UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,

IRVINE

Running from the Nation: Synthesis and Fugitivity in Contemporary Brazil and Venezuela

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Comparative Literature

by

Carlos Colmenares Gil

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Adriana M. Johnson, Chair
Professor Rei Terada
Professor Catherine Malabou
Professor Horacio Legras

2022

DEDICATION

to

Lucía, Elsa J. (chepina), Andrés F., J. Andrés (chichu), Andrés R., Andrea, Nora, Sam,

Providencia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a recent event, where I read a text in which I heavily criticized hierarchical kinship, Adriana Johnson, after expressing that she liked it, voiced a certain ambivalence with respect to me arguing for something like the abolition of academic parenthood. Adriana's scholarly motherhood—y su amistad—: challenging and brilliant, oblique and generative, is not something I plan on ever abolishing. I remember the moment I got lost while on a hike with Rei Terada, and all alone, trying to find my way back, saw a majestic mountain deer running up the hill, as if she was preparing me for that; I could not find a better description of the fortune of having her friendship. Meeting Catherine Malabou in 2011 and going to her office months later to discuss Raymond Queneau, among other things, made me feel heard in a way I never felt possible; our decade-long friendship continues…An email from Horacio Legras early on in my career, claiming a piece of my academic soul, has had repercussions in my life as a literature scholar that I will always be grateful for.

Jane Newman with her relentless support, Ackbar Abbas with his playful complicity, and Nahum Chandler with his generous commitment, have been incredible models for the kind of teacher and mentor I want to be. Williston Chase, Isabella Vergara Calderón, Pragya Trivedi, José María Urdaneta, Judith Rodríguez and Jon-David Settell have influenced my work and my life in ways I am still discovering.

And Nora, your intelligence and sharpness, your restless critical capacity, and your kindness and love make me feel both safe and surprised every day. You make the limits between work and play disappear, making me enjoy writing, knowing it is for you.

VITA

Carlos Colmenares Gil

2008 B.A. in Psychology, Universidad Católica Andrés Bello

2012 M.A. in Philosophy and Contemporary Critical Theory, Kingston University

2018 M.A. in Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine

2022 Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine

FIELD OF STUDY

Latin American Philosophy and Thought, Contemporary Latin American Literature and Film, Latin American Music, Afro-Caribbean Culture, Indigenous studies in Brazil and Venezuela, Continental Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, Translation Theory, World Literature.

PUBLICATIONS

"Leer demasiado, no leer lo suficiente: relación, ilegibilidad y lo popular en Alejandro Moreno." *Res Publica. Revista de Historia de las Ideas Políticas*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2021, pp. 27-36.

"Sentidos Fugitivos: escucha, costa, legibilidad*." Border-Listening/Escucha-Liminal*, vol. 1, 2020, pp. 69-79.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Running from the Nation: Synthesis and Fugitivity in Contemporary Brazil and Venezuela

by

Carlos Colmenares Gil

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Irvine, 2022

Associate Professor Adriana M. Johnson, Chair

This project moves through the difficult context of authors producing work that inevitably operates under a national frame of reference with the limitations that this entails. The critical discourse articulated around these works and these figures who overflow the canonical container, are severely underread, or simply exist at the sidelines of national literatures, has not been able to see how there is more at stake in their oeuvre than a compliance or an antagonism with national discourse. The examination I make of the works of Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Igor Barreto in relation to the landscape and mapping, Hilda Hilst and Oswaldo Trejo in relation to kinship, and Miguel James and Carolina Maria de Jesus and the racial democracy discourse, opt for creating a way of reading possibilities of being together that are not vertically sanctioned by the nation-state in contemporary works of literature in Brazil and Venezuela. The trans-local connections and local truths that different ways of seeing and different worlds-of-life help us encounter, will be the emphasis along the different chapters, resisting the constitution of a

proposal of a new community and focusing more on the construction of a structure of intelligibility and a reading method that is able to escape national commodification. In this sense, I show throughout the project how nation and critique have invented a mutilated object of study, also restricting the political field and its meaning, subsuming every aesthetic claim under a unique frame of reference in relation to the social. The different conceptual displacements enacted in this dissertation aim to acknowledge the existence and weight of that national frame while at the same time signaling many aesthetic-political instances that make a life outside, in the cracks, or despite of it.

INTRODUCTION

NATION-STATES OF AESTHETICS

While the nation-state form still prevails today, political and public opinion discourses constantly point at the failure of such a form in the global south only to ask for a reform while still maintaining the nation-state as a horizon. But what makes us talk about "failed states" as if there is common agreement on what the term means? The way in which Brazil has been said to "fail" as a nation is not the same way as Venezuela has, and yet, at some point in recent history both have been labeled as failed states.[1] Since 2019 at least, they represent two oversimplified poles in a Cold-War mindset that has lately returned from the dead: Maduro's post-chavista socialism facing off against Bolsonaro's savage capitalism until recently. Neither of these violently stabilized and polarized views can give us an image of the complex social dynamic of both countries in the last century.

Can failure not also be understood as both a symptom and a requirement for nationalism to emerge over and over under the same blueprint of the nation-state? Is collapse not the motor of new nationalisms, present and to come? Does the modern idea of the nation not feed off of these failures?[2] Being radical or a conservative is often evidenced in just having a different version of patriotism (Debray, 40), which generally implies using nationalism as the antidote to recuperate from the collapse that another version of nationalism produced. The assumption here

[1] https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/8/20/failed-state-venezuelan-displacement-and-starvation-multiply https://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/opinion-editorial/opinion-is-brazil-a-failed-state/

[2] In discussing the elusiveness of a definition of nation, Benedict Anderson quotes Tom Nairn in *The Break-up of Britain*: ""Nationalism" is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as "neurosis" in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable" (Anderson, 5).

is that this "failure," which represents the culmination of a cycle and the beginning of another cycle (perhaps also destined to fail) within the closed totality a nation-state encompasses, is perfectly readable. In fact, an intervention on the definition of the nation-state in Latin America would add that, besides being an institutionalized enforcement of a common identity, it is also a machine that constantly reads and comments on breakdowns, including its own, planting the seeds for competing nationalisms to emerge almost ad infinitum. The existence of Brazil and Venezuela as Nation-States depends on these acts of reading, creating a logic of failure, of peripheral capitalism at best, accompanied by a new national ideal that reconfigures in the present an imagined absolute past in a synthetic impulse that erases differences.

This seems like an old discussion, and it is. It filled pages and pages of academic publishing in the 1980s and 1990s,[3] in parallel, and maybe due to, the shock of globalization and the resurgence of a new cosmopolitanism.[4] Because that discussion already occurred, and it did so "universally", we are now living in a post-national era. Beyond the anachronistic joy of going back to these discussions of the nation, the national, and the nation-state, there is a wider concern. The acts of reading that different forms—usually two alternating ones—of nationalisms inaugurate in a pseudo-revolutionary manner, have shadowed other acts of reading that have become the writing of a literature and theory at odds with the homogenizing character of national discourse. The hypothesis derived from this claim is that such *other* forms of reading also suggest forms of being together that defy or simply try to bypass—without illusions of its disappearance—the national community. There are three main axes through which a first

[3] See the collective volume *Nation and Narration* (1990), edited by Homi Bhabha; and also *Nationalist Thoughts and the Colonial World* (1986) and *The Nation and its Fragments* (1993), by Partha Chatterjee; *Imagined Communities* (1983), by Benedict Anderson; *Race, Nation, Class* (1988), by Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, to name a few.

[4] Most notably in the works of Jürgen Habermas and Ulrich Beck.

analysis in this sense must be carried in the case of Brazil and Venezuela: the national landscape, the family, and the idea of racial democracy. The geographical, filial, and racial, embodied by the map, the nuclear-heterosexual family, and the category of the *mestizo*, as smaller syntheses of the larger national unity and representatives of it, are pillars erected to homogenize, and micromanage the differences of, territories, human groups and desires.

If we go back to the roots of the term, the idea of nationality has been tied to institutions for quite a long time, since its *nacimiento*. One of the oldest uses of the word nation—from the Latin *natio*, meaning "something born"—was in the context of the medieval university, where a nation was constituted by a group of foreign students coming from contiguous geographical regions. This identity operated only while the students were enrolled in the university, they would lose it once they went back home after completing their education (Greenfeld, 4). The need to turn an unfamiliar space or context into a familiar one just by the power of identification would eventually be taken further, now synthesizing what was already a familiar, but heterogeneous, space into a seamless unity, in order to guard it from others. It is not surprising, then, that a modern form of the idea of nation, and a nationalist logic as a result of the struggle against colonial empires and the emergence of liberal ideas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, would link the nation to yet another institution: the State.[5] The process of state formation in Latin America then, created nationalist movements and a sense of a common linguistic, cultural, and religious space, which, once administered by the newly emerged republics, became the blueprint of Latin American nation-states (Opello and Rosow, 126).

Benedict Anderson famously argued that nations became "portable" and adaptable to different ideologies (4) after their constitution in the eighteenth century. He also claimed that the

[5] State and the idea of university are connected too, of course, in a relation where "the game of organizing collective thought" mirrors the "game of organizing collectivities", as Williston Chase claims (434).

people who composed a nation perhaps "…will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Literary works, foundational and canonical have preserved that communion, by going hand in hand with national discourse articulation in the 19th century in Latin America, but also by contesting such discourse in order to put another version of it in place, as it happened with avant-garde movements in the twentieth century. Moreover, state power modulated literature and the written word at large in the nineteenth century, inscribing in it the "…principles of concentration, elitism, hierarchization" (Rama, *Ciudad,* 43), but also using literary texts as foundational and, therefore, justifications for an idea of nation that is needed by the state to exercise its violence (Lobo, 22). Let us read a passage by Ángel Rama in *La Ciudad Letrada*:

> The creation of national literatures toward the end of the nineteenth century constituted a triumph of the lettered city, which, for the first time in its long history, started to dominate its surroundings. It absorbed multiple contributions of rural culture, inserting them in its project and articulating them with other elements with the aim of crafting an autonomous discourse that explained the formation of nationality and that established, with admiration, its values (74).

What Rama describes is a product of the complicity between state and the literary realm—often comprised of writers that were also government officials—where both helped institute each other and were able to exploit each other while producing an idea of nationality that provides a synthesis to a set of geographically and racially distinct elements and persons, but which were unified, creating a fictive ethnicity in Étienne Balibar's words. The strengthening of state power and the narrowing of the literary realm and its possibilities is the result of this.

What my project investigates, is how there are different instances of communion which can go against or in parallel to that perverse relationship between the literary and the national, instances that, as Partha Chatterjee argues, propose creative forms of social organization that are marginalized when the national form is replicated over and over by national discourses and practices (156). Instead of national forms, fugitive forms of writing make an appearance, calling for other kinds of legibility, expanding not only the sense of community, but the literary field itself.

If the central maneuver of the nation-state is to nurture freedom in the form of subjecthood while at the same time articulating itself as the only possible form of community for those subjects to be part of something like a society (Chatterjee, 234), then any other possibility of being-with that bypasses or simply does not fall under the sanction of the nation-state becomes something disposable, incorporable without remainder, or ignored as invisible/illegible. As literature has served to help found nations and national discourses and "immemorial" traditions, I want to investigate how literature can help unearth, as well as contribute to create, possibilities of communities that do not want to fall under state's control in Brazil and Venezuela. Part of the challenge is that this is not the overt purpose of the authors examined here, but precisely because of this, I find their work even more relevant, insofar as it requires another kind of political and poetical game that complicates the inside-outside, pro-anti, binaries. It also requires another kind of critical game that instead of programmatically establishing and stabilizing concepts of movements, is able to read escapes, different alliances and non-compliances. *Running from the Nation* is not only a direct fleeing, but also a creative resistance in the texts to being re-contained by mutilating their critical possibilities.

The generic diversity of the texts analyzed in this project serves to emphasize how, by incorporating heterogeneous stylistic, thematic, or formal devices into their work, the Venezuelan and Brazilian authors studied show the limits of supposedly stable generic divisions. The experimental quality and ambiguous position in regard to canonization that is evidenced in most of these texts, creates new horizons and possibilities of social communion. Be it because they overflow the canonical container, as it is the case of Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, because they create their own structures of intelligibility to then destroy them, as we will see with Brazilian author Hilda Hilst and Venezuelan Oswaldo Trejo, or also because they refuse to participate in their own contextualization as authors, as it happens with Brazilian writer Carolina Maria de Jesus, these authors, along with Igor Barreto and Miguel James, have chosen to opt out of the idea that there is only one way of *being with*. Even if attempting to be foreign to the nation-state, they are still unavoidably under its reign, and that is where some important tensions of their work lie, making them contrast heavily with the often epic, always classificatory, character that nationalist discourses mobilize with the aim of normalizing collectivities.

It is crucial to note that, as Mikhail Bakhtin states, the decay of the epic genre in literature occurred at the end of the eighteenth century (5); this coincides with the rise of nationalism that in the early nineteenth century culminates with the establishment of the nation-state as the official form of social organization in Latin America. It can be argued that, rather than disappearing, epic narratives were displaced to the political realm, while other aesthetic possibilities thrived in literature and art, possibilities that often parodied the depiction of an immemorial past that the epic, as a genre, mobilized. As Timothy Brennan phrases it in a more general way: “The rise of the modern Nation-State in Europe [and in Latin America] in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is inseparable from the forms and subjects of imaginative literature" (48), or as Anderson argues more specifically regarding the idea of simultaneity that the novel solidified: "The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). The works I analyze make visible and critique the continued presence of the epic construction of the past as well as the idea of simultaneity that glues together the imagined community in official and literary discourses; these works also criticize the idea of an "imaginative" I (chapter 1), or an "imaginative" family (chapter 2), which creates and maintains a single, even if miscegenated, idea of what being Venezuelan, or Brazilian, is (chapter 3). This should not be confused with an attempt on my part to categorize the authors I analyze, to make them mobilize a post-national or even para-national argument. We are not there yet, and I am not sure if we should be there in the first place. After all, the avant-garde movements that immediately preceded some of the authors I read, tried to do this in order to obliquely arrive at a radical and critical neo-nationalism (chapter 0).

Just as the nation form seems to be very much alive in post-national times, the literary forms that stem from foundational and re-foundational narratives historically complicit with national discourse are also still at the center of critical activity. Rather than making visible other authors while working under the same critical gaze, focusing on the various refusals of these writers to be read in the same way as the canonical authors are read calls for the articulation of ways of reading and thinking otherwise.

The series of examples I will examine constitute a multiplicity of possibilities and not a counter-canon or much less a claim for any form of official inclusion, especially since some of

the authors are, in fact, included in canons when being read in a traditionally critical way, as I will index when dealing with each specific case.

The emergence of vanguard movements like *modernism* in Brazil or *valvula* magazine in Venezuela in the 1920s, is relevant here as a context or recent history that was, and is, available to writers in the twentieth and twenty-first century. In calling for new ways of reading, and being heard in that call, these avant-gardes represented the first contemporary attempt to escape foundational narratives, although without necessarily achieving or even wanting to escape the national itself. The trick that such movements performed, each in their own way, is that they were ready to establish an alliance with power (Getulio Vargas' *estado novo* in Brazil, and the *pacto de Punto Fijo* in Venezuela which constituted the birth of a new representative democracy at the expense of the excluded "radical" factions), reformulating the idea of *Brasilidade* and *Venezolanidad* in reconstituting the same, and the only possible, community. Operating in parallel to respective regionalist movements that at least were more overtly proclaiming a rearticulation of the national, such avant-garde movements questioned the links between aesthetic and politics that sustained national discourse only to promote their own (national) model.

Chapter 0 serves as a preamble and revisits this context against which, whether they wanted it or not, other authors were pressured to locate their own projects. The avant-garde movements in Brazil and Venezuela in the 1920s, as I already mentioned, proposed, directly and indirectly, alternative nationalisms or at least alternative ways of reading national identity and discourse. The analysis of these vanguard movements and their regionalist counterparts shows a process of transformation, and a certain literary miscegenation wherein conflict was resolved by the state acquiring the movements for itself, admitting new national images as long as they were

properly administered. Even if this is beyond of the scope of my project, such an operation makes a phenomenon like the Latin American Boom of Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar and Carlos Fuentes, legible in both Brazil and Venezuela, making them part, at least for the outside gaze, for the global north, of a supra-regional literary identity. The authors in chapters, 1, 2 and 3, in contrast, show localized micro breaks with this continuity inaugurated by the avant-gardes, and are as suspicious of them as they are of the canon at large. Chapter 1, 2, and 3 operate outside this frame I briefly present in chapter 0.

The first chapter analyzes the poetry of Carlos Drummond the Andrade and Igor Barreto, starting with two authors who, in fact, worked for the State while articulating a profoundly anti-national oeuvre. This can be evidenced, as I show, by their treatment of the landscape and their explicit and implicit dialogue with a traditional, foundational, lyric tradition, criticizing it and dislocating lyric poetry from its function since the establishment of independent Latin-American nations, while depicting a fragmented map and mapping of the territory.

Chapter two moves across the writings of experimental novelists Hilda Hilst and Oswaldo Trejo, who, in their problematization of the family and family structure, point at the collapse of the private and public realm and its management by the nation-state. They allow for a reinvention of alliance and relation, through a forced horizontalization that gives a productive meaning to the textual violence they exercise.

Finally, the third chapter concludes the project with a discussion of racial democracy through the work of Carolina Maria de Jesus and Miguel James. Both de Jesus and James question the idea of freedom and belonging that the discourse of racial democracy enable, opting instead for a displacement as an escape and as an aesthetic claim, instigating new forms of approaching and contextualizing their oeuvres.

A warning: this is not a project that will consolidate the materiality of creative forms of social organization. There is not a programmatic impulse in that sense, as I already claimed. It rather aims to show and discuss how contemporary authors have identified the availability of pre-articulated forms of linking their aesthetic projects with national discourse and have done otherwise, often in unstructured ways. The sensation that the texts leave when read in this light is one of escape, of running away from the nation and from that infinite loop of failure, distancing themselves from what otherwise could be the need for a new, radical or neo-conservative, nationalism.

My analysis is an approach to a way of reading which will recognize the fugitive character of these texts while at the same time dealing with how their critical reception has historically looked for a re-containment of them. It is an exposing of the complicity between politico-aesthetic institutions, and their service to a national universality (and university?) that projects itself immemorially into the past.

Each of the chapters, and the ideas put into question in them: landscape, family, racial democracy, do not form a totality or a totalizing critique to reading literature under a national context. The procedure that operates in my analyses, on the contrary, is one of establishing new links in the form of possible communities, connections between localities, reading practices, and intellectual jumps that aim to resonate in different ways and create passionate conversations and encounters.

0. NEW SYNTHESES, POST-FIGURATIONS OF NATIONALISMS.

MODERNISMO AND *VANGUARDIA*

The start of the twentieth century promised both to consolidate the trajectory that the young Latin American nations started less than 100 years before, while also to open a new path of innovation and progress. The need for a synthesis of these two elements became a major aesthetic problem at the start of the century, especially with movements that tried to appropriate European elements by just placing them in a new territory, without, or with very little, reflection or leaving no foreign remainder after absorbing these traditions. The impulse behind this opening chapter is to show how the first reactions to such naive appropriations were critical of such attempts to consolidate an already obsolete and Eurocentric national project, but also how those same reactions in Brazil and Venezuela became coopted by the national projects, creating an avant-garde national form.

Sociologist Maristella Svampa opens her 2016 book *Debates Latinoamericanos* diagnosing one of the major problems or Latin American social theory—and of Latin American aesthetic movements, I would add—: the deficit of accumulation (13). She says that beyond the erasure caused by dictatorships and exiles, or by process of epistemic expropriation where European and US thinkers have benefited from Latin American ideas without debating them or even acknowledging their authors, there are several gestures belonging to the nature of Latin American thought itself that indicate such a problem. On the one hand, there is a structural difficulty to build an intellectual legacy. In part because of the tendency to ascribe little value to intellectual production of the region, and in part for the lack of a stronger structure of academic communication within the different countries and through generations. But she will add that all

this is “accentuated by the extreme way in which so many academics and intellectuals start with a *tabula rasa* […] burying, through a dialectics without synthesis, debates and categories that in past times gathered an important part of critical thought” (13).

On the other hand, “this deficit is linked to the anthropophagic vocation of Latin American culture, manifested in the historical voracity with which it incorporates different lexicons, and political and philosophical vocabularies” (13). She references Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928) here, but one could also think of the *Somos* manifesto (1928) in Venezuela, with its politics of suggestion as an operation that does not plainly reject anything but incorporates it poetically and subtly.

The issue here, then, is not a lack of foundation, but a multiplicity of foundational moments, after those first moments of the nation in the nineteenth century. This dynamic has also been associated with political reality, where the re-founding of the state performed by many elected and non-elected leaders has been a constant since the times of independence (Campos 24). Svampa describes this as a “dialectics without synthesis”, where previous or contemporary debates are not integrated into the projects of thinkers who, nevertheless, were exposed to those same ideas they make invisible in their own work. But if this is so, then is not the cannibalistic hypothesis the opposite of the *tabula rasa*? That is, a synthesis without dialectics, where all that is left as evidence is the aftermath of the incorporation, the result without the memory or the trace of the elements of an inexistent past dialectics. How can these two contrarious processes be responsible for the same thing? As a first idea, we could say that both, either via negation of the multiple or via an incorporation of difference, end up consciously or unconsciously producing a singularity. But we could also question the idea of a dialectics without synthesis, since these foundational moments are in fact, as Miguel Ángel Campos argues, hiding many scattered and

less visible moments that could count as foundational as well, but which are replaced and displaced by the imposition of a unique gesture and the illusion of a homogeneous origin (24). Even the negation of the multiple is, then, a kind of synthesis made invisible, and it also presents its result as an origin. In this sense, the problem is not really the absence of synthesis, the problem is the proliferation of it, that synthesis is almost all there is in Latin American thought, that we have not found a way of dealing with the multiple other than trying to produce a singularity out of it.

Avant-garde movements in Brazil and Venezuela, tried in inaugurate the twentieth century with new syntheses respectively. Their foundational character, that started with a radical break, never really questioned the basis of an incipient national discourse, but very quickly adapted to it, creating a sort of necessary but traumatic repetition. Whether they wanted it or not, this marked a restricted path for future authors on how to innovate, producing a structure of legibility that gave credit to certain new expressions over others in the mid and late twentieth century.

la vanguardia

The official birth of Brazilian *modernismo* is the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in São Paulo in 1922, but, according to Mario de Andrade it was already ongoing since at least six years earlier (96; and Shellhorse, 45). Brazilian *modernismo* comprehends two periods, a first phase from around 1916 until 1929, and then from the 1930s until the mid-1940s. Having quite a long reach and influence on Brazilian socio-cultural life, but also extending beyond it and running in parallel with other artistic movements from the region (Shellhorse, 45), the movement was instituted by several Brazilian and European (living in Brazil) artists of the time, like painters Tarsila do

Amaral, Anita Malfatti, composer Heitor Vila-Lobos, and writers Mario de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade. Brazilian *modernismo*, however, must be distinguished from Spanish Latin American *modernismo*, which emerged in the nineteenth century; its "equivalent" in Spanish-speaking America were the *vanguardias*, like the one inaugurated by *valvula* magazine in Venezuela in 1928, uniting 29 diverse authors into a kind of aesthetic synthesis that would unify what Venezuelan literature would be from now on.

Brazilian *modernistas* like Mario de Andrade and latecomers to it like Carlos Drummond de Andrade were, like the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío—the the main representative of nineteenth century *modernism*—, influenced by French Parnassianisn and symbolism (De Andrade, 96; Perrone, 155). However, their twentieth century *modernismo*, especially in the case of Mario de Andrade and those artists involved in the *Semana de Arte Moderna* of 1922, was a critique of the exaltation of form and a project of explicitly inhabiting the tensions between aristocracy and the popular, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, and even of conflicting national projects (Shellhorse, 45; Oliver, *Modernism*). So, even if the names coincide, its counterpart in Spanish-speaking Latin America is not, as has already been indicated, Darío's and Martí's *modernismo*,[6] but the *vanguardismo* of the early Borges, Huidobro, Vallejo, and José Antonio Ramos Sucre among others. Rather than a cohesive movement across the region, the *vanguardias* are better read as an accumulation of related but different aesthetics (Vilain and Rojas Ajmad, 8).[7] Both movements, Brazilian *modernism* and the *vanguardias* emerge in similar

[6] Darío and Martí represented two branches of the *modernista* movement that became, according to Javier Lasarte, two foundational lines of the Latin American literature to come: literature as a reflection of the national and social context (Martí), and literature as a supra-reality, above everything else (cited in Lecuna, 81).

[7] Roger Vilain and Diego Rojas Ajmad summarize the common elements to European avant-garde movements: a. group conscience, b. institutionalization of the group, c. foundation and negation, and, d. experimentalism (9). Even if the Latin American movements share some of these elements, the reflection about their place of enunciation complicates any stable characterization of them.

moments, and as a critique to the tradition they inherited, still too tied to European symbolism (a naive appropriation, as we mentioned before) and formally rigid in terms of its writing style.

If the timespan from 1916 until the mid-1940s can be considered the period of the rising, splendor, decline and immediate aftermath of Brazilian *modernismo*, something similar can be said of the Spanish American *vanguardia* (Schwartz, *Introducción*, 36-7). In fact, both Jorge Schwartz and Ángel Rama consider the two movements as part of a general spirit in the region. Rama naturalizes this by merging in his analysis *modernismo* and the different movements located under the *vanguardista* umbrella like *creacionismo, ultraismo, estridentismo,* etc.[8] Schwartz, however, makes a comment on how some critical texts about the subject still erect a wall (his metaphor, by referring to a "*Muro de Tordesillas*") that isolates Brazil from Spanish speaking Latin America (*Introducción*, 36). Both authors are right in opting for enabling a route of communication between Brazil and the rest of Latin America that, to an extent, was already established between countries like Argentina and Uruguay, Venezuela and Chile, and that both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was reinforced by most of the representatives of those movements living in Paris and "finding Latin America" there.[9] The temptation of a simplified, unitarian, Latin American narrative can stem from this, one which would erase how different national receptions of these avant-gardes articulated them in relation to the national discourse. And certainly, some writers adopted a universalist view, prompted by an absolute rupture with any past, which, whether they wanted it or not, made their alliance with Europe as universal

[8] See Rama, "Las Dos Vanguardias Latinoamericanas", from 1973.

[9] See Rama (60-1) for a detailed account of all the *vanguardistas* living in Paris between 1916 and the 1930s, and how some of them found their "distant Latin America" there. Antonio Candido makes a similar argument in relation to Oswald de Andrade, indicating that his travels were "a way of feeling and knowing Brazil…" (Oswald Viajante, 1970, 54). For Schwartz too, both Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral's time in Paris during the 1920s helped them "rediscover Brazil" (2013, 32). And Oswald himself will say in 1944: "if I brought anything from my trips to Europe between the two wars was Brazil itself" (1971, 96).

history tighter, like the case of Huidobro (Rama, 62-3). And others, even if social realism was something they rejected, opted for a reconstruction that tied them to their social context and forced them to ask the national question even if from an oblique way.[10]

The paradoxical character of the proposal of a radical break accompanied by a reluctance to completely let go of European referents (and the different degrees of such a reluctance), and the staging of this undecidability in different ways by each local *vanguardia*[11], but also the fact that not all *vanguardia* movements were as tied to a particular country,[12] offers the possibility of the homogenizing pan-Latin American reading I mentioned above. This is precisely why Roger Vilain and Diego Rojas Ajmad are reluctant to offer a definition of what *vanguardismo* is, and find more productive to point at the problems that the impulse to find overarching definitions entail: fragmentation, eurocentrism, historicist and generational forced groupings, margination of other works, and linearity (11).

There are some common elements, of course, and Adam Shellhorse proposed a crucial one when he argues: "The lyric was rather conceived as a catalyst for aesthetic and cultural thought. Its task was to reinvent both world and word as part of a necessary updating of the field of cultural production" (38). Reinvention was not only a reaction, but the deliberate creation of a crisis that was the product of the perceived incongruency between the inherited tradition and the changing social panorama of the region and specially of Latin American cities (Rama, 58). If we follow Vilan and Rojas Ajmad, however, it would be important to see how the crisis occurred differently in every specific scenario where the *vanguardistas* made a local impact, and to revise

[10] This is the case of Borges' early work in the 1920s, who "explored the problem of creating a vanguard syntax in sync with the times and adequate to Argentine experience" (Shellhorse, 42). Also see Rama (62).
[11] And now by *vanguardia* I am referring to both Brazilian *modernismo* and the group of avant-garde manifestations in Latin American literature and art in the first two decades of the 20th century.
[12] For example, *Ultraísmo* had a Spanish and an Argentinean enclave, and *Indigenismo* (considered by some as an avant-garde movement as well) precisely proposed other ways of linking art and maps.

what "reinvention" meant for them. I will examine the case of Brazil and Venezuela, focusing on the way in which these movements considered themselves to be Brazilian and Venezuelan avant-gardes, making an intervention in the re-creation of an image of the nation.

modernismo, a hundred years ago

As Mario de Andrade states, the project of the *modernistas* in Brazil was "…specifically destructive" (103), even if he will go on to say, in 1942, that it also ended up being erased by that same destructiveness, and that it gave way to a more constructive and more politically concrete phase after the 1930s. This destructive quality does not only carry, as Schwartz sees it, a derogatory meaning in de Andrade's discourse (*Introducción*, 82); it was the trigger for the visible entry of the avant-garde to Latin America (Rama, 59).

The destructive spirit is seen in the organization of the *Semana de Arte Moderna*, in February of 1922, where a series of public events brough together literature, painting, music, among other arts, as put together by the *modernistas* Tarsila do Amaral, Anita Malfatti, Heitor Vila-Lobos, Mario de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade among others. The event pursued: "…the inalienable right to aesthetic experimentation; the modernization of Brazilian artistic thought; and the stabilization of a creative national conscience" (de Andrade M., 104). The institutionalization of experimentation and the need for stability, even if a creative one, give us signals of a counter-discourse that, nevertheless, looked for a place from which to sanction what Brazilian thought should be about, although in a "creative" way.

Since before the country became a republic in 1889, a battle for *brasilidade* was fought in the background, and moved to the center of the state's cultural policy by the time of Getulio Vargas' first regime (1930-1945). Before 1889, the imperial government, located in Rio de

Janeiro, was the manager of cultural patronage through a policy of bringing enlightenment to the emperor's new home after fleeing Portugal from the Napoleonic troops' invasion (Williams, 26-28), a dislocation that also created its own form of incipient nationalism. But after the transition to a republic, the political and cultural elites moved away from the idea of the state being the main cultural patron, articulating culture as an independent field. Daryle Williams reminds us how the main literary figure of the early republic, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis "went so far as to call upon the nation's intelligentsia to seek refuge in an ivory tower, far removed from the self-compromising messiness of politics" (33).

Machado de Assis' inclination can perhaps be read as an advice to newer generations of artists. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries' artistic milieu of Brazil, while not having the State as his main sponsor, was still supported by official institutions and a cultural elite who managed things in a way in which any avant-garde or politically dissident expression would be made irrelevant, maintaining a Parnassian inspired and politically disengaged model of literature at the center. This was the case of Anita Malfatti, founder of the *modernista* movement, who, after an exhibit of her paintings in 1917 was qualified as talented but mentally disturbed by establishment's regionalist writer José Bento Monteiro Lobato, making Malfatti into a "protomartyr" of *modernism* before it was officially born (Williams, 35; Schwarzt, *Introducción*, 89).

Nevertheless, on the 100th anniversary of Brazilian independence in 1922,[13] the State and other actors in the cultural field had to grapple with modernity. In September 1922, *A Exposição Internacional do Centenário da Independência*, the official commemoration of the centenary, inaugurated in Rio de Janeiro, focusing on showing foreign delegations the technological

[13] Despite becoming a republic in 1889, since 1822 Brazil became independent of Portugal, an independent Empire with a constitutional monarch: Dom Pedro I.

progress of Brazil in areas like telecommunications and farming (Williams, 36). However, seven months before then, as if in an impulse to arrive first at contemporaneity, the *Semana de Arte Moderna* opened in São Paulo with the destructive impetus with which Mario de Andrade described it.

It could be said that precisely this turning away from the state, as the single cultural sponsor or patron evidenced in the early republic, helped the *Semana* run its course by being funded privately with Marinette and Paulo Prado's coffee fortune (Williams, 39). In this sense, apart from the radical break *modernistas* wanted to make, there was also an ambiguous relation to the state, which was, however, not a rejection but an attempt to embrace *brasilidade* at large in new and non-official ways, a sort of public demonstration of the privatization of art and thought. For Mario de Andrade, the modernist movement was the "…creator of a national mood" (95). He says:

> No. Modernism in Brazil was a rupture, it was an abandonment of principles and consequential techniques, it was a revolt against what the nation's thinking was then. It would be much more accurate to imagine that the outbreak of war in Europe had created in us a warlike spirit, eminently destructive. And the fashions that adorned that spirit were, at first, directly imported from Europe. I think, though, that to say that we in Säo Paulo were anti-nationalists, europeanized anti-traditionalists shows a lack of critical judgement. It would be to ignore the whole regionalist movement opened up precisely in Säo Paulo, just before then, by the "Revista do Brasil"; to ignore all the publishing activity of Monteiro Lobato; to ignore the architecture and even the neocolonial urban design (of Dubugras) that was born in São Paulo. We were impregnated with this ethic. Menotti del Picchia gave us the "Juca Mulato", we studied traditional Brazilian art and

wrote about it; and the movement's first book celebrates its city of birth in a regional way.

But the Modernist spirit and its fashions were imported directly from Europe. (98-9).

A destructive spirit, a regionalist ethic, taking what is imported from Europe, and all of that creating a new national mood is a lot to unpack. Schwartz is right in saying that the "oscillatory character" of Mario de Andrade's discourse in this text from twenty years after the *Semana de Arte Moderna*, makes his evaluation of the *modernista* movement hard to comprehend (85). Mario's rather indecisive description in the passage above is accompanied throughout that whole text by remorse that his work (and that of the *modernista* movement) was not politically engaged enough: "…we were tilting at windmills",[14] he goes on: "And despite being up to date, despite being national, despite being universal, in one thing we did not really help, in one thing we did not participate: the socio-political advancement of man" (113, 115). It might be unfair to say that Mario's lament of not contributing to the socio-political advancement of humanity starts with a sort of shopping list of what any avant-garde movement worthy of consideration had to have: committed to the new and to the local while cosmopolitan. However, even if this is a simplification of his argument in the text, his frustration for the insufficiency of its political commitment also looks like a self-imposed obligation in order for the movement to stay relevant even after its death. Also remarkable is his attempt to prove that the *modernistas* were not alien to regionalism or to some form of nationalism; what is evidenced in Mario's text, though, is, for the most part, a regionalism of the metropolis, since all its referents are from São Paulo, as if insisting on keeping *modernism* local, even when looking back at it.[15] To make his point about

[14] The portuguese is "combatendo lencois superficiais de fantasmas." (1974, 253).

[15] Despite the Paulista gaze of the movement in the 1920s, in 1924 Mario and Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral took French poet Blaise Cendrars to a trip through the State of Minas Gerais in Brazil's south-east. Known as "Caravana Modernista", the trip meant a "rediscovery" of Brazil by the Paulista's eyes and inspired *modernismo*'s interest in "pre-bourgeois" Brazil and its contrast with the lights and speed of a city like São Paulo. Regarding the "Caravan", Williams says: "In São João del Rey, one of the few mining centers to survive the end of

being regionalist, Mario de Andrade surprisingly mentions Monteiro Lobato as an ally. Monteiro Lobato became an ally in de Andrade's discourse after being one of the enemies of the *Semana de Arte Moderno* due to his negative review of Malfatti's paintings twenty years earlier. In the 1940s, Oswald de Andrade, would have a positive evaluation of regionalist writers like Gilberto Freyre and Monteiro Lobato himself, something that would be unthinkable in the 1920s (Schwarzt, *Introducción*, 89). Even if regionalism was considered a hindrance to the *modernista* project at first, it became canonized by both Mario and Oswald years later in a revisionist attitude. Let us look at the other de Andrade, Oswald, with more attention.

A few years after the *Semana* Oswald published the *Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil* (1924), and the *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928), which can be considered extensions of the *modernista* project of the *Semana*, but that are also manifestations of his own trajectory along with and away from the 1922 events. For Schwarzt, both texts are the first steps of Oswald's utopian project which is rearticulated in the 1940s, but which he never loses sight of during his career (*Introducción*, 90). In the *Pau-Brasil* manifesto, which is accompanied by his 1925 collection of poems also called *Pau-Brasil*, Oswald illuminates the conditions for a new poetry and a new poetics, one which unavoidably has to be linked to Brazil while coming out of the country as such, as a poetry of exportation (*Pau-Brasil*, 185), like Brazilwood, the tree which became the colony's first export in the sixteenth century and gave the name to the country (Skidmore, 19).[16]

This half programmatic and half ironic tone will accompany the rest of the manifesto, in which progress goes hand in hand with a return to purity, a "natural and neologic" language

the gold cycle, locals tried to show their visitors the town's newer buildings. The modernists chose instead to focus their attention on the town's historical quarter" (47).

[16] *Pau* meaning wood and *brasil* derived from *brasa* or ember.

(*Pau-Brasil*, 185). Invention and rediscovery, simultaneously, even if they contradict themselves at times: that is the spirit of Oswald in this text, and his antidote to automatism as the dark side of the progress he and the *modernistas* celebrate. Many machines have been created, according to Oswald, "The only things that wasn't invented was a machine to make verses −the Parnassian poet already existed" (*Pau-Brasil,* 185). The radical break that critics like Ángel Rama and Doris Sommer saw in the 1920s avant-gardes is expressed concretely in these lines.[17]

Oswald's utopian project, an invention of nature and of a language, with the provocative and productively confusing implications something like that has, reaches a new level in the *Manifesto Antropófago* where the poetics expressed in *Pau-Brasil* turn into "a theory of Brazilian culture" (Shellhorse, 51). The anxiety Mario de Andrade expresses in 1942 about the spirit of the movement being imported from Europe and not being politically engaged enough, are dealt with by Oswald de Andrade in 1928. Oswald proposes devouring what the region needs from Europe, recuperate what Europe took from Brazil, and maintaining what Europeans could not even see, a synthesis without amalgamation, a world without dates or signatures (*Antropofago*, 41). The modernist project of creating a new language, a "*desliterarização*" which incorporates low-discourses and an anti-academicist syntax and vocabulary (Candido, *Narrativa*, 204) which contrasts with the idealized and artificial language of the previous Parnassian years (Lafetá, 21), is not, as it is evidenced in the content and intention of these two manifestos, an aesthetic project alone. But, as it is shown in Mario's remorse as we have mentioned several times now, there is not either, at least for one of his main figures, a clear political stance that could be read and translated into actions that were not visibly and mainly aestheticist attempts.

[17] See Sommer, "¡Es Hora de Empezar Siempre! La Vanguardia como Constante en Latinoamérica" (2018).

The solution Oswald gives in the late 1920s with the *Manifesto Antropófago* to Mario's ambivalence in the 1940s, deserves at least a description in its complexity. The first thing to notice is that both the *Pau-Brasil* and *Antropofagia* projects cannot be understood without the influence of painter Tarsila do Amaral,[18] who, not only illustrated Oswald's poem collection from 1925, but whose paintings "*A negra*" (1923), "*Abaporu*" (1928), and "*Antropofagia*" (1929), must be thought respectively as precursor of *Pau-Brasil* poetry, inspirer of the *Antropogafia* aesthetic, and synthesizer of the decade jump started by the *Semana* (Schwarzt, *Fervor*, 30). Rather than only inventions or montages which prefigure a national utopia, Oswald's manifestos gain new depths read as hyper realist descriptions of Tarsila's heterodox cubist and surrealist (magical realist?) paintings, in a double representational movement in which the ekphrasis becomes manifesto and art at the same time, creating both authors "A sort of four-handed revolution of a rare intensity" (Schwarzt, *Fervor*, 16).

Figure 1. Tarsila do Amaral, *Antropofagia*, 1929.

[18] Tarsila and Oswald were partners since they met in 1922 and got married in 1926 and separated in 1930. Those years were marked by an intense collaboration and mutual influence in each other's work.

A going back and a going forward, while preserving the image of that *going back*, is the gesture that both *Manifestos* used to manage the tension between tradition and progress, advancing a new image of *brasilidade*. This sort of *aufhebung* at a standstill, is read by Roberto Schwarz as an assimilation of pre-bourgeois Brazil by bourgeois Brazil in order to "prefigure a post-bourgeois humanity, unburdened and fraternal" (*A Carroça*, 12-13). Schwarz does not celebrate this, though, but sees in it the perhaps unintended consequences of Oswald's utopianism, a coexistence of different layers of *brasilidade* unproblematically, with the least amount of friction possible, or with a comical, domesticated and democratic friction, "an innocent progress", and the providing of an aura to a "myth of a non-official country" through, paradoxically, the "most radically anti-illusionist and anti-auratic literature" (Schwarz, *A Carroça*, 24-5).[19] Both the de Andrades (Mario and Oswald), became conscious of this "anarchic and optimistic conscience" of the movement in the 1920s (Lafetá, 30), especially during the 1930s where the myth of a non-official country, in Schwarz's words, started to become, due to the impact of *modernism*, a symbolic reality. The new language *modernism* created, along with the rejection of old artistic canons which were hand in hand with the state during the times of the constitutional monarchy (pre-1889), articulated a new notion of *brasilidade* which passed through an actualization of the tradition and the relation to it, to the point in which, after *modernismo* there was no going back, and even "anti-modernist" writers could produce their work thanks to the *modernista* inventions and language (Candido, *Revolução,* 185; do Nascimento, 197). Such liberation performed by *modernismo* seemed to be alien to events like

[19] See Schwarz's brilliant analysis of Oswald's poem titled "pobre alimária" in "A carroça, o bonde e o poeta modernista." See also Bruna Della Torre, "Modelos Críticos: Antonio Candido e Roberto Schwarz leem Oswald de Andrade", p. 190, for a discussion of what I have called a "democratic friction" in Oswald being read by Schwarz; but also for a contrast between Schwarz reading of Oswald with Antonio Candido's reading of him to establish similarities and differences in the critical reception of the *modernista* project through the figure of Oswald de Andrade.

the state sponsored *Exposição Internacional do Centenário da Independência*, and of course tied to the privately funded *Semana de Arte Moderna*, instead, and to the spirit of independence that a kind of event like this promoted: a foundational anti-epic, in Jorge Schwarzt's words, in which "the fragmentary, the provisional, the unfinished, and the humoristic prevail" (*Fervor*, 29), although perhaps in the naive way Roberto Schwarz warns us of.

One of the first things to note in respect to this is that the seemingly private character of the *Semana*, must be relativized. That the state did not sponsor it does not eliminate the fact that the resources for it to take place came from the coffee oligarchy from São Paulo. If the first Brazilian republic was characterized in terms of cultural policy by a shying away from state patronage of the arts, we must not forget that its period, from 1889 until 1930, was called *café com leite* (Fausto, 261), due to the influence of the coffee oligarchies from Sao Paulo and the dairy industry elites from the state of Minas Gerais in politics and in promoting candidates to presidency. This pact was however broken in 1929 when the president Washington Luiz Pereira de Sousa, from Sao Paulo, nominated another *paulista* candidate instead of one from Minas Gerais, as it was expected. This, along with the crisis on exportation due to the market crash, generated a deep political instability that culminated in the *coup d'etat* that removed Washington Luiz from office in October 1930. Brazil's 1930 revolution concluded with Getúlio Vargas as head of the provisional government "remaking the First Republic (1889-1930, also known as the Old Republic) into the *ancien régime* and the post-1930 regime into a purifying force of redemption" (Williams, 5). *Modernismo,* then, while not dependent on the state, was indirectly implicated in this transition into the 1930s, in which the state took back the reins of culture, turning cultural management into "the State's *negocio oficial*" (Williams, 51). In Oswald's

words in 1944: "*modernism* is a diagram of the rise of coffee, the [*Wall Street*] crash, and of the Brazilian revolution" (*Caminho,* 95).[20]

This consolidation of the State as the manager of the arts and of the need of an official art to advance the purposes of the state coincided with, on one hand, a consolidation of *modernismo*, meaning an officialization of it, changing its radical impetus from the 1920s into a canonical character by the 1930s, "losing its halo" when turned into more or less a habit for new writers and artists at large (Candido, *Revolução,* 184), making its non-official claim over *brasilidade* into a canonically sanctioned avant-garde. In this context, some elements are crucial to understand this second stage of *modernismo* and how it entangled itself with other artistic expressions.

First, the utopic characters of the movement, as signaled by João Luiz Lafetá and Schwarz, morphed into a more ideologically explicit kind of avant-garde. Lafetá, in this sense, distinguishes between an aesthetic project of *modernismo,* defined by new means of expressions and an anti-traditionalist language, and an ideological project, delineated by the searching for a national artistic and social conscience and an awareness of class positions in its discourse (21). These two projects, though, are not exclusive, but a change in emphasis is nevertheless seen in the 1930s, where *modernism* moved from giving more importance to the aesthetic elements to a more ideological inclination (Lafetá, 30). The second wave of *Modernismo,* then, is marked by this new emphasis, in great part produced by political struggles emerging around the world in anti-fascist and communist forms and which had its Brazilian referents as well, but also by the populist government of Vargas, with which the decade was inaugurated (Lafetá, 28). The accent on the articulation of a national conscience that was already there in a less concrete form in the

[20] "O modernismo é um diagrama da alta do café, da quebra e da revolução brasileira."

Pau-Brasil and *Antropófago* manifestos, and the incorporation (or internal cannibalization) of the anti-conventionalism and transgression in artistic forms even by non *modernistas*, also gave way to a new configuration of a 1920s project that was silently forging its own way in the shadow of the avant-garde: *regionalismo.*

The natural and neologic language celebrated in the *Manifesto Pau-Brasil*, while read as utopian or as an aestheticism, opened a door for the exaltation of orality and folkloric literature and expressions while still maintaining the impact of the avant-garde (Lafetá, 21-22). Even when Oswald distanced himself from the project of the manifestos as part of the ideological emphasis *modernism* took, embracing a militant attitude asking artists to "Change the serenades for the machine-gun!" (*Caminho*, 101),[21] he acknowledged that thanks to the events of 1922 "the national writer did not betray the people, but discovered it an elevated it" (*Caminho,* 97). The attempts to grapple with the impact of modernization beyond São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, and the emergence of new publishing houses and a literary scene outside these cultural centers, allowed for a displacement of the *modernista* principles to new regions (do Nascimento, 191, 192, 201). These conditions both coincided with and promoted the emergence of figures, especially novelists, not aligned with *Modernismo* but unavoidably keen to a new treatment of language, a rejection of literary tradition, and a solidarity with the people, articulating a regionalist spirit in the 1930s literature. By that time, *modernismo* had gone beyond the *Semana* and it encompassed several movements with little in common. Whether they were considered *modernistas* or not, these new actors participated and at the same time modified the project's aesthetics and politics, to the point that it can be argued that these changes made by other actors influenced opinions like Mario de Andrade's in 1942, as we already discussed.

[21] "Trocai a serenata pela metralhadora!"

According to Rama, as the avant-garde movements in Latin America took form between 1910 and 1930, a regional and regionalist narrative was also articulated in the region. The figures of Monteiro Lobato and of Rómulo Gallegos in Venezuela would contrast with the *vanguardias* in formal terms, but their themes and their interest in national reality often coincide (61). If in Venezuela, the publication of *Doña Bárbara* in 1929 marks a sort of consolidation of regionalisms, in Brazil, Gilberto Freyre's *Manifesto Regionalista*, read in the First Regionalist Congress in the city of Recife (Brazilian North-East) in 1926, constitutes a visible starting point of the movement.

Freyre's project evidences a clear preoccupation with modernization and cosmopolitism's erasure of tradition. A great deal of the manifesto is dedicated to North-Eastern cooking and how endangered it is because, among other reasons, the disdain Brazilians feel with a cooking associated with indigenous and Afro-Brazilians. One of his solutions to the problem, though, is for girls' schools to make local cooking classes mandatory, claiming that after religious texts, women should carefully dedicate to read traditional recipe books (42-43). Despite Freyre's conservative and sexist tone in the text, there is, like in the *modernistas*, a discomfort with the official idea of *brasilidade* and the nation, and specifically with the political divisions into States, so dear to the Federal Republic. Freyre understands a region as the sociological unity of the country, and the regional mode of being as expressing "a substance that is perhaps more historical than geographical and certainly more social than political" (14). Regionalism then is not a separatism, since he seems to believe in a unification of the regions, and even in how regional customs and values can become national, as in the case of North-Eastern symbols and even landmarks and produces (19); what Freyre claims is for a new organization of the Republic, not based on the fiction of States but on the organicity of regions (16). The implications of

Freyre's proposal for a new regional and regionalist art, were not only immediate, but it could be said that Freyre's crucial manifesto was already the product of a literary development that started to occur outside Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and to whose participants Freyre demanded the discovery and immortalization of the regional Quixotes in novels and their interpretations in essays (53-4).[22] Such a development benefitted from the structure of reception that *Modernismo* was already creating since the late 1910s and which was consolidated in 1922, in Candido's words, "…the writing of someone like Graciliano Ramos or Dyonélio Machado ("classics" in a way), even if not receiving a *modernista* influence, can be considered "normal" because its bare dryness had been enabled by the liberation *modernismo* brought about" (*Revolução*, 185). The *constumbrista* and sheer realist character of these texts, could be read as an aesthetic innovation product of a profound reflection on mimesis and locus of enunciation, only after the *modernistas*' revolution.

This emphasis on the ideological project of *modernism* in the 1930s, as Lafetá described it, is heavily influenced and by all means more welcoming of the regionalist direct and indirect critique of the aesthetic emphasis during the 1920s, so much so that Mario de Andrade's regrets years later, as discussed above, and Oswald's more militant turn in the 1930s and in the 1940s, where the urban space turns into misery and rural life is glorified (Schwarzt, *Introducción*, 88), can only be legible thinking about the impact *regionalism* made.

This drastic configuration of the artistic landscape and of the image of Brazil artists wanted to project was allowed by the return of the State as a key patron for the arts, in which

[22] Novelists from the North East, like José Lins do Rego and Graciliano Ramos, from the South like Érico Veríssimo and Dyonélio Machado, and from the South East like Lúcio Cardoso and Cyro dos Anjos are considered as some of the main figures of this heterogeneous label called *regionalismo* or *regionalismo crítico*, which sometimes is placed under the *modernista* heading. See do Nascimento (2011), for an analysis of some of these writers in relation with the tension between *modernismo* and *regionalismo.*

Vargas' government acted with both an authoritarian impulse and a modernizing one (do Nascimento, 192). If the private character of the *Semana* was in itself a statement against official cultural policies, or lack thereof, the fact that Mario de Andrade became a consultant of the minister of education led by Gustavo Capanema, indicated *modernismo*'s usefulness for this modernizing state established after the 1930 revolution, a state which will later be called *estado novo* (Williams, 42, 79). This soft and then forced co-opting of intellectuals by the government went hand in hand with the growth of the state and his cultural machinery of which Capanema's period as minister of education was key (Candido, *Revolução*, 194). But also, the new generation of artists were no longer heirs of small or big fortunes (like Oswald de Andrade was), most of them, no longer coming from the big cities, were professionals who could and needed to be inserted into the machinery, as it was the case of poet from Minas Gerais Carlos Drummond de Andrade (whom we will read in chapter 1), also recruited by Capanema, and perhaps the most memorable example of a bureaucrat and intellectual (do Nascimento, 200).

The ideological turn, the influence of *regionalismo* and the adoption of *modernism* by the State are three elements which helped consolidate a modern image of *brasilidade* which whether *modernistas* wanted or not, fit very well with the *Estado novo* and its authoritarian modernization, or in Schwarz's words: "How can one fail to notice that the *Antropófagos*−like the nationalists−take as their subject the abstract Brazilian, with no class specification, or that the analogy with the digestive process throws absolutely no light on the politics and aesthetics of contemporary cultural life?" (*National*, 272).

***válvula*, 1928; *bárbara*, 1929**

Hand in hand with the national question was Venezuelan *vanguardismo*, which, according to critical consensus, was born in 1928 with the publication of the literary magazine *válvula* (Osorio, 3; Lecuna, 77).[23] Despite that being the magazine's only number ever, contributors like Miguel Otero Silva, José Antonio Ramos Sucre, or Arturo Uslar Pietri went on to become central figures of Venezuelan literature. Otero Silva and Uslar Pietri themselves, for example, even became involved with Venezuelan politics for decades to come, while still forging a notorious literary career in the region (Osorio, 3).[24] For Nelson Osorio: "…Venezuelan *vanguardismo* is linked, more than other countries in the continent, to the renovating, progressive and democratic seed characteristic of the initial stage of development that emergent social sectors had since the years of WWI" (4). This seed, however, does not only emerge with *valvula*, but also with the poets of the *generación del 18*, a decade before, and with the short stories of Julio Garmendia and the voice of critic Mariano Picón-Salas, also in the 1910s (Osorio, 3; 10-12), plus the narrative of Teresa de la Parra in the 1920s (Miliani, 94-5).

