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Brazil and issues of cultural and national identity in Latin America

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I – The representations of the foundational myth

The 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Portuguese in the American continent has underscored, this year, in innumerable intellectual circles, the need to re-discuss issues linked to colonialism and post-colonialism, dependency relations, globalization, and all the related cultural implications this discussion brings up. The official “celebrations” of the “discovery of Brazil”, elaborately prepared by the government of the former sociologist and advocate of the left-wing intelligentsia during the military dictatorship and current President of Brazil Fernando Henrique Cardoso, culminated on April 22. A production worthy of an Oscar for special effects – a ship, the same size as the original Portuguese caravels that reached the Brazilian coast in the autumn of 1500, arrived in Bahia amidst fireworks, to the sound of symphonic orchestras, military music bands, afro and afoxé groups, samba and pagode bands, and “trios elétricos” (live music and sound systems on a truck). There were local politicians, diplomatic representatives, pop stars, members of high society and the jet set, social climbers, all under the blessing of the Catholic church and transmitted by television from coast to coast. The party could not have happened on a more appropriate date for its sponsors. By divine providence, the day for the “celebration of the 500 years” coincided with the Holy Week festivities, the celebration of the agony, death, and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The foundational myths of Brazil are renewed in the fake enactment of the First Mass and in the simulation of Cabral’s arrival. In a recent article, the philosopher and professor Marilena Chauí states:

We live in the diffuse presence of a narrative of origin. This narrative, although conceived during the conquest period, is unceasingly repeated because it functions as our foundational myth. Myth in the anthropological sense: an imaginary solution for tensions, conflicts, and contradictions that cannot be resolved in reality. Myth in the psychoanalytical sense: repetition compulsion

due to impossibility of symbolization and, above all, as a barrier to the passage to reality. Foundational myth because, like every fundatio, it imposes an internal link with the past as the origin – in other words, as a past that does not cease, that does not allow the work of temporal differences and that maintains itself perennially present. A foundational myth is one that unceasingly finds new means to express itself, new languages, new values and ideas, so that the more it seems like something else, the more it is a repetition of itself. (2000: 10)

The four main components that support the theological-political origin of the Brazilian foundational myth, pointed out in Chauí's essay, confirm their presence in the Hollywoodian performance of the April 22 – the view of paradise, the theological perspective of history maintained by Christian orthodoxy, the concept of Christian prophetic theological history, and, finally, the judicial-theocratic explanation.

From "Pero Vaz de Caminha's Letter to King Don Manuel Concerning The Discovery of Brazil", considered by traditional historiography to be a sort of a "birth certificate" for Brazil, and the accounts of European travelers that wandered around those lands in the sixteenth century, past the romantic narratives and arriving at the proud speeches of the military dictatorship in the 1960s and 70s, the image of the "paradisiacal place," the "Garden of Eden," was exploited. "*Our sky has more stars / Our plains have more flowers / Our forests have more wildlife / Our life has more love,*" (1976:262) wrote the poet Gonçalves Dias, in Coimbra, in the year of 1843.

The current attempt to activate the mechanisms of an epic memory of the process of constructing the Brazilian race and civilization, by symbolically confirming the coast of Bahia as the place of choice, reaffirms the foundational myth. Additionally, the myth is updated in the light of the industry of culture and of tourism, according to the clichés and stereotypes diffused around the world that sell Bahia (and Brazil) as the "land of eternal summer, with a happy, cordial, orderly, and friendly people, with exuberant tropical nature" – the first and original identity of the "Brazilian being." The idea that America, like Africa, is a European invention is confirmed. If the first conquerors, evangelists, and chroniclers who arrived in America already knew it from books and texts, today's seafarers already know it from fliers, videos, articles, and the Internet – cyberLatinAmerica. The contemporary foreign traveler incorporates to this myth another conquest in the sphere of the symbolic and, why not say it, in that of reality – to confirm the paradisiacal essence of the land and its

aphrodisiac effects on the Edenic scene: the pleasures of sexual tourism. Renewing what Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda wrote in his classic “View of Paradise”:

...the world seemed to renew and rejuvenate itself there, clothed in immutable green, bathed in a perennial spring, oblivious to the variety and hardships of the seasons, as if it were truly restored to the glory of the days of Creation. (1992:204)

As to the second component highlighted by Chauí, it is reasonable to state that the theological or providentialist history may be synthesized and confirmed as an indestructible symbol in the lyrics of one of the best known Brazilian songs, written by songwriter and singer Jorge Ben Jor – “*I live in a tropical country / Blessed by God / Beautiful by nature.*” It is the sign that we are the “chosen people.” Furthermore, beginning with the Pope who, from Rome, blessed Brazil, the most important authorities of the Catholic church were present that day to confirm what already seems to be a commonplace of nationality – Brazilians are part of God’s providential plan, the new chosen people for a new covenant, revelation and redemption of faith in the end of times. Nothing could have been more apt for the symbolism of Holy Saturday.

