

Reconfiguring Brazil: *Interdisciplinary Essays*

Edited by
Roberto J. González-Casanovas



Auckland
Latin American Studies
(ALAS)
monograph series
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New Zealand Centre for
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See separate notes for illustrations that accompany the essays by Diane
Brand (p. 30), Genaro Oliveira (p. 54), Rosangela Tenorio (p. 101), and
Roberto Segre (p.111).

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Preface

This volume of essays on Brazil is the first book in the new Auckland Latin American Studies (**ALAS**) monograph series, published by the New Zealand Centre for Latin American Studies (**NZCLAS**). The others that follow each year will cover a different region or theme of interest for contemporary developments in scholarship.

The present volume offers interdisciplinary approaches to key aspects of Brazil's evolution within cross-cultural contexts in eight multifaceted essays. **Roberto González-Casanovas** examines the rise and fall of religious tolerance of Jews and New Christians in Portuguese and Dutch colonial Brazil in terms of Iberian traditions of *convivencia* and multiple identities of the Sephardi diaspora. **Diane Brand** discusses the cultural politics of royal spectacle by land and sea of the Portuguese court first in Lisbon and then in exile in Rio de Janeiro in terms of the urban edges of *bluespace*. **Genaro Vilanova Miranda de Oliveira** undertakes a 'heterographic' revision of national history in official texts and paintings that construct independent Brazil's Empire and Republic, as European models conceal tensions with multicultural realities. **Marcelo Mendes de Souza** compares levels of ironic reception of English literature by Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis and Argentine fiction-writer J.L. Borges, and their English-speaking critics, in terms of intertextuality and creative misreadings. **Aline Frey** and **Sarah McDonald** propose two separate interpretations of contemporary films (*Cidade de Deus* and *Tropa de Elite 1 and 2*) about cultures of violence in Brazilian favelas, from the opposite viewpoints of supposed insiders and flawed authorities, in terms of cinematic strategies of realism and popular constructions of masculinity. **Rosangela Tenorio** compares major architects in Brazil, Mexico, and India (Porto, Lima/Lelé, González Gortázar, Baker) who pursue bioclimatic designs for sustainable cities, and assesses their respective success in terms of professional standards and civic responsibilities within a model of 'expanded regionalism.' **Roberto Segre** undertakes a wide-ranging assessment of the trajectory and legacy of Brazil's premier architect Oscar Niemeyer, in the year of his death, in terms of historicism, modernism, formal typology, and rational social policy in Brazilian and global contexts.

Both this book and the monograph series represent the culmination of years of productive collaboration by **NZCLAS** colleagues (Walescka Pino-Ojeda and Kathryn Lehman alternating as directors, aided by associates José Colmeiro, Roberto González-Casanovas, Matthew O'Meagher), along with many distinguished visiting scholars and committed postgraduate students. Together we have shared our life experiences, professional expertise, and disciplinary interests to engage in ongoing projects of constructive critical dialogue with the diverse peoples and cultures of Latin America.

– Roberto González-Casanovas, Auckland, 10 Dec. 2012, UN Human Rights Day.

Mixed Views of Jews and *Conversos* in Brazil 1630-1654: From Colonial to Postcolonial Discourses of *Convivencia*

Roberto González-Casanovas
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In memoriam: María Rosa Menocal (1953-2012)

1. Introduction: Critical models and issues

The purpose of my research is to examine significant developments in recent studies on early-modern Iberian *conversos*. These are broadly understood to include genuine New Christian converts, half-hearted or transitional Jewish-Christians, Judaizing false or coerced converts to Christianity, and re-converted New Jews. (For more on the historical evolution of these terms see Netanyahu 1966 and Rowland 2001.) My goal is to adapt key concepts on *convivencia* (as in Mann 1992 and Menocal 2002) and on go-betweens (as in Metcalf 2006 and Uchmany 2001) so as to establish a critical model of cultural hybrids as intermediary agents in transitional communities. This model seeks to integrate the following historical and critical developments: (a) parallel evolutions of Sephardi *conversos* into New Christians or New Jews in Iberia, Holland and Brazil (as studied by Kamen 2007 and Vainfas 2010); (b) convergent values of political pragmatism and cosmopolitan humanism in seventeenth century Dutch and Portuguese Brazil (as interpreted by Niskier 2004 and Costigan 2005); and (c) the mixed fortunes of tolerant regimes and the gradual rise of eras of toleration (as analysed by E.C. Mello 2006 and Schwartz 2008 respectively).

My research takes into account recent studies by Costigan 2005, E.C. Mello 2006, Israel and Schwartz 2007, and Vainfas 2010 that re-examine traditional views of Dutch tolerance and Spanish or Portuguese intolerance towards Jews and *conversos*, as well as critical revisions by Kamen 2007 of problematic aspects of Iberian *convivencia* and *converso* culture, and alternative multicultural models proposed by Schwartz 2008 of subcultures of religious dissidence and tolerance that evolved in spite of official policies and institutional pressures. By judiciously combining such critical approaches it is possible to develop more nuanced understandings of the cross-cultural, inter-religious identities of *conversos* within dynamic discourses of alterity. In light of these approaches the ideological crises of authority of early-modern Iberian nation-empires, along with pragmatic shifts in the balance of global and local interests, can be seen to give rise to mixed, fluid communities of ‘in-between’ *conversos*, who serve as useful intermediaries for both old and new societies.

2. From Iberian *convivencia* to Sephardi diaspora

Modern scholars from Américo Castro to María Rosa Menocal developed in the 1940s to 1990s critical models of *convivencia* in medieval to early-modern Spain and Portugal. These liberal multicultural models emerged amongst exiles and academics of the Hispanic and Lusophone diasporas (Kamen 2007: 5-52) in large measure as historicist correctives to counter the established ideologies of national unification of Christian Iberia through religious unity and purity. The latter had been promoted from the late-fifteenth-century Reconquest, expulsions, and Inquisition of the ‘Catholic Monarchs’ Fernando and Isabel of Castile and Aragon and of their son-in-law Manuel I of Portugal, to the mid-twentieth-century official state religion (and special concordats of dictators with the Vatican) under the *Estado Novo* of Salazar in Portugal and the *Nacionalcatolicismo* of Franco in Spain. In contrast to state ideologies and official versions of national history, modern liberal historians and academics sought to recontextualise, critique, and revise Iberia’s conflicted history by highlighting exemplary traditions of *convivencia*. For these modern re-interpreters, *convivencia* signified intercommunal relations and tolerant attitudes amongst Jews, Christians and Muslims of Iberia during key eras in 711 to 1492. It was characterised by multicultural acceptance and interdependence across ethnic and religious differences, and seemed to flourish in multiple regions and various periods under Muslim as well as Christian rulers (e.g., in the reigns of Abd al-Rahman III of Cordoba 929-961, Badis Ben-Habus of Granada 1038-1073, Jaume I of Aragon 1213-1276, Alfonso X of Castile-Leon 1252-1284). It did so in spite of religiously defined wars, persecutions, and massacres in various periods of the Iberian Reconquest (notably 1391), as well as their sinister aftermath in the regulation of social conformity, religious orthodoxy and ethnic purity, and in new persecutions under state-controlled Inquisitions of Spain, Portugal, and their colonies.

Unlike Christians and Muslims who alternated periods of rule and shifting balances of power across the peninsula, Jews always constituted religious minorities who were under the protection and at the mercy of Muslim or Christian rulers (cf. Gerber 1992, MacKay 1992, Neumann 1980). Pressures for forced conversions of Jews increased, especially in the aftermath of bubonic plague, dynastic civil wars, and religious fanaticism starting in 1348, reaching a climax with widespread anti-Semitic riots and massacres in 1391, and continuing sporadically in the following century (Roth 1995), until they culminated in royal decrees for final expulsions of all unconverted Jews from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497 (following earlier expulsions of Jews from England in 1290 and France in 1306). Ironically, as a direct consequence of the politics of forced conversions, what had been the ‘Jewish question’ of Catholic Iberia (how to persuade or force Jews to assimilate into Christian crusader nations-in-the-making) was transformed into a ‘*converso* problem’ (how to separate false or half-hearted converts, whether crypto-Judaizers or syncretist Jewish-Chris-

tians, from genuine New Christians as certified by many double standards of crown and church).¹

At the same time, however, the resulting Sephardi diasporas of Jews (including those expelled from Iberia as Jews, those fleeing as *conversos* under suspicion by the Inquisition, and their various descendants) also created new opportunities and tensions across European and trans-Atlantic regions in which Spain and Portugal had imperial and colonial interests.² The already ambivalent identities and loyalties of Jewish converts or exiles became even more problematic in the seventeenth-century as Catholic and Protestant nations competed for support of Jewish or *converso* communities in the changing geopolitical rivalries of European expansion in the New World. The most interesting and controversial cases involved: (1) Sephardi Jews who migrated from Iberia (often first from Spain to Portugal in 1492 to 1497) to Holland (after 1497) and eventually to Dutch Brazil (in 1630 to 1654); (2) *conversos* (officially baptised and re-categorised as New Christians) who were tolerated and favoured by the Portuguese Crown with the encouragement of Jesuit reformers like Antônio Vieira; (3) *re-conversos* who openly reverted to Judaism in the Dutch-controlled enclave of northeast Brazil due to the official tolerance of the Dutch West Indies Company and the colonial governor Johan Maurits of Nassau (but as 'New Jewish' *re-conversos* they were liable to be condemned as apostates by the Inquisition if they came again under Catholic control); and (4) ambivalent half-Jews or half-*conversos* who, after the Portuguese recaptured northeast Brazil from the Dutch in 1654—thereby ending their experiment in religious tolerance—, desperately sought to avoid Catholic persecution by fleeing to Dutch colonial enclaves in Surinam, the Caribbean, and later New Amsterdam (see Marcus 1970, Kagan and Morgan 2009), or by repenting of their apostasy and hoping somehow to be reconciled as lapsed Catholics.³

3. *Conversos* as New Christians versus New Jews

A common interpretation of Sephardi *conversos* or *marranos* that has prevailed from Américo Castro 1948/84 to Bernardini 2001 is that most of them should be seen as Jews (whether genuine or forced converts, or New Christians out of convenience, whether crypto-Jews or syncretist Jewish-Christians who continue to practise parts of their ancestral religion, whether half-assimilated or unassimilated Jews

¹ On the multiple and shifting categories of Iberian Jews, especially in relation to the Inquisition, see Carrete 1992, Gerli 2002, Kagan and Dyer 2004, Pérez 2007, Pulido 2003, Roth 1995; for Portugal, see Soyer 2007 and Tavares 1992.

² On Sephardi diasporas in colonial America, cf. Marcus 1970 (shifts from South to North America); Kagan and Morgan 2009, and Uchmany 2001 (colonisation and commerce); and Wachtel 2001 (religiosity).

³ On the changing roles and fortunes of *conversos* or New Christians in Portuguese Brazil before, during or after Dutch rule in Pernambuco, see: Boxer 1973: 283-84, 333-36; Costigan 1994; Disney 2009: 229, 236, 242, 248; Newitt 2005: 180-83, 224; Newitt 2009: 119-22; Niskier 2004; Novinsky 1972; Russell-Wood 1998: 106-9; Salvador 1969, 1976, 1978.

who gradually revert to traditional beliefs and customs). Such a broad view is challenged by Kamen 2007, who distinguishes two important phases of *converso* culture.

First comes an expansive and assertive era of New Christian growth, self-awareness, mutual support, and pride in their unique differences that follows the 1391 large-scale persecutions, massacres and mass conversions. But it leads to increased antagonism with the Old Christian Catholic majority that culminates in a sinister sequence of events: the establishment of the Inquisition in 1478 in Spain (Castile) and later in 1526 in Portugal to deal with heretics and false converts (especially from Judaism); the edicts of expulsion of all unconverted Jews (in part supposed to protect *conversos* from the bad influence of their recalcitrant former co-religionists) in 1492 from Spain and 1497 from Portugal; multiple prohibitions (at times ignored or circumvented) against the emigration of *conversos* to colonial America over the next two centuries; and the extension of the Inquisition itself to the Spanish colonies in Mexico City and Lima in 1569 and in Cartagena de Indias in 1610, but not to Portuguese Brazil, which depended on distant Lisbon's Holy Office and instead had periodic, mainly sporadic, tribunals of visiting inquisitors starting in 1591-1595 and 1618-1620.⁴

For Kamen, what characterises this transitional period for *conversos* as New Christians is a pernicious mixture of religious ambiguity and political antagonism:

Converso religion, usually Christian on the outside but with many elements of Jewish practice mixed in, fitted into this ambience of undefined and uncertain Christianity. Had the problem only been one of confused religious practice, the situation of the *conversos* might have gone unnoticed.... Enmities and rivalries picked on the issue of 'race' as a sticking point, and the ambiguous religious practice of the *conversos* sparked off a vigorous controversy (Kamen 2007: 6-7).

Ironically, having been pressured into converting over two centuries, Iberian Jews who did convert then found themselves caught between the mutual exclusiveness of many Old Jews and Old Christians. As a result, the New Christians could easily find themselves spiritually confused, emotionally traumatised, and socially discriminated, as they tried to negotiate a new balance in religious cultures and communal relations.

Second, according to Kamen, there emerges a period of internal exile and increasingly intensified assimilation. This phase Kamen terms a deeper, subtler 'Jewish presence.' Significantly, it becomes a permanent part of Spanish culture (especially as perceived by exiled liberal intellectuals), in spite of continued anti-Semitic attitudes:

⁴ On the 'spiritual conquests' that accompanied Iberian colonial expansion, see Boxer 1978 in general and Auril 1996 on Jesuits; on the Inquisition in colonial Ibero-America, see Liebman 1974, Newitt 2009: 119-22, Schwartz 2008: 125-29; on *conversos* and the Inquisition in Brazil, see Costigan 1994, Feitler 2007, Novinsky 2009, Pieroni 2003, Salvador 1969, Schorsch 2005, Vainfas ed. 2005.

Spain of the Golden Age became permeated with a subtle and corrosive anti-Semitism that turned into one of the most typical components of Hispanic culture, long after Jews ceased to play any part in peninsular life. At the same time, ironically, Jewish and *converso* attitudes remained deeply ingrained in Hispanic culture. The invisible Jewish presence penetrated into Spanish folklore, literature, music and even into daily food. It was so pervasive and profound that literary scholars and historians often run the risk of exaggerating it (Kamen 2007: 19-20).

This 'Jewish factor' is seen to contribute not only to cultural achievements of Spain's Golden Age 1500-1700 (from Vives, Rojas, Cervantes, Alemán, to Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Góngora), but also serves to reconsolidate a multicultural deep core of Iberian society which continues, at times under the surface, into the modern age.

Parallel to Kamen 2007's re-examination of the crisis of *convivencia* and evolution of *converso* culture within Iberia, one finds Vainfas 2010's reclassification of Sephardi *conversos* into distinct historical communities of New Christians and New Jews that develop respectively in sixteenth-century Mediterranean diasporas and seventeenth-century centres in Holland and Dutch Brazil (and later other Dutch colonies). Further, Vainfas stresses the hybrid culture of New Christians and New Jews by highlighting the extent of their partial assimilations of Jewish and Catholic formations:

The New Jews...were Jews in-the-making, Jews in search of religious and cultural identity with which they were not familiar, except for the Jewish origins of their grandparents. New Jews were also Christian or half-Christian in their formation, as they struggled in their consciences with doubts over which religion, the Law of Moses or the Law of Christ, led to eternal salvation (Vainfas 2010: 44, my translation).

Ironically, their crucial dilemma was even cast in the dialectical terms of the very Christian polemical literature that targeted Jews and *conversos* (Vainfas 2010: 44). Hence, while Sephardi rabbis in Amsterdam 'had to start from ground zero in Jewish doctrine in order to transform Portuguese New Christians into "true Jews",' for Vainfas it is not surprising that many offspring of New Jews 'continued to be half-Catholic all their lives, though born in Jewish communities, marked as they were by Iberian culture, Portuguese language and Christian formation' (48). Thus, their Sephardi origins and *converso* history would leave indelible marks on their complex identities.

4. Pragmatism and humanism

It is one of the ironies of the early-modern history of Brazil that amongst the principal advocates of toleration for New Christians and Jews one finds the Dutch Calvinist governor of Pernambuco Count Johan Maurits of Nassau and the Portuguese

Jesuit missionary and royal preacher Antônio Vieira. For most modern scholars these exceptional leaders—of opposing camps in the struggle to preserve or reconquer Protestant Dutch Brazil—both seek out Sephardi merchants and come to support communities of Jews and New Christians out of economic necessity and political pragmatism.⁵ But recent studies by Niskier 2004 and Costigan 2005 also stress convergent values of cosmopolitan humanism that develop amongst Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, Dutch merchant princes, and Sephardi Jewish and *converso* trans-Atlantic communities. In particular, the studies point to a new willingness to promote universal notions of human aspirations and rights as a result of cultural and philosophical developments that are in good measure derived from and influenced by cultural-historical developments of Iberian *convivencia* in convergence with the Sephardi diaspora.

For Niskier 2004, what stands out in Vieira's long religious and political career are his determined campaigns in support of Jews and *conversos*. In countless petitions and sermons Vieira strives to persuade King João IV to encourage New Christians to lend financial and commercial support to the new Portuguese trading companies as rivals to the Dutch West Indies Company (in which Sephardi Jews from Holland and Brazil were already involved), as well as to allow New Christians and Jews living in 'voluntary exile' to return to Portugal, be exempt from persecution and confiscations of the Inquisition, and even worship in synagogues. Why does Vieira persist in such pro-Semitic campaigns in face of strong resistance from the Inquisition and members of the Portuguese court and colonial administration? In spite of false rumours of *converso* origins or outright accusations of heresy and treason, for Niskier it is clear that Vieira is motivated equally by national interest and human justice (Niskier 2004: 67, 57-59). For Vieira, the Sephardi diaspora has made a significant contribution to the economic and cultural welfare of other nations at considerable cost to Portugal's development as a Catholic nation and empire. Further, Portugal has perversely rejected its own Sephardi communities in exile while having to deal with Protestant and Catholic enemies who share few values with it. But what stands out for Niskier is Vieira's genuine sympathy towards the Portuguese *conversos* and Sephardi Jewish community in Amsterdam (62-64). He befriends Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, a Sephardi leader in Amsterdam who later becomes rabbi of the first synagogue in the Americas, Kahal Zur Israel in Dutch-ruled Recife. Vieira also befriends Menasseh ben Israel and writes his own *Esperanças de Portugal*, influenced by the latter rabbi's *Hope of Israel*. Both works bear witness to a humanist ideal of the universal brotherhood of all peoples, cultures and religions. Niskier quotes Vieira's modern biographer Azevedo (64), for whom the Jesuit and his Sephardi rabbi friends have much in common: ecumenical interests in theological exegesis and disputation, rhetorical and dialectical gifts, and messianic visions of history and humanity, as well as opposition to the In-

⁵ On Dutch Brazil, see Boxer 1957 and J.A.G. Mello 1947/2007; on Dutch religious tolerance in Brazil, cf. Israel and Schwartz 2007, López 2002, Vainfas 2010.

quisition's nefarious practices, questionable motives, particular threat to the welfare of Jews and *conversos*, and corrosive damage to Iberian nations as a whole (63, 67).

For Costigan 2005, the affinities between Jesuit reformers and Sephardi communities are even more significant for cultural, historical and philosophical reasons. Both groups share common values derived from particular experiences of *convivencia* in sixteenth-century Portugal and its colonies; both recognise the Portuguese-ness of their communal identity in spite of submission to other dominant authorities, whether in the diaspora after 1497 or under Spanish Habsburg rule in Portugal and its colonies in 1580-1640 (see Schwartz 1968); both sympathise with the plight of other victims of Spanish imperial and religious power in the Americas, including not only New Christians or New Jews but also Amerindians (Costigan 2005: 129-30). From postcolonial critical perspectives, Costigan stresses shared subaltern conditions of Portuguese, Sephardim, and Jesuits in the seventeenth-century crisis of Spanish Catholic hegemony:

Probably the common subaltern situation of both [Antônio Vieira and Menasseh ben Israel] in relation to the exclusivist imperial policy of the Spanish Habsburg Crown, harmful to Jews and Portuguese in general, and the ethnic and religious intransigence of the Spaniards, favoured the mutual comprehension between Vieira and ben Israel and their openness to other cultures and civilisations, like those of the native peoples of the Americas (Costigan 2005: 150, my translation).

In addition, for Costigan the early Jesuit missionaries and reformers mirror characteristics similar to those of Sephardi Jews and *conversos*, such as a 'humanist formation oriented to this world..., a modern enterprising spirit that embraces change..., and inclusion of the Other in universal messianism' (Costigan 2005: 146-48). Thus, for Costigan, in their exemplary collaboration Vieira and Menasseh ben Israel come to represent positive 'ethnophile' role models for their contemporaries and for posterity: 'that which ethnographers and anthropologists characterise as the search for understanding and acceptance between different ethnic groups' (149).

5. Tolerant regimes and eras of toleration

What precipitates renewed collaborations and also problematises colonial relations between the Portuguese and Sephardim is the challenge posed to the global balance of interests by Dutch raids (in Bahia 1624-1625) and conquests and settlements in Northeast Brazil in 1630 to 1654. This is the immediate cause of both the experiment in religious toleration in Dutch Brazil that leads to mass migration of Sephardi Jews and open practice of Judaism, as well as counter-efforts by Vieira to create Portuguese armed trading companies to challenge the Dutch West Indies Company and to reintegrate Sephardi *conversos* and practising Jews in Portugal and its colonies. For E.C. Mello 2006, as modern Brazilian biographer of Dutch Governor Johan Maurits

of Nassau, it is important to recognise the latter's political pragmatism as well as enlightened statesmanship in the face of continuous tensions amongst Portuguese Catholics, Dutch Calvinists and Sephardi Jews under his rule. In his report to the Dutch West Indies Company Board of XIX, Nassau echoes popular resentment against Jewish merchants and agents who dominate key sectors of the local economy, but also acknowledges that the extraordinary influence of Recife's Jews is a reflection of their unique cross-cultural talents and entrepreneurial skills, as well as their strong ties to the Amsterdam Sephardim, affinity with Dutch policies of toleration, and antipathy to Spain and Portugal's religious exclusivity and the Inquisition:

The Jews consider that they are entitled to greater freedom than the Papists [under Dutch rule in Pernambuco], as we are more assured of their loyalty. We are well aware that, as they profess their Judaism publicly, in no way would they wish or be able to go back to being under Spanish control. On the contrary, they would strive to maintain and defend this State, whereas the Portuguese Papists have revealed that they are not entirely loyal to us and would cast us aside at the first opportunity (quoted in Schwartz ed. 2010: 239).