Another figure, sympathetic although aesthetically distant to *vanguardismo*, was the writer of, in Doris Sommer conception, one of Venezuela's "foundational fictions": Rómulo Gallegos. Already an important and admired literary figure in the late 1920s, Gallegos published *Doña Bárbara* one year after *válvula* came out. The novel is national romance which, as most of the critics point out in one way or the other, attempts to reconcile the urban elite with the rural population, and stages the conflict between civility and barbarism, in order to unify (and

[23] Domingo Miliani also adds the contributors of *Fantoches*, a literary magazine with a social-realist and humoristic character, and the *Seremos* group from the city of Maracaibo, as avant-garde collectives in the country in the 1920s (106-7).

[24] Although Ramos Sucre worked as a diplomat, his untimely death and his less visible involvement in the political struggles of the time makes him a peripheral figure in this respect.

modernize) the territory. A "fantasy of return and repair" (Sommer, *Foundational*, 275), where Santos Luzardo, a lawyer from Caracas, returns to his family's land in the Venezuelan plains, clashing with another side of the country and another idea of the law.

This impulse to make sense of the territory, however, cannot be understood by looking at *Doña Bárbara* only, as most of the critique does. What Domingo Miliani calls the super-regionalism of Gallegos is evidenced in his attempt not only of presenting the conflict between the city and the *llanos* (*Doña Bárbara*, 1929), but with the sense of duty of covering the whole national territory by writing a book located on the jungle near the Amazon (*Canaima*, 1935), one on the coastal regions (*Pobre Negro*, 1937), and one located in the oil production zone and the indigenous territories of the west of Venezuela (*Sobre la misma tierra*, 1943) (Miliani, 88). Gallegos project in his 1929 novel has to be also seen in the light of his super-regionalist impulse.

For Orlando Araujo, Gallegos is restating and restaging a theme from the Venezuelan nineteenth century, that of the need to move from non-industrialized forms of agriculture to a capitalistic-productive agriculture (161). This is a concern that another writer, Manuel Vicente Romero García, already introduced in 1890 with his novel *Peonía*. Araujo, in the light of this comparison, asks whether Gallegos' impulse is anachronistic, since he is presenting, forty years later, an issue that was dealt with in the previous century; Araujo says, however, that in the times of *Doña Bárbara*, such crisis in agriculture existed in the same terms as it did in the past century.

In a context where Juan Vicente Gómez's dictatorship embraced a group of positivist intellectuals who in turn justified his regime by articulating the need for a *necessary gendarme* who could unify the country and pacify it by "governing with an iron fist" (Rivas Rojas, 118),[25]

[25] Laureano Vallenilla Lanz's *Cesarismo Democrático*, from 1919, is the referent here. For Vallenilla Lanz, in Latin America, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, rather than the need for institutions, there is a "fatal

but where the agricultural crisis could not be overcome by the modernization of agriculture itself, since the exploitation of the land could not finance its own transformation (Araujo, 162), any call for a change would be considered as subversive. In this sense, Gallegos apparent anachronism, was deemed as dangerous by the dictatorial regime. Even if the author shared some of the positivist ideas of the intellectual of the regime, his democratic agenda made him and *Doña Bárbara* heroes in the midst of a repressive context.[26] But part of the allure of Gallegos' novel is that even if it appears in a moment where the agricultural question creates unease, this is also the moment where big scale oil exploitation begins, bringing the promise of modernization, and both Gallegos and the *válvula* group, in their own ways, are new voices that emerged confronting a society where the fantasy of market-growth, the military, and the family were the central elements (Alarcón, 54, 66). These voices started to grapple with the contradictions between the political regime in place and the direction the country would take by moving away from agriculture instead of reforming it and starting to experience the transformation into a *Petro-Estado*. In this sense, Sommer suggests the obvious question about *Doña Bárbara*: why is it about cattle and land and not about oil? She immediately responds:

> A novel of course can displace an immediate crisis to dwell on a related one; and in this case the choice seems most appropriate. Gallegos tells us that he was inspired to write

necessity" for a caudillo who acts as a force of national preservation, being this a proof of "…the phenomenon which men of science point out in the first stages of integration of a society: leaders are not elected but they impose themselves" (94). The "fatal necessity" of the gendarme governing with an iron fist is justified by an understanding of history not only in positive terms but as a set of stages to be overcome which becomes a defense of the status quo, which when Vallenilla Lanz published his work, was Gomez's dictatorship: "If society is an organism or a superorganism ruled by laws similar to biological laws, if it follows an analogous evolution to that of animated beings, from the infusoria to man, is it for human faculties to accelerate, delay or arrest this movement?" (205).

[26] For Araujo: "Gallegos is a conservative writer, whose difference with the nineteenth century oligarchy is only political: Gallegos affirms itself on a democratic belief based on the idealism of education, and the metaphysics, in the long term, of a predominance of good tendencies over evil ones thanks to a racial equilibrium that will produce a new man" (170).

> during a visit to one of Gomez's ranches, and more generally that he chose to set the story on the llano because that was where local caudillos (Gomez and minor versions of him) dominated vast and largely empty spaces (*Foundational*, 280).

The novel is about both of these crises, the agricultural and the one produced by the oil boom, and about the authoritarian management of them. But the solution came quickly, avoiding a violent uprising and pacifying the population by giving more strength to the state: oil solved everything with its magical, top-down, aura (Araujo, 162). The agricultural crisis and its possible consequences were forgotten by 1930, when Gómez paid Venezuela's foreign debt in its entirety. Fernando Coronil tells us how between 1924 and 1930 the nation's earnings due to oil exploitation "increased more than fiftyfold" (70).[27] One year after *Doña Bárbara*, the issue about developing agriculture was put under the rug, a luxurious rug bought with oil money.

Santos Luzardo's (*Doña Bárbara's* protagonist) return to that "vast empty space" perhaps prefigures also what one of the members of *valvula*, Arturo Uslar Pietri said in 1936 in relation to Venezuela's economic policy after the abandonment of agriculture: we must "*sembrar el petróleo*" ("plant the oil") (233). But the displacement Gallegos performs could be no displacement at all, but a need to deal with what the national territory means when the population is migrating to the oil fields or to the cities. What happens with our understanding of that space? Will it disappear? *Doña Bárbara* problematically monumentalizes that space, to the point where

[27] Coronil argues in *The Magical State* against the idea of Gómez's regime as unmodern and backwards that was mobilized by liberal democratic politicians, and another dictator, Marcos Pérez Jiménez, who came after him. Coronil stated how following governments shared both the oil dependency and the "personalization of State power". He continues "…it was during Gómez' "traditional" regime, as we shall see, that it became possible to imagine Venezuela as a modern oil nation, to identify the ruler with the state, and to constitute the state as the agent of its modernization" (3).

it is the only reference most of its readers may have of the Venezuelan *llano*, since what came after for the country happened elsewhere.[28]

There is a harmonious love triangle between Gallegos, the *válvula* generation,[29] and Venezuelan politics in the twentieth century. The critical nationalism in Gallegos, although closer to a populist regionalism (Rivas Rojas, 125) or super-regionalism (Miliani, 88), along with the work of other authors who started publishing in the 1910s,[30] produced a break that was radicalized in the poetics of *valvula*, trying to distinguish themselves from nineteenth century *modernistas*: "[Spanish speaking] *modernismo* was stagnant, and the moon, the swan and blue things were not as interesting as before" (Vilain and Rojas Ajmad, 11). In addition to that, the articulation of an artistic avant-garde in a time of a dictatorship which for years had exalted philosophical and artistic manifestations that offer a justification for its continuity (Osorio, 20-1), could not be indifferent to a progressive and democratic agenda. For Vilain and Rojas Ajmad, there was a contrast between the repressive political context and the profound artistic freedom with which the *válvula* generation worked to create new literary forms (15).

The "Somos" manifesto, with which *válvula* opens does not really proclaims a radical break with the past, as other avant-garde founding statements. It does speak about a "new art" that cannot be defined because its profound freedom goes against any rigid labels (*Somos*, 39). However, as Miliani and Lecuna have pointed out (Miliani, 113; Lecuna, 84), while they refrain from defining this new art, they do say that its purpose is *sugerir* "…to suggest, saying everything with the least possible elements, (hence the necessity of metaphor and of a double and

[28] We can see also how Gallegos' fantasy of repair went beyond *Doña Bárbara*, flooding his future novels set in other regions of the country, as if his body of work wanted to resemble the nation's map.
[29] The author of *Doña Bárbara* was invited and attended the dinner celebrating the publication of *válvula* on January 5, 1928 (Osorio, 7; Vilain and Rojas Ajmad, 25).
[30] Enrique Bernardo Núñez, José Rafael Pocaterra, Julio Garmendia and the *generación del 18* poets, like Fernando Paz Castillo, among others.

multiple image)" (*Somos*, 39). For Miliani, the emphasis on suggestion is a moving away from the central place of themes and anecdotes in the *criollista* literature of the times (including Gallegos' first stories and novels).[31] Lecuna agrees and goes on to say that this gesture makes the *válvula* generation a precursor of the abstract visual artists that were embraced by the Venezuelan democratic state in the late 1950s, in a maneuver that, once Gallegos super-regionalist oeuvre was completed and he focused on his political career (perhaps an actualization of his literary attempt to integrate the country), evidenced a productive contradiction in a state that "is read and makes itself to be read as nationalist (Venezuelan, local and modern, although not technocratic) and that is seen and makes itself to be seen as formalist (eurocentered, universal, modern and technocratic)" (93).

The indeterminacy of suggestion as a poetics, which links the texts in *válvula* with more formalist, surrealist and even fantastic motifs in the cases of Arturo Uslar Pietri, Juan Oropesa and José Salazar Domínguez, for example, contrasts, however, with a number of texts that still carry a *costumbrista* and *criollista* spirit, like in the contributions of Miguel Otero Silva, Julio Morales Lara and Víctor H. Escala. The manifesto itself (written by Uslar Pietri, according to critics), was already contradicted in the content of the magazine, pointing at the negotiation between generations, political positions and poetics evidenced in the content of *válvula* (Lecuna, 83-4). One cannot but think that the democratic seed Osorio sees in Venezuela's *vanguardismo* is a previous and perhaps more circumscribed trial of the pact of power alternance of Venezuela's democracy in the late 1950s. The *puntofijo* pact, made by the main political parties:

[31] An attempt to represent the singularity of the region and its inhabitants, while using techniques of the European literary tradition, *criollismo* represented the possibility of articulating an identitarian narrative in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, given its use of historical events and characters (Miliani, 53-61; Rivas Rojas, 105). See Rivas Rojas (2002), for a detailed discussion of the conditions of possibility of *criollismo* in Venezuela and how it set the basis for the super-regionalist narrative of Gallegos in the first half of the 20th century.

Acción Democrática and COPEI, expressed a restricted but visible heterogeneity, where some were left out in order for the pact to work, like the *café com leite* in Brazil. A democratic pact in which the antagonism of regionalism vs. abstraction coexisted as productively maintained by the state when imposing an aesthetic to the national project. Another point of union, of course, between the *vanguardismo* of *válvula* and the democracy to come was the fact that no women were included in such aesthetic-political pacts. The political *café com leite* in Brazil is also contrasted by the same expression being used in a racial sense in Venezuela, where mixed-raced citizens are defined as *café con leche*; the non-purist but renovation-driven spirit in the *Somos* manifesto does not delink itself from a glorification of miscegenation, aesthetic and racial. This is not too different ideologically from Gallegos' idea of the creation of a new Venezuelan through a racially democratic equilibrium, as Araujo claims (171). We are in the presence of different aesthetics with similar positions in terms of what the national discourse should be.

This passage between the launching of the magazine and the establishment of democracy in 1958 is deeply marked by what emerged from the context in which *válvula* came out. Gallegos, after Gomez's death in 1935 and a decade of attenuation of Gomez' authoritarian legacy, became elected president of Venezuela in 1947 (the first one elected by direct, universal and secret vote) representing the center-left party Acción Democrática, only to be overthrown in 1948 when another military dictatorship ruled the country until 1958. He was not the only literary figure of the times to have a national influence beyond his literary work, though. Some of the members of *válvula* had a very close relations with members of what is called in Venezuelan political history, the '28 generation, like the future presidents Rómulo Betancourt and Raúl Leoni, showing again how the democratic seeds of *vanguardismo* were tightly joined with the project of a democratic country that began to be articulated in those years.

The ‘28 generation, a group of students that organized a week of cultural acts that were a political protest in disguise against Gómez, and who were imprisoned by the dictator, and the publication of *válvula*, along with the appearance of *Doña Bárbara* one year later, constitute the triad that build the house of *vanguardismo*, populist regionalism, and a new national project. The reparatory spirit of Brazilian modernistas like Oswald de Andrade in the 1940s, trying reconcile his movement with regionalism, is already there since the get-go for the Venezuelan *vanguardismo.* There is no other country in the region where the foundational fiction coincided with the avant-garde movement, so, even if Gallegos' book was not aligned with the project of *valvula*, the fact that *Doña Bárbara* arrived late to provide a "political program" of modernization and *mestizaje* (Lecuna, 79), associated its national program (one upon which his presidential candidacy and the return to democracy in 1958 was still based) with a project of *vanguardia* to which Gallegos' work was not entirely divorced from.[32] The heterogeneity of the reunion of texts in *valvula* ended up with the privileging of the democratic state decades later of a literature of a "nationalist character, attending to the political and historical problems of the country…" (Lecuna, 84), something that ended up happening in other countries in Latin America, especially with the Boom, but that was already there in 1928 Venezuela.

It is curious that 20 years later, in 1948, when teaching at Columbia University, Uslar Pietri sends a letter from New York to the editors of the new literary magazine *Contrapunto*, in Caracas. After telling the editors that he received the first issue of the magazine, he cannot help but remember "our days of *válvula*", and describes the group as aimless, enthusiasts and "full of barbarity and ignorance", in comparison with the *Contrapunto* group, whose members "know

[32] The fruits of Gallegos' literary intervention in the political world were such that in 1953 Marcos Pérez Jimenez's regime (the one who overthrew Gallegos), commissioned the Spanish Novelist (Nobel Prize of Literature in 1989) Camilo José Cela, the writing of a Venezuelan novel, *La Catira*, a book which has been considered as the negative image of Doña Bárbara, and a failed attempt to destroy its influence (Lecuna, 83).

more, are more precise, better informed." He goes on to say, though, that the only critique he has is how little they talk about Venezuela and how much emphasis they put on being universal and abstract: "I believe more and more that one should aim at the universal, but through Venezuela, and that one must go to what is general and abstract but through what is concrete and immediate" (Uslar Pietri, cited in Vilain and Rojas Ajmad, 26).

Uslar Pietri's warning can be read as a statement on how despite their "barbarity and ignorance", the *válvula* group, like Gallegos precisely in *Doña Bárbara,* found a negotiation between the universal and the local, making the poetics of *suggesting* into an exercise of diplomacy, a pact. Like Mario de Andrade, twenty years later, he also undermines the impetus of his literary movement of youth, and does not really suggest but gives the young writers a very practical advice, a signal of what Lecuna describes as the triumph of a literature of nationalist character, that became more homogeneous in the decades after *valvula*. This more circumscribed pact, with Gallegos as an ally, creates a literary version of what the politicians from the *Generación del 28* went on to put in place after the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jimenez in 1958, but that had (already) previously failed after the regime of Juan Vicente Gómez and his allies in 1947, when Gallegos became president and was violently outed after less than a year. One issue was enough for *válvula*, but politicians like Rómulo Betancourt and Raúl Leoni needed a few to succeed.

The birth of the literary *avant-garde* in Venezuela, and its walking side to side with the super-regionalism of Gallegos confirms the words of Araujo: "Ideologically, the purpose of the new novelists is the same as the one of the *criollistas*: to express Venezuela, to search for the being of the Venezuelan, to reach the essence of what is their own [*de lo propio*] as a legitimate

path to universality; what varies is the procedure, the aesthetic features, the style and the novelistic structure" (78).

If for Brazilian *modernistas* the reconciliation between projects occurred years later, for the Venezuelans the complicity was always there. In both countries the attempts of renewal, even if by anachronistic means, were never not tied to the construction of a new national project. This is a reason why some of the protagonists were part of future governments as officials (Mario de Andrade, Drummond de Andrade, Otero Silva, Úslar Pietri), or as presidents (Gallegos), contributing to the proliferation of foundational moments and syntheses with the *Estado novo*, or with a new democratic pact.

Having set that stage where, at the start of the twentieth century, new literary projects could not and would not separate themselves from the need to re-create the nation and to serve the state, I will examine in what follows a series of authors who, some in their relative marginality, and some in their complicity, allow us to enter into new forms of reading that escape national logics. It is an exploration of ways of resonating as a reader which lead us to think and articulate other ways of being with.

1. (NO) ESCAPE FROM THE LAND: CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE AND IGOR BARRETO

In 1737, the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (the first dictionary ever published by what we know now as the *Real Academia Española*), defines for the first time in Spanish the word *Paisage*, now spelled *paisaje*. It renders it as "un pedazo de país en la pintura" ("a piece of country in painting") (Maderuelo, 29). Several things about this definition are worth commenting, which will guide the exploration pursued in the following pages. First, it gives a historical location to an idea that, as we will see, has been deemed, at least since the Latin-American 19th century, as immemorial. Second, the intrinsic connection of *paisaje*, or landscape, with a country (*país*), and how it became an indissociable element of the nascent nation-states in the region, also in the 19th century, give the *paisaje* the status of a representative, standing for a national whole. It is, finally, a representation within a representation, since the *paisaje* is something that occurs in a painting, which refers to a territory outside of it.

Beyond the definition, the author of the painting and the viewers are implied, in a kind of relation between entities (perhaps human landscapes in themselves) as individuals that compose a society in a hierarchical relation. If the construction of a national ideal in Latin America was supported by foundational poets and novelists with their lyric and epic impulse, more than by foundational painters, then what is the connection between the lyric I and the complicity of the landscape with a national discourse of homogeneity. We will follow this thread while trying to find a way out of poetry as a representative, even if not mimetic, art, insofar as tied to projecting an image of the national and mega-regional territory as homogeneous. The Brazilian Carlos Drummond de Andrade and the Venezuelan Igor Barreto will thus establish a dialogue while we articulate a way of reading a landscape otherwise, a *paisaje* or *paisagem* in retreat that could be

defined by us as “pedazos que exceden un país en el texto” (pieces which exceed a country in the text), instead of “un pedazo de país en la pintura.” A discussion of the position of the I within contemporary lyric will start our trajectory, we will turn to it now with Drummond de Andrade.

multiple drummonds

The “I” as insufficiency is still an “I”. This rather kitschy line, even if being a critical or suspicious statement, will allow me to initiate a conversation on a certain ego-centering, not necessarily egocentric, reading of Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902-1987). More than a generic discussion, as if I were invited to the party, of as if Drummond himself was, I am interested in staying for a free drink and then immediately leaving and moving onto something else. This sort of ungrateful reading can be the most compassionate one, and the only way I find of dealing with genre theory of any kind. Perhaps the question here would be how not to perform an ego-centering reading of any contemporary poet? A question which becomes more relevant in the case of “Carlitos” giving advice to himself, asking himself not to commit suicide:

> Love in the dark, no, in daylight,
> is always sad, my dear Carlos,
> but don’t tell anyone,
> no one knows or will know (Multitudinous, 31).[33]

The idea of “the mind speaking to itself” (Jackson and Prins, 2) seems useful and explanatory to deal with Drummond’s self-care poetic routine. But already in this there is an unfolding that is hard to predict, several little voices disseminating different lines in many directions. Ramifications that end up obfuscating the representation vs non-representation tension we assume forms a totality in literary genres. We will briefly resuscitate a discussion, not with a

[33] O amor no escuro, não, no claro, / é sempre triste, meu filho, Carlos, / mas não doga nada a ninguém, / ninguém sabe nem saberá. From *Brejo das Almas* (1934).

genre driven impulse in mind, but perhaps with the idea of turning away from it to be able to read differently, complicating the landscape of contemporary poetry, mistaking the *in visu* with the *in situ* as a reading strategy[34], to then see how, in that metaphorical landscape, metaphor breaks down and makes way for a new material landscape in pieces that suggest relations beyond and in parallel to the idea of unity of the national territory.

The trajectory of "the mind speaking to itself", then, as the very definition of lyric poetry, to the point that it passed on to be the definition of poetry at large in the twentieth century (Jackson and Prins, 4), shows the maneuvers of the critique to center the I, and a particular kind of I, of subject, in the analysis. Even if in Plato or Aristotle there was no room for non-representational poetry, romantic criticism made it look as if there was, creating them as precursors in the "three major genres" classification: epic, lyric, drama (Genette, 2, 9-10; Wellek, 46).[35] And if for the Schlegel brothers and for F. W. J. Schelling the existence of these three genres was a given, and lyric represented (in a non-mimetic way) pure subjectivity, then they were putting back into the classics the lyric I, as if it was immemorially there, giving the three genres and the pure subjectivity of the lyric "…an appearance or presumption of being eternal and therefore self-evident", in Gérard Genette words (2). This construction of an immemorial past is not alien to what, a few years before romanticism, started to configure as "the dawn of the age of nationalism", in Benedict Anderson words (11), which took as its purpose the reconstruction of a legible vision of the world after the "dusk of religious modes of thought",

[34] Borrowing a distinction that prefigures what will become one of the central discussions of this chapter, Alain Roger distinguishes between an *artialization* of the landscape *in situ*, that is, directly modifying it with an aesthetic aim, and an *in visu* one, merely representing it (2007, 21-22).

[35] Gérard Genette clarifies that not only lyric was excluded from Plato's and Aristotle's classification, but that what we see as genres in the epic, lyric and drama, were considered as modes of enunciation which did not include the thematic elements that are often associated with genres and sub-genres (1992, 62).

reconfiguring history as if the new nations were always there or were the culmination of such history.

Even in poetic criticism, or precisely in it, we see the universalization of an idiomatic singularity, of a national idiom, in accordance with this reconstruction and redirection of past and present. This is something that Jacques Derrida would come to analyze in the tradition of German idealism, which roots are contemporary to German romantic criticism (Derrida, 4). Derrida would call this National Humanism and National Philosophism.[36] The lyric I is a history that tries to erase its historicity, and it has been elevated to an analytic of a subjectivity which methodology represents *the* objective form of reading, an unveiling and a folding back into unity of the truth of the poem.[37]

Antonio Cándido, in more than one place departs precisely from the "Eu" as a structuring element of Drummond's whole project. In "Inquietudes na Poesia de Drummond", from 1965, he gives an account of a passage from an emphasis on the object as almost naturally poetic in Drummond's first books to a distrust of the world and a turn towards the materiality of the word, not to become an abstract or hyper-formalist poet, but to get closer to the world, to the creation of a new world through social poetry (*Inquietudes* 116). The way Cándido traces these changes is by always commenting on the poetic "I", even if fragmented. In another essay, collected in a

[36] See Derrida's "Onto-Theology of National Humanism (1992), and Ivan Trujillo's discussion of Derrida's seminars on *Nationalité et nationalisme philosophiques* in "La nación esencial. Breve introducción al problema del "nacional-filosofismo" (2020).

[37] In *Culture and the State*, David Lloyd and Paul Thomas make a compelling point referring, in their case, to English romanticism. For Lloyd and Thomas, William Wordsworth's understanding of subjective experience as transformed into aesthetic experience of universal validity, serves as the basis of a "pedagogical imperative" in which the poem turns into a carrier of a universal truth in the form of an individual experience that can be, and is, potentially shared. They say: "In turn, it is to such a cultural pedagogy that the task is granted of legitimating a structure of representative democracy for which participation is a purely formal expression of equality" (7). So, even if a non-representative genre was placed retroactively in literary history by the German romantic critics, their defense of subjective experience was still participating in a movement of "concentric circles" (Lloyd and Thomas, 6) from the individual to the State, inscribing representation within the people, creating the need for the State.

publication from 1989, “Poesia e Ficção na Autobiografía”, Cándido examines, along with the work of other poets, the first two installments of Drummond’s *Boitempo* trilogy (produced late in Drummond’s career) and the autobiographical elements presented in the form of poems which constitutes both volumes (*Poesia*, 50). By looking at the poet’s later work, and years later in the case of Cándido himself, the critic maintains the ego-centered and ego-centering lenses on the poet to mark yet another transition, this time one from an individualism taken to the extreme regarding its relationship with objects and society in his first books, to “an objectivity which calmly sees the I as *a piece of the world*” (*Poesia*, 55. My emphasis).

The periodization of Drummond’s poetic oeuvre is a constant in several notable critics. In his writing from the 1960s, José Gulherme Merquior points at this, and being a bit ambivalent about it still intervenes in the discussion; there was no other way of organizing a discourse about the poet, it seems. Merquior sees in the Drummond from the 1950s a third stage, one between the social poetry of the 1940s and the voyeuristic objectivity of the late 1960s, when the first volume of *Boitempo* appeared; interestingly enough, he agrees with Candido in relation to this last stage describing that in *Biotempo*: “the Olympic distance of contemplation hands itself to the playfulness of merely seeing” (*Notas*, 68). Despite this coincidence, though, Merquior will be suspicious of the periodizing impulse.

This metaphysical period of the 1950s, characterized by a retreat from social struggles, a newfound pessimism (Merquior, *A máquina*), an alienating ennui (Haroldo de Campos, 51), and an embrace of, until then, infrequent poetic forms like fixed meters and rhyme (Richard Zenith, xxii), evidenced a certain critical naiveté from those who saw a formal “evolution” in the poet but were nostalgic about his previous thematic commitment. Merquior attacks here by showing how the programmatic periodization can be a collective critical delirium, but, on the other hand,

recurs to the synthesis between the person of the poet and the voice of the poem to do so, using the I to save Drummond from the critics:

> The form in Drummond's third period cannot be "valid" if its thematic is not "valid". A poem cannot be good if its message lacks relevance and validity in relation to human experience at large. The qualities of the "artist" cannot be affirmed against the questionability of the "man's" [*homem*] positions -because, in the poem, man and artist are by any means indissociable (in *A Máquina*).[38]

The critical super-ego establishes itself by strengthening the I (a super-I) that the critique it confronts helps build. This over-identification of the poet becomes a mediation that creates, according to Eduardo Milán, a diction which displaces what he calls the "true" and at the same time the "other" diction of the poem: "The poetic I must disappear, vanish" (Milán, pt.1). I would like to read Milán as saying that this "other" diction, the one where the poetic I is not assumed, is the "true" diction precisely because by being originally other it is never really describing the origin of the poem or trying to produce a specific meaning, it is estranged to it all.

Going back to Cándido, his detailed and at the same time panoramic descriptions and readings of Drummond by any means show blindness or a lack of lucidity on his part, but they do attest for the mechanisms of working from the center to the periphery in relation to a poet that, although canonical, is quite peripherical, even in his transit from the borders to the centers, or in his travels from Itabira in the state of Minas Gerais to Rio to become a public servant under Getúlio Vargas' regime. To be clearer, the "I" serves as a totalizing function that organizes the vision about Drummond, and Merquior's more sophisticated gesture is not too different. The nonsensical, the splitting, and the disintegrations we see in his poetry, even or precisely, at the

[38] My translation.

level of the I (perceived by the eye of the critic) are made sense of by Drummond's act of speaking to himself, be that in the form of being a vehicle for the world and the experience of it, by constituting a mass, by stepping back of concrete actions, by decentering himself and becoming a part of reality, or by questioning that reality and its language.

One of the problems here is that the I, the *Eu*, even when it has been forced into the Greeks as always being there, does not need to be there. If we follow Candido, we have, on the one hand, a focus the object, not necessarily an objective view, but an encounter with the world where the object prevails, a first annulment of the I. Then there is a disenchantment with the world in the 1940s, which leads him to trust the materiality of the word, only to find that futile as well:

> destitute of melody and concept,
> words have taken refuge in the night.
> still damp and heavy with sleep,
> they roll in a rough river and transform into disdain (*Multitudinous*, 87).[39]

This tension and its solution via the embrace of a social poetry (as Candido calls it), is staged in his collection *A rosa de povo* from 1945, where the lines cited above come from. Right after this poem, containing a contempt for words and the need to use them to express frustration with words themselves, we see a sort of Deus ex Machina when a flower blooms in the asphalt: "Bound to my class and some clothes, / I walk down the gray street dressed in white. / Dejections and goods for sale observe me. / Should I keep on until I'm nauseous? / Can I, without weapons, rebel?"[40] (*Multitudinous*, 71), the poem goes on and we encounter the miracle:

> And if I set everything on fire, myself included?
> They called the adolescent of 1918 and anarchist,
> but my hatred is the best part of me.

[39] ermas de melodia y conceito, / elas se refugiaram na noite, as palavras. / Ainda úmidas e impregnadas de sono, / rolam num rio difícil e se transformam em desprezo.
[40] Preso à minha classe e a algumas roupas, / vou de branco pela rua cinzenta. / Melancolias, mercadorias espreitam-me. / Devo seguir até o enjoo? / Posso, sem armas, revoltar-me?

Without it I'd be lost,
and with it I can give a few people a slight hope.

A flower has sprouted in the street! (*Multitudinous*, 73)[41]

Words are not to be trusted, but then things like this happen. Do they happen in the poem or in the world? This undecidability is not too different from that of the episodes in *Boitempo* I (1968), and it does not need an I:

Surprise

These horses are part of the family
and are proud of it.
They cannot be sold or traded.
Cannot be ridden by just anyone.
They must die of old age, wide field.

Each one of us has a horse and must take care of him
with finesse and respect.
He's tamed by the owner and no one else.
My horse knows me as his brother,
his king and his child.
Why, in the narrow gap
(under his neck, behold, I was passing)
his hard teeth he digs
on my back?

Farmer chorus:
The horse bit the kid
Is the kid suckling yet?
Let's laugh, let's laugh of the nitwit
and if he cries, he should cry in bed (My translation).[42]

[41] Pôr fogo em tudo, inclusive en mim. / Ao memino de 1918 chamavam anarquista. / Porém meu ódio é o mehor de mim. / Com ele me salvo / e dou a poucos uma esperança mínima. // Uma flor nasceu na rua!

[42] "**Surpresa** // Estes cavalos fazem parte da familia/ e têm orgulho disto. / Não podem ser vendidos nem trocados. / Não podem ser montados por qualquer. / Devem morrer de velhos, campo largo. // Cada um de nós tem seu cavalo e há de cuidá-lo / com finura e respeito. / É manso para o dono e mais ninguém. / Meu cavalo me sabe seu irmão, / seu rei e seu menino. / Por que, no vão estreito / (por baixo de seu pescoço eis que eu passava) / os duros dentes crava / em minhas costas, grava este protesto? // *Coro fazendeiro:* / O cavalo mordeu o menino? / Por acaso o menino ainda mama? / Vamos rir, vamos rir do cretino, / e se chora, que chore na cama." (Boitempo !, *Reunião*).

The animal's teeth come to disturb the calm landscape of the past here, no chance of voyeuristic or monumentalizing narration of the episode, at least not without an utter destabilization of the supposed integrity of childhood and its fantasies of omnipotence. One can think the horse killed Carlos, and that either his little ghost, the horse, the farmer chorus in the form of a nightmarish lullaby, or the whole countryside became poets. José Miguel Wisnik glosses Silviano Santiago's argument that Drummond's anarchic impulse and his problematizing view of the past finds a sort of taming in his return to it from a complacent position in *Boitempo*, one that legitimizes the oligarchic and patriarchal structures he made tremble in his earlier work (Wisnik, ch. 2). The calmed objectivity, the Olympic distance of contemplation are, according to Santiago, a giving in, a step back to praise the conservative origin of the poet. Wisnik claims that the spectrum of legitimizing those structures is there, but only to stage an "objective contradiction" that serves as a "permanent dramatic tension", something to be worked through instead of denied (ch. 2). Drummond cannot erase his origin, but he can open it up, and go back to it repeatedly, *Boitempo* is one example of that which must be seen in relation to the rest of his trajectory, as productively and problematically overlapping it. His horse is biting the poem not out of disloyalty for Drummond's previous work, but to remind us of this inherent contradiction in a poetic oeuvre that opens itself to the multiple, the more than an I.

An *Eu* might be speaking, but why is it the organizing principle of the critical eye? In this context it seems that the most we can do is to formulate a negation of the I, which turns out to be, of course, another incarnation of it. Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe sees in the critical need for an I who sovereignly speaks, a commitment with the subject, with "that cancer of the subject, both the ego's and the masses'" (13). I read this obsession as an attempt to find and organizer of

meaning in the non-representationalism of the poem, a representative of the irrepresentable: cheating in their own game.

When describing the emphasis on social poetry which represents a turn in Drummond's production in the 1940s, mainly in *Sentimento do Mundo* (1940) and *A Rosa do Povo* (1945) as we have seen, Candido explains: "The feeling of insufficiency of the I, left to himself [*entregue a si mesmo*], makes him want to complete himself by adding himself to their fellow, substituting personal problems for the problems of all" (*Inquietudes*, 106). Is this the *Sentimento do Mundo*? This need to complete himself in the other? Esther María Passos is more explicit than Candido by pointing at the epiphanic resolution of contemporary life's fragmentation in Drummond's poetry by way of finding a "restless" totality (31), she reads "A Flor e a Nausea" to do so. The magic of epiphany is toned down in Candido's description of a more modest and heroic resolution, "an epic of contemporary life" (*Inquietudes*, 109). In both cases, the infamous lyric I, be it in the modernist early work, in the social turn of the 1940s, or in the late period of "objective" autobiography, strives to resolve, to sublate, to desire even the reunion of the quotidian and the individual experience with a social spirit in order to finally unveil truth, as Passos describes (42). To find himself in the other to overcome alienation (Passos, 35), fixates Drummond's project with a modern tradition of poetry that is as much critical of modernity as it belongs to it. Milán would see this critical preoccupation as pretending that nothing has happened since the nineteenth century, "when, practically, everything has happened" (pt.2).

the poet's ego, a generic landscape

In the movement from the object to the word, from the social to the metaphysical, to finally get at a stage where the poem "sees the I as a piece of the world" (Candido, *Poesia*, 55), the ego-

centered reading is only necessary. This reminds us of Hegel's trajectory of reason in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, describing Drummond almost as if his perception of the world and of himself as subject was elevated into a unity with the social only to reach a sort of universal objectivity in the end. But, as it is known, Hegel had a lot to say about poetry specifically in his lectures of Aesthetics, and although we could agree that his project there does not differ much from his outline of the trajectory of spirit towards absolute knowledge[43], we could also see something different in his conception of poetry and lyric poetry. The movement of the "Eu" that unifies Drummond's poetry finds a resonance in the Romantic construction of the lyric as a genre; and in Hegel's elaborations we can see how he teaches us to follow the I, in a sense, since poetry is not about "…the sun, mountains, woods, landscapes, or constituent of the human body like nerves, blood, muscles, etc." (Hegel, 972), which does not mean that poetry does not talk about those things, of course, but is does so only because it is "…a spiritual activity and it works for *inner* intuition to which the spirit is nearer and more appropriate than external objects in their concrete visible and external appearance" (972). He continues: "For language, this most malleable material, the direct property of the spirit, of all media of expression the one most capable of seizing the interests and movements of the spirit in their inner vivacity, must be used, like stone, colour, and sound in the other arts, principally to express what it proves most fitted to express" (972). Are not Candido and Passos describing these movements of the Spirit in their ego-centering readings? "Would there be a paradox in negating preliminarily the themes, to conclude that the object of poetry is the manipulation of the word?", says Candido (*Inquietudes*, 117). Hegel would not see a paradox here, but an explanation of how the material and medium

[43] René Wellek simplifies the Hegelian movement in the Aesthetics: "There the genres are worked into a dialectical scheme which is also historical. The objective epic, the thesis, is contradicted by the subjective lyric and synthesized by the drama" (48).

best suited for showing us the trajectory of Spirit operate. This abandonment of the object to recuperate it spiritually in language is Drummond's realization, after the 1940s, critics say, and it is hard to differentiate this from a Romantic conception of poetry and the Lyric I.

This rational movement of the I in Drummond that critics explain is problematized by Hegel when differentiating poetry from the visual arts and from philosophy. Placing it between and thinking as the driving force of reason and philosophy, and sense-perception as what enables the practice of visual arts, poetry, for Hegel, is a product of the imagination (*Vorstellung*) which "From thinking it takes the aspect of spiritual universality which grips together into a simpler determinate unity things directly perceived as separate; from visual art it keeps things juxtaposed in space and indifferent to one another." (1035). A synthesis without interconnection of its parts, for this would be thinking, and a juxtaposition of elements infused by meaning, because a meaningless collection of objects would be closer to mere perception, this is the juncture which poetry occupies, and we know, following Lacoue-Labarthe that the subject is the generator and accumulator of meaning here. So, if we want to play a little Hegel *contra* Hegel, we would remain suspended on this space of imagination, a disjointed plane provided with meaning, not yet the climax Candido and Passos try to articulate in Drummond's search for totality. In this space, the lyric I does not lose itself to find itself in social poetry[44], nor it becomes free in the Concept (Hegel, *Phenomenology* §197), but remains in this space of being more than mere meaningless perception. Of course, the dialectic continues for Hegel, and lyric poetry which is the same than to say just poetry, has to integrate the objectivity of the epic into drama, but even

[44] Paragraphs §178-181 of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* are in mind here.

there, the pure subjectivity of lyric is preserved, and we are not yet in the realms of the concept: philosophy.[45]

The trust in the subjectivity of the Lyric I and the maneuver of projecting back this Hegelian and Romantic articulation of the lyric to an immemorial past (quite an epic move) has the consequence of opening a space for contestation where the most we can do is to postulate alternative forms of subjectivity, or a negation of the I which is always already an I. Some readings of Latin American poetry in the last fifty years have certainly done this, like Guillermo Sucre's: "non-being is a more substantial form of being", "the ruin of the I makes space for another I" (575, 588); or Lorena Ventura: "It is not about 'the ruin of the I' as Sucre affirms, but of a new mode of subjectivity", "Poetry seems to propose to theory the question that it is not enough to define the lyrical subject as *subject of enunciation*, it is necessary to delineate their *identity* with the aim of making their operativity effective in the analysis" (Ventura, *Sujeto Lírico*). Again, nothing wrong with this as long as we do not assume that this is as far as critique can reach: to look for a father to hate and love and for that father to be Hegel (or Schlegel if you prefer).

Ventura is right to see in the configuration of lyric poetry and the subject a tension "that does not resolve itself in a superior synthesis" (*Sujeto Lírico*). This is what I want to show with pointing at Hegel's conception of the lyric as a privileged one, as Jackson and Prins claim (3), in

[45] Not only in Hegel the operation is also ego-centering, it is doubly so, because within the realm of poetry we encounter the "illustrious triad" of genres (Genette, 38): epic, lyric and drama, where lyric is, like its container category of Poetry, in the middle. A subjective form within a subjective category. If, in epic poetry the poet vanishes "before the objectivity of his creation" (1111), in lyric poetry, on the other hand, they escape this alienation by looking inwardly, into "the spirit's own subjective disposition" (1111), while drama goes too far, integrating "…the objectivity of epic with the subjective character of lyric" (1158). On this subjective character: The central point of unity in a lyric must therefore be regarded as the inner life of the poet. But this inner life itself is partly the individual's pure unity with himself and partly it is fragmented and dispersed into the most diversified particularization and most variegated multiplicity of ideas, feelings, impressions, insights, etc.; and their linkage consists solely in the fact that one and the same self carries them, so to say, as their mere vessel (Hegel, 1133).

the sense that even as drama, poetry preserves this idea of the subject and subjectivity as a vessel for totality, and that even that totality contain the fragmentations that contemporary critics call non-being, non-subject, etc. It is a totality that has more possibilities insofar as it presents itself as a synthesis without unification, so the concept of the lyric is a more interesting concept of philosophy than Hegel's idea of philosophy per se. This is speculatively satisfactory, but still too restrictive in terms of the inner life of the poet being the sole organizer of meaning and non-meaning.

The radical objectivity that Candido signals in Drummond's later work, points to poetry moving the I towards a totality that Hegel encounters in philosophy and in dramatic art, and we could be happy with this reading, since we are doubly displacing the genre, but in doing so we are replacing it with an absolute I, with philosophy or with poetry on its way to philosophy. It is rather in Hegel's flooding of subjectivity where the I does not move and all poetry becomes lyric poetry, since not only poetry in general is in between visual arts and philosophy, but lyric poetry in particular is also placed between the epic and drama in a subdialectic of its own (1035-1039). In this moment where lyric poetry becomes poetry in general and it does not differentiate itself, the I shows its place as an empty signifier, even by showing a consistency in its fragmentation, blocking other possible movements in the poems. The dialectic at a standstill that we have tried to force in Hegel has the intention of showing a certain meaningless of the I in contemporary poetry by its excess of it, the double subjective valence that lyric poetry has in Hegel's hierarchy, allow us to move in other registers. Out of relations between humans, even; two Is are not better than one, since they postulate relationality as a play of sameness, and this is the critical space we want to escape by reading Drummond otherwise, pieces that surpass the country, but also the I at the same time.

The multiplicity of feelings and ideas that the I synthesize for Hegel can pretty well work without the I, as Rei Terada says: "…destroying the illusion of subjectivity does not destroy emotion" (157), and more than asking what carries meaning then, or what carries the untranslatability of the poem, I turn to try to know what does the poem do without an I to support it and integrate it, it is not a poem without the author (as a person and as a function), but a poem without subject (in the many senses of the term): "Self-differential selves are dead only as subjects; they are not dead as self-differential selves" (Terada, 155). It also is a poem without the inner life (a way to say *Erlebnis*) planted by the critical police at its center: "the supposed intensity, inwardness, immediacy of an experience which can never be demonstrated as certain and can never be shown to be relevant to the quality of art" (Wellek, 51). I am less worried by the demonstrability or not of something than by the Germanization of the reading of poetry that Wellek also denounces (49) as a symptom of the universalization of a national agenda, and of a concept of immediate experience that Benjamin famously criticized, and Lacoue-Labarthe after him. For the latter, a Paul Célan poem ('Tübingen, January') which seems to commemorate a visit, "does not say any state of the psyche, any lived experience of the subject, any *Erlebnis*" (22), but for Lacoue-Labarthe this is not only a going outside the subject, but a "going outside the human" (31). Was Walter Benjamin criticizing his own (German) tradition when signaling to a change in the structure of experience as the culprit for the decay of lyric poetry? (*On Some Motifs*, 314). Was Baudelaire going outside himself and into a crowd that no longer had a "soul and movement all its own" not only to transform immediate inner life into "long experience" (*Erfahrung*) (Benjamin, *On Some Motifs*, 343) but to signal that the romantic projection of a theory of genre and a conception of lyric poetry was shaky right from the get-go? I am interested in seeing what happens when the I and the non-I give space to space precisely, to the landscape

as the guiding threat to a lyric impulse that requires no ego, but which nevertheless helped create the biggest ego of them all, the national landscape. We need to relate (*relatus* and *relatio*) the pieces differently.

In "Surpresa", as we saw, Drummond displaces, perhaps with the help of involuntary memory, the sovereignty of the I in order to construct a tense lyric enunciation. The boy passing below the neck of the horse cannot help but be surprised by the bite as he crossed the space the animal occupied. This equivocation comes back in Drummond, his creation of space is full of it. It is in the Venezuelan Igor Barreto (1952 -), however, where the tension in Drummond becomes and allows for a poetics of spatial criticism, for a theory of the landscape that is already prefigured in the Brazilian.

In Barreto it is not the horse who bites and menaces human stability. His book *El Duelo* (2010) narrates the killing of two horses in the Venezuelan *llano* and the selling of their meat in a context of scarcity, precarity and economic hardships. This time humans bite the animals' flesh to be nourished by it. The book closes with "Hunger":

> They're hungry
> and their mouths
> are open.
>
> A whole tree
> could be put inside
> a mouth
>
> and a whole
> river,
> even some mountains
>
> with their peaks
> and knolls.
> Everything would fit
>
> wrapped
> in saliva,

in white cloths.

The saliva
spreads
and softens the landscape:

some cows graze
in the depths
of their innocence

and the horses
jumping the fence
are like funerary steles.

Pity
for those who are
grass and bone

because soon
they will be ground up
by desire

under the sky
set fire to
and avidity

and the walls
of the cosmos
will move

and the landscape will be put away
in the acid sack
of forgetfulness.

The desire
to eat
the inedible:

the faithful dog,
streets and sidewalks,
buildings and trains.

The glass bonfire
of the little town
is alight.

Devouring, devouring,
never mind how much
and how.

Famine,
the sudden riptide
of the spirits

a massive
epidemic,
voracity,

the windy swirling
of the carnivorous birds,
the blacking out (*Blind Plain*, tr. by Rowena Hill, 339).[46]

That wish to consume the inconsumable is a radicalization of Drummond's "Surpresa." By any means it is a testament to humanity's superiority or dominion, but rather its ultimate humiliation as a presence which devaluates itself while not being able to give space to otherness. Hunger as the obstacle to any coexistence between humans and other actors, to any rendering of the landscape and space as harmonious. Gina Saraceni is right when pointing at how in *El Duelo*, the animal as poor-in-the-world, as Martin Heidegger would famously claim, becomes the world itself (*Caballos*, 27). Saraceni also reads the poem "Hunger" as going beyond the anecdote of the horses, but denouncing the voracity of humanity, its impulse of appropriation of nature. She, however, problematically equates those who kill the horses with those who appropriate and exploit the land to make a point about the subject's world-making impetus by representational

[46] "Tienen hambre / y han abierto / la boca. // Un árbol entero / podría colocarse / en ella // y un río entero,/ hasta unas montañas // con sus picos / y lomas. / Todo cabría // envuelto / en saliva, / en paños blancos. // La saliva / se estira / y ablanda el paisaje: // unas vacas pastan / en la profundidad / de su inocencia // y los caballos / sobre la barda / como estelas funerarias. // Piedad / para los que son / pasto y hueso // porque luego / serán triturados / por el deseo // bajo el cielo / incendiados, / y el ansia // y las paredes / del cosmos / se moverán // y el paisaje quedará guardado / en el saco ácido / de la desmemoria. // El deseo / de comer / lo incomible: // el perro fiel / calles y aceras, / edificios y trenes. // La hoguera de vidrio / de la pequeña ciudad / está encendida. / Devoración, devoración, / no importa cuánto / y cómo. // La hambruna, / la resaca súbita / del ánimo // una epidemia / masiva, / la voracidad // el ventoso remolino / de las aves carnívoras, / el entenebrecimiento".

means (*Caballos*, 25). Without simplifying her arguments, it is important to pose the question on whether those who steal the animals are not feeling hunger as well. Unlike high-level criminals, their act of kidnapping and killing the horses is precisely what Barreto is rendering as a collapse of representation and the impossibilities of mapping bare lived experience. He turns an anecdote into a critique of the construction of nature, which will extend towards a critique of the articulation of the national territory in the form of landscape, to which we will turn now.

creation and containment of the landscape

It is known how 19th century poetry went hand in hand with nation-making. But in Latin America it also helped make legible a notion of a mega-regionalism which was not foreign to the colonizers. The creation of independent Nation-States in the early 19th century did not, and did not want to, forget a sort of original, almost natural, identitarian claim: we belong to this continent, or, at least, we belong to the southern part of this continent. The conditions favorable for a certain kind of landscape are present here, also for a re-containing of that landscape wanting to get out of itself, because of its exuberance, its poverty, its blinding light, or its terrifying darkness. This sense of region, though, was somewhat linguistically sanctioned, leaving a place like Brazil included by exclusion because of it, and because of the particular nature of Brazil's independence.[47]

In 1823 and 1826 Andrés Bello publishes "Alocución a la Poesía" and "La Agricultura de la Zona Tórrida" respectively, two poetic *silvas*[48] that, according to Julio Miranda invent "…the Venezuelan history of light" (7). In them, the superposition of the Edenic and agricultural, past

[47] The history of the "Luso-Hispanic disengagement", as Robert Patrick Newcomb calls it, is long, and it shows how Brazil consistently challenges "the coherence of the continentalist rhetoric that has typified a good part of Spanish American nationalist-exegetic discourse…" (Newcomb, 2021, 5).
[48] Poetic form consisting in alternating hendecasyllables and heptasyllables.

and future, signal a trajectory in the relation between art and Nation-State that the Latin American, and certainly the Venezuelan, tradition could not easily shake off for over a century. Bello's rational schizophrenia (Miranda, 10), and his status as the pedagogue of Simón Bolívar for a short while, and of all Spanish-America for eternity, presents poetry as the ideal way of naming the elements that constitute the land, performing a movement from the political landscape of recently gained independence and its epic, to a politics of the landscape (Miranda, 25). Miranda claims: "The ideological rambling running through the *silvas* could awkwardly be summarized thus: America is an Eden; America was an Eden; America still is an Eden; America is, when compared to Europe, an Eden; America can be an Eden" (16). In the spatial are concentrated all forms of linear time (past, present, future), but also the recalcitrance of being, the power of the negative (or of its semblance), and non-equivalence. Bello's inventory of everything the land can offer in "La Agricultura de la Zona Tórrida": sugarcane, honey, almonds, cacti, passion fruit, *yuca*, bananas, and so on, and his appeal to the young nations of America to honor the countryside and "*su frugal llaneza*" (Bello, 48),[49] lay out a map where origin and potentiality collide, giving the poet the power to create the Nation.

Miranda shows, in his reading of Bello, how time and history are co-dependent of space when the latter is understood "as part of the basic structure of existence" (v), as Watsuji Tetsuro, writing in the 1930s, would claim, being one example of non-Western or global south thinkers working through these connections[50]. Miranda arrives at this emphasis on the spatial by reading

[49] "…its frugal plainness."

[50] Watsuji's conceptual developments, although not part of the focus of this chapter, deserve an analysis int heir own right when thinking about the delimitation of space and the construction of historical time. Watsuji's focus is that of Heidegger's ontology, which he inhabits to critique and complement it by arguing for the spatial as what allows Dasein to encompass the social in the form of the environment shared by human groups: "I perceived that herein lay the limitations of Heidegger's work, for time not linked with space is not time in the true sense and Heidegger stopped short at this point because his Dasein was the Dasein of the individual only. He treated human existence as being the existence of a man. From the standpoint of the dual structure-both individual and social of human existence, he did not advance beyond an abstraction of a single aspect. But it is only when human existence

Bello's *silvas* as connected with the project of a nascent nation, which leads him to examine the connections between landscape, poetry and politics during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Venezuela.[51] Miranda is pointing at the artificiality of that first moment of communion between nature and nation which poetry produces, and the importance he gives to the landscape will allow us to have our own, always provisional, while not ephemeral, definition of landscape and its relation to contemporary poetry and the Nation-State. In other words, the invention of a national landscape as a key strategy of the Nation-State in Latin America, and particularly in Brazil and Venezuela, gets challenged by the same medium that was key in its original articulation.

Georg Simmel's "The Philosophy of the Landscape", from 1913 help us frame the discussion we started with Miranda. The foundational versus the existential character of the landscape point to a politics of the landscape in which nature becomes unnatural. Simmel says:

---

is treated in terms of its concrete duality, that time and space are linked and that history also (which never appears fully in Heidegger) is first revealed in its true guise. And at the same time the connection between history and climate becomes evident" (Watsuji, v-vi).

The idea of Fūdo (風土)(also the title of Watsuji's book from 1935), which some authors like David W. Johnson, propose to leave untranslated, has however been translated as "Climate and Culture" and as "milieu". In Spanish, the term is rendered as *paisaje* (landscape). We could conveniently keep the Spanish translation and move forward without analysis, but it is relevant (and honest) to unpack the difficulties in equating fūdo with all these terms. For Watsuji, the individual and social character of the human being manifest themselves in the fūdo as something which structures human life, and it is only through it that historical existence actualizes itself concretely in the form of a nation or an epoch (Spanish tr, 34). Fūdo, then, contains the subjective and objective merging that the idea of a landscape presupposes as it is defined by Georg Simmel, for example (21-2), while it does not seem to contain the artialization, that is, the aesthetic treatment done to nature in order to extract the landscape from it, as Alain Roger proposes (21). For Johnson: "…fūdo is not an "objective" region of nature onto which we would then project "subjective" meanings; rather, it is the always already meaningful setting of a geo-cultural climate in which subjective and objective elements form an indivisible unity" (1134). Self, environment and the social, for Watsuji, can and should be comprehended together (Johnson, 1136), they also form a theoretical landscape in the broader sense.

Despite the nationalist implications in Watsuji's work, or precisely because of that, I am interested in how his view of the individual and the social as always already merged in a concrete space, can also suggest other forms of organization that are not Nation-State oriented. Also, the bringing back of space out of the traditional philosophical primordiality of time (is Kant to blame?) is something that I deem necessary to confront other spatial determinisms that, even if not central to this text, are always ghosts which surround us.

[51] His book is titled *Poesía, paisaje y política.*

"To talk of 'a piece of nature' is in fact a self-contradiction. Nature is not composed of pieces. It is the unity of a whole. The instant anything is parceled out from this wholeness, it is no longer nature pure and simple since this whole can be 'nature' only within that unbounded unity, only as a wave within that total flux" (21). That 'parceling out' from the indivisibility of nature, that impossibility, is the landscape. It has a physical reality traversed by a subjective (individual and social until they are indistinguishable) experience. This is what gives the landscape its recalcitrant quality as an event/experience that cannot be equivalent to territory or environment, as Raffaele Milani says (46). Milton Santos, however, sees the landscape as a photograph, as "trabalho morto", or geographic forms, which joined together with "trabalho vivo", or the social dynamic, constitute Space (25-6), the thing is that the geographic forms already contain the movement of the social forces which modify, contemplate, or try to represent them, it is true, though, that those social forces, especially those that are not registered as "productive" in terms of capital, tend to be one of those pieces which exceed the *país*, pointing to a critique of the *paisaje-país* connection.