Another component of Brazil’s foundational myth, the prophetic messianic and millennarian history, assures the politicians and populist leaders present at the celebration of the 500 years the continuation of their power, ideological agenda, and a place next to the alienated and marginalized sectors of Brazilian society. Since the official celebrations occurred in Bahia, “Estação Primeira do Brasil”, in the words of one its most distinguished sons, Caetano Veloso, two anthems, one civic-religious and the other religious-civic, set the tone of the official ceremony. The National Anthem, a triumphal emblem of identity nationalism that moved the romantic Brazilian imagination, and the anthem of Our Lord of Bonfim, patron saint of Bahia. The following stanzas are from the National Anthem:

*Brazil, an intense dream, a vivid beam
Of love and hope descends to earth
If in your beautiful sky, smiling and clear
The image of the “Cruzeiro” constellation shines.*

*Gigantic by nature
Beautiful, strong, dauntless colossus
Your future mirrors this greatness*

.....

*Forever lying in a splendid cradle
To the sound of the sea and in the light of a deep sky
You shine, oh Brazil, America's crown,
Illuminated by the sun of the new world.*

*Your lovely, smiling fields have more flowers
Than the fairest of lands.
Our forests have more wildlife,
Our life in your bosom more love.*

The Hymn to the Lord of Bonfim is a sort of National Anthem of Bahia. The superposition of three identities (to be Brazilian, to be Bahian, and to be Christian) functions in a kind of (con)fusion of complementary identities. The photo that illustrates the prayer book that every believer must carry with him or her displays the image of the Lord of Bonfim with a Brazilian flag in the background, surrounded by flowers from the “lovely, smiling fields” mentioned in the National Anthem. Not only is the messianism (proclaimed by Father Antônio Viera, documented in Euclides da Cunha’s saga of Canudos, challenged by Oswald de Andrade, readdressed by Glauber Rocha, and woven into a habit-skin by Arthur Bispo do Rosário) reinforced but it also expands the mythical and mystical explanation for the liberation from the colonial power and the fight against the Antichrist. Here are excerpts from the Hymn:

*Glory to you on this glorious day,
Glory to you, Redeemer, who 100 years ago
Led our fathers to victory,
Through the seas and fields of Bahia.*

*From this holy mount,
Mansion of Mercy
Give us the divine grace
Of justice and peace.*

Finally, this “splendorous nature,” with an elite anointed by God and a people in holy war against evil, going through their messianic phases, is governed on the stage of their enactment of progress and modernity by a State whose constitution is judicial-theocratic. Chauí concludes:

Political power, that is, the State, precedes society and has its origin outside of it, first in the divine decrees, and then by the ruler's decrees. This explains one of the main components of our founding myth, which is the statement that Brazil's history was and is made

without blood; because all the political events do not appear to originate from society and its battles, but directly from the State, by decrees: hereditary captaincies, General Governments, Independence, Abolition, Republic. Hence another peculiar consequence: the bloody moments of this history are considered mere conspiracies (“inconfidências”) or backward popular fanaticism (Praieira, Canudos, Contestado, Pedra Bonita, Farroupilhas, MST). (2000:14)

And it was the MST (Landless Peasants Movement), in conjunction with some indigenous communities, that originated an articulate and resolute confrontational and questioning reaction to the celebrations of the 500th anniversary. Approximately 2,500 demonstrators walked hundreds of kilometers to Porto Seguro, the city where the official celebrations were to be staged, weeks before D-Day. They went to recall the symbolic date that marks the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás, in the state of Pará, where exactly four years ago nineteen landless rural workers were killed in a clash with policemen. By order of the governor of Bahia, the members of the MST were not allowed to stay in the city until April 22, in the same way that the Pataxó Indians’ monument, an indigenous political statement in opposition to the celebration, was destroyed by the forces of repression. “Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question.” In the words of Governor César Borges, published in the daily *Folha de São Paulo* on April 17:

There is no physical space in Porto Seguro to accommodate very large numbers of people for all the events. If a group has already announced their intention to protest and coerce the authorities, we have the obligation to take every precaution.

