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# alternative modernities: statecraft and religious imagination in the Valley of the Dawn

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The ethnographic record of the colonial and post-colonial world is replete with new religions that promote the emblems, narratives, and technologies of modern nation-states. Let me give a few examples. Jean Rouch's astonishing film, *Les Maîtres Fous*, registers the practices of one such religion in Ghana. At a ritual site on the outskirts of Accra, viewers witness Hauka spirits descending on their mediums as officials of the British colonial administration. The Hauka manifest themselves through their engagement in the business of rule as the sergeant major, chief justice, train conductor, and governor-general with egg on his head (a plumed helmet, that is). With the frothing self-importance of high office, they rush around the ritual site, enacting bureaucratic directives, debating policy, and defending the colonial state. Another example is that of the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake who claimed to have converse in a trance with George Washington (Kehoe 1989; Wallace 1970). He reported that they spoke at the President's house as George relaxed with his dog on the verandah. Some Melanesians built airfields for the magical planes they believed were coming to deliver trade goods. Others, observing that power over cargo seemed to depend on letters dispatched between administrators, dressed in European clothes and exchanged magically encrypted pieces of paper. Throughout what many call the religious market of Latin America, a multitude of cults maximize the magical powers of each of the so-called three founding races by hybridizing African slaves, European nation builders, and Indian princesses into one pantheon of spirits. Recent religions in Brazil, Japan and California focus on flying saucers, radio beams, and high-energy molecular transfers to generate, through complex discourses about science, law, industry, and telecommunications, their chiliastic powers of cure and salvation.<sup>1</sup>

No doubt because the states in which these religions occur usually repress or ridicule them, the burden of explanation always seems to be on why poor, oppressed, deprived, and devitalized peoples should do these things, rather than on why or how or what it means that centralized states and marginalized religions often have strikingly similar and conjunctive practices. Rarely do anthropologists ask what such mimetic relations reveal about the nature of the state, modern notions of power, project, and the public both state and religion appear to employ, or about the conjunction and simultaneity of their memberships. In this context, it is

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*Many new religions promote the emblems and institutions of modern nation-states. In this article, I consider an example from Brazil, analyzing the mimetic relations between its modernist capital, Brasília, and a millenarian and ecstatic religion called the Valley of the Dawn located on the city's outskirts. I focus on the project of salvation that each sponsors and on a religious ritual that stages a judicial event associated with the state. Arguing against compensatory explanations, I suggest that both state and religion are performances, mutually critical, of the same paradigm of modernity. [Brazil, modernity, millenarian religion, spirit possession, ritual, nation-state, bureaucracy, law]*

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less noted that nation-states also compete for allegiances, display powers, establish pedigrees, manifest hierarchies, evoke fears, and induce explanations in ways that frequently have more to do with the erasures and reinscriptions of prophetic movements than with bureaucratic rationalities. Like prophets gathering flocks, modern states invent nations where they do not yet exist and create polities to which they later belong. And like prophets, they often do this inventing by means of public works that are supposed to demonstrate their capacity to create an imagined, usually alternative future and to fashion new subjects and subjectivities for it.

This kind of productive enterprise is altogether different from that of collecting taxes and amassing armies for which states are also known. In the sense that I am emphasizing, modern nation-states use public works—from master plans for economic development to television programming—as displays of statecraft to prove that they are indeed modern, to demonstrate that they manage the new time, space, and consciousness of modernity on which their legitimation depends. Often through claims that seem nothing short of miraculous, such projects aim to cultivate the belief that states can produce the future-modern by accelerating history (“Fifty Years of Progress in Five”), dematerializing distance (“National Unification through Highway Construction”), and generating their particular brand of human association out of its apparent opposite in the present (“The Five Year Plan”). Seen in this light, centralized nation-states and marginalized cults seem rather more twin than twain.

In this article, I consider such mimetically complex conjunctions between state and religion. To do so, I use an example from Brazil, analyzing the relations between its modernist national capital, Brasília, and a millenarian and ecstatic religion known as the Valley of the Dawn (*O Vale do Amanhecer*) located on the city’s outskirts. To bring out their conjunction, I focus on the project of salvation that each explicitly promotes and on a particular ritual of the religion, the Prisoners’ Ritual, which stages a judicial event of the kind usually associated with the state. The religious practitioners stage this event in different circumstances, to be sure, but with many like motives, structures, and forms. Based on these comparisons, I suggest that popular religions of this sort are not best understood, as often proposed (see below), as derivative, compensatory, or pathetic imitations of the real thing found elsewhere—namely, in the institutions of modern secular society that either exploit the poor or are beyond their reach, benefit, and control. Even where compensatory explanation may be appropriate, my point is that these religions also present homologous and perhaps alternative modernities. These parallels are difficult to grasp as such from the usual state-centric perspective of most observers. Indeed, I have found that many people, including anthropologists, tend to dismiss the Valley of the Dawn with the kind of snickers reserved for kitsch or ersatz. In this sense, I write as well against the condescension these religions frequently provoke.

I argue that both Brasília and the Valley of the Dawn are performances of the same paradigm of modernity. I call them modernist because of the way they manipulate the course of history, reckoning the present through master plans for new publics and republics. Struggling with similar conditions, these master plans of state and religion reflect each other. However, in distinguishing the kind of resources that each makes available to its members, and hence the kind of agency members have in each sphere, I also demonstrate a critical difference: the religion constructs an explanatory model of history that accounts for both individual and national fate in terms of justice and exposes the failings of the secular state in just these terms.

Through this kind of efficacy, the Valley of the Dawn mirrors modernity back to modernist Brasília. In so doing, it makes the capital other to itself. It exposes Brasília as a magnificent stage but a stage nonetheless—one of several in the Federal District—for the performance of modernity and its master plans. For most secularists in the modernist city, this unexpected defamiliarization of their self-image tends to provoke dismissive perplexity, if not outright ridicule and hostility. For the Valley’s initiates, the estrangement of the state does not generate alienated rebels or engaged reformists. In fact, it does not lead directly to political mobilization

of any sort. Thus, I cannot easily call the Valley's religious practice a form of resistance to the kinds of oppression the poor suffer in the secular world. But I do suggest that it constitutes a critical imagination in the sense that it exposes the nation-state Brasília represents to evaluation. Moreover, the cognate relation between Brasília and the Valley of the Dawn debunks the common idea that there are two Brazils—one religious and archaic and the other rational, national, and modern—and that one develops at the other's expense. Rather, the conjunction calls into question the classic sociological theses that modernity means secularization and that sacralization is anti-modern. Instead, the conjunction shows the modern to be far more complex than such oppositions imply.

I begin with a discussion of the problem of explanation in the study of millenarian and ecstatic religions. I then describe the two capitals, the Prisoners' Ritual, and its correspondence with the affairs of nation and state.

### kingdoms of heaven in the backlands of Brazil

Throughout Brazilian history, the poor have founded many religious movements and organizations. Their charismatic centers have been fundamental institutions of daily life, constituting what can fairly be called a religious pluralism: although at times these institutions are antagonistic, more often they coexist in market-like competition for adherents, many of whom transit between them. The Valley of the Dawn is remarkable in this tradition (Figures 1–4). So far as I know, not only is it the most spectacular of such charismatic centers, but it is also unusual in combining two dominant currents of Brazilian religiosity into one doctrine. First, it is a syncretic-synthesizing religion, a veritable sponge that absorbs and unites a host of belief systems into an original doctrine. Thus, it combines elements from many religious traditions, some of which are themselves highly synthetic: Catholicism, Candomblé, Umbanda, Xango, Spiritism, various supposedly Amerindian beliefs, Magnetism, Mesmerism, and an alphabet of others drawn from the world's religious imagination (with the striking exception of Islam). Its ritual doctrine emphasizes the curing powers of all of these religions through spirit possession. Although a mix of Catholicism, Umbanda, and Spiritism predominates, it draws freely from this global synthesis for ritual and explanatory purposes.<sup>2</sup>

Second, the Valley of the Dawn is millenarian and messianic. It is motivated by the belief that a 2,000-year Cycle of Civilization is coming to a traumatic end, generating confusion, anxiety, illness, cynicism, desperation, and violence on the part of those who are unprepared for a new "planetary phase."<sup>3</sup> Its specific mission is to undertake this preparation and to disseminate instructions for the new age. Its purpose is also to treat the many afflictions it diagnoses as "mediunic disturbances" that become especially prevalent during the interregnum of millennia, in particular schizophrenia, cancer, epilepsy, and a variety of obsessions. Under such conditions, in the words of one of its leaders, its mission is "to offer to Man, anguished and insecure, an explanation of himself and a path for his immediate life."<sup>4</sup> The Valley's doctrine (*doutrina*) guides this mission. It is based on the teachings and spiritual experiences of its clairvoyant leader, Neiva Chaves Zelaya, known to everyone as *Tia* (Aunt) Neiva. Her husband and most important interpreter is Mário Sassi, one of the *Trines* of the cult's ritual order and "First Master" of its doctrine. He and his assistants have given these teachings a systematic, partially written organization. This doctrine emphasizes reincarnation and liberation from karmic debt. It instructs individuals in their spiritual evolution and prepares the group for salvation.

As a millenarian and messianic religion in the interior of Brazil, the Valley of the Dawn belongs to a long tradition of groups attempting to establish their Kingdom of Heaven in the backlands. Over the last two centuries, the best known of these movements include The Enchanted Kingdom of King Sebastian in Pernambuco (1836–1838), the Muckers in Rio Grande

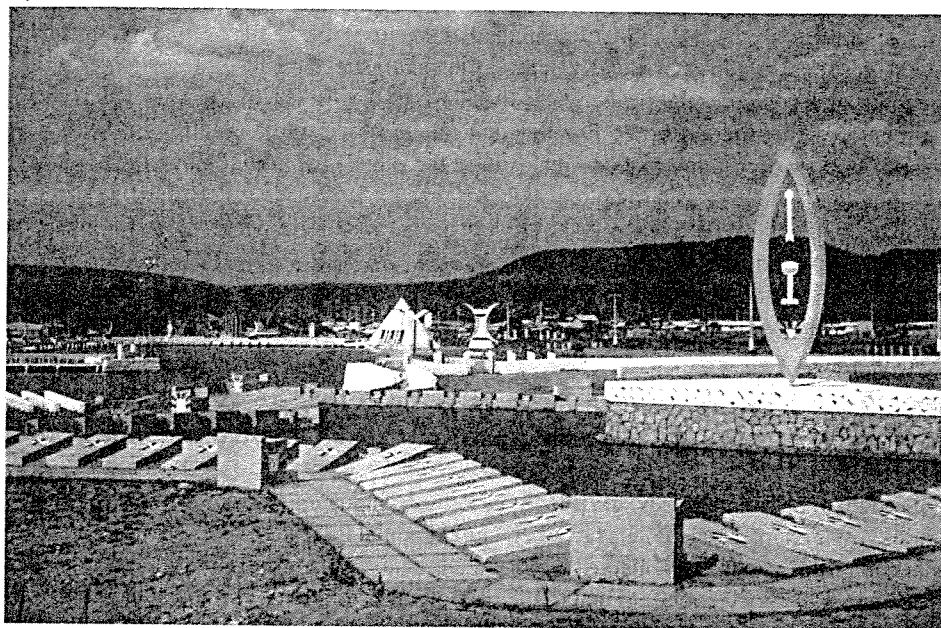


Figure 1. View of the Unification, Valley of the Dawn.