In 1641, when local tensions lead to protests and riots, Nassau upholds his religious policy and treats all parties, including Jews, with equal standards of toleration: 'he promised to punish anyone who harmed people of other religions and provoked such attacks' (quoted in E.C. Mello 2006: 182). Nevertheless, E.C. Mello rejects popular myths in nineteenth-century historiography that anachronistically glorified the brief period of Dutch rule in Brazil as an early Protestant manifestation of the Enlightenment in contradistinction to Portuguese colonial decadence and cultural belatedness. For Mello, what Nassau ultimately represents is the fortunate conjunction of historical opportunities, cross-cultural affinities, and individual political will. Nassau's rule was destined to be terminated. This was due not only to the increasingly divergent policies of the Dutch West Indies Company and the restoration of an independent Portuguese nation-empire in 1640 under João IV of the House of Braganza, but also to the mobile entrepreneurial interests of the Sephardi Jews who participated equally in other Dutch colonial settlements and in competing yet short-lived Portuguese trading companies.⁶

Such collaborative developments across frontier communities and peripheral colonies can also be understood in terms of the deep processes of popular cultures that gradually converge in contradistinction with periodic fluctuations in the official policies of rulers or states. In a revisionist study on popular cultural developments of reli-

⁶ These included the *Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil* of 1649-1657, as well as later the *Junta do Comércio* of 1662 and the *Companhia de Comércio do Estado do Maranhão* founded in 1680, under the influence of Antônio Vieira himself; see Boxer 1949 and Cohen 1998: 196-197.

gious tolerance, especially amongst ordinary people (whether from cultural centres or margins) who manage to empower themselves, Schwartz points out:

My subject...is not the history of religious toleration, by which is usually meant state or community policy, but rather of tolerance, by which I mean attitudes or sentiments.... Often toleration was a compromise born of practical political or economic considerations rather than of sentiments of tolerance.... The strains of tolerance that lay deep in Christian thought [—or Jewish or *converso* culture, one might add—], or that grew from a kind of simple common sense, need to become part of the history of toleration. In that relationship, people of some education who could read and write and who, with the access to information that printing and cheap books gave them, increasingly demanded the ability to know and to think for themselves, played a crucial role as mediators and agents. They were often the vectors between and within cultural divisions (Schwartz 2008: 6, 12).

Interestingly, given the importance of Jews, New Christians, and New Jews already noted by the other scholars cited before, Schwartz describes cross-cultural agents of tolerance, in terms strikingly similar to the dynamic roles commonly associated with early-modern Sephardim, as 'a subculture within the Iberian world, as a class of persons who were mobile and had travelled, had some access to print culture, and usually came from large towns or cities' (Schwartz 2008: 12).

It is clear that in the course of their internal and external exiles in the early-modern era of crises of national, colonial, and religious authority, the Iberian Sephardim managed to collaborate in creating multicultural communities that actually practised tolerance (as opposed to the official yet limited forms of toleration noted by Schwartz), even in the face of continual anti-Semitic threats. In the process they came to share their own understanding of Sephardi and Iberian *convivencia* with other Jews, *conversos*, New Christians, and New Jews, originally from Spain and Portugal, whom they found in Holland, across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, in Portuguese and Dutch Brazil, and in Dutch Antilles, Surinam, and New Amsterdam (later New York).

6. Conclusion: *Conversos* as intermediary agents

By way of conclusion, it is instructive to contrast early-modern propaganda about *conversos* as political traitors or economic rivals of Catholic Spain and Portugal with contemporary revisions of their role as cross-cultural intermediaries co-responsible for developments of global networks and humanist philosophies. Lope de Vega's Spanish play *El Brasil restituído* (1625), celebrating the Portuguese recapture of Brazil's colonial capital Bahia from the Dutch in 1625, portrays Sephardi merchants of Pernambuco as spies for the Dutch who conspire against Portuguese rule: 'juzgando

será mexor entregarnos a olandeses que sufrir que portugueses nos traten con tal rigor' ['we judge it is better to surrender to the Dutch than to suffer harsh treatment under the Portuguese'] (quoted in J.A.G. Mello 1947/2001: 240-41, my translation; cf. Costigan 2005: 126-27). Ironically the Dutch themselves are represented as half-Jewish in some Spanish texts (as if through a Semitic guilt by association) due to their acceptance of Sephardi Jews in Amsterdam and in their colonies (see E.C Mello 2006: 92-93, Vainfas 2010: 212). Likewise Portuguese friar Manuel Calado in his *Valeroso Lucideno e triunfo da liberdade na restauração de Pernambuco* (1648) voices colonial resentment against the commercial advantage of Sephardi Jews as middle-men between the Dutch and Portuguese in Dutch Brazil (in López 2002: 182-83). In both cases the Sephardi Jews' culturally hybrid identities and roles are represented in negative terms due to the typical misunderstandings of multicultural values and distrust of mixed loyalties, common to colonial historical and literary texts of that conflicted era.

In contrast, from post-Counter-Reformation and postcolonial perspectives, as well as in modern critical terms, the mixed identities of Sephardi Jews (in their various cultural, socio-economic, intellectual, and religious aspects) can be understood quite differently, as positive features for early-modern societies like the Portuguese or Dutch that take part in global exchanges of goods, peoples and ideas. Modern revisionist studies on Sephardi *conversos* as New Christians, Jewish Christians, or New Jews offer more complex and balanced interpretations of their evolving identities and agencies across Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic. For Kamen the paradox of *converso* internal exile and cultural assimilation within Iberia itself serves to re-contextualise the Sephardi diaspora as an integral part of early-modern formations of European societies and colonies that create new opportunities for economic and cultural development (Kamen 2007: 7-8, 12). For Schwartz the resilience of various communities of tolerance (including many varieties of *conversos*) that emerge in early-modern Iberia and its colonies gives eloquent testimony to mobile subcultures of cosmopolitan and pragmatic intermediaries (Schwartz 2008: 11-12). For Costigan the shared subaltern conditions of Portuguese colonists and Jewish *conversos* in early-seventeenth-century Brazil promote common interests against the political and religious hegemony of the Habsburg crown during the dynastic union of Spain and Portugal from 1580 to 1640 (Costigan 2005: 149-50). More significantly, as several modern critics point out,⁷ significant convergences between Iberian traditions of *convivencia* and the cosmopolitan humanism of both Sephardi Jewish or *converso* leaders and Jesuit intellectuals in early-modern Holland, Portugal, and Brazil serve to foster relations of tolerance and discourses of *ethnophilia* (as openness and respect towards all sorts of cultural differences, which embrace not only pro-Semitic but also pro-indigenous viewpoints). Such attitudes, enlightened for their age, are represented by Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel in his *Hope of Israel* (1650), Jesuit reformer

⁷ Cf. Costigan 2005: 146-48, 150; J.A.G. Mello 1947/2001: 239-40; Schwartz 2008: 6; Niskier 2004: 63-64.

Antônio Vieira in his *Esperanças de Portugal* (1647), and *converso* or New Christian chronicler Ambrósio Brandão in his *Diálogos das grandezas do Brasil* (1618). As E.C. Mello observes, as a result of mutual interests and common threats, open-minded individuals like governor Johan Maurits of Nassau and multicultural communities of Sephardi Jews and *conversos* managed to collaborate in creating new promised lands for material, cultural, and spiritual prosperity (E.C. Mello 2006: 16-18).

Nevertheless, the limited experiment in toleration of Dutch Brazil of 1630 to 1654 was doomed to end due to local tensions and geopolitical shifts. To understand its true significance it is essential to remap the circuitous trajectories and deep historical impacts of *convivencia* and *converso* cultures from late-medieval Iberia to early-colonial Ibero-America and Dutch Brazil. What emerges from such a cross-cultural historicist analysis is a series of limited, ambivalent, yet constructive experiments in multicultural modernity. They not only reflect the intermediary agencies of Sephardi and *converso* diasporas in the first age of globalisation, but also the humanist outlooks of what amounts to a pre-enlightenment amongst certain political, commercial, and religious leaders and groups in seventeenth-century trans-Atlantic exchanges. Flowing together at crucial times, such examples of *convivencia* traditions and *converso* identities can be employed by modern historians to reconstruct and articulate emerging networks of intercultural understanding. They reveal dynamic communities of tolerance that share key interests, as well as criss-crossed histories of crisis and renewal.

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The Ceremonial Appropriation of City and Sea in Rio de Janeiro 1807-1822

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1. Introduction

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, geopolitics, topography, urban precedent and colonial policy conspired to concentrate the civic and regal machinery of the Portuguese empire at the water's edge in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The harbour and waterfront of this colonial city became a metropolitan stage for the Prince Regent Dom João VI and his court between 1808 and 1821 during their exile in Brazil in the wake of Napoleon's conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. At that time Brazil was strategically located on established trade routes between Portugal, Africa, India and China, and with the discovery of gold and diamonds in Minas Gerais, the colony had become the de facto treasury of the Portuguese imperial administration. In 1807, as French troops marched on Lisbon, the King's great grandson Prince Regent Dom João VI and an estimated 15,000 citizens fled by sea under British naval escort to Rio de Janeiro. This study follows the trajectory of the ceremonial public lives of the Braganza dynasty as their fate unfolded in their adopted country.

The key theoretical concept of this study is the topographically contained 'bluespace' (Brand 2007) of the harbour city. Bluespace embodies the idea of land-sea or land-river transitions (of water, people and goods), which implies a fluctuating zone of space and ceremony *across* the coast and *includes the space of the sea itself*. This threshold condition is more intense on the urban land-sea edge where the activity of the port metropolis concentrates. The aim of this study is to catalogue important ceremonial events celebrated on Lisbon's waterfront, on Guanabara Bay and in the necklace of public spaces which form the land-sea edge in the centre of Rio de Janeiro, through a close reading of representational works of the period, with the aim of understanding how a particular culture, topography and political regime has configured a unique form of bluespace in the Portuguese Empire. Rio de Janeiro became the most painted city of this era in South America, because Dom João VI ironically invited disgraced Bonapartists from the Bourbon restoration in France to found the Academy of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro. Napoleon's former painters, sculptors and architects were paid court pensions to infuse Brazil with French cultural hegemony. The result in terms of painting was an explosion of work depicting the landscape, the harbour, the city and its rulers.

2. Portuguese Bluespace

Literature dealing with port cities has typically defined the port in relation to its landed boundaries rather than a space in its own right. Hoyle (1967, 1970) and Rimmer's (1973) theoretical framework for port cities defines the foreland and hinterland as generators of port development. Both elements conceptually relate to the land at the extremities of the voyage. The sea space itself, and in particular the space of the anchorage or harbor, is incidental. Reeves, Broeze and McPherson (1989) endorse the importance of the land-sea interface in their study of the Asian port city:

Such port city studies must take their start at the *places* where goods and passengers are transferred between ship and shore—which is, after all, the ultimate rationale of the port—and in consecutive stages include all aspects of urban economic, social, cultural and spatial development that are generated, dominated, or significantly influenced by the port (Reeves, Broeze and McPherson 1989: 42; my emphasis).

The word 'littoral' describes locations proximate to the seashore. 'Littoral society' broadens the concept to mean a community extending inward from the coast with porous frontiers acting as filters through which the salt of the sea is gradually replaced by the silt of the land society (Pearson 1985: 1). This is essentially a western and continental view of the space under discussion with its privileging of the land mass. Polynesian culture which locates itself in an ocean covering one third of the earth's surface has for generations migrated across these vast spaces and views the issue quite differently:

According to early Tahitian accounts these navigators saw the Pacific Ocean as a vast watery plain, joined around the edges of the horizon by the layered spheres of the sky, which encircled its clusters of known islands. It was also a marae, a sacred place where people went to cleanse themselves in times of spiritual trouble (Salmond 2003: 35).

Historically the Portuguese situate themselves in both of these realms with the littoral edge being the principal focus of colonisation. Inhabiting a precarious ear of land located at the extreme western edge of continental Europe, their imperial ambitions were executed via gradual maritime forays into the Atlantic and beyond, their seaborne empire eventually extending all the way to Japan. The sea and trade at the land's edge thus became the defining spatiality of their geopolitical world. In the mid-thirteenth century this unwillingness to engage with the land and the continent sitting behind it saw the coastal slavers and traders in Africa conduct their raids and business dealings from their ships anchored off river estuaries and trade routes. This practice of operating from a floating trade hub continued even when *feitorias* (trading factories,

or forts for the Dutch and English) were established. Between 1435 and 1570 the Portuguese created a necklace of fortified trading ports in Africa, India, South East Asia and Japan. The exception to the practice was in Brazil where a small number of coastal *vilas* or towns were established in addition to the *feitorias* (Kagan 2000). These permanent settlements became the main mechanism for Portuguese colonisation and exploitation in South America. With their hegemony as a maritime nation of explorers and traders the Portuguese initially clung precariously to the coasts of Brazil, unlike the Spanish who from the beginning undertook extensive settlement and evangelisation of the vast interior.

3. Lisbon's Legacy

The waterfront square in Lisbon has traditionally functioned as an urban maritime nexus. A 1650 plan of the city shows the flat tidal zones of the river banks hosting a necklace of waterfront spaces from Belém, near the mouth of the Tagus, to the city core [Figure 1]. The square is an enduring tradition in Portuguese urbanism (Teixeira and Valla 1999: 315). In Lisbon the principal waterfront square has been variously known as O Terreiro do Paço (Palace Square, pre-1755), and A Praça do Comércio (Commercial Square, post-1755). In 1755, Lisbon was hit by a series of disasters. A devastating earthquake, tsunami and fire killed more than 10,000 people (of a population of 250,000) and destroyed 20,000 homes, churches and civic buildings, including the Ribeiro Palace which was located adjacent to the Terreiro do Paço.



Figure 1: Panoramas of Lisbon before the 1755 earthquake (various authors), Museu da Cidade de Lisboa

Each pocket of waterfront space relates to a major institutional presence which has a functional interface with the water. These include the royal arsenal, royal palace, customhouse and market. These waterfront zones of public space are so fundamental to the life-blood of the city that they have endured the physical reconfigurations wrought on the town's steep hillsides by Romans, Visigoths, Moors, Christians, and

remain resistant as primary structural elements in the urban landscape (Rossi 1982). The principal square, Terreiro do Paço, developed around the royal palace on land which up until 1170 was submerged beneath an inlet of the Tagus (Gutkind 1965: 62).



Figure 2: View of Terreiro do Paço before 1755 earthquake (Dirk Stoop), Museu da Cidade de Lisboa

Figure 2 shows the daily bustle of commerce, exchange and gathering, rather than a grand ceremonial occasion. The image features courtiers processing in coaches, clergy and noblewomen promenading on foot, people congregating at the well, men weighing and carrying goods to be loaded into the holds of ships at anchor, cavaliers riding horses, troops exercising and children walking their dogs. While this provides us with a glimpse into the seventeenth-century habitual use of the space and its crucial relationship to the river, it is the Palace which transforms the space into a transition zone between river and city.

The royal palace dominates the entire western side of the Terreiro do Paço and therefore it is ceremonial use which prevails in the space, especially arrivals and departures of royals and foreign dignitaries. This naturally predicated a higher level of engagement with the Tagus. Smaller scale elements such as piers and bridges are positioned to direct the processional use of space into an ill-defined square from the sea, as principal mode of travel for this maritime nation before the nineteenth century.

Naval predominance and royal hegemony are the hallmarks of many images of Terreiro do Paço up until the early eighteenth century, when emphasis is given to the sea and vessels, not the city. **Figure 3** shows the spectacular arrival of King Felipe III/ Filipe II of Spain and Portugal in Lisbon. Half of the image is filled with the watery foreground in front of the square, and a mass of sailing vessels of all sizes and types swarming on the Tagus (larger vessels appear super-sized for visual effect). The Palace and the temporary structures installed for the occasion are drawn at similar scale to the ships, giving them the sense of being beached objects or vessels themselves,

rather than part of the medieval crust of the city. Other buildings fade into the uniform grain of the town behind with only churches registering a higher order of detail and importance. Techniques of graphic projection shift to give emphasis to the square and river which are depicted in perspective while the city is shown in elevation behind.



Figure 3: Panorama of Terreiro do Paço and disembarkation of Felipe III of Spain, also known as Filipe II of Portugal (Lavanha), Museu da Cidade, Lisboa

Graphic embellishment, such as the finely rendered texture of the waves at the bottom of the picture and billowing plumes of canon fire at either extremity, focus the eye on the bottom half of the frame. There is a concentration of activity in this zone with barques, barges, fishing boats, and row boats moving in different directions on the page. The bows of these vessels point to the King's ceremonial barge at the pier. The scene shows lateen rig and square rig vessels sailing in contrary winds to achieve this effect while the myriad of ensigns unfurl to the east in a westerly wind. As with the portolan chart representations of exotic foreign destinations, this image evokes the natural and mythical worlds. In the left-hand foreground there is a dolphin, a massive lobster, a mermaid and a Neptunian figure carried by seahorses across the surf. A compass, its needle adorned with an anchor, decorates the centre bottom of the image.

The square is articulated with a centrally located dais and an entrance arch at the land edge of the pier extending into the Tagus. These 'sets' function as props to direct the procession into the city beyond. West of the dais is a grid of supersized columns that extends to the northern and western walls of the square. Crowds are dwarfed by these monuments and cluster like ants at the river's edge to glean a view of the on-water festivities. The river in this instance is the expandable fourth façade to the square and a space which can effortlessly double and treble the scale of any important spectacle.

Bridges were also common threshold devices for marking the moment of transition between the land and sea. A bridge structure was a permanent fixture on the arsenal side of the palace and was lavishly adorned for state occasions. **Figure 4** shows

the Princess of Portugal and wife of the King of England leaving the Palace via this bridge. Dom João V also had a long, elegant and sumptuously decorated bridge built to honour the arrival of his bride Dona Maria Sofia Isabel of Bavaria in 1687. The structure's myriad arches were decorated in crimson velvet and gold.



Figure 4: Embarkation of Princess Catherine of Portugal, the wife of Charles II King of England (1622), Museu da Cidade de Lisboa

The foregoing discussion highlights the authority of the Portuguese monarchy and its ceremonial use of the river and square as a theatre for state events. The royals enjoyed a long tradition of urban maritime ceremony related to the arrival and departure of monarchs and foreign dignitaries in Lisbon. The harbour arena and waterfront square were also spatially contiguous and provided an ideal arena in which to stage significant events of public life. The court maximised the juxtaposition of a spacious landscape setting with regal pageantry, and extravagant maritime ceremony became an all-important ongoing public relations exercise for a minor European monarchy.

4. Establishing a Royal Presence in Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro's harbour arena and waterfront square were also spatially contiguous and, as in Lisbon, offered an ideal theatre to stage momentous events of public life. During his forced exile in Brazil, Dom João VI exploited the juxtapositions of Rio's imposing landscape settings with court pageantry, and equally extravagant seaside ceremonies served to enhance the status of a regime in decline (Brand 2006).

Portugal's history of strategic movements between land, sea and continents, set the scene for the exodus of the Monarchy from Lisbon in 1807 when the French General Junot and his troops massed on the Portuguese border awaiting Napoleon's orders to invade the country. Dom João VI prevaricated until the last moment ensuring that the departure was hasty, chaotic, and ill-conceived. The royals and their entourage embarked not from Pombal's grand Praça do Comércio, the principal ceremonial space of the reconstructed city, but from the port at the Belém docks where the imports and exports of empire were routinely trans-shipped. The departure, rather than being conducted with the pomp and ceremony usually accorded a royal voyage,

was executed in secret along with the removal of the contents of Portugal's treasuries, archives and royal palaces. The choice of departure point was significant, since the Praça do Comércio was the events space *de rigueur* of the age. There are many images of this space hosting the arrivals and departures of Portuguese dignitaries and foreign monarchs, as well as bullfights, day to day commerce, and the *autos da fe* of the recent inquisition period. On this occasion there was little to celebrate as Dom João and his family regretfully boarded royal barges which ferried them to a waiting fleet of badly repaired and ill-provisioned ships anchored at the mouth of the Tagus.

The voyage was a rough and uncomfortable one. By British envoy Viscount Strangford's account, a fleet of 40 frigates, brigs, ships of the line, and merchant vessels lumbered through storms towards Madeira where the convoy ultimately split before making parallel but separate courses to various destinations along the coast of Brazil. In addition to chronic seasickness, water and food shortages, and a lack of fresh clothing, two ships suffered lice infestation. After a journey of seven weeks ladies of the court arrived in Brazil, their heads shorn and dressed in shifts stitched from British Navy sheets and blankets. They were refugees in their own empire.

Dom João's arrival in Brazil was subdued. The Governor of Bahia, not knowing how to receive the royals, cleared the streets and met the *Príncipe Real* alone at the Salvador docks. When the fleet sailed south weeks later, the Governor of Rio de Janeiro had some advance warning of their arrival and prepared the city to welcome the Prince Regent. In the late afternoon of 7 March 1808 the royal squadron passed through the heads into Guanabara Bay to the echo of cannon fire and a fireworks display which was offset by the forested backdrop of the layered mountain range of the *Serra do Mar*. Disembarking the following day the city staged ample welcome. Thus began public ceremonial life for the royal family in the New World:

There was a reverent silence as the brigantine made its way slowly from the fleet to the wharf. It docked in front of the main square—a granite-paved clearing—which gave on to the bay where, at the head of a ramp, an altar had been set up. Reaching the altar, the royals prostrated themselves and were showered with a light spray of holy water. From there, under cover of a silk canopy, the entourage walked in a slow procession across the square to the Carmelite cathedral where prayers were said and thanks given for the successful completion of such a long and dangerous voyage. The entire city had turned out and taken up vantage points in the streets, on hillsides, some even climbing on rooftops (Wilcken 2004: 88-89).

5. Protocols

Public commemorations of the royal events emanating from Portugal had always been celebrated simultaneously across the Portuguese dominions, affirming the existence of a larger imperial political community:

The lavish celebrations of the royal life cycle, in this sense, allowed the city's residents to both witness the splendour of royalty as it was revealed in processions and festive ephemera, and to participate in a performance intended for an imagined imperial audience (Shultz 2001: 48).

Rio de Janeiro had been a generous and enthusiastic host to these spectacles as well as to annual religious festivals, and arrivals and departures of local viceroys and bishops. When the royal household arrived expectations were raised considerably, but ceremonies were already part of established urban culture. The Emperor and his advisors were aware of their tenuous position in the new land, but shared traditions and memories of regal symbolism in Africa and Portugal conspired to ease the fraught relationship. Schwarcz (2004) identifies the morphing of Portuguese and African modalities of monarchy, and illustrates how symbols and religious festivals took on multi-layered identities with African and European roots. The merging of cross-continental traditions and evolution of new hybrid forms of celebration created a zone in which the monarchy could operate and take their place at the centre of urban public events.