In response, Ademar Bogo, the movement’s general coordinator, stated:

We would like to say that Brazil, after 500 years of history, has not learned to throw a party for its people. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso needs to understand that Brazil is not just tourists, rich people, and rulers.

Those who were “*levantados do chão*” (“raised from the ground”), whether they are rural workers or Indians, blacks or marginalized people in general, watched from afar the confirmation of their exclusion from the real and the imaginary Brazil. Barred from the ‘party’, they clashed with security forces; their voice and their participation were placed *outside of the possible frontier* of Brazilian citizenship. They have no way to belong to a society still stratified and under the yoke of institutionalized

paternalism, favoritism, and corruption. Smaller and dramatic narratives that inculcate crises, instability, confrontation, and deconstruction have no space nor time before the spectacularization of the “brazilconstruct.com” on the verge of confirmation, by divine or natural decree – which are, in principle, the same thing – that Brazil is the “country of the future,” taking its place in history. According to Marilena Chauí:

This mythical production of a paradise-country persuades us that our identity and greatness are predetermined in the cultural blueprint: we are sensitive and sensual, caring and welcoming, happy and above all we are essentially non-violent. (2000: 12)

II – The representations of identity

The obsessive search for an original, unique identity, of nativist substance and geared towards a pure and immaculate Amerindian essence, with variants and specificities, characterizes the post-independence culture in almost every Latin American country. In the case of Brazil, our Romantics, in particular Gonçalves Dias and José de Alencar, applied themselves to a radical defense of a “truly” national discourse (“our reality” – the Indian) and of a unique linguistic treatment (“our expression” – the Brazilian language). The presence of Blacks as a cultural component would only appear later, because it was still a slaveholding society. The following quotation from Alencar illustrates this issue with significant aptness:

Can the people that eat cashews, mangoes, cambucás, and jaboticaba fruit speak a language with the same pronunciation and the same spirit as the people who taste figs, apricots, and loquats? (1958: 702)

The need to assert a unique Brazilian identity as a passport to modernity and a way to achieve differentiation from Europeans led Brazilian culture to a series of impasses. The discomfort lay in the idea that by imitating European culture, by assuming foreign values as his own, by expressing themselves in the Portuguese language with its syntax and prosody, Brazilian intellectuals distanced themselves from their own unique cultural identity. They believed in the possibility of establishing a strict *boundary* between *us* and the *others*, building an *original culture*, rediscovering Brazil with the Independence of 1822; of building a new nation, represented by an autochthonous culture, conceived in opposition to that of the colonizers, yet repeating the foundational myth of Brazil in different scenarios, as previously addressed. Repeating cyclically the idea

that the history of Brazil restarts from square one. Policarpo Quaresma, a character of Lima Barreto, is perhaps one of the best examples of this impasse and these contradictions. The professor and literary critic Roberto Schwarz, in the essay “Nacional por subtração” (National by subtraction), states:

Brazilians and Latin Americans constantly carry out the experiment of the false, inauthentic, imitated character of the cultural life we lead. This experiment has been instrumental to our critical thought since Independence. It can be and has been interpreted in many ways, by Romantics, Naturalists, Modernists, the left, the right, cosmopolitans, nationalists and so on, which suggests that this corresponds is a durable and deep-rooted problem. (1987:93)

This “feeling of inadequacy,” according to the critic, lasted up to Modernism, inciting the most diverse reactions that led to a line of action naively nationalistic and entirely deceptive – the notion that the Brazilian intellectual life will be stronger and more original the farther it moves away from European standards. The nationalist and populist branches of the Brazilian cultural tradition, by suggesting the elimination of all that is not native and situating evil and the problems of the *frontier* outside itself, obtains with the “subtraction residual” the authentic substance of the country. The critic is interested in demonstrating that the idea of “national by subtraction” disguises the most important issue – the analysis of social classes. Although the dichotomies European vs. Latin American, colonizer vs. colony, are established, they do not function in the internal zone, i.e. in the relation bourgeoisie vs. proletariat and in the forms of capitalist exploitation, the leitmotiv of Schwarz’s Marxist-based analysis. Since evil is the Other of the Same – the Portuguese to the Romantic, the North American to the left of the 50s and 60s – all that was needed was to resist the other for the same to assert itself as *within the frontier, the essence of its interior, the truth of a safeguarded original*.