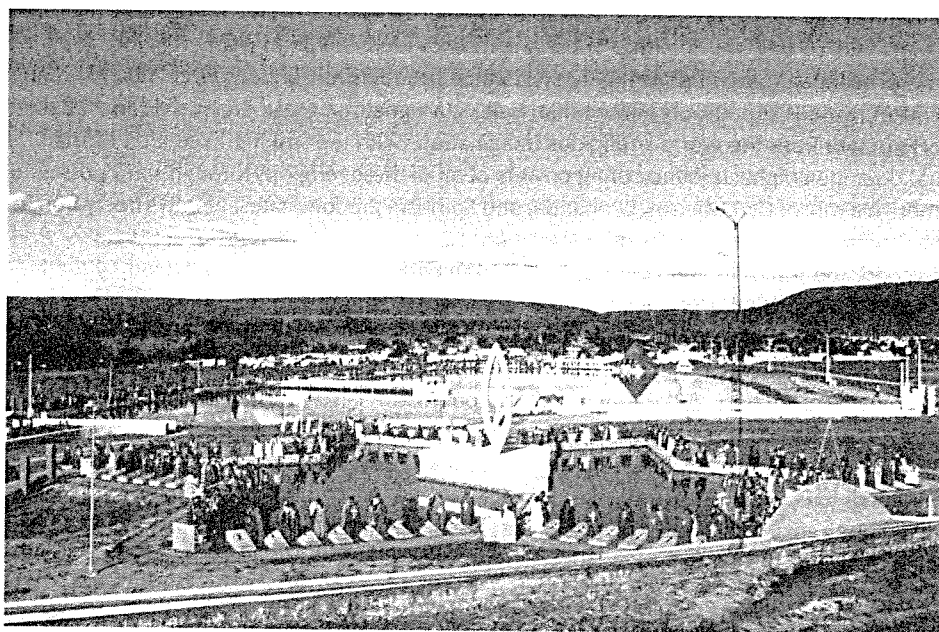


Figure 2. The Consecration Ritual at the Unification.

do Sul (1872–1898), the New Jerusalem at Canudos of the prophet Antonio Conselheiro (1893–1897), the Holy War of Contestado in Santa Catarina (1912–1916), and the Miracle of Padre Cícero at Juazeiro (1872–1934).<sup>5</sup> The groups in this tradition pursue the revelation their prophets teach and the regeneration they predict. Inevitably, they must defend a sacred space in which to achieve these goals because their very organization constitutes a break with the

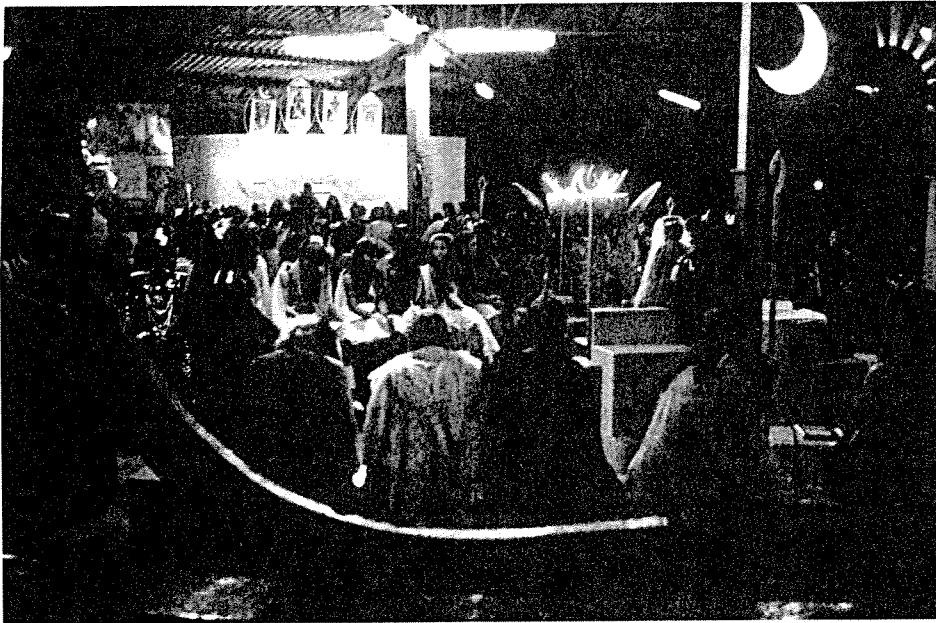


Figure 3. The tribunal gathers at the Turigano for the trial of prisoners, Valley of the Dawn.



Figure 4. Court clerk verifies prisoners' eligibility for trial.

dominant institutions of their time which they perceive as having betrayed them. Consequently, their conflicts usually concern local and often endemic disputes over sacraments, land, labor, and clientship that become recast into a language of messianic rupture and renovation. The inherent violence of this translation invariably provokes a violent end as the reigning order (usually with the help of the national army) has destroyed every one of these movements, mostly in massacre.

To this bloody history, the only significant exception I know is the Valley of the Dawn. Yet, in the early 1980s, it came close to meeting the same fate and in the same fashion—namely, in a dispute over sacred space. In 1969, the cult settled on land that the Federal Government claimed to own as part of the Federal district it inaugurated in 1960 for the new national capital. In one of the Government's master plans for regulating water in the district, it designated the Valley's site for flooding. By 1981, when I first began to visit the group, it lived under threat of imminent eradication: not only did state authorities plan to expel its members but, in more apocalyptic fashion, to submerge the entire site under flood waters. By that time, however, the Valley had become renowned for its cure and had attracted an enormous following. It had become a famous attraction, a place of spectacular ritual, and as such part of Brasília's fame as itself a spectacular place. As eradication became politically more difficult for these reasons, leaders of both sides initiated negotiations. Prophetically, a few months before she died in November 1985, Tia Neiva predicted that the Valley's eradication would be rescinded and that the president of Brazil would himself legalize the settlement. Two years later, that is exactly what happened. President José Sarney flew by helicopter from his headquarters to hers to deliver the title personally.<sup>6</sup>

It seems reasonable to suggest that the Valley of the Dawn escaped a violent end because—exceptionally in Brazilian history—it combines the millenarian tradition of rupture based on revelation with the non-millenarian tradition of spirit-possession cure. As exemplified by Candomblé, Umbanda, and Spiritism, among others, cults in the latter tradition are far more accommodating to the existing structures of authority and social difference. Their conflicts are not about establishing a new kind of consensus concerning the basic institutions of social life. They do not usurp the authority inherent in existing relations of property, labor, or hierarchy to establish new ones based on a revealed destiny. Rather, and above all, they seek gains in this world, not the next, by protecting their initiates from spiritual and human malevolence and by syncretizing their symbols with those of other religions to garner more universal powers. In recent decades, these strategies have crystallized into a broad-based and non-sectarian recruitment of affiliates as they harmonize different social and religious orders.<sup>7</sup>

Although the Valley of the Dawn does not permit its members to participate in other religions, it does not denigrate them. Rather, it incorporates other belief systems explicitly so that, through this absorption, it is able to rearticulate its millenarianism in terms of a universal but at the same time more pluralistic religious trajectory. Significantly, the Valley's members do not choose the obsessive reclusion and denial typical of other millenarian groups. Most do not dedicate themselves exclusively to their religious mission. Two contrasts are particularly important. First, the Valley's ritual is spectacular, exuberant, eclectic, and mostly public—the kind of pageantry that millenarian groups in Brazil generally reject. Second, most initiates do not live at the sacred site itself, isolated from the rest of society. These contrasts become clear in relation to the several other millenarian groups in the Federal District. For example, members of the Cidade Eclética reside at an isolated site, segregated by gender. They dress alike in white robes and practice a severe ritual, moral, and material regime imposed by their prophet. By contrast, non-religious factors determine the residence and lifestyle of most of the Valley's initiates. As a result, they reside dispersed among the satellite cities of the secular capital, anonymous for all intents and purposes from other residents. Like most people, they are modern-day commuters to their place of worship. Thus, the Valley of the Dawn manages to live within and accommodate the existing order of differences through its synthetic symbols, rituals, and curing practices while at the same time it prepares for an apocalyptic transformation based on its revealed doctrine.

Studies of both the millenarian and the spirit-possession traditions of Brazilian popular religion have generally focused on explaining their causes on the one hand and their particular religious forms on the other. It is not an exaggeration to say that, since the institution of the Brazilian Republic at the end of the last century, most studies that engage the question of origins

employ some version of what I call the *two Brazils argument*. With more or less subtly, they understand Brazilian history in terms of the development of two deeply dichotomous civilizations, conceptualizing the abyss that separates the two in terms of a mix of oppositions such as backland (*sertão*) and coast, rural and urban, feudal and capitalist, mystical and secular, and archaic and modern. Each side tends to have its own society, economy, culture, and psychology, and the advance of one signals the decline of the other. The archaic Brazil of the backlands is like a darkly-recognized interior persona for authors who mostly write from the perspective of the other. What is curious is not that some despise this backland Brazil as degenerate, even though all describe it as little-known and remote. It is more that this Brazil emerges as the authentic one, the real Brazil, in contrast to the other, which is artificial and baseless. The former, unfamiliar and barbaric, is nevertheless genuine. The latter, modern and urban, is, to use a phrase Roberto Schwarz (1977) made famous in this context, a copy “out of place” of European or North American ideals of progress, civility, law, and democratic citizenship, in short, a copy of liberal modernity.

My intention is not to review these studies—even though some have much to contribute and are little known outside of Brazil—but rather to highlight the development of a kind of explanation that I want to question. An earlier and more static version of the two Brazils argument presents popular religious movements as a natural product of the type of society that engenders them. It claims this naturalization even when it replaces geographical and biological causes (e.g., climate and idiocy) with social and cultural causes. Thus, it accounts for outbreaks of religion as the result of some quality supposedly inherent in backland society, such as mysticism, depravity, alienation, gullibility, or communalism. In the words of Euclides da Cunha (1944[1902]:156) which became their shibboleth, members of backland millenarian groups are “a crowd of crazies,” bandits and fanatics or, perhaps more positively, ingenuous peasants and mystics. These more static accounts do not cast religious movements as deriving from an interaction between the two Brazils. Rather, the abyss between the two is preserved by an ethnocentric prejudice that views the movements as natural expressions of the primitivism of one side.