The impossible character of singling out elements of nature and turning them into experience, gives the landscape a supernatural character, a term that Alain Roger uses (13). Alain, however, explains how this supernatural quality lies in the in between-ness of the landscape as not completely transcendent or immanent (14). If there is a meta it is not that in *metaphysics*, it is the one of the metamorphosis of nature into landscape through an artistic sense that comes before art itself (Alain, 14; 24; see also Simmel, 25; and Milani, 59)[52]. The prime

[52] "Se puede añadir que el descubrimiento estético del paisaje precede a los movimientos de la pintura y de la poesía. Es a través de este descubrimiento que, como nos enseña Assunto (1994), transformamos en objetos estéticos aquello que antes eran puros y simples objetos de la naturaleza. La constitución del paisaje natural en objeto estético es obra del ser humano y de su historia" (Milani, 59).

example of this metamorphosis for Alain is the transformation of a land (nation) into a landscape, a *pays* into a *paysage*, *país* into *paisaje, país-paisagem, Land-Landschaft,* and so on.

From wherever we see it, the landscape ends up taking us to the Nation. From a landscape of origin that is believed to embody an immemorial past, to the artificiality of nation-building, where, like enlightened Gods, the poets and painters name and present the elements of the land, the purity of a national identity, as Joan Nogué notices, is at display (13). But also the movement to a landscape of a second order, to a metaphor of the Nation synthesized in an imaginary "natural" referent creates a system of references internal to nations "…where the visual refers us to the historical and where individuals and society establish a continuity with the past" (Folch-Serra, 141).

Perhaps literature more than painting has served in Latin America as the helper of National projects in the metamorphosis of *país* into *paisaje(gem)* because of its distance with visuality, as Antoni Marí says (145-6). Poetry in particular, in the case of Bello, is closer to the non-representational. However, poetry does not serve the same function than it did in Bello's time. The Nation-State, however, tried to hold onto that foundational landscape and build on it, disregarding the contradictory elements, or the multiple landscapes and breakdowns of the idea of landscape that occur within it, qualifying them, as Folch-Serra claims as "irrational", forcing them to be legible only under the Nation-State's logic (158).

After Bello, it has taken at least a century to understand how that history of the South-American light selectively illuminated those geographies that gave a synthetic illusion of continuity and border at the same time.[53] A poem from Drummond de Andrade and one by Barreto can help us start making sense of the disintegration of the landscape as Nation that the

[53] The amazon, split between Venezuela and Brazil, and yet helping constitute a unique national identity in each country (and in the other countries through which it extends) is an example of the arbitrariness.

authors provoke. Let's start with "Paisagem: Como se Faz" by Drummond, from his 1973 collection *As impurezas do branco*:

> This landscape? It doesn't exist. What exists
> is vacant space, to be planted
> with landscape retrospectively.
>
> The view of the mountains, the springs,
> the cecropia trees? What view?
> That all comes later.
> Twenty years later, just like in dramas.
>
> For now our seeing doesn't see; it gathers
> slivers of road, strands of horizon,
> without knowing that one day
> it will weave them into tapestries,
> like photographs,
> of visited lands we didn't grasp.
>
> A landscape takes time. It begins as a blank
> space tinted by green, brown, and gray,
> but the color doesn't stick to surfaces,
> doesn't shape them. Stone is only stone
> from the distance of much maturing.
> And the water from this stream
> doesn't cool naked bodies:
> it cools them later.
> Water is a project of living.
>
> A gate opens. Creaks. Meaningless.
> A cow in its silence. I don't even notice.
> One day this cow's silence, this creaking,
> will strike me in their phenomenal
> perfection, wholly tangible,
> in front and at the back and from the side.
> Someone next to me asks:
> What's with you?
> And it's nothing
> except the gate's sound, the silent cow.
>
> Landscape: a land
> made from thoughts of landscape
> in the creative distance of space-time,
> when things,
> without any prints

or documents, exist more fiercely
than we do: they colonize
and watch us, stare at us. Submissive
objects of regard, we are their pasture.
We are the landscape's landscape (*Multitudinous*, 180).[54]

At first sight, we can see Drummond's emphasis in the historicity of the landscape, in how one always comes late to its constitution. The fourth stanza, like a phenomenological description, lists elements we capture which only after are assembled in a tapestry, in a landscape. This is far from a sort of naturalist view of things, far from singing the virtues of the land as they appear, since it is acknowledged that, without elaboration, there is no space. The naming of the rock, the water, and so on, only mimics the original and originative naming that foundational poets were so obsessed with. It is indeed a metaphysical statement, as some critics have labeled Drummond's mature work before *Boitempo* (Merquior, for example), which can be read as beyond Kant, in that beyond Immanuel was so cautious of. It denounces the regulative character of the landscape as a governor of the sense of nation and, hence, as a constitutor of a certain kind of subjectivity. The landscape is what makes sure the country (*país*) does not step over someone else's territory, does not become what it is not, does not turn into its frowned upon neighbor: the

[54] Esta paisagem? Não existe. Existe espaço / vacante, a semear / de paisagem retrospectiva. // A presença das serras, das imbaúbas, / das fontes, que presença? / Tudo é mais tarde. / Vinte anos depois, como nos dramas. // Por enquanto o ver não vê; o ver recolhe / fibrilhas de caminho, de horizonte, / e nem percebe que as recolhe / para um dia tecer tapeçarias / que são fotografías / de impercebida terra visitada. // A paisagem vai ser. Agora é um branco / a tingir-se de verde, marrom, cinza, / mas a cor não se prende a superfícies, / não modela. A pedra só é pedra / no amadurecer longínquo. / E a água deste riacho / não molha o corpo nu: / molha mais tarde. / A água é um projeto de viver. // Abrir porteira. Range. Indiferente. / Uma vaca-silêncio. Nem a olho. / Um dia este silêncio vaca, este ranger / baterão em mim, perfeitos, / existentes de frente, / de costas, de perfil, / tangibilíssimos. Alguém pergunta ao lado: / O que há com você? E não há nada / senão o som-porteira, a vaca silenciosa. // Paisagem, país / feito de pensamento da paisagem, / na criativa distância espacitempo, / à margem de gravuras, documentos, / quando as coisas existem com violencia / mais do que existimos: nos povoam / e nos olham, nos fixam. Contemplados, / submissos, delas somos pasto / somos a paisagem da paisagem.
.

narcissism of small differences. But it is also what can gather the emotion and sense of identity that any good old lyric I needs for a certain formation of *latinoamericanidad(e)*. The poem is also proposing an excess or formulating an insufficiency of the phenomenological suspension or bracketing, since, as it is said in the final stanza, things themselves exist much more violently than us, it is us who become suspended by them. The trust in the possibility of domesticating the space through words that earlier poets, national poets, proudly had, is dismantled by Drummond de Andrade here, but also the confidence modern philosophy had in apprehending the world, one could argue.

Drummond's anti-instructions to create a landscape contrast and at the same time are complemented by Simmel's "The Philosophy of the Landscape". Simmel's essay could also be called "Paisagem: Como se Faz", but Simmel's instructions are quite different. For the sociologist there is a paradox in the construction of the landscape, since it extracts a singularity from the wholeness of nature, as we explained before, and, while being an example of a natural "case", a landscape in its very constitution is estranged from the nature where it belongs (21-2). The bounds that make us identify a landscape are nonexistent in "the unity of a whole" that nature is, and yet "a landscape is permeated by an opaque awareness of this infinite interconnectedness" (22). He continues: "Nature, which in its deep being and meaning knows nothing of individuality, is transfigured into an individuated 'landscape' by the human gaze that divides things up and forms the separated parts into specific unities" (22). Simmel calls this "the fundamental tragedy of spirit", a part coming out of a totality in order to strive to be a totality itself, and defines the idea of landscape as a modern idea, in the crisis of the individual to be an autonomous entity while having a role as a part of society (22). Simmel however turns this paradox into a conciliation between individual and society, between the landscape and nature at

large, an opaque awareness of belonging to a universality that resolves the tragedy of spirit analogically. He makes the pieces fit.

What is curious in Simmel's argument, and where we can put pressure on Drummond, is how the landscape is a relation between the subject/observer and nature, that is how it is made. An abstraction of the infinity, which is always a failure, but nevertheless carries in a simple relation within parts the opacity of such infinity. Where landscape is not, nature reigns for Simmel, while as in Drummond, without landscape there is only vacant space, waiting for a promise that always arrives late. The relation that in Simmel leads to a conciliation between two wholes is less legible in Drummond, where an interaction of nature, culture, perception and feeling exist but in a less clear direction. In Simmel, what gives his wholeness and its singularity to a landscape at the same time, its affirmation as an entity, is its mood (*Stimmung*)[55] (26). Simmel does not differentiate between the act of perceptual abstraction the observer does and the particular mood the landscape projects, for him, they not only occur at the same time, but they are the same thing. And to illustrate that, he recurs to an example which is of interest to us:

> The same is the case when we reconstruct within ourselves the feeling arising from a lyrical poem. If this feeling did not directly arise in us while reading its words, then they would not constitute a poem, but a plain communication only. On the other hand, if we did not take its words as forming a poem, then they could not arouse that feeling within us (27)

And:

[55] Simmel's Spanish translator, Mathias Andlau, explains that *Stimmung* "means, at the same time, atmosphere, mood, spiritual tonality" (*Filosofía del Paisaje*, 2013, 18).

> Is not the feeling within a lyric poem an indubitable reality, one that is as independent of all arbitrariness and subjective frames of mind as are rhythm and rhyme? This is the case, even though one cannot find a trace of precisely this feeling within the individual words which make up the surface manifestation of a poem, which the natural process of linguistic creation has generated, as it were, unawares. But exactly because a poem, as this particular objective creation, is already a product of the human spirit, that feeling is, for this reason, a factually real one (28).

Simmel is trying to argue for the mood and the formation of a landscape, that is, the unification of different elements existing in a certain contiguity: a tree, a mountain, and a river, for example, as the same thing, as if perception and feeling "…in their own tonality, were just uttering one and the same word in unison" (29). He does talk about landscape painting, of course[56], but to drive his final point home, he opts for lyric poetry. The perception of a poem as a poem and the feeling it provokes are the same thing, but not only that, this feeling acquires a realness also because the poem is an objective manifestation. The problem is not of cause-effect, but of nature activating, as it were, our creative capacities where perception and feeling form a landscape (28). The opaqueness becomes clearer now, and whether he wanted it or not a hierarchy is established, and a unidirectional gaze that also aims to inform our reading of lyric poetry. The lyric as a category is more degraded than the landscape here, because even if it's the example to talk about the simultaneity of perception and feeling, the creation of the landscape entails a singular mood for each of them, distinguishing the philosophy of landscape from general (and generic?) "literary-lyrical concepts relating to feeling" (28). We can say a landscape is sad or uplifting, but

[56] For Simmel, there is an "artistic form" alive within us that is stimulated in artists and non-artists by a landscape (25). However, if the form landscape has an historicity that Simmel briefly explains, how is that historical character related to a presumably innate, semi-pure form of intuition?

the mood is a much more unique feature of that landscape, is what makes us create/identify it as such.

Simmel then includes poetry by exclusion in the Philosophy of the landscape, the externalization that the feelings of lyric poetry evoke is too generic to be compared at the same level with the creation of the landscape and its objective externalization and constitution by the beholder, but it serves us to understand the unifying movement of the soul. “We are the landscape of the landscape” is an incomprehensible line for Simmel, or maybe it is just poetry.

Let’s look at Barreto’s poem now, a text which gives the title to one of the two collections he published in 2010:

Carreteras Nocturnas

When I turned 35
I yielded with a passion
to roads at night;
at that time I was travelling through the imaginary country we all build,
a country that followed me like my one blue shirt
or my handkerchief
in the left pocket.
I used then
to look out
of the window of the bus
and watch in a trance
the line that divides off
half the road,
that line
boldly crossed
by the coat of a fox
or the shadow of an owl escaping from the stare
of powerful headlights
or simply
the flicker
of a human
silhouette
fleeing from fatality
and from being run over.
The aisle inside the bus
was another road
with bodies huddled
in the fetal position.
The driver's assistant

went up and down that passage leaning on the back
of the seats
and looking
inside the sleep
of the travelers.
There was silence
and some muttering of voices was the sporadic accompaniment of those hours.
The sleep you have
during a bus journey
produces sensory fatigue: nervous weakness, psychasthenia.
At the age of 35
I was already a traveler
through places of debauch and danger, and had discovered something
as important
as the familiar destination
awaited at the end of the route.
Finally
I was coming up with
what seemed
a metaphor for the country.

The novelist Enrique Bernardo Núñez
in *A Glance at the Map of Venezuela*
wrote this sentence:
Above all the land we have before us demands of us
an interpretation.
It must be about 2 a.m.
and the prow of the sleeper bus
slows down
and parks under the roof
at a roadside restaurant.
When the bus doors open
we unroll stunned
to the solitude of the urinals,
to the slot machine,
to the bread and coffee.
The light inside the place
was white
like a mist
brushing the heads of the travelers.
In the darkness
the road was still there
- immobile.
I know there's a city near,
a wood near,
but how to relate them
and assemble with them
a universe.
The map of the country
is useless.
In spite

of the certainty of the night
if someone asked
what day is it?
and what year and what date?
I wouldn't be able to answer.
So, that moment at a standstill
in a continuous present
seemed to me so like the country:
I mean the country
is like a roadside restaurant
at night.
These images have resounded
over years
like a wave expanding
and not dissolving.
I would say it's a place of amnesia.
A West Indian poet called Walcott
also thinks so.
Amnesia
is the sight of some herons
alighting on the sea shore
after a long journey.
Pity rains
on that picture
and there's no remedy.
Who remembers
a death that happened,
a buried past?
With calm eyes
I reread - again -
A Glance at the Map of Venezuela,
printed by Élite publishers in 1939:
Sometimes, going through a village, I see abandoned houses.
The people have left there and with no effort have exchanged
their home for a cramped room in the cold city.
In 1939
people still talked about "beautiful barbarism"
but today
slums armor-plate
the mountains
with their walls of orange bricks.
It's the accursed circumstance
of the present everywhere.
Now,
when the bus draws away from the restaurant
there's a moment when the facade
is imprinted
as a faint glow
in the enormous glass expanse
of the side windows.
I don't understand why I recall

a journey to Greece
and my only visit
to the Acropolis
and the theater of Epidaurus.
My ruins
have always been:
the oil painting of a quiet mountain
or the incandescence
of the Caribbean coast at Macuto.
A country to be cherished
that will not come back again (*Blind Plain*, 347).[57]

It is puzzling how a text so rich in metaphors at the same time shows the limits of metaphorical thinking. The voice in the poem, after embarking in this road trip across the country believes to

[57] Al cumplir los 35 años / me entregué con pasión / a las carreteras nocturnas, en ese tiempo viajaba / por el país imaginario / que todos construimos, / un país que me seguía como la única camisa azul / o el pañuelo / en el bolsillo izquierdo. Solía entonces / asomarme / a la ventanilla del autobús / y mirar en trance / la línea que segmenta / la mitad de la carretera, aquella línea / atravesada audazmente / por la pelambre de un zorro / o la sombra de una lechuza / escapada a la fijeza / de potentes faros, / o simplemente / el celaje / de una silueta / humana / huyendo de la fatalidad / y el arrollamiento. / El pasillo interno del autobús / era otro camino / de cuerpos contraídos / en posición fetal. / El ayudante del chofer / recorría aquel pasadizo / apoyándose en el espaldar / de los asientos / y mirando / al interior del sueño / de los viajantes. / Había silencio / y algún susurro de voces / era el esporádico acompañamiento / de aquellas horas. / El sueño que se vive / durante un viaje en autobús / produce fatiga de los sentidos: / debilidad nerviosa, psicastenia. / A los 35 años / ya era un viajero / por lugares de crápula y peligro, / y había descubierto algo / tan importante / como el destino familiar / esperado al término de la ruta. / Finalmente / atinaba con aquello / que parecía / una metáfora del país. // El novelista Enrique Bernardo Núñez / en *Una ojeada al mapa de Venezuela* / escribió esta frase: / *Ante todo la tierra que tenemos delante reclama de nosotros una interpretación.* / Deben ser como las 2 a.m. / y la proa del bus-cama / reduce la velocidad / estacionándose bajo el antetecho / de un restaurante de carretera. / Al abrirse las puertas del bus / nos desplegamos aturdidos / a la soledad de los urinarios, / al tragamonedas, / al pan y al café. / La luz del recinto / era blanca / como una niebla / que rozara la cabeza de los viajantes. / En la oscuridad / la carretera permanecía / –inmóvil–. / Sé que hay una ciudad cercana, / un bosque cercano / pero cómo relacionarlos / y armar con ellos / un universo. / El mapa del país / resulta inútil. / A pesar / de la certeza de la noche / si alguien preguntara: / ¿qué día es, / de qué año y qué fecha?, / no sabría responderle. / Entonces, aquel momento estancado / en un presente continuo / me pareció tan semejante al país: / quiero decir que el país / es como los restaurantes nocturnos / de carretera. / Estas imágenes han resonado / durante años / como una onda que se expande / y no se disuelve. / Diría que es un lugar de amnesia. / Así también lo cree / un poeta antillano llamado Walcott. / La amnesia / es la visión de unas garzas / que posan a la orilla del mar / luego de un largo viaje. / La piedad llueve / sobre esta estampa / y no hay remedio. / Quién recuerda / una muerte ocurrida, / un pasado sepultado. / Con ojos calmos releo –otra vez– / *Una ojeada al mapa de Venezuela*, / impreso por la editorial Élite en 1939: / *A veces, al cruzar una aldea, veo casas abandonadas. El hombre se ha marchado de allí y ha cambiado sin dificultad / el hogar por una reducida habitación en la ciudad fría.* / En 1939 / todavía se hablaba de la «hermosa barbarie» / mas hoy / las favelas acorazan / las montañas / con su muro de ladrillos anaranjados. / Es la maldita circunstancia / del presente por todas partes. / Ahora, / cuando el bus se aleja del restaurante / hay un momento en que la fachada / queda impresa / como un resplandor tenue / en el enorme vidrio lateral / de las ventanas. / No entiendo por qué evoco / un viaje a Grecia / y mi única visita / a la Acrópolis / y al teatro de Epidauro. / Mis ruinas / siempre han sido: / el óleo de una quieta montaña, / o la incandescencia / de la costa caribeña de Macuto. / Un país entrañable / que no volverá más.

have found a metaphor for Venezuela; more than a trip to find himself, as in many stories, he is trying to build a map of the country for himself. However, such map, as he later acknowledges, is an impossibility. This interpretation that the land claims us to make, as the protagonist of the poem reads in Enrique Bernardo Nuñez's[58] book, can no longer be made, precisely because understanding comes later, as Drummond also expresses, but because when it comes, the land is already lost "…no volverá más." This becomes clear the second time Nuñez's book is mentioned, since the first time there is still the confidence to be able to make an interpretation. The second time, however, mapping (because mapping is a metaphor for metaphors in this text) shows itself as impossible: "*El mapa del país / resulta inútil*," Although mapping is perfectly possible, it will not account for the favelas or barrios which "*...acorazan / las montañas*", or it cannot tell us how to relate the nearby city and the nearby forest, how to make them look like part of the same thing; so it is useless for the poet.

Barreto's text begins where Simmel's *Philosophy of the Landscape* breaks down: "I know there's a city near, / a wood near, / but how to relate them / and assemble with them / a universe.." The opaque awareness Simmel trusted so much is just a quick transit in the Venezuelan night. Barreto is aware that what surrounds us demands an intervention, he just does not know what that intervention looks like. The chain composed by landscape, region, country, world appears before him and is quickly rejected, not without nostalgia: "*Un país entrañable / que no volverá más*." He agrees with perception and feeling acting at the same time, as Simmel explains, but is less sure, and Drummond accompanies him in this, about the presence of a sort of executive actor artistically domesticating nature to produce the form landscape and throw it back to the exterior. Simmel's *Stimmung* and its singularity are just another form of the individual and

[58] One of the reference writers of Venezuela's literary *vanguardia.*

the chain that links it to one universality. But Barreto and Drummond are not done with the landscape, they want to examine it without the regulative character it has had and without the lyric-I or the landscape-I that it assumes.

Towards the end of his long poem *Carama* (2000), Barreto writes:

> Today, my words have been shut out.
> The landscape has dismantled its pieces
> and the tree and a stretch of a river
> have become again just parts.
> There's a spot of tears,
> a white stain
> which has taken the place of the harmonious whole (*Blind Plain*, 139).[59]

Not only he is playing Simmel backwards here, rewinding the movement of landscape formation, but Barreto is also showing the subtraction of the subject from it all. There is a writer here, of course, but only in the trace the tear left as a substitute of the whole. It is truly what the poet can aspire to. The dissolution of the landscape is not a joyful epic event here. Not an excuse for a new national ideal or an *hombre nuevo*, it is an event that is registered in angst for the future, but with certainty that the whole which is now gone would have been much worse.

A need to describe the land is ever present in Drummond and Barreto, but in expressing it they tear open the seemingly seamless way in which we talk about space and landscape informed by national discourse, literary works that serve it, and philosophical discourse at the same time. We are not done with the landscape in the same way in which we are not done with nationalism or racism (or even humanism), every "post" before these terms falls easily into the temptation of putting too specific of a spotlight in front of them. Closes a window for thought. Reviving these discussions might also curb thought, but in a more anarchic way as far as it is an anachronic

[59] Hoy, mis palabras se han excluido. / El paisaje ha desarmado sus piezas / y el árbol y un trozo de río / han vuelto a ser sólo partes. / Hay un punto de llanto, / una mancha blanca / que ha tomado el lugar del todo armónico.

discussion. The absence of principle and the absence of epic time gives us the space to question principles and time in ways that the *post* does not allow. The land in pieces our authors present bears witness to this, a sort of scapeland or *paisabotaje*.

In *Tierras en Trance*, Jens Andermann opens up to us the question about the contemporary treatment of the landscape, *paisaje* or *paisagem*. Two critical stances are examined regarding art and the landscape, on the one hand a *crítica desde el paisaje* (critique *from* the landscape), as an uplift of nature and the territory against a violence affecting it from the outside, and a *crítica del paisaje* (critique *of* the landscape), denouncing how that violence is already there, constituting the gaze that paints, sings or contemplates a landscape of dispossession, colonization and death (intro.). The critique *from* the landscape is not naïve, since it opens a space of *Convivencia*, of living-with, with the non-human, with non-identity broadly speaking (intro.); and the critique *of* the landscape, on the other hand, in its irony and destruction from within the form[60] do not prevent us from looking, still, at a landscape, but perhaps not only as *trabalho* morto but as *trabalho vivo* too, in Santos' terms. Could we say that Drummond and/or Barreto occupy any of these positions? Do we have to? What if we have developed a classification allergy? Precisely because of that?

Drummond knows, as Andermann does, the complementarity of these positions, that they are not necessarily opposed, and that the critique of the landscape as form and as an isolated materiality is not a linear progression from the idea of the landscape as what remind us that things could be otherwise. "*Paisagem: Como se Faz*" operates not as a *post* but as a *between*. The landscape can be built, but never in the present, and that delay, while it signals a subjective

[60] Andermann exemplifies the perspective *from* the landscape with Miguel Lawner's drawings in which nature resists. These drawings were produced while Lawner was interned in a concentration camp during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile. While Brazilian artist Adriana Varejao is the example of a position critical of the landscape and the violence it hides (intro.).

take on it, is also a delay of the subject as form, as a landscape of the landscape. The same violent work we do to the landscape is done to us by it, but this latter form of destruction is where our liberation in thinking about the landscape and in thinking ourselves in the world in general resides. The between Drummond is in shows the disintegration of anything like a subject, or like a lyric voice, in the disintegration and delay of the landscape, for arriving late does not mean it arrives whole or wholly: "*A presença das serras, das imbaúbas,* / *das fontes, que presença?*" The elements are there, the landscape is not, and it is not a promise, it is a project that betrays the landscape. Drummond then is between the *of* and the *from*, between the promise that betrays and the living-with that de-subjectivizes us, like the painter Armando Reverón. For Andermann:

> Reverón trusts in the landscape's epiphanic ability as threshold and anticipation of another coexistence (*Convivencia*) between body and land, that is, between human and non-human life, between material and spiritual sensations and realities of a different nature - even if he knows, as Varejão does, that only the rupture, the sharp cut, with the landscape genre allows for some hope that such a promise could be one day fulfilled (intro.).[61]

[61] "Reverón confía en la capacidad epifánica del paisaje como umbral y anticipación de otra convivencia entre cuerpo y tierra, esto es, entre vidas humanas y no humanas, entre sensaciones y realidades materiales y espirituales de distinta índole –si bien sabe, como Varejão, que sólo la ruptura, el corte tajante, con el género paisaje autoriza alguna esperanza de que esa promesa pueda algún día ser cumplida".

Figure 2. Armando Reverón - *Cocoteros en la playa*, 1926.

What goes in between body and land is the landscape itself. Reverón decides to go from Caracas to the other side of El Ávila, the mountain which was going to be the object of an almost traumatic repetition of representations in the 1940s and 1950s as the most prolific (and centralized) sub-genre of landscape painting in Venezuela. At the other side of that mountain in which Reverón was not so interested in, lied the central coast, where he produced, between the 1920s until the 1950s, "a different kind of painting, one situated at the limits of painting's possibilities, at a point of exhausted vision in the face of Caribbean climate and light conditions− a light that defies representation" (Pérez Oramas, 18). In Reverón's landscapes, especially those of his "white" period, there is figuration and a compassionate and ally-like trust in the palm trees, the sea and the little *ranchos* by the beach, but at the same time an aggressive attempt of erasure

of all that by the light in which "the materiality of the canvas and the visible trace of the brush stroke" (Andermann, intro.) also show themselves.

Reveron's landscape in ruins, insofar as it shows the ruins of representation while still capturing its elements, has the coast of Macuto as its place and non-place. A history of the light turned into semi-blindness, a Nation no longer looking inwards. Barreto's accidental adventure through the disintegrated country, where he notices the mood of their landscapes without being able to make sense of them as a unity, as a country, where his opaque awareness is that of knowing the disjointed quality of the presence (in the temporal and spatial sense), leads him to evoke the ruins of the Acropolis, not just as a cosmopolitan gesture but as a necessary violent jump out of the present, which questions, while not escaping, the demand for a linearity he feels he needs to conclude the poem, a moral of the story that says there is no moral, but that preserves its form. It is a Reveronian procedure, showing the non-representation of lyric poetry, and the weight of the anecdote in narrative poetry while collapsing the two, while still saying or speaking in the limits of both forms. When, after the negation of a landscape that can secretly be joined to the form of the nation (as sanctioned by the modern Nation-State), Barreto's text ends with: "My ruins / have always been: / the oil painting of a quiet mountain / or the incandescence / of the Caribbean coast at Macuto", he is remembering the tension between the city and the coast and the mountain which divides them, the disjunction between them is precisely the impossibility of mapping, since mapping can be a synthesis of the territory that the Nation-State does and that national poets embrace. The Ávila painters like Manuel Cabré and Pedro Ángel González on one side, and Reverón on the other.[62] All this belongs to Barreto, even if his procedure clearly sides

[62] Luis Pérez Oramas will argue that the foundational elements of the kinetic art of Jesús Rafaél Soto and Carlos Cruz-Diez, its proliferation of geometric shapes and colors, has as distant, yet close, ancestors the Venezuelan landscape painters of the first half of the twentieth century. They represented the Ávila as something without a discursive referent or equivalent, expressing "in painting only that immense silhouette impossible to render in

him with the painter of the coast, auto-exiled from the idea of the urban and the city (Pérez Oramas, 18). Barreto, however cannot renounce anything, he always comes back, like Drummond: *No elevador penso na roça / na roça penso no elevador* (which could be translated as "In the elevator I think about the countryside / in the countryside I think about the elevator") (*Reunião*, "Explicaçao"). But this oscillation is a transit between ruins, between remainders of attempts to synthesize, unify and universalize. Reverón understood this, and according to Luis Pérez-Oramas, that makes him "the first to embody a kind of unintentional modernity−one that is perhaps distorted, certainly residual" (20), but if the painter decided to relegate himself, the poet opts for taking a bus and travelling across country, this is the same Drummond did. Departing and returning constantly, between the city and the countryside.

country and city, disintegration

Why move towards this binary? It seems that the city/countryside distinction does not do much for us. But not having the distinction might do even less. One of the main things to have in mind, is that if we maintain this binary as a category of analysis, it will always be in a contaminated way, and such a contamination is what makes it worth it. Some intermediate spaces plague the country and the city, complicating them and creating places of incompleteness, illegibility or even perplexity. As Raymond Williams says: "…there is a wide range of settlements between the

words or concepts" (17). This almost traumatic repetition of painting the mountain seen at the north of the capital gave way, as a gesture, to the abstraction and formalism of a kinetic art which was adopted by the democratic state alongside with a populist-nationalism literature and using these two contradictory expressions to its advantage. As Vicente Lecuna states: "From this contradiction -abstraction in art and populism in literature- emerges a democratic State which is read and makes itself be read as nationalist (Venezuelan, local and modern, although not technocratic) and that is seen and makes itself be seen as formalist (eurocentered, universal, modern and technocratic)" (93). Reverón, until his death in 1954, kept himself at the margins of this dialectic, and in a distant "between" the two, as if taking elements from both while inhabiting a completely different orbit, hence Pérez Oramas' description of him as participating in a "deformed" or "residual" modernity (20). Barreto's poetry is always conscious of the Reveronian movement, and it is enacting it, I argue.

traditional poles of country and city: suburb, dormitory town, shanty town, industrial state" (1). Williams also explains how the urban and the rural can mean different things in different times, or, more importantly, how the terms are ways of naming other things, broader things: the city as another name for capitalism, centralization, bureaucracy; and the countryside as independence, imagination or even deprivation (291).

Inserting these terms as polyvalent signifiers in the totality of human social relations, or lifting the veil they sometimes impose on us by disguising the history of the division of labor and revealing a chain composed of many other binaries (work and leisure; mind and body, etc.), is a crucial job, but one of which I am not sure we have the conditions of possibility for if we do not untangle some things first. There is, however, a certain fugitive trajectory that poetry can do while working with, between or going back and forth the country and the city as spaces that the Nation-State still imagines as pieces of a fantasy of unity, because when we imagine a community, we also give it the power to imagine us and imagine itself in return, we give it a "personality". As Etiénne Balibar says "The history of nations […] is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject" (86). This is why our early reflections on the ego-centering readings that critique performs and about the synthesis the landscape performs can be in mind here.

Let's look at Episódio, from Drummond de Andrade, included in *A Rosa do Povo*, 1945:

First thing in the morning
and ox passes by my door.
Where does he come from?
If there aren't any farms.
Sniffing the times
between night and rose he comes.
He stops his slow machine
at my door.
Foreign to the police
previous to traffic

oh, ox, you conquer me
into another kingdom, yours.
Your horns, for sure
have, oh, transported me
dream and compromise
to the Deep Country (My translation).[63]

I am interested in how the idea of the "Deep Country" can only be enabled by an equivocation. Yes, there is a nostalgic affect in the image of the ox, but its out-of-placeness suggest a picture of Brazil that is made out of these patches of the imagination, going against the continuity Balibar also denounced. The kingdom of the ox is the kingdom of the past, without traffic or police, because Drummond knows that the Itabira of his adulthood in the 1940s is not what he is reconstructing here, when seeing the ox arrive to Rio de Janeiro, presumably. We know he knows this, because in a poem published five years before, *Revelaçao do Subúrbio*, he admits to the futility of looking at the countryside or the rural landscape as a romantic space of a de-historicized past, he rather sees one of the intermediate spaces that contaminate country and city as divisions that are supposed to fit together to form the continuous of a nation:

When I go to Minas, I like to stand and lean against the car window,
watching the suburb go by.
The whole suburb condenses itself in order to be seen quickly,
with the fear of not noticing enough
its lights which have almost no time to shine.
The night eats the suburb and then returns it,
it reacts, struggles, tries,
until the countryside comes, where orange groves emerge in the morning
and during the night only the sadness of Brazil exists (My translation).[64]

[63] Manhã cedo pasa/ à minha porta um boi. / De onde vem ele / se não há fazendas? / Vem cheirando o tempo / entre noite e rosa. / Para à minha porta / sua lenta máquina. / Alheio à policía / anterior ao tráfego / ó boi, me conquistas / para outro, teu reino. / Seguro teus chifres: / eis-me transportado / sonho e compromiso / ao País Profundo (*Reunião*, AP).

[64] Quando vou para Minas, gosto de ficar de pé, contra a vidraça do carro, / vendo o subúrbio passar. / O subúrbio todo se condensa para ser visto depressa, / com medo de não repararmos suficientemente / em suas luzes que mal têm tempo de brilhar. / A noite come o subúrbio e logo o devolve, / ele reage, luta, se esforça, / até que vem o campo onde pela manhã repontam laranjais / e à noite só existe a tristeza do Brasil (*Reunião*, SM).

Only in the unanimity of the night something like a homogenous, continuous space of a Nation can emerge. And it does so in sadness. Again, Drummond is not just being nostalgic for a Minas Gerais of times past, he is telling us that the suburbs in the countryside (a countryside not necessarily rural or no longer rural), are like the ox in the city. Compositions made of incomposite materials that point at Brazil as a fantasy that exist only after dark, when the violence of sameness hides the disintegrated fragments, where the Nation-State commits its most horrendous crimes. I see in this a thought that not only is non-representational insofar as lyric poetry avoids the mimetic impulse, but also a not-completely or never-to-be-completed metaphorical procedure, since the ox and the suburb are not here to represent other elements but themselves, they inhabit a space at the sidelines of a metaphorical logic, while also not claiming a documental or linear reality.

In his treatment of Minas Gerais as a region and of Itabira as the hometown where he keeps coming back to, Drummond is not being allegorical. As José Miguel Wisnik shows us, the locality of Itabira and its steel mines contain these patches of both past and future already since the 1910s, when Drummond was a child. “The always reversible movement between the province and the world in Drummond’s poetry, between Brazil’s archaic configurations and the announcement and spasms of modernization of the country, is already virtually inscribed in the folds of Itabira’s singular history, since 1910, “when the English bought the mine”” (Wisnik, ch. 1). Wisnik continues to say that in Drummond, the past returns as the matter of the present, and this not only complicates any unexamined origin, but it shows us that already there, in the countryside, the disintegration of the landscape is a presence since the poet can remember. And the ox in the city is just its reverse confirmation, the wish that the city could be as contaminated than the countryside.

As we argued above, the complicity between literary production and the nascent Nation-State gave some authors a foundational status, like in the case of Andrés Bello and the coexistence of both the Edenic and the agricultural in his poetry (Miranda, 8). Drummond had this complicity in mind, as member, even if of a second generation, of Brazilian *modernismo*, and also as a survivor of it. Even when the *modernistas* aimed at revolting "against what the nation's thinking was then" (2008, 98), in words of Mario de Andrade, the movement became a sort of officially sanctioned avant-garde during the Estado Novo in the late 1930s. How to move away from becoming another singer of the Nation-State? The avoidance of the national territory as a strategy to not be canonized in this way would not have been as strong as getting your hands dirty and polluting those spaces, a sort of poetic sabotage that reconfigures the idea of landscape. This is one of the most interesting things Drummond is doing in these two poems.

A re-placed radicalization of Drummonds position is seen in Barreto, whose collected poems are titled *El Campo/ El ascensor* after the line from Drummond we mentioned above: *No elevador penso na roça, / na roça penso no elevador*. In poem number V from the 2006 collection *El Llano Ciego*, Barreto writes:

> What am I in the streets of San Fernando, the town facing the prairie and the river: a foreigner. The aching fluctuations I associate with that term, its frontier morals, its ambiguity, have become over time the non-place of my experience (*Blind Plain*, 229).[65]

His vision of the Venezuelan llano or plains, where he was born before moving to Caracas as an adult, is not that of a conquest and taming of the landscape, examples of which nineteenth and early twentieth century poetry are full of. Nostalgia and abandonment, much more modern attitudes, are not there either. A perplexity and a subtle expulsion are what we have, and a

[65] Qué soy en medio de las calles de San Fernando: la ciudad frente a la estepa y el río: un extranjero. La doliente oscilación que asocio a ese calificativo, su moral de frontera, su ambigüedad, se han transformado con el tiempo en el no-lugar de mi experiencia.

demand of a poem which expresses this different experience of the no-place. Barreto's oeuvre witnesses the exhaustion of both the city and the countryside (in this case also of San Fernando as a small city *in* the countryside, facing the plains and the river), and the collapse of the landscape as a given or as a "natural" material for the poem, but, like Drummond, he sees in this collapse not a demand to turn away from it but a breakdown to be thematized as text and as a long experience of that no-lugar.

Andermann sees in positions like the one Barreto adopts towards the landscape, a void in which new alliances between humans and non-humans become possible (intro.), since what is at stake here (as in Drummond) is the collapse of the world as a means for subjects to affirm themselves against. In the exhaustion of the landscape and of the landscape as form, in that *despaisamiento* (*dépaysement*), a transformative crisis occurs (Andermann, intro.). However, as I mentioned, this is not a relinquishing of the landscape as form and concept, but a movement from, as Andermann suggests, the landscape as a plenitude which both suspends and connects the gaze with the infinity of nature, to a landscape that precisely destroys any illusion of a harmonious presence, opening space for precarious lives to emerge and for new ways of cohabiting with other species and with the territory (ch. 5: *Después*), showing the excess of the pieces of land in the poems.

In his essay "Dilemas para una Poesía de la Tierra", Barreto serves as Andermann's secret predecessor. Barreto claims that the only possibility for a cohabitation with nature is to consider it as an *other*, he says: "This attitude acquires, again, a status of necessity as the only possible cure against such an affected lyric" (*Dilemas*, 114). Such affected lyric is precisely the appropriation of the geographical space by the lyric I. Barreto, on the other hand, proposes a poetry of the land that accounts for the jumps between rural and urban modernity and their

incomposite and uneven patches of experience, but also the jumps within each seemingly homogeneous space. “Moving away from astonishing enumerations and from the transcendentalist cult to a nature that no longer exist or that is endangered; the conscience of exile will reestablish a territory in crisis, shifting and everchanging, where the word must be alert” (*Dilemas*, 116).

This reestablishment is where everything happens in Barreto, where the lyric I as the appropriator of nature, whose “inner spirit” gains command over external objects, as Hegel would have it in the *Aesthetics* (972), no longer works. A poetry of the land must then stand on the no-place, as experience but also as a relation with an *other*, as a *depaisamiento*, which is not the absence of a landscape or of a national land, but the poetic conscience of its disintegration and its ruses[66]. The dissimulation of violence that traditional western landscape painting and poetry exercises, as Andermann tells us (intro.), where beyond the frame of the work of art lies the most ruthless terror in the form of extractivism, massacre of indigenous and minoritized populations, and shady deals among local and central politicians (another shape of the country/city divide), runs its course under the protection of the Nation-State as the sponsor of a landscape of synthesis.

The relation with the outside turns, then, into a confrontation with an *other* in the search for a new understanding of the relationship with the environment, and the no-place of experience moves across the urban and rural land, populating the empty bucolic spaces of the past, suggesting they were never such a thing. When Barreto moves to the urban realm, he locates another intermediate space and moves the frame, or the lenses, of western treatment of the landscape a little to the side to zoom in the city that is hidden from the city. It is a violent jump

[66] To be *dépaysée* is to be out of place, even in the place which one could call “mine”.

of the gaze that we can experience in almost every Latin American urban space.[67] This is "Los verdaderos pobres", from his collection *El Muro de Mandelshtam* (2016).

Today, Friday
the true poor
arrived to the Ojo de Agua ghetto:
the beautiful supermarket cashiers
the bricklayers with their smudgy overalls
and their hands cracked by the living lime,
the knockoffs sellers
and those who subsist thanks to
the disability pension.
To give or not to give any of them
an opportunity,
is the same thing.
Everything ends on Sunday afternoon
when the spinning wheel leaves them again with nothing
and on Monday
the cheapest bus
returns them to the city center (*El Muro*, 59).[68]

The *barrio*, slum, ghetto or *favela* becomes a part of Barreto's poetry of the land in this collection from 2016, in which Russian poet Osip Mandelshtam, like Drummond's ox, visits and establish himself in Ojo de Agua, a slum in the outskirts of Caracas.[69] But who are "*Los Verdaderos Pobres*"? They are not the ones who serve as an example of hard work resulting in social ascension, not those who leave the *barrio* and "move up", not those who win the lottery, or become visible in some other form. Barreto's *barrio* also has the quality of the no-place where

[67] As a member of the famous collective *Grupo Tráfico* during the 1980s, Barreto sympathized with a treatment of the city as a natural space for poetry. However, it is not until the 2010s when he comes back to the city in a non-oblique way. Since the start of his career, though, his work contrasted with the "nightly closure and magic reverie" of the poetry of previous decades in Venezuela, and moved towards a "solar opening and the woke and indiscreet gaze to the exterior", one of the principles of *Tráfico*, according to Rafaél Castillo Zapata, one of its members (Castillo Zapata, 199).

[68] Hoy viernes / llegaron al ghetto de Ojo de Agua / los verdaderos pobres: / las bellas cajeras del supermarket, / los albañiles con overoles tiznados / y sus manos rajadas por la cal viva, / los vendedores de imitaciones / y aquellos que existen gracias / a la pensión de invalidez. / Darle a cualquiera de ellos / una oportunidad, o no dársela, / es lo mismo. / Todo termina la tarde del domingo / donde la rueca los vuelve a dejar sin nada / y el lunes / el autobús más económico / los retorna al centro de la ciudad. (My English translation).

[69] In *El duelo* (2010), Barreto will say that the eye of a horse is an "Ojo de Agua" (*El Campo*, 358).

a composite of incomposite things collide, where the mimetic, documentary, patronizing impulse of synthesis breaks down. Where the logic of opportunity that has been painted in the urban landscapes of modernity ends up in a void that his poems inhabit. For Luis Moreno Villamediana, Ojo de Agua (Barreto's *barrio*), "combines the ethics of human adhesion, the crisis of lyric poetry, political denunciation, and the effective acceptance of an aesthetics which refuses to vindicate any beautiful appeasement" (19).

Barreto's jump from the *llano* to the *barrio* is the poetic denunciation of the monstrosity of not encountering the *barrio* as a space of another logic of experience, but as a space of extreme aesthetic and political simplifications which erase its poetic agency. As there are painters of the empty plains, there are painters of the innocent slum, who reinforce the lyric I through the absorption of the space and its inhabitants, using them as the material of a static picture, of a representational and metaphorical illusion.

The return of *Los verdaderos pobres* to the city's center on Monday, the cycle this describes, is far from the modern image or projection of metropolitan connections that progress promised in the 1940s and 1950s in Latin America. Not only because of the spontaneity with which the *barrios* emerged then and their growth until the present, but also because most *barrios* are not officially mapped, they are foreign to the map of Venezuela Barreto was trying to make sense of in "Carreteras Nocturnas". Their return to the city's center to participate in an economy that will leave them broke again by the end of the week is a return to a forced visibility, to an official landscape which tries to eliminate where they are coming from by including the slum as a static image of a better future, or of a romantic present that only becomes legible from the centers of political and aesthetic power.

Alejandro Moreno will say of mapping and the slum:

> I think we all have the map of the *barrio* more clearly in our heads than others have the map of their neighborhoods, simply because we know where everyone we frequently meet with lives, and we can represent to ourselves the path to their homes because we walk there. So, we know all the holes in the pavement, the colors of the houses, their fences, the sounds of their speakers, the music they like and how everyone's voice sounds in each place (Moreno, *Barrio*, 325).

Relation as mapping, as Moreno describes it, lies at the heart of Barreto's project of a *new* poetry of the land, in which the human gaze and its environment are confronted in a productive play of differences. Such a confrontation signals the challenge of resisting the appropriation of the subject and the construction of a poetic subject at large in all the sense of the word (as a material of inspiration, a theme, and as a subjectivity the directs the gaze or of which one speaks of). Saraceni calls Barreto's procedure a "geopoetic machine", "a verbal dispositive which connects distant geographical spaces, virtual and real which become coexistent and simultaneous" (*Cumbre*, 279), but as we can see, such a connection is a disjunctive one, enabled by such a play of differences, as Gilles Deleuze knew, which allows the poet to dwell on the tensions between city and countryside and allows for his gestures of illuminating intermediate spaces to dismantle the synthetic unity of the national territory at the same time.

The territory in crisis here is San Fernando, Caracas, and its disconnections, but also the internal disjunctions within those places, like Ojo de Agua and its inhabitants in relation to the city where they are excluded by inclusion. The landscape, urban or rural, for Barreto, is the heterotopic interpellation from a *terra em trance* which produces, in Andermann's words: "a language which announces the possibility of an *other* coexistence" (intro.). Saraceni agrees with

this and sees how, in Barreto, necessity and precarity demand new ways of being, doing and feeling which require a new language (*Caballos*, 23).

In *El Duelo*, when a group of hungry people kill a horse to eat his meat in the Venezuelan plains, Barreto tries to paint the landscape after the fact in "Imágenes luego de la Desaparición de un Caballo":

> The antilandscape,
> the antiriver,
> the anticarrot,
> the anticorral,
> the antisugarlumps,
> the anti-little-girl with long hair,
> the anticampfire,
> the anticowboy
> with his saddle
> and antiboots,
> the antimorningstar
> the antidogs… (*Blind Plain*, 319).[70]

This "anti", however, is not the negative image of the romantic enumerations national poets made of the territory. It is rater the expression of the illegibility of certain spaces framed by precarity, hunger and poverty. It is the collapse of the classic form of landscape and the admission that only in the obscure night, as Drummond knew, can there be something like a modern city and a peaceful countryside, where poverty is harmless, where horses run free, where oxen are not displaced, and the suburbs and mining do not erode the childhood town. Because these fictions of harmony are the Nation-State's alibi. To keep treating the space unproblematically is then to be complicit with State power present and past, to stand in front of the landscape in a way in which the environment is always-already submitted to human exploitation. Reverón made Bello's history of light shatter, and Barreto is creating a mosaic with

[70] El antipaisaje, / el antirrío, / los antiamigos, / la antizanahoria, / el anticorral, / los antiturrones de azúcar, / la antiniña de pelo largo, / la antifogata, / el antivaquero / con su silla / y antibotas, / el antilucero de la mañana, / los antiperros…(*Blind Plain*, 318).

the pieces.

The current difficulty of referring to the urban and the rural is then closely related to the exhaustion of the landscape as form, which, as Andermann points out "is linked with the harm inflicted by State terror to the relation between humans and land that once upon a time was called a Nation." (ch.5: *Después*). Rather than a *post*-landscape and *post*-national posture, though, Drummond and Barreto acknowledge that we are not done with these forms, and their escape is not avoidance or a long exile, but a fugitive dwelling in the *anti-paisajes* of our times, a back and forth which erodes from within tradition what is already in ruins but will not cease to exist.

on ruin and relation (after drummond)

We are facing a problem of relation without synthesis, or of a disjunctive synthesis, a divergence which affirms (Deleuze, 174), as we saw before. This is so, not only insofar as the between, that is, the space that Drummond, and that Reverón next to him, occupy, demands us to think about what the between relates, but insofar as the relation it suggests is, like Drummond's landscape, a violent encounter in more than one sense, what we do with that encounter is what is at stake. "…quando as coisas existem com violencia / mais do que existimos" (*Paisagem: Como se Faz*) things can go in many directions; the attempt to domesticate difference that western civilization made in the colonies is complicit if not constitutive of our thinking about the representation of nature and also the modern environment and its concealment of such hierarchical relation hidden in the virginity of the forest and the coast, but also in the noise and the lights of the modern city. It seems to me that Reverón in his retreat from the city to encounter the light as the contaminator of nature, Drummond in his delayed feeling of landscape, and Barreto in his movement through

different ruins of a landscape, invite us, not without difficulties, to a new conception on how to deal with relation, one closer and looking towards another between, that of W.E.B. DuBois in *Souls of Black Folk*, "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question" (7). I say this in the sense that, as it is indexed by Nahum Chandler, this between which DuBois presents is always soliciting a moving away from the idea of a unitary absolute, proposing instead "another thought of whole, which as an eventuality rather than an instance, in its realization and as its accomplishment, could only always reopen the question of relation" (155). The landscape of Drummond is always being made because it questions not only the fixed quality of our relation to the outside, but our own stability as identifiable subjects while not being able to shake of (or not wanting to) identity as eventuality, or as pure becoming, one which "contests *both* model *and* copy at once" (Deleuze, 2). The landscape suggests or projects back to us a self-differential self, not a subject.[71] The between implies a relationship with ourselves that at the same time does not erase the other (human and non-human) selves of the landscape, those who have passed through there, who have been there before, but also those who we expect will form an-other *convivencia*.

We can see how the movement from landscape to Nation demands us to think of purity, even if hidden behind the heterogeneity proposed by the discourse of racial democracy in the cases of both Venezuela and Brazil. Balibar will talk of an "invariant substance" (86), purity sustained in time, which explains the illusion of national identity by "…believing that the process of development from which we select aspects retrospectively, so as to see ourselves as

[71] Let's remember: "Self-differential selves are dead only as subjects; they are not dead as self-differential selves. Their apparent deadness is an artifact of our imposition upon them of the impossible expectation of subjectivity". (Terada, 2001, 155-6)

the culmination of that process, was the only one possible, that is, it represented a destiny" (86).[72]

This radically, and productively, oscillatory project of Drummond gives way to a dismounting of all these illusions in Barreto. After more than twenty years situating his work in the *llano*, Barreto goes, as Saraceni observes, from the horizontality of the plains to, in *Annapurna* (2012), the verticality of both the Himalayas and the government building where he worked (*Cumbre*, 272); and in *El Muro de Mandelshtam* (2016) to the verticality of the hills in which Caracas' *barrios* exist.

Like Drummond, Barreto was a bureaucrat during the times in which a new national project was being orchestrated. Drummond's work as Gustavo Capanema's (Getulio Vargas' education minister) chief of staff during the 1930s and 1940s remains a complex issue, since the Vargas' regime persecuted intellectuals, embraced conservative artists, and at the same time absorbed *modernism* as the official aesthetic movement of *brasilidade* (Williams 14-15). It is in this context where Drummond's side as a government official becomes a symptom of a nascent cultural nationalism of which he was and was not a part of. While Drummond defended Capanema from Vargas taking credit for the advancement of cultural and educational policies in Brasil (Williams, 14), Barreto spent some of his days as a government official of the ministry of

[72] Drummond's "Seven Sided Poem", the very first text in his first collection from 1930 (Alguma poesia), already contains the resistances to this invariant substance. It can be read as a sort of cubist poem, with seven stanzas somewhat self-contained and disconnected one from the other, although not completely. Together they form an image of this seven-sided poem, but an image that is not actually fully integrated. One could suspect that the reader does the integration, but what kind of integration is it? Is the imagined community a way of reading that forces a unity out of all these different social, cultural and political stanzas? We know this synthesis is possible, but would not it be like giving a summary of Dummond's poem, being left with only surfaces of meaning and only with what "makes sense"? In "seven-sided poem" Drummond's poetry and the illusion of a unified reading is at stake. Seven is a number for multiplicity, not a totem through which we should build meaning. Instead, it is what indicates that there is no ending to meaning, that there are no final readings, but a reconfiguration of what we believe a "whole" is, so any unitarian image derived from it, any solid reading, is opting for a domestication of these islands resisting a seamless synthesis.

culture under Hugo Chavez' regime travelling on Google Earth. When the government cut the culture budget by half and Barreto was told that, instead of editing art catalogues his work would now consist of writing "acknowledgment letters", he quickly created some templates and then started virtually climbing the Annapurna in the Himalayas (Sainz Borgo, *Mis Libros*). Here is "Declaración Final de un Funcionario", translated by Rowena Hill:

> I was on Annapurna and its black and White crest
> or maybe in my office with my eyes frozen
> on the computer screen
> I fled 10,000, 20,000 meters altitude
> and strayed toward the stagnant desert of Pakistan:
> or it was my face over administrative documents
> and the lateness of my reports.
> Along the corridors of the Ministry of People's Power for Culture
> trotted the rhinoceroses of impending civil war.
> We all know how well the devil recites the scriptures.
> Nothing I can do, nothing I can do,
> except travel by Google Earth.
> And if the salary runs away by a filthy ditch
> I swear I will never descend from Annapurna
> −to the hills of
> torrible tedium−.
> I love the subjectivity of the copy, the standards of light
> at different hours of the day,
> the chromatism of a computer of a good brand, its well
> calibrated shine.
> As a last straw (…) when I left the building I couldn't start
> my beloved Ford Thunderbird.
> And my two hands frozen on its placid body
> awaited the tropical sunset (*Annapurna*, 83). [73]

[73] Yo estaba sobre el Annapurna y su peine negro y blanco / o quizás en mi oficina con los ojos congelados / en la pantalla del ordenador. / Huí a 10.000 a 20.000 m de altura / y me aparté hacia el estancado desierto del Paquistán: / o era mi rostro sobre papeles administrativos / y la tarde alcanzada en los informes. / Por los pasillos del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Cultura / trotaban los rinocerontes de la anteguerra civil. / Todos sabemos lo bien que el diablo recita las escrituras. / Nada que hacer, nada que hacer / como no sea viajar con Google Earth. / Y si el salario se va por una zanja inmunda / juro no descender jamás del Annapurna: / -a las colinas del tedio / torritremebundo-. / Amo la subjetividad de la copia, los estándares de luz / a distintas horas del día, / el cromatismo de un ordenador de buena marca, su resplandor / bien calibrado. / Para colmo (…) al salir del edificio no pude encender / mi amado Ford Thunderbird. / Y mis dos manos congeladas sobre su carrocería mansa / aguardaron el ocaso del trópico.