Despite his critical position in relation to the reductionist binary opposition of nationalist politics, Schwarz does not agree with what to him represents one of the discrediting factors of cultural nationalism – the post-structuralist French philosophy (Foucault, Derrida) and, to update the debate, the so-called Cultural and Post-colonial Studies. In short, Roberto Schwarz’s sociological and historical debate is situated in modernity and represents a counterpoint to the contemporary post-modern debate. To him, the indictment of hierarchies (anterior/posterior, model/copy, center/periphery), of the fragmented conception of the whole of culture and the “*dismantling of conventional frameworks of literary life (such as the*

notions of authorship, work, influence, originality etc.)” (1987:98) amount to a sophisticated imported theoretical arsenal that does not solve the issue of copying, imitation, and dependency in Latin America.

My intention now, in opposition to Schwarz’s argument, is to build a notion of identity that deconstructs itself as a unit and pluralizes itself into *floating and multiple identities*.

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, in the article “Minimizing Identities”, published in 1999, states that the modern concept of identity, in its most recent use as well as its traditional usage, is motivated by a feeling of *nostalgia* or by *resentment*, in the sense given by Nietzsche to the term. Nostalgia for something that was left behind, that turned the corner of time, that remained on the border of a past that is definitely lost and that can only be rescued in the imagination through memory. Nostalgia as a melancholic condition of conceiving the present as a time of want, loss, and absence. Resentment is the slave’s discourse, the need to oppose the other from intolerance, the denial of vital active principles, and a resentful set of principles that presents itself as an attitude of domination. Perhaps some of the current situations, in the field of micro- or macrophysics, can be better understood by starting from the problematization of the notion of identity. Gumbrecht proposes the abandonment of this concept and a reflection on the “possibility of living without an identity.”

Perhaps that is not quite Professor Zilá Bernd’s proposal, but it is very similar to her suggestion that the idea of *identity* (closed, immobile, crystallized) be replaced by that of *identification* (open and in process). Against the “identity fetishism”, Bernd proposes the praise of roaming. In any case, the replacement of the concept of *identity* by those of *floating identities*, *multiple identifications* or *nomadic identifications* hurls us into a contemporary crisis of the concepts of *frontier*, *origin*, *center* and *periphery*, whether in national discourses or in the fields of ethnic, sexual or gender representation.

Let me return to the initial issue, one of the nodal aspects of contemporaneity – *frontiers*. I speak of a borderland place, in-between discourses with multiple readings. Frontiers, for the strategy of my argument, cease to be limits, obstacles, barriers, whether of gender, ethnicity, nationality, and culture, to gain the dynamic contours of *places of appropriation*. This is not the basic, foundational concept of origin, genesis, zero degree. To me, it seems to be much more the *in-between* place, to borrow Silviano Santiago’s useful concept for a reading of Latin-American culture, where the tension between different parts and contrasting forces can be supplemented by the interpenetration of

meaningful terms rather than by a dichotomy of meanings, transgressive breaks and acquiescent emendations. Writes Santiago:

Latin America's greatest contribution to Western culture comes from the systematic destruction of concepts of unity and of purity: these two concepts lose the precise shape of their meaning, their crushing weight, their sign of cultural superiority, as the work of contamination of Latin Americans establishes itself and proves increasingly efficient. Latin America found its place in the map of Western civilization thanks to the movement of bypassing the active and destructive norm that transforms the finished, immutable elements that Europeans exported to the New World. Due to the fact that Latin America can no longer close its doors to the foreign invasion or reencounter its "Edenic" condition of isolation and innocence, one is forced to conclude, cynically, that without this contribution its product would be a mere copy – silence. A copy often dated, because of the imperceptible regression of time that Lévi-Strauss speaks of. Its geography must be a geography of assimilation and aggressiveness, of learning and reaction, of false obedience. Passivity would reduce its operative role to disappearance by analogy. Saving its place in the second row, it is, however, necessary to signal its difference, register its presence, an often vanguard presence. The silence would be the answer preferred by cultural imperialism, or yet the sound echo that only works to further tighten the grip of the conquering power. To speak, to write, means: to speak against, to write against. (1978:18-9)