Contemporary Brazilian social scientists have roundly criticized this kind of prejudice, arguing that it masks historical particularity and, more significantly, denies the possibility that these movements may be collective responses to that very prejudice and to the other Brazil that endorses it. Thus, rather than scuttle the two Brazils argument, sociologists such as Rui Facó (1963), Maria Isaura Queiroz (1965), Maurício V. Queiroz (1966), and Douglas Monteiro (1974) replace the static version with a dynamic one. Their version remains the dominant explanation of millenarianism in Brazil, reiterated in more recent studies that rework the same data (such as Diacon 1991). This dominant sociological account contends that backland religious movements are responses to the massive disorganization of social life that accompanies the incursions of the coastal, urban, capitalist, secular, modern society into the rustic. This functionalist approach does not deny the abyss between the two Brazils. Rather, influenced by a Marxist analytical framework, it argues that one side (always the modern) provokes the other with contradiction. The issue of provocation is usually the breakdown of the system of land tenure, production, and domination referred to as semi-feudal latifundium as it confronts the expansion of modern capitalism into the countryside.<sup>8</sup>

In what is often regarded as the most brilliant study of Brazilian millenarianism, Monteiro (1974) focuses on the Holy War of *Contestado*, modifying some of the assumptions of this explanation. Monteiro argues that the *Contestado* “negates the old secular as a whole” because it redefined the old forms of consensus and conflict characteristic of the latifundium in terms of the new forms of violence that capitalism generates (1974:201). He sees millenarianism as a means of responding to this violence in ways that its adherents thought correspondingly powerful—as a means of forging new social institutions and a new symbolic universe (of



language, clothes, festival, space, and so on) in which to express and combat this violence. Monteiro's study also makes an important point about religion: although the work maintains its explanatory focus on the crisis of local institutions of domination, it criticizes what had become a rather standard Marxist dismissal of religion as "mere epiphenomenon," as mere ideological covering of the "essential and objective facts" of, for example, the struggle over land (1974:12–13). Monteiro still uses a Marxist and functionalist language of social reproduction, in which "religious and para-religious institutions (like godparenthood) guarantee the reproduction of [traditional] order, [and] express and hide its contradictions" (1974:13). But he also gives a careful ethnographic analysis of religion as the most important repertoire of signifying practices available, both before and after the millenarian break, through which people construct themselves as social beings.

In addition, Monteiro makes two intriguing but undeveloped suggestions concerning religion and modernity that I will take up later. First, he suggests that demystification "no matter how much clothed in a secular aspect" must eventually search for a "re-enchantment" (1974:205). He thus implies that secularization does not exclude sacralization in the historical transformations that characterize modernity. Rather, they may be coordinate processes that, viewed over time, are part of the same set shaping modern experience. Second, he confronts the estrangement between the two Brazils with an exceptional insight. Like the first point about the religious forms of modernity, however, this point also goes unexplored throughout the work because his analytic focus remains on the "other Brazil" of the millenarian fanatic and not on the "author's Brazil" or on their interrelation. Yet, in his introduction, he wonders why the fanatic Brazilian is always such an enigma, such an "inevitable perplexity" (1974:11). His answer is that they disturb because they are "not primitives whose barbarous customs we ignore or leave to specialists," but because they are in fact "very close to us, in the case of Contestado, neighbors, employees, and even relatives" (1974:11). They shock "us" because they confront us with the unexpected defamiliarization of *ourselves*. Their behavior "constitutes the inversion of what we take for granted . . . of what we understand to be the normal procedure." In this insight about the defamiliarization of modernity in popular religion, Monteiro registers precisely the kind of estrangement I propose that the Valley of the Dawn makes of Brasília.

Monteiro's study also presents with special clarity the causal explanation at the heart of the more dynamic of the two Brazils accounts of popular religious movements. It is one already articulated in M. I. Queiroz's disequilibrium model, namely, a crisis theory of deprivation and compensation. Monteiro's insights about modernity notwithstanding, he sees his object of study through the lens of this theory. He organizes his analysis in terms of three distinct phases, labeled a baseline past order, a disenchantment, and a re-enchantment. The first is ruled by traditional religious norms and reciprocities that produce consensus as they mask the coercive aspects of social organization. With the penetration of modern capitalism, this holism is shattered. The traditional mechanisms of order lose their efficacy in relation to the new regime of labor and violence. This failure erodes the old unity and exposes its underlying framework of coercion. The world disenchant. Some people organize to defend themselves by pursuing a means to reconstruct lost consensual norms and expurgate their now evident contradictions. This compensation assumes a religious form because that is the available expressive universe for consensus and plenitude, especially through ritual and festival. Hence, for the chosen, the world re-enchants.

In its dynamic form, the two Brazils argument belongs to that broad category of theories that explains the development of religious imagination in terms of compensation. With regard to the kind of religions we are considering—millenarian groups, cargo cults, voodooes, Ghost Dances, Zionist churches, and other sects at the margins—it understands them as a compensation for or protest against the failures, privations, traumas, or exclusions their members suffer in modern society. Even the most sophisticated studies, like those of Douglas Monteiro in Brazil and Jean

Comaroff (1985) in South Africa, tend to use this frame of deprivation and revitalization when they view religious change among the poor and oppressed from a baseline of historical tradition, orthodoxy, originality, unity, coherence, or primordialness that is violated by the crises of contact, colonialism, or capitalism.<sup>9</sup> Without necessarily adopting the psychological language of classic revitalization theory, they nevertheless present popular religious movements as a response to a historical collision that produces “cultural distortion” (Kehoe 1989:123, from Wallace 1956). In doing so, they necessarily assume a functionalist before-and-after story in which a religious doctrine grows out of a crisis that may be either of specific events or of changing social modes and to which it is always a second-order response: derivative, defensive, restitutive, or subversive.

I do not doubt that compensatory explanation is an important part of the story in some cases or that such causal theories of millenarian movements are sometimes appropriate. It would be difficult indeed to grasp native peoples’ reaction to conquest and decimation without it. But my point is that even when applicable, it is surely not enough to understand why people sustain religious commitments and what they derive from them. Compensatory accounts tend to be mechanical in positing an action-reaction model of religion. They also tend to suppose that people are interested in religion—and hence that their collective actions take religious form—because religion is inherently about transcendent unity and, therefore, a means to reintegrate a shattered self and society. Such assumptions may be accurate, but they may also close off discussion about other kinds of engagements people get out of developing their religious imagination.

There are a number of fatal problems with compensatory explanation for religions like the Valley of the Dawn. One is that it inevitably relegates manifestations of the popular imagination to the margins of the real business of modern states and societies. This reduction to marginalia happens because to begin explanation at the level of diachrony (before/after) is generally to accept a dimension of accounting already initially claimed by other, usually dominant, already-on-the-scene histories. It is to accept, in however sophisticated a form, for example, that there are two Brazils rather than one or many. This kind of accounting is nowhere more evident than in Latin America where, since the beginning, history has been an universal, rationalizing, and evolutionary force claimed by the elites of the nation-state. This is not to say that it is a claim unchallenged. It is rather to note that as such, this claim reduces real difference to aberration and backwardness, when it does not legitimate the massacre of those who defy it. The Valley of the Dawn challenges the compensatory crisis perspective because its ethnography reveals that this religion is too deeply embedded within the institutions of the new secular of Brasília to consider it a backward, escapist, anti-modern phenomenon. Its initiates are too obviously dual members, maintaining simultaneous memberships in *both* centers of authority and charisma. Thus, there is no baseline view of religious change in the Federal District from which to see two dichotomous Brazils.

I would make the same argument for the other Kingdoms of Heaven in their particular historical moment. I would argue that there has never been such a baseline view in Brazilian history. The problem with that view of religious change is that the experience of modernity in which most of the world’s societies (including Brazil) are implicated, and which covers a good five hundred years, simply does not feature the “steady state” (Wallace 1956:265), “proper state of affairs” (Aberle 1962:209), pristine conditions, holistic traditions, continuous order of being, and the like that the various versions of deprivation theory presuppose. For these societies, there is no starting point of an organically whole and encompassing cultural system, stress-reducing norm, precapitalist formation, or state of nature that people supposedly lose and then seek in religion. The idea of Brazil is modern, from the beginning, and all the dualisms surrounding the dichotomy of archaic and modern are misleading.

I do not assume at the outset, therefore, that the Valley of the Dawn or any other of the numerous charismatic institutions of the poor are heterodox, derivative, compensatory, or subversive—and much less backward and anti-modern—just because they are peripheral. In Brazil, no original position, no baseline of coherent integration and normality, exists from which such dichotomous assumptions could originate. Rather, it is better to begin on a synchronic plane of analysis by considering all the agencies in the story—state, church, cult, army, market, nation—as coeval, coordinate enactments and interpretations of similar historical circumstances. They are all contemporaries, born out of modernity. They work through commensurate situations, translating the modern conditions set loose on the land in terms of their own priorities. From this perspective, religion too may afford people an opportunity to feel modern—to express their views on modernity passionately, direct its forces, and engage its dilemmas.

In sum, the imbrications of Brasília and the Valley of the Dawn preclude dualist paradigms of analysis and suggest that compensatory explanation misses what is most important. They suggest instead that the problem for study is one of simultaneous memberships in the institutions that configure Brazilian modernity.

### **two capitals of the modern**

The idea of Brasília crystallizes a particularly important paradigm of modernity. It contends that the state, usually as a national government, can change society and manage the social by imposing an alternative future embodied in plans. As a modernist plan, this idea is also millenarian. It proposes to transform an unwanted present (“the rest of Brazil”) by means of a future imagined as radically different, based on pre-established exemplars, and already scripted in master plans. This millenarian modern exemplifies a kind of stagecraft that has come to define the statecraft of modern nation-building: modern states use planned public works to stage their imagined future of new subjects and subjectivities that constitutes the projected nation. Through public works as diverse as loan programs for home ownership, sanitation codes, and new cities, states promote projects to forge new forms of collective association and personal habit. This project of embodying and imposing the future through public works—in effect, of staging it—is central to the making of modern nation-states.<sup>10</sup>

Brasília’s modernism is exemplary of this statecraft. To create new forms of perception and experience, it redefines what its master plan calls the key functions of urban life—namely, work, residence, recreation, and traffic. It directs this redefinition according to the assumptions of a particular narrative of the modern, that of the modernist city proposed in the manifestoes of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne). From the 1920s until the 1970s (and in many parts of the world, until today), CIAM established a worldwide consensus among architects and planners on problems confronting the modern city. As interpreted through the prism of Le Corbusier’s architecture by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in the 1950s, Brasília is the most complete example ever constructed of its tenets. CIAM manifestoes call for national states to assert the priority of collective interests over private by imposing on the chaos of existing cities a new type of urbanism based on its master plans. CIAM planning imposes a totality of new urban conditions in which any conflict between the imagined new society and the existing one is dissolved in the imposed coherence of its total order. This model of transformation appeals explicitly to state authority to institute the total planning of the built environment as the objective conditions necessary to implement its blueprint of the future. As this appeal privileges the development of the apparatus of the modern state itself as the supreme planning power, state-building elites of every political persuasion have embraced the CIAM model of urban development—as the history of city planning around the world attests.