The superposition of the mountain with the high-rise building in which the poet surfs through the internet to climb the Annapurna, goes hand in hand with the superposition of countryside and city we already examined. Disappointment and ennui, the broken Ford Thunderbird, and the administrative papers end, yet again, with the promise of the tropical dawn. It connects with what Walter Benjamin would call "the sickness of tradition" in reference to Kafka. Barreto's conception of nature includes the government building, his virtual journey, and the constant promise of the Venezuelan paradisiac climate. We never see a submission of the poem to them, though, instead, his poems "unexpectedly raise a mighty paw against it" all (Benjamin, 144). Tradition in the form of landscape and lyric poetry is not dead, it is sick, "Only the products of its decay remain" in Barreto. And this makes us look towards new inhabitations. The decay and ruins Barreto unfold are not a sort of romantic sublime, but a statement of the series of equivocations which articulate the national and nationalist landscape.

Figure 3. Image in *Annapurna*'s original edition from 2012. "Maurice Herzog. Primero en alcanzar la cumbre del Annapurna. Adolorido mira sus dedos congelados". Photo by Ricardo Jiménez with Barreto's hands.

Barreto's conception of a landscape tries to move away from the appropriating, subjectivizing gesture that most philosophies of the landscape propose, in line with romantic-traditional lyric poetry. By conceiving nature as "an other" (*Dilemas*, 117), Barreto is not only

announcing the sickness of tradition, but creating a landscape of estrangement (*dépaysement*) (Lyotard, 183), and providing it with a point of view, personifying nature in a non-humanist way, or only to des-naturalize in order to re-naturalize our relation with it.[74] The encounter between equals or "sames" that the most devoted contemporary poetry of the land proposes,[75] cannot be possible if nature is nor regarded as an autonomous other, alien to our reason and feelings (*Dilemas*, 114).

If, as Jean-François Lyotard says, landscape "interrupt narratives" (187), it is because what for someone like Simmel was a subjective appropriation of Nature that would break with it only to signal its infinity, in Barreto's poetry becomes an equivocation, a breakdown of the territory as a synthetic national landscape. "It is the writing [*ecriture*] of the impossible description; DESCRIPTURE [*decriture*]" (Lyotard, 188). It is an affirmation of the landscape (even as *anti-paisaje*) only to make it resist against its proliferation as the symbol of the national destiny. Lyotard continues: "Poetry tries not to tame the forms which form language, not to procure the inscription which retains the event of the landscape. It tries to slip by before its withdrawal" (188), and later on "A landscape is a mark, and it (but not the mark it makes and leaves) should be thought of, not as an inscription, but as the erasure of a support" (189).

We should get back to our problem of relation. The pieces of land that exceed the Nation as descripted by Barreto are nothing but the collapse of patriotic metaphors and its operations of sameness which supported lyric poetry in its most nationalist facet. The jump between city and countryside in Barreto and in Drummond to render the city as unfinished and the countryside as only thematizable insofar as an undefined intermediate space, makes their diction build an exilic

[74] For Amerindian shamans "to know is to "personify" (Viveiros de Castro 60).
[75] Barreto Will index these encounters between equals by referring to Joseph Brodsky's essay on Robert Frost, where the Russian-American author says that a new-world poet's (although a new-world poet here seems to only be a (North)American poet) encounter with a tree is a meeting between equals (*Dilemas*, 114).

landscape.[76] We can begin to make sense of this exilic landscape in Barreto (after Drummond) unpacking the implications of considering nature as *an other*.

Barreto's destruction and construction of an exilic landscape can be read as an important episode of Latin American thought, in connection with other thinkers that are after similar questionings of the territory as an articulator of the illusion of national identity. Not only Barreto has been thinking along the lines of Andermann, as it was explained above, he can be put in the same line as anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. A departure point to describe Viveiros de Castro's position and place of enunciation is the idea of how most peoples of the New World[77] "share a conception of the world as composed of a multiplicity of points of view" (55) which he, along with Tânia Stolze Lima call Amerindian perspectivism. Barreto's autonomous nature is no longer the object of subsumption of the lyric poet or landscape painter, but a "center of intentionality" on its own, which makes obsolete the premises of something like a culture/nature divide (Viveiros de Castro, 55). The exilic landscape, the landscape of *dépaysement* "leaves the mind DESOLATE. It makes lymph (the soul) flow, not blood. You do not associate. No more synthesis. It doesn't follow on. Leave it for later" (Lyotard, 186). This is the description or the *descripture*, of the encounter with an other, with the "loss of the map of a territory" (Barreto, *Dilemas,* 116). In Barreto's work we see "A glimpse of the inhuman, and/or of an unclean non-world [I'immonde]" (187). In poem XXVIII of *El llano ciego*, Barreto elaborates on Lyotard:

> Where are the revered ruins of nature if today what we find is the rubble of a river of shit? How can we go on believing in the landscape as a beautiful and pleasant representation? The contemporary landscape (if we insist on that term) would be a corrupted, invaded, impure representation: a cordillera of garbage. How can we jump by means of a lyrical strategy over this

[76] Barreto speaks of a conscience of exile in regards of the poetry of the Latin American land (*DIlemas*, 112).
[77] He says, "virtually all peoples", in a kind of structuralist simplification that is not always problematized in his discourse.

> present and go back to writing about trees that nod their heads and murmur sweet nothings among themselves? (*Blind Plain*, 259).[78]

L'immonde and *lo inmundo* show here the need to move away from an impulse of synthesis and see that what such impulse produced was one world of objectification of nature and of peoples. The impure representation, which is no representation at all, comes from a non-world that perverts any idea of landscape, running away from it and opening it up simultaneously.

But it is a non-world insofar as the world makes it so, believing in nature as that infinity and universality Simmel was so sure of. Barreto's nature is more restricted, and hence less static, it is a nature slipping away, so the poem does the same, a fugitive movement of mutual constitution in a play of differences. This glimpse of the inhuman can be read with Viveiros de Castro as a multiplication of personhood and a relinquishing of humanity and humanism (58), of thinking nature as having a point of view, like us, the problem being that nature's point of view about the point of view can be radically different, so it remains an other in a perspectival process that Viveiros de Castro calls "reflexive dislocation" (78)[79]. The way we see the landscape is not the same in which the landscape sees us, but we can be sure that it does see us. Barreto writes with this in mind, it is at the core of his process.[80]

---

[78] ¿Dónde están las ruinas veneradas de la naturaleza si hoy lo que encontramos son los escombros de un río fecal? ¿Cómo seguir creyendo en el paisaje como representación bella y agradable? El paisaje contemporáneo (de insistir en este término) sería una representación pervertida, intervenida, impura: una cordillera de desechos. ¿Cómo saltar valiéndonos de una estrategia lírica por encima de este presente y volver a escribir sobre unos árboles que cabecean y rumoran entre ellos necedades?

[79] "Obviously, the indigenous concept of the point of view does not coincide with the concept of the point of view of the indigenous, just as the point of view of the anthropologist cannot be the same as that of the indigenous (this is not a fusion of horizons) but only its (perspectival) relation with the latter. This relation, moreover, is one of reflexive dislocation. Amerindian perspectivism is an intellectual structure containing a theory of its own description by anthropology -for it is precisely another anthropology, superimposed over ours. That is exactly why perspectivism is not, pace Descola, a subtype of animism, i.e., a schema of practice whose reasons can be known only by the reason of the anthropologist. It is not a type but a concept, and the most interesting use for it consists not so much in classifying cosmologies that appear exotic to us but in counter-analyzing those anthropologies that have become far too familiar" (Viveiros de Castro, 78).

[80] See Viveiros de Castro, 56.

Even when this perspectivist inversions are usually applied to the "relational status of predator and prey" (Viveiros de Castro, 57) in Amerindian thought, "All animals and cosmic constituents are intensively and virtually persons, because all of them, no matter which, can reveal themselves to be (transform into) a person. This is not a simple logical possibility but an ontological potentiality" (Viveiros de Castro, 57). The landscape of the Venezuelan plains and the city, in Barreto's poems, shows itself as actualizing that ontological potentiality in unexpected ways.[81]

But should we keep this idea of landscape even if broken up? Even if exilic, fugitive, estranged?

> The rule of the landscape is monotheism. This erroneous perspective arises at the apex, the seat of the eye (one and deified) that segments nature. But we need only observe the cosmos with its names: Ceres, Venus, Neptune, to realize how many are watching us from the tops of trees and the curve of steppes (*Blind Plain*, 229-31).[82]

To have one God is to have one universal nature. If the law of the landscape is mononaturalism, using Viveiros de Castro's terms, could we displace it to the cosmic reflection Barreto makes and turn it into a multinaturalism? Perspectivism, in concrete terms, is not about animals and plants being like humans, but about humanity being something strange to itself, that all beings "are different from themselves" in different ways (Viveiros de Castro, 69). But could the landscape be part of this perspectivist relation? Or does it belong to a mononaturalist world? Barreto will continue:

> If someone said they wanted to represent the landscape it would reclaim for poetic writing the notion of "place." "Place" is dynamic as opposed to the static character of a pictorial image of

[81] "The possibility of a previously insignificant being revealing itself (to a dreamer, sick person or shaman) as a prosopomorphic agent capable of affecting human affairs always remains open; where the personhood of being is concerned, "personal" experience is more decisive than whatever cosmological dogma" (58).

[82] La regla del paisaje es el monoteísmo. Esta perspectiva equivocada nace en el vértice donde se asienta el ojo (único y divinizado) que segmenta la naturaleza. Pero basta observar el cosmos con sus nombres: Ceres, Venus, Neptuno, para darnos cuenta de que son muchos los que nos miran desde las copas de los árboles y la comba de las estepas (IX, El llano ciego).

> nature: particular, historical versus universal, nominal versus adjectival. Landscaping? According to Baudelaire it consist only of glorifying vegetables (*Blind Plain*, 267).[83]

Barreto then collapses landscape and *lugar* to disjoint the visual and fixating regime of landscape painting and poetry, of patriotism as monotheism. It is a loaded idea of landscape, if we want to keep it, informed by Lyotard's *dépaysement*. If landscape survives it will be in a disjointed, dynamic, local logic, otherwise it will explode. Both are good things. In any case, the lyric I loses its ground as subject and a self-differential person emerges, a internal and external relation emerges too, in and between humans and nature, with no possibility of integration into a totality.[84]

The *lugar* or place from where a landscape is produced as a relation to an other connects Barreto with Moreno again. We have briefly discussed the loss of mapping Barreto indicates, and how, for Moreno regarding the *barrios* of the Venezuelan city, this is an indicator not of a disappearing of mapping, and certainly not of a disappearing of the landscape, but of *an other* mapping. In 2013, as part of a collective multidisciplinary volume about Venezuela and some of the challenges the country was, and is, facing, a question was asked to Moreno. As a kind of provocation that would initiate a reflection expressed in his contribution to the volume, the question on whether "*¿El Barrio es Ciudad?*", or: "Is the Slum part of the City?" can be read in many ways. Moreno (*Barrio*, 531) would point out, right in the first few lines of the text, that he, and the inhabitants of his *barrio* or slum, do not think about this question at all. They do have

[83] Si alguien dijera que desea representar el paisaje reivindicaría para la escritura poética la noción de «lugar». El «lugar» es lo dinámico que se opone al estatismo de una imagen pictórica de la naturaleza: lo particular, lo histórico versus lo universal, lo nominal frente a lo adjetivo. ¿Paisajismo? Según Baudelaire sólo consiste en glorificar legumbres (XXXIII, El llano ciego).

[84] "Cultural relativism, which is a multiculturalism, presumes a diversity of partial, subjective representations bearing on an external nature, unitary and whole, that itself is indifferent to representation. Amerindians propose the inverse: on the one hand, a purely pronominal representative unit -the human is what and whomever occupies the position of the cosmological subject; every existent can be thought of as thinking (it exists, therefore it thinks), as "activated" or "agencied" by a point of view -and, on the other, a real or objective radical diversity. Perspectivism is a multinaturalism, since a perspective is not a representation" (72).

certain practices, however, that can give us some clues as to how we can articulate an answer to it. But this is a question, he would say, "that is asked by those who reflect about the city, professionals like urbanists, architects, sociologists or common citizens when they look at the stain of red bricks that cover the hills" (*Barrio* 531). I am particularly interested by his reaction to the question and his suggestion, as I interpret it, that it might tell us more about those outside of the slum than about the slum itself. This, then, represents a return of the provocation to the editors of the volume, who are located in the city, unsure about whether the space of the slum is part of Caracas and whether its inhabitants are citizens in the same way that people from 'proper urban' neighborhoods are. The mapping that is lost is then a way of saying that there is an exilic landscape that is not registered as such.

Would it change anything to shift the perspective and reflect about the view from the *barrio*? Or how the *barrio* as an expanded and at the same time exilic landscape thinks about the landscape. Both an approach of the *barrios* as part of a 'planet of slums' as Mike Davis proposes, and a mere practical, or praxis-centered, examination of them and their representation miss this crucial angle. How would things change when we examine things from the *barrio*'s point of view?

There is an echo of Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism here, of course, in perhaps an abusive collapse of "urban" and "rural" anthropology as a binary dear to multiculturalism but alien to multinaturalism. Moreno, in another place, would point precisely at the inutility of traditional anthropology to study Venezuelan popular life, but also indigenous peoples themselves (*Antropología Urbana*, 525). Rather than culture, what Moreno and the *Centro de Investigaciones Populares* study is what he calls the Venezuelan popular world-of-life (*mundo-de-vida*) (*Antropología Urbana*, 527).

Modernity, then, and contemporary Western thought imply a particular world-of-life (*mundo-de-vida*), one constituted by "…the individual, no-relation, order, (reason, logic, method, organization), uniformity, object, subject-individual, that which is seen, (precision, limitation and quantitative distinction), ante-anti, permanence, possession and power" (Moreno, *El Aro*, 241). But the only way to be aware of this, according to Moreno, is linked again to immersion and location, encountering or experiencing a different episteme than modernity's. But it is not enough for this encounter to be theoretical; if it stays at that level, we will try to fit the other episteme within our categories. For Moreno the encounter must be living-praxical. This kind of encounter sets off an initiatory process that he describes in terms of death and resurrection (Moreno, *El Aro*, 62). This death is the death of simple difference and the resurrection is the unearthing of distinction as the encounter with a wholly *other* world-of-life. This initiatory process triggered by his immersion in the *barrio*,[85] entails the discovery and the need to articulate a way of practicing life that contains both a praxis and a series of ideas stemming from this praxis, a whole structure of being in the world. Moreno will use a neologism to describe this: practication (*practicación*). For him, *praxis* as a concept is charged with a certain static quality and a need for the completion of something. He sees practication instead as "the act of living as it is exercised by a community in a particular historical period, which can have a long duration and in which its members participate in a spontaneous manner" (*Antropología Cultural* 384). Every "elemental gesture" and every "gesture of life" occur in practication.

The inclusion of *lugar* to the idea of landscape we see in Barreto goes in parallel to the critique of traditional praxis Moreno performs, turning it into practication. I wonder if we could see practication as this landscape that does not extend into a Nation, an historicized and

[85] Moreno lived in a *barrio* in the area of Petare in Caracas since the early 1980s until his death in 2019.

hyperlocalized set of interactions between persons and their experience of the *in visu* and *in situ* in their surroundings, but also of the interpellation those surroundings carry with them. Moreno's humanistic discourse does not want to go that far, but if he later on says that lived relation is the first practication which origin we cannot trace but that enables the conditions of possibility for the popular world-of-life (*El Aro*, 352), then we feel compelled to extend, with Barreto, that lived relation to the immersion itself in the slum and in natured intervened (since nature is always intervened).

The *barrio* as a space of another logic of experience, as we have argued, is also the proof of the collapse of any synthetic quality of the landscape as a national symbol. The existence of a Popular Episteme, as Moreno names it, is the formalization of this encounter with an exteriority *within* modernity, which expresses a different logic and sense of practices than the Modern Episteme. Episteme for him, then, is not so much an anthropological structure or a point of view as it is a matrix in movement, an event that keeps occurring in the form of a certain exercising of life or *practication*, as we explained (*Antropología Cultural*, 216). This practication, understood in a broader sense as including the *locus* (in the form of landscape) in which it occurs, has the character of a recalcitrant eventuality, sabotaging any forceful attempt to craft a national identity that includes many only as a foil.

pueblo y nación

Let us read one last (long) poem of Barreto. "La caja y la pregunta por la pobreza", from 2017:

In a pathway of the Ojo de Agua ghetto
a wooden box appeared:
six hermetically closed sides
the edges rounded over
until smooth
as if lacquered by a cabinetmaker.

Not even a nail.
The wood grain
would go from left to right reenforcing each joint,
maximizing its possible internal darkness.
It was an organic
and mechanical object at the same time, but also solid and dead.
The truth is that the box was right
at the center of that pathway to be found
and so it was:
it was taken to the ghetto's main street
where all the residents
got together.
A certain someone said that inside of it was the definition of poverty:
the pasty sensation of the days,
the shadow that climbs with his habit lessening the houses.
The faces of those present
became rounded: the mouth, the eyes.
Some put their hands in their pockets
The truth
is that an eye came closer to see
the root of what they were
and the tongue brushed the surface
to investigate the taste.
And they shook it in the air
looking for a sound that could identify them.
So many enquiries
and investigations about that box:
until finally
it was snatched
and they banged it against the floor
and hit it with a rock trying to splinter it.
But the box
remained mute, enclosed.
The box looked like itself.
They cleaned it with a cloth offered by a mechanic.
The oil and grease of the piece of cloth
while repolishing it
left the box just how they found it.
What an oddly perfect object.
It was the same question that returned
at the start of the meetings and interrogations:

-What kind of interest can they have in a poverty
that doesn't bother them anymore?
-Who said that pain and disgrace can be defined in any way?
Right after

someone took the box between their hands
and threw it
to the dumpster at the entrance
of the ghetto.
There
it remained hidden amongst juice containers
and sodas,
and a plastic bag
tied closed with a knot
holding the story of a day:
a piece of toilet paper, two wrinkled packs
of cigarettes, remains of hairs,
the head of a dead hen
and its bones.
Humanely squeezed elements.
Buried between those daily remnants
the perfect wooden box remained:

but
also

that question (*El Muro*, 39-40).[86]

[86] En una vereda del ghetto de Ojo de Agua / apareció una caja de madera: / seis tapas herméticamente calzadas, / engomados los filos de cada extremo / hasta quedar lisos / como bordes laqueados por un ebanista. / Ni tan siquiera un clavo. / Las vetas en la madera / iban de izquierda a derecha reforzando cada juntura, / potenciando su posible oscuridad interna. / Era un objeto orgánico / y mecánico a la vez, pero también sólido y muerto. / Lo cierto es que la caja estaba justamente / en el centro de esa vereda para que alguien la encontrara / y así fue: / la llevaron a la calle principal del ghetto / donde todos los habitantes / se reunieron. / Un alguien dijo que en su interior estaba la definición de la pobreza: / la sensación pastosa de los días, / la sombra que trepa con su hábito apocando las casas. / Los rostros presentes / se tornaron redondos: la boca, los ojos. / Algunos metieron sus manos en los bolsillos / Lo cierto / es que un ojo se acercó para ver / la raíz de lo que eran / y la lengua rozó la superficie / para indagar el sabor. / Y la sacudieron por los aires / buscando algún sonido que pudiera identificarlos. / Se hicieron tantas pesquisas / y averiguaciones sobre aquella caja: / hasta que al fin / fue arrebatada / y la tiraron contra el suelo / y le pegaron con una piedra buscando astillarla. / Pero la caja / permanecía muda, encerrada. / La caja se parecía a sí misma. / La limpiaron con un paño que ofreció un mecánico. / El aceite y la grasa del trozo de tela / al repulir la caja / la dejó tal y como la encontraron. / Qué objeto extrañamente perfecto. / Se trataba de la misma pregunta que retornaba / al inicio de las interrogaciones y los encuentros: / ¿Qué interés pueden tener en una pobreza / que ya no les molesta? / ¿Quién ha dicho que el dolor y la desgracia se definen de alguna manera? // Poco después / alguien tomó la caja entre sus manos / y la arrojó / al basurero del portal / del ghetto. / Allí / permaneció oculta entre recipientes de jugos / y bebidas gaseosas, / y una bolsa de plástico / cerrada con un nudo / conteniendo el relato de un día: / una toalla de papel higiénico, dos paquetes arrugados / de cigarrillos, restos de cabellos, / la cabeza de una gallina muerta / y sus huesos. / Elementos humanamente apretujados. // Enterrada entre estos remanentes diarios / permaneció la caja de madera perfecta: // pero / también // aquella pregunta.

The apparition of the box and the disturbance it creates equals its uselessness. It is an event within a larger but invisible event. Moreno Villamediana says how "The examination of the box combines forensic exam with topography" (14), the death of a kind of landscape. And suddenly someone takes the beautiful pine box and throws it in the trash at the entrance of the *barrio.* The apparition is like the question of whether the *barrio* is a part of the city, something that the inhabitants do not ask themselves but that comes from the outside as a force to grapple with. An invitation for a world-of-life to participate in the National landscape, mapping it from the outside. The inhabitants of Ojo de Agua realize this, realize the Nation infiltrating the popular, a false universality like any other. Barreto, similarly, situates himself in a metaphorical space while being conscious of its breaks, a metaphor that can never be opened, a promise of a resolution which belongs to poetic language as if it were natural to it; so, he displaces the metaphorical space to a space of disintegration[87].

For Mikhail Bakhtin, modernity separated nature and humanity to the extent that "nature itself ceased to be a living participant in the events of life" (217). This gave rise to the classical idea of the landscape and of its depoliticized contemplation. The forms of communal life that were lost and no longer represented in literature, according to the Russian critic, were just left out of the ideals of the modern Nation-State in the West. For the Amerindians, if we follow Viveiros de Castro, but also for many other minoritized although westernized populations, these common forms of life kept dealing with pristine boxes containing reason(s). Peoples within the Nation, whose intellectual and artistic concerns have only been subsumed under a national substance which dissolves them.

[87] See "Sobre la Poesía Actual" (included in *Resistir. Insitencias sobre el Presente Poético*, pt. 3) by Eduardo Milán for a brief but important discussion of the status of the metaphor in contemporary Latin American poetry.

The idea of a people (*pueblo*) has been equated, since the enlightenment, with Nation and with culture. There is a structural ambiguity in that idea, according to Moreno (*Antropología Cultural*, 49), which is why it has entered into the logic of the Nation-State, of class struggle, and it seems to have vanished into globalization (*Antropología Cultural*, 50). Moreno, in his conception of the Popular Episteme, tries to keep the terms alive, clarifying that "By *pueblo*, we mean the great majority of our population that is considered poor, even if it is not poverty what defines it, but its belonging to a community which shares […] a whole way of practicing life in Venezuela. Our concept of *pueblo* will therefore be social, cultural, convivial and, above all, ethical" (*Antropología Cultural*, 52).[88]

By delinking *pueblo* from the idea of Nation, Moreno is not acting as if the latter does not exist, but he is stating how the Venezuelan *pueblo* has practiced life not governed by the Nation-State, although it feels its pressure. This is the ambiguity of the concept. The exilic landscape we have tried to articulate, at least preliminarily, with Barreto (after Drummond), is the localized landscape contemplated and created by a certain kind of poetry and its reading, a concrete set of pieces that we see in the text and surpass, escape from, and sometimes hide from the Nation-State. In general, what is at stake is a critique of all these instances of knowledge that see space as naturally tied to human faculties and, by analogy, to the nation understood as a configuration where such faculties and the will of the people coincide perfectly. God forbid us to try to put a perfect squared box in here. These are just speculations that return to us an image in which we feel disoriented (*dépaysé*), where another landscape insofar as it will allow another sense of earth, land and space in relation to *others* emerges as necessity. It seems that for Drummond and

[88] "Entenderemos por pueblo, pues, a esa gran mayoría de nuestra población considerada pobre, aunque no sea la pobreza lo que la define totalmente sino su pertenencia a una comunidad humana que comparte […] toda una manera de practicar la vida en Venezuela. Nuestro concepto de pueblo será, por tanto, uno social, cultural, convivencial y, sobre todo, ético".

for Barreto, in disagreement with Hegel, poetry *is* about "…the sun, mountains, woods, landscapes, or constituent of the human body like nerves, blood, muscles, etc." (Hegel, 972), they try to occupy and be occupied by their points of view, constantly enunciating and escaping the landscaping while leaving its traces in the poem.

2. COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AS DEGENERATION: HILDA HILST AND OSWALDO TREJO[89]

People are least related to their parents:

it would be the most extreme sign of vulgarity to be related to your parents.

Friedrich Nietzsche

We talk about different kinds of parents constantly. In this context, our concern is with the actual parents, the family lineage, as well as with something like the motherland or fatherland in the ways in which its discourse collapses symbolically, while tries to separate institutionally, the private and the public. There is a literary lineage too, of course, which canons use and abuse to create legibility and mobilize aesthetic ideas creating a, symbolic, center. The works of Brazilian writer Hilda Hilst and Venezuelan author Oswaldo Trejo are linked here, in an alliance, not by filiation, as we will discover later, since they represent a strong critique against the logic of filiation that emanates from both the normative family and the State. In the case of Hilst, the project of a degenerate literature, her oscillation between low and high art, and her own position as a Brazilian author in relation to literary work and the market, when read along with the content of her pornographic late work, will show us a localized degeneration, allowing ways to read a literature not coming from the centers of power but nevertheless immersed in a logic of capital. In the case of Trejo, his literary experiments, also in his late work, present a barrier to the traditional ways in which the critical eye is prepared to talk about literature in a national context, missing deeper political implications in texts that on the surface are articulated by processes of experimentation for experimentation's sake. Both writers establish a secret alliance which

[89] All English translations of Hilst's declarations and writings and of her Brazilian critics are mine. The same with Trejo and his Venezuelan critics.

generates possibilities of reading narrative texts otherwise, by showing their relentless resistance to be related to their literary, institutional, and perhaps actual, parents.

minor degenerations

When in 1990, after 40 years of literary work, Hilda Hilst (1930-2004) announced that, from then on, she was only going to publish pornographic books, she gave the illusion of a break in her writing style (Abreu, 257). Journalist and writer Humberto Werneck, in a text from a month before *O caderno rosa de Lori Lamby* came out, tells how Hilst "wants to make believe" that such a turn is due to her desire to earn more money. He quotes from an outraged Hilst: "that idiot, what's her name? ... Ten million dollars! ... It's not possible that I, with this splendorous head, cannot support myself. If it weren't for having received an inheritance, I couldn't have written what I wrote." (Werneck, 246).[90] Hilst is referring to French erotic writer Régine Deforges, and using her example as a comment on what, for Hilst, is a mismatch between the market and literary quality. According to Werneck, Hilst insists that the publication of obscene texts is not due to the attempt to gain a recognition that she did not have at the time: "a questão é o dinhero mesmo",[91] she says (in a phrase that I leave untranslated to imagine her saying it or shouting it), a statement she followed by saying that she did not give a shit about recognition.[92]

This public renunciation to "serious" literature, as Caio Fernando Abreu called it at the time (257) is an obvious point of entry into Hilst's work, in the sense that it is what divided the critique around her oeuvre at the time. *O caderno rosa de Lori Lamby* (prose, 1990), the first

[90] "aquela idiota, como é mesmo o nome dela? ... Dez milhões de dólares! … Não é possível que eu, com esta cabeça esplendorosa, não possa me sustentar. Se não tivesse recebido uma herança, não teria podido escrever o que escrevi."
[91] "…the thing in question is money and nothing but money."
[92] "Estou cagando para o reconhecimento." (246).

installment of what was later called her "obscene tetralogy" (also composed by *Contos d'escarnio. Textos grotescos* (prose, 1990), *Cartas de um sedutor* (prose, 1991), and *Bufólicas* (poetry, 1992)), was labeled as "pure trash" by some; literary critic Leon Gilson Ribeiro, one of the few defenders of Hilst previously, did not like the work either, while publisher Caio Graco Prado liked it but did not have the courage to publish it (Werneck, 245). The fact that this renunciation was public, though, points to a complication which, knowing Hilst literary project, must be exhaustively considered in order to establish whether this turn was indeed a turn. It is also crucial to ask ourselves if this renunciation did not constitute instead a continuity in an artistic project which was already degenerate, in the sense of being a deterioration of fixed canons, as Eliane Robert Moraes labels Hilst's prose, making it thematically degenerate as well by messing with literary moral standards. Moreover, as we will analyze later, we start with these words by Hilst to mark how her opening up to a more popular genre is a tricky way of highlighting a tension between the private and the public. However, the critical reception of this aesthetic-political gesture remained, for the most part, immersed in a discussion on whether her work was acceptable or not as high literature, instead of seeing how her turn to pornography constituted a deepening of a questioning about the relationship between intimacy, writing, the literary market, and the State, something we will analyze by examining the role of the family in her project.

Going back to Hilst's declaration, which apparently was blown out of proportion by the press at the time, a symptom of the interest in her eccentric persona rather than for her oeuvre, as Alcir Pécora explains (8), constitutes a complaint against the scarce treatment of her work as a complex literary project, accompanied by the very few readers she felt she had after four decades of work, which she labeled as "a sort of KGB", a secret police of followers (Destry and Diniz,

52).[93] In addition, such a declaration is a contradictory maneuver which seems to feed that critical superficiality by saying: *if you want me to not be serious, then I will indulge you, you'll see*, but which allow her to precisely continue with her project even in her explicitly obscene, generically minor, literature. After the publication of *Lori Lamby*, Hilst said in an interview "No true writer writes for fame or money. One writes for an internal compulsion; we are obsessive. But, all of the sudden, being greatly enraged, you can decide to do something to gain attention − not for yourself, but for your work" (Abreu, 259).[94] This choleric impulse, which was treated as a rigid manifesto by the press and critique as well, should not be dismissed, but should not be given the status of an *ars poetica* either. It is simply, but not that simply, the continuation of an aesthetic project where, it is true, the personal is involved, but rather than as a set of biographical anecdotes that becomes the structure of reception to her work, as Pécora and Nilze Reguera rightly lament (Pécora, 9; Reguera, 19), it forms part of the work in the play of distance and intimacy that it constantly performs, complicating the private-public binary. No wonder then, that her public statement which precedes her obscene tetralogy could be easily isolated as a discrete event to not get our hands dirty. But getting ourselves dirty is precisely what Hilst had always wanted, not just since *Lori Lamby*, but since long before. Her prose, which she started to publish in the 1970s, after a few decades publishing poetry and after almost a decade of playwriting, was always contaminated by these other genres, but also intersected by different registers and modes of enunciation. This makes her prose anarchic, according to Reguera (2013, 23) and Pécora (10) and as degenerate according to Moraes (268); her prose is the stage where this movement between the public and the private is best expressed and mimicked.

[93] "uma espécie de KGB."

[94] "Nenhum verdadeiro escritor escreve por fama ou dinheiro. O camarada escreve por compulsão interior; nós somos uns obsessivos. Mas, de repente, numa cólera enorme, você pode resolver fazer alguma coisa para chamar atenção – não para você, mas para seu trabalho."

Pécora, the editor of Hilst's complete works for Editorial Globo in Brazil, describes her as working with many traditions at the same time, specifically in her use of strategies from "…biblical songs, *a cantiga galaico-portuguesa*, Petrarquist song, Spanish mystic poetry, the Arcadian Idyll, the epistolary libertine novel, etc." (Pécora, 11) treated from the point of view of twentieth century avant-garde procedures like Samuel Beckett's minimalism, Fernando Pessoa's sensationism, or James Joyce's and Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness. In this respect, Pécora makes a case for her non-archeological treatment of the tradition, which explains her anarchic collage of genres and modes of enunciation (10-11). Reguera fundamentally agrees with Pécora in this respect, but tries to understand the anarchy by referring to how genres and themes are subordinated to Hilst's writing itself, that is, to a need for expression which finds a way to unfold, making use of "polyphony or a narrative flux which seem to disorient the reader" and of "themes which come close to the grotesque, bad taste, imprisonment or madness" (Reguera, 24) indiscriminately in order to make them modulations of such an expressive impulse. Sonia Purceno, in her own way, contributes to this line of thought, by linking her movement towards the obscene with an already existing perversion in form, that organically also became a perversion in content (85).

Within this context, or after this way of introducing Hilst's work, one that is only available to us after the most recent critical work (mainly undertaken after the authors' death), one can understand the failure and the success at the same time of her turn to the obscene. Failure because her pornographic texts not only continued with this anarchic way or working with the tradition, but deepened it, making Hilst's work easier to fall into the non-readings or the superficial readings that she lamented in the face of the complexity of her literary practice. But it is a success for almost the same reasons, in the sense that they put her expressive impulse to the

test in a somewhat popular and minor genre, carefully criticizing both the market and its demands, but also the particular expectations of highbrow literature. This is how Moraes accurately puts it when thinking about *Contos d'escarnio.Textos grotescos*, the second title of the obscene tetralogy:

> A radical critique to the hegemony of the cultural garbage, but also to the supposed superiority of intellectual elites, Hilda Hilst's book suggests that in between these polarities in our culture, there are also much more complex relations than we are used to admit. Such a suggestion does not cease to be intriguing -and it deserves a more detailed exploration. in the end, as these *Contos d'escarnio.Textos grotescos* teach, the complicities between the high and the low can always constitute themselves into surprises for thought.[95]

I am interested in exploring this intriguing suggestion that Hilst's obscene texts make, specifically insofar as they are not a break with the rest of her prose, as I already mentioned, but rather point to a more hidden aspect of the author's work: her problematization of the private and the public as a mirror of her thematization of other polarities like high and low art, as it is expressed by Moraes above, and of life-death, and contention and dispersion, as Reguera shows (2003, 19), only to attempt to dissolve them into a degenerate, while quite generative prose.

In Hilst's second book of prose, *Qadós*, from 1973,[96] there are a few instances that allow us to dialogue with her regarding such polarities. *Qadós* is composed by four stories or novellas:

[95] "Crítica radical à hegemonia do lixo cultural, mas também à suposta superioridade das elites intelectuais, o livro de Hilda Hilst sugere que entre esses polos da nossa cultura também existem relações mais complexas do que normalmente se costuma admitir. Tal sugestão não deixa de ser intrigante – e mereceria uma exploração mais atenta. Afinal, como ensinam esses Contos d'escárnio – Textos grotescos, as cumplicidades entre o alto e o baixo sempre podem reservar surpresas para o pensamento."

[96] Hilst would alter the title to *Kadosh* in 2002, and that is how it appears in recent editions (see Destri and Diniz, 59).

"Agda", "Qadós", the third one also titled "Agda", and "O oco". In the one that gives the book its title, we find a voluntarily isolated mystic character, Qadós, giving a monologue that, as the narration goes on, confuses itself with that of another narrator (another side of Qadós?) reflecting on the character's own thoughts, and including secret messages of a secret group linked to an entity called O GRANDE OBSCURO. To justify living separated from the people, in a small dungeon-like cell, Qadós confesses how, living amongst the others, he was torn between "devouring the flesh of the thigh of the neighbor and at the same time wearing a cilice that made the kidney bleed" (*Qadós*, 30).[97] Through his mystic revelations, though, he embraces a religious sense of the erotic, not without guilt, shame, and doubt, but there is a *jouissance* in that too, in that unresolved and multiple quality of experience.

Qadós decides to be amongst people again, perhaps to predicate about this mystical multiplicity, and is questioned by them: "what is your name? Qadós. Qa-what? Qadós. Qadós of what? That is very difficult now. I mean, I was always only Qadós. Profession. I don't have one, mister, I only search and think. Search and think what? I search for a wise way to think about myself. Get him out of here, he's crazy, not from our jurisdiction, let him move away from the city, so he does not bother the citizens." (*Qadós*, 44).[98] This scene, almost taken out of Socrates' life, reminds us, in a figural sense, of what is at stake in Hilst's project. The most obvious element is the tension between another kind of knowledge or experience, and the lack of a structure of reception for such experience, the illegibility of it. When Hilst referred to her readers as a kind of KGB, and when almost twenty years after the publication of Qadós she tries to call attention to her work by embracing "bandalheiras", or smut, it is hard not to think of Qadós. The

[97] "devorar a carne-coxa da vizinha e ao mesmo tempo usar um cilício que sangrasse o rim."
[98] "qual é teu nome? Qadós. Qa o quê? Qadós. Qadós do quê? Isso já é bem difícil. Digo: sempre fui só Qadós. Profissão. Não tenho não senhor, só procuro e penso. Procura e pensa o quê? Procuro uma maneira sábia de me pensar. Fora com ele, é louco, não é da nossa alçada, que se afaste da cidade, que não importune os cidadãos."

horny mystic already contained these layers in him, his solitude only reinforced the tensions which made him suffer and isolate himself, and Hilst inhabits this multiplicity of genres and modes of enunciation as passions which go through her. The figure of the author as an unprofessional investigator and thinker matches the coexistence of the multiple and its collapse into experience, an experience of unfinished thoughts and of thought as always unfinished.

There is, of course an elitism in Socratic and mystical figures, a disdain for the *hoi polloi* that in "Agda", the third story from *Qadós* is not ignored by Hilst. The story mixes a dialogue of Agda's three male lovers, and a collective narration by inhabitants of Agda's village, but it also refers to the homonymous first story in *Qadós*, where another Agda is the main character, one who lived in the same village before. The community-narrator describes the first one (from the first story) as a saint and the second one as a whore. The same communal voice says how they had been silent about the paranormal experiences apparently caused by the two Agdas "because your world only accepts the seal of science, even if to us your men of white seem demented, thinking that you can only think with the head" (*Qadós*,106).[99] It is curious how the idea of thought is not abandoned by the villagers, but it is rather expanded into something larger than the rational. Hilst strikes against cultural garbage with Qadós being judged by the people, but denounces the elitism of western and scientific rationality, leaving an open ended path of reading and expression to be accompanied and followed with the body as well. If Hilst caricaturizes these oppositions in her pornographic texts, it is only to remark how they have been already there in other ways in her previous work, revealing "relations between body and spirit that our culture, because of tradition, tries to hide" (Moraes, 268). Like Kafka showing the "sickness of tradition", as Walter Benjamin explains, Hilst disjunctively links not only body and spirit, but

[99] "porque o vosso mundo só aceita o selo da ciência, ainda que a nós nos pareça vossos homens de branco, homens dementados, pensando que só se pensa com a cabeça."

also distinct and distant forms of conceiving such things, pointing at a "consistency of truth that has been lost" (Benjamin, 143) in favor not of a relativism, but of something closer to a multinaturalism, using Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's word, a critique of the presumed single origin of truth, of its fantasy of an ontological unity. Hilst's intervention can be read in this context, then, as affirming "the naturalness of variation" (Viveiros de Castro, 74) rather than variety within a single nature, as Western metaphysics traditionally assume. Going back to the statement, said by the communal narrator, that we do not only think with our heads, we keep finding in Benjamin's Kafka an ally to Hilst:

> This is why, in regard to Kafka, we can no longer speak of wisdom. Only the products of its decay remain. There are two: one is the rumor about the true things (a sort of theological whispered intelligence dealing with matters discredited and obsolete); the other product of this diathesis is folly-which, to be sure, has utterly squandered the substance of wisdom, but preserves its attractiveness and assurance, which rumor invariably lacks (Benjamin, 144).

The ambiguous relation with truth that Qadós suffers and then embraces in his cavern-like mystic experience is still too solemn; it needs to be pushed forward by Hilst, even in his dealings with O GRANDE OBSCURO and the temptations that sometimes parody classic libertine texts.[100] The folly which strips away wisdom from its seriousness and its heavy substance is precisely the renunciation of serious literature, and an incursion into the low, the discredited, and the obsolete.

O caderno rosa de Lori Lamby is the smut Hilst wanted it to be, while at the same time a testament of the decay of wisdom as the only way to produce an expression which radicalizes the

[100] Like the petition, in Qadós, of "os vinte e um", followers of O GRANDE OBSCURO, to incorporate erotic exercises into their meetings, like the torture of a woman and her abuse by a thousand men that they also want to execute (34).

theologically whispered knowledge of her previous work. The first few lines eloquently direct us and deceive us:

> I am eight years old. I am going to tell everything the way I know how because mom and dad told me to teel it the way I know how. And after that I will talk about the beginning of the story. Now I want to talk about the young man I see, who's not so young according to mommy, and for that I laid on my little bed that is so pretty, all pink. And mommy could only buy that little bed after I started to do that which I am going to tell (*Caderno*, 11).[101]

Not only we are immediately dragged to the abusive context in which Lori tells the story of her parents prostituting her to older men, but that is contrasted with the candid promise of her narration, in an innocent and jovial tone, that this is the only way the story could be told. In those first lines, Hilst presents to us a connection that is a constant in the text, between money and the non-consensual instrumentalization of bodies, even as she creates a link between pornography and childhood, as Luciana Borges comments (21). But Hilst is at the same time staging that exploitation in her authorial gesture, going all the way. Lori's stories, written in her little pink notebook, contain the hope that Lalau, her father's publisher, will publish them, because her father has been asked to write pornography, since his books are not selling. Her father is reluctant to do so and does it against his will to an extent. Lori seems to do it better, though, because her own smut combines her lived experiences, her dealings with her parents who have submitted her to other men's abuses, and the creative crisis of her dad and his relationship with her mom and the publisher. This creates several layers in which the obscene text of Hilst's unfolds, fortunately and unfortunately distancing itself from the best-selling erotic novels of

[101] "Eu tenho oito anos. Eu vou contar tudo do jeito que eu sei porque mamãe e papai me falaram para eu contar do jeito que eu sei. E depois eu falo do começo da história. Agora eu quero falar do moço que veio aqui e que mami me disse agora que não é tão moço, e então eu me deitei na minha caminha que é muito bonita, toda cor-de-rosa. E mami só pôde comprar essa caminha depois que eu comecei a fazer isso que eu vou contar."

which Hilst was so jealous. Since the first pages, then, we can appreciate Hilst's failure and success, the reiteration of reflections and metanarrative strategies and themes that, as Borges indicates, lessen the efficacy of the text as pornography (25).

Lori's infantile tone, and her explanation of the conditions of her erotic experiences, make the text difficult and illegible as pornography, as if the conditions of possibility of the enjoyment of a pornographic text require a distance and a simple seamlessness that Hilst is incapable, or unwilling, to produce, because she is as interested in the sex as she is in the social relations surrounding it. According to Moraes, pornography, seen as an inferior genre, is not perceived as outrageous but, is, on the contrary, accepted or at least tolerated. She says:

> Sade's scandal was not the fact that he wrote obscene works, which, by the way, was common in the libertine literature of the seventeenth century, it rather was to displace enlightened thought to the lubricous bedroom, bridging philosophy and erotism together. Likewise, if Flaubert scandalized nineteenth century's French morality, it was not simply for having created an adulterous heroin, as the pornographers of his time used to do, it was for having done so in one of the masterpieces of realism. (267).[102]

The ability to be unable to follow the conventions of a so-called minor genre highlights the same ability/inability to pursue the conventions of major genres like the novel. This is why Moraes talks of a degenerate text, one which uses form and content to transgress and "to pervert literary laws" (Moraes, 268). *Degenerado* in Portuguese, and in other romance languages, means that which is outside or complicates genres, but since *gênero* means gender as well as genre, this

[102] "O escândalo de Sade não foi o de escrever obras obscenas, o que aliás era corrente na literatura libertina setecentista, mas sim o de deslocar o pensamento iluminista para a alcova lúbrica, aproximando a filosofia do erotismo. Assim também, se Flaubert escandalizou a moral francesa do século xix, não foi apenas por ter criado uma heroína adúltera, como faziam os autores pornográficos de sua época, mas por tê-lo feito em uma das obras-primas do realismo."

illegibility that Hilst creates responds, at the same time, to a distancing from a clear male or female gaze narrative, that deform the outcome, that degenerates it.

In this sense, there is a history of degeneracy, of course, which I will only briefly allude to here through a famous father, a founding one, we could say. Sigmund Freud, in trying to delink the concept of degeneracy from "sexual inversion" in a discussion about the deviations in respect to the sexual object, restricts it only to instances in which "several serious deviations from the normal are found together" and "the capacity for efficient functioning and survival seem to be severely impaired" (*Three Essays*, 138). He concludes then that what he called "inverts", that is, mainly homosexual persons, are not necessarily degenerates, since some of them do not have these deviations, and they also show "high intellectual development and ethical culture". He goes further and explains how it is impossible to equal "inversion" with degeneracy or to make the first one an indicator of the other because, essentially, the concept of degeneracy is "usually restricted to states of high civilization" (*Three Essays*, 139), and we have cases of "inversion" in all periods and history and in the most heterogeneous cultures, according to the anthropological readings Freud was so fond of.

Our little Freudian detour here is to signal how Hilst's degeneration, even if applied to her prose, has a history which will inform the reading we can make of her. But also, that such a history is already inscribed in her work. The context in Freud is one of problematizing, without completely ruling out, certain correspondences between the physical and the psychical, as well as de-pathologizing certain choices of sexual objects, even if he will go on to pathologize them in his own way after showing that we all have the potential to make those choices which are still pathological to an extent. By showing how the sexual instinct is, at first, independent of the object (*Three Essays*, 148), already in 1905 in the *Three Essays*, but more timidly in 1900 in *The*

Interpretations of Dreams, Freud tells us that the basis of all the possible deviations, hence, of degeneracy, lies within us, and this "constitution, containing the germs of all perversions" (*Three Essays*, 172), this state of free movement of the instinct, is ideally demonstrable in children. Lori, then, but also Hilst's prose in general, can be read as a conversation with and a deviation from Freud, in the sense in which the reinforcement of the space of the family as the cause of the normal and normative object choice, are not obeyed in Hilst's universe and in her conflicting treatment of the passage from the private to the public. Family and State are at stake as the enemies of the degeneration, as assimilatory structures of the constitution of a homogenous social space.

The illusion given by the form of the intimate diary is quickly broken when we learn that Lori's intentions are to publish her adventures; and with so much of the novel's content gravitating around the publisher and the idea of publishing something that will sell, Hilst makes Lori into a literary pawn as well. Lori calls his dad's publisher "uncle Lalau," the same term she uses for an older man to whom her parents give her away for a sexual escapade: "uncle Abel." Abel takes Lori to a motel and registers her as his daughter, to which Lori asks him:

> …uncle Abel, do you also like to play Daddy? Because another man also liked it. He says that everyone is a pig and likes it, they just don't say it. I said: is it filthy to play Daddy?
>
> - It is filthy, yes, but all of humanity, or at least ninety per cent of it is very filthy, it's trash; a great man, but a filthy one as well, said this. Said uncle Abel.
> - How strange, right, uncle? – I said. And I don't know what ninety per cent is. And neither what humanity is (*Caderno*).[103]

[103] "…tio Abel, o senhor também gosta de brincar de papai? Porque um outro homem também gostava. Ele disse que todo mundo é porco e gosta, só que não fala. Eu disse: é porco brincar de papai?
– É porco sim, mas toda a humanidade, ou pelo menos noventa por cento é gente muito porca, é lixo, foi um grande homem também porco que disse isso. O tio Abel que disse.
– Que esquisito, né, tio? – eu disse. E noventa por cento eu não sei o que é. E humanidade também não."

Lori's own rhetoric, full of childish questions based on her sexual experiences, mocks the division of form and content while also pointing at kinship as a perverted performance, one that, when seen in this context of abuse, is more critical about the normative family itself than about the Daddy/daughter game. In this sense, the fact that her biological parents are the ones introducing her to all these uncles, shows how the natural bond is also a producer of family-like performances that respond to it reproducing a hierarchical, abusive, relation. As long as the family is receiving the money, be it by the sex work of an underage child, or by the possibility of the dad writing and publishing his smut, it does not matter who is exploited for the sake of keeping the structure alive. The desire here is the desire of the nuclear family, which allows for the existence of difference and subversion only when it comes back to the core in the form of wealth; in this sense, difference is made equivalent as and by money. Lori, however, by not knowing what a percentage is, and especially by not knowing what the word "humanity" means, does not participate fully in this game, she does not play "Daddy" in that way, in the way in which the biological family produces property and equivalences.

With the emergence of the State, according to Friedrich Engels, kinship becomes subordinated to property relations (2), this leads the way for a production of human beings which runs alongside the production of the means of subsistence (1). Lori's relationship and fascination with money, almost as another game, forces us to think about the family as submitted to the State as that organism in charge of distributing and managing all kinds of property systems. Like Lori's parents, who reflect these property relations in the novel, showing the family as a microcosm of State control and administration. Her parents turn Lori's play into exploitation disguised as play, in order to produce capital.

The publisher, uncle Lalau, serves as an administrator of the anxieties of the family. All the marital problems, Lori's exploitation, and Lori's own worries about her dad being sad are channeled into Lalau's demands that the dad publishes something that sells. The publisher's advice is taken into account by Lori, to write something neither extremely obscene nor mildly obscene, not too long but not too short. Otherwise, Lori says, uncle Lalau cannot put her notebook into the book-making machine (24). Her dad seems defeated all the time by his lack of hope that someone writing in Portuguese might be successful. Lori tells us how he says that he must control himself to not end up killing Lalau, and that he will go live in London for twenty years and only write in English "…because this fucking stinking language I write in, cannot be read because everyone's illiterate" (50).[104] The fantasy that a writer coming from Brazil might be successful is constantly shattered by her dad, and the pressure of the publisher is a demand to do what it takes to be like one of the foreign great writers, even using Lori to get some money in the meantime.

When one of the older men asks Lori if she was looking forward to receiving the money he was going to give to her after they did what he wanted, she replies that without money, people are sad and cannot buy nice things they see on TV. The man, in response, asks her to keep repeating that she liked money as he licks her (12). Later in the text, when uncle Abel and Lori initiate a correspondence, Abel's disclosure that he is having economic problems saddens her, she writes to him, telling him how the previous day she had wanted to be nice to money since money was so good to people, and had pressed a bill against her intimate parts, thinking that if uncle Abel and all the other men liked that so much, then Mr. Money would enjoy it too (52). This logic of total substitution combines an ambiguous social commentary and micro revenge,

[104] "…porque a fedida da puta da língua que ele escreve não pode ser lida porque são todos anarfa."

giving money the same status as the older men, and thus turning them into money as well. This is not sufficient, of course, and the ambiguity turns into a sad story of Lori's instrumentalization. This economy of affects is present in Hilst's declarations years after the publication of her obscene tetralogy. In an interview from 1996 she says: "And all of the sudden I wanted to make myself happy. I started to feel a complete removal from everyone. They never read me, never. So I decided to write the book" (*CLB*, 29).[105] Unhappiness, the seduction of money, and exhaustion are present in Lori's dad, but Lori, because she is a child, emerges as a problematically hopeful figure, contaminating both Hilst's idea of making a pornographic best-seller, and of creating an elitist work by using the conventions of a minor genre, even if this is what the novel ends up leaning towards the most. When Hilst is asked in that same interview if the idea was to try to sell more books, she answers: "*To try*, but I didn't succeed. I thought "I am going to create some filthy things", but I didn't succeed" (*CLB,* 30).[106]

Instead, Hilst shows us many other filthy things, which require an examination of the role of the family and its immersion into the economy and the larger social context where the private is submitted to the public. In a sort of intermission within the novel called *O caderno negro*, Uncle Abel sends a letter with an erotic story for Lori to read, this part of the book opens with an epigraph where we read: "Hi, hi! −Lori Lamby" and "Ha, ha! −Lalau". Everyone laughs but the dad/writer, and that enjoinment in which he does not participate prefigures the end of the book, where we learn (as if to make things more bearable) that Lori did not experienced the abuses that were described, but was just fabulating all along. Taking things she saw in her father's notes for his pornographic novel and mixing them with what she imagined could be something that would

[105] "Mas de repente eu quis me alegrar. Comencei a sentir um afastamento completo de todo mundo. Eles nunca me liam, nunca. Então decidi fazer o libro."
[106] "*Tentar* conseguir, mas eu *não* consegui. Pensei: "Voy fazer unas coisas porcas". Mas não consegui."

be published by Uncle Lalau and sell, Lori turns into an editor and publisher of her dad to an extent, having one of the last laughs. While the shock of reading her notebook sends her parents to an insane asylum in a caricaturesque ending, Lalau reads it and liked it, said it was "…a sweet and tender and perverse filthiness!" (56).[107] Lori also reflects on this tragic ending for her parents due to her notebook: "Oh, daddy and mommy, everyone there at the school, and also you, talk about creativity, but when one has that thing, everyone gets mad at one. Licks for you too… Lori" (Caderno, 56).[108] We agree with Borges, that the central obscenity lies here, in the union between exploitation and the production of literature. This does not mean that they can be comparable or equivalent by any means. But such union shows that when Hilst "…ironizes on the modes of circulation and valuation of the literary text, at the same time as she dangerously plays with pedophilia…" (Borges, 30), to then show us that it is all a ruse, one with its traumas still, since Lori read and was a witness to her dad's pornographic imagination and anxiety, the author collapses different levels of fiction and different fields of action upon which fiction operates. Maybe the happy ending is that our heroine was less ruined by her parents in the end, and she decenters the figure of the author and turns it into a sort of cynical trickster, one that already knew about the impossibility of writing pornography and/or high literature, since those are labels created and maintained by someone like uncle Lalau.