Duly taking the differences into consideration, we might associate this category with the idea of transculturation, with the discussion concerning cultural crossing, hybridism, or even Oswald de Andrade's notion of anthropophagy, which today, unfortunately, has worn threadbare by the trivialization of its usage. Oswald de Andrade would be a bestseller if all those who use his reflections on Brazilian culture without criteria and in the superficial form of a cliché had read his vast production. In an attempt to overcome the deterministic mechanics and the reductionist political position in the cultural debate of his time, the author of *Pau-Brasil Poetry* proposes, in its place, to devour what is outside, to internalize it and, in an immediately subsequent movement, to externalize the exterior that was internalized, already distorted; transformed; this is the duty of all "technicized barbarians." "Tupi or not Tupi – that is the question." Brazilian culture, with an energetic movement, destroys the oppositions inside/outside, foreign/native, model/copy, subverting the romantic search

for the lost paradise, the indigenous purity, the post-card standard of natural beauty displayed in Copacabana newsstands, little sea princess, pearl of the Atlantic, where the *sabiá* sings with João Gilberto and Nara Leão of the sweet cordiality of the Carioca malandro under the shade of a palm tree, fastening butterflies on a board between Sugarloaf Mountain and the statue of Christ the Redeemer. Oswald saw all this as “macumba (voodoo-like witchcraft) for tourists,” sensing that the time and memory in the constitution of our cultural practices turn counterclockwise on the hands of the billboard clock of the 500th anniversary. Provokingly, I quote some excerpts from his pastiche writings (*Manifesto da poesia pau brasil* – 1924; *Manifesto antropófago* – 1928), under the regime of the aphorism:

Poetry exists in facts. The saffron and ochre shacks in the greenery of the Favela, under a Cabral blue, are aesthetic facts.

Rio’s Carnival is the religious happening of the Brazilian race. Pau-Brazil. Wagner submerges before the merry-makers of Botafogo. Barbaric and ours.

No formula for the contemporary expression of the world. To see with free eyes.

Only anthropophagy unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically.

What bothered the truth was the clothing, the waterproof between the interior and the exterior world.

We were never catechized. We live through a sleepless law. We made Christ be born in Bahia. Or in Belém do Pará.

Language without archaisms. Without erudition. Natural and neologistic. The millionaire contribution of all mistakes.

In the tone of a *boutade*, in the ironic and iconoclastic key of Oswaldian discourse, a poetics of transgression took shape that would give to our culture, with all the risks, contradictions, and impasses, the solar face of representation of a certain borderline *ethos* between mockery and seriousness. This is the utopia of a nation imagined as a marginal construct, inserted on the fringes of a periphery devoid of a center. The tradition of a delirious speech of / in / about Brazil that, re-addressed by Glauber Rocha, Zé Celso, Hélio Oiticica, Caetano Veloso, and the

Tropicalists, would continue the enactment of *Brazil as performance*, allegorically solitary in Cacá Diegues's movie *Bye, bye Brasil*.

To be in the frontier, the frontier culture, without closed identities or belonging, discontinued and fragmented on the landscape of contemporaneity – “I am Brazilian, I'm married and I'm single, I'm from Bahia and I'm a foreigner”, states Caetano, during the explosion of the Tropicália movement, a countercultural reinterpretation of the Oswaldian tradition. The issue of national identity, that today returns with a vengeance to the post-colonial cultural debate, intertwines variables related to gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, provoking a deconstruction of universal and closed identities for the representation of floating identities, influenced by multicultural conflicts.

The contemporary subject, disowned by the “logic of identity” (fixed, still, typified, coherent, stable), the hallmark of modernity, seeks in the culture of feeling and emotion the place previously occupied by the rationalistic view of a stable and immutable order, as the sociologist Michel Maffesoli would have it. The “multifaceted subject” sheds its closed and uniform identity to assume successive floating and plural identities, imploding the polity in its macrophysical sense, transfigured into a politics of the domestic, the potency of the matriarchy succeeding the power of the patriarchy. According to Maffesoli, “matriarchy implies a looser, more diverse, and shattered civilizational state, closer to life in its diverse potentialities.... Matriarchy, while an ideal-type, would confer coherency to all the values alternative to the rational scheme of modernity.”

To return to Oswald's anthropophagic manifest of 1928: “Against social reality, dressed and oppressive, catalogued by Freud – the reality without complexes, without insanity, without prostitution and without penitentiaries of the matriarchy of Pindorama.” Let me open parentheses to introduce another voice in the debate. *All About Eve* is the first of many references to appear in Pedro Almodóvar's latest film. The mythological image of Bette Davis, tentacular and perverse, smoking with the same despair as Huma (“Smoke”), the actress in the leading role of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Eve's desire, experienced by Huma, marked by the trajectory of Manuela, who plays the main role in *All About my Mother*.” A film of women, rather than a film about women. Manuela's journey in search of herself, her history, the memory of her voice like a weapon against silence, is unleashed by a tragic loss, the death of her son, Esteban. Like Sherazade, narrating to survive, she plays the role in Barcelona, to find the strength of her voice, “the voice of a sacred woman,” in the words of Caetano Veloso in “Vaca profana” (Unholy cow). And at the deterritorialized frontier of nationality, sexuality, identity, Manuela finds

La Agrado (“Pleasure”), the transvestite who brings together and distances masculine and feminine, the body written on the misplaced hybridization, on the frontier inscription. Strange and familiar, *Umheimlich* in the Freudian senso, he who is neither from nor from anywhere else.