Complementing its theory of objective change, the CIAM model also proposes a subjective transformation of existing conditions. Borrowing from other avant-garde movements of the early

20th century, it uses techniques of shock to force a subjective appropriation of the new social order inherent in its plans. These techniques emphasize decontextualization, defamiliarization, and dehistoricization. Their premise is that the new architecture and urban design would create set pieces of radically different experience that would destabilize, subvert, and then regenerate the surrounding fabric of denatured social life. It is a viral notion of revolution, a theory of decontextualization in which the radical qualities of something totally out of context infect and colonize that which surrounds it. This something may be a single building conceived as an instance of the total plan. Or, it may be an entire city designed as an exemplar, as in the case of Brasília. Either way, the radical fragment is supposed to create new forms of social experience, collective association, perception, and personal habit. At the same time, it is supposed to preclude those forms deemed undesirable by negating previous social and architectural expectations about urban life.

As a complete embodiment of the CIAM model, Brasília's design implements the premises of subjective and objective transformation by both social and architectural means. On the one hand, its master plan displaces institutions traditionally centered in a private sphere of social life to a new state-sponsored public sphere of residence and work. On the other, its new architecture renders illegible the taken-for-granted representation of these institutions. Its strategy of total planning is thus a double defamiliarization. As a result, for example, the functions of work and residence lose their traditional separation when the latter is assigned on the basis of work affiliation—Bank of Brazil employees in one *superquadra*, those of the Labor Ministry in another, and so forth. In addition, these functions become architecturally indistinguishable as the buildings of work and residence receive similar massing and fenestration and thereby lose their traditional symbolic differentiation. These intended defamiliarizations are brutally effective as most people who move to Brasília experience them with a kind of trauma. In fact, the first generation of inhabitants coined a special expression for this shock of statecraft, *brasílite* or "Brasília-itis," to describe the subversion of daily life that Brasília's modernism produces.

Brasília was also designed to mirror to the rest of Brazil the modern nation Brazil would become. In this scheme of statecraft, the capital is a charismatic center in doubly mimetic terms. It conveys its aura as an animating center of the modern by embodying in its own organization the CIAM plan of a radiant future and also by relaying it to the national realm. In this radiation, Brasília is a civilizing agent, the missionary of a new sense of national time and space, colonizing the whole into which it has been inserted.<sup>11</sup> During the construction of the city, for example, its regime of hard work was known throughout Brazil as the "rhythm of Brasília." This is not an African beat or a Portuguese meter of colonialism, with their mythical indolence and corruption. Breaking the old, this is a new rhythm, a new time, defined as 36 hours of nation-building a day—12 during daylight, 12 at night, and 12 for enthusiasm. It expresses precisely the new space-time consciousness of Brasília's modernity, one that posits the possibility of accelerating time and of propelling Brazil into the future. It reveals the development of a new kind of agency confident that it can change the course of history through willful intervention. At the heart of this project of change is the premise that it is possible to abbreviate the path to the future by skipping over undesired stages of development—here embodied in the ruined urbanism of the 19th and 20th centuries that Brasília replaces. As I will explain, this premise of abbreviating history is central to the Prisoners' Ritual in the Valley of the Dawn as well.

The project of Brasília is thus a blueprint-perfect embodiment of the CIAM model city. Moreover, its design is a brilliant reproduction of Le Corbusier's formulation of it. My point is not, however, that Brasília is merely a copy. Rather, it is that as a Brazilian rendition of CIAM's global modernism, its copy is generative and original. In a fundamental sense, the very purpose of Brasília is to capture the spirit of the modern by means of its likeness. It is this homeopathic relation to the model, brilliantly executed to be sure, that gives the copy its transformative power.

In other words, its power resides precisely in the display of likeness, in a replication of the model that is even formulaic. This display constitutes the stagecraft that I referred to earlier as statecraft. It is the state in its theatrical form, not in the sense of play-acting but of constructing itself by putting on spectacular public works. Under President Kubitschek, Brasília's founder, Brazil showed itself to be modern by staging modernity. As the centers of decisive political, economic, and cultural power remained elsewhere for at least a decade, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brasília's initial mission was above all gestural: to display modern architecture as the index of Brazil's own modernity as a new nation, establishing an elective—indeed, miraculous—affinity between the two.

Thus, Brasília's modernity is spectacular in the sense of being a staging of the state in its charismatic form. It is charismatic not only because Brasília is an animating center of nation-state building and state-directed modernizing. Certainly, that which animates has charisma. It is also because Brasília's project proposes an equation between the condition or status of the ruler—in the form, metonymically, of his seat, the capital—and the state of rule. It proposes, in other words, to lead the rest of Brazil into a new era by example. As Quentin Skinner demonstrates in his historical analysis of the conceptual foundations of the state, this charismatic notion of statecraft is an ancient proposition (1989:91–93). It depends on establishing a connective correspondence between the good state of the ruler (the majesty of majesty) and the good state of the realm (*status regis*). In this correspondence, the first becomes a prerequisite of the second, and the grace or demise of each is implicated in that of the other. This relationship is homeopathic, one of establishing a likeness between two conditions. What makes this link plausible, as Skinner argues following Clifford Geertz, is the display of state—through its public works, as I have called them—in which the stateliness of power is itself an ordering force (Geertz 1980). With Brasília, this charismatic conception of state finds a modernist incarnation.

Yet, as often happens in charismatic projects, the necessity of having to use what exists to achieve what is imagined destroys the utopian difference between the two that is the project's premise. This contradiction is not necessarily unproductive; but developing it creatively has been exceedingly difficult in modernist projects of the most varied sort. In the case of Brasília, the city's premise of total planning rendered contradiction intolerable. As a result, planners tried to eliminate it from the city. This attempt to eliminate what is, in fact, inevitable turned Brasília into an exaggerated version of what its planners had sought to escape, namely, the inequities of the rest of Brazil (Holston 1989:199–318). Total planning led planners to respond to the inevitable deformation of their plans—in such forms as illegal settlements and chaotic growth—with dystopic measures that not only characterized that undesired Brazil but also reproduced it at the foundations of the built Brasília. The most significant measure was the creation of satellite cities for the labor force of workers (*candangos*) who constructed the capital but who had no long-term residential rights to the city they built. These workers eventually forced the state to recognize their rights, but only to the periphery. As the planners would not tolerate the contradiction of permitting construction workers—the rest of Brazil incarnate—to remain in the modernist center, they had to assign them to the periphery. However, planners thereby created the even greater contradiction of a rich center and poor periphery, precisely the kind of center-periphery relation that typifies other Brazilian cities and that the master plan had prohibited for that very reason.<sup>12</sup> As a result, an urban hinterland immediately came to dominate the Federal District in population and poverty and to isolate its modernist center as an oasis of wealth. In the perverse outcome of these processes, planners produced the most stratified city in all Brazil in terms of most measures. Brasília succeeded, therefore, in capturing the likeness of the modern in such a way that made the contradictions of the model itself all too evident.

Located on the outskirts of Planaltina, one of Brasília's satellite cities—in other words, in the impoverished periphery of that “rest of Brazil” the planners could not keep out—is the Valley

of the Dawn. About 30 miles from the capital, it occupies a sacred site of approximately 120 acres after which the religion itself is called. For legal purposes, however, it is known as the Social Works of the Christian Spiritualist Order, under which name its leaders registered the cult in 1973. When I first visited the Valley of the Dawn in 1981, it had a resident population of about 400 people, although many times that number gathered for rituals, especially on weekends. Almost all adult residents were initiated "mediums of the current." Their houses were bare concrete block or wooden shacks, mostly without electricity. There were no paved roads, urban services of every sort being precarious at best. Beyond a general store, a restaurant, a shop of religious paraphernalia, and an enterprise for tailoring ritual clothes, there was almost no commerce.

Within ten years, however, the Valley had undergone a remarkable transformation. Its resident population grew to about 8,000, swelling to 10,000 on the weekends. It had approximately 550 houses, about 200 of which were of finished masonry construction and 350 had electricity. In addition to a police station with four guards, it had several restaurants, three boarding houses, a hotel, four supermarkets, a pharmacy, a bookstore, a shoe repair, and a building-material supply store, among other commercial enterprises. Four houses had telephones. The Valley of the Dawn had become, in short, a small town in the interior of Brazil, rather like other towns except for its magnificent sacred site. That site is now gated to distinguish it from the profane areas of the satellite city that the Valley has become. Not surprisingly, this growth has generated numerous disputes over issues of authority, identity, and membership—not the least of which is whether members can sell their houses or house lots to non-members (most of whom rent) and who has ultimate authority in the sacred areas, the political authorities of the Federal District or the religious authorities of the Valley.

Two other changes of consequence occurred. The Valley ceased being the cult of a chosen few and turned into something of a mass religion. According to its leaders, in the Federal District alone there are now as many as 80,000 mediums who minister daily to hundreds of non-initiated "patients" or "clients." Although I could not verify these figures during my last visits, I could see that the scale of operation has changed dramatically. In addition, the religion has become an empire: it claims to serve another 30–40,000 members through some 70 "external temples" under its authority that are distributed throughout Brazil. Tia Neiva's eldest son presides over this external empire. Although space precludes further discussion of these changes and their inevitable conflicts, the relevant point here is that the Valley of the Dawn has accompanied the development of Brasília in becoming a capital in its own right, center of a radiating empire, and authority to a mass of members. Yet only a fraction of the mediums in the Federal District actually reside in the Valley. Most of the rest live in poor conditions in the satellite cities and commute both to the administrative capital to work at menial jobs and to the Valley's ritual center to develop their mediumship. As Brasília also maintains a commuting relation between center and periphery, however, the Valley's development mirrors Brasília's in this regard as well.

This parallel development is evident in many aspects of the Valley's organization. It is evident, for example, in the leadership of Tia Neiva herself, whose teachings govern the sacred city and whose prophetic career coincides with Brasília's. Both began in 1957. At that time, Tia Neiva was a 31-year-old professional truck driver, an unusual occupation for a woman, to be sure. Widowed and with four children, she was drawn to the construction site of the future national capital to find work like tens of thousands of other *candangos*. There, in early 1959, she began to see and hear spirits and to communicate with the past and the future. She pursued spiritual initiation by perfecting the techniques of "conscious transport" (soul flight), traveling daily in this way to Tibet to take instruction from a guru she called Humahā. According to her legend, she learned to pass to other "vibratory planes" to investigate the remote past of the tribal group of spirits to which she belongs, the Jaguars, and to receive guidance from its commanders, the spirits Seta Branca (White Arrow, reincarnated as Tupac Amaru and Saint Francis of Assisi,

among others) and his Ministers.<sup>13</sup> During the early period of her training, she contracted tuberculosis as a result, doctrine has it, of her spiritual labors—though I usually see it the other way around. She suffered terribly all her life from this disease, a prophet's disease because of its nightly fevers.<sup>14</sup> By the time it killed her in November 1985, she and her associates had generated a complex, modern, and urban religious community in the periphery of the national capital.