In *Contos d'escarnio. Textos Grotescos* (1990), Crasso, the main character, laments that the deceased writer Hans Haeckel (HH) "Morreu porque pensava" (125). "The editor only thinks with the head of his cock" (125),[109] he says, but relates how when Haeckel thought about writing

[107] "… uma doce e terna e perversa bandalheira!"
[108] "Ó papi e mami, todo mundo lá na escola, e vocês também, falam na tal da cratividade, mas quando a gente tem essa coisa todo mundo fica bravo com a gente. Lambidinhas pra vocês também…
Lori."
[109] "Editor só pensa com a cabeça do pau."

a porn story involving a little girl to make some money, since he was hungry at the time, he was shamed by his publisher. This reference in *Contos d'escarnio* to the previous volume of the obscene tetralogy not only continues with the exploration of the perverse link between the editorial market and pornography, but also elaborates on Hilst's already acknowledged defeat, which she keeps turning into literature.

Lori Lamby, then, turns out to be failed both as pornography and as high literature, smut and a novel which cannot please them all, since it was labeled as promoting pedophilia and considered trash by Hilst's regular detractors as well as by some of her sympathizers (Borges, 21). But Hilst's always ambiguous desire is expressed here in an interesting oblique way. What would be better? To have money or to write a novel about everything surrounding the desire for money in a place like Brazil in the early 1990s? What does it imply to depict these abusive relationships of tutelage between kids and adults? How can the conventional and alternative forms of kinship emerge from a hierarchical structure governed by economic pressures? This is the point where family romances, and romances of the cultural field and of the State meet.

historical degenerations

In *The origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* from 1884, Friedrich Engels, a year after Karl Marx's death, seems to be writing the book Marx wanted to write himself. Based on the research of anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan on kinship and social structure, Engels takes up Marx's notes on Morgan to trace a transition from a society based on kinship groups, to one based on local units, that is, families, which are overseen by the State and whose functioning is driven by property relations which determine kinship relations (2). For Engels, such a transition

brought to light already existing antagonisms that since the emergence of the modern State have been crystalized as class struggles.

The book is a sort of palimpsest, where Marx's notes to Morgan are intervened by Engels to obliquely make a historical materialist intervention in anthropological research. And part of this intervention is charged with a certain ambivalent nostalgia for a primitivism and barbarism as an alternative to civilization. Even if Engels agrees, with Marx, that "the primitive community had to be broken", this created an undesired result, according to him, a society which moved away from the "moral greatness of the old gentile society" (108), substituting cooperation for exploitation. This is the beginning of civilization, which "during all the two and a half thousand years of its existence, has never been anything else but the development of the small minority at the expense of the great exploited and oppressed majority; to-day it is so more than ever before" (108). Engels marks then a break and the instauration of a continuity. It is curious, though, how inside that continuity he situates some utopian instances. The example he chooses is also curious. According to Engels, the Germanic peoples "breathed new life into a dying Europe" (177) after the decline of the Roman Empire, but this was not, of course, because of a "miraculous power innate in the German race" (177), as Engels proudly clarifies, it was because of "their barbarism, their gentile constitution" which not only implies a less brutal form of slavery than the one of the Romans or Greeks, but a survival of the mother-right in a world in which civilization (Greek and Roman) started to privilege the father-right. "Only barbarians are able to rejuvenate a world in the throes of collapsing civilization" (178), Engels insists, putting his cards on the table regarding how the Germanic influence over the formation of the feudal state in the Middle Ages created a possibility for the articulation of solidarity within the oppressed class, and how he deems that as preferable than both ancient slavery and the modern situation of the proletariat. A

structure based on kinship rather than a society formed by the transition to civilization where the family became the basic structure of socio-economic life, subordinated to property relations, was preferable. But one must wonder how this is not a case of competing forms of civilizations? And why does the Germanic spirit triumphs, creating a semi-barbaric historical island that is later on eaten up by capitalism and industrialization?

Engels' palimpsest has been indeed criticized as marking a linear and deterministic trajectory (as Morgan also does) where a previous "barbaric" privileged society with a matrilineal structure is, by the introduction of private property, changed into a culture where women are subjugated. Engels explains a shift which constitutes "the *world historical defeat of the female sex*" (59) with examples as simple as men being responsible for getting food for the clan, and having access to tools which they appropriated to gain power over women; and connecting this with Greek and Roman civilizations establishing a new form of the family, where the paternity of the child could be determined, giving way to monogamy and a paternal line. For Heather Brown, not only is this a simplistic view of the position of women historically, but an annulment of their subjectivity as historical subjects, since, for Engels, it was only due to economic factors that they were subjugated (nostalgically thinking this was not the case as well in "primitive" societies of which he had not enough evidence) and only with the introduction of communism women would be liberated (166).[110] It is with these questions and reservations in

[110] Brown shows how, for Marx, the position on these changes from earlier societies to antique civilizations and the transition to capitalism and the State's regulation of private property, is much more nuanced than for Engels. Even if Marx subscribes Morgan's theses, he "indicated that the development of society to the present was much more complex than Morgan could account for in his model" (148), moreover, and being more critical than Engels, Marx thought that "These early societies may have provided a vantage-point to begin to articulate a new society that was less individualistic and more communal. However, it would not simply be a return to the old with the addition of technology: instead, 'totally new' relations were necessary" (146).

mind that we will introduce Engels into our discussion of the family as an instrument of the State.

Engels does locate a historical degeneration, where through a series of displacements we end up with a socio-political structure that is built around class division,[111] having the modern State as an administrator of private property and the private realm of the family and social relations outside political life. Even if scholars like Brown or Raya Dunayevskaya[112] argue for a less linear understanding of this trajectory in Marx, for both Marx and Engels "the development of class-society and women's oppression are part of the same historical process" (Brown, 133). For Engels, in proximity with Marx's notes:

> The original meaning of the word "family" (*familia*) is not that compound of sentimentality and domestic strife which form the ideal of the present-day philistine; among the Romans it did not at first even refer to the married pair and their children, but only to the slaves. *Famulus* means domestic slave, and *familia* is the total number of slaves belonging to one man. As late as the time of Gaius, *the familia, id est patrimonium* was bequeathed by will. The term was invented by the Romans to denote a new social organism, whose head ruled over wife and children and a number of slaves, and was invested under Roman paternal power with rights of life and death over them all (60).

This passage in Engels is accompanied by one of Marx's notes, where he claims that the family contains "all the contradictions which later extend throughout society and its state" (Marx in Engels, 60).[113]

[111] According to Brown, for Marx, this "development toward class-society" is far from having the unilinear trajectory Engels seems to portray (8).
[112] See Brown, 173.
[113] Marx's notes on Morgan, unpublished until 1972, can be consulted in *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, edited by Lawrence Krader.

Marx and Engels, although differently positioned methodologically and in terms of their reading of this history, coincide in the relationship between the dissolution of the clan and the articulation of property in the emergence of the monogamous patriarchal family. In this sense, the most notable point in Engels' analysis is precisely the transition from mother-right to the *patrimonium*, and the invention of the family as going hand in hand with the accumulation of material and "human" property, which evokes the indistinguishability between selling their daughters' body or selling more books for the Lori's parents.

In Brown's words: "It was the family as an economic unit that did the most to separate out the undifferentiated unity of public and private interests among individuals" (158). But this equation of dissolution of communitarian forms of life, instauration of the father-right, and the accumulation of property by individuals that started to take place in early civilizations (Greek and Roman), according to Engels, needed a sort of glue that tied everything together:

> …an institution which not only secured the newly acquired riches of individuals against the communistic traditions of the gentile order, which not only sanctified the private property formerly so little valued, and declared this sanctification to be the highest purpose of all human society; but an institution which set the seal of general social recognition on each new method of acquiring property and thus amassing wealth at continually increasing speed; an institution which perpetuated, not only this growing cleavage of society into classes, but also the right of the possessing class to exploit the non-possessing, and the rule of the former over the latter. And this institution came. The state was invented (119).

As the State emerged as the administrator of individual or familial wealth, social forms of community had to reorganize themselves. Like Engels, Hannah Arendt locates the start of this transition in antiquity, stating how the foundation of the polis involved the dissolution of any organization that was based on kinship in ancient Greece (Arendt, 24). Parallel with the

transition to the family as constituted by a *paterfamilias* and his property, "the transition to full private property is gradually accomplished" (Engels, 186), making the single family into the economic unity of a society to be administered by an incipient State.

This, according to Engels, marks the relationship that the private realm will come to have with the State in modernity, being the family a replicator of State power and its values.

Contemporary nationalisms have indeed tried and succeeded in replicating the familial love, to the point in which, as Benedict Anderson argues, even colonized populations, in order to express loath for the colonizers, recur to nationalist sentiments (Anderson, 142). The idea of the natural/biological, nuclear, and monogamous family as the sanctioned type of kinship, helped erect a fiction of being also naturally tied to a Nation-State, so the notions of fatherland, motherland, or *patria* come unexamined (Anderson, 143). The modern Nation-State, following this long trajectory that Engels traces, reinforces an already existing relationship of mutual influence between the intimate sphere (an element, but not the whole of the private sphere, as we will see with Habermas below) and the public.[114] Lori's dad cannot help but to conflate his brazilianness, the lack of interest in his work, and the exploitation of its daughter, who becomes property, in order to articulate his personal-political drama against the background of the nation to the expense of his kin.

Jurgen Habermas, in his analysis of Eighteenth-century Europe, famously distinguished between the public sphere, that is, the place of the state and the courtly noble-society, and the private sphere or private realm, where the civil society and the family (which he called the intimate sphere: *intimsphäre*) are located (30). The public and private sphere, however,

[114] For Étienne Balibar, the institution of a "national-social state", that is, of a state that intervenes in the reproduction of the economy by administering individual formation and the family, is what helped resolve some of the contradiction the emergence and early stages of capitalism brought about (92).

transformed, and from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the interventionist state, "tended to adopt the interests of civil society as its own" according to Habermas (142); this led to a ""societalization" of the state simultaneously with an increasing "stateification" of society" (142). The distinction between private and public was not so evident anymore. The family, before a center of the private sphere, insofar as it still had the character of *oikos*, was no longer the site of exchanges based on family property and even less so a "community of production." The passage from family property to individuals earning a wage, constituted the loss of self-support and self-provision that families autonomously enjoyed before the nineteenth century (Habermas, 154). The implications of this, besides a reduction of the public sphere to the conjugal family, given a civil society infiltrated into the public sphere, are precisely that some functions previously left to the family were now part of the State, like the education of individuals and their general socialization.

This weakened family, as Habermas claims, still maintains the illusion of a "perfectly private personal sphere" (159), however, Habermas continues: "The economic demands placed upon the patriarchal conjugal family from without corresponded to the institutional strength to shape a domain devoted to the development of the inner life. In our day this domain, abandoned under the direct onslaught of extrafamilial authorities upon the individual, has started to dissolve into a sphere of pseudo-privacy" (157). It seems then, that for Habermas, every aspect of the private realm has become infiltrated by the modern State. Habermas points at the complicated relationship between family and capitalist economy in a curious way by referring to psychoanalysis: "Freud discovered the mechanism of the internalization of paternal authority; his disciples have related it, in terms of social psychology, to the patriarchally structured conjugal family type. At any rate, the independence of the property owner in the market and in his own

business was complemented by the dependence of the wife and children on the male head of the family" (Habermas 47). Instead of the modern Nation-State assuming the full weight of the already existing structure of the patriarchal family, it constituted itself as a reinforcer of that structure, an administrator of modern kinship. The psychic trust in the market and the state are given not by the minimal role a *paterfamilias* plays in the public life, but by the fantasy that such a role could be more like the one he fulfills at home.

Today's state not only manages the archives of filiations and alliances, as Étienne Balibar points out (101), it also provides relations between individuals with a civic function, making itself indispensable in any step of those in-and-outs of the family circle that we mentioned. Among the different types of human relations that are intervened and shaped by the state, the relations between the sexes as aimed at procreation are central. According to Balibar, this is why any "sexually 'deviant' behavior" is usually legible as anarchistic by the modern state, even if some arguments of religious heresy are still mobilized (101). Balibar continues: "That is why nationalism also has a secret affinity with sexism: not so much as a manifestation of the same authoritarian tradition but in so far as the inequality of sexual roles in conjugal love and child-rearing constitutes the anchoring point for the juridical, economic, educational and medical mediation of the state." (102). If the state reinforced the patriarchal family structure and made it fold back into intimacy only to replicate its values as an entity seemingly separated from it, then can we make the jump and read the family romance as a state romance? For Doris Sommer, in the formation of Latin American nations, not only the desire for family alliances and nationhood went hand in hand, but the "reciprocal allegorization" between the two resolved the tension between the private and public realm, reinforcing the heterosexual family structure as a symbol of state power (Sommer, 20).

We add another complication to this discussion when we go back to Hilst and her desire to write pornography that sells: "Por que eu, vivendo num país capitalista, não posso ganhar dinheiro?" ("Why can't I, living in a capitalist country, earn some money?") (interview with Ana Maria Cicaccio, in Azevedo Filho, 27). We should ask ourselves whether Brazil is a capitalist country in the same way as the European nations more directly implicated in the trajectory we just traced. As Raul Prebisch argues, the centers of power and wealth do not expand on the same scale on which the periphery can develop (1976, 8), creating instead precarious relationships between both world centers of finance and peripheral countries of the global south, but also between local centers and its local peripheries. This gives way to an imitative capitalism which frequently hides the objective conditions of peripheral contexts. I am afraid Hilst would not be content with this answer; she would probably insult us, since, even if we stand by this explanation as one possible answer, there is more going on in her statement.

What other displacements and mismatches are implied in this serious, although performative, declaration of Hilst: wanting to make money in a capitalist country? There is already a distance in terms of place of enunciation, even within Brazil, since from 1966 until her death in 2004, Hilst secluded herself in her *Casa do sol.* The *casa* is located in State of São Paulo, almost 70 miles away from the big city and near the smaller city of Campinas, a periphery of one of the fastest growing cities in the world in the twentieth century thanks to the coffee boom and the influx of European immigration, being one example of the imitative capitalism Prebisch talks about.[115] Her statement, however, can be read as an investigation she carries out

[115] Architect Guilherme Pianca explains: "In 1900, the city of São Paulo can be described as a medium-scale village, with a population of 240,000 inhabitants. Its main economic activity was to serve as a trading post, chiefly for the coffee production in the countryside, and its transport to the port of Santos. During the first decades of the twentieth century, São Paulo turned into an industrialized city; its population increased, amounting to 840,000 inhabitants in 1930.[6] This steep rise was accompanied by a urban crisis: increasing problems related to traffic and

within her novels, especially her obscene ones. Lori's dad deals with this frustration by fantasizing about moving to London and writing in English, for example. If he is in the periphery then the solution would be to move to the center, it seems, and in this gesture affirm Brazil, and Brazilian literature, as always already derivative.

In *Contos d'Escárnio / Textos Grotescos* (1990) Hilst's investigation about being a Brazilian writer continues. The book is a story about the main character Crasso, his sexual adventures, but also his desire to become a writer: "There is so much bullshit in print that I thought, why can't I write my own?" (*Contos*, 64).[116]

The *não posso*, or "why can't I?" that we see in Hilst's declarations, but also in Crasso's statement are the first step (and result at the same time) of this investigation Hilst undertakes through her novels. A Brazilian writer *não pode*, cannot, do many things. And it is in this impossibility where these texts lend themselves to be read. The family romance as a state romance must be analyzed by this Hilstian logic of impossibility. Both "*não posso*" are productive, Hilst's whole obscene tetralogy stems out of this impossibility, so does Crasso's story, they are already an answer to the impossibility since they are structured in the form of a reply to a self-made but contextually enabled question: *por que não posso?*, "why can't I?"

Crasso's mother dies when he is just a baby, and his father passed away a month after, while having sex with a prostitute in a brothel. We learn this in the first paragraph of the novel, while towards the end of the novel we read one of Crasso's stories in which a sixteen-year-old boy and his mom enjoy an incestuous relationship while they talk about literature: "Byron was one of us, dear, he loved his own sister",[117] the mother says (*Contos*, 127). In between we read a

public transportation, the urbanization of areas outside the boundaries of the historic center, increasing sanitation and health problems" (3).

[116] "É tanta bestagem em letra de forma que pensei, por que não posso escrever a minha."

[117] "Byron foi um dos nossos, querido, amava a propria irmã."

patchwork of things like Crasso's and Clódia's (a painter, and a friend and lover of Crasso) dialogues, some sexual scenes, their relationship with suicidal writer Hans Haeckel (same initials as Hilst), and even dramatic texts and food recipes. These are all *Contos d'Escárnio* and *Textos Grotescos,* where the family romance, and its relation to Brazil and the editorial market are a recalcitrant oblique presence.

When Clódia goes to jail for making a painting of a homeless person's penis in broad daylight in the streets, and then gets sent to an asylum, she tells Crasso that her friends at the asylum gave her a cookbook, from which I will reproduce a few recipes:

> II.
>
> Take a turnip. Put two or three words inside of it, for example: rod, gold, vastness. Shake it. You will not hear any noise. It's normal. Then kneel with turnip in hand and say:
>
> > With the rod that I was given
> >
> > with the gold that was from me taken
> >
> > and with no vastness whatsoever
> >
> > of concepts and facts
> >
> > I want to be born again as a Brazilian and a poet.
> >
> > Whoever hears you will be dumbfounded (*Contos,* 90).[118]

The cookbook's title is *Pequenas sugestões e receitas de Espanto Antitédio para senhores e donas de casa.* In a way, since addressed to gentlemen and housewives, and being a cookbook, these recipes want to occupy the domestic setting, and combat the tedium of that familial

[118] "Pegue um nabo. Coloque duas ou três palavras dentro dele, por exemplo: bastão, ouro, amplidão. Chacoalhe. Você não vai ouvir ruído algum. É normal. Aí ajoelhe-se com o nabo na mão e diga:

> Com o bastão que me foi dado
> com o ouro que me foi tirado
> e sem nenhuma amplidão
> de conceitos e dados
> quero renascer brasileiro e poeta.
> Quem te ouvir vai ficar besta."

constituted environment. It takes being crazy to think of recipes like this, with no apparent utility, other than a literary one, and this is partly why Clódia enjoys them and wants to share them with Crasso. But it also takes being crazy to wish, in this culinary-kitsch-shamanic ritual, to be born again as a Brazilian and a poet, this would certainly be the nightmare of Lori's dad, as we know, and perhaps of Hilst as well.[119] Whoever hears that desire of someone, especially of someone who has already tried to be Brazilian and a poet, *vai ficar besta*, will become stupid. Not only one is crazy for wanting this, but the fact of wanting it will drive others crazy too. The power of Brazilians over that vastness, which is a vastness irreducible to ideas and facts, but which is constantly synthesized as such by national discourse, means nothing without the gold taken from them. It is all a charade, a useless recipe which only could come out of an asylum, but by making this evident, both Clódia and her friends in the asylum not only see the emperor naked, which is not hard to do, but they also gesture towards the *não posso* of peripheral, imitative capitalism, which relies on a state which manages private life, sending Clódia to an asylum by the intervention of public authorities. There is an opening for a new community in these recipes, presumably collectively made by the inmates of the asylum, but there is no emancipatory hope in them. The vastness of the country is translated into control and restriction, a policing of behavior, thought and literature. Two ways open up to the subject here, its autonomy as a private citizen only goes so far:

> III.
>
> Grab one green and two red cabbages. Wrap them up. Pack your bags and cross the border. It's time (*Contos*, 90).[120]

[119] Ironic self-deprecating comments, however, seem to be a marker of Latin American regional identities, and of many other national identities all over the world. Raúl Ruiz's film *La noche de enfrente* (2012) comes to mind in relation to Hilst here. In Ruiz's film, one character warns another: "Un día dios lo va a castigar", to which the other replies: "Ya me castigó, me hizo chileno".

[120] "Colha um pé de couve e dois repolhos. Embrulhe-os. Faça as malas e atravesse a fronteira. Tá na hora."

And

> XIII
>
> If you want to kill yourself because the country is rotten, and are about to, take a small camphor pebble and a can of caviar and put it next to your gun. Then, put the camphor pebble under your tongue and stare into the caviar can. Only then cock the gun. (It's nice to depart with elegant and aromatic memories. Warning: don't shoot yourself in the mouth because the camphor pebble will shatter) (*Contos*, 92).[121]

Emigration or suicide are depicted as some of the *receitas de Espanto* which would give a partial emancipation to the people. The playful and convoluted tone and display of such options pushes against romantic renderings of any kind; instead, they depict an excess that has always been a statement for Hilst. "…I wanted to make something that, maybe, they would like to read. It was all in vain. They said that I was very difficult in pornographic literature" (*CLB*, 30).[122] Whether she wanted it or not, the obscenity is there, but in a manner that creates a fiction of a degeneration of public and private life, staring at caviar and not being able to, but also not wanting to, eat it, pure desire, perhaps in an uncontained way, madness as a desperate and incomplete antidote against the normative. The failure of this pornography is that it is just desire; and pleasure, even as pain and cruelty, is only a part of it inconsistently and anecdotally. Hilst's texts here inhabit the space between her utilitarian and individual aspiration of making money and the realization that such a thing was not possible in the context she belonged to.

[121] "Se você quer se matar porque o país está podre, e você quase, pegue uma pedrinha de cânfora e uma lata de caviar e coloque ao lado do seu revólver. Em seguida, coloque a pedrinha de cânfora debaixo da língua e olhe fixamente para a lata de caviar. Só então engatilhe o revólver. (É bom partir com olorosas e elegantes lembranças. Atenção: não dê um tiro na boca porque a pedrinha de cânfora se estilhaça)."

[122] "…eu queria fazer uma coisa que, de repente, eles gostassem de ler. Não adiantou. Diziam que eu era dificílima na literatura pornográfica."

Georges Bataille articulated the existence of a principle at odds with that of classical material utility and means to an end. He claims that "humanity recognizes the right to acquire, to conserve, and to consume rationally, but it excludes in principle nonproductive expenditure" (117). Expenditure, however, is a fundamental part of human life, one which has been even more repressed in modernity:

> Everything that was generous, orgiastic, and excessive has disappeared; the themes of rivalry upon which individual activity still depends develop in obscurity, and are as shameful as belching. The representatives of the bourgeoisie have adopted an effaced manner; wealth is now displayed behind closed doors, in accordance with depressing and boring conventions. In addition, people in the middle class-employees and small shopkeepers-having attained mediocre or minute fortunes, have managed to debase and subdivide ostentatious expenditure, of which nothing remains but vain efforts tied to tiresome rancor (124).

Bataille is also talking about the folding back into itself of intimate life, and the enjoyment of wealth within the family, and sees the need of a resurgence of expenditure in the struggle and revolt of the lower classes against these degraded elites and bourgeoisies which are not even displaying the excess they once did. It is about time for him, since "Men assure their own subsistence or avoid suffering, not because these functions themselves lead to a sufficient result, but in order to accede to the insubordinate function of free expenditure" (129).

Hilst is closer to Bataille in many ways here, but she exemplifies a peripheral expenditure, since she is still making art and playing, but this excess is incomplete given her location. There is also perverse sexual activity, of course, but that is the only marker of the utilitarian goal of the author: making some money by selling smut, and not necessarily a loss. She is pretty much with Bataille, though, since her obscene books overflowed the containment of generic literature, making them illegible as bestsellers. But Hilst's work also lets Bataille know

about the center from which he speaks. With one foot on the way to production and reproduction at least in her initial intentions when writing the tetralogy, and the other planted firmly on these "unproductive forms" we have described, using Bataille's words (118), Hilst complicates the productive-unproductive duality, collapsing them into the extension of her oeuvre made by her biography and her declarations about what she wanted for her texts. It is true that the result could be rendered as a triumph of art and poetry as "creations by means of loss" (Bataille, 120), given the ambivalence of the characters with publishing and the market, like Lori's dad, and writer Hans Haeckel, who committed suicide in *Contos d'escarnio* for not being read and for being shamed by his publisher when he wanted to write a pornographic story to make some money. Such irony that seems to end in futility is close to one of Alain Robbe-Grillet's theses on the novel as not expressing anything or translating a reality, but exploring itself (160). However, on a deeper layer, the desire of these characters and of Hilst display a kind of third-world utility that cannot even be contained (or uncontained) by Bataille's notion. It simply lies there as a peripheral residue, unassimilable. Bataille's pedagogical demonstration of the utility of unproductiveness through reason and examples is turned into a cookbook where no matter how driven by expenditure we are, we always born again as a Brazilian poet, to the dismay of everyone else.

State and family, and the fortune of being Brazilian, resonate next to each other, kind of uncomfortable with each other but forming a compromise. What Hilst is trying to show in her novels, though, is how to see beyond that compromise, not deconstructing it, not even judging it in order to create another normativity, but articulating a vulgar critique of it all through scenes of constant sabotage of any literary purpose. It is not easy, and it might even be a sort of betrayal, to make sense of her project as a critique of those links: state-nation(alism)-family; these are

hyphens and parentheses she playfully but dramatically inhabits, almost displaying the private life of these *betweens* which is not private at all. She chooses a clear scenario for this playful and vulgar depiction, which is the familial setting, as we have seen. We will come back to it, but she will not be alone next time, since some of her formal and intellectual preoccupations are shared by the Venezuelan writer Oswaldo Trejo, to whom we will turn now.

el arte por el arte

"What is spoken should not be written, and what is written should not be spoken",[123] states the Venezuelan narrator Oswaldo Trejo in one of his unpublished diaries, fragments of which are available to us thanks to critic Violeta Rojo (Rojo, 131). Trejo, born in 1924 in the Venezuelan Andes, and deceased in Caracas, in 1996, where he lived since the 1940s, exercised throughout his life several jobs that made him into a fountain of anecdotes. His days as a paper bag maker, traffic officer, worker of a pigsty, insurance company clerk, diplomat, and painter, made him the center of the party, telling, and sometimes making up, stories full of humor and suspense (Rojo, 130). He never wrote about any of this, though, being a devoted believer in the principle I quoted above: you do not write about what you speak of. This ethics of anti-representation is a constant in his work and has been read, especially in his late work, since the publication of his second novel *Andén Lejano*, in 1968, as a withdrawal from a conception of literature as mimesis. I will look at some of these readings and put them in contrast with what I believe is a flight from the problem of mimesis that points instead to a deep concern with a non-representational concept of reality, one that reexamines the Venezuelan literary and artistic tradition and the ideas of the political in the National cultural project. In this sense, I will also focus on his depictions of the

[123] "Lo que se habla no se escribe y lo que se escribe no se habla"

family and the figure of the mother. This figure complicates the literary and social body as well as mainstream, but also alternative, narratives of the family in relation to the State's project of constituting the public and the private realm as "equally public instances that must be controlled" (Gonzalez Stephan, 121).

According to Beatriz González Stephan, the national project during the formation of the Latin American Nation-States, in the nineteenth century, implied the fabrication of "a new cultural framework [*entramado*]" that created "the imaginary of a certain collectivity, of living inside *one* nation, within *one* territory…".[124] In the second half of the twentieth century in Venezuela, long after the articulation of such an imaginary, a nascent new democracy looked for an integration of the already forged national identity with an openness to a future now available politically and culturally in ways in which it was not for the recently overthrown dictatorship. Such dictatorial regime, in power since 1948 until 1958, although very much invested in economic progress, considered "allegorical nativism" as the true national art, even when it still financed geometric abstract art merely as a demonstration of its greatness, as Luis Pérez-Oramas (28) claims, maintaining a link with international art movements, but without incorporating this avant-garde expression into its discourse like nativist art was.

Critic Vicente Lecuna explains how, after 1958, that new democratic Venezuelan State enabled and influenced a development of artistic practices in the country that helped legitimize certain procedures in the visual arts and others in the literary realm. Lecuna shows "…how the Venezuelan State managed to "solve" the contradictions inherent to postcolonial nationalism through a peculiar reproduction of gazes and words, of a populist verbality and an abstract

[124] González Stephan vocabulary is in line with Benedict Anderson's, but she will argue that the development of such an imaginary in Latin America was much more a Top-down process, with impositions made almost by decree, than in Europe. See "Escritura y Modernización", 110.

visuality which co-opts the avant-garde project while at the same time it is absorbed by such a project" (78).[125] The realist and populist literature, occupied with social issues, like that written by Miguel Otero Silva and Salvador Garmendia[126] coexisted (since the early 1950s, but especially after the end of Marcos Perez Jimienez's dictatorship in 1958) with an abstract, formalist, visual art represented by figures like Jesús Soto and Carlos Cruz-Diez, who quickly became renowned artists all over the world. Such a schizophrenic embracing of two distinct discourses allowed the Venezuelan state to project an image of development and progress internationally, and to create a sense of a legible, populist common discourse at home; it is no wonder then, how Venezuelan abstract visual artists, leaders of the kinetic-art movement and still important referents of it in the present, gained an international recognition that the realist writers did not have.[127]

During the 1960s and the 1970s, however, according to critic Luis Barrera Linares, the relative stability and the rising of oil prices, creates "…a situation of social peace in which writers start to become sort of decorative objects, alien to dissidence and opting for an art devoid of social militancy, even when being invested with a certain mythical halo by the system which praises them" (*Incomunicación*, 203).[128] However, it is precisely in contemporary democracy, after Pérez Jiménez's dictatorship, that an often complex narrative of insurgency emerges as well, to accompany and narrate the trajectory of left-wing guerrillas disillusioned by a

[125] My translation "Quiero mostrar cómo el Estado venezolano logró "resolver" las contradicciones que supone el nacionalismo poscolonial a través de la peculiar reproducción de las palabras y las miradas, de una verbalidad populista y una visualidad abstracta que coopta el proyecto de vanguardia y a la vez es tomado por este proyecto"
[126] For example, see *Casas Muertas* (1955) by Otero Silva and *Los pequeños seres* (1959) by Garmendia.
[127] Novelists like Miguel Otero Silva, Adriano González León, and José Balza (who already had a project that adapted certain procedures of the visual arts in the literary), came to be published and recognized in Latin America at large, but never attained a status as world referents, like the one visual artists such as Soto, Cruz-Diez, or Mercedes Pardo and Alejandro Otero had, and, arguably, still have.
[128] "…una relativa situación de paz social en la cual los escritores pasan a ser casi objectos decorativos, ajenos a la disidencia y ganados para el arte sin compromiso social, aunque investidos de cierta aureola mítica para el sistema que los aupa".

democracy crafted as a pact between the center left and center right parties. The testimonial narrative of Argenis Rodríguez and Ángela Zago, as well as the work of Carlos Noguera and Victoria de Stefano's first novel *El Desolvido*, nuance Barrera Linares' argument. When it comes to Oswaldo Trejo, the Venezuelan critic associates him, as well as writer José Balza, with a move away from the historical context, pursuing instead the text as text, without any, or with a minimal, regard for the reader and their socio-political context (*Incomunicación*, 203).

The productive problem Barrera Linares finds in Trejo in this sense, is that his texts, especially those made from the late 1960s onwards, starting with *Andén Lejano,* but covering the rest of his novels and short-story books, represent a gesture of going too far, of being over-aestheticized to the point of incomprehensibility. For Barrera Linares, Trejo's proposal is one of "literary (in)communication" (*Incomunicación*, 200). Even when the critic sees enough reasons to study the author, such an interest is framed in terms of Trejo's late work as a curiosity, a demonstration that the transmission of a legible message to the reader should not be taken for granted, assuming this is one of the goals of narrative works (*Traje Narrativo*, 106). Trejo performs, a critique of the "socio-aesthetic value of the book" as form by using the same medium it critiques (Barrera Linares, *Traje Narrativo*, 116). The framing of Trejo's work in this sense, though, as avant-garde, can be a way of limiting the discourse around him by archiving his oeuvre in a category that often does not say much.[129] And yet, such classification has value insofar as it pairs him, not with the populist writers which the State promoted, as Lecuna explains, but with the visual artists that the Nation projected internationally.[130] Trejo is very

[129] See Robbe-Grillet in *For A New Novel*: "The word "avant-garde," for example, despite its note of impartiality, generally serves to dismiss—as though by a shrug of the shoulders —any work that risks giving a bad conscience to the literature of mass consumption. Once a writer renounces the well-worn formulas and attempts to create his own way of writing, he finds himself stuck with the label "avant-garde"" (26).

[130] Abstract visual artist Mateo Manaure was a frequent collaborator of Trejo, illustrating his first books, where Trejo's project was still tied to a more traditional realist aesthetic. It can be argued that in later works Trejo

conscious of this fact; in an interview with critic Julio Ortega from 1991, the Venezuelan writer states: "…it can be said that narrative has a debt with the other arts, which have clear, and very defined expressive correspondences among them, having their multiple proposals, already classical, been accepted in the present century. However, non-traditional narrative is associated with difficulties or accused of being boring, incomprehensible, and definitively illegible" (in Ortega, 145).[131]

Trejo is not only indirectly pointing at this Venezuelan context described by Lecuna, but also expressing a more general opinion about the tendency of narrative art to not dialogue with other arts, or, in the best-case scenario, to not acknowledge that influence. He associates his non-traditional narrative, which he would call "exploratory" rather than "experimental",[132] with his openness to incorporate procedures of other arts, mainly visual, but also sound art, into his texts, and claims how, in part, such illegibility or incommunicability lies in critics not being able to read such a dialogue in his work. Trejo is in proximity to Robbe-Grillet here, reminding us of one of the theses of the Nouveau Roman: "The New Novel is not a theory, it is an exploration" (134). Furthermore, Trejo and Robbe-Grillet seem to be pointing in this case at a similar mismatch between the text, on the one hand, and readers and critics, on the other, since the latter are "seeking a kind of communication which has long since ceased to be the one which is proposed" (Robbe-Grillet, 156).

---

cannibalizes this abstraction that until then was fundamentally decorative, and builds a new kind of narrative with all those influences. In fact, Barrera Linares describes some of the short-stories from his 1980 collection *Al trajo, trejo, troja, trujo, treja, traje, trejo*, as a series of unconnected superimposed images (*Traje Narrativo*, 98).

[131] puede decirse que la narrativa está en deuda con las demás artes, de claras, definidísimas correspondencias expresivas entre ellas, cuyas múltiples propuestas, ya clásicas, han sido aceptadas a lo largo del presente siglo. Sin embargo, a la narrativa no tradicional se le asocia a dificultades cuando no se le acusa de fastidiosa, de incomprensible, de definitivamente ilegible."

[132] See Ortega, 144.

Barrera Linares' criteria for differentiating Trejo's work from more traditional narrative projects center on descriptions of his texts as following the principles of *l'art pour l'art* (*Incomunicación*, 201; *Traje Narrativo*, 16), that is, an escape from the historical, social, and literary context that turns the texts into almost unintelligible self-referential entities. Barrera Linares' curiosity-driven valuation of Trejo is then tied to explaining how the texts folding into themselves, offering to the readers very little to hold on to, are examples of a literature of incommunication. At the same time as he praises this, he worries that "his proposal may lead to the annihilation of the narrative text as such" (*Traje Narrativo*, 104); this is very similar to Veronica Jaffé's consideration of Trejo's discourse as a closed one, giving way to a "permanent incommunication" with the reader (85), but again, we might be talking about different proposals and understandings of communication that are derived from different conception of what reality means. Nevertheless, Trejo could not avoid being seen as a sort of black sheep within the family of Venezuelan narrators.

I find Barrera Linares' reading relevant to think of a critique of traditional narrative, of legibility, of reception, and of the separation between the written word and the visual that the Venezuelan State cultivated, even when Trejo, as we have seen, does not abide by it. However, Barrera Linares' insistence that Trejo is the most elitist of Venezuelan writers (*Traje Narrativo*, 114), and that his over-aestheticized literature does not pose explicit threats to the State and official discourse by writing an (*Incomunicación*, 201), keeps his texts politically constrained and doomed to an operation that isolates aesthetics from politics.

This over-valuation of a writing closed on itself, of a mere exercise in narration, a Narcissistic text, in Linda Hutcheon's words,[133] seems to cover most of the scarce critical

[133] See Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissitic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*.

comments on Trejo.[134] These ideas are tied to a moving away from representation, where Trejo's characters become fluid and conceptual, not tied to individuals, as Sifontes claims (9), which puts Trejo's later narrations close to the lyric or to Dadaist experiments, as Jaffé argues (84). And it is this non-representational feature that Barrera Linares identifies with a literature that does not present challenges to its socio-political context but is, on the contrary, isolated from it. Nevertheless, it is precisely the non-representational character of Trejo's narrative that pushes him away from a simplistic poetics of *l'art pour l'art.* He is concerned with subverting the separation of the narrative and the visual promoted by the contemporary Venezuelan State, as well as with finding an expanded idea of the political.

In his 1975 novel, *Textos de un texto con Teresas*, the multiplicity of characters and narrators, and the typographic games, frame a confusing event in which a genocide occurs (Trejo, *Teresas,* 281). There are several groups of characters: 11 individuals named Teresa at first, each wearing a crucifix from which the small Christs escape, becoming characters in their own right. Then 25 more Teresas appear, not wearing crosses. And regular-sized Christs. We can identify the Teresas with women, the little Christs with children, and the "adult" Christs with males, but this is never entirely clear. In fact, one of the narrators tells us that among the 36 Teresas in total plus the small Christs some of them carried, there are males, females, men-like characters, and a dog. The tiny Christs, who ran away from 11 of the Teresas' crucifixes are the men-like characters, smaller than men. While most of the Teresas are women, two were men (Teresa Alejandrina and Teresa Sixta), are Teresa Dorotea is a dog. Trejo's strange genealogy starts to suggest complications with hierarchies and non-normative kinships as we will analyze below.

[134] As it can also be seen in Elvira Macht de Vera (23), and Lourdes Sifontes (6).

What the Teresas and the small Christs have in common is the fact that they are protesting something. While this something is vague and unclear, they have mottos and signs, and we read their demands as a repeated mantra in the novel: fidelity, no concealment, scrupulousness, no double crossing, justice, no shittiness, delicacy, no simulations, no fallacies, no treachery, no breaches (*Teresas*, 168). This is how it appears in the original resembling protest signs:

FIDELIDAD NO ENCUBRIMIENTOS

ESCRUPULOSIDAD NO DOBLE

JUEGOS

JUSTICIA NO ENMIERDA-

MIENTOS, NO

DELICADEZA

NO SIMULACIONES

NO FALACIAS NO ALE-

VOSIAS

NO DESGA-

RRAMIENTOS

These sorts of chants precisely call out on people, probably the regular-sized or adult Christs, who commit genocide towards the end of the novel against the Teresas and the small Christs. Those who are being called out are referred to from the very first lines of the text: “Will there be a *why* or a *for what* to tell a lot about you, concealers, unscrupulous, double crossers, unjust,

shitty, indelicate, simulators, fallacious, treacherous and breachers, showing so many defects?" (*Teresas*, 155).[135]

The text starts as an enquiry, and can be read as a detective novel, picking up the clues that lead to genocide, intermingled with Trejo's exploration with language and with the distribution of words in the page to articulate much more than a capricious avant-garde experiment. Punctuation and paragraphs breaks are arbitrary, and the distribution of words sometimes change to be arranged in double columns, with interruptions, or by putting accents without words in this manner: "´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´´". The experimentation is an exploration of the possibilities of a new kind of political text and subtext, which is what we will try to develop now.

The Teresas are foreigners, "llegadas de tan lejos" (*Teresas*, 237), some of them sex workers (*Teresas*, 204). There are eleven killers (one for each of the defects mentioned repeatedly in the novel, and to which the signs the Teresas carry respond: unfaithfulness, concealment, unscrupulousness, double crossing, injustice, shittyness, indelicacy, simulation, fallacies, treacherousness and breaching). The explicit reason given for the genocide is that the killers are afraid of the Teresas taking their pigs and eating them. But one of the narrators, who is one of the killers, will quickly add: "The desire that will lead the other to proceed in the way they will is the pure and simply desire to kill Teresas!" (*Teresas*, 236).[136] The Teresas and little Christs were hungry, and they were given food as a trap, to surprise and eliminate them as they were eating (281). Even if, as Barrera Linares, Jaffe, and Trejo himself have claimed, the plot is

---

[135] "¿Habrá por qué ni para qué contar mucho de ustedes, encubridores, inescrupulosos, doble jugadores, injustos, enmierdadores, indelicados, simuladores, falaces, alevosos y desgarradores, mostrando tantos defectos?" (Trejo, *Teresas*, 155).
[136] "¡El deseo que inducirá a los otros a proceder en la forma como lo harán será el puro y simple deseo de matar Teresas!"

secondary to Trejo's work since *Andén Lejano* (1968) (Barrera Linares, *Textualismo*, 97; Jaffe, 82; Ortega, 144), the novelist explains how it is impossible to say of a book that it does "…not tell anything" (Ortega, 144).[137] It is remarkable however, that the critics do not engage with the events of *Textos de un texto con Teresas* other than to point at the impressive work with the language and word disposition on the page as an extension of his later narrative project.

Violeta Rojo is the only one who points at the fact that Trejo's so-called "hermetic" nature is only apparent, although she does not elaborate on this further (Rojo, 131). However, she cites a fragment from Trejo's unpublished and unavailable diaries where he refers to *Textos de un texto con Teresas* in 1970, the time in which he was composing the novel: "I write as a reader, and as a reader I am not interested in anything else but in that where the word is the most important element, demolished to its utmost possibility, like orthography, punctuation, syntax, matters not concerning with grammar but with reality giving itself to me back and forth in the development of *TTT*" (Rojo, 132).[138] It is not a concern with reality as conceived by populist-realist narrative, as promoted by the State, but neither is it a simplistic isolated aesthetic experiment, a sort of autopoietic text that points to a neutral universalization. What Trejo is concerned with is an aesthetic labor that help us catch a sight of a new understanding of reality, not tied to representation in the strict sense, but not retreating from the world and seeking refuge in the letter as voided from its context. I see *Textos de un texto con Teresas* (TTT from now on) not as a text folding back into itself, but as the unfolding of an expanded experience of the political, a reality giving itself opaquely and problematically as the novel moves.

[137] "…no cuenta nada"

[138] "Escribo como lector y como lector ya no me interesa sino aquello en lo que la palabra es más importante, demolida hasta donde sea posible, como la ortografía, la puntuación, la sintaxis, cosas no de la gramática sino de la realidad dándoseme ahora al derecho y al revés en el desarrollo de *TTT*".

Placing Trejo in the realm of the *a* or *anti* political, unavoidably, signals an apparent disengagement with a reality that is, in fact, political. Trejo's work acknowledges that dialectic but attempts to construct a realm of reality more ample than that, insofar as it is intervened in unexpected ways by the text. Rather than giving legibility to reality, all Trejo can say "is that this reality will perhaps have a meaning after he has existed, that is, once the work is brought to its conclusion" (Robbe-Grillet, 141). It is in this sense that his project, and its expression in TTT in particular, can be read as inhabiting the impolitical, as articulated by Roberto Esposito. Trejo's expansion of reality and of politics to cover more than populist realism (and its separation from abstract art), and his digging into language until the last consequences are the expression of a contaminated space of writing that wants to think, that desires to think, about the social and the aesthetic as difficultly entangled. As it is impossible not to tell anything, to completely forgo the anecdote, it is impossible to be outside the political: "To tell a story has become strictly impossible. Yet it is wrong to claim that nothing happens any longer in modem novels" (Robbe-Grillet, 33). The perverse game present in TTT, the negation that the signs the Teresas carry embody: "no encubrimientos, no doble juegos, no enmierdamientos…", accompanied by their affirmative demands: "justicia, fidelidad, delicadeza…", constitute the "…paradoxically affirmative character of the impolitical "negation"" (Esposito, *Categories,* xviii), which is also the disjunctive synthesis that the impossibility of a proper story and the proliferation of events form in Trejo's narration. This opposition of forces do not resolve into a propaedeutic, or into a transparent, even if complex, communication; the anecdote here, what is being told, is this space of conflict and the possible communities that can be formed depending on what we opt for.

If we understand the impolitical as the inscription of difference within the homogenizing and/or polarizing tendency of the political, we understand how "the impolitical does not

"critique" reality in the name of something other than reality-some different ideal, value, or interest" (Esposito, *Categories*, xxiv). Trejo's preoccupation is with that space which admits the demolition of syntax as well as the undecidability of experience, while still giving an account of an unjust, shitty, unfaithful, unscrupulous, indelicate and fallacious context. His proposal is not a retreat or an outside, but a recalcitrance inscribed within reality, and *im* that signals a going into, towards, or within in a destabilizing way.

The eleven defects that are repeated over and over in the text might point to the defective way in which any community is constituted (Esposito, *Terms,* 25). The problem is that the Christs who commit the genocide use their defects to purify their community of what they deem truly defective: the strange and foreign Teresas and their children, and the struggle to include them in a traditional national(ist) family. The radical foreignization of Trejo's text mirrors this difficult encounter, being impenetrable and yet insistent in its impenetrability, inscribing difference continuously. The presence and the protest of the victims contaminate the restricted reality that wants to be legible, "…the pure and simple desire to kill Teresas" is disguised as an attempt to protect the land, to free it from the defects, to block the contamination of a nucleus that would perturb the allegorical reciprocity between a closed community and a legible family structure where the foreign subjects and their ambiguous children have no space. We have then a confrontation between a restricted and an expanded, or impolitical, conception of politics in TTT. The genocide is the victory of a restricted politics, one that reads Trejo as cultivating *l'art pour l'art* and a hyper-elitist discourse. The problematic relationship between language and anecdote that the novel presents us on a more general layer, though, "…is the sharing of the political-or better still, the political as sharing", which, according to Esposito, "…opens a space for the thought of community" (*Categories,* xxii).

Those who commit genocide bond over the fear of the presence of the Teresas. Such fear is articulated as a discourse of defense against the Teresas taking their food, and instead of the political as sharing, we witness the creation of a fictive ethnicity that is indissociable from a way of writing fiction that Trejo moves away from, with an emphasis on representation and direct communication as its ultimate goals. When bonding to eliminate the difference that the Teresas embody, there is a creation of a past in the present that projects itself into the future, a linear mythical narrative that wants to be preserved, and that we can call national or State discourse. The genocidal agents fabricate themselves in the crime they commit; "It is fictive ethnicity which makes it possible for the expression of a preexisting unity to be seen in the state, and continually to measure the state against its "historic mission" in the service of the nation and, as a consequence, to idealize politics" (Balibar, 96). There is a double staging of two understandings of the political. The first is in the event the novel narrates, where a restricted, representational notion wins, forcing the closure of a defective community. But there is also an impolitical staging in the friction between the demolition of language and what the novel cannot but narrate, both being within the reality of the text and of its interaction with the space that makes the writing of the text possible, a context. In this last case, there is also a critical comment on the calculated separation of the visual and the written, both serving the Nation-State for two different purposes integrated always into its own unifying fiction. The fictive ethnicity that the genocides create, resembles the paradox of a new modern democracy, emerging after a violent dictatorship, while administering the aesthetic realm with an appeased populism indoors and a neutralized abstraction outdoors, fabricating the political-apolitical dialectic as a collective subjectivation of the modern Venezuelan, of forming part of the great Venezuelan family, where the state does not want to cease to be a *paterfamilias*.

Trejo's cross-contamination can be read as an impolitization insofar as it infiltrates a political fiction into a language experiment, at the same time as it makes a visual artwork out of the promise of a political novel. With this in mind, we are going to go back to Trejo's thematization of the family as the expression where such a cross-contamination and amplification of the political against the restriction of it by State-discourse, but also by alternative discourses, presents the most challenges for thought.

trejo's mom

In *El Aro y la Trama*, Alejandro Moreno describes what he calls "the popular Venezuelan family", highlighting how the type of relations that are involved in the process of articulation of the family do not have a language of their own. Any attempt to understand the popular Venezuelan family goes through a deformation of something that "does not yet have a card of citizenship in the logical-western language of academic discourse" (*El Aro*, 323), but which nevertheless deserves to be described in its complication. When Moreno says this, he is specifically beginning to describe the role of the mother in a matricentered (*matricentrada*) popular family that is inserted, however, in a patriarchal culture, where it nevertheless builds a world-of-life that transcends it, even if it suffers it.

For Moreno, the projection of a typical and universal family structures in the part of the political and economic elites in Venezuela denies the existence of this popular matricentered family as a structure of its own rather than a deviation (*Familia*, 449). The external layers and ideals that progress and a "necessary" catching up with modernity bring about, frame the Venezuelan popular family as an anomaly, something to be corrected, or, in some cases, simplistically romanticized. Even during a government that, in its initial stages gave a political

identity to the popular sectors and claimed to put an end to the idea of the family which carried conservative and traditional investments, that idea of the family was carried forward. Moreno quotes Héctor Navarro, Education Minister under Chavismo in 1999, who, in the first year of Chavez' government would declare: "Generations will pass while we reconstruct the family, in the meantime the State will be, necessarily, the Dad" (*Familia*, 449);[139] in the same year, 1999, the then wife of Hugo Chavez, Marisabel de Chávez would declare in the United Nations that two words described the Venezuelan family: poverty and disintegration (*Familia*, 450). On the part of the government and non-governmental elites, there is an identification with a language of the "third-world" family as a social pathology and the need for the State to intervene among such "infantile" actors.[140] Let us remember then the Roman meaning of *familia*, as the total number of slaves that belonged to, precisely, the *paterfamilias.*

The genesis of the Greek state, father of the modern state and perhaps grandfather of the contemporary nation-state, for Engels, already shows a movement that goes from family ties, usually of maternal line as a central social structure, towards a creation of classes where the gens, the family group, is dismembered and the family becomes subordinate to private property and monogamy, which guarantee the paternal right (Engels, 144-6). The family is subjected to the state since the origin of that logical-western language of which Moreno speaks. And let us remember, of course, the declarations of former Education Minister Héctor Navarro we quoted before, "…in the meantime the State will be, necessarily, the Dad." This use of modernity's

[139] Héctor Navarro was part of the Chavista government as Minister of Education, Culture and Sports, and then Minister of Electric Energy until 2013. In 2014 he was expelled from the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) for defending another ex-Minister, Jorge Giordani, in his critiques of the government regarding corruption, something of which Giordani himself has also been accused.

[140] For a series of examples of this line of pathologizing thought see Genis, Abraham, "De la Célula a la Familia y la Familia en Venezuela", and Zancajo S., José Carlos, "El difícil Arte de la Familia", both in *Familia: un Arte Difícil*, ed. by Fundación Venezuela Positiva, where Moreno's text "La Familia Popular Venezolana y sus Implicaciones Culturales" can also be found.

language to describe and to aspire to an "ideal" family structure coincides, indeed, with the "modern" "…dissolution of relations of "extended" kinship and the penetration of family relations by the intervention of the nation-state" (Balibar, 101).

Moreno's reading views such declarations as one worldview trying to understand another or, in his words, the Modern Episteme apprehending the Popular Episteme and its world-of-life from the outside. "In "educated" discourses, be they academic, political, religious, the perspective is of a family that does not exist -or only exists as an exception-, a fictive fiction [*ficción ficcionada*], fabricated by a culture that is an assumption and that considers itself as Venezuelan" (*Familia*, 451). Outside of that assumption lies what, for Moreno, is the Venezuelan popular family, a local truth that complicates the national aspiration to a universal, or a version of the universal, idea of the family. The popular Venezuelan family, constituted by the mother-son dyad, is a structure that is "…perfectly balanced, full of internal coherence, self-sufficient for its own "familiar" ends, and is, in addition, stable" (*Familia*, 451). The tangential role of the father highlights the figure of the Mother, who, in Moreno's project, is the center where everything stems from.

But if we have to think of the mother, and of universal vs. local truths, as Moreno invites us to do, Freud comes to mind, and also the negation of him. Freud is present even if we imagine telling him: *You ask who this person in the dream can be, it is not you, Sigmund, nor your mother* (*Negation*, 235), to which he will say, *So it is me, so it is my mother*. Freud's mother, literal and theoretical, floods that logical-Western discourse from which Moreno seems unable to escape, but which he tries to make tremble. And Freud's own role as a sort of founding father does not imply overcoming him, but returning to him by finding differences in each repetition, contaminating him.

This discussion is complicated by Trejo's mother, in a literature that comes obliquely to think with Moreno and Freud, with the local and the imposed universal. Trejo's mother, from her intrusive position, simultaneously confirms and denies the attempts to place the mother as a totality around which psychic and micropolitical life are structured. Trejo knows this, and that is why he destructs these normativized subjectivities in his work, always leaving the problem of the mother, which is a political problem in the *im*political sense we discussed above, productively unresolved.