Portuguese Court protocol made serious demands of the populace. Public display of fealty was required to be elaborate, demonstrative, and ongoing. To the already complex religious observances which wove through the fabric of *carioca* urban life were now added new layers of regal compliance. Royal attendants preceded Dom João's carriage to clear a path in the streets and demanded that the public remove their hats. Escorts to the Queen Dona Maria insisted that riders dismount and kneel with bowed heads until she had passed. Jaques Arago, an artist on Freycinet's voyage to the South Seas (1823: 75), describes an incident in which the American Consul, being twice accosted in one day by the Princess Regent Dona Carlotta's attendants, produced a pair of loaded pistols and was allowed to proceed without interference. Traffic would progressively grind to a halt as the royals moved at random around the city, although the incident above saw foreigners eventually excluded from this ritual.

Religious ceremony was also both public and elaborate. George Staunton describes typical religious observance in the streets of Rio:

The ceremonies of religion were, however, regularly kept up, and even multiplied. In the day time bells and sometimes sky rockets announced at every hour some solemnity performing in the churches; and after sunset the streets were crowded with processions. At every corner was

stuck up, in a glass case, the image of the Virgin Mary, which homage was regularly paid by those who passed along. (Staunton 1799: 81).

At the other extreme the regular *beija-mão* ceremony (a hand kissing protocol) was adopted to enable ordinary citizens to individually attend the palace and petition the Prince Regent on any matter. When the court took up residence in Rio de Janeiro ceremonial observance took on an expanded public and ritual dimension, and these events became the subject of many important paintings produced in this era. The ceremonies of the new urban elites filled the grand natural amphitheatre of Guanabara Bay and the Largo do Paço or Palace Square.

6. Guanabara Bay

The three-dimensional space created by the watery horizontality of Guanabara Bay and the rugged verticality of the Serra do Mar provides the city of Rio De Janeiro with a spectacular 'entrance' and theatre of arrival. This is the first of a sequence of enclosed spaces which hosted urban events of different kinds. Rio de Janeiro is famous for its majestic granite outcrops which descend abruptly into the sea. The geology of granite and water is responsible for both the grandeur of the landscape and the way the city accommodates itself to the extreme topography. The peaks of Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf) and Corcovado (The Hunchback) with their other-worldly silhouettes dominate the sea approaches. The city itself occupies precarious strips of beach and pockets of flat land between the sea and the hills. The edge is therefore precipitous and sharp, distilling and circumscribing a place that engages the foreshore (the shore between high and low watermarks) and the dryshore (the land between high watermark and economically exploited land) in an intimate relationship.

A sophisticated port defence system for Rio de Janeiro was initiated in 1567 after the expulsion of French colonists from the area. A chart of Rio de Janeiro bay from 1801 shows critical dimensions of defences of Guanabara Bay and approaches to the city measured out by fort locations and cannon trajectories from squadron lines. The narrow entrance between Fort de São João, Fort de Laje, and Fort de Santa Cruz forms the perfect sentry to the city. A final line of defence was afforded by Fort de Villegagnon and Fort Ilha das Cobras before landfall, as Captain James Cook discovered when *Endeavour* was unceremoniously fired at while approaching Rio in 1769.

A port was created where early charts show an extensive anchoring shelf of 12 metres off the beach between Morro Castelo and Morro São Bento. This space became the natural sea extension of urban space yet to be developed at the waterfront edge of the city. Extensive reclamation was only to be undertaken at the start of the twentieth century. The Portuguese built their cities hard on the edge of the sea with multiple public spaces providing the baseline for larger ceremonial expansions into the bluespace of the bay. The country's riches were transported, bonded and exchanged over the short distance from clearinghouse, to landing place (square), to

longboat, to ship's hold, with the transaction sometimes occurring across the seawall [Figure 5]. This immediacy was a function of the Portuguese propensity for efficient exchange, and their history as coastal-edge transactors.



Figure 5: Unloading goods at the central market (Thomas Ender 1817),
Academie der Bildenden Künste, Vienna

The bluespace of Guanabara Bay qualifies as a harbour arena because of the degree of containment afforded by surrounding hills, and because events hosted in that space related to royal ceremony and involved movement, adornment and celebrity. The written descriptions that follow make reference to landscape as an analogy to built architectural space (theatre) or enclosure (stage) which contains human activity. Many travellers' diaries refer to the unique perceptual experience of entering the port.

The theatrical spatiality of the setting is recognised by Wilcken (2004: 68), who describes the escarpments backing the harbour as 'receding in ever lighter pastels into the distance, like *theatre* sets stacked one against the other.' In a more abstract way Pedro da Cunha e Menezes (2004: 234) further identifies the spectacle of the tropical landscape itself as the 'stage' which enabled Brazil to be perceived by Europeans as a natural 'theatre' for scientific discovery, when unprecedented access to the region became possible after 1808. Written descriptions highlight the harbour as an enclosed ceremonial space of dramatic proportions:

High mountains, rocks overlapping columns, lush forests, islands of bright flowers, green banks, all blended with white buildings, each small headland crowned with its church or fortress, vessels anchored or in movement, and countless boats moving around, and such a delightful climate, all this comes together to make Rio de Janeiro the most enchanting scene that the imagination could conceive (Graham 1956: 194-195, referring to travels in 1821-1823).

This experience was savoured to the extent that late arriving vessels sometimes delayed their final entry into the bay until daylight to maximise their sense of arrival in this sublime landscape, as Charles Darwin's diary below indicates. Entering the space embodied the theatrical behaviours of suspense and performance as ships processed across the watery stage to landfall: 'We lay to last night, as the Captain was determined we should see the harbour of Rio and be seen in broad daylight. The view is magnificent, and will improve on acquaintance' (Darwin 1996: 21).

Paintings of the era clearly exploit the spatiality of Guanabara Bay to enhance portrayal of significant events in the civic imagination and show the harbour contained by land and bristling with activity. Convict George Raper's precise depiction of the arrival of Arthur Phillip's First Fleet in Rio de Janeiro shows both the spatial containment of the harbour and the idea of a processional approach from the sea. 'The English Squadron in Rio de Janeiro' [Figure 6] is an example of one occasion when the imagery of this procession was deliberately manipulated to emphasise the theatrical nature of such arrivals. Menezes identifies the 'squadron' as the same fleet en route to Botany Bay, Australia, with 1000 convicts to found a penal colony. Almost double the actual 11 vessels are depicted, and they are shown inaccurately as high-gunwaled craft exchanging canon salutes with forts to further dramatise their arrival.



Figure 6: The English squadron in Rio de Janeiro (Leandro Joaquim 1787), Museu Histórico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

A later work 'Embarkation of the Prince and Princess of Joinville,' painted to commemorate the marriage of Dom João's daughter Dona Francisca to the Prince of Joinville in 1843, embodies a similar spatial sense but frames the royal subjects with an aura of sea spray and a religious landmark. Their departure for Europe was painted emphasising the wild atmospheric landscape of the harbour in blustery conditions and a decorated royal barge is shown receding from the plane of the picture with the wind whipping waves around the sleek hull. On a promontory at the right of the picture

stands the magnificent church of Nossa Senhora da Glória, and to the centre and left a cloudy sky churns in the distance behind the waiting French squadron.

7. Largo do Paço

Rio de Janeiro's, urban space on the land adjacent to the waterfront followed a spatial and institutional facsimile of Lisbon, although the spaces in Rio show both a higher level of differentiation and a smaller scale than the Portuguese originals. In Lisbon, the royal shipyard and the fish market flank the super-scaled square Praça do Comércio, which embodied multiple layers of daily use, including customs, official ceremonies and exchange. In Rio the regular city blocks start to the west of Rua Direita. Forward of this line, which marks the original beach, there is a crescent of public squares and edifices. The overall effect is a necklace of serial institutional space dedicated to activities of the army (Largo de Moura, Praia do Dom Manuel), royal household (Largo do Paço), customs (Alfândega), fish market (Praia do Peixe), naval arsenal and shipyard (Arsenal), export of commodities (Praia dos Mineiros) and slaves (Valongo). They represent micro-niches of commodity concentration, safeguarding the exportation of products and the importation of slaves and manufactures. From the main street Rua Direita, one block back from the sea, perpendicular thoroughfares reach to these spatial pockets at the water's edge, where they galvanise discreet and highly specialised flows of materials out to the bay and the Atlantic. This narrow assemblage of spaces at the edge constituted the anterooms of exchange to empire.



Figure 7: The Coronation of Dom Pedro II (Thomas Ender 1841),
Academie der Bildenden Kunste, Vienna

The Largo do Paço was the principal urban square of Rio and the place where major events of state took place. The space was immediately adjacent to the royal palace and was controlled by the military and embellished by artists to meet the security and ceremonial requirements of the royals. The coronation of Dom Pedro II in 1841 [Figure 7] shows an informal walling-off of ordinary citizens from the royal entou-

rage by soldiers. This served to reinforce racial and social divisions and afforded the court some protection from their subjects. Ephemeral architecture was also used during the monarchy's stay to provide a sense of architectural grandeur that was wanting in the early years. The building in the rear plane of this picture is a temporary façade constructed and painted in neoclassical style specifically for the occasion, to give the impression of an imposing rear wall to the urban space. Large ephemeral pieces included triumphal arches, arrival pavilions, and ceremonial platforms, and reflected the spontaneous informality of *carioca* religious festivities. Jacques Arago, reflecting the French distaste for colonial Portuguese cultural practices remarked:

On occasion of the king's coronation, palaces and triumphal arches were constructed of wood. What violations of taste! The Triumphal arches are great gates on which are painted figures which the vilest of our daubers would be ashamed to own. The inscriptions which adorn these arches and palaces are very fine; they proceed from the heart, which is a citizen of the world, and are dictated by gratitude and love. Their paintings indicate the infancy of the arts (Arago 1823: 78-79).

Debret's 'Baptismal Procession of Dona Maria da Glória' in 1819 shows a temporary wall constructed diagonally across the space between the Royal Palace and the Royal Chapel, guarded at intervals by the military as the court processes across the space. The space of the waterfront square was strategically manipulated by using temporary structures, regimental bodies and false façades to contain, embellish, and protect the royal family during official commemorations. Largo do Paço was used outside of these occasions as the nexus of trade and commerce in the city with foreign ships drawing up to replenish water supplies from the huge fountain at the water's edge. It was also the principal landing point for Portuguese naval and government vessels. For slaves it was the place where water was collected for the master's household and the location of the *pelourinho* where harsh whippings were administered.

In 1817 in an arrangement designed to cement Portugal's ties with Austria's Hapsburg dynasty, the Archduchess Leopoldina arrived in Rio de Janeiro for her marriage to Prince Dom Pedro I [Figure 8]. The highpoint of the royal household's residency in Brazil, this occasion was depicted by artist Jean Baptiste Debret, a founding member of the French Artistic Mission. The scene represents one of the most exuberant public waterfront celebrations in which the house of Braganza indulged during its time in Brazil, and we see all the spatial experiences discussed above collapsed into one historic moment. The image shows the wider context: the Princess Royal arrives by barge at the Arsenal and is shown crossing the threshold between sea and land. She is surrounded by a flotilla of craft drawn close to the landing place. Morro São Bento is bursting with people desperate for a glimpse of her, and in the far right of the picture, framing the scene, sailors hang precariously off the rigging of their ship. The ar-

chitecture of landfall is marked with a pavilion designed by naval officers through which the royals transition as they disembark. The structure is shown with six columns painted in blue and white (the colours of the United Kingdom of Portugal and Brazil) terminating with obelisks on the seaward side. Decoration consists of the flags and the imperial crests of Portugal and Austria, garlands of flowers carried by eagles, a scarlet vaulted canopy, and crimson sand on the ground. At the time of the arrival 21 ships of foreign nations were at anchor off the city. Thus began Leopoldina's tragic life in Brazil. An intelligent, well-educated and erudite woman, she was ultimately overwhelmed by an ignorant and inattentive husband, multiple pregnancies and sheer boredom. Such was the importance of her arrival that it was documented by three other artists: Franz Fruhbeck, who accompanied the Princess on her voyage, fellow Austrian Thomas Ender, and Carlos Simão Pradier.



Figure 8: Disembarkation of the Princess Royal Leopoldina in Rio de Janeiro (Jean Baptiste Debret 1817), Museu Chácara do Céu, Rio de Janeiro

8. Conclusion

The above discussion highlights, through analysis of pictorial and written material, the diversified use of bluespace in the port of Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the nineteenth century. Guanabara Bay with its fantastic natural backdrop was an ideal setting for maritime approach and ceremonial display. The public squares of the city capitalised on the adjacency of commodious water space into which ceremonies could overflow. While this arrangement was prefigured by the waterfront disposition of the city of Lisbon, the model was embellished and developed from a tropical and colonial situation to that of an imperial locality after 1808. Portuguese culture and ceremonial life with its emphasis on public display of fealty and religiosity could not have found a better home.

The Portuguese, due to their historical propensity to occupy the coastal edge and exploit the hinterland in a direct and linear fashion, adapted the precarious land-

scape of Rio de Janeiro to this model of engagement with a new territory. The city of Lisbon provided the model for the development of the land-sea interface. The result was a string of highly institutionalized containers of public space at the water's edge with feeder lines back into the city behind running from the demarcation line of the main street Rua Direita. This represented a cosmopolitan mechanism for exploitation from the very edge of the continent in a time when international trade and warfare relied on prodigious fleets of seagoing vessels.

Royalty appropriated this space for a brief historical moment and overlaid unfamiliar practices and procedures on the shores of Brazil. The presence of the Portuguese royal family between 1808 and 1821 extended the formality and rigid institutionalization of space in Rio de Janeiro, and prolonged the adulation of monarchy well beyond what would have been acceptable in Europe at the time; in an imperial reversal of fortune Portugal found itself in the unenviable position of becoming a colony. Upon return to Portugal in 1821 Dom João VI left his son Dom Pedro I as Prince Regent in Brazil. Inspired by Spain's recent example, the people of Portugal embarked on a form of constitutional government, and Brazil declared independence in 1822. In less than a year the Emperor ceased to rule either western or eastern domains in an absolute manner, and like his European counterparts faced the future as a titular head of state. Dom João VI and his family's short stay in Brazil demonstrated an inspired use of an iconographic landscape as urban bluespace, thereby highlighting the possibilities that this kind of space association offers in port cities.

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Word Imagery and Painted Rhetoric: Historians, Artists and the Invention of the History of Brazil

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Contrary to the interpretation of romantic-teleological narratives disseminated from the nineteenth century onwards, the emergence of modern nation-states in this period, not only in the Americas but also in Europe, was by no means a natural, predestined or linear process. Unlike the still persistent explanation of nations originating spontaneously from ‘pre-existing’ cultural and historical bonds, contemporary history studies have been suggesting how the emergence of nation-states was largely marked by symbolic and physical struggles to join together populations with different feelings of belonging, and heterogeneous political and cultural loyalties, under the control of these new social forms. Elite nationalisms (along with their long-term expansion and appropriation by wider populations) are currently regarded as being key factors for the emergence of nations, not the contrary (Hobsbawm 1990).¹

This is nowhere more true than in Brazil, a society of regionally autonomous indigenous peoples colonised by a European minority residing in a few cities on the coast, which introduced a large African slave population and built its wealth on this colonial system. Around the independence period, this European and European-descended minority represented only 24.4% of the population (Skidmore 1995), yet in just a few decades the former colony achieved one of the greatest transformations in history: the widely disseminated self-image of the sovereign nation-state of Brazil as a mainly white (or whitening) civilized people who made the transition from colony to nation-state almost entirely peacefully. This image stands in stark contrast to most other neighbouring nation-states, whose transition was usually depicted as character-

¹ It is important to note that the idea that nations and nationalisms are much older phenomena, pre-dating the formal emergence of modern nation-states and capable of being traced in a group’s immemorial traditions, continues to be supported by some academics, whether they are self-assumed nationalists or not. This position of understanding contemporary countries as a result of the continuity of kinship and cultural ties preserved since pre-modern times, often denominated as ‘primordialist’ or ‘perennialist,’ has been less supported by contemporary Latin American academics. For this reason, this study favours what is often described as a ‘modernist’ approach, an umbrella term for researchers who define nations and nation-states as relatively recent social forms, originating at the turn of the nineteenth century. For a detailed debate between ‘modernist’ and ‘primordialist’ positions see Gellner 1997. See Smith 1998 for a brief description not only of modernist and primordialist positions, but also of what can be called ‘neo-perennialist,’ ‘post-modern’ and ‘ethno-symbolic’ interpretations of nations.

ised by internal violence, continuous border wars and chronically divisive politics. Brazil has also been seen as distinct by the fact that emancipation was accomplished through the continued presence of monarchic administrators *while also* becoming a sovereign nation. How did this new country manage to secure a national project in such a relatively short period, while inheriting basic structures of colonial society?

This study will trace the development of this unique process of nation building, in which a wide range of state-supported educational, scientific and artistic initiatives, along with other more autonomous ones—such as the formation of an influential Romantic literary movement—, promoted what has been called a ‘politics of national memory’ (Wehling 1999). Specifically, it will explore the close relationship and complementary roles of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) and the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) in the construction and dissemination of an ‘official’ history of Brazil in the nineteenth century.²

By suggesting a comparative analysis of both *printed* and *painted* media produced in the nineteenth century, this study hopes to contribute to the debate on how feelings of Brazilianness gradually became plausible and convincing among widely distinct social groups. It will also try to add to the critical and often ambiguous reception of Anderson’s ideas about imagined communities at the origins of nationalism (Anderson 1989) when applied to Latin American experiences, particularly to Brazil.

² Brazilian ‘official’ history can be defined here as a knowledge of the past *directly* supported by the state both in the context of *creation* (funding research, inaugurating historical institutes, awarding scholarships to historians and artists, fomenting historiographical contests, building museums, national archives, public libraries, etc.) and of *dissemination* (designing history programmes and implementing their teaching in schools and universities, celebrating/ritualising historical dates, subsidising the publication of books and textbooks, financing museum exhibitions, commissioning historical monuments, paintings, theatrical performances, etc.). Naturally, no ‘official’ body of knowledge about the past has ever been as stable and coherent as most nationalists often suppose; national histories everywhere tend to change with the agonistic ebb-and-flow of new governments, with the shifts in regional/class/gender/ethnic powers inside a country and, not least, in face of continuous new findings and paradigm variations in national and world historiographies. Despite its changes and disputes, the context of the creation of what is being called here a Brazilian ‘official’ history in the nineteenth century is a relatively stable one, associated with one basic form of government (constitutional monarchy), one main city (Rio de Janeiro) and few privileged state institutions (notably, IHGB, AIBA, National Archives, and Pedro II School). It is also important to add that this study is admittedly dedicated to a type of ‘history from above,’ restricted to the understanding of the intellectual production of a rather small group of Brazilian historians and artists. Because of limitations of space and focus, this study will not discuss the active resistance and creative agency that workers, women, indigenous peoples and Afro-Brazilians constantly had in shaping the nation-building process in Brazil. Even though it does not directly focus on the countless histories of subaltern and politically-excluded groups, this study hopes that an analysis of how an ‘official’ Brazilian history was constructed from the ‘top down’ can be an important step toward showing how its limited assumptions have not only been constantly challenged and modified by wider groups of society but, specifically, what contemporary historiography can offer to this debate.

Of course, no attempts are made here either to test or apply Anderson's ideas to the specific Brazilian case. As expected, due to the virtual ubiquity of *imagined communities* in studies of nationality, many books, articles and conferences have been dedicated to evaluating, proving or discrediting Anderson's thoughts with respect to diverse and particular national contexts. It is important to note that even though Anderson makes bold arguments about the Latin American process as a whole, especially in his chapter on 'Creole Pioneers' (in Anderson 1989), the Brazilian case is left relatively untouched. If Anderson ever attempted to suggest any kind a pattern for nation-state building, he did not rely on Brazil as a proof of his model.

Nonetheless, regardless of its focus on Spanish American examples, Anderson's work has also been influential in Brazilian scholarship. His celebrated book, though, seems to be increasingly remembered more as an audacious essay, whose merit consists of its overall suppositions and innovative conjectures, rather than for any possible direct applicability to the Brazilian case. Consistent with this approach, scholars of Brazil tend to be joining other Latin Americanists, for whom Anderson's contributions lie more in his resourceful insights than in any kind of accurate or general model for the region. As a result, rather than simply condemning Anderson's propositions for failing to stand up to empirical scrutiny, many critics have opted to take them as useful 'starting points' and to benefit from a critical and selective use of his ideas, such as the possibility of 'correcting Anderson's chronology' (Castro-Klarén and Chasteen 2003). In this line, for example, it has been argued that if print capitalism did promote feelings of national belonging in Latin America, this was probably more significant *after* the independence movements than prior to them (Guerra 2003).

Naturally, beyond the matter of accuracy of dates, François-Xavier Guerra among many other scholars has also raised strong objections to overall omissions in the 'imagined communities' approach. If Anderson's approach to understanding the emergence of the nation-states has been so influential and relatively original, it has been equally accused of a reductionist social perspective, which virtually ignored issues of class, gender and race in the process of nation building. In addition to this underestimated focus on the agency of workers, women, indigenous peoples and Africans in shaping the emerging nations, Anderson's suggestion of a historical succession from religious realms to secular societies seems incapable of dealing with how not only Catholicism but many other religious manifestations have clearly been integrated into Latin American nation-states' policies from their origins until today. Other frequent criticisms also point to the 'indefensible' hypothesis of the role of 'creole functionaries' as a main cause for the formation of regional identities (Guerra 2003); and to incongruities in trying to apply Anderson's key conceptualisation of the nation as being imagined as both 'limited and sovereign' to empirical data and to historical and heterogeneous contexts (Lomnitz 2000).

This study will give particular attention to one of the most polemical aspects of Anderson's book when applied to Latin America: what is often considered a dis-

proportionate place given to the role of Romantic narratives and newspapers in disseminating national discourses. In this sense, it joins a critical chorus that argues that Anderson's central idea of *print capitalism*—even if it still figures as an inspiring reference for researchers wishing to approach nation-states as political as well as cultural phenomena—is insufficient for understanding the complex dynamics of identity discourses being produced during most of Brazilian and Latin American post-independence contexts. Indeed, any attempt to link print culture to the shaping of political identities has to take into consideration that, in contrast to the expanding literacy context and even the concern with rising levels of peasant and worker's reading seen in some European countries (Lyons 1997), most of nineteenth-century Latin American populations remained fluent in essentially oral and visual-based forms of knowledge.