This community is structured by two overlapping hierarchies of offices that share with Brasília an affinity for bureaucratic complexity: one is an administrative order comprising a presidency, a directorate (with four categories of members), a general assembly, two councils, and a college; the other is a religious order of trines, adjutants, masters, assistants, phalangists, doctrinators, and incorporators responsible for the doctrine and rituals. These religious offices also have many titled subcategories. The two orders overlap in several ways. The heads of the religious order hold many, but by no means all, of the key offices of the administrative order; for example, they do not hold the presidency. These orders also overlap in the person and vision of Tia Neiva herself, who certainly had the first and last word in the religious order and who in person or proxy (through her sons and daughters) dominates the administrative. Although it is usual for a religion to be dominated by its prophet, what is striking is the extent to which, during the prophetess' lifetime, this one is bureaucratized. Moreover, the bureaucratic idiom is pervasive not only in its ruling orders but also, as I will explain, in its ritual practice.<sup>15</sup>

The Valley's intricate bureaucratic ordering of religious purpose concentrates spiritual force in two areas of the sacred site, constructed in definitive form between 1971 and 1980. The one is an ensemble of structures called the Unification (Figure 1). Except by special dispensation, non-initiates do not participate in its rituals. The other area is a temple for curing and other works of spiritual cleansing where the public is attended. Connected to it on one side is an outdoor staging area for some rituals, including the Prisoners', called the *Turigano*, that is illuminated, covered, and adorned with many symbols of the faith (Figure 3). In front of the Temple's main entrance is a gigantic billboard figure of Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup>

At these sacred sites, the Valley of the Dawn sponsors rituals and courses of initiations for two overarching projects: spiritual cure and what I call historical accounting. The former is based on "the science of manipulating energy." The latter is based on grasping the experience of reincarnation and liquidating its "karmic debts." The doctrine teaches that each medium is a member of the phalanx of spirits called Jaguars and, as such, has had a minimum of 19 reincarnations to date. These add up to 32,000 years of planetary experience during which the Jaguars have been prime movers of world history, especially in antiquity—"renowned manipulators of social forces that established the bases of peoples and nations," as they were described to me. Hence, when exercising their mediumship (i.e., manipulating energy), members can undertake identities at any point in this complex genealogy, though they generally assume their ancient garb as Caesars and Cleopatras, Maya lords and Inca nobles, Greek philosopher-scientists and Roman generals. To illustrate these two projects, I will first discuss a ritual of manipulating energy (The Consecration) and then one of historical accounting (The Prisoners').

The Consecration Ritual is performed two or three times a day at the Unification, at precise hours around the waters of the Shooting Star (Figure 2). Its purpose is to intercept an enormous space ship that arrives at scheduled times, called an *Amacê*, and to direct it into position above the Star. As explained to me, the ship is an immense "factory of forces," a "spiritual laboratory that emits powerful forces on top of the mediums." Only mediums who have achieved their "master's degree" (*mestrado*) in spiritual initiation can participate. There are two sorts of mediums in the Valley: Doctrinator (*Doctrinador*), also called Sun Master, and Incorporator (*Incorporador*), also called Moon Master or *Apará*.<sup>17</sup> Each sort can be either male or female, though most Suns are male and Moons female. The major difference is that Doctrinators concentrate their "ectoplasm"—the substance of mediumship—in the "chakras of their head"

while Incorporators concentrate it in their “solar plexus.” As a result, the former express their mediumship through an “intellectual process”—and hence are considered “spiritual scientists and educators”—and the latter through the “physiological process” of spirit possession. When in contact with spirits, Doctrinators remain conscious of this intellectual process while Incorporators enter into a semi-conscious state. The Valley considers the development of this conscious contact one of its great innovations. In most circumstances, the two types of mediums work together, the one “doctrinating” the spirits that the other incorporates.

The Consecration begins when a minimum of 14 pairs of mediums assembles at the Unification’s Radar Command post. After the Coronation in which Doctrinators and Incorporators pair off, as if in a dance, escorting each other by the finger tips, they take up positions around the Shooting Star. Each pair stands at one of the 108 concrete slabs that line the six sides of the Star, Moons in front and Suns behind. In unison, they raise their arms to broadcast “magnetic nets” that capture the forces being emitted by the space ship. These forces are in fact “disintegrated spirits” so completely “deformed by hatred,” by their “negative vibrations,” that they are too monstrous and malignant to be captured in the usual way—that is, through incorporation by individual Aparás. Instead, they have to be called down collectively to the positively charged waters of the Unification. The purpose of the Consecration is to work with and enlighten these “obsessor spirits” that cannot otherwise be attended. One kind, called Falcons, is especially dangerous and a prime target of the ritual. They are spirits of prodigious but perverse intelligence (often depicted as wearing black suits and top hats), which upon incarnation become the evil scientists, politicians, and intellectuals of world history. Mediums cite Hitler and Idi Amin as recent examples.

Once the spirits are present, the Doctrinators lie on the skiffs and project an “ectoplasmic radiation or emission” into the waters where the emission is consumed by the ever-ravenous spirits. Malevolent spirits normally feed on bodily emanations such as breath, semen, and blood—with destructive consequences. However, at the Unification, they are tricked because the radiation of the Doctrinators is *initiativ* (educated). Thus, in consuming it, the spirits are enlightened; in spite of themselves, they are force-fed an education. After this “doctrination,” the spirits are invited to deliver themselves to God’s domain. Finally, Aparás incorporate water spirits to cleanse the area of any residual negative charges.

After the last Consecration of the day, the mediums assemble around the Flame of Life (a neon light) to “deliver the positive energies” that have been generated during the several rituals. They carry this energy into the Temple for a night of curing clients who seek the Valley’s help for physical, mental, and material problems. Although there are many kinds of cures, they all have in common the aim to recalibrate the relation between the positive and negative energies that defines a person’s “tonic” or “vibration pattern” in multiples of seven. When this relation becomes unbalanced, a person becomes vulnerable to attack by “suffering spirits.” These are spirits that can neither reincarnate nor complete their karmic trajectory. Instead, they remain trapped in a nether world, feeding, if they can, off the energy and fluids of living things. For their human victims, illness and misfortune result. Doctrinating these spirits means, as far as I understand, changing their “molecular weight” which “varies according to their density.” When they consume the Doctrinator’s emanations, which is magnetic, they are “ionized.” When they consume enough, they become “sufficiently light to be taken magnetically to a spiritual emergency room,” thereby freeing their victims. From there, by means I do not know, they can be “returned to God.”

This doctrination of spirits exemplifies the Valley’s fundamental process of cure: mediums use ritual techniques to entice and trap malign spirits in a liminal state in which they can be safely doctrinated. Mediums believe that the consumption of their projection changes the being of a spirit, giving it the motivation to respond to their command to turn away from evil. In this forced exchange, the Valley’s cure emphasizes the power of humans to transform spirits. It is a



power not merely to banish or exorcise spirits but also to provoke an ontological transformation that causes them to seek a new status in the spirit world.<sup>18</sup>

Mediums have also developed techniques of “broadcasting” their energy manipulations out to society at large, both during the ectoplasmic radiation and during the gathering of energies at the end of the day—though some Doctrinators say that they can do this broadcasting any time they “mentalize.” As explained to me, they broadcast particularly to hospitals, prisons, and administrative centers of government. Although the primary concern of the Valley’s ritual system is the well-being and spiritual trajectory of initiates, mediums thus make its efficacy available to a non-paying public that consists both of specific patients and of a planetary audience. In this way, the rituals are both individual and public *works*—the latter being a term commonly used to describe this activity.

Mediums learn the science of manipulating energy and their history as Jaguars by completing courses of initiation. There are five grades and many courses of specialization within the more advanced grades. Each requires the completion of a set of classes taught by advanced initiates. Mediums distinguish graduation from each of these courses with proudly displayed badges, degrees, insignias, and robes—as in the pomp and ceremony of any university worth the name. In fact, they generally use the language of higher education to describe the religious enterprise of the Valley. As the rituals are choreographed in detail, all the elements predetermined according to authorized scripts (sometimes written out), and the planetary history of the Jaguars complex, there is much to learn. What has never failed to impress me is that most mediums discuss their “scientific study” with remarkable intensity. People who otherwise appear quite humble become even physically transformed—faces animated, gestures assured, bodies confident—with the new vocabulary and sense of discourse they learn. Although Doctrinators in particular consider themselves intellectuals, I have also met many Aparás who are passionate interlocutors of the doctrine. Indeed, outside class meetings, it is common to find mediums of both sorts reviewing the fine points of doctrine in study groups of their own organization. As the Valley’s public spaces are devoted to rituals, curing, classes, and study groups, the whole place always seems abuzz with the activities of learning. Thus, for mediums and spirits alike, the Valley functions as a “university,” an “academy” of higher education.<sup>19</sup>

The intellectual intensity with which mediums undertake their study is all the more remarkable because, when not exercising their redemptive powers, Jaguars are usually poor and often ill Brazilians, paying now for the crimes they committed in past lives as Caesars and Cleopatras. They work in the low echelons of Brasília’s bureaucracy—as janitors, maids, clerks, cooks, waiters, guards, and drivers—or in the construction and retail trades as minimum wage workers. Most have not passed beyond elementary school. For example, the man who first introduced me to the Valley of the Dawn is a janitor in one of Brasília’s ministries of government. In the secular work force, he performs the most menial tasks; however, in the Valley’s “spiritual work force,” as it is called, he holds the position of Jaguar Master, Assistant Adjutant to the Minister Jarua. At the charismatic center of their own construction, therefore, mediums don the robes of high office and enact rituals of Wagnerian enterprise to secure not only their own salvation but also success in a meritocracy of their own organization. The courses of initiation allow members to rise in the Valley’s bureaucratic hierarchies according to the merit of their own development.

The close commensurate relations between the institutions, practices, and generative concepts of the Valley of the Dawn and those of Brasília should now be evident. Although the Prisoners’ Ritual illustrates yet another level of correspondences, it also reveals disjunctions. If the Consecration Ritual treats suffering through the cure of energy manipulation, the Prisoners’ Ritual treats it in terms of historical causation: it lets mediums abbreviate their suffering by presenting it in terms of their own role in the making of history. It then reckons that history as a process of accounting set in the idiom of trial law.