In *Andén Lejano*, the beginning of the era of an incommunicable literature in Trejo, as Barrera Linares describes it, two characters with the same name: *Ecce Homo*, born at the same time, debate and dialogue, without overcoming their loneliness, about the dead mother of one and the missing mother of the other. Trejo as author, rather than disappearing, multiplies himself in these voices, achieving the effect of becoming a series of traces, and substituting subjectivity with small collectivities that, in Sifontes' words "move through writing looking at each other" (9). The psychoanalytic undertones of this possible split of the self in the text, of this "disintegrated personality," as Macht de Vera (23) calls it, are clear, but there is more going on here. Towards the end of the text, the encounter of the searching *Ecce Homo* with his mother, after looking for her, is narrated. Whether the mother is a memory or a physical body is unclear, the context is very nebulous, but Trejo's use of the second person, as if to remind *Ecce Homo* of what happened, acting as a witness and a corroborator is strikingly effective:

> Ecce Homo, seeing your mother, welcoming her after so much searching for her years after years, of so much suffering the consequences of her loss, still ignored as if she were not with you, and everything seems to happen as in her letters, in islands of words, in islands of whites, because also the moments you live always lack something that you do not yet know what it is, something that perhaps you will never know as they do not know nor will those who go, discovering that

> everything is incomplete, broken, mutilated and that the sun, that mestizo, sumptuous sun, that now illuminates them does not serve them at all even from their highest rank in time or from their most privileged position in space, and being so they go sad, invited and uninvited, sad even if they do not want to be, they go, that is all, and they can only despise the satisfaction of those who come in the opposite direction because they do not know what theirs is made of, and this is how they spend looking at each other, stripped of something that is endearing to them and that perhaps belongs to (*Andén*, 142).[141]

The fantasy of fusion with the mother is impossible for the *Ecce Homos*, totality and completion are not attainable for the individual, but in the family and the social they are absent as well. Trejo keeps closer to a community based on heterogeneity, and to the defective quality of loss and melancholy that one of the *Ecce Homos* feels when seeing that the encounter with the mother does not return reality to an appeasing legibility. Melancholy passes from being an individual, isolated and isolating feeling, to constituting a community that puts alterities in confrontation with each other, since what articulates the social relation in this sense is this radical difference. As Esposito claims, community is what reminds individuals of the impossibility of a complete identification with themselves (*Terms*, 29). The articulation of a social space will not solve this problem but will exacerbate it instead. Trejo's mother is not an explanation but an agent of

[141] "Ecce Homo, ver a tu madre, acogerla después de tanto buscarla años tras años, de tanto padecer las consecuencias de su extravío, ignorada todavía como si no estuviera contigo, y es que todo parece darse como en sus cartas, en islas de palabras, en islas de blancos, pues también a los momentos que vives les falta siempre algo que no sabes todavía lo que es, algo que tal vez nunca lo sabrás como no lo saben tampoco ni lo sabrán los que van, descubriendo que todo está incompleto, roto, mutilado y que el sol, ese sol mestizo, suntuoso, que ahora los alumbra no les sirve de nada ni aun desde su más alto rango en el tiempo ni desde su más privilegiada posición en el espacio, y siendo así van tristes, convidados y no convidados, tristes aunque no quieran estarlo, van, eso es todo, y solamente pueden despreciar la satisfacción de los que vienen en sentido inverso porque éstos no saben de qué está hecha la de ellos, y es así como pasan mirándose los unos a los otros, despojados de algo que les es entrañable y que tal vez les pertenezca".

strangeness to ourselves; it is not a cause that points to a direction, but a signal of the melancholy inscribed in the social.

This encounter with the mother, whether real or not, and its implications, makes us think of how opting for *another* writing, illegible insofar as it raises questions that critics do not always register, renders Trejo a fundamentally political writer, as we have argued. Trejo demands a challenge for thought, he issues an interpellation to produce the conditions of possibility of its reading. The concession of the national prize of literature to his oeuvre in 1988 was a way of monumentalizing what had not been fully considered in its impact and radicality beyond a superficial *l'art pour l'art*. Our approach, then, will aim at the articulation of a different structure of reception of reality, and how the figure of the mother appears in such rearticulation.

Trejo's mother is a crack that shows us a system of thought. His fiction brings together the creation of a fictive ethnicity, of which the grouping around the killing of the Teresas is an example. We could infer that Moreno contraposes such fictive fiction of the family as enunciated by the State with a "real" fiction of how the popular Venezuelan family is as he describes it, but in fact, what Moreno is aiming for is a local fiction that, paradoxically, expands the realm of the real beyond one sole epistemic understanding. Trejo's fiction is not an antifiction or an antinarrative; it is instead the problematic space of what fictive ethnicity and fictive fiction do not want to see about themselves. In a sense, Trejo shows that what has not yet been thought of power and what power has not thought of itself is undistinguishable from what we desire not to think of power. One of the questions of Trejo is that of the link between thought and desire, then. The affirmative role of negation is central in this dynamic, but Trejo's logic is not one of instauration of the negation as the first clue to a solution for his incommunicable narrative, as a

split of the intellectual and the affective that constitutes a first acknowledgement that would lead to a solution *of* the text. He is instead interested in the space of negotiation between affirmation and negation and its undecidability. It could be said that, like Chantal Mouffe, Trejo believes in the central status of conflict. However, his agents of conflict split and multiply, change bands, blur the contours of the sides implicated, and expand the political realm in ways that are sometimes unrecognizable if we keep abiding by the attempt to universalize categories.

The *Ecce Homo* who knows that his mother is dead gains a lucidity that creates another language, while the one who meets his mother at the end of the text maintains certain ties with a narrative arc that awaits a resolution of the plot, but "something is always missing", the encounter does not magically solve anything, there is no cure, and certainly not a bringing of the unconscious into consciousness. What happens, finally, is that the *Ecce Homo* who was looking for his mother, sees how she abandons him to go away with the *Ecce Homo* who knew she was dead, understanding that "no arrival, if there is any arrival, will be fully satisfactory" (*Andén*, 150), what remains is guilt for the disappearance of that *Ecce Homo* who knew the truth: by assuming the mother was dead he was aware of the impossibility of the plenitude found in otherness, of the dangers of a homogenous community, as we saw more explicitly in TTT. In this case, though, the other *Ecce Homo* and the mother go together in a mismatch that mimics the disjunctive and defective quality of a community. We are left with the experience of the text, and the idea that this tension between the hope of legibility and its crossing-out is where the texts or the *trejos*, as Sifontes baptized his *textos* (7) come from.

If the figure of the mother allows us to glimpse this at all, or rather, if the psychic and textual position occupied by the mother in Trejo's work helps to build this tension that puts into play a certain conventionalism of the critical tradition and a certain superficial reading of the

political, it is because what Trejo weaves is precisely between Moreno and Freud. It is between the Venezuelan popular family and the universalizing Oedipus, in a moving *between*, which finally wants to denounce the complicity of any normalized family structure in the creation of a morality that becomes an official aesthetics.

For Freud, as it is known, both the female and male Oedipus are described by an intense triangulation with both parents. But it is the mother, being the first erotic object of the child, and more specifically the mother's breast, which, as Melanie Klein observed, becomes the totality of the inner and outer world (because there is no difference) of the baby, who lays the foundations for psychosexual development. Freud says that the mother becomes the first seducer of the child (*Outline*, 188), and that, in the case of the boy she is the object of his first sexual fantasies since the age of two or three (*Outline*, 189). It is not necessary to explain the whole development of the Oedipus complex, but it is important to note that, while for the boy it ends with castration, staged in the threat that the father, his rival in the love of the mother, will cut his penis, in the girl, it begins precisely with the castration complex, when she realizes that, indeed, she has no penis (Outline, 193). In the girl, however, it is resolved by the identification with the mother and in the desire to one day have a child from someone like the father, from the promise of being pregnant and eventually possessing a penis inside of her in the form of a little baby boy.

Moreno, in the case of the Venezuelan popular family, will reduce what for Freud is an Oedipal triangle, to a Mother-Son dyad, in which the father does not appear, as we mentioned above, for all men are always sons and all women are always mothers. The couple does not exist in the popular world-of-life, for there is no woman or man as individuals, but relational structures of existence: woman-mother and man-son, as well as the main link between them: mother-son (*El Aro*, 326). The mother is even the producer of sexual difference, making sure that

her daughters are developed as mothers and her sons as sons. The possibility of paternity, in this case, is erased by the dyadic and matricentered structure, which, Moreno insists, survives in a patriarchal and sexist context, since sexism ensures the denial of the paternal role in men and makes the son-ness of the son remain (*El Aro,* 331). There are fraternal, horizontal, relationships, and relationships of another kind, but all always diminished by the mother-son bond, that kind of relationship of "subtle incestuous features, in the psychological-experiential, not in the genital-sexual", as Moreno clarifies (*El Aro,* 326).

Two types of incest, or incest fantasies, then. That of Freudian psycho-sexual development, that is, of the mother as the first object of love for both the boy and the girl, which, one step more or one step less, leads to oedipal triangulation. And that of the praxis of popular life, where the absence of a father is but a symptom of the strength of the Mother-Son dyad, which constitutes all popular subjectivity for Moreno. The mother is at the center in both cases.

The heteronormative and binary character of both positions goes without saying. Although Freud has opened a productive path to think about the "natural" predisposition to bisexuality, and his oedipal determinism is always subject to revision; and although Moreno breaks with the pathologizing and description of single-parent families as unstructured and rather sees them as part of another logic of being in the world as legitimate as others (*El Aro,* 337), their understanding of sexuality stems from the binary, and demands pregnancy and/or motherhood from women as constitutive of their ontological character, of their realization as a woman. Freud and Moreno are two versions of the same story, the local in Moreno is universalized and the universal in Freud is regionalized. When Paul B. Preciado addresses The School of the Freudian Cause in Paris, he tells them something similar: "There is no universality in the psychoanalytic tales you recount. The mytho-psychological tales picked up by Freud and

raised to the rank of science by Lacan are simply local stories, tales of the patriarchal-colonial European mind" (22).[142] The universal truth is simply the myth of the heterosexual white man, and the locality that Moreno gives to his popular episteme reaches its limit when we come across his postulates about the woman and/or the mother.

The staging of a disintegrated personality, which superficially pleases psychoanalysis, and this centrality of the mother as a generator of the entire social fabric that pleases Moreno, and a more conventional socio-anthropological tradition in Venezuela, is a lure that Trejo weaves in *Andén Lejano*, because, as we saw, the encounter with the mother does not explain anything. It seems to us that the most interesting thing here is, then, how neither the memory nor the imaginary reconstruction, nor the denial of her death save us from how necessary it is to knock down the totem of family fiction as an organizer of the social. Trejo does not want a "healthy" or a "proper popular" mother who makes him participate in the constitutive incest of his masculinity. He wants rather to kill that concept and his submission to the theories that put it at the center of all normality and pathology, even if it is an "alternative" normality as in the case of the Venezuelan popular world.

Even in *También los hombres son ciudades* (1962), his first novel, the most traditional narratively speaking, what seems like an "anecdote that is a guide to reconstruct family vicissitudes" (Macht de Vera, 17), already carries with it this project of detachment from the family, not affectively, but normatively. Alberto José, the narrator who recounts his childhood and serves as a chronicler of the family story, very early in the text says: "From Adriana, whom many times I called "mom", I received tenderness. The apparition of my love made me not call

[142] Moreno will say something similar of the idea of one family structure that Venezuelans must abide to, as it has been debated in the country's public sphere, but he will still mobilize binary categories that end up defining women's subjectivity as the Eurocentric conceptions has done so.

her like that anymore, but Adriana instead" (*Cuidades*, 14).[143] Trejo lures us here even before *Andén Lejano*. If *También los hombres son ciudades* contains, according to Macht de Vera, a layer that states (denotative) and another that suggests (connotative) (5), the denotative can be read in a Freudian way, while the connotative already carries the resistance to such reading. The emergence of Adriana and her disappearance as a mother (disappearance that is repeated more radically in *Andén Lejano*, as we already know), is on the surface a product of oedipal seduction if we want to keep the mother in her place. But what if, more than that, the act of naming Adriana as Adriana makes her, even in a "family fiction", more and less than a mother? Does it make her different from herself and from the patriarchal critical gaze? The nominal death that occurs in *También los hombres son ciudades*, and the death simultaneously lived and denied in *Andén Lejano*, require a reading outside of the family romance. What takes place here is not an emancipation or a substitution, nor a liberation of the subject from the parents (Freud, *Family Romances*, 238), but rather a reduction of their status as cultural monuments which act as images of a State that, in its many shapes, has felt the need to be the Dad. Moreno understood this too, and his popular family denies the need of a father, but that denial ends up affirming his own ethics of the traditional family: "The mother does not ever exercise the function of the father; at most she manages to duplicate her maternal function, but she never substitutes the absent one. In the son's heart forever and ever palpitates that sadness." (*El Aro*, 342).[144] The change of register in Moreno's language to express this is uncanny, and Freud laughs.

Trejo seems to ask in Andén Lejano: *what if we get rid of the maternal function? Is not such an operation one of the major steps to get rid of subjectivity, of characters that are just one,*

[143] "De Adriana, a quien muchas veces le dije 'mamá', recibí la ternura. La aparición de mi amor permitió que no la llamara más así sino Adriana."

[144] "La madre no cumple nunca la función del padre; lo máximo que logra hacer es reduplicar su función materna, pero nunca suplir al ausente. En el corazón del hijo late desde siempre y para siempre esa tristeza".

of communities that pretend to be homogeneous? In the same way, in TTT, the little Christs are not emancipated from their moms in an Oedipal game when they jump off the crucifixes that carry them; like Christ, they complicate the Mother-Son dyad and point to a fictive fiction that even in the Western version of the prototypical family shows its defects. Likewise, we read of nameless subjects, without a precise birthday, who appear to be children of their fathers with the father's mom (TTT, 181). The perpetrators of the genocide enforce their fictive ethnicity upon the Teresas: women, men, and non-binary subjects that have lost or abandoned their parental function (it has run away from their crucifixes). Trejo denounced this and laughs, "Deterritorializing Oedipus into the world instead of reterritorializing everything in Oedipus and the family" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 10).

The erasure of the parental function, with a dedicated treatment of it in the figure of the mother, and the construction of the fictive ethnicity as genocidal suggest in Trejo the idea of a community yet to be articulated. The non-individuality of his characters,[145] their internal and external collective impulse, as can be seen in the Teresas and in the *Ecce Homos*, do not look for synthesis. The fiction mobilizes the idea of a space of difference which rejects traditional and alternative illusions of the family and its links to State power insofar as the foundational events and myths of official communities carry with them the genocidal seed. There is no program in Trejo because that would imply a community that is realizable. He remains in the idea of it as an "unrealizable goal, a pure destination", in sympathy with the impolitical (Esposito, *Terms*, 20). However, in reading his efforts to also merge the officially divided aesthetic realms that contemporary democracy in Venezuela distinguished, his project must be localized. The question Trejo asks Esposito is whether the impolitical has a history and a map and mappability. And for

[145] "One cannot base a philosophy of community on a metaphysics of the individual" (Esposito, *Terms*, 16).

Moreno, Trejo asks, how would the Popular Episteme look like without the maternal function that drags it into modernity even without intending to? The constitution of a fiction that is more critical of other fictions than a literary critique that does not even attempt to read Trejo's texts to their final consequences, becomes a note in the margin of the complicity between State, Family and narration, a note that points to pages full of "sí" and "no", but mostly full of "´´´´´´´", accents without words, communities without subjects, and a writing without constraints. This "is the only chance of remaining an artist and, doubtless too, by means of an obscure and remote consequence, of some day serving something—perhaps even the Revolution" (Robbe-Grillet, 41), a revolution that for the French novelist and for Trejo imply creating a way of speaking that becomes unrecognizable to the critics trained under a socialist realist and a bourgeois novelistic tradition, because both categories embody the same operations of restricted meaning and representation of reality.

os gêmeos, los gemelos

In *Cannibal Metaphysics* (2009) Eduardo Viveiros de Castro states:

> …if "nothing is changed" by the fact that the primary energy is filiative, is it possible to determine an intensive order in which it would be alliance that is primary? Is it truly necessary for alliance to always exclusively arrange, distinguish, render discrete, and police an anterior pre-incestuous filiation? Is it possible to conceive of an intensive, anOedipal alliance including "prepersonal variations in intensity?" In short, the problem consists in constructing a concept of alliance qua disjunctive synthesis (131-2).

In the context of a discussion of Claude Levi-Strauss' *Elementary Structures of Kinship* and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Viveiros de Castro,

supported by this lineage (!), intervenes to question the elementary character of relations of filiation that act as lenses to read and articulate the thoughts and experiences of affinity within some Amerindian tribes. Viveiros de Castro's thought experiment, not an imagination of an experiment, but the methodological idea of "treating indigenous ideas as concepts" (187),[146] has, as one of its ultimate consequences, this displacement that was already announced by Levi-Strauss and Deleuze and Guattari with a vocabulary that Viveiros de Castro translated into his own terms.[147] When Deleuze and Guattari claim that "The universe does not function by filiation" and becoming "concerns alliance" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus*, 242, 238); and if we read Levi-Strauss, as Viveiros de Castro does, as proposing a "brother-sister incest, or "alliance incest," rather than the effectively Freudian "filiation incest" between parents and children" at the foundation of kinship (Viveiros de Castro, 178), we are in the middle of a critique of the nuclear, hierarchical family as filiation.

An alliance as disjunctive synthesis, that is, an alliance as based on a community of difference(s), or at least with that horizon, dismantles the natural, linear, and evolutive character of the family. But it also changes the emphasis in filiation as homogenization and the fear of incest as a way of moving away of such homogeneity that reproduces the socius in the link between the family and State we have elaborated above. Amerindian thought in Viveiros de Castro's proposal allows us to approach Hilst's and Trejo's texts and give a new language to their narrative explorations in terms of the family and its subsumption to the State.

There are several horizontalities at play in Viveiros de Castro's conception. First (and the rest are specific variations of this), the emphasis on alliance as disjunction instead of filiation and

[146] "Where the Indians themselves are concerned, I think that they think that all humans, and, beyond them, many other nonhuman subjects think exactly "like them." But they also think that, instead of expressing a universal referential convergence, this is precisely the reason for divergences of perspective" (188).
[147] Translation here is used as "controlled equivocation" as Viveiros de Castro himself suggests (87).

lineage; second, the fact that the Tupi word *tojavar* means both "brother-in-law" and "enemy" "its literal sense having been "opponent"" (Viveiros de Castro, 139); third, Amazonian shamanism as a transversal communication between incommunicables (151); and, fourth, amerindian twinhood as a metaphor for difference (181).

In *Cartas de um sedutor* (1991), Hilst narrates the reflections of Karl in letters sent to his sister Cordelia, where he makes reference to their incestuous relationship as teenagers. These letters, which are written or found in the trash by Stamatius, a writer and former friend of Karl who is now homeless, create a triangulation where the fantasy of the Freudian incest is displaced and horizontalized by Hilst. Here is a long passage from the first letter:

> You don't ignore how competent I was in doing the impossible so you could think (while you were with me) that you were fucking our beloved father instead. (To my knowledge, until today, we were not that fortunate.) And I acknowledge that you made an effort so I could think of mom when sucking your beautiful breasts. But Cordélia, I confess, how could I think of mom if she left (with that jerk) when I was only ten years old? And dad went crazy and burned all her pictures, leaving only the photo, taken from a magazine, of the princess of Lamballe, saying that it was mom's face. And you think I could think of mom while fucking? After reading the French Revolution when I was ten (That bloody filth of heads, ears, and pikes) and making sure that the princess of Lamballe's head was severed, put on a stick, and displayed all disheveled for the queen? (*Cartas*, 21-2).[148]

[148] "Não ignoras o quanto fui competente fazendo o impossível para que tu pensasses (quando estavas comigo) que na realidade fodias com nosso querido pai. (Sorte que, até hoje ou até onde sei, não nos coube.) E reconheço que te esforçaste para que eu pensasse em mamãe na hora de te chupar os formosos seios. Mas Cordélia, confesso, como poderia pensar em mamãe se ela se foi (com aquele panaca) quando eu tinha apenas dez aninhos, e papai enlouquecido queimou todos os seus retratos, e nos deixou apenas o retrato, extraído de uma revista, da princesa de Lamballe, segundo ele a cara de mamãe. E tu achas que eu podia pensar em mamãe na hora de fornicar, depois de ler aos dez anos de idade a Revolução Francesa (aquela nojeira de sangue cabeças orelhas e picas) e certificar-me que a princesa de Lamballe teve a cabeça decepada, enfiada numa vara e exibida desgrenhada à rainha?"

The oscillation between two kinds of incest is key here. Karl is conscious that in the psycho-socio-political space the paternal and maternal incest are on the top of the hierarchy. He wanted to offer her sister "the next best thing", but he quickly states how such Oedipal dynamic does not seem to have the importance it is claimed to have. The Oedipal impossibility for him makes him discover that there is no need for it. It makes us wonder if the de-totemization of Freud has occurred, or if the historicity of the Oedipus complex has degraded it, making it rusted and partial, seen more and more as a local myth of which Oedipus himself was a victim, as Karl says: "Poor Oedipus! Because he did not even know that the other was the mother" (*Cartas,* 160).[149] The mother has been decapitated and we are left with a patriarchal fantasy that is, nevertheless, not as central as the brother-sister link. But we cannot escape Oedipus and filiation, of course, and we discover that Cordelia did have sex with their father, got pregnant and now has a fifteen-year-old boy, whom she has initiated sexually. The resemblance of difference that authority instantiates turns out to be the pinnacle of homogeneity, while at the same time we see difference inscribed within the same person: Iohanis, Cordelia's son/brother/lover is Karl's nephew, brother, brother-in-law, and opponent (*tojavar*) in the love of Cordelia.

If Lory Lambi showed us the artificiality of the Daddy/daughter game and how it is fabricated in relation to the instrumentalization of the family body, in *Cartas de um sedutor* we witness a difference that tends to zero without ever getting there (Viveiros de Castro, 180), a more horizontal alliance that institutes a logic against the hierarchy of filiation that keeps creating sameness. The game of substituting the biggest taboo for a lesser one only reveals that the form of difference that Hilst is interested in is the one that is less perceptible, since it is not as traversed by authority, or since it fucks with authority. The power of the Oedipal fantasy gives

[149] "Pobre Édipo! Pois nem sabia que a outra era a mãe."

way to a sibling's alliance that turns into experimental, or exploratory, in Robbe-Grillet and Trejo' words, literature.

In Trejo's *Andén Lejano*, we continue reading the horizontal instances of meaning-making that Viveiro de Castro proposes, as I mentioned above. The apparently incommunicable literature of Trejo is a mistaken interpretation of his thematization of incommunicability. He emphasizes this at the beginning of the novel:

> However, mutual recognition is more effective for the oval-shaped table in relation to the table that's further away, or the smallest table, rectangular, placed in the center of the hall, the small table with objects, there, symbolizing the memory of those who left them as a token of affection for you, Ecce Homo, and for Ecce Homo. The recognition between things is more absolute than yours Ecce Homo, with Ecce Homo through all the attempts, forever failing. It is an accomplished fact, not applicable to easy chairs, tables, fruits, to all those elements that coexist more fully than you, Ecce Homo, and Ecce Homo. Those same words pronounced by you, Ecce Homo, and by Ecce Homo, resist to establish a communication, understanding, to modify what already happened, what will happen, what happens (*Andén*, 26).[150]

The two *Ecce Homos* cannot find mutual recognition; their nominal and genetic similarity is, as we saw with Hilst, a minor degree of difference. They cannot grasp each other, and yet, they are always together along the text, a disjunctive synthesis which sees the outside as more harmonic than they will ever be, one thinking their mother is dead and one thinking she is alive, the ambivalence of the attempt to escape the filial prison. Trejo is not taking the side of things, in the

[150] "Sin embargo, el mutuo reconocerse es más efectivo para la mesa ovalada respecto de la mesa más lejana, o de la mesa pequeña, rectangular, que se halla en el centro del salón, de la mesa pequeña con objetos, allí simbolizando el recuerdo hacia quienes los dejaron en demostración de afecto para contigo, Ecce Homo, y para con Ecce Homo. Es más rotundo el reconocerse las cosas entre sí que tú, Ecce Homo, y Ecce Homo a través de todos los intentos, fallidos desde siempre. Es un hecho cumplido, no aplicable a las poltronas, a las mesas, a las frutas, a cuantos elementos convivan más plenamente que tú, Ecce Homo, y Ecce Homo. Las palabras mismas pronunciadas por ti, Ecce Homo, y por Ecce Homo se resisten a establecer una comunicación, entendimiento, a modificar lo sucedido, lo que sucederá, lo que sucede."

sense Francis Ponge would, but he is saying that things do have a side, incommensurable with ours, and that we, humans, can only relate with that difference, with the difference with the other *Ecce Homos*, and with the difference with ourselves. Trejo stages a "…communication between incommunicables, a dangerous, delicate comparison between perspectives in which the position of the human is in constant dispute" (Viveiros de Castro, 151). This is very different from writing an incommunicable literature of course, but it points to another register of experience and kinship.

The Ecce Homos are twins, born "…in the same day, the same hour, the same second" (24),[151] and instead of that being a claim for a difference stemming out of sameness, Trejo inscribes failure in it as what creates the relationship and the search for the lost/dead mother, a search which, as we saw above, ends with a detotemization of the maternal function, which is mirrored in the escape of the parental function in TTT. The siblings in *Cartas de um sedutor* and the *Ecce Homo* twins in *Andén Lejano* are "far from representing the prototype of similarity or of consanguinal identity" (Viveiros de Castro, 180). In contrast, these siblings demand a movement from the local European to the local Amerindian to think about reconfigurations of the family and community, since "Amerindian twinhood −provisional, incomplete, semi-meditative, divergent, in disequilibrium, and tinted by incestuous antagonism− is the internal repetition of potential affinity; the unequal twins are the mythical personification of "the unavoidable dissymmetry" that forms the condition of the world" (Viveiros de Castro, 180). It is in this sense that the minimal degree of difference acquires a radical and incommunicable status that looks for ways of moving away from the family as a replicator of the State. The alliance Hilst and Trejo establish with Amerindian thought in this sense, speak to what Viveiros de Castro states:

[151] "…en un mismo día, una misma hora, un mismo segundo".

"…every filiation projects a State, is a State filiation. We could further say, in homage to Pierre Clastres, that Amazonian intensive alliance is an alliance against the State" (177).

3. The Displacement of Racial Democracy: Miguel James and Carolina Maria de Jesus

This is the pursuit of movement. Not as forensic notes, a popular form of criticism, but as an attempt to move *with* which will take the form of a moving *against* and of an escape. Sometimes a refusal to move implies its own movement. It is a coming to terms with a kind of non-linear impulse I will call displacement in the Venezuelan writer Miguel James and Brazilian author Carolina Maria de Jesus. Both James and de Jesus, as we will see, speak from somewhere else while being circumscribed within a (national) territory, and that somewhere else is the product of an ancestral as well as biographical set of passages through Blackness. In the case of James, his migration from Trinidad to Venezuela as a kid marks a first displacement which will start an overflow of movements through his poetic oeuvre, where Blackness is never at the center but creates a system of meaning against the canonical and against white and *mestizo* supremacy obliquely but from diverse angles. De Jesus, for her part, writes as being the result of a movement from the countryside to the slums of the city in modernity, but that echoes a history of migrations and escapes of Africans in Brazil and later Afro-Brazilians that have only partially been accounted for in the national project. Their work, therefore, carries movement with it, and it is such movement the element which disorganizes social hierarchies sedimented as immemorial by an operation of racial democracy that has been successful in Venezuela and Brazil. This sense of being elsewhere while being inside and the counter-History it reveals is what I call displacement.

The diasporic character of Black history in the Americas, and the particular condition in which a project of racial democracy includes and erases such a history, in favor of a miscegenation which creates something new and national, produces its own kind of oscillation.

Are we in or are we out? Being in, implies a policing of the imagination, in Fred Moten's words, an elimination of a kind of thinking that "comes from nothing, from nowhere, which is the real presence of our displacement, which is everywhere, in everything" (*Passage*, 195). The work of James and de Jesus are precisely attempts to tackle that in−or−out question, both for the intellectual sake of the question, as well as, sometimes, for survival. These movements are, in fact, everywhere in terms of time, as the history of slave revolts teach us, and in terms of space, as the modernization in Latin America shows. But they displace the tradition of criticism and the ways of reading that under a racially democratic lens underread or simply cannot read the authors' work. We will start, then, with a problematization of criticism that will lead to the ways of reading we propose.

the construction of hybridity

In the *Manifesto Antropófago*, or "Cannibalist Manifesto", from 1928, Oswald de Andrade sentences: "The spirit refuses to conceive a spirit without a body. Anthropomorphism. Need for the cannibalistic vaccine. To maintain our equilibrium, against meridian religions. And against outside inquisitions" (39).[152] An entire book should be written to unpack and to think with these few lines; my intention is, however, to shed some light on a few aspects and rather than stay with those lines, see where thought moves, and how it moves. The very start of the passage projects us, as readers, into the past and the future. The idea that "The spirit refuses to conceive a spirit without a body", calls to mind that famous anecdote told and retold by Claude Levi-Strauss a few decades after de Andrade's manifesto, in 1952 (*Race et Histoire*), and in 1955 (*Tristes Tropiques*). But the anecdote also violently refers to the past, since Levi-Strauss mentions it is

[152] "O espírito recusa-se a conceber o espírito sem o corpo. O antropomorfismo. Necessidade da vacina antropofágica. Para o equilíbrio contra as religiões de meridiano. E as inquisições exteriores".

taken from Indian Chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo. Levi-Strauss tells us how in the early sixteenth century, in the island now known as Puerto Rico, "the Indians would capture white men and drown them. Then, for several weeks, they would mount guard round the drowned bodies in order to find out whether or not they were subject to decay" (76). Thinking about the constant query of the Europeans to determine whether the indigenous people had a soul to be saved, trying to find a guarantee that they could be converted to Christianity, a question that constantly cast doubts on the very humanity of the natives, Levi-Strauss continues "…while the whites maintained that the Indians were beasts, the Indians did no more than suspect that the whites might be gods. Both attitudes show equal ignorance, but the Indians' behavior certainly had greater human dignity" (76).

There are several readings of this subtle and powerful intervention by Levi-Strauss. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro sees it as an example of an equivocal relation, a disequilibrium that points to how "Amerindian ontological regimes" diverge from Western ones (52), arguing for a multinaturalism, and a reconfiguration of the idea of relation as based on this equivocal difference, an ethics of perspectivism and the existence of many worlds. Silviano Santiago, for his part, reads Levi-Strauss' comments, and the anecdote itself, as a contrast to the insistence of the Europeans that the indigenous people were in a state of constant infancy, being therefore incapable of being free human beings. There is an intellectual and spiritual preoccupation in the natives, but one that only becomes legible through a perpectivist lens, perhaps.

But Santiago goes deeper in his analysis, though:

> Violence is always practiced by the Indians for religious purposes. Faced with the whites, who considered themselves to be the bearers of God's word, each and every one a prophet, the reaction of the Indian is to test to what extent the words of the Europeans

> translate into transparent truth. One must wonder, however, whether the experiences of the Puerto Rican Indians could not be justified by the religious zeal of the missionaries. Their successive sermons preached the immortality of the True God and the resurrection of Christ: as a result, the Indians were more than eager to witness the biblical miracle and experience religious mystery in all its enigmatic splendor. Thus, for the Indians the proof of God's power should reveal itself not so much through the passive *assimilation* of the Christian word but rather through the *vision* of a truly miraculous act (*In-Between*, 27).

This is what Santiago writes in "Latin American Discourse: The Space In-Between", from 1971.[153] The preoccupation there, as it was for Oviedo and other Europeans writing about the conquest, but also for Levi-Strauss, de Andrade, and for Viveiros de Castro, is related to the making sense of a practice that is similar but different, that superficially resembles "passive *assimilation*": *you kill me, I drown you*; but where there is more going on: *I don't doubt you have a soul, but is your body capable of performing these miracles you are talking about?* We go back to de Andrade, then, to spirits refusing to accept the refusal of the body. The "cannibalistic vaccine" is that dislocation that has been so hard to read, a slight correction that goes beyond the derivative, the copy, the influence or the aspirational. There is not a version of history that can ignore the imposed contamination (material and symbolic),[154] so a partially controlled inoculation is what de Andrade sees and proposes at the same time.

The desire to transform America into a simulacrum of an "original" Europe, fails in the inevitable fact of the creation of a "mestizo" society in which a "gradual infiltration achieved by

[153] This essay was originally written in French, then republish in English, and finally rewritten in Portuguese and published in 1978 with the title "*O Entre-Lugar do Discurso Latinoamericano*." Its production history seems to mimic some of the arguments of intellectual hybridity Santiago mobilizes.

[154] "In their wish to exterminate the indigenous race, the colonizers would collect the infected clothes of smallpox victims in the hospitals in order to hang them, together with other gifts, along the routes most usually frequented by the tribes" (Santiago, *In-Between*, 30).

'savage thought'" (Santiago, *In-Between*, 30) is enacted, hybridizing the forms colonialism wanted to preserve. Santiago performs the internalization of such a copy/non-copy practice by presenting deep variations of ideas that are key to twentieth century Latin American thought, starting with José Vasconcelos' *raza cósmica*. Vasconcelos, in 1925, sees Latin America as the perfect scenario for the imminent coming of the "cosmic race" as a materialization of history's purpose of unity (40):

> The dispersion will come to an end on American soil; unity will be consummated there by the triumph of fecund love and the improvement of all human races. In this fashion, the synthetic race that shall gather all the treasures of History in order to give expression to universal desire shall be created (18).

There is a teleological movement which is headed to the unification of humanity, a sort of social *élan vital* in Vasconcelos, as Santiago Castro-Gómez claims (78). "Universal desire" is the future's call for the merging of the "four racial trunks: the Black, the Indian, the Mongol, and the White" (Vasconcelos, 9) that will form a "fifth universal race", the cosmic race. Even when Europeans thought they were conquering and merely moving their culture to another place, they were setting the basis for a "general and definitive transformation" (Vasconcelos, 10). And even when these colonizing movement also reached North America, for Vasconcelos, those of the north "…*committed the sin of destroying those races, while we assimilated them, and this gives us new rights and hopes for a mission without precedent in History*" (17).

The horrors of colonization then, will serve a higher purpose. And Latin America will be the scenario for the fulfillment of History's purpose, as opposed to North America, where something like a creole elite (the "we" that assimilates "those races") was not as possible because of the "inflexible line that separates the Blacks from the Whites in the United States"

(Vasconcelos, 19). In Vasconcelos we see a monumentalization of miscegenation, his own version of a cannibalistic logic as a transition to a superior race that destroys old hierarchies to create new ones. This sort of anti-imperialist imperialism and anti-purity puritanism, would not be possible without the mobilization of synthesis as the primordial mechanism of dealing with difference and with multiplicity. As Alfonso Reyes, his contemporary, claims, the Latin American intelligence (*La inteligencia americana*) "…has the call to perform the most noble complementary function: to keep making syntheses, even if necessarily provisional ones; to keep applying the result quickly, verifying theory's value in action's living flesh" (9).

There is at least another possible goal, or another variation of that universalization Vasconcelos sanctioned, which also illuminates one possibility of the cannibalistic flag. Even as Europeans, North Americans and members of the Latin American elites view such miscegenation as dangerous, more pragmatic scientists in the 19th century in complicity with government officials, particularly in Brazil, viewed such miscegenation as the only realistic possibility of a whitening of the country. According to Zita Nunes: "Further encouragement for the whitening thesis was provided by calculations that speculated that the white race would incorporate the Black and Indian within four or five generations" (6).

Santiago's hybridity has the character of the non-essential, which distances him from the early proponents of *embranquecimiento,* but a dark genealogy of his ideas can be seen in the figure of Vasconcelos.[155] In complicity with de Andrade, Santiago claims that "The major

[155] While Vasconcelos is the most notable figure, others like Argentinian philosopher Rodolfo Kusch, for example, are part of this early intellectual genealogy of synthesis and hybridity. In América Profunda (1962), Kusch attempts to unearth the categories of "an American thought" (3) and perform an American dialectics (5). The two poles of such a dialectics are characterized by the two forms of the verb to be: *ser* and *estar*. For Kusch, *ser* is linked to European culture and the European occupation of the American territory in the 16th century. *Ser* can be reduced to "being someone." *Estar*, on the other hand, is linked with pre-Columbian cultures, and it is associated by Kusch with a "being there", in the sense of the connection with the environment and with the earth. The confusion between *ser* and *estar* is what constitute the Latin American way of being in the world (6). But this dialectical relation between the two is not one of equals. Even if European culture has imposed its language and enabled

contribution of Latin America to Western culture is to be found in its systematic destruction of the concepts of unity and purity" (*In-Between*, 30). The "against outside inquisitions" to which de Andrade mobilizes cannibalism, becomes an aesthetic maxim for Santiago: "To speak, to write, means to speak against, to write against" (*In-Between*, 31). But again, this is a displaced *against*, it is not the reactive, oppositional violence of the natives waging a symmetrical war against the Europeans, drowning them with that intention. It is an *against* that in the "anthropophagous ritual of Latin American discourse" (Santiago, *In-Between*, 38) enters into complicity with the *between* of W.E.B. DuBois as analyzed by Nahum Chandler. When DuBois opens *The Souls of Black Folk* with "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question" (DuBois, 7), he is, according to Chandler, exceeding an oppositional logic which would point to a radicality "without reminder" (Chandler, 3). "Another sort of logic, could, perhaps, be elucidated, one that would take over the radicality assumed by the oppositional logic and make it its own" (4), Chandler says. The "me" and the "other world", as the natives and the Europeans, do not share the same meaning of what an opponent means,[156] displacing or exhausting the agonistic readings and moving to a space where the between and the against create (and need) other structures of intelligibilities for their reception: "in the midst of another logic, an other logic, logic of the other" (Chandler, 5).

---

vertiginous processes of modernization, Kusch argues that the *estar*, that is, the indigenous cultures, resolve this tension by assimilating *ser* while at the same time remaining immersed in the way of life signaled by *estar*. Kusch will call this process fagocitation (fagocitación): "…the absorption of the pristine things of the West by America's own things, as a mode of equilibrium and a reintegration of what is human in these lands" (18). So the synthesis is biased, or one-sided, as it were. Kusch will go further later in his text: "From the indigenous point of view, it is only natural that fagocitation takes place, given that being (*ser*) someone is transitory and by any means immutable and eternal. This is why *estar* and *ser* maintain a mother-son-like relationship. And moving away from the plane of the indigenous, we can say, now at an ontological level, if you will, that such a fagocitation occurs in the same way in which the grand history —that is, the history of the *estar*— distorts, to the point of gobbling it up, the small history —of *ser*. And it is because fagocitation is a primitive law that makes distention natural, and the tension of ser unnatural and circumstantial" (201).

[156] The Tupi word tojavar, for example, means both "brother-in-law" and "enemy", "its literal sense having been "opponent"" (Viveiros de Castro, 139).

This equivocal relation, this disjunctive synthesis marked by the *against*, and informed by a non-oppositional quality, will mark our readings from now on, in an attempt to inscribe and unfold the scenes of this other logic and the logic of the other within a context of *mestizaje* in Venezuela and Brazil.

against

If unity and purity are destroyed by the Latin American thought Santiago calls *hybrid* and *mestizo,* it is because of the way in which such thought contaminates and complicates what on the surface simply resembles an assimilation of (and to) Western literature. "Since Latin America can no longer close its doors to foreign invasion nor recuperate its condition as a ''paradise'' of isolation and innocence, one realizes with cynicism that, without such resignifications, its product would be a mere copy" (Santiago, *In-Between,* 30). The *writing against* then, means walking on a tightrope surrounded by precarity, derivativeness, plagiarism, and the naïve outside that a discourse of deficiencies or dependence sanction (as well as some revolutionary discourses fond of a conformity with dialectics). However, whether he wants it or not, Santiago still articulates a block or an entity, even if hybrid, that we can call Latin American. There is, of course, a strategic mobilization of such an entity, but its heterogeneity is only subtly implied insofar as it is cannibalistic and never completely unified. Certain suspicions of the against and an openness to imagine an against *against* the against, enabled by Santiago's voice and silence, and qualified by his (and DuBois' via Chandler) non-oppositional logic start to awaken. No better moment then, to read the Venezuelan-Trinidadian writer Miguel James (b. 1953), born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and moving to Venezuela when he was six years old. His biography, marks a displacement, and his corpus presents a heterogeneity that any attempt to unify what

Venezuelan, or Latin American, literature is, would assimilate eliminating any residues. This is "Against the Police":

> My entire Oeuvre is against the police
> If I write a Love poem it's against the police
> And if I sing the nakedness of bodies I sing against the police
> And if I make this Earth a metaphor I make a metaphor against the police
> If I speak wildly in my poems I speak against the police
> And if I manage to create a poem it's against the police
> I haven't written a single word, a verse, a stanza that isn't against the police
> All my prose is against the police
> My entire Oeuvre
> Including this poem
> My whole Oeuvre
> Is against the police
> (*Kentakes*, 59, translated by Guillermo Parra).[157]

The hyperbolic while undramatic voice in the poem confesses a nucleus in James' project, but one that is constantly moving across all the themes and formal concerns of his oeuvre. This constant displacement comes with a reminder, though, that the *against* is what makes the work possible. It is not only an abstract against, there is a location of the poet and a localization of what is being poeticized against. The position of someone who experiences oppression, and incarnates it as an identification, even if a mobile one, against the repressive state apparatus, is a tricky one, perhaps too fixated in an oppositional logic. But the operation of specifying the object he is against, the police, and his response to it, the proliferation of a written oeuvre, conflate the space of bare power with a multiplication of seemingly unrelated signifiers that go beyond this poem but are compiled by it.

[157] Toda mi Obra es contra la policía / Si escribo un poema de Amor es contra la policía / Y si canto a la desnudez de los cuerpos canto contra la policía / También si metaforizo esta Tierra metaforizo contra la policía / Si digo locuras en mis poemas las digo contra la policía / Y si logro crear un poema es contra la policía / Yo no he escrito una palabra, un verso, una estrofa que no sea contra la policía / Mi prosa toda es contra la policía / Toda mi Obra / Incluyendo este poema / Mi Obra entera / Es contra la policía.

James does not isolate the political poem, but instead contaminates his previous ones, and the ones to come, with an *against* that is not as worried about his work's status as Latin American, or Venezuelan, but that knows it both comprises and exceeds such status. This explains the flooding of the entire oeuvre with the condition of its possibility that is contained in every other text but that is only explicitly articulated in this poem. That this poem is just one more example, and not the archetype or the central piece of James' project−"My entire Oeuvre / including this poem"−, removes any singled out trust in just one thematic element in his texts. It also disseminates the against, making it take as many shapes as possible, while also giving it a corporeality, since not every Latin American writer, and not every Venezuelan writer occupies this particular against. The against in James gains a hyperlocalized character that needs to be analyzed.

Poet and essayist Anne Boyer speaks of poetry's "relative silence", and how it provides an eloquent negativity that creates its own kind of meaning. She labels this poem by James as the most elegant among "all the poems of *no*" (Boyer, *No*). What is that which James is affirming, with Santiago and Boyer, and yet rejecting by showing an excessive quality that goes beyond his classification under a national canon? The exercise of displacement and of cannibalistic copy/not-copy is there, producing a new meaning that disseminates an *against the police* that is visible in the invisible, that conditions our reading of his other poems while freeing them in James' polyrhythmic logic. A refusal of authority, of course, but by a way of an *in-your-face* and subtle play with the horizontalization of a corpus: the undermining or rejection to accept *this* poem as a structuring nucleus while performing it as such. James undertakes a double task, he has two jobs (at least), which is why he is such an ambiguous figure to read within any kind of

tradition in Venezuelan literature, one who belies any kind of comfort with the idea of Latin American and Venezuelan identity.

There is very little that is known about James' biography, other than the fact that he came to Venezuela with his family when he was six years-old in 1959, that he published his first book *Mi novia Itala come flores* in 1988, and his ninth and latest poetry collection *Kentakes* in 2003, along with his first novel Sarita *Sarita tú eres bien bonita*, in 2004. He has lived in the cities of Caracas and Mérida, without being part of the literary canon while still being included in literary circles in both cities and published in presses with national circulation; and since the early 2000s friends, and even family, have lost track of his whereabouts, with some rumors that he went back to Trinidad. It is safe to assume, though, that his family was part of the many Trinidadians that came to Venezuela for better job opportunities since the oil boom in the early twentieth century (Jones, 494), and that in a country with a majority of mixed-raced and a significant percentage of black population, James would not stand out too much as a foreigner.

James' corpus/*cuerpo* and his references to his walk on the tightrope where Venezuela is on one side and Trinidad on the other, illuminate Venezuelan literature in a singular way. What his ambiguous figure has to say is that racial democracy is complicit with the hybridity that the critical tradition keeps celebrating, and that there are problems in this celebratory impulse. He ridicules universalizations of such hybridity by sneaking in them to turn them on their head often. Let's take *A Ti* (To You), form 1993:

I
Prince
Of Africa
In
This world
Tell you
I love you
And I wish

To spend
Next
Christmas
With you
To you
whom
The Ashantis
Of Trinago
Guyana
Jamaica
And Kumasi
Will honor
To you
whom
The Yorubas
Will adore
As a goddess
To you
Canarian
White woman
Of African
Blood (*Caramelo*, 27).[158]

The process of blackening that James mobilizes in the text, precisely contaminates the poetic situation with the residues that racial democracy eliminates. Against the historical whitening by favoring European immigration and making it harder for non-Europeans and non-whites to have the same opportunities in a country with a promising future in the early and mid-twentieth century, James here not only sheds light on the fact that a great number of Spaniards who came to Venezuela at the same time as his family came from Trinidad, were coming from the Canary Islands, not only geographically located in Africa, but a place where the natives were also colonized, creating its own kind of miscegenation. There is no racial "purity" in this white woman James, or his poetic voice, seems to be infatuated with, and the one drop rule he seems to

[158] Yo / Príncipe / De África / En / Este mundo / Te digo / Te quiero / Y deseo / Pasar / Las próximas / Navidades / Contigo / A ti / A quien / Pagarán / Tributo / Los Ashantis / De Trinago / Guyana / Jamaica / Y Kumasi / A ti / A quien / Adorarán / Como / A Diosa / Los Yorubas / A Ti / Canaria / Mujer Blanca / De sangre / Africana. (My English translation).

appropriate stands against the fantasies of *blanqueamiento* that, as Winthrop Wright points out, go hand in hand with the national project of purity in miscegenation (10; 56-58). The regal, but telegraphic, form of his discourse emphasizes a multiplicity of reversals that we will see in other poems, or his inhabitation within poetry and within Venezuelan culture, while still having the mark of a partial outsider: born elsewhere and black. This allows James to unmask the myth.

What we deem as an excess over hybridity that James' work represents is given by the fact that Venezuela's official discourse of racial democracy privileges hybridity while carefully making sure that each component of such a character stay in its place or disappears in favor of the desired archetype, in a sort of aseptic procedure against uncontrolled contamination. It is not a lie that the majority of Venezuela's population, and Venezuelan culture, has a multiple constitution, where White, African, and Indigenous elements co-exist together, sometimes in indistinguishable ways. But, as Diónys Rivas Armas, echoing anthropologist Miguel Acosta Saignes, says, it is crucial to analyze how such a fusion came about historically (Rivas Armas, 233). In addition, Acosta Saignes, in 1949, argues how unhelpful it is to just describe Venezuelan identity by claiming it is composed by white, indigenous, and black influences. He advocates for a substitution of such a "void generalization" for a systematic analysis of the cultural specificities of the particular groups of Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous which, in asymmetrical relationships established by colonization, helped form the Venezuelan population for centuries. Only in this way, Acosta Saignes warns, and in direct relation with an analysis of the modes of production and the classist relations derived from it since colonization, up to the process of independence, can we make sense of miscegenation in a historically relevant way (98).

Acosta Saignes also claims that, in the struggle for independence, Indigenous, Africans, and mixed-raced people strategically came together after three centuries of an agonistic process (184), but as Pablo Quintero argues, those plural interests were betrayed, and the constitution of the Republic in the following decades "configures a homogeneous model of national identity based on the myth of racial democracy", where miscegenation creates an equivalence between all races, de-historicizing how such miscegenation came about (Quintero, 163). We will turn now to an analysis of the material implications that such "void generalization" has when thinking about the political space and the production of culture in Venezuela.

Ligia Montañez's work aims at dismantling the myth of racial democracy as a fantasy which has benefited the elites and that has been maintained until the present. In *El Racismo Oculto en una Sociedad no Racista*, from 1993, Montañez states:

> But the simple affirmation, common amongst our population, that we are all *mestizos* in Venezuela, has a different meaning and function whether it is uttered by a white bourgeois person, by a brown professional, or by a black cleaning lady or empanada maker. It is an affirmation that must be examined if we want to establish its historical and social validity (67-8).[159]

Montañez analyses *mestizaje* as a polyvalent signifier that depends on how it is mobilized and by whom. She localizes and signals particular embodiments of that which national discourse has made seem as immemorial or as a radical break since our independence, with the intention of unearthing a history of inequalities that the early republic and contemporary democracy have not erased. Before Montañez, Pedro Trigo opened the idea of mestizaje up for suspicion by claiming

[159] "Pero la afirmación sencilla, común en medio de nuestra población, según la cual todos somos mestizos en Venezuela, tiene significado y función distintas según sea dicha por una persona blanca de nuestra burguesía, por un profesional trigueño o por una señora negra empleada de la limpieza o hacedora de empanadas. Es una afirmación que ha de ser revisada a fin de precisar su real validez histórica y social". *My translation.*

how it did not represent our collective cultural currency, but that it rather operated as a cover-up, naturalizing conflicts that are, in fact, historical (62). In this sense, Montañez expands on Trigo analysis, proposing that the concept of *mestizaje* carries with it a triple meaning. Firstly, *mestizaje* is a progressive idea, a notion that, for Montañez, expresses above all a wish, even if it also expresses a partial reality. It signals a path of social justice and a branch of anti-racist struggle that does not have a strong vocabulary in Venezuela. Secondly, *mestizaje* is an ideological term; even if racial mixture is an evident feature in the majority of the population, the mobilization of such an observation "creates an obstacle to the acknowledgment that such a physical reality possesses an unequal and contradictory social expression" (68), it gives an illusion of equivalence and impartiality among all the components of such a synthesis. Thirdly, and as a consequence of the last meaning, Montañez describes the idea of *mestizaje* as a demagogic concept, as an arm of political programs that force a heterogeneous population to comply with the mandates of the centers of political and economic power, because, since we are all equal, we must all participate in the advancement of the nation (69). The materiality of *mestizaje* as ideology and demagogy, then, and the preservation of *mestizaje* as a progressive idea only as a future to come, according to Montañez, makes invisible a legacy of anti-blackness that is the product of three centuries of enslavement (169) until emancipation in 1854, after which things did not improve significantly for those not completely legible under the incipient discourse of racial democracy. James' position as a black Trinidadian-Venezuelan, gives him a vantage point from which to see this oppressive *mestizaje* as that which articulates the nation, like the dove flying over the national heroes of one of his poems, as we will analyze later: "You poo on the founding father with the silver saber / And don't forget the one with the scarlet spear / So they know what kind of nations they have left us with" (*Caramelo*, 20).

The collapse of some of these meanings of *mestizaje*, as pointed out by Montañez, becomes evident in the discourse of poet and politician Andres Eloy Blanco, one of the most important referents in the tight relationship between the cultural field and the political space in Venezuelan contemporaneity. Blanco was a founding member of Acción Democrática, a center left political party with a popular agenda, and crucial for the country's recent establishment of democracy. In 1944, in his response to a friend who explained how the Brazilian government was offering monetary compensation to white citizens for marrying black persons, Blanco wrote that they were going about it the wrong way. He saw this whitening of the population as un-Latin American, and claimed that in Venezuela such a problem of racial tensions was solved by letting miscegenation operate freely, creating a balanced race: *café con leche* (cited in Wright, 1).[160] Blanco's comment signals a difference between his ideal (shared by many) of what Latin America should look like, and its contrast to a place like the US. It implies a blind acceptance of racial democracy as the post-independence truth of the country's identity. For Wright, however, whose book takes the very common racial descriptor as its title: *Café con Leche*, Blanco's position, while logical in a country with a 70% of mixed-race population, and without many overt manifestations of racial violence in the form of hate crimes, gives the illusion of a racial utopia that blocks the possibility of seeing another form of whitening in that process (2). The problem, according to Wright, is not the existence of a visible racial segregation, but of a more fluid mobility where mixed-race and even black individuals can have access to positions of power, but always at the expense of black (and indigenous) persons who continue to suffer

[160] A common racial descriptor, *Café con Leche* serves to designates mixed-race, brown looking, people in Venezuela. Even if the result of *Café con Leche* comes from the combination of a black element (coffee), and a white one (milk), the terms does not only designate those of a white and a black parent, but virtually any brown Venezuelan without much regards for specifying their background.

discrimination in a context with numerous exceptions to the rule (Wright, 2, 7-9).[161] Racial democracy, in the words of Nunes "…depends on a narrative of assimilation in which the "black race" is incorporated into the white race" blocking "…the possibility of a political life of plurality and difference" (135). In other words, it implies the existence of blackness and indigeneity as a foil against which a top-down projection of plurality operates. It is a forced visibilization and an erasure at the same time.