It is true that studies have been pointing to how information in books, newspapers and other publications was frequently accessible not only to those capable of directly reading print media, but also to wider groups who would eventually hear their contents through popular forms of public and collective readings. Nonetheless, if the limits of Latin American nineteenth-century public spheres are considered—pervasively undemocratic political environments, severely segregated societies based on patriarchal and rural economies (slave-based, in the case of Brazil), to relatively sparse urban centres and their inherent cultural infrastructure (libraries, bookstores, salons, cafes, publishing houses,³ etc.), along with attempts to exclude women from institutionalised political life and formal education,⁴ and pressures to be confined to

³ In the case of Brazil, this print infrastructure was even more limited, considering the way the Portuguese crown exerted an extremely centralised control over information and teaching, based on the strict prohibition of the production of newspapers and books or establishment of printing industries throughout colonial times. Naturally, this reflected the quite distinct approach to education adopted during the Spanish and Portuguese colonisation processes: 'While Spain established the first universities in the Western hemisphere, Portugal expected its subjects to return to the mother country in pursuit of higher education. Primary and secondary education were also relatively neglected' (Kirkendall 2003). Even though the *Correio Braziliense*, published in London by Hipólito José da Costa, is often considered as the first 'national' newspaper, the first official publishing houses (along with universities and libraries) on the colony's soil would only be inaugurated with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family to Rio de Janeiro in 1808.

⁴ Women were formally granted access to higher education in Brazil only in 1879. Despite efforts to include women's right to vote in the first republican constitution of 1891, this would only be legally recognised in 1932 (Hahner 1990). It is important to note that, even though formal political and educational restrictions for women were a rule in the majority of Latin American countries during most of the nineteenth century, it can be argued that traditional (phallogocentric) historiography has also played an enormous role in the silencing of nineteenth-century women's voices. In a different direction, although less public and 'largely excluded from national literary canons' (Chambers 2003), and in spite of the fact that countless primary sources in the form of newspapers, manuscripts, letters and diaries written by women were never considered important enough to be protected in state archives, new historiographical research has been accumulating evidence of the active participation and influence of Latin American women in cultural and political spheres, throughout colonial periods,

domestic spheres—it is not hard to deduce the rather limited reach of print media's content, even if part of it was read publicly aloud. As a consequence, even though in certain social circles and specific territories writing was not as 'rare as some believe,' during most of the nineteenth century 'Latin American discourses of identity extended beyond writing, even beyond language, to involve images and ceremonies as key elements' (Guerra 2003).

As for Brazil, any attempt to link print technologies to the spread of national discourses within wider parts of the population has to consider that a shift towards a text-centered society would only occur more than a century after the outburst of the independence movement:

The spread of literacy in Brazil only started to take place during the twentieth century following on the tardy establishment of the public education system. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, educational opportunities were greatly restricted, accessible only to the land-owning elites and to freemen in small towns and cities, a minority of the population. The first national Brazilian census was conducted during the period of the Empire, in 1872, and revealed that 82.3% of the population over the age of five was illiterate. The same proportion of illiterates was found by the census conducted in 1890, after the proclamation of the Republic (Di Pierro et al., 2009).

In short, no matter how seductively succinct Benedict Anderson's proposal might be, studies interested in understanding the many layers involving the *nationalization of societies* (Balibar 1998) seem to share the open task of not only 'correcting' the chronology of the impact of print culture in Latin America but, necessarily, to consider the centrality of non-textual languages in these processes. In order to contribute to this debate, the next pages will be dedicated to showing how, besides the investment in publishing books and newspapers, the production of history paintings was also central to the construction of feelings of belonging in post-independent Brazil.

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The Portuguese royal family's dramatic transmigration to the colony of Brazil in 1808, fleeing from Napoleonic forces, brought rapid changes to the capital at Rio de Janeiro. Beyond the immediate task of finding proper accommodation for the royal family and its entourage of 20,000 nobles and courtiers, the tropical colonial city

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independent movements, and republican times. A summary of specific changes in Brazilian historiography on nineteenth-century women can be found in the chapter on 'Patriarchalism and the Myth of the Helpless Woman in the Nineteenth Century' in Costa 2001.



needed to emulate the metropolitan atmosphere of early nineteenth-century Lisbon.<sup>5</sup> Profound cultural, urban, and landscape projects included construction of libraries, gardens, avenues, universities, museums, and other scientific and artistic institutions.



**Figure 1:** Nicolas-Antoine Taunay, *View from Santo Antonio Hill in Rio de Janeiro*, 1816. Oil on canvas, 45 × 56,5 cm. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes (Rio de Janeiro).  
Reprodução fotográfica: Walter Morgenthale.

Officially founded in the first years after Brazilian independence, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) would continue the work of one of these institutions, the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts created by Portuguese King João VI in 1816. In many ways, to understand the role and history of AIBA is a way of following the history of the Brazilian imperial state itself: the institution was created in the first years after the declaration of independence from Portugal and extinguished with the Empire's own decline, due to the Brazilian republican movement at the end of the nineteenth century (Castro 2005). While its inauguration dated back to the first turbulent years of Dom Pedro I's government, AIBA would only gain full prestige and stability

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<sup>5</sup> Naturally, beyond the changes to the specific city of Rio de Janeiro, the transfer of the centre of the Portuguese empire to the colony would also catalyse a gradual redefinition of powers between the American and European parts of the Portuguese nation, especially after King Dom João VI formally raised the colony of Brazil to the category of United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves. This rebalancing of political powers, added to the longer than expected length of stay of the Portuguese king in Rio, would eventually create profound discontent among the European Portuguese. The constitutional and liberal revolution in the city of Porto in 1820 was the ultimate result of this. The fact that the European Portuguese rebelled against the Portuguese king living in Brazil, demanding his return under the risk of losing his territories in Portugal, lead to Kenneth Maxwell's insightful suggestion that it was actually Portugal that first declared its independence from Brazil: 'The important point about Brazil, therefore, is that it became economically and politically emancipated between 1808 and 1820 while acting as the centre of the Luso-Brazilian Empire. This unusual circumstance explains why in 1820 it was Portugal that declared "independence" from Brazil, and only afterwards, in 1822, that Brazil declared its "independence" from Portugal' (Maxwell 2000).

more than a decade later when Emperor Pedro II began his long reign, and became its honorary president and personal sponsor:

It was during the Second Reign (1841-1889) that the Academy came to enjoy a more stable situation, especially in the function of public and private assistance from the monarch. Practising a policy similar to that of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB), the Emperor started to distribute awards, medals, scholarships and financing for study abroad, as well as assiduously participating in the annual 'General Fine Art Exhibitions' and distributing insignia to the most celebrated artists (Schwarcz 2006).

The close relation with the Brazilian monarchy helped to confer AIBA with the monopoly of Brazilian artistic production and education during most of the nineteenth century. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to affirm that AIBA's artistic criteria and inclination were crucial in legitimating what should be considered as 'art' and who should be regarded as an 'artist' during this period.

Ultimately, the quality of a work of art or the progression of an artists' career would be measured not only according to personal talent or dedication, but also according to the ability to translate these into what was then considered as 'universal' European standards, in particular those derived from Italian and French traditions. Since its predecessor, the former Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts, had been originally founded by members of what is known as the French Artistic Mission invited by Dom João VI,<sup>6</sup> AIBA continued to be strongly influenced by the administrative and educational model of the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Yet, Italian conventions—especially from Renaissance masters—were regarded as a supreme artistic reference concerning the teaching of painting. It could be said that Brazil's Academy was institutionally inclined toward France and artistically oriented toward Italy (Leite 2009).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'French Artistic Mission' refers to a group of artists and artisans invited by Dom João VI to officially inaugurate and develop the teaching of Arts and Crafts in the colony, during the period the Portuguese court was in exile in Rio de Janeiro. Even though the mission's formal existence was relatively short, being impacted both by the royal family's return to Portugal in 1820 and Brazil's independence in 1822, its works had a great influence on nineteenth-century Brazilian art. Joachim Le Breton, the mission's first chief, was responsible for writing a document structuring the academic rules, neoclassic tendencies and systematized teaching methods which would be adopted by the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts and later during the first years of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) (Fernandes 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Due to its self-proclaimed aspiration to develop a national art by keeping up-to-date with European schools, polemics involving originality and plagiarism in the works of AIBA's teachers and students have been a recurrent theme in Brazilian art debates since the nineteenth century (Coli 2006). Brazilian intellectuals' and artists' supposed imitation of and subservience to foreign models was a particular target for the modernist movement from the 1920s on. Modernist artists' and critics' often negative appreciation of what was called an 'academic' art became very influential during most of the twentieth century. As a result, a large and



**Figure 2:** Vítor Meirelles. *Decapitation of St. John the Baptist*, 1855. Oil on canvas, 130.5 × 97.1 cm. Vítor Meirelles Museum, Florianópolis.

It is worth noting that this close (and often ambiguous) relation between national and European art reflected in many ways a much wider political-cultural landscape. Most Brazilian leaders at the time thought of themselves not only as newly freed from colonialism but also as direct descendants of the Portuguese settlers. Thus, the point to be emphasised is not how these independent local elites attempted to emulate foreign European patterns, but how most of them regarded themselves as being genuine heirs of the colonial enterprise. The challenge of consolidating territorial and political autonomy from Portugal and, at the same time, affirming an inherited kin-

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heterogeneous generation of nineteenth-century artists was collectively held responsible not only for copying exogenous models but also for discontinuing the use of native themes, materials, and techniques of earlier colonial artists—especially of what often was often considered as the first expression of a proto-national art: the Baroque works of the province of Minas Gerais (Venâncio 2008). For these very acts, it was not uncommon for modernists to accuse nineteenth-century painters of having ‘delayed’ the emergence of an authentic Brazilian art. These often assumed oppositions and hierarchies between ‘academics’ and ‘modernists,’ ‘imitators’ and ‘creators,’ ‘imported’ and ‘genuine’ art, contributed to the relatively marginal and discredited status of research on nineteenth-century art in most Brazilian universities until recent times (Fernandes 2007). Following a different path, however, are some contemporary studies that try to re-assess Brazilian nineteenth-century production, emphasizing its uniqueness and even its surprising similarities with some twentieth-century modernist works (Pereira 2008). In particular, studies have suggested how AIBA’s pursuit of recognition and validation, commonly based on European paradigms, was not because of shortages of local ambition or self-esteem. Rather it was because it was actively focused on the mission of showing Brazilian art (read ‘civilization’) in a comparable position with other European nations (Castro 2005). Recent attempts to interpret AIBA’s production have thus tried to go beyond the influential (and typically negative) interpretation that modernists had of academic artists. Efforts to read AIBA in its *historical context* have revealed that the institution’s aspirations were never restricted to merely replicating French or Italian models. Rather, in a post-independent period marked by simultaneous efforts to consolidate internal stability and international recognition, the appropriation of European techniques was seen not only as a reputable way of affirming specific national themes, *but also* as the most effective way to situate Brazilian culture at the same level of former metropolitan powers.

dred and intellectual parity with Europe would constitute a structural aspect of the life of most Brazilian nineteenth-century upper classes:

Any member of this elite necessarily existed in two worlds.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, he was part of a tiny educated minority within his own country. His ideas and training were European, shaped by Jesuitical and

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<sup>8</sup> It is tempting to interpret these 'two worlds' as simply a relation between a model and a copy: as the unbalanced way with which Europe managed to continue to export its cultural values to a former colony that in contradictory ways carried on importing 'misplaced ideas' (Schwartz 1974). The argument that a continuous adoption of metropolitan forms is at the root of Brazilian intellectual and cultural dependency has been a constant theme throughout the country's history, from the critique of academic painters by modernist avant-garde cited earlier, to virtually every other debate since the nineteenth century that attempted to find a 'pure' national expression behind the supposed layers of 'forged' foreign influences. This has been a polemical topic not only for critics, but also for several artists and art historians. Naturally, the discontinuous history of what has been considered a 'true' Brazilian art and the often emotional debate over the supposed contributions (or disservices) of artists and artistic movements to the country's development far exceeds the limits and scope of this study. However, because the academic painters studied here have frequently been targeted as examples of (neo)colonial art, and since I have already mentioned how European conventions have influenced Brazilian practices, it is just as important to note that this study agrees with authors who insist on the difficulty of interpreting Brazilian art simply by means of *dualistic* and *polarised* notions, such as 'original' or 'replica,' 'true' or 'false,' 'authentic' or 'illegitimate.' Indeed, as a result of the intense and often brutal process of social-cultural mixing that marked the Brazilian colonial and post-colonial processes for at least 500 years, it has been virtually impossible to define convincing boundaries between 'unadulterated' national characteristics as opposed to 'absolute' foreign ones. Instead of the search for local uncorrupted essences that clearly contrast with derivative copies, studies seem to have benefited more by exploring the processes of transculturation (Ortiz 1995) and hybridity (García Canclini 1995) that can be perceived in Brazilian as well as most Latin American productions since the nineteenth century. Furthermore, not only in cultural but also in political and economic realms, historians have tried to understand how Brazilians have been strategically selecting and creatively adapting European conventions to local contexts, rather than reproducing them in literal and indiscriminate ways. In this sense, even when local elites openly declared their wish to perpetuate European legacies, recent studies have suggested how this was always accomplished (consciously or not) by filtering and diverging from these same legacies. From macroscopic levels of state administration to daily issues of domestic cooking, historians have been accumulating evidence of how Portuguese settlers and creole descents have been at the same time 'replicants and deviants' of European paradigms (Jancsó 2008). What Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago has called the 'space in-between' (Santiago 2001) of Brazilian culture—the recurrent deviation from the norm that avoids inert assimilation of foreign models and also demolishes any claim of discursive purity and homogeneity—, might also be applied to nineteenth-century artistic production. As will be made clear in the course of this study, and can be noticed in the selective reproduction of AIBA's paintings intercalated with the text, one of the patent transgressions of the rules relates to the very specificities of the Brazilian Romanticist movement. The latter, in informing history paintings and historiography of the time, promoted an unexpected merging of neoclassicist aesthetics and quests for scientific rigour—on the rise in most of Europe and Latin America—with local indigenous-inspired subject matters, tropical elements, and a preliminary debate on genetic and cultural miscegenation.

humanistic cultural traditions of Portugal, but increasingly modified during the nineteenth century by French culture, which brought the message of the Enlightenment with its secular and material assumptions. On the other hand, the elite actually lived in Brazil, not Paris or London. Eça de Queirós or Anatole France might visit Brazil, but they were certainly not of Brazil (Skidmore 1974).

AIBA's selections and appropriations of foreign artistic models, thus, cannot be understood unless they are placed within a specific national project as conceived at the time, which was seen as perfectly compatible with European notions of politics, science, and art. Hence, from a modern viewpoint—accustomed to understanding paintings as a search for originality and/or as an expression of a particular national identity—, what may seem strange about using particular European works (usually authoritative models from the Italian Renaissance or the latest French production) as templates for national production did in fact seem a coherent strategy to AIBA's group of artists as well as to most other Brazilian intellectuals in the nineteenth century. The appropriation of favoured European aesthetic forms (then considered universal) was admitted as a legitimate path to express Brazilian national culture and, indeed, as the most valid way to confirm it alongside the rest of the civilized world.



**Figure 3:** Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, *D. Pedro I*, 1826.  
Oil on canvas, 123 × 94 cm. Museu Histórico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

This quest for both *nationalist* and *universalist* expressions is more easily understood by considering how, despite the often resentful rhetoric against former Iberian rule, most political and intellectual elites still felt a profound identification with Luso-European civilization. If political and territorial autonomy often underlined a distance from former metropolitan-colonial hierarchies, intellectual emancipation still continued to be considered in relation to positioning Brazilian cities (and citizens) closer to their European counterparts. The fact that Brazil continued to be officially a Bragança-Hapsburg monarchy in the Americas only reinforced, mostly among local elites, the idea of belonging to a wider and transcontinental Europeanized civilization.

It can thus be argued that the former colony continued most of the colonial enterprise. Indeed, in these early attempts to try to affirm a European-like society within an overseas, tropical and multiethnic territory, one could already foretell the intricate identity conflicts that not only Brazil but most Latin American countries would have for years to come: 'to no longer be colonial meant embracing a colonial project: to *civilize*' (Schultz 2001).

The Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA), as a result, cannot be understood outside of this largely state-promoted 'civilizing' process, which started with Portuguese king Dom João VI, then only increased in many ways during the independent reigns of both Pedros, and, arguably, continued in republican days until the present.



**Figure 4:** Rodolfo Amoedo, *Último Tamoio* (*The Last Tamoio*), 1883. Oil on canvas, 180 × 261 cm. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.

As expected, all of the attempts to *nationalise* populations either by persuasion or by force,<sup>9</sup> along with the active resistance and creative agency that workers, wom-

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<sup>9</sup> The references to how state administrators used both 'force' and 'persuasion' in their attempts to nationalise wider sectors of society should not be understood as clearly antagonistic strategies. Rather both terms are employed here to refer to a wide spectrum of strategies (often-blurred and simultaneous) that ranged from the most unambiguous use of physical violence (such as military actions, punishment of deviant behaviour and heterodox culture, incarceration, death penalties, expropriation and relocation from 'state' territories, etc.) to the subtlest forms of control, such as the creation and normalization of a universal education system, mass propaganda, regional alliances, and other power negotiations. It is important to note that, beyond any national policies imposed 'vertically' by state agents and institutions, nation-building studies are never complete without understanding power relations that occur 'horizontally': these are forms of control/authority that extrapolate direct realms of the state and formal politics. Foucault has been the most influential author in suggesting how power relations should be understood, not only as repressive actions associated with state apparatus, but also as productive/positive actions produced by everyday citizens. His works challenge others to understand power-knowledge relations inside societies: through visible and macroscopic forms of coercion, as well as through the 'microphysics of power'; not only in the ways that governments impose themselves on societies, but also in the ways that societies accept and reproduce 'governability' itself (Foucault 1991). In an analogous way, yet approaching the specific theme of nation-building, Balibar suggests that the fundamental problem is

en, indigenous peoples and Afro-Brazilians had in shaping this process, have given rise to a diverse number of publications and conjectures. Nonetheless, beyond the successful efforts to draw attention to specificities of local nation-building processes around the globe, most modern historians and scholars tend to agree on how the production of historical discourses was central to most of them (Berger 2007).

Indeed, the so-called invention of a national history, and institutional attempts from state administrators and elite groups to disseminate/impose it, along with critical and creative receptions to these discourses from subaltern and marginalized populations, seemed to be a topic that united most Latin American and European states as they emerged in the nineteenth century. It would not be an exaggeration also to say that during this period national histories gradually gained as much prominence as other traditional forms of knowledge—such as religion or family genealogies—in daily practices. At first restricted to elite groups, an increasing interpellation of all populations within the boundaries of the state as a national population, as *'homo nationalis from cradle to grave'* (Balibar 1998), would take place during the nineteenth century.

It is important to note that this spread of feelings of (historical) belonging and nationness to ample segments of society, or what has been called the emergence of a historical-mindedness (Bann 1995), was a gradual and conflicting process. As it was argued earlier, it is impossible to reduce the dissemination of Brazilian national-historical discourses only to the spread of print media. Although initially fashioned at restricted circles in Rio de Janeiro, a growing production of books and newspapers, as well as art and museum exhibitions, inauguration of monuments, composition of songs and anthems, theatrical performances, and many other media-forms, should be considered responsible for gradually propagating/stabilizing consensual information about the History of Brazil for the rest of the territory's population. It is only by evoking the way in which history knowledge was not simply inscribed with ink on pages but also recited in melodies, not just pressed into cellulose but also brushed on canvases, not merely stacked in libraries but even made to shine in the copper of squares,—in other words, only by understanding how the history of Brazil started to become a common subject for both *lettered cities* (Rama 1984) and *oral-visual suburbs*—, that it is possible to comprehend the gradual construction the 'historical culture' that began to mobilise ample sectors of society in the nineteenth century. For, as Wehling notes:

Intellectuals and the masses, so often apart in earlier moments, began to interact having a historical communion as a bond. Erudite history, historical romances and the construction of public monuments built the visible facets of this 'historical culture.' [...] The concept of *historical culture* has been historically used to designate the spreading of nine-

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not how the state's vertical 'top down' forces operate to create national communities—or what he provocatively denominates 'producing the people'—, but how 'the people produce itself continually as national community' (Balibar 1998).

teenth century historicism beyond the limits of the intellectual world, generating new attitudes in broader sectors of society. [It was] a new *Weltanschauung*, if we use the term of traditional German philosophy, based on the perception of historicity by an audience much broader than scholarship communities of the time. Patriotism, nationalism, political Romanticism are other variables of the Euro-American mindset of the nineteenth century which are interlaced with the concept of historical culture (Wehling 1999; my translation and emphasis).

Unsurprisingly, the *rise of history* (Bann 1995) as a pervasive and popular form of knowledge, and its powerful and unprecedented use for the development of identity discourses in the nineteenth century, is virtually an unlimited theme of study. Among the many possible paths of inquiry, it is essential to mention two interrelated phenomena that seem inseparable from the creation and popularization of a (textual and visual) History of Brazil: the advent of the Romantic movement and the professionalization of history as a discipline.

Even though the word 'Romanticism' is still the subject of debate and controversy, it can conveniently be used to refer to a body of literary, artistic and intellectual production that, although originating in the second half of eighteenth-century Europe, had also tremendous impact on Latin American art and historiography in the first decades the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that they covered diverse geographic areas and multiple fields of scientific and artistic production, it is sufficient here to emphasise that Romantic movements everywhere tended to be centred on the search for a unique national past and culture. It is not by chance that in Brazil, as in many European and Latin American contexts, the spread of Romantic forms of expression are also usually regarded as contributing to the rise of a collective historical-mindedness:

No one has ever doubted that one of the most potent causes, and one of the most widespread effects, of Romanticism was a remarkable enhancement of the consciousness of history. From being a literary genre whose 'borders' were open to other forms of literature, history became over half a century or so the pragmatic form of knowledge to which all others aspired. The 'historical novel' set the pace for the novelists of the 1820s; the 'historical genre' (*genre historique*) forced its way into the traditional modes of painting at the time and remained there for half a century (Bann 1995; my emphasis).

Naturally, Romanticism also found its way into the works of AIBA's teachers and students. However, it is not possible to fully understand the way Romanticism helped to colour the institution's canvases, especially the prolific production of nationally-inspired history paintings, without AIBA's close contact with the ways the of-



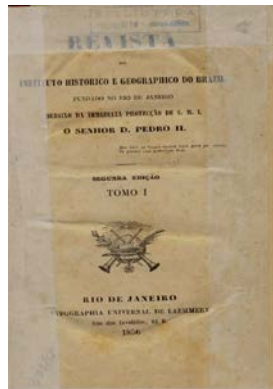
ficial History of Brazil was produced, ‘professionalised’ and validated in the headquarters of another key imperial institution: the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB). If Romantic nationalism<sup>10</sup> stimulated the search for ancestral cultural, linguistic and geographical bonds, it was not by chance that historical knowledge gradually became ‘the hegemonic discourse as all other disciplines appealed to it to explain their subject matter and acquire legitimacy’ (Unzueta 2003). More than the daily object of historians or specialised teachers, historical discourses eventually became an unavoidable reference to most narrative forms during the nineteenth century.