The Prisoners' Ritual began with a vision that Tia Neiva experienced in 1981. Over the course of the next year, during my first period of fieldwork in the Valley, the prophetess and her associates transposed that vision into ritual. The vision relates the story of Aragana, a woman who, in a terrestrial incarnation, murdered her husband. He died with such great hatred that it imprisoned his spirit in darkness and prevented it from incarnating again. Instead, it became an "obsessor spirit," a type of suffering spirit that maintains a direct relation of vengeance with a specific person in order to "exact the debt" (*cobrar a dívida*) that it believes it is owed and of which it is, therefore, "the creditor." This obsessor spirit persecuted Aragana and caused her such terrible suffering that she called this period of torment her "prison." As Aragana was a good and hard-working woman, superior spirits, including Ministers, decided to consider her plight. They called together a Council of Entities that instituted a tribunal to judge her in the presence of her tormentor, the spirit of the husband she had murdered. Before this divine court, she was formally accused by a prosecutor and in turn defended by a court-appointed attorney. Humiliated and distraught, confronted with her victim, she pleaded for forgiveness, transmitting to that spirit all her love and sorrow. In rage, the obsessor consumed Aragana's emanation, her breath and words. But the spirit was, in the process, transformed, for it could not resist her doctrination of love and humility. It relinquished its vengeance and "judged the debt paid." At the end of the trial, the court declared both Aragana and her husband's spirit "liberated."

The Prisoners' Ritual is designed to offer the present-day Jaguars of the Valley of the Dawn an opportunity for liberation similar to that of Aragana's tribunal (Figures 3 and 4). It brings criminals to trial before a spirit jury composed of crime victims to liquidate the debt between the two. Over the course of millennia, as the lords of history, leaders in science, art, warfare, and government, the Jaguars became conceited and imperious. As a result, many committed terrible crimes—murder, betrayal, and corruption are the three I heard about most often. These abominations imprison the spirits of their victims in walls of hatred and link them to the souls of their oppressors through a web of mutual affliction. This web of vengeance forms the lines along which an individual's personal destiny develops as victims—called obsessors, accusers, and creditors—seek revenge and persecute their villains—called debtors and eventually prisoners—through the latter's successive incarnations. Hence, the afflictions of today's Jaguars are payment for the crimes they once committed. As defendants in the Prisoners' Ritual, they are given the opportunity to admit their guilt and seek forgiveness. If their plea is accepted, they receive in exchange a reduction of their accrued karmic debts.

The ritual is thus a special technique to abbreviate karmic debts and trajectories. It is an abbreviation because the jury's judgment concentrates at one place and time all of the defendant's tormenting spirits and spirit-world enemies. Becoming a prisoner therefore entails assuming a dangerous status, one of heightened vulnerability because the prisoner is exposed to all of his or her enemies at the same time and place. However, the very point of the ritual is to attract these spirits, to concentrate them, so that both criminal and victim become vulnerable to reconciliation. In that sense, both become prisoners of the court.

Until the prophetess's death, all mediums who had completed the master's level of initiation had to assume the status of prisoner once during a lifetime. Through her clairvoyant powers, Tia Neiva decided when a medium was ready for judgment. She would identify the specific crimes committed in previous lives and establish a trial date. After her death closed the veil of clairvoyance, however, the ritual changed in several ways. Mediums could self select, and they could become prisoners as often as they liked. Maximally, that means once a week as trials are scheduled every Saturday night, though people are counseled against such frequency because of the dangers involved.

The Prisoners' Ritual begins for each medium when she or he assumes prison garb. For men, this consists of exchanging their white badge-decorated vests and brown or blue capes for a chain of leather or metal worn across the chest over a black shirt. For women, a rose (artificial) and a brightly colored scarf pinned together on the left side of the head signify prison. This special clothing has two ritual functions: it is supposed to attract the attention of enemy spirits and also help a prisoner's spiritual mentors (knights and guides) protect her in this "opportunity to capture enemies" as the pre-trial period of luring is sometimes called.

To be eligible for trial, a prisoner must obtain a minimum of two thousand "bonuses." A bonus is understood as a measure of good energy, a credit against the karmic debt of the prisoner. This packet of good energy guarantees the assistance of a prisoner's mentors, who go about the job of gathering the avenging spirits in magnetic nets they cast as the avengers are lured to their prey. Prisoners obtain bonuses by participating in designated rituals and by gathering signatures, each worth one bonus, in special notebooks. For most prisoners, pre-trial activity consists primarily in gathering these signatures—so much so that public space in the Valley is often jammed with people signing notebooks, especially as participating in the Saturday night ritual has become increasingly popular. In this *mise en scène* of atonement and spiritual banking, the signatures are themselves theatrically given. People usually pen the title of one of their ritual offices or spiritual genealogies with a flourish, adding what they call a "tuning frequency," such as "dash, zero, dash, in Jesus Christ." This tuning opens a "channel of communication" over which to broadcast a kind of Morse code that attracts the spirits.

Prisoners consider the gathering of signatures both as a means to obtain bonuses and as an act of penance in itself, an admission of guilt, a humbling. They often describe the signatures as "money in the spiritual plane" that can be used to pay karmic debts. Each of the two thousand signatures is, therefore, a kind of ritual performative. Accompanied by the appropriate enunciation and social exchange, each is an act that changes the status of the prisoner ever so slightly, moving the petitioner one step forward toward judgment and liberation. It is striking that in the Valley of the Dawn, this ritual signature closely parallels in form and function the signature of secular bureaucracy. The latter is also a performative; in fact, it is *the* bureaucratic performative, moving the world of paper and the "cargo" bureaucratic paper delivers. As bureaucratic capital, Brasília embodies a state moved by signatures. The business of rule is largely accomplished through the circulation of signed paper in the form of laws, petitions, requisitions, deeds, degrees, money, and so forth, the circulation of which gives the state its form in time and space. In the Valley of the Dawn, signatures are performed, with all due flourish, by those who in Brasília rarely sign anything. Yet both bureaucrat and penitent share faith in the power of signed paper to legitimate procedure and move the world.

As in Brasília, the trial itself is a complex institution and staging of correct procedure. Called an *aramê*, each trial requires a specific cast, minimally consisting of 26 ritual office holders who must be present to open a session of the tribunal. My purpose here is not to detail every procedural aspect of the trial but rather to outline its major components. It takes place in the Turigano adjacent to the Temple (Figure 3). As it is a regular Saturday night event, the trial has become a form of popular entertainment in the periphery of Brasília for non-prisoners, non-initiates, and non-patients, as well as a ritual of liberation for prisoners. As the trial is expressly intended to generate a public of spirits, the mediums do not mind the crowds that gather in the late evening around the edge of the semi-circular Turigano. At a certain point, the prisoners line up to present their notebooks to a court clerk who sits at a desk off to one side and who verifies the number of bonuses (Figure 4). Once qualified to stand trial, the prisoners arrange themselves in gendered pairs. The President of the Court opens the session, and the prisoners file in and stand in rows facing the officials of the bench. The President then invites the representative of the Countess of Natanhy, the "witness of time" (and of all the crimes committed), to enter the Court with her entourage of Gypsies. After they have taken their places,

to much applause, several officials of the Court make chanted presentations. These chants all call attention to the agony of a life “lost in darkness,” to “the power of love to illuminate and liberate,” and to the extraordinary opportunity that the trial offers “to re-encounter the terrible pain in the hatred of those who continue to be our victims of the past.”

Next, in a booming voice, the Prosecutor accuses the prisoners of their crimes. His standard opening remarks establish that his purpose is to “bring justice to the persecuted as well as to the persecutor” and that “the law permits the liberation of those who say that they are our enemies.” When Tia Neiva was alive, the Prosecutor would then have accused each prisoner individually of specific crimes, using evidence she provided and detailing the motivation and circumstances of each. Now, he recites a more inclusive list of accusations, applying it to all prisoners, and emphasizes the human failings that lead to crime—the lack of humility, tolerance, and charity; the capitulation to vanity, arrogance, and anger. The performance of the Prosecutor varies with the players. Some are more vehement, exalted, or bombastic; others are more quietly emphatic. But in all the performances I have witnessed, the prisoners react in the same way: they seem genuinely humiliated; some weep. The Prosecutor closes by asking the Divine Court that justice be done.

The Defender presents himself to the divine jury as an instrument of conciliation and understanding. He defends the prisoners collectively. He argues that they did what they did because, ultimately, “they did not know how to love,” that they have already paid dearly for their ignorance, and that today they have learned. He does not excuse or deny the accusations. To the contrary, he emphasizes the prisoners’ heartfelt admission of guilt. He then negotiates for clemency, pleading for a reduction of the debt owed or for outright forgiveness on the basis of the time already served. Although performances vary, Defenders usually close by invoking ancestral examples of justice through compassion.

Then, as the prisoners sing softly, the spirit jury deliberates. At the end of the hymn, the President of the Tribunal asks certain officials (Aparás) to incorporate the spirits (Old Blacks especially) that will communicate the jury’s decisions. Other officials (Doctrinators) consult these spirits for the results, in what is called “the counting.” They call forward each prisoner to receive the decision. One by one, the prisoners approach the bench to hear the President pronounce the verdict. It is always favorable. The Court declares the prisoners liberated. They exit, removing their ritual signs of imprisonment.

### **alternative modernities**

Ritual practice in the Valley of the Dawn reveals a detailed set of correspondences between sacred and secular capitals. Both express their ambitions through the idioms of the modern institutionalization of power. From bureaucracy, law, science, higher education, and telecommunications they deploy similar sets of specialized vocabularies, structures, and procedures. From the idiom of bureaucracy, both use notions of minister, adjutant, directorate, council, petition, signature, and so forth to articulate office, organization, authority, and procedure. From that of law, both institute tribunals and prisons that engage judges, juries, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and witnesses in the name of justice. Both also share a vocabulary of industry and telecommunications, including radar, antenna, space ships, factories, currents, and tuning. Both present their deepest knowledge in terms of science, employing concepts such as energy, ectoplasm, ionization, and magnetic fields. Both have universities that offer advanced degrees in this knowledge. Both legitimate their enterprise in terms of a recapitulation of history that announces a new era.