The recognition of the importance of the figure of the stranger, the *dépaysé*, the errant traveler as post-modern *flâneur*, is not entirely surprising in the presence of the illegible ruins of a world conceived in the cynical, narcissistic, and indistinguishable uniformity of globalization.

The emergence of a sailor narrator (cf. Walter Benjamin – *The narrator*), the wanderer, the visionary, the beyond-horizons, the traveler, who in his circumnavigating act of leaving his own space, leaves his own self to visit other shores, borders, and limits. In the words of the German film director Wim Wenders, “the journey is, in itself, a state of identity.”

The journey that interests us in this case is the inverse image of the one made by Cabral 500 years ago, the reason for the proud celebration sponsored by the FHC Administration in 2000. Perhaps the official celebration is the clearest attempt to construct an exportable image of Brazil as a tourist-cultural product. However, the image I will speak of involves the painful and bitter ongoing experience of generations of Brazilians, scarred by dictatorial periods: imposed and voluntary exiles, a black-and-white, out of focus, photograph in an ID card.

The recent products of two dictatorships (that of the 30s, the Estado Novo, and the one following the military coup in 1964) and of the constant crises of self-esteem, exile begins to have, in this discussion, the importance of representing the nostalgic search for a personal and a social identity that were lost and/or erased from time and a resentful search for a country that turned its back on it. One of the lost faces of the idealized Brazilian identity, the Diaspora, and, on the other hand, the dream of rebuilding it smoothly, carefully and joyfully. The paradox of finding oneself in loss and losing oneself by finding oneself.

This dilemma is quite clear in two films by the well-known director Walter Salles Jr. – *Terra estrangeira* (Foreign Land) and *Central do Brasil* (Central Station). If in the earlier movie young Paco, son of a Basque mother, goes to Europe and finds death, in *Central do Brasil*, the reason for the trip repeats itself, but now the destination is the pure, humble, messianic “heart” of Brazil. The trip abroad ends in tragedy. The trip inward represents an encounter with origins, roots, solidarity, symbolized in the reunion of the three brothers with Biblical names (Moisés, Isaías, and Josué – Moses, Isaiah and Joshua) in addition to the carpentry of their father, Jesus. The wish of reencountering the motherland, the matriarch, perhaps stepmother land, is fulfilled in *Central do Brasil* and fails in *Terra*

estrangeira. As in “Sabiá,” a song written by Tom Jobim and Chico Buarque de Hollanda in 1968.

*I will return
I know I will return someday
To my place
It was and it is there
That I will hear
A sabiá sing
I will return
I know I will return someday
I will lie in the shade
Of a palm tree
That is no longer there
Pick a flower
That no longer blooms
And perhaps a lover
Can drive away
The nights I did not want
And announce the day
I will return
I know I will return someday
It will not have been in vain
That I made so many plans
To trick myself
Like I made mistakes
To find myself
Like I made roads
To lose myself
I did everything but
Failed to forget you
I will return
I know I will return someday
To my place
That was and is still there
That is where I will hear
A sabiá sing*

Or in the poem *Retificação*, by Claudius Hermann Portugal (1976:9):

*The palm trees were cut
In their place a highway will be built*

*The sabiá won the 1968 music festival
But is being rapidly extinguished
Or is confined in some cage*

The exile of my land is no longer a song.

How can one speak of unique, closed, self-sufficient identities, if the contemporary *frontier man* walks along the edges and the irregular ways that lead to a certain atopia, a kind of pluralism, to a polyphonic cultural discourse? How can one wish to be from a certain place if his feet insist on leaving footprints in the vacant lot next door? Vacant or supposedly available for occupation, tolerantly shared.

Neither the inside nor the outside, but the middle; neither the internal nor the external, but the in-between place; neither nostalgia nor resentment, but the fecundity of the neighbor, as Nietzsche would have it.

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