 9 Vict. c. 122) passed during the reign of Queen Victoria on August 9th. It gave the Royal Navy authority to stop and search any Brazilian ship suspected of being a slave ship on the high seas, and to arrest slave traders caught on these ships.

- 11 There is a verse composed by a son of Caetano Veloso's – a paraphraser of Nabuco in Noites do Norte (2000) – which says that “every man needs a mother.” The title of the song is “Todo Homem” (Every Man).
- 12 In Portuguese, the word for wet nurse is *ama-de-leite*, or *ama* for short. It is the same word used for the verb “to love” in the third person of the present tense.
- 13 This idea is already, to a certain extent, contained in Bosi's interpretation (2012: 14) cited throughout the text. As a challenge to it, it would be possible to say that the expression in the original French of FV is “*nostalgie de l'esclavage*” (Nabuco, 2012: 264), which would refer the object of *saudade* to the institution, and not to the concrete person of the enslaved. As an answer to that challenge, it is worth remembering that, although written in French in 1893, the text was only published by the author as part of MF in 1900. And, in that occasion, he translated it into the Portuguese expression “*saudade do escravo*” (longing for the slave). In my view, this reinforces the volitional dimension involved in the public presentation of the term, and provides us with one more element for interpreting its (re)writing as a social action (of subjectivation). From the point of view of a genetic critique, there is no reason to privilege an earlier version of the text as more original, pure, or authentic. If the work can be read as a process rather than as a stable ontology (Bittencourt, 2013), it is precisely this movement from one version to another that is of interest. Finally, even nostalgia for slavery does not necessarily exclude its condemnation. The interpretation, following another cue from Bosi, comes in the wake of the evidence gathered around the discussions of personal domination, its problematic way of recognizing the dignity of the other, and the figuration of Massangano as a space in opposition to the world which, in the limit, prevents generalizations.
- 14 It was in honor of this uncle that Joaquim Nabuco was given his name, having been entrusted to his care and that of Ana Rosa shortly after his birth, when his biological parents went to Rio de Janeiro in 1849 to swear in José Tomás Nabuco de Araújo Filho as a member of parliament (Alonso, 2007: 21).
- 15 In this sense, he is accompanied by Lahire (2008), for whom there are no “objects more social than others.”
- 16 See Conceição et al., 1988.

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MASSANGANA, BRAZIL: PROBLEMS IN PARADISE**Abstract**

The article proposes a new reading of “Massangana” by Joaquim Nabuco, from the perspective of a political sociology of the individual. The interpretation mobilizes elements of the cultural matrices with which the abolitionist’s memoirs dialogue, especially Christianity, to read them as a practice of subjectivation that intervenes in the realm of individual subjectivity as an arena of social conflict. In doing so, it contributes both to the critical reception of the white Brazilian elite author and to the availability of elements for the construction of a sociology of the individual in Brazil, by delineating processes of subjectivation and individuation which condition possibilities and limits to democratic citizenship contemporaneously.

Keywords

Joaquim Nabuco;
Brazilian social thought;
Christianity;
Sociology of the individual;
Individualism.

MASSANGANA, BRASIL: PROBLEMAS NO PARAÍSO**Resumo**

O artigo propõe uma nova leitura de “Massangana” de Joaquim Nabuco, na perspectiva de uma sociologia política do indivíduo. A interpretação mobiliza elementos das matrizes culturais com que as memórias do abolicionista dialogam, em especial o cristianismo, para lê-las como prática de subjetivação que intervém no âmbito da subjetividade individual como arena do conflito social. Com isso, contribui-se tanto para a crítica do autor proveniente da elite brasileira branca quanto para tornar disponíveis elementos de construção de uma sociologia do indivíduo no Brasil, pelo delineamento de processos de subjetivação e individuação que condicionam possibilidades e limites à cidadania democrática contemporaneamente.

Palavras-chave

Joaquim Nabuco;
Pensamento social brasileiro;
Cristianismo;
Sociologia do indivíduo;
Individualismo.