I have suggested that it is better to understand this mimetic relation between national capital and peripheral cult not in terms of mere compensation—as an aping by those excluded from the power and pomp of others—but rather in terms of homology. Both are versions of the same

paradigm of modernity, homologous rather than analogous embodiments of it. That is, what makes the Valley powerful for those who join (and who are, after all, members of both) is that it assumes as its mission a modernizing project similar in structure and origin, but not necessarily in function or performance, to the one that the state also attempts with Brasília.<sup>20</sup> As we have seen, for both, this is a project of renovation, and both derive their versions from a modernist understanding of it. I am not suggesting that they share an essential model of modernity. I do not think there is such an essence. Rather, theirs is one of several possible understandings of the modern, a particular one that became dominant in Brazil early in this century. I call it modernist because it is grounded in a claim they both make to be able to change the course of history—to abbreviate misfortune, change destiny, leap over stages of development (individual and national)—through the imposition of master plans on present conditions and through the localization of universal schemes in such a way that the copy becomes original as I explain below. Both embody the modernist presupposition that alternative futures are possible through such active intervention. Moreover, both express that confidence through the modern disciplines of master planning, science, law, and bureaucracy. Neither speaks of magic in accounting for its powers, but both may be seen to rely in part on magic's logic. Both claim to be objectively scientific and bureaucratic, but both are also highly charismatic and personalistic. They are, in short, parallel institutions, two capitals of the modern.

As such, they are structured by a model-copy relation. Each derives its persuasive force from its capacity to demonstrate a model-in-the-making in its own constructions, principally in ritual and in architecture, respectively. Thus, Brasília not only imitates the model of a Le Corbusian or CIAM modernist city. In becoming its most complete realization, in digesting it, so to speak, the model becomes Brazilian, to use the anthropophagic notion of intake (*antropofagia*) with which Brazilian literary modernism of the 1920s defined new forms of national identity in relation to the metropolitan world. In digesting Le Corbusier (the 1971 Brazilian film *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* comes to mind), Brasília mirrors to Brazil the imagined modern nation that its construction was to bring into being. Its master planning is proof of the state's abilities to create something new, to capture modernity—its institutions, forms of knowledge, modes of power, and radiant future—by means of its likeness. The copy becomes an original.

At Brasília's margins, the Valley of the Dawn also models itself on this imagined and magical modernity. Its model is not the built and corrupted Brasília, but what it imagines to be its intended state and society—namely, a bureaucracy that is indeed rational, a meritocracy that delivers as promised, a legal system that not only achieves justice but also works for the common citizen, an intellectual center where national problems are actually solved and where all members have access to resources that lead to mastery, self-discipline, and pride. Like Brasília, the Valley of the Dawn is an embodiment of a master plan. Its creators are also master planners, dreaming as well about the possibility of breaking with the past and its debts and crimes to create a different future. In this project, the religion models itself on the agenda for modernity that Brasília was supposed to accomplish—in short, on “the idea of Brasília.” The Valley of the Dawn embraces this idea of modernity and views the state's attempted performance of it in the built capital as an apocalyptic failure. Compared to this built Brasília, therefore, the Valley's performance is an alternative version. It presents an agenda for an alternative modernity in Brazil.

This alternative becomes clearer when we consider the kind of resources and agency members have in each sphere. In the one, the Brazilian state fails to provide most of its citizen: with adequate access to the institutions of modernity. In the other, the religion makes its version of them available to its members—overwhelmingly poor and hardly educated—through a set of intellectually complex explanations and correlations that they master through courses of initiation. Moreover, it provides a set of rituals through which to put their theory into practice with the objective of improving both their own destiny and that of the nation's.

In this contrast between state and religion, it is not necessary to compare resources in every area, point for point, to establish the alternative. But it is legitimate to ask which has more effective resources in critical areas to offer its members. The question is not one of material production. The state does not produce refrigerators any more than the religion does. The issue is conceptual resources and performative opportunities to use them. For those few who have access to them, the Brazilian state appears to have massively greater resources. But for most citizens, the state makes few resources available even though it imposes membership. Yet, it would be wrong to argue that the poor choose to join or create their own religious institutions only in compensation for this shortfall in state membership. To say so is to suppose that the sacred in this case is but a simulacra of the secular and, moreover, one that is in the last analysis a counterfeit substitution that at most offers a poetic or metaphorical approximation of the original. If that were the case, it would not sustain people's commitments. To grasp that commitment, it is necessary to understand cult and state as initiates do, namely as closely related yet different and even competing attempts to provide people with the resources with which to experience modernity. For members of the cult, who are also citizens of the state, the religion is mostly the more successful.<sup>21</sup>

Consider the resource of history. Brasília dehistoricized its own foundations. Costa's Master Plan presented the founding of the city as if it had no history—not in Brazil, not in architecture—justifying it instead in terms of abstract geometry and ancient mythology. Similarly, the government intended to unveil the built city as if it were without a history of construction and occupation. It banished the construction workers and their families to the hinterland so that on inauguration day it could reveal a city empty and ready to receive its intended population of bureaucrats.

By contrast, the Valley historicizes its engagement of modernity. It makes the offer of history to its members. It is not a secular, academic history, to be sure. It has to be different from Brasília's. Rather, through ritual, it recognizes initiates as agents of world and national events and proposes that they have, therefore, a foundational stake in the future. In Valley ritual, a medium does not act out a superimposed personality so as to perpetuate that role and its characteristics, as Mauss (1985) described the allocation of available *personnages* in a tribal society. Rather, the medium projects an inner historicized individuality whose primary target and audience is the spirit world. The medium has a mission to change that world, not perpetuate it. In ritual, the secular person (poor, worker) falls away to reveal "a new set of clothes," as initiates say, an identity that presents his or her true historical individuality as the agent of this project. Kubitschek (1975) had proclaimed that the common masses of Brazilians he called on to build the capital were the "anonymous titans" of a new Brazil and that the construction would move them from the backlands to the center stage of Brazil's development. But the capital soon marginalized them, kept them in poverty, and forgot them without so much as a single monument to their titanism. In terms of transforming this common Brazilian into a new agent of history, therefore, it is more the Valley of the Dawn than the city itself that realizes the foundational "idea of Brasília."

In this sense, the cult's defamiliarizations of the built Brasília are not a parody of this idea—just as Hauka deities do not burlesque British colonialism but rather try with extraordinary enthusiasm to possess its powers, as Rouch's film depicts so vividly. Similarly, the Valley of the Dawn affirms the norms and forms of the modernist project, but not through parodic ridicule. Elites in the capital may openly mock its means and representations, but those on the margins exercise them with great pride and even a sense of national mission. In affirming the modernist project, the Valley distinguishes critique from parody, establishing a critical evaluation of the state's attempt to realize modernity in the built city.

To the popular imagination, this counter is conceptually registered in the Prisoners' Ritual through a contrast between the bureaucracy of statecraft—enacted with the use of signatures,

petitions, and courtroom procedures—and the underlying ritual principle of karmic accountability. By the latter, I mean the ledger system of karmic debts and credits. The Prisoners' Ritual provides believers with a means of settling accounts, of intervening in the power and liability relationship between oppressors and victims. This agency is ultimately interpersonal, meritocratic, universal, and objective because its efficacy does not depend on the personal power of mediums but rather on the correct procedures of ritual office. In other words, efficacy depends on the strict separation between person (*personalidade*) and office—the former portrayed in the doctrine as an ephemeral mask transcended and replaced by the medium's indissoluble and creative individuality on the assumption of ritual office. Thus, anyone can become an office holder in the Valley of the Dawn because any person can develop his or her mediumship through the requisite course work. And anyone who is qualified can participate in the rituals because roles are not personal sinecures.

Although person and office and personality and individuality are thus dichotomized, the doctrine attributes responsibility to the individual for his or her afflictions. Mediums are accountable for their actions, including those in all previous incarnations; hence, the need for the Prisoners' Ritual. This attribution of accountability is generally absent in Brazilian popular religions—and in the entire set of religions that Lewis calls peripheral cults—in which the spirits are always to blame: individuals are “overcome involuntarily by an arbitrary affliction for which they cannot be held accountable . . . since the illnesses which they suffer are interpreted as malign possessions in which their personality and volition are effaced by those of the spirits” (1989:77). For Lewis, this lack of responsibility provides the cover for the afflicted (often women) to manipulate and challenge their secular superiors (often men) with considerable impunity. The logic of affliction presented in the Prisoners' Ritual is opposite. The agency that it consolidates through the legal procedures of the trial is that of the accountable and resourceful individual, not helpless victim.

These connections between the state of the person and the state of bureaucratic power in the Ritual indicate that grounding the Valley's charismatic authority is a notion not only of spiritual grace—a mystical quality to be sure—but also of this kind of accountability. This double grounding is, indeed, a common and even defining feature of non-modern rule. Examples abound: the Chinese emperor was personally liable for the plagues of the land and his legitimacy weakened; the European medieval monarch was accountable to God for the condition of his realm; and so forth (see Bendix 1977 for European, and Wheatley 1971 for Chinese examples). But such notions of accountability and merit are usually overlooked in considering the relevance of charismatic features of rule in the modern state (see Skinner 1989 for an exception). The Valley of the Dawn's charismatic authority draws our attention to them because it explicitly posits them as the rationality of history, as accounting for its outcomes. Thus, charisma is not necessarily irrational and bureaucratic power may also have charismatic aspects, though social scientists tend to assume that charismatic authority is, following Weber, “sharply opposed to rational, and particularly bureaucratic, authority . . . [and is] specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules” (1978:244).

It is accountability that establishes the fundamental difference between Brasília's charismatic rule and the Valley's. Because history is accountable in the latter's explanation of privilege and misfortune, it appears to the members of the religion as ultimately just. This justice is not a reckoning through revenge, although it may seem that way initially. Rather, it aims to break the cycle of crime and vengeance that proliferates violence. This resolution is precisely what the secular legal system seems powerless to achieve for the vast majority of Brazilians, as privatized forms of reckoning (vigilantism), police abuse, and criminal impunity dominate (see Holston and Caldeira 1998). This incapacity pollutes the entire legal field, discrediting the courts and the law generally as a means to justice. It is a field, moreover, biased by class. For the rich, the judicial system is a reliable means of manipulation. For the poor, it is little more than a source

of oppression. This abusive rule of law embodies a basic discrimination in Brazil: criminal law is what the poor “get,” from which the rich are immune; civil law is for the rich from which the poor are systematically excluded. For most Brazilians, this double bias produces a generalized expectation of either impunity or abuse from the state’s justice system (Holston and Caldeira 1998).

In contrast, the Valley’s justice enacts as its objective the reconciliation of parties and the end of vengeance. In this enactment, the law becomes a resource for settling conflict equally available to all members. It also promotes the rehabilitation of the guilty as essential to settlement. Rehabilitation is a concept missing from the secular prison system—which is dedicated to removal and elimination—and from society’s usual expectations about commutative justice and the treatment of evil. In the Valley of the Dawn, prisoners are always liberated at the end of the Prisoners’ Ritual because they have already done their time. The basic article of its justice is clear: even the worst spirits can be reformed.