This erasure of blackness, then, is masked by the absence of an institutionalized racism, as it was, and is, the case in the United States, particularly in the Jim Crow era and its present aftermath. Since in Venezuela, an attack on a racial group as a group is rare, the implicit practice of everyday racism makes the recognition of a racial inequality very difficult, as Jun Ishibashi points out (27). The situation in Venezuela, in this sense, is similar, but not identical, with that of

[161] Wright compares Venezuela to Argentina and Brazil, and puts Argentina on one side of the spectrum of racial prejudice and Venezuela on the other, while Brazil is in a relative middle, but closer to Venezuela. I quote at length: "Historically, blacks and nonwhites have played a more important role in political and social institutions in Venezuela than in any other South American nation, with the notable exception of Guyana and Suriname. Argentines simply purged blacks from their national image and presented themselves to the world as white EuroAmericans. For their part, Brazilians compromised their racist instincts by showing an ostensible tolerance for blacks, even though they kept them from holding powerful positions in government and social institutions. But since Venezuela's inception as an independent nation in 1830, its blacks and *pardos* have held powerful positions in regional and national elites. The process actually began in the colonial era and continued through the wars of independence. Since 1830, each subsequent generation of elites experienced the infusion of new members from nonwhite groups. During the better part of the nineteenth century, and again after the death of Gómez in 1935, blacks and nonwhites gained access to political power at regional and national levels. This social and political mobility of Venezuelan blacks differed markedly from the experiences of blacks in Argentina and Brazil, where the elites remained white and enjoyed far greater continuity from one generation to another" (9). Beyond the fact that throughout his book Wright keeps calling black Venezuelans or Afro-Venezuelan "the blacks", he points to an important point, the presence of nonwhites in power positions historically. This, however, as we have mentioned, creates the perfect context for an erasure of racial difference and an isolated focus on class-based politics which is still predominant as a national discourse even against the experience of many Afro and Indigenous Venezuelans. Wright is aware of this (see 2 and 5), but seems to still have some confidence in Venezuela, much more than Brazil, as the society that will be successful in implementing a "true" racial democracy: "Venezuelans had made a *café con leche* society a viable one, one in which people of all races belonged to all social strata. Obviously, the myth of racial democracy does not stand up under the scrutiny of historical review. But all the same, Venezuelans lived in a primarily mixed society in which race, while an important factor for poor blacks, did not serve as an impenetrable obstacle for mobility. Historically, changes in political rhetoric, accompanied by scholarly works and legal developments, have been important in the move toward racial democracy" (12). More than thirty years after the publication of *Café con Leche*, this move towards racial democracy does not seem accomplishable.

Brazil, Colombia, or Panama (Quintero, 166), where racial conflicts are either turned into a class conflict without a consideration of intersectionality, or where they are dismissed by invoking racial democracy as the foundation of the country and comparing the Venezuelan case with the history of the US or apartheid South-Africa.

The position of the *mestizo* is a tricky one, then, not only because the beginnings of the process of miscegenation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were charged with sexual violence perpetrated by the Europeans on indigenous and African women (Montañez, 70), but also because, as Montañez states, the *mestizo* is simultaneously on the side of the object of discrimination, and the discriminator (170). This play of an even more perverse narcissism of little differences, to use Freud's term, contradicts the supposed equality of belonging to a nation where miscegenation unifies us, displaying instead a gradation of internalized racism as well as the existence of a somewhat opaque white privilege that only becomes clear after analyzing race and class together and dismantling the idea of racial democracy.

So we turn back to James by assuming an against the against, a solidarity with the cannibal discourse but a "something else" to it, and adding a new signification to that tightrope he walks with Venezuela on one side and Trinidad on the other, one that is closer to the between of Du Bois and his idea of the color line (113), a blurred one perhaps, or that is painted on a road: James is walking that line.

In *Rosas Robadas* (Stolen Roses), included in *Mi novia Ítala come flores,* from 1988, James' trickster-insider/outsider's voice inhabits the trickiness of Venezuela's reality of inequality as we described it above, while at the same time confirming the dissemination of the ideas he will more directly express in "Against the Police" in 2003. This is *Rosas Robadas*:

> I appear with the moon and with her I go embrace me like a bear I love you crazy I love you Mari don't do anything with me don't explode there are no cigarettes in my mouth

> put yours on me Mari I will get my pillow washed I will cut back on my phone flirting I won't love calendar girls your breasts are two chocolate ice cream cones I swear Mari I did not look through the bars all the stars fell over you I will kill Queen Elizabeth the mom of ? don't understand me hear the singing of the frogs choke me with your braids Mari dressed in blue I give you a bouquet of stolen roses I broke all the shopwindows of the city Mari Mari Mariiiii the po-lice! let's not get sad no one knows me damn me I have a beard I am honest I don't know you are we sad Mari? The mortuary! embrace me bear embrace me Mari Mari Mari Mariiiiiiiiii…(*Itala*, 19).[162]

The text, which exist in the verge of intelligibility, and which combines a conversational tone with a display of a discourse that cannot flow, that seems to be pronounced in a rush, that is being forced to remain silent (as a right that becomes an imposition for racialized and minoritized subjects dealing with the authorities), is a love story that ends in tragedy. A writing against the police is shown here again, quite literally. But what is also shown is the tragic possibility of what such a confrontation might entail, not only the dissolution of a love that was perhaps only imaginary, but death itself. The innocent love poem loses its innocence in an intended way, full of lust: "your breasts are two chocolate ice cream cones", or "choke me with your braids". But it also does so in an unintended way, begging for an embrace while dying at the hands of the police. Love here serves as an emancipatory possibility amidst institutional violence and a context where having the material means to express such love is an impossibility. The mortuary, however, is the final destination in the poem, the place to which a State for which love between certain 'citizens' and rioting means the same thing, sends the I of the poem. The run-on discourse in the poem, rather than a stream of consciousness, resembles the speech of

[162] Aparezco con la luna y me voy con ella abrázame como una osa te amo loco te amo Mari no hagas nada conmigo no explotes no tengo cigarros en los labios ponme los tuyos Mari mandaré lavar mi almohada cortaré mis galanteos telefónicos no amaré chicas de almanaque tus senos son dos barquillas de chocolate te juro Mari no miré por rendijas sobre ti cayeron todas las estrellas mataré a la reina Isabel a la mamá de ? no me comprendas escucha el canto de los sapos ahórcame con tus trenzas Mari vestida de azul te regalo un ramo de rosas robadas rompí todas las vidrieras de la ciudad Mari Mari Mariiiii ¡la po-li-cí-a! no nos pongamos tristes ninguno me conoce me maldigo tengo barbas soy sincero no te conozco ¿estamos tristes Mari? ¡la morgue abrázame osa abrázame Mari Mari Mari Mariiiiiiiiii…(*My English translation*).

someone that knows he has not much time, someone reciting from the tomb almost, but in a celebratory tone to an extent. It is an almost muffled uttering, against an inclusion in civic life on the condition of having only one chance to speak before being put in jail.

A critique of citizenship is at stake throughout James' work, in this hybrid and mestizo way that ends up articulating a discourse against mestizo supremacy (and the white supremacy it hides). Poems like *Testas Coronadas* (Crowned Heads), also from 1988 keep working in this direction:

> Farewell freedom to crush those who do not wish to be accomplices
> dissidence turned party
> beautiful institutions
> Hunger represented unhappiness with a voice
> You bloat your cemeteries with coffins citizens
> Glory to the crowned heads
> Fortified citadels (*Itala*, 37).[163]

It is as if, pages later, *Testas Coronadas* is responding or offering company to *Rosas Robadas.* The goodbye to freedom points to the prison as the space for the inclusion of certain citizens, especially those that embody the intersection between blackness or indigeneity and poverty that the *mestizo* utopia decides to be blind to. It also illuminates the bloated stomach of the national body, the cemetery filled with corpses that only become proper citizens when deceased. But it marks, in parallel, the fact that liberty, even without prison or death, associated indissolubly with the racial paradise, is a living hell for those who do not form part of that shared delirium. The "beautiful institutions" give everyone a voice, an unhappy voice like the one speaking in *Rosas Robadas*, running out of time and out of love, oscillating between jail or the mortuary. Representational politics counts everyone, even the hungry ones, who remain hungry but taken

[163] Adiós libertad para aplastar a quien no desea ser cómplice / disidencia hecha partido / hermosas instituciones / El hambre representada la infelicidad con voz / Hinchaís vuestros cementerios con urnas ciudadanas / Gloria a las testas coronadas / Ciudadelas fortificadas (*My English translation*).

into account as Venezuelans, participating in the performance of the nation where everyone is equal. Montañez's point comes back, and she asks with James: is *mestizaje* the same for those who inhabit James' texts as for those who choose to believe in the utopia? Is it enough to say that it is not as bad as it could be? The "Farewell freedom" takes on the force of a need to escape the dialectic of freedom and enslavement/imprisonment/annihilation. The poem implies an unchaining *from* the logic of freedom, since it leads, for some 'citizens' to the tragic endings James presents to us. Freedom is a destroyer of community in James' poetical project, as Fred Moten puts it, freedom imposes "…the breaking of affective bonds, the disavowal, in entanglement, of entanglement." Moten continues: "What if freedom is nothing more than vernacular loneliness?" (Moten, *Erotics,* 251). James knows this, and the solitude of being given a voice that only can speak from jail or from the tomb, after being denied the possibility of love, is his farewell to the dialectic of freedom that accompanies the national discourse of racial democracy.

James' response is given with a constant, stubborn, attempt to disseminate a critique of freedom by constituting a partial, non-oppositional stance. Moten helps us see this once again: "The freedom drive is where the failed imitation of sovereignty, of the simultaneously omnicreative, autocreative, uncreative power that sovereignty is supposed to have, takes that self-destructive social turn, which is then aligned with or is conceived of as failure rather than the interinanimation of refusal and (alternative) claim" (*Erotics,* 263). Not only does James' mobile position problematizes the National discourse and the national canon that he bordered without ever inhabiting properly, it sheds lights on the problem of the proper per se, an issue of a very Venezuelan kind of cleanliness, the amalgam of the *café con leche*.[164] To escape

[164] The anti-historical constitutive character of racial democracy hides the fact that those considered property in the past can be unwilling to play the game of the proper without addressing such a history, and even while doing

constructing a project amidst the dialectic of freedom-enslavement, to refuse to formulate it in terms of a struggle to become a (proper) citizen, expresses the productive instability of James' position, the value of his wanderings and oscillations as an equivocal method, it also implies a profound distrust of a dissimulation, that is, what Montañez calls *mestizaje* as demagogy as the forceful homogenization of the state. The broken union in *Rosas Robadas* does not express the absence of a relation, but the imposition of one kind of relationality based on subjection to the institutions that will always end up in a failure to conform, to assimilate (claims to which black immigrants were subjected to in contrast to European immigrants in the Venezuelan twentieth century), instead of the contaminated possibilities of inhabiting an inside/outside and its creative possibilities which take place outside of the official distribution of permissions to speak.[165]

The disaggregated groups of poems that characterize James' project enact an abstract commitment to form as a crypto-relationality, "…an other logic, logic of the other" (Chandler, 5); avoiding identification and subsumption into the relation in terms of controllable, measurable elements, as part of a community of fictive kinship where micro and macro hierarchies resemble each other. The semi-muted voice of *Rosas Robadas*, and the pathetic yet triumphal tone of *Testas Coronadas*, in which a continuity, via the crown, is marked with previous forms of terror as omnipotence and universality, finds another ally in *Paloma Palomita:*

> Little dove who shits on the heroes' statues
> How graceful you are
> You give those guys what they deserve and go flying towards the sky
> Black little dove
> White little dove
> You poo on the founding father with the silver saber
> And don't forget the one with the scarlet spear

---

so can decide to not play, to not perform (See Moten's "Erotics of Fugitivity", esp. 261; and Sora Han's "Slavery as Contract: *Betty's Case* and the Questions of Freedom").

[165] Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau differentiates between being *in* relation, a horizontal configuration of a community based on difference; and being *under* relation, the prototype of the colonial subjugation, for example (310).

So they know what kind of nations they have left us with
Black little dove
White little dove
How audacious
You defecate over their white palaces
Harass their ministerial buildings
And are the terror of their martial parades
Dove
Little dove
There is no hero but you in the public squares
For the children in blue outfits
For the elders with their bag of popcorns
And the tourists with photographic cameras
Magnificent bird
Dove
Little Dove (*Caramelo,* 20).[166]

The children's literature-like voice in *Paloma Palomita* ("Dove Little Dove") is one more of the spaces where James' *against* is disseminated, contaminating different registers with a hybridity that resist institutionalization in a cult of *mestizaje.* James' positionality as displaced and racialized makes him experience the inside and outside of a context of a supposed fluidity that calculates who passes (not only and not mainly *as*, but *through*), legitimizing itself as non-racist and as more diverse than "non-racial democracies".

The flight James enacts embodies his poetry as an uncomfortable stain in monuments, precisely, in the fixity of an immemorial past that sees itself as a paradoxical, and hence, more proper in its impropriety. A *mestizaje* supremacy, we can say, as a mask of a nation and a state that co-opts without extreme difficulties the cultural discourses of the hybrid, the *cosmic race*, or even cannibalism. The simplicity we see in *Paloma Palomita*, and which María Antonieta Flores

[166] Palomita que te cagas sobre las estatuas de los héroes / Qué grácil eres / Le das su merecido a esos tipos y te vas volando hacia el cielo / Palomita negra / Palomita blanca / Te haces pupú sobre el prócer del sable de plata / Tampoco olvidas al de la lanza escarlata / Para que sepan qué naciones nos han dejado / Palomita negra / Palomita blanca / Qué osadía / Defecas sobre sus palacios blancos / Atormentas sus edificios ministeriales / Y eres el terror de sus desfiles marciales / Paloma / Palomita / No hay más héroe que tú en las plazas / Para los niños de trajes azules / Los ancianos con bolsas de cotufas / Y los turistas con cámaras fotográficas / Ave magnífica / Paloma / Palomita (My translation).

identifies as a result of a careful work of putting deep lyrical baggage side by side with popular expressions and orality (Flores), distances itself from the overelaborated discourse new nationalisms complicit with a humanist agenda. The human is indissociably tied to the freedom/slavery dialectic, and its card of citizenship is the rushed limited speech James shows in other poems; he agrees with Moten in the fact that an (hemispheric) Afro-American thought is not so much reclaiming a "supposedly triumphant emergence into citizenship", but a space of statelessness instead (Moten, *Passage*, 211). The dove becomes the agent of another kind of flight, a subtle, displaced agonism, that also carries the impetus of the wargames of children. One could deem this as immobilizing or as naïve (the multiple examples of children-like texts in James make him conscious of this), and it is, but it is also a patient gnawing away at language and the poetic as potential fabricators of these illusions of striving towards a modernity with a Latin American touch.[167]

The insignificant terrorism of the dove gains the political energy of the *against* of his other poems, while at the same time giving a sense of the molecular and the local to a proposal that is constantly trying to disjoin the aesthetic from its complicity with a S/state of dissimulation, creating unexpected relations between the poems without forming a unity. James' work is not opposed to Santiago's claim that Latin American literature destroys the ideas of unity and purity, but is ever suspicious of it, so it tries to resist becoming a unified body of work.

[167] The most canonical novel in Venezuelan literature, Rómulo Gallegos' *Doña Barbara*, from 1929, especially because its author became president almost two decades after publishing it, is seen as going hand in hand with the official discourse of democratic modernity in the country. A tale of a city man battling internal and external enemies of the nation's progress, and domesticating the countryside and/by marrying an uneducated mixed-raced woman from the *llano*, while also being transformed by his experience, *Doña Bárbara* presents allegories of race and space that can produce multiple readings, but where the civilizing impulse of Gallegos always comes to the fore. For Doris Sommer, this "…fiction of elite control needs another fictional grounding: falling in love and getting married to the object of control" (288), while for Quintero, such an enacting of control by the elites "does not go back to a past genealogy (such a thing was inexistent to a new bourgeoisie) to be legitimated, but it appeals to a "barbaric" and problematic present instead, in order to forge a modernizing, civilizing, national future wearing the racial democracy mask" (173).

James' *against* the against can be likened to a cannibalism of cannibalism itself, a critique of the critique, but it strives to do so by not establishing itself as such, flying from canonizations and monumentalizing categorizations, as it shits on the major and minor heroes.

kinds of refusal

The dove's flight and mischievousness are part of the several inversions from within that James performs with his poetry. His refusal covers many instances, like a refusal to inhabit the outside that he is able to manage without advocating for a belonging with the racial democracy myth of synthesis, that is, of a structure of relationality that presents an amalgam while still operating with the historical mechanism of oppression and inaccessibility that made such amalgam possible. His conversational, colloquial poetry, also shows, as Flores claims, a strong influence of the sacred, of polyrhythm, and of elements from a pan-African culture (Flores); but it does not constitute and integrating vision, as some superficial readings of his work might point to (see Ramirez Carrillo, 156). *A Ti* (To You), as we saw before, is an example of James' oscillation between inside and outside, configurating a refusal of both at the expense of clear legibility and an uninterrupted, uncontaminated diction.

James' stance is not only that of a minor terrorist. His kind of production has the quality of fleeing instead of settling. As Boyer claims about James as well as about other poets of the "no": "a refusalist poet's "against" is an agile and capacious "for," expanding the negative to genius and the *opposite of* to unforeseen collapses and inclusions" (*No*). The unforeseen in James cannot be placed as a canonical poet's project can, as a complicit discourse can work for and with the myth of synthesis. James' poems carry an understudied reflection on how freedom and

inclusion dissimulate violence that not all of us suffer, ruining the dream of equality, even in misfortune.

In "Amor", from 1988, James unfolds the multiplicity of *Yesses* that abound in his celebratory poetry of another kind of triumph than that of citizenship, representation, and participation. All of these yesses make the refusals more remarkable and contaminating:

> You will come naked with open arms
> I will rest my head on your breasts
> You will say the words I'm hoping for
> I will sing sweet dirges
> You will promise seas and valleys and mountaintops
> I will be the father of your children
> You will shine like lightning
> I will become star
> You will be my bride, more beautiful than all brides
> I will sing Jorge Ben's songs
> You will have long hair
> I will braid mine
> You will want a house in the countryside
> I will build a cabin by the river
> You will sometimes dress with all the colors of the rainbow
> I will forever love you
> You will want flowers
> Me a horse, a guitar
> And we will never, never, never work (*Itala*, 31).[168]

The love poem has a happy ending this time, the refusal here is James' biggest *yes* that helps build a place of existence *against* forced participation in an ahistorical myth of equality. The alternation between an action from the loved one and one from the lover collides into a community of rejection of labor that reminds us of the long history of *cumbés* or maroon

[168] Tú vendrás desnuda con los brazos abiertos / Yo apoyaré sobre tus pechos mi cabeza /Tú dirás las palabras que espero / Yo cantaré dulces endechas / Tú prometerás mares y valles y cumbres de montañas / Yo seré el padre de tus hijos / Tú brillarás como el relámpago / Yo me haré estrella / Tú serás mi novia, más linda que todas las novias / Yo cantaré canciones de Jorge Ben / Tú tendrás cabellos largos / Yo trenzaré los míos / Tú querrás una casa en el campo / Yo construiré una cabaña junto al río / Tú te vestirás a veces con todos los colores del Iris / Yo te amaré siempre / Tú querrás flores / Yo un caballo, una guitarra / Y no trabajaremos nunca, nunca, nunca. (My English translation).

communities in Venezuela, which, by the end of the eighteenth century represented one third of the black population of the country with 30.000 fugitives (Acosta Saignes cited in Izard Matínez, 2013, 124). The flight of the little dove and the renunciation of productivity as a way to citizenship is at the core of James' complex inside/outside that has been so hard to read in the critical reception of his work. Fugitivity is illegible under the lens of racial democracy, and the possibilities of community that emerge from it, and that are as old as the first *cumbé* in the sixteenth century, remain to be fully explored. Such an exploration is jump-started by an against the proper, announced in these multiple ways, from a liminal position: "…an outlaw edge proper to the now always already improper voice or instrument" (Moten, *Uplift*, 131).

We can ask ourselves if the difficulty of reading James, that I claim is one of the main reasons for the critical silence around his work, lies in the projection of simplicity which immobilizes a discourse eager to find referents, influence, and to say: "the work is this *and*". Not that there are no canonical influences in James; Flores reminds us of James' own links with the important *Tráfico* and *Guaire* literary groups from the 1980s in Venezuela, without fully belonging to them, as well as his affinity with the beat poets and the folk style of Antonio Machado and Juan Ramón Jiménez; she also mentions the *and* of non-Western poetry and Afro and Afro-Caribbean history (Flores). But the different kinds of refusals, of noes that build distinct kinds of yesses, keep displacing these correct and proper analyses, away from an own/owned location. James' location of James is where the proper collapses, and another kind of construction made of refusals is re-born. This is *Contra Todo Todo* ("Against Everything Everything"):

> Against depth light songs. Stars and moon populate the sky and fish are in the water. Against pain joy. There are palm trees in the avenues and the women put on makeup in the afternoon. And what about angst? Laughter against the bearded bards. We just listen to the birds' song. Come Love to cover us with your cloak. Keep sadness away, frights.

> Against depth songs of air. Slight pelican flight, passing comet. Against loneliness I have a beautiful boy. I have a kid as strong as a colt. Against loneliness the woman with eyes of sky, the saggy breasted maiden. Oh mushrooms and parasites forests. Oh cayenne gardens. Against the century the coming century, eternal century of sweetness. Let's sing, let's sing at once the song of abundance. Let's hear the chorus of the nymphs alone. Against heat the freshness of Spring. And the golden tunics we will wear. And the Sunday red jeans. Against everything everything (*Albanela*, 36).[169]

The songs of air that constitute James' *against* inhabit and escape tradition, but that does not make his work hybrid; in fact, it is his *against* which allows us to expand it to an against hybridity while being against purity as well. But if the context of *mestizaje* supremacy and racial democracy in which these operations occur keeps being examined superficially we mistake the slight flight of the pelican (and the dove) for a simple *yes and...* James' refusals are part of a history that discourses of radical mixtures have not incorporated. Cannibals do not eat every body part after all, and this is where James' poetry has been not well digested by the bearded bards.

The lack of depth as a rejection turns out to be the biggest form of hope, a naïve hope perhaps, but rooted in the possibilities of a community that keeps being dreamt over and over, and for which the discourse of the State is a threat rather than anything else. James' discourse strive for a form of being-with that predates the idea of racial democracy, the law of the Nation. Moten elaborates on this: "Deviance is not opposed to the norm; it comes before it, bears it, must take responsibility for explaining, in defying, how the brutal ensemble of differences under which we now live became the same" (*Fugitivity*, 243). The non-assimilable residues that James

[169] Contra lo profundo canciones leves. Astros y lunas pueblan los cielos y hay peces en las aguas. Contra el dolor alegría. Hay palmeras en la avenida y por las tardes se maquillan las muchachas. Y ¿qué de la angustia? Risas contra los bardos barbados. Sólo escuchamos la canción de las aves. Ven Amor a cubrirnos con tu manto. Aleja tristezas, espantos. Contra lo profundo canciones de aire. Leve vuelo de pelícano, cometa que pasa. Contra la soledad yo tengo un chico hermoso. Yo tengo un niño fuerte como un potro. Contra la soledad la muchacha de ojos de cielo, la doncella de senos caídos. Oh bosque de hongos y parásitas. Oh jardín de cayenas. Contra el siglo el siglo que adviene, el siglo eterno de dulzores. Cantemos, cantemos ya la canción de la abundancia. Escuchemos sólo al coro de las ninfas. Contra el calor el frío frescor de primavera. Y las túnicas de oro que vestiremos. Y los bluejeanes rojos del domingo. Contra todo todo. (My English translation).

shows us keep resisting the homogenization of *mestizaje* and demand a careful reading of the refusal that does not oppose the *against* of cultural theory but that demands more of it, stretches it, and gives it indigestion by articulating an understudied and undermined *yes* that we are trying to unearth and disseminate. As we have seen with *Contra Todo Todo*: "Poetry's no can protect a potential yes—or more precisely, poetry's no is the one that can protect the *hell yeah,* or every *hell yeah's* multiple variations. In this way, a poem against the police is also and always a guardian of love for the world" (Boyer).

a damnable mixture

In the 1990s, Brazilian historian Jose Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy interviewed several lower-class women and asked them about their dreams for a series of works in oral history in his country. A woman named Dinalva Santos shared the following dream, as narrated by Meihy:

> She recounted that she came from a rural place in the interior of the state of Maranhão, where she with her mother took care of pigs and their large family. Her brother asked her to come to São Paulo and take care of his shack in the favela. She dreamed "I was very tired and I slept…It was hot as hell…In the dream we were all together; my brothers from Maranhão were here, too…but they didn't know each other any more. There were all types: Bahians, people from Pernambuco, from Salvador, from the North. The neighbors were all types: Japanese, Arabs, Bahians, Italians, from all over the world. Everyone spoke different languages, a damnnable mixture, like devils. You couldn't understand anything…Everyone shouted and gestured with their hands. It was total confusion. I remained quiet…The worst were those who lived in my house. No one understood one

another. I thought: Ah, Dinalva, why did you come to this place? When the noise got worse and I couldn't stand it, I woke up" (349).

Dinalva is telling, or dreaming, her own version of the story of the Tower of Babel. Her movement from the countryside to the city, and the difficult confusion she encounters, resembles the movement of many others in Brazil in the twentieth century, with a promise of progress that the discourse of racial democracy projected for everyone, but that could only be sustained separating off what was excessive, and erasing everything that undermined the homogeneous national identity and its miscegenated, or harmoniously blended, racial archetypes. Dinalva's story, dream, and position, localizes and destabilizes the universal myth, not in order to explain the creation of nations, but to point at how nations and single languages are a proliferation of differences forced into sameness. In a way, Afro-Brazilian writer Carolina Maria de Jesus dreamed Dinalva's dream some decades before, and her non-fiction is a way to deal with her feeling of being excessive at the face of a national discourse that included her only insofar as subjectively mutilated, always edited and constrained.

In her diary titled *Quarto de Despejo*, from 1960, which we can literally translate as *Trash Room*, but which David St. Clair rendered as *Child of the Dark* for the English edition published in 1962, de Jesus records and elaborates on her experiences as a slum-dweller, a *favelada*, in a stream-of-consciousness prose that contains, sometimes in the same entry, grocery lists, descriptions of everything she buys and the prices, her reading and writing routine, hers and her children's experiences of hunger, and description of events happening in the favela of Canindé, in the North of São Paulo. As an example, let's look at the start of her October 30, 1958 entry:

> I got out of bed at 5 o'clock and went to haul water. What torture! There is a hole in my tin can and I don't know when I will be able to buy another. I lit the burner and put water on to heat for the children to wash their faces.
> They detest cold water (*Unedited*, 20).[170]

Then she goes on and, usually, tells us the story of her day, a well as the conversations she has had, and her reflections.

The publication of *Quarto de Despejo*, and its international success launched de Jesus' literary career, allowing her to publish another diary: *Casa de Alvenaria* (1961), literally *Brickwork house*, but translated into English as *I'm going to have a little house* in 1997, two decades after de Jesus' death in 1977. None of her books were as successful as that first one, and while she achieved her dream "to leave the favela" as she narrates in *Casa de Alvenaria*, she quickly had to sell her recently acquired brick house and move to the countryside, something she desired, but not in the extremely precarious conditions in which she had to do it, after receiving only a small fraction of the royalties due to her from selling near one hundred thousand copies of her book in just a few months and being translated into more than a dozen languages (Levine and Meihy, *Life and Death*, 7). She left for the small rural area of Parelheiros, two hours away from São Paulo, where she spent the last years of her life growing vegetables and raising chickens, still in poverty, but less hungry than in her Canindé years, living the partial dream of returning to a rural life after being fed up with the city life and the noise that woke up Dinalva Santos from her bad dream.

I mark her life changes because they will be relevant for my reading of *Quarto de Despejo* and her subsequent diary entries. These attempts to escape the favela are preceded by

[170] There is no version in Portuguese of this fragment since it was edited out by Audálio Dantas from the original Brazilian edition. It is only available in the English translation of *The Unedited Diaries of Carolina Maria de Jesus*, edited by Robert M. Levine and José Carlos Bom Meihy, who had access to de Jesus' manuscripts thanks to Vera, her daughter.

what led many people of Afro-Brazilian, indigenous and mixed-raced descent to precisely escape to the city in the late 19th and early 20th century, in some cases to help build the favelas. Most of the internal migrants were running from the aftermath of slavery and colonization, and from a national ideal that included them by erasing their differences. Let's remember that Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, by a royal decree given in Rio de Janeiro on May 13, 1888 (*Abolition decree*, 145). These movements were preceded by the formation of Quilombos or maroon communities as an origin without origin of alternative forms of community making. Such an aftermath is an afterlife, since it does not imply the discrete ending of an event and its minor consequences but the recalcitrant presence of what Saidiya Hartman deems to be: "skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment" (*Mother*, 6). It is precisely this afterlife of slavery that de Jesus keeps trying to move away from, and that she signals for us by inhabiting a literal and figurative margin outside a city/countryside dialectic, but also outside of a freedom/subjection one, as we saw with Miguel James as well. De Jesus' project is an intellectual project made in and from the slums, but not reducible to being fixated there by being overidentified as a *favelada*. Instead, she presents us with a project that becomes illegible under the guise of assimilation to Brazil's racial democracy.

In narrating the history of the city of Sacramento, where Carolina Maria de Jesus was born, in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, her biographer Tom Farias describes how, before the founding of the city in the early nineteenth century, the region was populated by indigenous peoples and "*negros quilombolas*", that is, fugitive quilombo dwellers (Farias, 13-15).[171] This is

[171] In 1900, almost a middle point between the abolition of slavery in Brazil and de Jesus' birth, a law regulating beggars in her home state of Minas Gerais was promulgated. These kind of laws, which were put into practice in other states as well were a way of managing the fact that, after emancipation, there was not a plan to help the former enslaved people, who had to look for temporary and unstable jobs. All beggars should be registered and

the context where de Jesus is born, and since her family was quite large on her mother's side and had been born and worked in the Patrimônio farm, Farias calls her family The Patrimônio Quilombo. This name points to a continuity between the struggle for freedom of black people in Brazil and de Jesus' family situation, to their ways of practicing being in a community at the margins of the farming and mining business at the time, while being subjected to an economy that did not give free Afro-Brazilians a much different status than the one they previously had (Farias, 36). de Jesus' grandfather, an African man from Angola, probably from the Bantu culture, represented a close referent for Carolina of the history and legacy of something that Brazil still had not come to terms with, slavery and its continued forms after abolition.

Child of the Dark came to life rather fortuitously. De Jesus had been writing a diary since 1955, but it was only in 1958, when she met self-taught journalist Audálio Dantas, where the possibility of publishing became real. Dantas was sent to Canindé to cover the opening of a new playground in the context of a municipal election. During it he witnessed a quarrel where a few men were trying to get some kids off the swings area, followed by the yells of a black woman menacing them: "If you continue mistreating these children, I'm going to put all of your names in my book!" (Levine, 59). Dantas was curious and, after asking de Jesus if he could read her texts, composed by poems, stories and her diary, he decided to publish excerpts of the diary in the *Folha da Noite*, a São Paulo journal. The partly morbid interest in the story led Dantas to select some fragments of the diaries and, with Carolina, publish them as *Quarto de Despejo*. The book was a success, but the critical treatment of it abroad merely referred to its shocking

wear a sign defining them as such. The article 4 of the law states the following: "Any person found begging without having registered officially will be taken to the police station to be examined by a physician. a. Is he is found capable of working, he will be dealt with accordingly; b. If he is seemed not capable of working, he will be registered as a beggar unless he is a resident for less than two years, in which case, he will be sent to the place of his former residence" (Brazil Reader 1st edition, 146-7).

character, a sort of description of the lower depths of human misery; while in Brazil the debate moved between, on one hand, doubts about the authenticity of the text, and the lack of a clearly identifiable political position that would turn the book into a useful ideological tool. Even in 1993, when *Quarto de despejo* was republished after being out of print for a few decades, critic Wilson Martins doubted the authenticity of de Jesus' text, suggesting it was written for her in order to elevate a woman from the favela to literary fame with a commercial (and perhaps ideological?) agenda (Levine and Meihy, *Life and Death*, 135).

Such denunciations of inauthenticity seem to reveal more about the critics than the author. Dantas selected and cut some entries to present a more "legible" book to the audiences, but he did not change or add to de Jesus' writing. Thanks to the authors' daughter Vera, who preserved the manuscripts, and to historians Robert M. Levine and José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy, who did crucial work in the 1990s in terms of reconstructing the history of the text and making part of the previously unedited diaries available, it was made clear that de Jesus' prose was not solely an outsider's invention, even when it was edited by Dantas at first. Levine and Meihy affirm: "What appeared in print was what Carolina Maria de Jesus thought and wrote during a twenty-year period of her life from the mid-1950s to her death" in 1977 (Levine and Meihy, *Life and Death*, 135).

After Levine and Meihy's work we also have access, then, to a selection of the previously unpublished diaries, translated directly into English and not yet published in Portuguese. My reading will move across both versions, the originally published text, edited by Dantas, and the so-called "unedited" as it is referred to by Levine and Meihy, but only presented in English translation and, of course, intervened in such a translation and selection by the editors.

Let's look at a fragment of her unedited November 1, 1958, entry, translated from the manuscripts by Nancy Naro and Cristina Mehrtens, and compare it with the edition published by Dantas:

> I was pleased I found a sack of cornmeal in the garbage and brought it home for the pig. I am so used to garbage cans that I can't pass them by without fishing about inside. Today I didn't go after paper since I know I won't find any. An old man gets there before me.
> Yesterday I read the fable of the frog and the cow I have the impression that I am the frog That he wanted to grow to the size of the cow −I wanted many jobs. They refused me due to my poetic talk, so for this reason I don't like to talk to anybody
> Today I went begging (*Unedited,* 25-6)

This is Dantas' edition as translated by St. Clair:

> I found a sack of corn flour in the garbage and brought it home for the pig. I am so used to garbage cans that I don't know how to pass one without having to see what is inside. Today I'm going to look out for paper but I know I'm not going to find anything. There is an old man who is in my territory.
> Yesterday I read that fable about the frog and the cow. I feel that I am the frog. I want to swell up until I am the same size as the cow (*Child*, 112).[172]

In Dantas' edition, the paragraph ends with the story of the frog and the cow, probably a version of Aesop's classic fable of the frog and the ox. However, without looking at the whole set of phrases, we lose sight of de Jesus' fugal operation of meaning. Dantas maintains the difficult, yet legible, paratactical character of the sentences, but by omitting the description of her desire to have many jobs, her rejections, and the fact that she went begging that day, the text remains within a realm of intelligibility that simplifies it. Let's also note how the Dantas edition breaks the passage into different paragraphs and adds the periods that are missing in the comment about the fable, forcing a continuity of the domesticized parataxis. In the unedited version, in contrast,

[172] ... Achei um saco de fuba no lixo e trouxe para dar ao porco. Eu já estou tão habituada com as latas de lixo, que não sei passar por elas sem ver o que há dentro.
Hoje eu vou catar papel porque sei que não vou encontrar nada. Tem um velho que circula na minha frente.
Ontem eu li aquela fabula da rã e a vaca. Tenho a impressão que sou rã. Queria crescer até ficar do tamanho da vaca.

both the parataxis and punctuation escape in the end; there is no full stop either. An identifiable literary resource leads the way to an unknown openness to a futurity that cannot be contained, but that nevertheless ends in de Jesus' begging for food or money.

Her desire to have many jobs, even if in the past tense, is key here. Her poetic talk is precisely what Dantas refuses to include in full, like those who rejected her from the jobs she wanted to have. De Jesus' poetic talk, deemed illegible and destined to be corrected by making her stay in the space of the frog, explodes like the frog, showing, rather than an appeasing moral, other possibilities of writing and of existence. The escape of punctuation and the parataxis enable a new space for meaning and reading. Her writing opens itself up to an undefined outside, insofar as it does not want to follow, even if it had to, as the text came out edited, the national or regional discourses of what Brazilian literature and contemporary non-fiction at large are. The text shows different configurations of meaning still waiting to be assembled, which is what my analysis is invested in. Her poetic talk, we must add, and the ambivalence it generates accompanied de Jesus since she was a child, in a sort of tandem with the history of slavery and the disappointment of emancipation as we have commented. Levine and Meihy provide us with an anecdote that connects the illegibility Dantas did not want to confront with de Jesus' writing and thinking about her-self: "Once in Sacramento her mother set out to beat her because a teacher, Eurípedes Barsanulfo, referred to her daughter as a "poetess." The mother, consulting with her neighbors, figured out that this must mean some kind of evil" (*Life and Death*, 26). In the two years she went to school thanks to a white benefactor,[173] her presence impacted the prestigious institution she attended (Levine and Meihy, *Life and Death*, 25), in the same way that

[173] Thanks to de Jesus' mother working as a maid in the house of Maria Leite Monteiro de Barros, member of a rich family from Minas Gerais, Carolina, or Bitita, as she was called as a child, was enrolled by her Mother's boss in the Colégio Allan Kardec, one of the best in the region. Less than two years later, though, little Carolina had to move outside of Sacramento with her mother, leaving the school (Farias, 45, 53).

her writing troubled the journalist and editor that was figuring out how to present her to the reading public. De Jesus writing, and her rebellion against constraint, a procedure she has in common with earlier modernist writers, becomes underread if we do not see how form, content, and movement assemble to form what Gilles Deleuze would call a disjunctive synthesis. Her non-fiction adopts a fragmentation of experience that, as in the last passage, ends in precarity and hunger, as the text cannibalizes punctuation.

Like James, her position as a black *favelada*, and her personal and intellectual history contest the limitations of meaning-making to which her experience is subjected in a context where miscegenation is the paragon. This is something that is more available to us after comparing the two versions of her text, so we will zoom in that racial democracy discourse again to then go back to her writings. Before then, however, it is important to signal how de Jesus makes explicit her position in a way James does not, though. What in James is a proliferation of elements that point to a refusal of compliance, subjection and a marginal or peripheral joy, with blackness as one of those elements, in de Jesus constitute a much more enforced racialization that she cannot bend but has to directly confront.

a myth

In 1968, eighty years after the abolition of slavery in Brazil, and nine years before de Jesus' death in 1977 but two after her last known writing in 1966, scholar and pan-African activist Abdias do Nascimento asks "Are the descendants of African slaves really free? Where do Brazilian blacks really stand in relation to citizens of other racial origins, at all levels of national life?" (446). As we already saw with Montañez' *El Racismo Oculto en una Sociedad no Racista*, the physical *mestizaje* upon which national discourses base a forced homogenization of the

population was determined by "multiform and irreducible racial prejudices" (170) that, when analyzed, speak against the neutrality that such an ideal of racial democracy wants to project. In this context, do Nascimento names such a neutrality a "pathology of normality", where racial inequality in terms of access to political, economic and social power is covered by this enforced democratic normality (446). "Why should black people be the only one to pay for the onus of our "racial paradise"? (447), do Nascimento states, showing how the myth of racial democracy serves to project an image abroad of a model of peaceful coexistence, while internally the same myth is used to keep "black people tricked and docile" (446).

Nunes analyzes the effects of such projections of the national discourse by examining how black intellectuals in the US in the early twentieth century subscribed to such a myth when looking at South America.[174] She extensively comments on the series of articles that Robert Abbott, the founder of the African-American newspaper *The Chicago Defender*, wrote in 1923 after a trip to Brazil. Abbott, in line with other African-American intellectuals at the time, came to the conclusion that there was no color-line in Brazil, and that South America at large would be a safe haven for African-Americans who wanted to escape the oppressive conditions of the US (Nunes, 119-120; 127). Abbott's opinions about Brazil were confusing to some Brazilians, though. Abilio Rodrigues, collaborator of the Afro-Brazilian magazine *Kosmos*, published an article at the time stating that the equality that Abbott claimed was a mere fantasy. In relation to this, Nunes says: "Rodrigues's article sympathizes with Abbott's desire to see a place where democracy could include black people; nevertheless, he faults Abbott for not recognizing the high cost of the inclusion — the disappearance of black people as such" (131). Already in the

[174] Nunes comments how the idealization of Europe and the English and French Caribbean as a paradise for black Americans in comparison with their own land was soon complicated, but such complication never reached the idealization of South America (118).

1920s, some Brazilian intellectuals were conscious of the operation of the racial democracy myth outside their frontiers that do Nascimento would denounce four decades later.

Anthropologist and activist Lélia González also names racial democracy as a myth (229). Like every myth it hides something while at the same time it shows the manifest content of official discourse: "we are all mixed-raced, we are all equally Brazilian". Gonzalez ironizes about it, ventriloquizing a collective voice:

> Racism? In Brazil? Who says that? That is an American thing. There are no differences here because everyone is Brazilian above all, thank God. Black folks are well treated here, they have the same rights that we have. Even so that when they make an effort, they ascend in life like anyone else. I know one that is a doctor, so educated, cultured, elegant and with such delicate features…doesn't even seem black (226).[175]

This idea of miscegenation as demagogy, exercises its violence primarily over poor populations, those living in the slums, but particularly, over black and indigenous women, whose experiences are mutilated to fit that racial democracy ideal that is supposed to include them, but that only includes them as foil, by exclusion, as spoken from; that is, as infants in the classical sense of the word. The black woman, for González, is the one who most feels the symbolic violence of racial democracy (229), in a complex movement where the "prejudice of not being prejudiced" coexist at the same time with the belief that black people belong in the slums (238), and with the certainty that the archetypical image of the black woman is the domestic employee.

Both Carolina and her mother worked as housekeepers for white families, one of the few positions that Brazilian society would admit for a black woman, as Gonzalez emphasizes. In fact,

[175] Racismo? No Brasil? Quem foi que disse? Isso é coisa de americano. Aqui não tem diferença porque todo mundo é brasileiro acima de tudo, graças a Deus. Preto aqui é bem tratado, tem o mesmo direito que a gente tem. Tanto é que, quando se esforça, ele sobe na vida como qualquer um. Conheço um que é médico; educadíssimo, culto, elegante e com umas feições tão finas... Nem parece preto.

de Jesus' move to the favela came after being fired as a housekeeper at thirty-three years old, for being pregnant with her first son, João (Levine and Meihy, *Life and Death*, 37). In the diary containing her memories from childhood, *Diario de Bitita*, posthumously published in 1977, de Jesus elaborates on her leaving school in Sacramento to accompany her mom and step-father to work in the countryside in a farm. The owner's wife, Maria Cândida, asked de Jesus' mother to let her daughter "help her" clean the house every day. de Jesus writes:

> Dona Maria Cândida told me, "You know, Carolina, you come work for me, and when I go to Uberaba, I'll buy you a new dress, I'll buy medicine to turn you white, and I'll get another medicine to straighten your hair. After that, I'll get a doctor to narrow your nose" I thought, "So, these men who work here used to be black, and the farmer's wife made them turn white!" (*Bitita*, Ch. 12).

The position of the black woman within the racial democracy myth, and the fantasies of whitening that it carries with it could not be depicted better here. The process of racialization and the projections and desires of a group who identifies, or will come to identify, with the discourse of racial democracy, uncover in this passage what the myth tries to conceal. As Nunes claims, the environment of inclusion and lack of conflict that the idea of racial democracy puts forward is always done through the identification with the idea of *embranquecimiento*. Nunes continues, "the identification would revolve around the desire for whiteness, and those who refuse this identification are remaindered. Even when the emphasis on whiteness is no longer foregrounded, as in the discourse on racial democracy, its roots in this way of thinking are apparent when one attends to the remainder" (9). de Jesus is marked by experiences like this, and her prose and project as a thinker of her living conditions and what surrounds her, can be read as an attempt to come to terms with the multiple layers that operate in racial democracy, also describing her own ways of being inside and outside of it. Her writing and the way in which she assumes her position as a writer confronts us with, precisely, the fantasy of totality that racial democracy as

synthesis performs, since, as Zakiyyah Iman Jackson explains, "no synthesis can be totality; rather, it is a selective bringing into order, one that presents entropy as ectropy based on a pursuit of an unassailable indexicality between representation and entities structured by incalculable processes of differentiation" (638). The only belonging and order that de Jesus can bring into Brazilian society is, literally and metaphorically, becoming white, and the homogenous and harmonious identity that the national discourse seems to want to create and re-create is an order where everyone can assimilate in the way in which it is dictated from above. A *favelada*'s diary not only has to be edited, then, but her existence outside of the realm she described must be managed, administered.

a space

The *favela* becomes that remainder Nunes refers to, what cannot be assimilated fully by racial democracy, the disorder that must be transformed into order by the system, as Jackson claims, into legibility; it is also the locus of enunciation that enables de Jesus' prose. The *barrio* as it is called in Venezuela, and the *favela* as it is called in Brazil (and which I will give the common name of slums in a gesture of linguistic solidarity that does not forget how they can be different), are spaces that do figure in the operation of racial democracy that homogenizes a territory. However, the slums figure as always hyphenated or partially included: they are on the way to something else, a stage of, or simply a romantic site of simplified resistance. These communities comprised by self-built houses, on land that is not legally owned, are still part of a teleology of development. But even before something like an idea of miscegenation and racial democracy were mobilized as an ethics of belonging, there was a resistance to its futurity. As indexed before, there is a long history of rebellion and fugitivity in which runaway enslaved people along

with indigenous allies in many cases, formed *quilombos*, that is, maroon communities. They exercised practices of life outside of the slavery-freedom logic, creating new meanings that have survived in parallel practices transmitted in subterraneous ways. It is in this tradition of alternative ways of forming communities that I read the slum. Seeing the slum as part of the afterlife of slavery and colonization, adapting Saidiya Hartman's words, puts it in continuity with such forms of communities that never ceased to be made, despite the weight of a violent pacification and unification via colonial and then state power.

Alejandro Moreno has been theorizing from the slum in Caracas since the 1980s until his death in 2019, and his work is central to understand the local truth that a discourse coming from the slum, as is the case of de Jesus, carries with it. The *barrio* as a space of another logic of experience, is also the proof of the collapse of any unifying quality of the landscape as a national symbol. The existence of a Popular Episteme, as Moreno names it, is the formalization of this encounter with something other *within* modernity's expansion, not reducible to it, which expresses a different logic and sense of practices than modernity's Episteme.

This popular episteme is:

> …a mode of knowing not accepted by modernity, devaluated, marginalized, repressed, subsumed to the power of the dominant mode of knowing. An active popular knowledge emanates from this episteme, and from there it is possible to elaborate a dis-tinct "science" of man –and of things.
>
> Because it is oppressed, this episteme cannot utter its word in the other world. It utters it in its own world-other (*El Aro*, 397).

The idea of the Popular Episteme delinks *pueblo* from the idea of Nation and its official discourse and puts the popular subject as an agent that practices life as relation and not as

individual production, but who nevertheless has to move in and out of the context of an official racial democracy as in the oscillation we witness in de Jesus' diary. Levine and Meihy note how de Jesus' use of the word *povo* (*pueblo*, people) sometimes takes the general meaning of "The Brazilian people", for example, but it also often refers to the poor people, "her fellow members of the Brazilian underclass." In fact, in 1961, in the *Quarto de Despejo* tour in Argentina, "she used the same word, *povo*, to refer to the Argentine population at large and to the inhabitants of the Buenos Aires slums, the notorious *villas miserias*" (*Afterword*, 205). For Moreno, the concept of *pueblo* is crossed by ambiguity, suggesting on the one hand a particular, localized, communitarian logic and on the other referring to a civic-political collective subject (*Antropología Cultural*, 49). This is the oscillation de Jesus makes between a general (civic-political) and a hyper-localized (communitarian) idea of *povo* or *pueblo.* But if, as Moreno claims, the idea of *pueblo* as a civic-political entity is based on a coincidence between the Nation-State and a homogeneous group, subjects of rights and political will, subjects of freedom, we may add, and such a coincidence is the base of democracy (Moreno, *Antropología Cultural*, 49), we can see how the idea of a *povo* that involves a minoritized community which is separated and also separates itself from the homogenizing impulse of the nation is at odds with a universalizing concept of "the people". De Jesus' oscillation is the coming in and out of democratic universalization to show, as González says, that what black people (as a localized *povo*) say to the proponents of racial democracy is that "the king is stripped of his clothes. And the body of the king is black, and the king is a slave" (239). A racial democracy as a homogenizing, whitening, operation cannot read this subterranean and fugitive idea of *povo* that de Jesus explicitly shows and hides, but that is present implicitly in her writing.

In *Quarto de Despejo*, de Jesus also gives us a view that confronts merely pragmatic action, like the one a certain line of urban anthropology as well as social policies from different ideological fronts seem to be after. At the same time, however, neither is it what some other scholars call "slum as theory". It is rather an operation of translation, that I, following Moreno, call transduction, since it goes from one logical register to another, making us read a set of symbols and practices in another key, that is, her text moves meaning to the horizon of that *other* form of knowledge that the Popular Episteme carries with it (Moreno, *El Aro*, 354-5). It is an attempt to give an account of an experience that does not follow the temporal logic of an autobiographical account, since it thinks itself as not complying with a demand of modern subjectivity. It does not try to speak to the other world, but to show a world-other that participates in but cannot be reduced to a "modern" reception of the text. Her refusal to talk to people, as she expresses it, is, rather than an individualism, the acknowledgment of her being *an other* because she inhabits *an other* space of experience. As Moreno says: "To think from the relation is to situate oneself in the exteriority of modernity's totality, to remain out in the open, within marginality" (*El Aro*, 374). I read de Jesus' destabilization of meaning as a statement of thinking of herself as *other* in her own terms, in order to deal with the oppressive maneuver of otherizing done from the outside; it is the construction of a space of writing and thinking, putting side by side her rejection of being turned into a legible individual and the position where she speaks from, the favela.

Hartman agrees that there is a continuity, even if not a seamless one, between the *quilombo* and the slum, she also agrees, with Moreno, about the excessive character of the encounters that occur in that space (*Wayward,* 4). This excess can be seen because, as Nunes claims about blackness within racial democracy, racialized people in the favela share an

experience that is, on the one hand, a rejection of what the national body assimilates, confining such practices to the margins, and, on the other hand such experience can be an active resistance to such assimilation (Nunes, 14). "It is a realm of excess and fabulousness", Hartman seems to add to Nunes, "a space of encounter", where "reformers and sociologists" adept to the slum as theory look for the deficient, failing to see "the beautiful experiments crafted by poor black girls" (Hartman, *Wayward*, 4).

blackness in ambivalence

One of the beautiful and illegible experiments of de Jesus' diaries is its resistance to becoming an icon or role model. The demand from progressive groups at the time for her to be a revolutionary and not an "individualist" who cared about her and her family above bigger causes (Levine and Meihy, *Afterword*, 192), misses her profound problematization of subjectivity and her escape from an imposed form of black subjectivity that racial democracy needs to function.

Here is an exchange de Jesus has with senhor Manoel, a lover she had for a brief time in those years, from November 8, 1958 (this appears both in the "unedited" and in Dantas' edition):

> "I was telling my kids that I wished to be a Black", she says.
> "And aren't you a Black?" replies Manoel
> "I am!" and then she reflects:
> "But I wanted to be one of these scandalous Blacks to beat you and tear your clothes. But, when I do something like that, my sound judgment takes over" (*Unedited*, 44)[176]

There are many moments like this, where "internalized racism" can be read in de Jesus, a sort of triumph of a dominant domesticating logic. There are also moments where, as scholars like historian Brodwyn Fischer denounce, her discourse shows an internalization of the slum as a

[176] - Eu esrava dizendo aos filhos que eu desejava ser preta.
- E voce nao e preta?
- Eu sou. Mas eu queria ser destas negras escandalosas para bater e rasgar as cuas roupas. 119

nightmare that theorists of the famous "culture of poverty" school of thought described (Fischer, 38). I do not separate myself from the problematizations of these elements, but, if we think of her discourse, as evidenced in the passages I have analyzed so far, as an embrace of the popular episteme via a disidentification with mechanism of modern subjectivation, we not only see the slum as a particular locus of enunciation that produces new kinds of practices and thought, but we also see her implicit theory about the instability of blackness that mirrors her writing and the place of her diary in the community. In her already being, but also wanting to be, black, there is a sabotage on imposed operations of subjectivity, and a futurity which displaces the subject to new registers of experience. Her text is an embodiment of all these movements of escape not from the nightmare of the slum, but from the nightmare of a racial democracy that speaks for the favelados and limits their voice to a reaction to external demands or discourses. On November 17, 1958, she writes: "The vagrant men want to grab the ball from the children. The little boys throw stones at the awkward young men. And they want to hit the children. When they see me they calm down. because nobody wants to be included in my Strange Diary" (*Unedited*, 51).

Her "Strange Diary" acts as a communitarian agent, a pacifier, not because of a need for an official order, but because if its destabilizing force. This force of the writing and of the promise of naming mirrors her conception of blackness as that which refuses to gain the status of a subject but is nevertheless constantly on its way to disturbing such categories, insistently *making a way out of no way*. When she later says, as the great-granddaughter of slaves: "I thank God I wasn't a slave. I don't know the taste of the Whip. The only thing that enslaves me is the cost of living" (*Unedited*, 55), she is aware of the fantasy of the subject as a framing under the slavery-freedom dialectic that liberal racial democracy champions. The developmental trajectory is not enough, teleology will not deal with slavery's afterlife. Her text and the way she narrates

her experiences are constant escapes instead. “Blackness is consent not to be one”, as Fred Moten says (*Uplift*, 115; 122), and the movement to the slum and moving in the slum, that parallel trajectory of urbanization marked in the bodies and practices of racialized and minoritized groups is a fugitive displacement, and unintelligible dis-appointment.