Directly inspired by the Institut Historique in Paris, the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute was founded in 1838 in the context of this transcontinental national-romantic environment, and rapidly became indistinguishable from most cultural and political transformations in post-independent Brazil. Through its periodical publication, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Brasil (RIHGB)*, IHGB headquarters in the capital city of Rio de Janeiro—along with similar institutions that multiplied throughout most other provinces—would be given direct responsibility and funding by the imperial government to coordinate the ambitious project of writing from scratch the history of the newly independent state. At the Institution’s inauguration in 1839, Januário da Cunha Barbosa synthesised IHGB’s rather straightforward yet monumental task of writing a ‘general history and philosophy of Brazil’:

Today we are gathered to commence the work of the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute, and by this act to show cultured nations that we also care for the glory of our country’s history, proposing to assemble, in this lettered association, diverse geographical explanations and events of our history, so they can be shared with the rest of the world, purified from errors and inaccuracies that stain them in many national and foreign publications (Barbosa 1839; my translation).

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<sup>10</sup> For reasons of space and focus, this study will not directly address the extremely influential national-romantic movement found in Brazilian literature. Of course, analogous to historians and painters studied here, Romantic writers were actively engaged throughout the nineteenth century in similar projects of demonstrating cultural equivalency to Europe by helping to position the country intellectually and politically alongside the rest of the sovereign and ‘civilized’ group of nations. It is also undeniable that their prolific production in prose and verse contributed to shape and popularise a History of Brazil in the minds and hearts of distinct Brazilian social groups. However, this study is restricted to the creation of what has been called an ‘official history’ of Brazil. As already mentioned, this form of historical knowledge was directly connected to the state’s financial and logistical support. It is true that the monarchical state constantly commissioned works from Romantic writers, especially poems. Yet, as historian Wehling 1999 argues, while literary Romanticism should be considered a fundamental agent for the ‘politics of national memory’ in the nineteenth century, it was a rather ‘spontaneous’ movement that (unlike institutions like IHGB or AIBA) did not depend on direct subsidies from the Brazilian monarchy to survive. For specific discussions on the relationship of Brazilian Romantic literature to history and politics, see Sommer 1993 and Cândido 1981.



**Figure 5:** Cover of second issue of the *Journal of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (RIHGB)*, 1856.

As Schwarz 2004 argues, in order to fulfill its mission of promoting a unique national past, the Brazilian Romantic movement would be influenced by the presence of Dom Pedro II himself in IHGB's regular meetings. The then young monarch not only became a direct financial sponsor, contributing '75 percent of the institute's funds,' but also offered a place in his own palace for IHGB meetings. The Brazilian king, besides attending most of the Institution's selective gatherings until his dethronement in 1889, was also known for having actively engaged and fomented discussions about the need to discover, systematise and propagate national traditions:

He [Dom Pedro II] and the political elite of the court concerned themselves with recording and perpetuating a certain kind of memory of Brazil, but also with consolidating an essentially Romantic project, the shaping of a 'genuinely Brazilian' culture. His involvement was to give him a reputation as a Maecenas, a wise emperor of the tropics. Following the example of Louis XIV, the monarch formed his court and at the same time chose *historians to formulate a national tradition and painters to glorify it* (Schwarz 2004; my emphasis).



**Figure 6:** Pedro Américo, *Dom Pedro II at the Opening of the General Assembly*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 258 cm × 205 cm. Imperial Museum, Petrópolis.

For the purposes of this study, it is of fundamental importance to trace not only the many parallels between textual and visual history discourses being produced nearly simultaneously at IHGB and AIBA, but also the pivotal moral roles that such discourses played inside the state's national-romantic project. After all, for both of these institutions that gained increasing prestige during the nineteenth century, history production was regarded as much as field of knowledge as a form of instructing Brazilian society and improving its conditions. Beyond a matter for purely erudite occupation, or just a motif for artistic inspiration, history knowledge was regarded as a vital agent for stabilizing the existence of the very Brazilian Empire that artists and historians were helping to build and for whom, in many cases, they directly worked.

In the case of AIBA, the notion that art could directly contribute to the process of nation-building became even more evident after the institution came under the direction of Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre. He encouraged teachers and students to focus on the search for a 'genuine' Brazilian art:

Porto Alegre tries to transpose, to the realms of culture and arts, political independence. Influenced by tendencies typical of Romanticism, he seeks to use particular historical, geographical and cultural Brazilian features as a path to situate the country in the same universe as other modern Western nations. He affirms the political role of the arts in the service of the moral and intellectual formation of new generations. He defines himself and other artists as having the mission of building works for the national cult. Not without reason, therefore, he also defends a closer relationship between artists and government through the production of an iconography in the service of building a strong state in the minds of the population (Schlichta 2006; my translation).

It is essential to note, therefore, that far from the alleged creative and research autonomy cherished by many of today's artists and historians, the creation of both history images and texts during most of the nineteenth century in Brazil was assumed to be naturally aligned with the state administration. This self-declared proximity between historiography and politics—for example, in the notable way that IHGB historians and Pedro II joined forces in pragmatic attempts to use representations of the past to reaffirm the strength of the post-1822 monarchical regime—, would ironically be called by succeeding generations of historians as a 'courtier historiography.'

The works of the historian who is often considered the 'founding father' of Brazilian historiography, Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen, himself a self-proclaimed and zealous monarchist, can be regarded as a clear example of historical production for the benefit of the State: 'Varnhagen's moralism, loyal to this pragmatic environment, was aimed at the improvement of Brazilian society: the goal was to be useful, the

means to achieve it was through work that combined, in the author's purpose, scientific authority and social pedagogy' (Wehling 1999: 58; my translation).

It is fair to say that an analogous *courtier visual historiography* was being well developed in AIBA at the same time, benefitting from similar support from the monarchical regime. Most of the institution's members, after all, proudly recognized a direct association between the teaching of Fine Arts and some form of moral-mental development of Brazilian society. In his famous speech detailing the Pedreira Reform,<sup>11</sup> for example, Porto-Alegre suggested that mastering a refined drawing technique would not only benefit the specific training of Fine Arts, but also be considered a

civilisatory element, a social thermometer, and the basis for guaranteed development. [...] Vulgar spirits consider it an artistic luxury, a pleasurable hobby. However, educated men, those of superior intelligence, see it as a necessity for civilization, because it is a revelation of thought itself, and the universal writing of the language of forms (Porto-Alegre 1855; my translation).

Just a few years earlier, on the occasion of his visit to Italy, celebrated AIBA painter and teacher Pedro Américo had affirmed a similar connection between the promotion of art and the intellectual development of a particular civilization:

Art is everywhere the material expression of thought, the visible and undeniable proof that a society has ideas, aspirations, and sensitivity of its own. A country where there is no art is not a real homeland for the men who live by intelligence; it is simply a country with no ambition to nourish a predestined society (Américo 1844; my translation).

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<sup>11</sup> The transformation of AIBA's artistic teaching and administrative organization is usually explained by reference to two major reforms. First, in 1831 the 'Lino Coutinho Reform' took place under the administration of Félix Émile Taunay. It basically updated the founding document approved by the chief of the French Mission, Joachim Le Breton, during the establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts (Escola Real de Ciências, Artes e Ofícios) in 1816, which served as a model for the provisional AIBA act until 1831. This reform consolidated AIBA's public general exhibitions, awarded scholarships for students to travel to Europe, improved the institution's library and translated foreign books to aid its method of European-inspired artistic training. The second major pedagogical and administrative transformation in AIBA, known as the 'Pedreira Reform,' was conducted by Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, with the aim of modernising the Academy according to new trends in the teaching and production of art. Deeply influenced by his stay and training in Europe (1831-1837), Porto-Alegre—besides establishing new disciplines for specific training in geometric design, industrial design, theory of shadows and perspective, applied mathematics, theory of art, archaeology, and aesthetics—, is also regarded as having started the romantic-nationalist phase of the institution, stimulating AIBA's students and teachers to search for a specific Brazilian art.

Even though the development of Fine Arts as a whole was seen as beneficial to the country, imperial intellectuals and bureaucrats regarded visual representations of the past as particularly valuable for the ‘civilizing’ process that the Brazilian nation should undergo. Political uses of history paintings, merging the didactic appeal of works of art with the authoritative discourses of history, were not something new. In fact, in a direct way, the Brazilian imperial government was essentially relying on a tradition inaugurated and proven successful around the end of the eighteenth century, in the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath (Johnson 2006, Bann 1997). The links between art and politics, between the Empire of Brazil and post-revolutionary France, are made even clearer by recalling that some of the founding members of the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts created in 1816 by Dom João VI—from which AIBA would inherit its initial artistic, academic, and operational methods—had been directly immersed in the context of the Napoleonic wars:

During the French Revolution, art showed its potential when used under the State’s service. With Gros, Denon, Vanderlyn, Ingres, Proudhon, especially David, *but also Taunay and Debret*, art was linked to the empire and later tried to praise its maximum figure: Napoleon. Some of these artists would arrive in Brazil in 1816, frustrated with the destiny of the Revolution and disappointed with their professional opportunities at the time (Schwarcz 2008; my translation and emphasis).



**Figure 7:** Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Coronation of Pedro I by the Bishop of Rio de Janeiro*, 1828. Oil on canvas, 340 × 640 cm. Ministério das Relações Exteriores, Palácio Itamaraty, Brasília.

Nicholas-Antoine Taunay and Jean-Baptiste Debret are arguably the most famous names from a larger group of French artists who arrived in Rio in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and whose artistic and political knowledge would have long-term impacts over the education of the first Brazilian artists. Many of their students would not only develop successful careers in Brazil and abroad, but also continue their work as future teachers at AIBA. Among them one of Debret’s most esteemed pupils stands out: Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, who ended up not only teaching in, but also directing AIBA, after Debret and Taunay had returned to France.

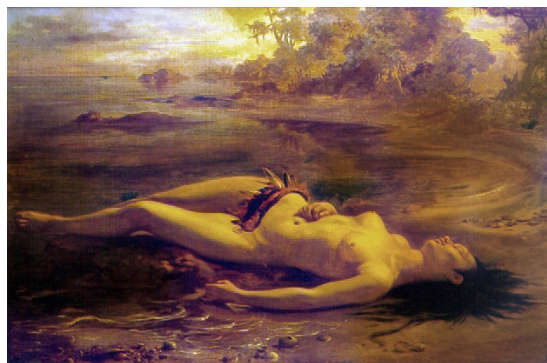


**Figure 8:** Pedro Américo, *Portrait of Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre*.  
Oil on canvas, 81 × 65 cm. Dom João XVI Museum, Rio de Janeiro.

Through all the expected changes that followed the successive phases of artistic training in Brazil, from the arrival of the French masters in the 1810s to the celebrated 1860s generation of painters such as Víctor Meirelles and Pedro Américo, there is a thread of continuity: AIBA continue to regard history paintings as the supreme artistic genre, and the (benign) representation of the state as its noblest subject matter. AIBA's teachers and students would represent the state in a variety of grand manners: equestrian battle scenes, such as the *Battle of Avahy*; or pompous portraits of Emperor Pedro II; or Romantic indigenous-feminine allegories of the nation, such as *Moema*.



**Figure 9:** Pedro Américo, *Battle of Avahy (Batalha de Campo Grande)*, 1872-1877.  
Oil on canvas, 600 × 1100 cm. National Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro.



**Figure 10** (left): Víctor Meirelles, *Dom Pedro II*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 252 × 165 cm.  
São Paulo Art Museum (MASP), São Paulo.

**Figure 11** (right): Víctor Meirelles, *Moema*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 129 × 190 cm.  
São Paulo Art Museum (MASP), São Paulo.

By all such means they were expected—in similar and complementary ways to ‘cour-tier’ historians at IHGB—to express and prove their personal talents, as well as to use them to instruct. More than display a mastery of techniques as pieces of art, their can-vases should convey examples of civilized behaviour and heroic national action. In this context, most of the history paintings should be seen not only as cultural products, but also as strategic pedagogical means for the consolidation of values of order, patri-otism, and civility that were intensely pursued by nationalists and state administrators:

The Academy imported from France the idea that an ethical dimension should be shown in pictures, with exemplary figures as representatives of virtue and the power of will winning out over the world of passions. The Academy, which from now on produced all official images of the Empire, dictated themes as well as styles: uplifting subjects, portraits, landscapes, and history painting. These fashionable representations of empire paralleled literary production at IHGB (Schwarcz 2004).

The political employment of images so as to instruct and communicate with a broad population was not restricted to paintings. Indeed, since colonial times, Brazili-an as well as most Latin American societies were constantly interpellated by a ‘visual rhetoric’ that relied on all sorts of representational strategies and media formats to transcend the limitations of textual communication in dealing with not only oral-based but also visual-based communities. This was particularly true in nineteenth-century Latin American cities, marked by what has been termed a ‘visually-inclined public’:

a growing urban public used to watching (and often participating in) all sorts of scopic spectacles, including fairs, circuses, parades, varie-ties of fireworks shows, allegorical paintings, and a host of street per-formances. Many spectacles had roots in older traditions that filled the public sphere in colonial Latin America. *Visual communication* was key to these types of spectacles in the colonial period and more so fol-lowing independence (González-Stephan 2009: 135; my emphasis).

Without disregarding all the complex visual forms employed throughout Latin American history, or the diverse private and public spaces in Brazil where visual ma-terials were crafted and disseminated, this study has privileged only the production of paintings at AIBA. As has been pointed out, this option has been primarily chosen due to the central place AIBA occupied in producing/validating visual discourses during most of the Brazilian nineteenth century. However, it is also necessary to better ex-plain the decision to confine the analysis only to *history paintings*. As expected, dur-ing AIBA’s more than 60 years of formal existence, its students and teachers were also prolific producers of sculptures, lithographs, drawings, and cartoons, in addition to

diverse landscape, portraits, still life and other genres. Hence, this study's methodological preference, which implied having to ignore most of the institution's vast and heterogeneous visual material, should be understood above all with respect to the superior status that this category of paintings had within the national-romantic project supported by the state. It was this official purpose which shaped AIBA's practices:

To the institution, historical painting was a genre intended for artists with great talent, to whom was reserved the grand mission of eternalizing national history episodes. Committed to the official program, directed to the cult of the fatherland, through the narrative of the nation's past; to the consecration of moral and virtues, through its symbols and allegories; to the representation of the nobility through its portraits. All of these representations, which had an official seal, would contribute to the construction of a national imaginary, in the narrative discourse of the represented themes (Fernandes 2007; my translation).

In addition to their political-institutional significance, the decision to analyse only history paintings also aims to underscore what seems to be a relatively unexplored yet exciting subject of study. This important topic is the relationship between *words* and *images* in the context of the Latin American independence movements and, particularly, connections between IHGB and AIBA productions in nineteenth-century Brazil.

By offering some understanding of the correlation and reciprocal influences between the works of historians and painters of that period, the present study has hoped to shed some light on the multifaceted debate on the process of nation-building in Latin America. Specifically, it has sought to highlight how the Brazilian imagined community relied not only on spontaneous *print capitalism* but also on meticulous *art subsidism* to foment feelings of belonging. While still considering Anderson's ideas and concepts helpful for offering an 'opportunity to improve our reading of nationalism' (Centeno 2008), this study also subscribes to critical approaches that recognise the need to go 'beyond imagined communities' (Castro-Klarén and Chasteen 2003).

If figures like Carl von Martius and Francisco Varnhagen are already widely recognised for *drafting* the basic scenario of how future generations would *read* the history of Brazil, relatively less studies have been dedicated to understanding how figures like Pedro Américo and Vítor Meirelles were central in *sketching* basic perspectives of how they would *see* it. Martius' essay 'How to Write the History of Brazil,' recipient of the IHGB award in 1847, is often considered a foundational work in the development of Brazilian historiography in the nineteenth-century. Even though no analogous fine arts award was created, an open field of investigation lies ahead for those who wish to understand how AIBA members were similarly engaged in discovering *how to paint the history of Brazil*.



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### Notes on Illustrations

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**Figure 10:** [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victor\\_Meirelles\\_-\\_Pedro\\_II.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victor_Meirelles_-_Pedro_II.jpg)

**Figure 11:** [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pedro\\_Am%C3%A9rico\\_-\\_Moema.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pedro_Am%C3%A9rico_-_Moema.JPG)

**For a Latin American Irony: A Cross-Reading  
of Machado de Assis' and Jorge Luis Borges'  
Intertextualities with English Narrative and Criticism**

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Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges is often considered in relation to Brazilian writer Machado de Assis with respect to their ambivalent relations with national and other literary traditions, especially English narrative traditions. Despite evident differences between them, particularly those of time and place, and prominent differences within their fictional works, each struggled against being characterized as a twentieth-century Argentine author or a nineteenth-century Brazilian writer. In other words, both were trying to come to terms with their own literary traditions by looking beyond at other narrative and cultural traditions, and by refusing to embrace the use of local themes, settings or linguistic peculiarities—the ‘local colour’ and other common devices present in the literary productions of their peers—as a sign of autonomy from their national literatures. Furthermore, Machado and Borges are both characterised by critics as narrative and cultural ironists: writers who use irony not only as a rhetorical trope, but also and mainly to question the relations between reality and fiction, world and text. Given their ultimate importance as precursors of the new Latin American narrative, one should question further what it means for each of them to be ironists.

Is it possible to relate both Borges and Machado to certain traditions of ironists identified with English authors, and, thus, consider them to be cross-cultural ironists? Or does being men of their own time and place bring other national peculiarities to their narrative use of irony? Firstly, I intend to address these questions by examining and contrasting their ‘dialogical’ relation (in Bakhtin 1981’s sense) with ironic English prose traditions. I intend to look at their works not just as unique and original productions, but also as results of relations with other works and traditions: a critical dialogue with other writers—specifically, in this case, with English ironists. Secondly, I intend to examine the dialogical relation between these two writers and their times, to argue for a Latin American appropriation of irony as a critical-literary device, and as a signpost for a new Latin American narrative tradition in the twentieth century.

Borges’ and Machado’s affinities with English literature can be viewed as biographical facts, or even as narrative peculiarities on the surface of their works, with evident or concealed thematic and stylistic parallels with given English writers. In this sense, it is possible to relate Machado and Borges to English literature both by way of their biographical-creative relation with this tradition (formative readings of their

youth or along their development as fictional writers), and through echoes of certain ironic English writers—such as Sterne, Dickens and Thackeray (in the case of Machado), and De Quincey, Sterne and Stevenson (in the case of Borges)—that run throughout their prose. In other words, it is possible to observe when this tradition became relevant for each author, and why, based on their biographies (Piza 2008; Rodríguez-Monegal 1978). Despite the fact that there are many misunderstandings regarding this matter, Machado was familiar with English for a long time, having even started a translation of Dickens' *Oliver Twist* in the 1870s (Piza 2008: 16). According to Guimarães (2008: 99), Machado must have definitely been drawn to it in his forties by some friends, especially José Carlos Rodrigues, the editor of arguably the first collection of North American and English prose published in Brazil (with excerpts by Fielding, Sterne, Lamb, Johnson et al., all 'eccentric' writers in Brazil then), and Arthur Barreiros, the first one to relate Machado's mature prose to English ironists. Borges, in turn, was raised in a bilingual environment, in which he was taught, especially by his paternal grandmother, Frances Haslam, to love both English language and literature. Rodríguez-Monegal (1978: 15) asserts that Borges first learned to read in English, and that '[h]e first read *Don Quixote* in English translation.' Furthermore, it is possible to highlight some devices used by Machado or Borges in their fictional work, for instance, the unreliable narrator of Machado's *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* echoing that of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; or the fictional essay form of some of Borges' short stories, for instance, 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*' or 'Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain,' echoing the essays of Thomas De Quincey.

Biographical facts and parallel styles are relevant: at least as an evidence of these authors' formative as well as revisionary relation to English literature, or to specific English authors. Nevertheless, I am interested in the dialogical relation (Bakhtin 1981) between these two authors and certain English ironists. In other words, my purpose is to consider the discursive otherness within the work of Machado and Borges, as if their literary works were always in quotation marks, in constant dialogue with their own tradition, their own society, and their ironic English models. This dialogical relation can be considered a sort of parody, especially when considering the critical dialogue between writers and models: not in the traditional sense of parody as a simple imitation, but rather as a form of intertextuality with an 'ironic inversion' (Hutcheon 1985: 6). Furthermore, Bakhtin considers parody a key feature of the novel (1981: 71; cf. Bakhtin 1984 on Rabelais' use of it): he views humour and irony as central to the novel genre, and at the same time posits the presence of a serious intent within parody; for he asserts that in parody it is possible to observe a dialogue between at least two points of view (76), a cross between the comic and the serious, mockery and homage. In this sense, one can say that parody is at the same time playful and metafictional (Rose 1993: 1). Irony, in turn, can be viewed as a device that at the same time reinforces the potential relation between literature and reality, and mediates dialogical

relations between writer and reader, or between writers (Behler 1990: 11). Thus, both parody and irony can be considered forms of literary continuity and transformation. Further, in Bloom's terms, they offer ways of critically and creatively 'misreading' literary traditions (Bloom 1997).

Borges and Machado had different English ironic models, and obtained different outcomes from the sometimes parodic, but usually ironic dialogical relations they came to establish with them. Borges was interested in eccentric, noncanonical, and even 'minor' English authors; whereas Machado was interested in English 'strong' authors (Bloom 2002's term): very influential writers with strong personal styles. Being interested in English ironists, it is to be expected that Borges' and Machado's models would coincide in certain points. For instance, both are considered by critics (Bloom 2002; Monegal 1978; Nagel 1979; Gomes 1939) to be Sterne's successors. Nevertheless, what Borges and Machado have in common, rather than specific models, or even the overall outcome of the dialogical relations with them, is their critical attitudes towards their models. Both have a peculiar attraction for English authors who pursue themes and styles related to certain types of irony, usually metafictional and even subversive ones. How they relate and respond to these models, considering their differences, and how they come up with their own peculiar metafictional and cross-cultural irony, is a critically revealing way of comparing these two Latin American writers. Fundamentally, I wish to question their dialogical relations with English prose ironists in search of critical-discursive links between them as modern Latin American writers.

Borges is known by his 'secondariness' (Bloom 2002) with respect to other writers. Some of his works are evidently and deliberately derivative. For instance, 'La Casa de Asterión' (a short story from the book *El Aleph*) can be seen as a footnote to other literary traditions, namely mythological and epic genres. In this short story, Borges describes Teseo's struggle to defeat the Minotaur from the point of view of the latter. It is possible to assert that the short story presents a dialogical relation with itself that, while not exactly parodying a previous text (since it adds a perspective to it), at least proposes an 'ironic inversion' (Hutcheon 1985: 6) of certain literary traditions. The originality of this short story by Borges lies exactly in its intertextuality with Greek narrative traditions. Borges plays with his reader by only revealing the name and nature of this story's protagonist through the knowledge of the 'main' text—as in a riddle, what is being asked is never directly mentioned. It is a complex ironic inversion, not of a specific text but of certain traditions, that attests—maybe more than other stories—to Borges' deliberate 'secondariness.'