This religious imagination about justice reflects the state’s legal system back upon itself as an empty shell, decorated on the outside with the ceremonials of rule but devoid of the accountability that would make it just. In such ways, religions like the Valley of the Dawn that are on the margins of the modern state can articulate a critical imagination for their members. They can open people’s minds to fundamental conflicts at the heart of modern society and offer languages, concepts, techniques, intellectual passion, and confidence to engage them. They demonstrate, therefore, that sacralization is not necessarily anti-modern and that both religion and state can further modernizing projects. Do these new capacities and resources translate into political action against secular injustices, into strategies of reform or resistance? Not necessarily. But, as I have shown in the Valley of the Dawn, the critical imagination they constitute takes the very terms and practices with which the modern state denigrates many of its citizens and redeploys them to an important and even radical purpose: it enables initiates to acquire a new sense of self, a new structure of thought, feeling, and practice, transforming them into the modernist agents Brasília’s modernity promised.

## notes

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1. Produced in 1955, Rouch’s film is distributed by Interama Video Classics. See Stoller 1992 for a study of Rouch’s cinematic ethnography and Stoller 1995 for an analysis of the Hauka. Anthony Wallace (1970) discusses Handsome Lake, his prophecy, and his conversation with President Washington, as does Alice Kehoe (1989). The images of Melanesian cargo cults come from Cochrane 1970, Schwartz 1962, and Worsley 1968. Among others, Douglas Monteiro (1974) used the expression “religious market” to describe both the hybridized and the competitive nature of popular Brazilian religions. In his study of the cult of the Three Potencies in Venezuela, Michael Taussig (1997) considers the circulation of spirit possession through the three “races” and the icons of the state. There is no shortage of Californian examples. In March 1997, one religion called Heaven’s Gate gained notoriety when its members left their earthly “vehicles”—that is, their bodies—in a planned act of mass suicide to beam up to a spacecraft hovering in the shadow of the Hale-Bopp comet.

2. Candomblé, Umbanda, and Xango are the dominant religions of the Brazilian religious universe inspired by African traditions. They have an enormous following among all classes of Brazilians and have been the subject of many fine studies over the last few decades, including Bastide 1978; Brown 1994; Montero 1985; Ortiz 1979; and Velho 1975. On popular Catholicism, see Brandão 1986 and Zaluar 1983. Spiritism is a European occult and a theosophical belief based on the teachings of Allan Kardec. Known as *Espiritismo* or *Kardecismo*, it came to Brazil in the 19th century and is today widespread especially among the middle classes (see Cavalcanti 1983 and Hess 1992). Unlike the Valley of the Dawn, Spiritism works with spirits of the recently deceased.

3. As used here, double quotation marks indicate an expression or concept from the Valley’s belief system.

4. Interview, Valley of the Dawn, September 1988.



5. For a useful overview in English of these religious movements, see Forman 1975. Some well-known accounts of individual movements include the following: on King Sebastian, see Queiroz 1965; the Muckers, Amado 1978; Canudos, Cunha 1944; the Contestado, Monteiro 1974; and Juazeiro, Della Cava 1970.

6. This legalization was officially recognized as Decree 11,224 of August 24, 1988.

7. I do not mean to imply that these spirit possession cults have not been persecuted. To the contrary, at least until the Vargas era in the 1940s, they have been openly harassed throughout Brazil and, from time to time, had their sites raided, objects destroyed, and practitioners arrested as *charlatans* (the technical legal term of accusation against "false curers"). But in recent times, these religions have become accepted by the state, massively popular, and ecumenical. Referring to the latter developments, Montero argues that "for many initiates, the passage from umbanda to candomblé, is understood only as a reordering of religious trajectory and not as a change of religion. . . . On the one hand, the different religious traditions are in a permanent process of reinvention and rearticulation that many times erases the clearness of boundaries, as in the case of umbandomblé; on the other, people shuttle continuously between the cults" (1994:85). Brazilian Pentecostal congregations do not participate in this religious pluralism. Although the Pentecostals recognize and engage the African-Brazilian spirits in their rituals, they do so only to destroy them as pathogenic and evil. There is no equivalence in this recognition, even as enemies. Their ritual objective is to exorcise and eradicate the *macumba* spirits. Not surprisingly, Pentecostals consider the Valley of the Dawn an irredeemable manifestation of evil.

8. For example, Facó (1963) and M. V. Queiroz (1966) analyze the movements as forms of peasant revolt against the expropriation and commercialization of agricultural land that this expansion produces—a revolt grounded in the misery and servitude of what they both call the semi-feudal and precapitalist latifundium. For both, the central issue is the generation of class consciousness through revolt. Another influential interpretation presents the movements as conservative rather than revolutionary. M. I. Queiroz argues that the expansion of urban-based capitalism disrupts local structures of domination (such as *coronelismo*) that keep the "endemic social disorganization and instability" inherent in traditional, family-based societies in balance (1965 and 1969:128). When this disequilibrium occurs, the local community becomes disoriented and messianic movements emerge to re-establish the old equilibrium.

9. Thus, in one of the best studies we have of religion among a people at the margins of the modern state, Comaroff (1985) at times establishes a compensatory mode of explanation as primary. She does this when she accounts for the development of popular religion among the Tshidi as a response to a violated sociocultural order that was once unified as an attempt at reconstruction that links contemporary individuals directly to a great historical before-and-after narrative. This history is not one of specific events but rather one of whole systems, orders, and modes:

The pre-colonial social system [was] one in which human relations were not pervasively mediated by commodities and dominant symbols unified man, spirit, and nature in a mutually effective, continuous order of being. Such a sociocultural order stands in contrast with the mode of production of industrial South Africa . . . a world in which social and cultural continuities appear to be fractured and individuals, abruptly wrenched from their human and spiritual contexts, are no longer able to recognize or realize themselves. I shall examine the ways in which persons thus decentered strive to reconstruct themselves and their universe. [1985:2–3]

Comaroff presents the specifically *religious* form of the protest of Zionist Christianity as "an integrated order of symbols and practices that seeks to reverse estrangement, to reconstitute the divided self" of proletarianization (1985:12). Thus, her study sees the religious form as compensatory in motivation by reference to an undivided and unestranged self and society that not only must have once existed but that would still have to be fundamentally relevant to individuals.

10. See Holston 1989 for a fuller discussion of this modernist political and planning project. In his reactions to Lúcio Costa's Master Plan for Brasília, President Kubitschek typically expresses the millenarian and utopian conception of the new capital: "Owing to the need to constitute a base of radiation of a pioneering system [of development] that would bring to civilization an unrevealed universe, [Brasília] had to be, perforce, a metropolis with different characteristics that would ignore the contemporary reality and be turned, with all of its constitutive elements, toward the future" (1975:62–63).

11. This civilizing project is precisely represented in countless maps of Brazil produced in the 1950s and 1960s that picture a radiating network of highways linking Brasília and state capitals. As a project of national development, it is a map of pure intention as almost none of these roads existed at the time. Thus, it represents the intended unity of nationalized space Brasília would generate. For an example of the map, see Holston 1989:19.

12. Other dystopic planning measures included the denial of political rights, the repression of voluntary associations, and the restricted distribution of public goods, especially housing, on the basis of status discrimination. Brasília's residents themselves (including planners) also rejected many aspects of the city's utopian design by reasserting familiar values, conceptions, and conventions of urban life. Moreover, a few years after inauguration, the government privatized most of the city's superquadra apartments. This privatization launched a set of complex market forces that had the effect of marginalizing the lower service classes of the bureaucracy to ever more distant satellite cities.

13. After joining a Kardecist group to find support for her spiritual experiences, she left Brasília to found a community called the Spiritualist Union Seta Branca near the city of Alexânia in the state of Goiás, about

60 miles from the capital. In 1964, she moved the group back to the Federal District, first to the satellite city of Taguatinga, and then to its present site in 1969.

14. When I first met her in 1981, she had already lost two thirds of one lung. During that year, she suffered a respiratory crisis that forced her to curtail her active participation in the Valley's rituals. From then on, she was linked to an oxygen tank through tubes and masks, some of which I regularly sent or brought her from a medical supply firm in the United States.

15. Without doubt, Tia Neiva's respiratory illness and frequent health crises caused her to plan her death and succession carefully by bureaucratizing it—that is, by gradually withdrawing the immediate authority of her person and trying to replace it with that of bureaucratic office. Nevertheless, her death threw the Valley into a classic struggle for succession after charismatic rule. It must suffice here to say that this struggle focuses on a confrontation between her genetic heirs, who are not necessarily spiritual, and those who claim to be her true spiritual heirs led by Mário Sassi. Bureaucratization has not prevented this crisis. In many ways, it facilitated the conflict by defining it even before the prophetess' death in terms of canonization (codification of established revelation) versus continued innovation (new sources of doctrine), of legalism versus intuition.

16. The Unification consists of a Radar Command platform (with loud speaker system), a waterfall, a reflecting pool in the form of a six-pointed Shooting Star around which about 300 mediums can gather, a larger body of water divided into seven quadrants called the Lake of the Doctrinator (sometimes also called the Lake of Yemenjá), a Pyramid of the Valley of the Kings, a great ellipse considered to be an antenna, and enormous billboard-like statuary (about 30 feet tall) of various spirits, including Yemenjá and Seta Branca. The Temple is elliptical in shape (an antenna too) and has a series of internal divisions including various Castles, a Curing Room, a Table of the Doctrine, a Radar Command, several Oracles, and a central area with yellow and red Thrones.

17. I use the neologism *doctrinator* rather than *indoctrinator* because in English the latter has a uniformly negative connotation that it may not have in Portuguese. Indeed, the Valley of the Dawn considers the development of this type of mediumship one of its most important and original contributions, first introduced by Tia Neiva in the early 1960s and key to its entire religious system.

18. The doctrine that humans can transform spirits from within (enlighten), rather than only manipulate them (supplicate, exorcise, or master) seems unusual in Brazil. However, as Obeyesekere discusses, it is common for Hindu-Buddhist ecstasies to believe that attacking spirits can be converted into good beings and eventually protectors "by transferring Buddhist merit to them" (1981:70).

19. Although they have never insisted on my own initiation, mediums often relate to me as one scholar to another. When I noted this correspondence to Mário Sassi, he agreed. He added, however, that for both spiritual and practical reasons, the Valley's academy is not based on "developing the deductive intellect as in your academy, but rather the intuitive."

20. As a type of correspondence that may vary in function, the relation of homology suggests that some features of a shared idiom are similar while others differ. I assess these differences with regard to law and history below, but space precludes an analysis of others.

21. If compensation is a response to perceived need, a type of desire, a substitution for what one wants but that someone else has, then it is surely a core motivation. It is at the root of every appetite. In this sense, the Valley of the Dawn is compensatory, as is Brasília itself—as is, in fact, just about everything that has vitality, all linked in a great chain of compensation. A similar type of generalizing argument can be made about the copy. It is important, however, to distinguish this kind of Hobbesian compensation from compensation as mere exchange and simple substitution, a functionalist and mechanistic action-response, cause-effect, original-derivative notion of human behavior. It is the latter I refuse. If the Valley of the Dawn and Brasília are compensatory in the former sense, they must also be understood as agency-producing compensations and original copies.

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