The ambivalent status of blackness in her diary forms an assemblage with her locus of enunciation, and her location at the favela of Canindé as a black woman. This is not alien to the paratactical and fugitive impulse of her text as we saw earlier. There is a triple refusal in de Jesus’ project that I define as her intellectual project from the slum. First, a resistance of the object to complying with becoming the subject of slavery and of a domesticized freedom under racial democracy; second, an attempt to flee the favela and live in a brick house, while still rejecting the idea of integrating into a nation which only includes with mechanisms of death or erasure; and third, a textual escape from a civilized, “proper”, which is to say clean, legibility. We cannot understand one without the others, I argue, and it is in this way that a reading of de Jesus is possible. We know that an attempt to go out or off the borders is an artistic procedure in modernity. But in this case, to not miss the possibilities and the radicality of it, it is necessary to read it as an assemblage with these other elements, as a disjunctive synthesis. Only in tracing her textual and contextual movements, which do not speak for, but accompany and make community with the movements of black poor women in Brazil, it is possible to understand the fugitive character of a project woven in an alliance with not complying, with blackness as nonperformance to use Sora Han’s words (408). I will join Moten now after this reading:

> Fugitivity, then, is a desire for and a spirit of escape and transgression of the proper and the proposed. It’s a desire for the outside, for a playing or being outside, an outlaw edge proper to the now always already improper voice or instrument. This is to say that it

> moves outside the intentions of the one who speaks and writes, moving outside their own adherence to the law and to propriety (*Uplift*, 131).

De Jesus should not be speaking in the first place, much less publishing, but since she is, at least she should not be saying what she is saying. All these words coming out of her pen are difficult to capitalize by the Brazilian right wing or left wing. An improper literature from an improper place by an improper person. De Jesus even recalls this, by constantly calling attention to her improperness, to being dirty. Her refusal to be managed was resented by critics and acquaintances in the literary world during her brief period of fame, this was even mentioned in her obituary, saying how she fell out of grace with the elites and that "Her inability to adjust to success cost her dearly" (cited in Levine and Meihy, *Life and Death*, 87). She writes on her diary on November 3, 1961, when about to go abroad promoting the Spanish translation of *Quarto de Despejo:*

> We left the Livraria i complained that I am going to leave literature aside. I am going to get a job. I don't adapt to being teledirected. With the money I received from Europe I wanted to make the down payment on another house and rent out the one where I am living. With the rent I would pay the installments on the house. But dr. Lélio and Audálio interfered they want to pay for the house all at once and that interferes with my plans. I warned senhor Bertini, that if I don't have money to buy food for my children I won't go to Argentina. He heard me indifferently. I thought: he doesn't yet know me. He doesn't realize I am a descendant of the atomic bomb (*Unedited*, 96).

Even during her years of fame, de Jesus was not only infantilized by having her ability to spend her earnings controlled, she also became aware that leaving the favela did not make her part of the cultural scene in the way she wanted to be. The *between* she occupied, the residual entity she became was not something she accepted, rather, she used her in-betweenness as a way to name names, pointing to a collective nightmare even for the examples of exceptionality. It makes us remember Gonzalez's irony modified: "I know one that is a writer, so educated, cultured, elegant and with such delicate features…doesn't even seem black". She was none of that, and the

problem she presented in the face of her Brazilian publishers (Lélio and Audálio) and the representative of the Argentine ones (Bertini), was the problem of not being legible to an assimilatory social machinery, of resisting to such legibility.

These different layers of impropriety, of not wanting to be property anymore, of an acknowledgment of the continuity in a long history of marginalization, are accompanied by what cannot be read unless there is a strong critique of the environment of racial democracy that elevated and then could not and would not support her. As in the case of Miguel James, there is creativity in such refusals, but it is a dangerous creativity for the integrity of the nation, the act of speaking and writing from the *favela,* and of looking at herself as *an other* in her own way proposes indeed an idea of the people (*povo*) that separates itself from the Nation and from racial democracy while still inhabiting its margins, it shares the seed of a wayward life, as Hartman claims: "The air is alive with the possibilities of assembling, gathering, congregating. At any moment, the promise of insurrection, the miracle of upheaval: small groups, people *by themselves,* and strangers threaten to become an ensemble, to incite *treason en masse*" (*Wayward,* 8).

De Jesus' diaries have been an empty signifier for those interested in the culture of poverty, but they also carry the strongest critique to it, the testament to the most pervasive upheaval. Her words are contaminated by all this, and make beautiful stains in the purity of a miscegenation carefully constructed by the Brazilian state since its famous independence without a war, but with a difficult afterlife.

towards an ethnocentrism of the poor

The articulation of racial democracy we have exposed here through the writings of James and de Jesus projects an image of the people as a unity, a body that, while its parts have different functions, must work towards a normalizing and universalizing behavior. If racial democracy inevitably leads to the erasure of black and indigenous people, in a sort of asymptotic whitening utopia, the nation will still pretend to participate in a world order where the local synthesis imitates and aspires to a universal synthesis. The disjunctive as a sort of internal contaminator of such a configuration is never allowed, so the image of harmony must reign. Racial democracy aspires to cosmopolitanism, to a certain ideal of multiculturalism and a legibility of the people and the national form. This has been the case of Latin American literature, often accompanied by the commonplace saying that one must be local to be global as a way to describe, for example, the Latin American boom's literature. The universal character that some Latin American Literature aspire to is, again, a hybrid, sometimes residual, conception of universality. "To make of the margins an aesthetics" is how Beatriz Sarlo describes Jorge Luis Borges' project, for example (16). Mariano Siskind, for his part, and engaging with Sarlo's analysis of Borges among others, conceptualizes this fact by talking about *deseo de mundo,* or desire for the world (*Desires*, 3), a sense of a lack that mobilizes marginal writers to make their way "into the realm of universality, denouncing both the hegemonic structures of Eurocentric forms of exclusion and nationalistic patterns of self-marginalization" (*Desires,* 6). Siskind is aware of this as a fantasy of omnipotence, although not explicit about the different layers of marginality within a region, in the sense in which Borges is not operating along the lines of the same marginality as Jose María Arguedas, for example. However, even as a "cosmopolitan failure" (*Desires,* 22), Siskind accepts it as an operation that "widens the margins of cultural and political agency and

illuminates new meanings by reinscribing cultural particularities in larger, transcultural networks of signification" (*Desires*, 21-2). This cautious critical enthusiasm only lasts for a few years, since in a text written in 2017 (but published in 2019), Siskind admits how such a desire for the world and its inscription of the margins within a larger (universal) context does not seem as relevant, since the most pressing issue in our immediate present is whether there is or should be a world in the first place (*Loss*, 206-7).

The idea here, if we radicalize Siskind's argument, seems to be finding a way to come to terms with the loss of the world, as well as the losses of past worlds, something which would require a different kind of literature and criticism. This is akin to what Moten elaborates as the need for an undercosmopolitanism that works to "abolish the Kantian line and its recursions to and recrudescences of exclusionary state and national determinations—its conflicted, melancholic, imperial, and post imperial patriotisms—even as it materializes antinational ways of being together from the exhaust(ion) of internationalism" (*Passage*, 194). The different textual escapes that James and de Jesus find from the myth of racial democracy are in this same vein, each author nurtures a project in movement: "to sift and rub, delve and caress, in the interest of flight" (Moten, *Passage*, 194). This is helpful to understand the purchase of James and de Jesus' work, but more conceptual tools are needed in a context obfuscated with miscegenation as its own totality.

We might have been a little unfair with Santiago at the beginning, but his hybridity, we think, is not as well equipped to read the non-operationality of a once productive desire for the world from the margins, or to deal with the remainders and residues that Latin American, and particularly Venezuelan and Brazilian, socio-cultural life and afterlives leave behind while moving forward with the National ideal. Somewhere else, however, and more than thirty years

after “Latin American Discourse: The space in-between”, Santiago seems to take charge of these problems in 2004, awakening the complicated idea of cosmopolitanism that Siskind brought back more recently in his own way. In “The Cosmopolitanism of the Poor”, we could say that Santiago finds a defective synonym of racial democracy in the idea of cordial multiculturalism (taking the notion of the *homem cordial* from sociologist Sergio Buarque de Hollanda). Santiago says:

> The impersonal and sexual voice of the nation-state that, in retrospect, had been formed in the melting pot’s interior speaks through that multiculturalism. Now, under the empire of the governmental and entrepreneurial elites and the country’s laws, various and different ethnic groups, various and different national cultures, intersect in a patriarchal and fraternal manner (the terms are dear to Gilberto Freyre). They mix in order to constitute another, different national culture that is sovereign and whose dominant characteristics, in the Brazilian case include the extermination of the native population, the *escravocrata* (slave-ocrat) model of colonization, and the silencing of women and sexual minorities (*Cosmopolitanism*, 31).

Santiago will, in an oblique manner, compare such multiculturalism with what he calls a cosmopolitanism of the poor. Against the articulation and strengthening of the state’s fictive historical narrative through the suppression of the marginalized population’s memory, Santiago argues for a soft subversion, where a trans-localism from below produces surprising encounters and exchanges between long histories of resistance to official policies (*Cosmopolitanism*, 36). It passes through the need for a delinking between pueblo and nation and to the unstable but persistent link that the popular and poverty, as indexed by Moreno (*Antropología Cultural*, 50), have in Brazil and Venezuela. The need to not let go of cosmopolitanism is a symptom of the

desire for the world, though, one that can only hyphenate difference and absorb it much too clearly. Racial democracy is a Latin American cosmopolitanism. The soft subversion is there, as Santiago states, but it does not seem to look for world-making, as Santiago argues, it comes from worlds already made and internally refashioned and unmade, but always unregistered by the desire for a unified world, even if multicultural.

The theory-praxis of the reading performed here aims at the exploration of a trans-local possibility of encounters that we could call an ethnocentrism of the poor, mixing Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism and Moreno's idea of the world-of-life with Santiago's analytical impetus. This ethnocentrism moves away from the foundational literature that configured a desire for the world, living instead in-between incommensurable worlds. Its existence is not a hybrid one, it involves a different procedure, a contamination of one world with the other's practice, against the paralysis of believing that we have lost all worlds, as if that loss has not historically been a constant for poverty and blackness and the actual and written displacement we see in James and de Jesus.

In November 8, 1961, de Jesus writes:

> Audálio said: You have nothing to complain about life. You have everything. That you stuck in my mind.
> And the others? The workers who have children…and can't feed them decently. I have the impression that I am a thousand meter statue. Observing the suffering of humanity. Brazil is going to be a wonderful country when the lands are free. The agrarian reform was the hope of the people. It was on paper only. But the people need reality. We went home (*Unedited*, 118-9).

De Jesus has a desire for land. She mobilizes an ethnocentrism of the poor against Audálio's act of singling her out, and becomes an immense observer, not afraid to be speaking for others, telling her editor that it is not the same for him and for her to be a statue one thousand meters tall. In her later diaries de Jesus is insistent about the need for a radical agrarian reform, and her

move to a rural area at the end of her life, even if not in the conditions she would have wished for, is a reversal of the movement to the city that she, and "the others" made. Her return is not a new beginning or an end, but a local, parochial, subversive act. Always fugitive, but always intervening in the world that believes itself to be one, always in movement with a desire for a little land for her and the others, patching together something that might be a world, perhaps, but might have no name yet.

James, for his part, occupies a more ambiguous place when read in terms of an ethnocentrism from below. He is always escaping the national but circumscribes himself in an already codified regional space and its stereotypes with a seemingly excessive neutrality that can leave little to say. Let's read "Caribe", from 2003:

> Long live the sensual dances
> The doing nothing
> The kisses given under the palm trees
> Long live rum
> Long live The Sun
> Long live this fucking Caribbean (*Kentakes*, 55).[177]

The desire for the maintenance of the Caribbean as form is also a desire for the survival of practices that were supposed to be erased by now, that a whitening of the population in the name of racial democracy would get rid of. There is a celebration and a reappropriation of the discourse of laziness that poor and black people have been subjected to, by showing (as it is shown in James' oeuvre in general) that the absence of a certain productive work translates in a proliferation of other kinds of activities that do not want to be codified within a logic of this world. "The doing nothing" does everything here, it is the unpaid aesthetic labor that does and undoes. The text, however, also exceeds the world, projecting itself into a celebration of the

[177] Vivan las danzas sensuales / El no hacer nada / Los besos dados bajo los cocoteros / Que viva el ron / Viva el Sol / Viva este Caribe del carajo. (My English translation).

universe without universals, the sun which often blinds Caribbeans, and which Armando Reverón brilliantly captured and invented in his white paintings, shows the inevitability of running out of this world while staying in the local space. *El Caribe* is, for James, his own problematic and luminous way of being ethnocentric, of containing his movements between two countries, and in also exceeding them, pointing to many other countries and the sea, being *more* and *less than*, permanently; not a loss but a multiplicity for which several structures of receptions must be made and unmade constantly.

De Jesus returns to the countryside while James expands to the Caribbean at large, two forms of escape in parallel, within, beyond, and before the national form. They make the possibilities of trans-local connections of minoritized ethnocentrism resonate in a frequency only available after working out the desedimentation of the myth of racial democracy, revealing all we can do by doing nothing.

CONCLUSION

ON EQUIVOCAL SIMULTANEITY

The authors examined so far have encountered, each in their own way, pre-articulated aesthetic forms available for them to produce literature out of. I have shown how they have escaped from such forms while produced others that are not completely legible under a national literature regime. Some of the open questions that an open project like this carries with it go beyond the literary realm and its defined contours given by the strengthening of the nation-state and its modernization. The visual field and its interaction and superposition with written and spoken language has become a terrain of discourse and counter-discourses that have often established a polarity where different modes of nationalism exist in a predictable confrontation. It is relevant, then, to start a brief discussion on what kinds of escapes to the national syntheses cinema can offer.

There is a scene in *Araya*, the 1959 film by Venezuelan director Margot Benacerraf, which is worth looking at to think about new escapes from readily available ways of reading and seeing. The film addresses, in a highly stylized manner, the harsh conditions in which workers, with no other choice, extract the salt of the sea, selling their labor power for a barely sufficient salary in the Araya peninsula on the eastern coast of Venezuela. After depicting the ritualistic movement of the salt extraction and its arrangements in pyramids, including the "cutting" of the salt under the sea, we hear the voice over explain how "a "salary" is the salt earned for a day's work, and that "The Conquistadors paid their soldiers with salt", which was as precious as gold back then (28:10). The equivalence of salt with gold has been abstracted even further, since the

workers now receive a token for carrying the baskets filled with salt (a process in which all the family is involved since the cutting of the salt, the first link of the labor chain).

The token can be changed for another one, a 50-cent coin. That description of exchanges is juxtaposed in the narration with another fact, mentioned casually in the scene that concerns us: Fortunato Pereda, the young son of Beltrán Pereda, a veteran worker, has not been able to come to work for many days due to his feet being ulcered by constantly stepping on the salt. When this is said, we do not see a close-up of Fortunato's damaged, or even cured, feet, as it would be one temptation of filmmakers.[178] Instead, we see him shirtless, like many of the salt workers, and well-groomed and good looking. Benacerraf directorial decisions here are ambiguously putting different discourses together. There is a denunciation of the risks involved in the job, and the toil it takes on the body. This, united with the choreography of the workers receiving the token (of which there are longer scenes at other moments in the film), works as a simulacrum of a dialectical montage[179] that does not impose, however, a solid synthesis, but only suggests. The dialectics is in fact complicated with the portrayal of a sensual Fortunato, reaching for his pockets to count the tokens of the family. Benacerraf's mention of the pyramids of salt, and the portrayal of Fortunato, like a classical statue, are also suggestive ways of stating the archaic nature of a job that has not changed in almost five centuries. We have in mind the voice-over talking about Fortunato's injury, but all we can see is his agency and beauty. He is inserted in a repetitive ritual of movements destined for production, but Benacerraf catches other gestures that expand and overflow such a mechanized and aestheticized choreography. There is here a carefully constructed play, where images do not necessarily contradict words; instead, they point

[178] Julianne Burton-Carvajal argues about a different scene: "Perhaps there is no contradiction in the fact that though the narrator makes reference to the cock fighting ring at Manicuare, the director does not see fit to include visuals of this hypermasculine entertainment" (227).
[179] Not out of nowhere has Araya been compared with Eisenstein *¡Que viva México!,* especially by French critics.

to an equivocal simultaneity, that is, a superposition of poetry and politics that is always on the way to being resolved but never is. It is where the visual shows its power of non-synthesis.

Figure 4. Fortunato Pereda in *Araya.*

I think about this purposeful failure of the dialectical montage while reflecting on other avenues we can take by following a way of reading against national discourse—and its complicity with critique. The cinematographic presence, in André Bazin's terms (who was a lover of Benacerraf's first film, *Reverón*), means in *Araya* an understanding of bodies not only as exploited or as passive agents of their fortune. There is indeed an exposition of the unjust conditions for workers in Araya's salt-marshes historically, but parallel to that, Benacerraf is trying to articulate a new kind of presence that encompasses poetry and an expanded sense of the political. The shots of Fortunato reaching for his family's fortune in his pocket, and subject to the fortune of being a salaried worker in Araya are an example of this poetic denunciation that creates a new presence. Deleuze says: "The body is no longer the obstacle that separates thought from itself, that which it has to overcome to reach thinking. It is on the contrary that which it plunges into or must plunge into, in order to reach the unthought, that is life" (189). This is partly so for Benacerraf, as there is not a one-dimensional body for her but different expressive possibilities that will inevitably lead to different thoughts of the unthought. She is not extracting

Fortunato from the routine which injures him, her camera is not passing judgment or speaking for him, she is showing something else that is on/in him, amplifying cinema and articulating a multiple presence, full of remainders.

The hyper-aesthetic emphasis that some critics like Alfredo Roffé in 1977 and Julio Miranda in 1989 denounce as leaving no room for social comment and critique, and which would make Araya a "…filmic manifesto of the defenders of the status quo", according to Roffé, and "a museum of images", in Miranda's words (quoted in Burton-Carvajal, 213), is not a valuation of cinematic beauty over political content, as these critics interpreted it, but the articulation of both in an oblique and unexpected way, contributing to a new language of the political, that is, to the political in a movement of zig-zag, or as an illusion of a dialectic montage that is always sabotaged and interrupted by new possibilities, including the distraction from a pedagogy of the image as a demand on the viewer to *look* in a certain way. The genesis of new kinds of presences that Benacerraf structures in an equivocal simultaneity is precisely her way of reaching for a way of life that both suffers and exceeds its lack of choices in a naturally and industrially hostile environment, but that, in such a context makes a way out of no way, as in another scene in which a woman and her granddaughter adorn the tombs of their loved ones with seashells and corals due to the lack of flowers in arid Araya.

If mapping, family ties, and the myth of racial democracy have accompanied us thus far, the displacement of the analytical and speculative character of this project to the visual realm demands a more careful consideration of this form of simultaneous equivocation (*anthesis* or *unsynthesis* if you will), especially in how it would allow us to read promises of national progress and development which eliminate the embodiments of local thought and only remembers them as part of a long line leading to progress.

Near the beginning and near the end of *Araya*, we are presented with historical reality checks amidst the mesmerizing ritualistic rhythm of the rest of the movie. After a visual prologue, the voice-over starts, and an omniscient narrator of sorts tells us about the arrival, in 1500, of Spaniards to those lands, giving the peninsula its name: Araya. We see the shots of a colonial fortress now in ruins, which contrasts, somewhat violently, with the images of nature in the prologue: the sky, the sea, the arid land. Cut to 450 years later, and the extraction of salt remains the same, the hard manual labor has been historically repeated by the inhabitants of Araya, as well as the fishing labor, because, in Araya, where nothing grows, as the omniscient voice makes sure to tell us, everything comes from the sea.

Towards the end of the film, before a short epilogue, after the stylized and choreographic depiction of a day in the life of the workers, more violent images emerge: the arrival, not of the conquistadors this time, but of industrialization and progress. The manual hard labor we have witnessed will disappear, will be mechanized. The film is explicit about collapsing these two temporalities: colonial and developmentalist, when the narrator states "450 years come face to face". The explosions and noise of machines that will substitute the arms of the workers interrupts a rhythm Benacerraf created for most of the film, where community, craft, the body's abilities; as well as fatigue, inequality, and an unforgiving nature, form a remarkable composition.

When we think of the scenes of the construction of the fortress and the first experiences of extraction of salt in 1500 collapsed with the fantasy of progress and industrialization in the late 1950s, it is hard not to think of one of the most famous scenes in cinema history: the ape throwing a bone in the air after utilizing it as a weapon, and then a match cut to a satellite, comprising at least thousands of years in a few seconds. Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space*

Odyssey, from 1968, nine years after *Araya*, explicitly enacts a technical possibility that is only implied in Benacerraf's film. *Araya* gives us a similar feelings to that abrupt change where some things did not change, but instead of opting for a match cut, Benacerraf decides to register what a match cut would have put in a marginal and tacit position: the presence of agents that through their labor help us to think of film as ethnography and poetry at the same time, with the distinctly political implications that this would bring in contrast to the more overtly, but not in all cases, Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano of the late 1960s. In Julianne Burton-Carvajal's words: "The film's analogy between colonial conquest and the neo-colonial introduction of modernizing industrialization seems more aptly read as an intervention in rather than an abdication of political discourse. Araya's discursive logic is symbolic and associative rather than explicitly didactic" (223).

Indeed, this expanded notion of politics that forms an alliance between poetry, ethnography, the transformation of bodies creating a new presence, and the interrupted dialectical montage, are not a positioning in an already-made logic or the abandonment of a discourse. Benacerraf's positioning is the articulation of a new grammar of the political, where the repetitive but different movement of the characters, the going back and forth between scenes to find meaning, and the superposition of images and words where the latter are sometimes displaced by the images instead of reinforcing them, create a space of problematic coexistence of symbols and referents, a space where film can do many things at once, even sabotage its own beauty by depicting its own limits and its own excess.

When *Araya* premiered on Cannes in 1959, a young Glauber Rocha, who was at the time a reporter for a Brazilian newspaper, was astonished by the film. He interviewed Benacerraf at the festival and she later reflected on that encounter: "He was enthusiastic. He did a big

interview with me. Then a few years later we met again, and he said "Your film impressed [me]; I made *Barravento* thinking that you had the courage to make that sort of film about your country"" (*A film restored*). *Barravento*, Rocha's first film from 1962, indeed carries an obvious influence of *Araya* in its shots of nature, the sea, and the synchronized movements of workers, part toil and part choreography. Rocha's film chronicles the lives of afro-Brazilians in the village of Xaréu, in the state of Bahia, in the North-East of Brazil. The film stages a confrontation between Firmino, a native from the village who went to the city to work and returns claiming that the old ways of life, characterized by fishing and the afro-Brazilian cult of *candomblé*, are obsolete, and Aruã, a young man who is devoted to Iemanjá (or Yemayá), deity of the new world's seas, and blessed by her. Even if a hybridization of old and new ways triumphs, as Aruã ends up going to the city to work in order to buy a new fishing net for the villagers, Rocha's plot is constantly interrupted and sabotaged by his own images. Naína, the only white woman in the village, ends up becoming, through ritual, Iemanjá's daughter, while Aruã abandons, at least temporarily, fishing for a job in the city. Naína's initiation is just one of the many instances where a story is displaced by music, dance, and religious ritual, as if Rocha is trying to not only imitate Benacerraf in some of the shots of bodies against sea and nature, but also in giving continuity to the anti-synthetic logic of *Araya*, introducing the simultaneous equivocation as a poetic resource. Rocha is less successful, since he cannot escape the hero-anti-hero relation and the different dialectical montages that it elicits, but the most enigmatic moments of the film, where the immersion of the spectator makes them abandon any sense of rational struggle, allow us to think of a possible history of cinema where Rocha can be a sibling of Benacerraf and not a father of a movement that had other fathers in other Latin American countries (Getino, Solanas, Sanjinés), who created, for the most part, a propaedeutic of seeing instead of a questioning of the

synthetic impulse of images. The horizontal kinship of these two filmmakers that I am only suggesting here, involves, through an analysis of a local treatment of time and simultaneity, a different idea of the cinematic map as well as a memory of worlds-of-life that existed before modernization and an idea of national unity projected their syntheses over the images that still resist and escape today.

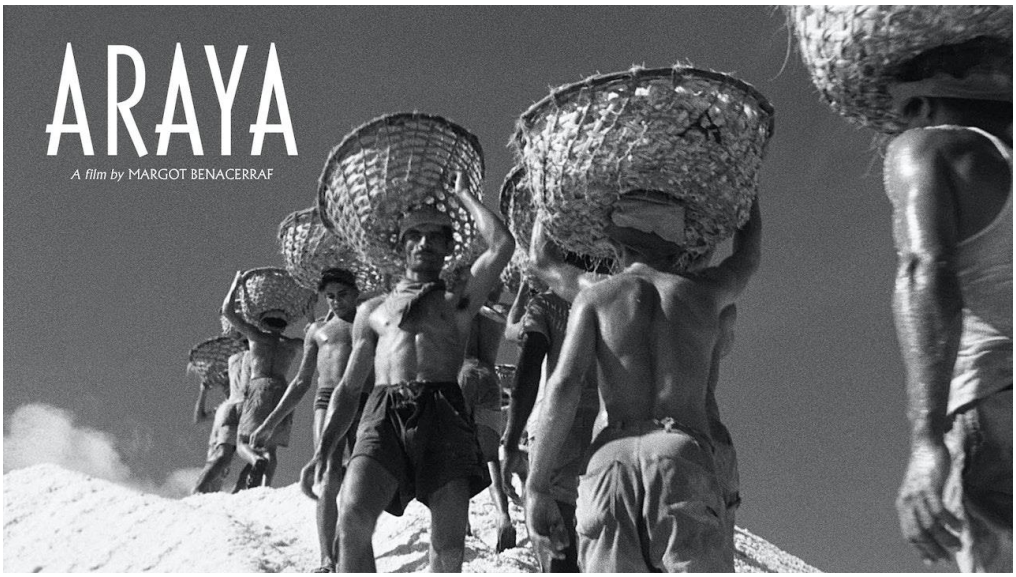

Figure 5. *Araya*, 1959.

Figure 6. *Barravento*, 1962.

REFERENCES

Abreu, Caio Fernando. "A Festa Erótica de HH." *Pornô Chic*, by Hilda Hilst, Editora Globo, 2014.

Acosta Saignes, Miguel. *Estudios para la Formación de nuestra Identidad.* El Perro y la Rana, 2017.

Alarcón, Víctor. "La Ansiedad por los Orígenes. El Problema de la Historia en la Vanguardia Literaria de Venezuela." *Mitologías Hoy*, vol. 16, 2017, pp. 53-69.

Andermann, Jens. *Tierras en Trance: Arte y Naturaleza después del Paisaje*. E-book, Metales Pesados, 2018.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

Araujo, Orlando. *Narrativa Venezolana Contemporánea*. Monte Ávila Editores, 1988.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition.* University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Azevedo Filho de, Deneval Siqueira. *Holocausto das Fadas: A Trilogia obscena e o Carmelo Bufólico de Hilda Hilst.* Annablume, 2002.

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays.* University of Texas Press, 1981.

Balibar, Étienne and Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities.* Verso, 1991.

Barrera Linares, Luis. *El Traje Narrativo de Trejo: Análisis Comunicacional de la Cuentística de Oswaldo Trejo.* Ediciones La Casa de Bello, 1994b.

---. "Oswaldo Trejo: Pautas para una Propuesta de la (In)comunicación Literaria". *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 60, no. 166-167, 1994a, pp. 199-218.

---. “La Narrativa Breve de Oswaldo Trejo: Más allá del Textualismo”. *Inti*, no. 37/38, 1993, pp. 97-106.

Barreto, Igor. *Annapurna. The Empirical Mountain.* Alliteration, 2021.

---. “Dilemas para una Poesía de la Tierra.” *Revista Nuestra América*, vol .4, 2007, pp. 111-117.

---. *El Campo / El ascensor. Poesía Reunida (1983-2013).* Pre-Textos, 2014.

---. *El Muro de Mandelshtam*. Sociedad de Amigos del Santo Sepulcro, 2016.

---. *The Blind Plain / El Llano Ciego.* Translated by Rowena Hill, Tavern Books, 2018.

Bataille, Georges. “The Notion of Expenditure.” In *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, by Georges Bataille, University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

Bello, Andrés. *Obra Literaria.* Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1979.

Benacerraf, Margot, director. *Araya.* Milestone Films, 1959.

---. “A Film Restored, a Director Revered.” Interview with Lewis Beale. *AARP VIVA*, Fall 2009, https://www.aarp.org/entertainment/movies-for-grownups/info-07-2010/a_film_restored_adirectorrevered.html. Accessed, 7 November, 2022.

Benjamin, Walter. “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire.” *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 313-355.

---. “Some Reflections on Kafka.” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections.* Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 141-145.

Borges, Luciana. “Sobre a Obscenidade Inocente: *O Caderno Rosa de Lori Lamby*, de Hilda Hilst.” *OPSIS*, vol. 6, 2006, pp. 20-32.

Boyer, Anne. “No.” *Poetry Foundation*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2017/04/no. Accessed, 14 September, 2022.

Brennan, T. “The National Longing for Form.” *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi Bhabha, Routledge, 1990, pp. 44–70.

Brown, Heather. *Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study.* Brill, 2012.

Burton-Carvajal, Julianne. “Araya Across Time and Space: Competing Canons of National (Venezuelan) and International Film History.” *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, vol. 11, no. 21/22, 1998, pp. 207-234.

Cadernos de Literatura Brasilera. “Das Sombras: Entrevista.” *Cadernos de Literatura Brasilera*, no. 8, 1999, pp. 25-41.

Campos, Miguel Angel. *La fe de los Traidores*. Instituto de Investigaciones Literarias Gonzalo Picón Febres, 2004.

Candido, Antonio. “A Nova Narrativa.” *A Educação pela Noite*, by Antonio Candido, Editora Ática, 1989, pp. 199-215.

---. “A Revolução de 1930 e a Cultura.” *A Educação pela Noite*, by Antonio Candido, Editora Ática, 1989, pp. 181-198.

---. “Inquietudes na Poesia de Drummond.” *Varios Escritos*, by Antonio Candido, Livraria Duas Cidades, 1977, pp. 93-122.

---. “Poesia e Ficção na Autobiografía.” *A Educação pela Noite*, by Antonio Candido, Editora Ática, 1989, pp. 51-69.

Castillo Zapata, Rafael. “Palabras Recuperadas, la Poesía Venezolana de los Ochenta: Rescate y Transformación de las Palabras de la Tribu. El Caso ‘Tráfico’.” *INTI*, no. 37/38, 1993, pp. 197-205.

Castro-Gómez, Santiago. *Crítica de la Razón Latinoamericana.* Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2011.

Castro Padrón, Marta y Arellan, Milagros. *La Migración Venezolana hacia las islas del Caribe: Entre la Clandestinidad y la Precariedad Laboral en Trinidad y Tobago.* Equilibrium CenDE, 2021.

Chamoiseau, Patrick. "La Puesta en Relación." *Cuadernos de Literatura*, vol. 17, no. 34, 2013, pp. 302-312.

Chandler, Nahum Dimitri. *X–The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought.* Fordham University Press, 2014.

Chase, Williston. "Cómplice de la Idealidad: la Universidad y la idea del Estado." *La Universidad (Im)posible*, edited by Willy Thayer, Elizabeth Collingwood-Selby, Mary Luz Estupiñán Serrano, and raúl rodríguez freire, Ediciones Macul, 2018, pp. 424-443.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories.* Princeton University Press, 1993.

Coronil, Fernando. *The Magical State. Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela.* The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

de Andrade, Mario. "The Modernist Movement." *Portuguese Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2008, pp. 95-115.

de Andrade, Oswald. "Cannibalist Manifesto." *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 19, no. 38, 1991, pp. 38-47.

---. "Manifesto of Pau-Brasil Poetry." *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 14, no. 27, 1986, pp. 184-187.

---. "O Caminho Percorrido." *Obras Completas 5. Ponta de Lança*, by Oswald de Andrade, Civilização Brasileira, 1971, pp. 93-102.

de Campos, Haroldo. “Drummond, Mestre de Coisas.” *Metalinguagem & outras Metas*, by Haroldo de Campos, Editora Perspectiva, 2006, pp. 49-55.

de Jesus, Maria Carolina. *Bitita’s Diary. The Childhood Memoirs of Carolina Maria de Jesus.* E-book. Routledge, 2015.

---. *Child of the Dark. The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus.* Mentor Books, 1963

---. *Quarto de Despejo. Diario de uma Favelada.* Francisco Alves, 1983.

---. *The Unedited Diaries of Carolina Maria de Jesus.* Edited by, Robert M. Levine and José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy. Rutgers University Press, 1999.

Debray, Régis. “Marxism and the National Question.” *New Left Review*, no. 105, 1977, pp. 25-41.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image.* University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

---. *The Logic of Sense.* Columbia University Press, 1990.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

---. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Della Torre, Bruna. “Modelos críticos: Antonio Candido e Roberto Schwarz leem Oswald de Andrade.” *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, no. 74, 2019, pp. 178-196.

Derrida, Jacques. “Onto-Theology of National-Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis).” *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 14, no. 1/2, pp. 3-23.

Destri, Luisa and Diniz, Cristiano. “Um Retrato da Artista.” *Por Que Ler Hilda Hilst*, edited by Alcir Pécora, Editora Globo, 2010.

do Nascimento, Abdias. “The Myth of Racial Democracy.” *The Brazil Reader. Second Edition*, edited by James N. Green, Victoria Langland and Lila Moritz Schwarcz, Duke University Press, 2019, pp. 445-448.

do Nascimento Arruda, Maria Arminda. “Modernismo e Regionalismo no Brasil. Entre Inovação e Tradição.” *Tempo Social. Revista da Sociologia da USP*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2011, pp. 191-212.

Drummond de Andrade, Carlos. *Multitudinous Heart. Selected Poems.* Translated by Richard Zenith, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2015.

---. *Nova Reunião. 23 Livros de Poesia.* Companhia das Letras, 2015.

Du Bois, W. E. B., *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Engels, Friedrich. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* Lawrence and Wishart, 1942.

Esposito, Roberto. *Categories of the Impolitical.* Fordham University Press, 2015.

---. *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics.* Fordham University Press, 2013.

Farias, Tom. *Carolina. Uma Biografia.* Malê, 2017.

Fausto, Boris. *História do Brazil.* Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1995.

Fischer, Brodwyn. “A Century in the Present Tense: Crisis, Politics, and the Intellectual History of Brazil’s Informal Cities.” *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America*, edited by Brodwyn Fischer, Bryan McCann, and Javier Ayuero, Duke University Press, 2014, pp. 9-67.

Flores, María Antonieta. “Miguel James. Voz de lo Cotidiano y lo Sagrado.” *Altazor. Revista Electrónica de Literatura*, https://www.revistaaltazor.cl/miguel-james-2/. Accessed, 14 September, 2022.

Folch-Serra, Mireia. “El Paisaje como Metáfora Visual: Cultura e Identidad en la Nación Posmoderna.” *La Construcción Social del Paisaje*, edited by Joan Nogué, Biblioteca Nueva, 2007, pp. 137-159.

Freud, Sigmund. *An Outline of Psychoanalysis.* In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXIII*, edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, 1964, 139-207.

---. “Family Romances”. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. IX*, edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, 1959, 235-241.

---. “Negation”. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XIX*, edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, 1961, 233-239.

---. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.* In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. VII*, edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press, 1953, 125-248.

Freyre, Gilberto. *Manifesto Regionalista de 1926.* Os Cadernos de Cultura. Ministério de Educacão e Cultura, 1955.

Genette, Gérard. *The Architext: An Introduction.* University of California Press, 1992.

González, Lélia. “Racismo e Sexismo na Cultura Brasileira.” *Revista Ciências Sociais Hoje*, 1984, pp. 223-244.

González Stephan, Beatriz. “Escritura y Modernización: La Domesticación de la Barbarie”. *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 60, no. 166/167, 1994, pp. 109-124.

Greenfeld, Liah. *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity.* Harvard University Press, 1992.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. The MIT Press, 1991.

Han, Sora. “Slavery as Contract: Betty's Case and the Question of Freedom.” *Law & Literature*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2015, pp. 395-416.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose your Mother. A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

---. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments. Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval.* W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Arts. Volume II.* Oxford University Press, 1975.

---. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Hilst, Hilda. *Cartas de um Sedutor*. Editora Globo, 2002.

---. *Contos d’Escarnio. Textos Grotescos.* In *Pornô Chic*, by Hilda Hilst, Editora Globo, 2014.

---. *O Caderno Rosa de Lori Lamby.* In *Pornô Chic*, by Hilda Hilst, Editora Globo, 2014.

---. *Qadós.* Edart, 1973.

Ishibashi, Jun. “Multiculturalismo y Racismo en la Época de Chávez: Etnogénesis Afrovenezolana en el Proceso Bolivariano.” *Humania del Sur*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2007, pp. 25-41.

Izard Martínez, Gabriel. “Del Olvido a la Memoria y la Presencia: Estrategias de Visibilización de los Movimientos Sociales Afrovenezolanos.” *Humania del Sur*, vol. 8, no. 14, 2013, pp. 121-133.

Jackson, Virginia and Prins, Yopie. General Introduction. *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, pp. 1-8.

Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman. ““Theorizing in a Void”: Sublimity, Matter, and Physics in Black Feminist Poetics.” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 113, no. 3, 2018, pp. 617-648.

Jaffé, Verónica. *El Relato Imposible*. Monte Ávila Editores, 1991.

James, Miguel. *Albanela, Tuttifrutti, Blanca y las otras.* Fundarte, 1990.

---. *Kentakes.* Ediciones Mucuglifo, 2003.

---. *La Casa Caramelo de la Bruja.* Fundarte, 1993.

---. *Mi Novia Itala come Flores.* Fundarte, 1988.

Johnson, David W. "Self in Nature, Nature in the Lifeworld: A Reinterpretation of Watsuji's Concept of *Fūdo*." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 68, no. 4, 2018, pp. 1134-1154.

Jones, Natalie Dietrich (2020). "The Venezuela-Trinidad and Tobago Migration Corridor." *Routledge Handbook of Migration and Development*, edited by Tanja Bastia and Ronald Skeldon, Routledge, 2020, pp 492-500.

Kusch, Rodolfo. *América Profunda*. *Obras Completas Tomo II*, Fundación Ross, 1998, pp. 1-254.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *Poetry as Experience.* Stanford University Press, 1999.

Lafetá, João Luiz. *1930: A Crítica e o Modernismo.* Duas Cidades/Editora 32, 2000.

Lecuna, Vicente. "Reinas Venezolanas del siglo XX. Populismo, Abstracción y Estado." *Cuadernos de Literatura,* vol. 22, no. 43, 2018, pp. 75-96.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques*. Penguin Books, 1992.

Levine, Robert M. "The Cautionary Tale of Carolina Maria de Jesus." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1994, pp. 55-83.

Levine, Robert M. and Meihy, José Carlos Sebe Bom. "Afterword." *The Unedited Diaries of Carolina Maria de Jesus.* Edited by, Robert M. Levine and José Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy. Rutgers University Press, 1999, pp. 185-222.

---. *The Life and Death of Carolina Maria de Jesus.* University of New Mexico Press, 1995.

Lloyd, David and Thomas, Paul. *Culture and the State.* Routledge, 1997.

Lobo, Gregory J. "El Estado y la Teoría Literaria: hacia una Agenda de Investigación." *Cuadernos de Literatura,* vol. 19, no. 37, 2015, pp. 20-37.

Lyotard, Jean François. "Scapeland." *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time.* Stanford University Press, 1991.

Macht de Vera, Elvira. *Indagaciones en el Universo Narrativo de Oswaldo Trejo*. Fundarte, 1982.

Maderuelo, Javier. *El Paisaje. Génesis de un Concepto.* Abada, 2005.

Marí, Antoni. "Paisaje y Literatura." *El Paisaje en la Cultura Contemporánea*, edited by Joan Nogué, Biblioteca Nueva, 2008, pp. 141-154.

Meihy, José Carlos Sebe Bom. "Dreams of Uneducated Women." *The Brazil Reader. First Edition,* edited by Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 348-349.

Merquior, José Guilherme. "'A Máquina do Mundo' de Drummond." *Razão do Poema. Ensaios de Crítica e de Estética*, by José Guilherme Merquior, E-book, É Realizações, 2016.

---. "Notas em função de Boitempo (I)." *A Astúcia da Mímese. Ensaios sobre Lírica*, by José Guilherme Merquior, Topbooks, 1997, pp.59-69.

Milán, Eduardo. *Resistir. Insistencias sobre el Presente Poético.* E-book, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004.

Milani, Raffaele. "Estética y Crítica del Paisaje." *El Paisaje en la Cultura Contemporánea*, edited by Joan Nogué, Biblioteca Nueva, 2008, pp. 45-66.

Miliani, Domingo. *Tríptico Venezolano (Narrativa, Pensamiento, Crítica).* Fundación de Promoción Cultural de Venezuela, 1985.

Miranda, Julio. *Poesía, Paisaje y Política.* Fundarte, 1992.

Montañez, Ligia. *El Racismo Oculto en una Sociedad no Racista.* Tropykos, 1993.

Moraes, Eliane Robert. "A prosa Degenerada." *Pornô Chic*, by Hilda Hilst, Editora Globo, 2014.

Moreno, Alejandro. *Antropología Cultural del Pueblo Venezolano: Tomo I*. Caracas: Fundación Empresas Polar / Centro de Investigaciones Populares, 2016.

---. "De la Antropología Urbana a la Antropología Socio-Cultural." *Obras Completas II*. Caracas: El Estilete, 2017b.

---. *El Aro y la Trama: Episteme, Modernidad y Pueblo*. Convivium Press/El Estilete, 2015.

---. "¿El Barrio es Ciudad?" *Obras Completas II*. Caracas: El Estilete, 2017a.

---. "La Familia Popular Venezolana y sus Implicaciones Culturales". *Familia: Un Arte Difícil*, edited by Fundación Venezuela Positiva, Fundación Venezuela Positiva, 2000, pp. 447-452.

Moreno Villamediana, Luis. "El Lugar de la Pobreza." *El Evangelio Histriónico.* El Taller Blanco, 2019.

Moten, Fred. "Erotics of Fugitivity." *Stolen Life*, by Fred Moten, Duke University Press, 2018, pp. 241-267.

---. "Notes on Passage." *Stolen Life*, by Fred Moten, Duke University Press, 2018, pp. 191-212.

---. "Uplift and Criminality." *Stolen Life*, by Fred Moten, Duke University Press, 2018, pp. 115-139.

Nogué, Joan. "Introducción. La Valoración Cultural del Paisaje en la Conteporaneidad." *El Paisaje en la Cultura Contemporánea*, edited by Joan Nogué, Biblioteca Nueva, 2008, pp. 9-24.

Nunes, Zita. *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas.* Minnesota University Press, 2008.

Oliver, Amy A. "Modernism in Latin America." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, edited by Stephen Ross, Routledge, 2016, https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/overview/modernist-intellectual-currents-in-latin-america. Accessed 24 September 2022.

Opello, Walter C. and Rosow, Stephen J. *The Nation-State and Global Order: A Historical Introduction to Contemporary Politics.* Lynne Rienner, 2004.

Ortega, Julio. "Oswaldo Trejo: Exploraciones". In *Taller de la Escritura (Conversaciones, Encuentros, Entrevistas)*, by Julio Ortega, Siglo Veintiuno, 2000, pp. 144-160.

Osorio T., Nelson. "Antecedentes de la Vanguardia literaria en Venezuela (1909-1925)." *Hispamérica*, vol. 11, no. 33, 1982, pp. 3-30.

Passos Simões Fróes Guimarães, Esther Maria. "A Dialética da Rosa: Alienação e Cotidiano em Tempos de Crise na Obra de Carlos Drummond de Andrade." *Revista Multiface*, vol. 4, 2016, pp. 27-43.

Pécora, Alcir. "Nota do Organizador." *Por Que Ler Hilda Hilst*, edited by Alcir Pécora, Editora Globo, 2010.

Pérez Oramas, Luis. *Toward 20th Century Venezuelan Art.* Fundación Cisneros, 2001.

Perrone, Charles A. "Carlos Drummond de Andrade." *The Cambridge Companion to Latin American Poetry*, edited by Stephen M. Hart, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 152-162.

Pianca, Guilherme. "Le Corbusier and São Paulo—1929: Architecture and Landscape" *Le Corbusier, 50 years later, International Congress*, 2015, pp. 1-18.

Prebisch, Raul. “Crítica al Capitalismo Periférico.” *Revista de la CEPAL*, 7-74, 1976.

Preciado, Paul B. *Can the Monster Speak? Report to an Academy of Psychoanalysts.* Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021.

Princess Isabel and da Siva, Rodrigo Augusto. “Abolition Decree, 1888.” *The Brazil Reader*, edited by Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti, Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 145.

Purceno, Sonia. “Ensaio de Leitura.” *Por Que Ler Hilda Hilst*, edited by Alcir Pécora, Editora Globo, 2010.

Quintero, Pablo. “La Invención de la Democracia Racial en Venezuela.” *Tabula Rasa*, no. 16, 2012, pp. 161-185.

Rama, Ángel. *La Ciudad Letrada.* Arca, 1998.

---. “Las Dos Vanguardias Latinoamericanas.” *Maldoror*, no. 9, 1973, pp. 58-64.

Ramírez Carrillo, Erasmo Rafael. “Dos Propuestas Poéticas sobre el Caribe Venezolano: la Poesía en la Voz del Negro.” *Religación. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, vol. 4, no. 15, 2019, pp. 152-157.

Reguera, Nilze Maria de Azeredo. *Hilda Hilst e seu Pendulear.* Editora UNESP, 2013.

Reyes, Alfonso. *Notas sobre la Inteligencia Americana*. UNAM, 1978.

Rivas Armas, Diónys Cecilia. “Caminando la huella ancestral africana: aportes al estudio de la identidad cultural afrovenezolana.” *Humania del Sur*, vol. 16, no. 31, 2021, pp. 227-250.

Rivas Rojas, Raquel. “Del criollismo al regionalismo: Enunciación y representación en el siglo XIX venezolano.” *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2002, pp. 101-128.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction.* Northwestern University Press, 1989.

Rocha, Glauber, director. *Barravento.* Trigon-Film, 1962.

Rojo, Violeta. “Oswaldo Trejo, el Textor, el Relator.” *Las Heridas de la Literatura Venezolana*, by Violeta Rojo, El Estilete, 2018, pp. 129-134.

Roger, Alain. *Breve Tratado del Paisaje*. Biblioteca Nueva, 2007.

Sainz Borgo, Karina. “Igor Barreto: “Mis Libros son una Reacción Civil ante la Ocupación del Estado.” *Vozpopuli*, https://www.vozpopuli.com/altavoz/cultura/igor-barreto-libros-reaccion-ocupacion_0_1082292906.html. Accessed 28 September 2021.

Santiago, Silviano. “Latin American Discourse: The Space In-Between.” *The Space In-Between: Essays in Latin American Culture*, by Silviano Santiago, Duke University Press, 2001, pp. 25-38.

---. “The Cosmopolitanism of the Poor.” *Cosmopolitanisms*, edited by Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta, New York University Press, 2017, pp. 21-39.

Santos, Milton. *Metamorfoses do Espaço Habitado. Fundamentos Teóricos e Metodológicos da Geografía.* Hucitec, 1988.

Saraceni, Gina. “La Cumbre del Poema. Igor Barreto y la Máquina Geopoética.” *Inti: Revista de Literatura Hispánica*, vol, 87, 2018a, pp. 272-282.

---. “Los Caballos del Hambre: la Muerte de la Belleza en Igor Barreto” *Documentos Lingüísticos y Literarios*, vol. 36, 2018b, pp. 19-30.

Sarlo, Beatriz. *Borges, un Escritor en las Orillas.* Ariel, 1995.

Schwarz, Roberto. “A Carroça, o Bonde e o Poeta Modernista.” *Que Horas São. Ensaios*, by Roberto Schwarz, Companhia das Letras, 2002, pp. 11-28.

---. “National by Imitation.” *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, edited by John Beverley, José Oviedo, and Michael Aronna, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 264-281.

Schwartz, Jorge. *Fervor das vanguardas. Arte e literatura na América Latina*. Companhia das Letras, 2013.

---. "Introducción." *Las Vanguardias Latinoamericanas. Textos Programáticos y Críticos*, edited by Jorge Schwartz, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2002, pp. 33-94.

Shellhorse, Adam Joseph. "The Avant-Garde: From *Creacionismo* to *Ultraísmo*, Brazilian *Modernismo*, *Antropofagia*, and Surrealism." *The Cambridge Companion to Latin American Poetry*, edited by Stephen M. Hart, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 36-62.

Sifontes Greco, Lourdes. "Preludio para Tres Trejos". *Tres Textos Tres*, by Oswaldo Trejo. Monte Ávila Editores, 1992, pp- 7-18.

Simmel, Georg. *Filosofía del Paisaje.* Casimiro Libros, 2013.

---. "The Philosophy of Landscape." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 24, no. 7/8, 2007, pp. 20-29.

Siskind, Mariano. *Cosmopolitan Desires. Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America.* Northwestern University Press, 2014.

---. "Towards a Cosmopolitanism of Loss: An Essay about the End of the World." *World Literature, Cosmopolitanism, Globality. Beyond, Against, Post, Otherwise*, edited by Gesine Müller and Mariano Siskind, De Gruyter, 2019, pp. 205-235.

Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil. Five Centuries of Change.* Oxford University Press, 1999.

Sommer, Doris. "¡Es Hora de Empezar Siempre! La Vanguardia como Constante en Latinoamérica." *Cuadernos de Literatura*, vol. 22, no. 43, 2018, pp. 43-53.

---. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America.* University of California Press, 1991.

"Somos Manifiesto." *Revista válvula (1928). Edición Facsimilar*, edited by Roger Vilain and Diego Rojas Ajmad, Ediciones Actual, 2011, pp. 39-40.

Sucre, Guillermo. "Poesía Critica: Lenguaje y Silencio." *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 37, no. 76/77, 1971, pp. 575-597.

Svampa, Maristella. *Debates Latinoamericanos.* Edhasa, 2016.

Terada, Rei. *Feeling in Theory. Emotion after the "Death of the Subject."* Harvard University Press, 2001.

Trejo, Oswaldo. *Andén Lejano*. *Tres Textos Tres*, by Oswaldo Trejo, Monte Ávila Editores, 1992.

---. *También los Hombres son Ciudades.* Monte Ávila Editores, 1981.

---. *Textos de un Texto con Teresas*. *Tres Textos Tres*, by Oswaldo Trejo, Monte Ávila Editores, 1992.

Trigo, Pedro. "Patria, la Mestiza: Consideraciones sobre el Mestizaje en Venezuela." *Revista SIC*, vol. 45, no. 442, 1982, pp. 61-64.

Trujillo, Iván. "La Nación Esencial. Breve Introducción al Problema del 'Nacional-Filosofismo.'" *Disertaciones*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2020, pp. 25-35.

Uslar Pietri, Arturo. "Sembrar el Petróleo." *Revista de Artes y Humanidades UNICA*, vol. 6, no. 12, 2005, pp. 231-233.

Vallenilla Lanz, Laureano. *Cesarismo Democrático y otros Textos.* Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1991.

Vasconcelos, Jose. *The Cosmic Race/La Raza Cósmica*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Ventura, Lorena. "La Configuración del Sujeto Lírico en la Poesía Latinoamericana de Posvanguardia." *Círculo de Poesía*, https://circulodepoesia.com/2012/10/la-

configuracion-del-sujeto-lirico-en-la-poesia-latinoamericana-de-posvanguardia/. Accessed 7 September 2022.

Vilain, Roger and Rojas Ajmad, Diego. "Presentación." *Revista válvula (1928). Edición Facsimilar*, edited by Roger Vilain and Diego Rojas Ajmad, Ediciones Actual, 2011, pp. 7-31.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. *Cannibal Metaphysics*. Univocal, 2014.

Watsuji, Tetsuro. *Antropología del Paisaje. Climas, Culturas y Religiones.* Sígueme, 2006.

---. *Climate and Culture. A Philosophical Study.* Greenwood Press, 1961.

Wellek, René. "Genre Theory, the Lyric, and *Erlebnis*." *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, pp. 40-52.

Werneck, Humberto. "Hilda se Despede da Seriedade." *Pornô Chic*, by Hilda Hilst, Editora Globo, 2014.

Williams, Daryle. *Culture Wars in Brazil: the First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945*. Duke University Press, 2001.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. Oxford University Press, 1975.

Wisnik, José Miguel. *Maquinação do Mundo: Drummond e a Mineração.* E-book, Companhia das Letras, 2018.

Wright, Winthrop R. *Café con Leche. Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela.* University of Texas Press, 1990.

Zenith, Richard. Introduction. *Multitudinous Heart. Selected Poems*, by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2015, pp. xi-xxvii.