Machado's contemporary critics regarded him as a 'mere imitator' of some European models (Gomes 1939: 11). It is true that some of Machado's work can be perceived as parodical, even as Menippean satire, according to Bakhtin's description: a text provocatively designed to expose ideas and ideologies, encompassing different points of view and ideologies (Bakhtin 1981: 87). For example, in 'Teoria do medal-

hãõ' (a short story from *Papéis avulsos*), by means of a dialogue, Machado as the author, to put it in Bakhtinian terms, sustains a dialogical relation with another's word, another's language: a wealthy father explains to his son how the 'world' (Brazilian society in the nineteenth century) works. In the narrative, the father's words can be viewed as literal, but Machado's textual intentions are nothing but ironical (and in this case satirical), since he presents the dialogue from a landowner's perspective, full of prejudices and malice, in order to expose it.

Considering Borges' and Machado's responses specifically to English ironic models, it is possible to state that both authors sustained the same critical and ironical attitude towards them. Borges' relation with these English ironic traditions is evident in many works, specifically in his short stories. In addition, his short stories usually sustain an ambivalent and ironical relation with the social reality they are related to, which attests to his critical attitude towards his models. An example is 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*,' a parody of a eulogy and of a literary polemic—a review of an imaginary writer—which challenges the conventions, among others, of authorship, influence and, in a wider sense, the notion of reality itself. It can also be seen as a parody of De Quincey's style for the narrative use of the essay form. In a literal sense, it can be understood as a parallel between Borges and De Quincey, but Borges is approaching his model with cross-cultural irony: the use of different genres within the realm of fiction is an ironic inversion (Hutcheon 1985: 6) of the model and at the same time of the literary conventions of his time. In this short story, Borges suggests ways of ironically misreading previous texts, namely 'la técnica del anacronismo deliberado y de las atribuciones erróneas' [the techniques of deliberate anachronism and erroneous attribution] (Borges 2007: 537). This gives room to critics such as Sarlo (1993) to suggest that, through the fictional character of Pierre Menard, Borges is making a statement about Argentine writers: they 'do not have to respect the hierarchical order attributed to originals'; thus, 'the inferiority of the margins vanishes and the peripheral writer is entitled to the same claims of his or her European predecessors or contemporaries' (33). In other words, according to Sarlo, Borges is demonstrating his own ironic and critical relation to European literary traditions as a model for Latin American literary continuity and transformation.

Machado's relation with English ironic traditions is also evident in his fictional work, and is fully documented by critics, especially in longer narratives. His novels usually criticize Brazilian society by means of an irony that exploits readers' expectations and indulges their biases (Gledson 1984). An example is the novel *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, the life story of an upper class Brazilian slaver owner narrated from his own point of view after his death—a parody of an autobiography that echoes Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*. In this novel, Machado did imitate Sterne's style, to some degree, but he did so as an intertextual 'ironic inversion' (Hutcheon 1985: 6): significantly, Machado's primary target was not Sterne's text, but Brazilian contemporary society. In other words, it is possible to suggest that Machado intended

to criticize Brazilian society by ironically playing with the conventional assumptions of the reading public of his time. He does so not only in terms of content, by letting the narration unfold from the point of view of an upper class Brazilian slave owner, in order to, as suggested by Gledson (1984), 'delude the reader by being able to flatter his prejudices,' but also in terms of form, by using the less regarded literary devices, at least in Brazil, of ironic English narratives. Machado found in the English novel a vehicle for his ironic, and sometimes deceptive, critique of his own society.

Through such uses of irony Machado and Borges critically 'misread' (Bloom 1997) their predecessors. In 'Pierre Menard' and in *Memórias póstumas*, Borges and Machado play with multiple conventions—literary, political and even social—and also misread the ironic English traditions of the likes of De Quincey and Sterne in reconstructive and transformative ways, in order to create new Argentine and Brazilian narratives, respectively. This ironic attitude towards their models and societies can also be understood in terms of a new Latin American irony—bearing in mind that Machado's and Borges' creative and subversive achievements will gain them recognition as precursors of Latin America's new narrative in the second half of the twentieth century. In other words, Borges' and Machado's dialogical relations with English ironists are in themselves culturally ironic, in the sense that they are not simply copying the rhetorical tropes of their models, but adapting them for their own contexts. Thus, there is no right or wrong, understatement or hyperbole: irony is not only a rhetorical device, but also and mainly something historically determined by critical (mis)readings—particularly Borges' and Machado's own (mis)readings. In this sense, irony still encompasses linguistic-rhetorical playfulness, but at the same time it is linked to literary traditions and receptions. Irony can thus be seen as a model that describes relations between writers and readers, especially in revisionary terms.

Therefore, even though Borges' and Machado's dialogical relations with ironic English writers can be compared, we are talking about different societies, different times and different relations with foreign cultures and literary traditions. Of course, there are certain similarities between Borges' early twentieth-century Buenos Aires, and Machado's late nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. For instance, both metropolises pursue the ambition to become a sort of sub-tropical Paris; they reveal the importance of French culture and literary traditions within their societies. It is important to notice that in the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, both Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires were physically remodeled based on mid-nineteenth-century Paris (Moody 2009: xv), in the hope of acquiring a new, more modern and cosmopolitan, national identity along with it (vii). This hope also affected writers: for instance, according to Guimarães (2008: 96), Brazilian writers chose as a model France over Portugal, or other Western countries of the time; Rodríguez-Monegal (1978: 17), in turn, affirms that in Argentina, as in other Latin American countries, the 'choice of cultural model' of the Argentine upper class 'was the French one.' Such similarities between the two capital cities only serve to strengthen the cultural-literary distinctions of Bor-



ges and Machado, given their particular affinity with English narrative traditions. At the same time, there are a number of significant differences that have to be considered, especially in order to understand the outcomes of their ironic relations with English ironists, and their own peculiar cross-cultural ironies.

First and foremost, it is possible to point out the difference between Machado's and Borges' contemporary readerships. Illiteracy was common in Brazilian society of the end of the nineteenth century: in 1872, a general census determined that 84% of the population of the time (10 million) could not read (Piza 2008: 154). Argentine society in the early twentieth century as a whole was much more 'refinada, culta y democrática' [refined, cultured and democratic] (Canto, 1989: 35), as a result of the wealthy economic situation it enjoyed at the turn of the century, mainly because of Argentina's production and distribution of wheat and meat worldwide (37). Thus, it is possible to state that Machado's irony was aimed at his limited number of readers and the cultured sphere of society that they were a part of. Machado's irony, consequently, is more satirical: Machado's *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas* is a fine example of the satirical instance of his ironic prose. It is possible to state that the novel's rhetorical irony targets too directly the Brazilian readers of the time ('Dez? Talvez cinco'—Machado 1994: 625), who were arguably not able to wear the shoe obviously made to fit them. *Dom Casmurro* (1899), Machado's third novel after *Memórias póstumas*, would take the issue of critical and public misreadings of Machado's work to the next level. Narrated by Bento Santiago, the sterile heir of a rich family and a member of the small rich and cultured Brazilian society of the time, *Dom Casmurro* led critics and readers to believe that the core of the novel, a betrayal plot, was the real subject, and not the biased description of a jealous character. This was only later suggested, in the 1960s, by American critic Helen Caldwell, in *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis* (1960). Once again, it is possible to state that Machado was able to 'delude the reader by being able to flatter his prejudices' (Gledson, 1984).

Borges' irony, in turn, is also aimed at his readers, but in a different way: he proposes a metafictional, and sometimes, nihilistic play between reality and fiction. Borges' short story 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*' is a fine example of the metafictional instance of his ironic prose in the interplay between essay and short story forms. Borges' ironies were aimed at his readers, but relied on their expectations regarding literary genres and their relation to reality. By using footnotes, references to real writers, and anecdotes relating Menard, fictional character, to other real figures, Borges plays with textual conventions shared by his educated readers and fellow writers. In this 'theoretical fiction,' to use Sarlo's words (1993: 31), Borges' discusses 'knowledge' produced by texts (32), and the act of reading itself, proposing, for instance, that to turn an author into a classic is a form of misreading: 'la gloria es una incomprensión, quizá la peor' [glory is a type of incomprehension, maybe the worst] (Borges 2007: 537). Besides, by an act of 'erroneous attribution,' another form of misreading, he connects *Don Quijote* to a French writer, the fictional character

Menard, rather than to the real Spanish writer Cervantes. Borges displaced the reference in order to ironically invert his readers' expectations regarding European models and references. Another interpretation, suggested by Sarlo (1993), is that Borges displaced the reference in order to point out certain appropriations of European models connected to Latin American readers, critics and writers. A third explanation would be that Borges was burlesquing the choice of France as a model for Argentine writers and cultured people of the time. In any case, Borges is playing with the potential relations between text and reality, or the expectations of his implied readers in relation to European literature and literary traditions. For instance, another short story by Borges that uses the same devices, 'El acercamiento a Almotásim,' in its interplay between fiction and reality, led writers and critics such as Bioy Casares and Rodríguez-Monegal to really believe in the existence of an imaginary book and writer. According to Rodríguez-Monegal (1978: 265), he and Bioy Casares went as far as to order the non-existent book described in Borges' fiction.

I am not suggesting that Machado's irony cannot be seen as metatextual, or that Borges' irony cannot be considered satirical. But their distinctive narratives correspond to different societies, which required different approaches: Machado's society required and allowed for a more parodic and satirical approach, whereas Borges' public warranted a more metatextual and intertextual approach. In fact, that is how their ironies are usually understood in critical terms: Borges as metafictional ironist, sometimes even disconnected from reality; and Machado as sarcastic critic of his society. Balderston (1993: 1), for instance, points out the fact that critics usually relate Borges' work to the 'unreal, the fictive,' and that certain critics and readers even associate it with 'fantastic literature,' or even denounce it as being 'escapist' (2). Balderston then cites critics that consider Borges a metafictional ironist, which can be summarized by the quote he takes from his own book on Borges *El Precursor velado*: 'Fiction [for Borges] is more abstract and artificial than representational or mimetic' (3). As for Machado, critics such as Gledson not only point out Machado's relation to his society, but also highlight the centrality of social and political awareness in Brazilian society of the time—thus, the centrality of it in the work of Machado (1991: 9). Gledson considers the unreliable narrators of Machado's works, for instance, a sort of metanarrative play with his society. For Machado's comments and critiques of his society are at the same time allegorically disguised but still accessible, especially for later readers and critics—such as Caldwell in the 1960s, who revealed the unreliable narrator of *Dom Casmurro*, modifying the way in which Machado's work would be received; or Brazilian critics like Schwarz, who undertake a completely socio-political approach regarding Machado and his intertextual 'intentions.'

Another noticeable difference between Borges and Machado involves their places within their societies. Borges was born in a wealthy middle-class, traditional, cultured and cosmopolitan family, in early twentieth-century Argentine society. He grew up in a highly cultured environment, surrounded by Spanish and English lan-

guage and literature; in Borges' own words: 'the truth is that I grew up in a garden, behind a speared railing, and in a library of unlimited English books' (in Rodríguez-Monegal 1978: 3). Being part of a wealthy society, in which a trip to Europe was seen as an important part of a gentleman's education (107), Borges had the opportunity to live and study abroad. First in 1914, he lived in Geneva, where he and his family remained until the end of World War I, and where Borges studied for four years. Later, in 1923, he returned to Europe, and went to live in Madrid for almost a year—having passed through London, Paris and Geneva before (179). Moreover, as part of a wealthy family, Borges had the opportunity to dedicate himself to literature, either as a reader or as a writer; he was raised to be an intellectual and a writer of the elite. Machado, in turn, was born into a poor family, of mixed Afro-Brazilian ancestry. Yet despite all his disadvantages, Machado had an unusual education for a youth of his condition (Piza 2008: 55): his parents knew how to read and write—something very rare among poor families—and Machado himself must have attended classes in a nearby school; he was probably tutored in his younger years by the priest Silveira Sarmiento (55). Despite the fact that he was not able to go to Europe—even later in his life, he never left Brazil—he learned French early in life, probably from a French baker in a shop nearby, and later other languages, such as English and Greek. With this unusual social and educational background for an important writer of nineteenth-century Brazilian society, Machado had to silently struggle against the social limitations imposed on him, before and after the official end of slavery in Brazil in 1888. Nevertheless, for some time Machado's works were considered purely literary inventions, even evasive artifices, with no connections with his social-historical surroundings—much like part of the critical-theoretical approaches to Borges' work (Balderston 1993).

Both Borges and Machado, each in his own way, had privileged perspectives regarding the societies for which they wrote: Borges, by living abroad, and by being connected to different languages and cultures; Machado by coming from a socially marginal background for an important writer of the time, and by fighting to make his way in the professional literary world. Despite the obvious contrasts between their backgrounds, but because of underlying similarities in their places within their societies, both writers were able to distance themselves from their peers, and look at their own surroundings in critical and ironical ways. Furthermore, both authors were able to come out of this dialogical tension with their societies with a fictional productions that combine philosophical and critical commentaries, and their own unique perspectives on reality (Fischer 2008: 28), in ways that emphasize cross-cultural irony. In other words, Borges' and Machado's fictions are full of an irony that results from the tension between their local cultural relation to their societies, and their broader critical relation to Latin American as well as European models. In *Machado e Borges* (2008), Fisher compares Machado's and Borges' distance from their societies, especially considering their relation with the literary life of their times, and considers the 'philosophical' and 'cultured' outcome of their productions. He then poses the rhetorical

question: 'Terá isso algo com a afinidade de ambos com a literatura inglesa?' [Would this be related to the affinity both have with English literature?] (28). Clearly his answer is yes—especially if one limits this 'English literature' to its ironic prose traditions. What remains to be done is to examine Machado's and Borges' dialogical relations with their own societies and literary traditions in more precise intertextual and cross-cultural terms.

It is possible to state that both Borges and Machado looked at their own and other literary traditions 'sin supersticiones' (to use Borges expression in his famous essay 'El escritor argentino y la tradición'). Or one can maintain that they had 'certo sentimento íntimo' that made them an Argentine or a Brazilian writer, even when dealing with 'assuntos remotos no tempo e no espaço' [matters that are distant in time and space] (to use Machado's words in his famous essay 'Notícia da atual literatura brasileira: Instinto de nacionalidade'). Significantly, Borges and Machado established a critical, dialogical and ironical, relation with other traditions, especially those of ironic English writers, and their own national traditions, and developed different literary receptions, but on many levels, similar discursive approaches. Both reconstructed English ironic models not only by reproducing devices used by them, but by producing a metacritical ironic twist in their adaptations of these models, and thus producing a different type of cross-cultural irony. Borges' and Machado's irony results from the metadialogue across English ironic writers and literary traditions, their own national and neocolonial cultures, and finally their own contemporary societies. This metadialogue is at the same time serious and playful, critical and multilayered, producing multiple and different ways of reading and relating literature to reality or society. Borges and Machado thereby show different ways of dealing with tensions between national identities and transnational literatures (Hispanic and Lusophone, local and universal, Latin American and European). In fundamental ways, they each used irony to renovate national literary traditions through intertextual and cross-cultural dialogues.

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## **The Cinematic Favela: Realism and Mainstream Aesthetics in *City of God***

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The main goal of this study is to discuss aspects of what has been termed by various critics as ‘realism’ in the Brazilian film *City of God*. I will pay particular attention to the way realism informs the aesthetics of the film and its representation of social reality. I will address the theme of representation through Stuart Hall’s notion that images embody cultural codes that convey different meanings depending on the social and historical situation of an audience (Hall 1997). To contextualize my analysis, I will begin with a brief overview of the film.

*City of God* is an adaptation of the book of the same title written by Brazilian poet Paulo Lins. The author lived in the actual City of God, a favela in Rio de Janeiro. Lins’ childhood memories inspire the narrator of the film Rocket. To write his novel, Lins relied on an ethnographic survey entitled ‘Crime and Criminality among Popular Classes,’ for which he worked as a research assistant. This research approached Rio de Janeiro’s criminality from a different perspective from that of mainstream media, by giving voice to favela *residents*. As a consequence, the research, the novel, and the film all share the claim to be speaking ‘from inside’ the favela.

The film eventually received four Oscar nominations, among other national and international prizes. Mixing realism with MTV style editing, the film managed to please different audiences worldwide, becoming one of the most famous Brazilian films. However, director Fernando Meirelles’ decision to mix entertainment strategies with social issues proved to be as controversial as it was successful. A large number of Brazilian and foreign scholars have raised important questions related to ethics and aesthetics in the film. A good example of such criticism is Else Vieira’s book *City of God in Several Voices*, which brings together divergent perspectives on the film (Vieira 2005).

Although most audiences are aware that *City of God* is a work of fiction, the film has often been taken as an authentic portrayal of life in the favela. As Lúcia Nagib points out, this has less to do with the film’s ‘attempt at copying reality’ than with its convincing mode of producing it (Nagib 2006). I will therefore analyse four strategies used in the film to create realism: naturalistic performance, location shooting, hand-held camera movement, and intertextual references from television programs. These strategies blend aspects of classic Italian neo-realism with contemporary television reportage, creating a disturbing—yet engaging—real life drama.

The naturalistic performance in the film results from a lengthy casting process conducted over more than a year and involving young non-professional actors. As di-

rector Fernando Meirelles states: 'Middle-class actors would not know how to interpret those characters. Besides, there were no young black or mulatto actors in Brazil. I would have to find the cast in the favelas of Rio' (Meirelles 2005: 15). Finding the right actors started with interviewing around 2,000 people from many favelas across Rio de Janeiro. From this initial number, 400 were chosen to participate in an acting workshop. Eventually 200, including the main actors, were selected to constitute the final cast. However, the actors' convincing performances cannot be reduced only to their social background. *City of God's* acclaimed acting is, above all, the product of a careful way of training new actors for nearly a year. The film's dialogues were adapted as actors in the cast were chosen via several improvisation exercises, which helped to generate the 'insider's point of view' that director Meirelles was searching for.

The second strategy of the film's realism is the location shooting. The outdoor scenes of *City of God* were shot in different favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Although the actual locations varied geographically, the cinematic representation is artfully constructed to convince audiences that everything takes place only in one favela, *City of God*. Since the cinematic space remains the same, changes are perceived mainly from one historical period to another. The favela experiences few urban changes over the decades in which the narrative occurs. Yet certain characteristics of the favela are intentionally represented as static, regardless of the decade portrayed. For example, *City of God* is always represented as an ideal refuge for runaways and outlaws. There is not a single establishing shot to contextualize the boundaries of *City of God*. The absence of any urban landmarks that can be identified makes it impossible to recognise nearby neighbourhoods or tourist sights around the favela. It seems that the place is surrounded only by bush. Therefore, the cinematic space creates a division between the inside and the outside of the favela. It is as if Rio de Janeiro and *City of God* were isolated and discontinuous worlds.

The third strategy of realism is based on camera movement. The handheld camera is used in specific parts of the film to produce shaking images and unexpected movements making the audience experience the tension of the scenes. The instability of the image is used to exacerbate the effect of immersion in the world of the film. It follows the actors' emotions, allowing for the improvisation of dialogues and actions.

The fourth aspect is the use of intertextual references that mix journalistic sources and fictional images. One example of this is the use of archive footage from a TV news bulletin from the 1980s. This is immediately followed by an interview with the character Knockout. He starts out as a 'good guy' but soon turns to vengeance when his girlfriend is raped and members of his family are killed. Knockout gives a TV interview when he was arrested. The film's incorporation of journalistic images in the form of actual TV news footage into the narrative reaffirms the existence of the fictional character within a non-fictional social world. At the end of the film, the same interview with Knockout is repeated. However, this time it is the actual person on which the filmic character is based who appears, not the actor. The strategy of blend-

ing fictional and non-fictional images reinforces the film's realism. During the credits, another example is shown when the names and photos of the main actors are paired off with the photos and names of the actual people who inspired the film's story.

Although realism is an important component of the aesthetics of *City of God*, the film's success is also due to its similarities with Hollywood mainstream cinema. As Melo suggests, the film resembles some of Scorsese's and Tarantino's works, in which urban violence is shown through the use of carefully structured cinematography, art direction, and soundtrack, all of which are blended into a frenetic narrative (Melo 2006). In this respect, Melo criticises the director for exploiting poverty with 'fancy visual effects,' providing spectators with a kind of visual pleasure.

Meirelles, who is also a commercial director, is held responsible for having brought to the film an MTV style of editing, easily recognisable and accessible to audiences used to fast-paced television programs. Ken Dancyger's definition of MTV style is a useful way of understanding *City of God*'s editing innovations: in a work informed by such a style, a 'series of set pieces' correspond to short films inside the main film; its narrative presents a fragmented world allowing the spectator to follow multiple storylines in which each set piece has a 'dramatic arc' (Dancyger 2010: 196).

Meirelles' film is narrated from the perspective of Rocket. He is responsible not only for introducing and establishing connections between all other characters, but for explaining the drug dealing and also helping to construct the spectator's point of view. In this sense, he is a strategic character bridging two social worlds: he is the voice from inside the favela but, at the same time, he speaks from outside its world of organized crime. In an intimate (often tragicomic) tone, his narration guides spectators through the streets of *City of God*, while at the same time he shares with them the two personal challenges he is currently facing: the quests to find a job and to lose his virginity. His voice-over, associated with flashbacks, expresses a form of subjective temporality. He also reveals the transformations in the *City of God* during its three distinct decades. Even though the film's script offers an account of how criminality grew inside the favela *City of God* over time, it is important to note how it fails to show a wider social reality. As mentioned before, the film intentionally represents the favela as an isolated space from the rest of Rio de Janeiro. For example, apart from a typical military helmet used by a few policemen, there are no visual clues or dialogues that inform the viewer about the military dictatorship occurring in Brazil during the narrative of the entire film. Because the series of events take place in this apparently self-confined space, violence has no apparent relation to the external world. There is no attempt to challenge the real causes of poverty, or the origins of drug-trafficking money. Additionally, even though the film focuses on the lives of Afro-Brazilians, it never makes reference to the country's racial tensions. The population of *City of God* is simply divided between supposedly 'bad' and 'good' guys, giving the impression that there are no historical causes for this.



It is also important to say that the director's attempt to offer an insider's perspective on the favela is contradicted by its representation as a faraway place, lacking connection with the outside world. In the film, it seems that the favela's residents are not aware or do not participate economically, politically and socially in the life of the rest of the city. Yet, this portrayal of an isolated favela, distant from high and middle class groups, could not be further from the contemporary reality of City of God. Indeed, along with countless other favelas, it is the home for many workers who constitute the main labour force of Rio de Janeiro.

Internationally famous because of the film, the actual City of God became another attraction of Brazil's most touristy city. Due to its fame, City of God was one of the first favelas recently occupied by a permanent public security initiative called 'Police Pacification Unit.' This initiative is part of the Brazilian government's strategy to reclaim areas controlled by local drug dealers before two upcoming international events in Rio: the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016. The presence of police units in City of God, as well as in other favelas close to middle and upper class areas, is part of a public attempt to be successful in the so-called 'pacification' of favelas by means of the intense use of police force.

Last year, president Obama's visit to an already 'pacified' City of God became an opportunity for the Brazilian government to change the infamous image of the favela. They showcased it as a family-friendly and non-violent place. Among the many photos of the North American president walking through City of God, his image playing football with children could not be more emblematic in affirming to the world the 'positive' changes in the favela. This photo illustrates Douglas Kellner's assumption that entertainment sectors influence politics by making authorities act in a close relationship with mass media (Kellner 2003). Officially released by the White House, this photo can be interpreted as linking three important events: namely, the visit of Obama, the upcoming football World Cup, and the so-called 'pacification' of City of God. Among its many layers of meanings, this photo is also clearly aimed at providing a renovated representation of the favela. Yet, in complete contrast to the film, the favela City of God is now finally integrated into the city and assisted by the state.

Unfortunately, it is fair to argue that the changes in the representation of the favela were not followed by analogous changes for those who actually live there. The permanent presence of the police inside the favela, for example, supported by the government as a way to reduce criminality and drug trafficking, might offer immediate results, such as an increase in arrests. However, it eventually leads to an overall increase in crime, as well as to the mass migration of people (and crime) from occupied favelas to less visible areas of the city.

During the problematic decision to 'occupy' the favela City of God made by Rio's governor in 2009,<sup>1</sup> *The Guardian* released a sequence of photos of the police

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'occupation' (or sometimes 'pacification') has been officially used by the Brazilian government to refer to state-funded operations that attempt to combat drug trafficking.

force invasion alongside photos of the film *City of God*.<sup>2</sup> One picture shows the actor and *City of God* resident, Rubens Sabino da Silva, who played the drug dealer Blacky on the film. The photo shows him handcuffed, staring directly at the camera. A caption at the bottom of the image explains that the actor in real life was being sent to prison after trying to steal a woman's purse. By portraying images of the favela's residents mixed with scenes from *City of God*, the British newspaper clearly opts not to differentiate the actor Rubens from his character Blacky. Once again, film and reality are blended together, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between cinematic and journalistic images. In many ways, these images naturalise the brutal events taking place, and make reality seem a type of sequel or a second episode of the film, which audiences are already prepared to watch from a comfortable distance. Ivana Bentes has raised important questions regarding the subtle connections between cinema and real events: 'Does the cinema of the massacre of the poor prepare us for the real massacre that already happens and others to come, such as the American action films foresaw and produced the feelings of international terror and control and the claims for "infinite justice"? We hope it does not' (Bentes 2005: 89).

In an effort to respond to Bentes' provocation, it seems necessary to raise a second, more specific question: in what way has contemporary realist cinema been anticipating or normalising different forms of violence among audiences? In this study I have mentioned four strategies used in *City of God* to create realism and the way the film is informed by a commercial aesthetics. I have also emphasised how the film's success has brought attention by the media to the actual favela *City of God*. In these contexts, in which reality and fiction work closely together, it seems increasingly difficult to distinguish between cinematic and journalistic images. However, it is necessary to emphasise that the history of the favela and of the people who live there cannot be understood by this film or reduced to its cinematic or journalistic representations. In this sense, it is fair to argue that the use of realism added to mainstream aesthetics seems only to reinforce the social discrepancy between cinema crews and middle-class audiences on the one hand and favela residents on the other. By means of the film's realism, poverty is turned into a commercial spectacle of otherness.

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**Favela Wars?: Masculinity and the Legitimacy  
of Violent Conflict in *Tropa de Elite* and  
*Tropa de Elite: O inimigo agora é outro***

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In late 2011 a Sydney-based community radio program asked to interview me about the clearing of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, the sprawling urban shanty-towns that have become an intrinsic part of the image of Brazil's large cities, ahead of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics. The international mainstream media has shown some scepticism about the 'war' on drug traffickers being played out on the streets of Rio's urban shanty-towns, stepped up by the Brazilian government in the wake of the announcements naming Rio as the host of the two biggest international sporting events in the world. Within the nation, the mainstream media has been far more positive in its portrayal of this intervention aimed at pushing the drug gangs out and in some cases relocating the favela residents. These contrasting views reflect the wider split between international and national perceptions of these urban areas, as well as in receptions of cinematic constructions of the favela in Brazilian cinema of this century.

The favela has been a recurring motif in Brazilian cinema. While some early depictions often fell into a utopian vision of the 'poor but happy,' samba-producing inhabitants, others have shown the more predatory reality of the urban poor. Later films that focussed on the favelas tried, often problematically, to bring these two visions together.<sup>1</sup> With the 2002 release of *Cidade de Deus* (directed by Fernando Meirelles and Katia Lund), the representation of the favela in mainstream cinematic culture changed radically. The brutal violence with which the film portrayed these urban areas, showing a world dominated by drug traffickers and extreme, often arbitrary, violence revealed a fundamental shift in the configuration of these spaces in the national imaginary. This film reflected a growing national concern with what are often seen as lawless spaces that sit on the fringes of legitimate society, while simultaneously feeding into an increased global desire to consume the poverty of the other. *Cidade de Deus* raised disquieting questions about the exoticisation and stylisation of violence in mainstream Brazilian film and the impact this has when representing spaces and people that are already socially, economically and politically marginalised.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many films that fit these descriptors. Among the best known are: *Orfeu Negro* (dir. Marcel Camus, 1956), *Rio 40 graus* (dir. Nelson Pereira dos Santos 1959), and *Orfeu* (dir. Carlos Diegues, 1998).

In 2007 and 2010 two films were released that took the depiction of violence in the favela in a new direction. *Tropa de Elite*, and perhaps to a greater extent *Tropa de Elite: O inimigo agora é outro*,<sup>2</sup> stand in contrast to the existing body of cinematic work on the favela by shifting the focus of the films from the favela inhabitants themselves to the forces of the state that represent the other side of the violence associated with these urban spaces. Both films focus on members of Rio de Janeiro's Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais (Special Police Operations Regiment), or BOPE as it is more commonly known, an elite police squad with special military training that specialises in policing the favelas and is famed for its brutal tactics in what has been stylised in the media as an urban war between the state and the drug traffickers.

*Tropa 1* is set against the backdrop of Pope John Paul II's visit to Rio de Janeiro. Captain Nascimento of BOPE has been instructed to clear the Turano favela of drug traffickers to ensure the safety of the Pope, who will be staying at the Archbishop's residence, which borders on the favela. Specifically, his task is framed in terms of ensuring that the Pope has 'a good night's sleep' and is not woken by the disturbing sound of periodic gunfire that emanates from the favela. Despite Nascimento's protestations that the incursion into the favela will lead to many deaths, he follows his orders. The central narrative thread of the story follows the search by Captain Nascimento to find his own replacement in the BOPE unit he commands. He wishes to leave the unit now that his first child, a son, is due to be born. The film begins with the squad being called to a favela where traffickers have cornered several military policemen. The reasons behind the police presence are far more complex than at first appears and we learn what has led them to this point in a flashback narrated by Nascimento. The mid-point of the film brings us back to this initial scene, which is the fundamental pivot in a narrative that essentially divides the film into two sections. The first follows the struggle of two new recruits, Neto and Matias,<sup>3</sup> among their corrupt colleagues, their meeting with Captain Nascimento and acceptance into the training program for BOPE. The second part shows their eventual moral (and physical) disintegration as Neto is killed by traffickers and Matias becomes absorbed into the squad.

*Tropa 2* picks up the story more than a decade after the point where the first film ends. The narrative is stylistically similar to *Tropa 1* in that the film begins at the climax of the story and then through a flashback takes the viewer through the events that lead to the opening scene. Again, voice-over narration by the central protagonist comments on the action in much the same way as occurred in the first film. The film's narrative reflects the evolution of the life story of the central protagonist of *Tropa 1*.

Nascimento is now a lieutenant colonel and his son Rafa is ten years old, he is divorced and his wife has married Diogo Fraga, a soon-to-be senator who is a human rights activist. Fraga and Nascimento are in constant conflict over their opposing views of how to deal with drug gangs in Rio. The second film does not have the same

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Tropa 1* and *Tropa 2*.

<sup>3</sup> The character of André Matias is referred to as Matias in *Tropa 1* and André in *Tropa 2*.

psychological dimension as the first, which follows the mental disintegration of Captain Nascimento who suffers from extreme panic attacks and is highly medicated. In *Tropa 2*, after what seems a disastrous end to a siege at Bangu 1, a high security prison, Nascimento, who is portrayed as fully recovered from the psychological issues established in the first film, is promoted to sub-secretary for security of Rio de Janeiro State. While initially Nascimento appears to be politically isolated because of the events in the prison, the popularity of the violent end to the siege among the public ensures his promotion rather than his expulsion. In his new role inside the system, Nascimento becomes embroiled in the political games that define the movement of money and power between the drug gangs, favela residents, corrupt police, and even more corrupt politicians. Slow to recognise the true power nexus in the state, Nascimento is involved in increasing the power of BOPE and in turn clearing the favelas of drug gangs so that, unbeknownst to him, the corrupt police can set up extortion and protection rackets in the favela to bring in money and to secure votes for a range of political power players, including the state governor. The change in the portrayal of the central protagonist becomes a highly problematic element in *Tropa 2* because of the implicit elevation of BOPE that goes hand in hand with this shift. The inherent problems with this character change are explored in greater detail later in this study.

Like many favela films that came before, the *Tropa* films show a depiction of urban life in Brazil dominated by an array of male protagonists and the violence that rules their lives. The portrayal of the conflict and violence projected in the films is associated with the image of the favela as a war zone, which at times shows an open conflict with traffickers but in other moments reveals a more insidious 'dirty' war waged through corruption and violence. The imagery of war is endorsed not only through the films' trajectories but, more concretely, through Captain Nascimento's voice-over narration. The films show a disquieting nexus between violence and identity that erupts in these masculinised spaces and attempt to examine the socio-political implications of these links. In an attempt to understand this representation of identities, this study examines the relationship between the performance of masculinity in these films and the legitimacy of acts of violence based on this performance.

To gain a better understanding of both the representation of the favela and the economic, social, and political forces that come to bear on these marginal spaces, it is important to consider the place of the favela in the Brazilian imaginary, which has shifted from being a place of petty crime and the creative space of samba in the 1950s and 1960s to the image that became prevalent since the 1980s, which highlights the favela as a deviant threat to society embodied in the image of drug trafficking. The *Tropa de Elite* films reflect broad understandings among Brazilians about the favela as a socio-economic space and its inhabitants. The fringe and often illegal status of these communities has come to be equated, in the eyes of many Brazilians, with the status of the inhabitants. The categories of 'margin' and 'periphery' have been transposed on to a character type so that people who live on the periphery are seen as 'mar-

ginal' people (Pardue 682). The conclusion developed from this perspective is that 'the *periferia* cultivates criminal, lazy, passive, uneducated, and, in short, second-class citizens' (682). This collapsing of location and character is further exacerbated through race-based fears about the young men who inhabit these marginal spaces,<sup>4</sup> as Polly Wild states '[m]uch of the violence in Brazil is associated with favela communities, and acute death rates affecting principally young, mainly black, males from poor backgrounds. Such men...[find] themselves subject to criminalization by the police and dehumanization by the media' (Wild 2010: 719). These ongoing processes of both 'dehumanisation' and criminalisation' in the popular media go some way to explaining the fact that many Brazilians see the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment as a hindrance to police operations that favours criminals (Caldeira 2000: 157). It is this socio-political context that makes both *Tropa 1* and *Tropa 2* so contentious as they grapple with the inherent complexity of mediating a representation of the policing and politicising of spaces that are already so heavily coded with meaning in the national context.

It is also within this context that BOPE itself sustains the understanding of its actions as necessary military interventions to protect the nation from the perceived threat from the periphery. The role of BOPE as 'protector' of Rio, and symbolically the nation, is derived from the history of the squad, which was established in 1978 during the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1985. Its creation responded to the perceived necessity of the military police to have a special unit whose role was to provide a quick response in times of crisis. It was created by an instrument of repression to enact, sustain and secure the repressive actions of the state.<sup>5</sup> Everything about BOPE, its training and its physical appearance feed into the image of being formed for conflict, especially the black uniforms with the symbol of a skull pierced by a knife on the sleeves, as an aid in differentiating them from the regular military police; the members of BOPE define themselves in terms of this imagery, having christened themselves with the nickname 'skulls' (see Arnal 2010).

The *Tropa de Elite* films pick up on and emphasise these ties to the Brazilian military and military culture of the squad by showing the marine-like training of the new recruits in *Tropa 1* and by having one of the songs sung by recruits during training as part of the soundtrack, with the lyrics 'Homem de preto, qual é sua missão? Entrar pela favela e deixar corpo no chão' [Man in black (uniform), what is your mission? To enter the favela and leave bodies on the ground], which clearly set out the ethos of the squad. Indeed, as Nascimento states in *Tropa 1*: 'Homem com farda preta entra na favela para matar, nunca para morrer' [The man in black uniform enters the favela to kill, never to die]. The history of BOPE together with the public perception of the spaces it polices and the representation of these in the film problematize any

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<sup>4</sup> This is discussed in relation to *Cidade de Deus* in McDonald 2006.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the legacy of the military dictatorship in *Tropa de Elite*, see Marques and Rocha 2010.

attempt on the part of the director to subtly critique BOPE in *Tropa 1*. While in *Tropa 2* José Padilha explicitly sets out to show the deep layering of corruption at all levels of state (and, it is suggested, national) institutions, at the centre of the film BOPE itself remains untouched. The corruption, shown to be an endemic promoter of institutionalised violence, that swirls around the elite squad does not contaminate it; rather, the squad remains distant from the tarnished image of the broken and violent state that Padilha constructs on screen. Problematically, this image also enforces the identity of BOPE as 'heroic protector' and the violence associated with this role becomes accepted as an intrinsic and necessary part of that identity.

The first film was controversial from the outset. An estimated eleven million people saw *Tropa de Elite* before its official release, when a leaked copy was circulated on the internet. Throughout its production different governmental bodies and the police tried to block its progress because of its depiction of institutionalised corruption among the police and politicians. Since its release, *Tropa 1* has polarised opinion in Brazil. As Arthur Ituassu has pointed out, three clear and distinct positions have been taken up in relation to the film. The first praises BOPE and views its tactics as necessary in the urban war with the drug traffickers; BOPE is seen to be a functioning institution as opposed to the reputation for incompetence and corruption of the police. In direct opposition, the second position regards the film as a glorification of what is essentially a 'violent and deviant' institution. For Ituassu the third position is one that blames the Brazilian people, who have been morally corrupted by institutions like BOPE, and this view blames neither BOPE nor the film.<sup>6</sup>

What we can see is that *Tropa 1* speaks to pre-existing notions about the deviant nature of these spaces and as such feeds into fears in the nation about the threat that favelas pose to civil society, while simultaneously satisfying the desire of an international audience to consume Brazil's internal conflicts in a certain format. Both these positions play against criticisms of the institutions of state justice by locating the 'problem' of the favelas within their space and with its inhabitants in *Tropa 1*, and by extrapolating its critique to the political institutions of the state that profit from control of these urban spaces in *Tropa 2*.

On first viewing the *Tropa* films, the audience may be struck by the many similarities between them and *Cidade de Deus*. These similarities occur not only at a technical level—visually the films have a number of similar aspects, such as particular camera work, use of series of rapid cuts between shots, a rap/rock soundtrack, and the pace of editing—, but also on the level of the representation of characters and the

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<sup>6</sup> The film has also been controversial outside Brazil. After it was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the Golden Bear, critic Jay Weissberg, who writes for *Variety*, called the film a 'one-note celebration of violence-for-good that plays like a recruitment film for fascist thugs.' Since his review was published, he has posted various pieces in discussion groups and blogs that defend his comments and debate with those who hold other views of the film. For some contrasting views on the film see: Weissberg 2008, Beckstein 2008, France Presse 2008.



construction of a society that is overwhelmingly violent and almost exclusively masculine. As with *Cidade de Deus*, the *Tropa de Elite* films show the world of the elite squad, like the world of the gang, to be an entirely masculine realm in which the bonds between groups of men are the strongest form of social cohesion and the female characters are on the periphery. In *Tropa 1*, the construction of the gang and the squad show that there is very little difference between the functioning of the two groups. In *Tropa 2*, the predatory nature of these masculinised ‘families’ is reinforced by the inclusion, in much more explicit details, of the connections between corrupt members of the military police and politicians who exploit the favelas for both economic and political gain. It is clear that the differences between all these inherently violent groupings of exclusively male characters lie in the perception of each group within the broader nation. In both films BOPE is legitimised by the state despite the fact that it also functions in a criminal manner, in that it does not follow legal procedures in interrogating or arresting suspects and witnesses. This is justified as necessary because they are constructed as protectors of the nation who are fighting an enemy rather than policing citizens of the state.

In line with this construction of the protector, the development of the main character’s identity is based on a specific performative concept of masculinity, whereby the biological fact of gender needs to be enforced through an active demonstration of ‘maleness.’ There is violence inherent in these representations of gender identity (cf. Biron 2000 and McDonald 2006). The films construct interconnected webs of male relationships that privilege some masculine identities while denouncing others. In this instance masculinity, normally understood as a relational category between men and women, is constructed and played out in relation to other men.

In an attempt to unravel the function of masculinity in the context of these films, its links to violence, and the legitimacy of that violence, it is important to understand what is meant by the term masculinity, and what shifts in meaning may occur, given the context and the social, political, ethnic, and economic identities of the subject. We broadly accept that masculinity is a biological fact, but we can also argue that it is a performed identity. Aspects of the performance of masculinity, such as:

[a]uthoritativeness, defensiveness, aggressiveness, physical strength, self-assurance, or self-reliance [are viewed] as heroic or natural in nation formation, military achievement, sport or business; yet we often view the very same displays as criminally transgressive and unnatural if performed by men who are marginalised ethnically, politically, economically, or sexually (Biron 2000: 11).

In the context of this analysis, we can see this reinforced through a juxtaposition of transgressive, unnatural masculinity—embodied in traffickers, corrupt police and politicians—against the legitimate, heroic masculinity of Nascimento and, by extension,

his squad. This contrast explicitly differentiates the legitimacy of given violent acts based on the legitimacy of the masculine identity of the perpetrators of violence.

The question of 'legitimate violence' and its relationship to forms of masculine identity moves beyond the cinematic techniques of the films and is further developed through the portrayal of the different masculine 'families' in the films. The most obvious example in *Tropa 1* is the contrast created with the dominant violence in representations of life in the trafficker-ruled favelas. In this film the drug traffickers are the 'enemy' and their violent activities are never sanctioned, while the brutality of BOPE is partially and problematically constructed as a response to this initial violence; yet within this 'legitimate' response, the viewer is shown extremely violent acts and torture. In *Tropa 2*, BOPE is contrasted explicitly with the rest of the military police, who act against the citizenry of the favelas and do so with impunity, primarily, it is suggested, because the control and exploitation of these poor urban areas works to the direct benefit of both local and state government. The politics behind the corrupt rule of law is shown to be the instigator, if not the perpetrator, of much of the violence. Again the violence of BOPE is justified in its portrayal as the protection of the citizenry or the result of BOPE itself being a victim of the 'system.' Through the central protagonist's voice-over comments on how the 'system' works *Tropa 2* highlights the widespread existence of violent patron/client relationships that function at all levels of state institutions. This juxtaposition of violence, legitimate or illegitimate, continues to be a central area of contention in analyses of these films.

Nascimento is the protagonist of both films. It is he who provides the voice-over narration that attempts to distinguish between the activities of BOPE, the military police, and state institutions, in order to justify the extreme actions taken by the squad; he also gives a more general comment on the progression of the narrative. His character has several overlapping roles in both films. In *Tropa 1*, Nascimento is a husband and new father with a son; he is a mentor figure in the BOPE unit and grooms two new recruits, looking for one to take his place. These two roles converge at the point at which he becomes a father, something which is shown literally in the film. His son is born when he saves the two new recruits, marking the beginning of a specific 'fathering' role in both circumstances and consolidating these masculine ties. The son is to take the father's place; the new recruit is to take the officer's place. A montage is created interspersing images of his newborn son with the new recruits he has saved. Parts of this montage are played at the beginning of the film and later in the narrative when Nascimento is actually retelling this part of his story. In addition, these images flash into the protagonist's mind in moments of great stress and when his actions betray this image of fatherhood, such as when he leaves young informants to the mercy of the drug gangs. The recurring use of these images underscores the importance of Nascimento's role as both literal and figurative father. They are so central to his characterisation that they also appear in the opening credits of *Tropa 2*.

While on the one hand uniting his roles as father and the leader of the squad, the scene discussed above also reinforces on the other hand the division between Nascimento's private and public worlds. We can clearly see this as he chats on the phone to his wife while he is on incursions into the favela. The distance between his two worlds slowly disintegrates as the film develops. His work life, the pills he must take to stay calm, and the increasing episodes of panic he experiences begin to dominate him, eventually destroying his home life.

The impending birth of his son is a central motivating factor for Nascimento's actions and it initiates his psychological breakdown, highlighted in a dream sequence when he has a psychological episode. He has a flash-forward to an image of his unborn son, an image later repeated when his son is born. This image of his son is interspersed with those of a young man the squad releases after forcing him to give information on the traffickers. Nascimento lets him go despite knowing that the young man will be murdered as a punishment and example, therefore implicating himself in the murder. The mother of the boy repeatedly visits the squad and asks them to find out what happened to her son, forcing him continually to confront his own role in this young man's death.

The portrayal of Nascimento's deteriorating mental state in *Tropa 1* also reflects the impossibility of meeting the demands of 'home/wife' and 'work/squad.' Although he repeatedly states his active desire to leave the squad to be with his son, Nascimento feels loyal to his men, a loyalty that takes precedence over his responsibility to his family. He will only leave his job once he finds a replacement. His wife leaves him and although he wants his family back, he can only deal with the issue of his family once the question of his replacement and his responsibility to the squad—his masculine family—have been resolved.

In *Tropa 2* the family/squad dynamic shifts. Nascimento becomes distanced from both his actual family, embodied in his son Rafa who struggles to understand the violent nature of his father's world, and his symbolic family, the squad, represented through André who feels betrayed by Nascimento's move into the state government with his appointment as sub-secretary for security. This distancing endangers both Nascimento and those closest to him. Ultimately it results in his son being accidentally shot when an attempt is made on his step-father's life. Because Nascimento is slow to understand the machinations of the state and because he is distanced from his son both literally, in that they have little contact, and emotionally, he is shown to be unable to protect his son, despite his desperate attempt to do so. In the case of his symbolic family, he loses his figurative son when André is shot by a member of the military police. Again, the fact that Nascimento has become distanced from André through his shift away from the squad that, it is suggested, leaves André exposed to the threat of the corrupt police. In the scene in which André dies, he has been interrogating a suspect who is shot by the military police so that he cannot expose one of their schemes. He is on his own, with no back up from his squad when he confronts the members of

the military police. When he demands answers and turns to walk away he is shot in the back. This scene not only highlights the vulnerability of the individual over the strength of the group, but also emphasises the threat the conventional military police pose to BOPE as an institution. Once again this makes a clear differentiation between the illegitimate violence enacted by a corrupt police system and the legitimate violence of BOPE, which is faced with threats from both those outside the system/state (criminals/traffickers) and those who form the system (corrupt police and the politicians who benefit from their corruption).

As with *Tropa 1*, it is the relationships between men that dominate the narrative. These bonds are formed through an experience of violence. Nascimento and Fraga clash over the violent treatment of favelados, and physically clash when Fraga is taken hostage in the violent siege at the prison. Even Nascimento's relationship with his son is marked by violence, as their encounters are framed around the martial art of judo, so that they physically 'fight' each other. The relationships in the squad are framed by the violence they enact: it is the ability to follow this through that ensures continued membership; it is also violence that destroys the squad/family (through the death of André) and restores it, when the squad rescues Nascimento.

Despite the danger posed to these male bonds in *Tropa 2*, by the end of the film these masculine relationships are redeemed, or at least it is suggested that they are. Rafa awakes in the final scene and the changes that Nascimento has undergone, his denunciation of the military police and Rio's politicians, offers new hope for their relationship. This even extends to his relationship with Fraga, when they find themselves on the same political side. In the case of André, Nascimento redeems his relationship by reconnecting with his squad. In one of the film's final scenes Nascimento is shown as still supported by his comrades from the squadron who effectively save his life. This sequence is framed in a very classic shootout style with two cars framed as the barricade between the two sides. The camera cuts between a series of long point-of-view shots which give the viewer the perspective of both Rocha, a corrupt officer, and Nascimento. In what seems a heavily one-sided ambush that would surely lead to Nascimento's demise, the camera cuts to a close up of the protagonist's face as his voice-over states that, in fact, this time he was not alone. With these words the camera cuts to a medium long-shot of a car screeching into shot and four gun toting BOPE members emerge and walk towards the camera firing their weapons. The cavalry has arrived and Nascimento's salvation is assured. The bonds between the squad members are emphasised when one receives a superficial wound. Nascimento leans toward his comrade framed in a close up, asks the injured officer if he is OK, and receives the reply: 'Skulls forever!' His reconnection to his masculine family through the squad ensures that he is not alone and suggests that he never will be as long as he maintains his link to his masculine family.

The redeemed Nascimento of *Tropa 2* is a marked departure from his character in the first film. In *Tropa 1* his episodes of psychological instability implicitly

question his capacity as an officer and his reliability as a narrator. His questionable judgement—highlighted in scenes that portray the interrogation of suspects, where young men and women with only a peripheral attachment to the drug trade are nearly suffocated and/or severely beaten in order to secure information on the traffickers—could be seen to undermine his narration which seeks to justify BOPE's methods. The framing of these scenes serves to further destabilise the voice-over narration. In these scenes not only are BOPE members in no apparent immediate threat to themselves, but they are also shot almost always from a low angle as they tower over their captives/victims. Those being interrogated are shown restrained, on their knees or sitting, surrounded by the squad as they torture their captives to get the information they want. The victims' pleas are drowned out by the squad members and any declarations of ignorance are met with derision. As the camera sweeps the faces of the interrogators, it is clear that information must be provided and its accuracy is not questioned. The torture inflicted to gain information is framed on screen in such a way that there seems little difference between the gangs and the squad. However, the voice-over narration justifies these abuses as necessary and returns to the rhetoric of war.

Both the means of interrogation and the inherent risk that informers run suggest that BOPE places innocent individuals in an untenable position, where they run the risk of violence from both drug gangs and police squads. By juxtaposing these threats, the film equates the violent behaviour of both sides in this 'war,' and the suffering is felt most keenly by those trying to survive life in the favela. Despite the possibility of reading the film in this way, Padilha's portrayal of BOPE never fully commits to any sort of denunciation of the squad and the 'enemy' is very concretely portrayed as an imminent threat to the city and ultimately the nation.

In *Tropa 2*, this positioning of violence increasingly shifts to further legitimate BOPE and its violent tactics as well as to place the blame elsewhere. This is not to say that the film's denunciation of corruption amongst police and politicians is not valid, but it does hinge on the construction of a sanitised version of BOPE without any condemnation, direct or indirect, of its actions. In *Tropa 2*, the clearing of the favelas by BOPE is constructed within very specific parameters and it is a highly militarised image. When Nascimento narrates how he has extended the resources of BOPE as sub-secretary, the images on screen are a series of panoramic long-shots that begin with a low-angle shot from a favela that tracks a helicopter overhead, then cut to the point of view from within the helicopter as we see BOPE invade a favela. The choice to position the camera within the helicopter does two important things: it relates the conflict in the favelas more directly to an actual war by associating the film style with images of wars in Vietnam and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. The distance created between the viewer and the 'action' also serves to sanitise the reality below, which is that of an urban police force turning its arms on a civilian population. While some of that population may be engaged in criminal activities and some are armed, the style of filming brushes over the fact that, while framed as a war, it is still a civi-

lian conflict. In *Tropa 2*, we see far fewer episodes of BOPE's interrogation tactics and incursions into the favelas. Instead, the focus is on the corruption this (unwittingly?) enables through the racketeering of police and politicians. What we do begin to see clearly in the film is a differing reception of a violent performance of identity according to the socio-political status of the performer.

In stark contrast to both the 'cleansed' BOPE of *Tropa 2* or BOPE as protector presented in *Tropa 1*, is the violence enacted by the regular military police (PM). In *Tropa 1* the new recruits attempt to report the corruption they encounter to their superiors. They then find themselves isolated and vulnerable, not only in the policing situations in which they find themselves but also in terms of the threat posed by their fellow officers. The recruits are sent into a favela without backup, as their superiors hope that they will be killed, thus eliminating any problems for them. The stories of the two new recruits reveal how all the layers of corruption in the police force impede any sort of integrity. The film highlights for the viewer that those who break ranks, disrupt or refuse to conform with corrupt practices, are harshly dealt with, some even killed. The police are portrayed as a closed society that works along similar lines to those of the drug gang and in both cases betrayal of the group is dealt with through violence. While the first *Tropa* film does briefly show how poor pay and dangerous working conditions lead many to feel that what they gain through corruption is the only recompense for their job, in showing the actions of both the regular military police and the drug gangs, the film, intentionally or not, equates one with the other, while placing the actions of BOPE apart from both.

In *Tropa 2* this association is taken far beyond mere suggestion. Now the director explicitly develops a portrayal of the widespread corruption among the institutions of the state, embodied in the military police and the office of the state governor. What is shown as essentially small-time racketeering in *Tropa 1* is shown as a highly developed criminal network functioning in all areas of the state, with the continued exception of BOPE.

Sitting on the fringe of this network of violent criminals and equally violent corrupt cops are the state politicians that encourage both criminality and corruption in order to benefit directly from both. The direct link made in the film between politicians—primarily through the characters of Fortunato, Guaracy and the state governor—and violence is explicit. While the politicians may not pull the many triggers seen on screen they provide the weapons and bullets, both literally and figuratively. This connection is played out in its most explicit form through the scene in which Fortunato, Guaracy and the governor are guests of honour at a community party organised by Rocha, a key member of the corrupt militia of military police officers. The scene opens as the camera moves through a throng of revellers towards a table at which the politicians are seated. The camera cuts to a series of medium close-ups of the politicians and their enforcer, Rocha, as they congratulate themselves and offer and receive support for the coming elections. The festive spirit of the occasion is

overshadowed by the potential threat embodied in the image of Rocha, who carries a gun throughout. As he stumbles to the stage to make a speech explicitly thanking Fortunato, Guaracy and the governor, and committing the community to voting for them in the coming elections, he is framed in a low angle shot as he raises his gun and fires while he throws his head back and laughs. Although this takes place in an atmosphere of celebration, it is clear that Rocha wields the power in the community and that power is backed up by violence, or at the very least the threat of violence.

This scene clearly plays out the patron/client socio-political model previously mentioned. In this model power and identity come together, both through the display of violence and the ability to be violent. This is embodied in Rocha's firing of a gun and his constant use of the weapon to emphasise his points while speaking, as though the weapon were a natural extension of his body, which is used to gesture in much the same way as his hands. This scene also shows the power that the perceived threat of violence has. The politicians, Fortunato, Guaracy and the governor are never violent themselves but they have recourse to violence as a means of control. Rocha is under their control; he is violent for them. Again, their authority as father figures (patrons) comes down to the ability to wield a violent threat but not act themselves. While the two films clearly denounce this warped authority, they are less successful in mediating the violence of BOPE, which continues with its image of a 'heroic' form of masculine identity that serves to legitimate the violence it enacts.

The real difficulty in both films comes from the distinction between BOPE and the conventional military police. Where can the lines of difference be drawn and under what circumstances? Is there a moment when violence can be a response to what could be argued are essentially social and economic problems? While the film polarises opinion, director Padilha and lead actor Wagner Moura have attempted to defend the film. Padilha has repeatedly commented on the fact that the film has been misinterpreted. But Moura has stated in relation to the first film that it would be 'impossible that people in [other countries] would see these police as heroes, police that torture and kill' (Barrionuevo 2007). Nonetheless, the director who has specifically said that he set out to make a film 'denouncing violence and torture' (Barrionuevo 2007) walks a dangerous line in his attempt to reveal some of the factors at the root of a violent and dysfunctional state institution without excusing that institution's failure. Indeed, Demetrious Matheou, in relation to *Tropa 1*, questions whether José Padilha is 'stumbling in the dense moral maze he himself has set up, or consciously reflecting the view held by the great many cariocas who applauded his film?' (Matheou 2008).

The framing of the routine abuse of human rights by BOPE in their role as combatants in this 'war' as legitimate action, has important implications in terms of the perceived legitimacy of BOPE's tactics. The mainstream media coverage of the conflict in the favela often invokes ideas of war, using militarised language and referring to the favelas as war zones where the authorities are battling against traffickers,

and describing the actions of the police as laying siege to favelas.<sup>7</sup> This type of rhetoric is not specific to the situation in Brazil. It reflects wider global trends in a post-9/11 world where a range of abuses of human rights have been justified in the context of fighting a militarised enemy. Indeed, this rhetoric advocates violence as a legitimate response to a perceived threat. In *Tropa 2*, this is made specific through the television broadcasts of Fortunato. In these broadcasts, Fortunato is framed in a series of long-shots, that encompass his full body gestures, mid-shots which serve to focus on his wild gesticulations as he calls for further militarised action against traffickers, and extreme close-ups as he stares directly at the camera and denounces the 'forces' that seek to destroy Rio de Janeiro. He is filmed against a backdrop of a series of iconic images of Rio, including the statue of Christ the Redeemer and the Maracanã football stadium. These images heighten his link to popular televised media and the way in which this media seeks to explicitly manipulate public perception of both social and political events. Fortunato's televised calls for actions are also shown as linked to the desires of the politically strong, as he constantly emphasises the threat posed by the traffickers and the state of war that is in place in the favelas.

Neither film clearly questions this warlike depiction of urban conflict as a justification for all sorts of abuses on behalf of the state in contemporary society. Rather, the rhetoric is accepted and internalised by the characters. In *Tropa 1*, Captain Nascimento believes he is in a war: he repeatedly states this; his behaviour—the torture and execution of traffickers and those close to them—is justified in this framework as a necessary response to a 'greater' threat to wider society. In *Tropa 2* the enemy location shifts and the method of fighting them also changes, but this does not involve any reflection on the rights and wrongs of the violence inflicted on the inhabitants (drug dealers or not) of the favelas. The only violence questioned or deemed wrong is that

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<sup>7</sup> Many articles in Brazil's newspapers use this language to a greater or lesser extent in daily reporting on conflict in the favelas. Here is a selection from *Folha de São Paulo*, which has one of the largest circulations: 'Guerra de traficantes deixa 2 mortos e 4 feridos no Rio' [Drug war leaves two dead and four wounded in Rio] (25/04/2010), <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u725790.shtml>; 'Tiroteio em operação do Bope deixa dois mortos em favelas de Niterói' [Shootout during BOPE operation leaves two dead in Niterói favelas] (31/08/ 2010), <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/co...-em-favelas-de-niteroi-rj.shtml>; 'Beltrame diz que polícia sabe a localização do chefe do tráfico da Rocinha, no Rio' [Beltrame says that police know the location of the drug traffic lord in Rocinha (favela)] (25/08/ 2010), <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/co...tráfico-da-rocinha-no-rio.shtml>; 'Tiroteio mata três em favela do Rio; polícia apreende armas e drogas' [Shootout kills three in a favela in Rio; police seize arms and drugs] (27/11/2009), <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u658562.shtml>; 'PM mantém ocupação de morro no Rio após tiroteios; confrontos deixam 3 mortos' [Military Police maintains occupation of a Rio hill (favela) after shootouts; clashes leave three dead] (18/11/2009), <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u654222.shtml>; 'Lula admite dificuldade em acabar com violência no Rio e chama criminosos de anormais' [Lula admits difficulty in ending violence in Rio and calls criminals abnormal/retarded] (28/10/2009), <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u644498.shtml>. [trans. editor (R.J.G-C).]



inflicted on characters that do not form part of any social, economic or political periphery: Nascimento and his sons Rafa (biological) and André (symbolic).

While *Tropa 1*'s narration is called into question and challenged by both an unreliable narrator and the screen images, the film's sympathies seem to lie increasingly with BOPE, thereby weakening the potential critique of failed state institutions. For me, this is exacerbated in *Tropa 2*: not only is BOPE distanced from any violence on screen, but Nascimento is shown mentally stable and no longer medicated, strengthening the depiction of an incorruptible BOPE via his voice-over narration.

Rather than tease out the complexities of the corruption shown to be embedded in the institutions of the state by problematizing BOPE, the construction of the squad reduces the argument to a good cop/bad cop scenario that is played out literally on screen in the final scene, analysed above, in which we have the *good* cops, Nascimento and his squad, ambushed by the *bad* cops, Rocha and his minions from the military police. While the films offer a lot of scope to delve into the complexities of corruption and violence, ultimately their narratives lead to simplistic conclusions that exonerate BOPE and broadly condemn everyone else. The trajectory of BOPE in both films serves to enhance its image as a legitimate tool of war, and the films continue rather than contest the formulation of this urban conflict as a war. In *Tropa 1*, there appears to be little difference between the masculine worlds of the gang and the military police: both are violent communities where the ability for extreme violence secures position and power. All male relationships are shown as formed in relation to this model of violent interaction. However, while the BOPE squads function in much the same way as the gangs, their displays of masculinity and associated violence are made legitimate through their image as defenders of society, while drug gangs embody the threat inherent in transgressive violence. In *Tropa 2* not only does BOPE's violence become cleansed through calculated distancing from onscreen acts of brutality, but the few incidents of violent behaviour shown on screen increase its legitimacy, as it is explicitly elevated to protector of the father (Nascimento), the family (Rafa/André/the squad), and ultimately the nation.

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# **Bioclimatic Regionalism After Brasilia and Chandigahr: Transitions from Brazil, India, and Mexico**

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## **1. Introduction**

‘Design dominates the architectural ethos. However, design is much more than just the looks of the product. Sustainability, how the building works, how it uses resources can be considered under four headings: site, energy, materials, and wastes’ (Szokolay 2003). If we consider that buildings use roughly 50% of the energy (operational and capital) generated on earth (ERG et al. 1999) and are responsible for 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in our planet, it becomes pertinent to study and monitor energy consumption and production in the context of sustainable design as a whole.

Bioclimatic design (a term coined by Olgyay 1963) involved a twofold consideration of climatic adaptation which would allow for appropriate comfort conditions and reduced energy use. By using a bioclimatic chart, Olgyay related climatic data to thermal comfort limits and design strategies. Bioclimatic design, when integrated in early design stages, became an approach that took account of the climate, through the right application of design elements that would be decided according to contextual conditions. Energy savings and comfortable conditions were at the core of bioclimatology studies at the time. Bioclimatic design from the 1960s on, as expressed in the work of the architects here studied, demonstrated a focus on energy and comfort needs (a key aspect in current understanding of sustainable design). Given the contextual constraints (e.g. financial resources, availability of materials), these architects’ design approach revealed an expanded view of the bioclimatic concept of their time. It also evolved into a more holistic approach, considering its impact on future generations, in which growth becomes not the dominant aspect as stated in *Our Common Future* (WCED 1987), but rather a collective understanding of a strong sustainability concept set out in *Limits to Growth* (Meadows 1972) and *Beyond the Limits* (Meadows 1992). This approach draws attention in economic calculations to the value of all environmental assets (Turner 1993, Dieren 1995), as the use of the concept is in tune with the understanding that natural capital stock cannot be destroyed: ‘we are part of the system, which constitutes the whole ecological community.’ The destruction of nature implies threatening the survival of humankind. Our current search for changes towards a carbon-neutral future, especially in developed countries, raises questions of our role in society and of different areas in which we should and can contribute as responsible citizens. According to several pioneer researches in the field of sustaina-

bility, collective behavioural changes are crucial to regaining control of society. Vale and Vale 2007 indicate that most changes needed are within our own patterns of living and our own choices, at least in the developed world.

The architectural works here studied attempt to convey a return to fundamental aspects of architectural design that raise opportunities for architects who are conscious of their civic responsibilities. Part of the selected architectural approach shows the ingenuity of João Filgueiras Lima's hospital project. The entire hospital, located in one of the most difficult climatic conditions (hot-humid) in northeast Brazil, functions with little aid of air conditioning, relying almost solely on passive design techniques (Tenorio 2002a, 2002b, 2007). The region is marked not only by harsh climatic conditions but also by challenging issues of governance, struggles for resources, and undeveloped economic situations. Based on this example and several others, it seems difficult to accept the current architectural solutions and current patterns of overconsumption at any level. Ultimately, a significant disparity from the 1960s to today's context lies in the undeniable scientific proof of climate change and its effects (IPCC 2007), the common ground for understanding the results of inaction. The access to this type of information facilitates our realization of the urgent need for 're-learning' to live in sustainable ways, and its relevancy to every single being at every stage of life.

This study endeavours to analyse the design movements and, to some extent, personal paths of architects who aligned themselves with the emergent bioclimatic design approach of the 1960s. Section 2 gives a snapshot of that context with correlated movements and rationales around the environmental movement, the regionalism approach which followed, and finally a critical and expanded regionalism. Sustainable design, its representations and standards, are also examined, to the extent that such values and needs are relevant for today's society (Tenorio 2002c). Also discussed and contextualized are the works of João Filgueiras Lima and Severiano Mário Porto in Brazil. Section 3 outlines the experiences of two other architects: González Gortázar in Mexico with Museo del Pueblo Maya and Laurie Baker in India with the Corpus Christi School. It also considers their relationship to Porto's and Lima's experiences in Brazil. A cross-comparative analysis is explored in relation to the work of the four architects in selected public buildings in tropical locations. This analysis also serves to provide an insight on current sustainable design practices, as well as on the crucial role of architectural education. It aims to show how this method of learning can play a role in bridging the gaps between practice and knowledge of the built environment.

## **2. Modernism in Latin America: Beyond Brasilia and Bioclimatic Thinking**

### **2.1 Background and history**

In the first decades of the twentieth century, innovative architectural theories and the development of new design practices began to influence the understanding of

the European built environment. Adolf Loos launched his exemplary proposal for new Austrian architecture with his *Raumplan* (spatial plan). In the 1920s the German Bauhaus School and Walter Gropius initiated a new understanding of logical architectural thought and industrialised production systems. Also in the 1920s to 1930s Le Corbusier, recognised as a leader of the Modern Movement, brought to the forefront of architectural discussion a very new architectural language linked to new technologies of construction. As Andreoli and Forty 2004 note, it was ‘an architectural language that rejected the values of bourgeois culture, discarded decoration, celebrated light and air, and rationalized construction so as to take advantage of industrial processes.’

In Latin America, with a strong appeal to a more socially and inclusive society, marked by extremes of wealth and poverty, there was the apparent need to develop an architecture that was accessible to all. Architects experimented with this idea, and between the 1930s and 1960s Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela produced exponential examples of modern architecture, with a very strong political and social basis. As Fraser (2000) states: ‘The Governments of these three countries, despite their very different political standpoints, embraced the new architecture as an efficient means of promoting an image of a progressive nation-state. They invested in city planning and public services, in schools, universities, hospitals, and social housing, and in the respective ministerial building to administer these new responsibilities.’

During this period, experimentations in adapting European theories to contemporary Latin American realities were widespread. Latin American architects would achieve this adaptation using a variety of means: ‘by incorporation of works of art or indigenous flora; by use of local materials or techniques, by formal references to colonial architecture, or to indigenous culture, past or present; merely by use of traditional colours or textures’ (Fraser 2000). This tendency occurred before World War II and was identified as a transitional period for modernism, one which, in terms of an architectural adaptation to climate, was considering mostly ideas relating to sun shading and ventilation devices. A more integrated design resolution is achieved more solidly after World War II and the construction of Chandigarh and Brasilia.

Le Corbusier had given importance to shading devices and natural ventilation, but mostly from an arbitrary and predominantly aesthetic point of view (Tzonis 2002). It was in the 1920s and 1930s that Lewis Mumford began to write about regionalism, signalling the appearance of a new approach (Mumford 1928, 1938, 1941). Mumford showed strong aversion to what he called the ‘empty, formalist-form world of Le Corbusier,’ and exalted the work of two well-known regionalists: Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto. Later on, writings by Lefavre and Tzonis (2001) acknowledged Mumford’s contribution as the initial step towards a Critical Regionalism, ‘one conceived as an extension of the mind, a cognitive tool, that expresses the values of particular people and time in the way that film, art and music do.’ While architectural discussions were occurring at an international level, Chandigarh had been built, and a broad range of influences came to bear across India. Laurie Baker reacted fiercely to

'progress-related' trends and in Kerala established a strong reaction to the International Style and the Modern Movement as a formal expression of living.

In Latin America, the humanizing trend in architecture came out strongly after the construction of Brasilia. As Valerie Fraser points out:

Latin American architecture was valued for its inventiveness and its confidence [...] but the enthusiasm did not endure beyond Brasilia's completion date. [...] Brasilia [...] marked the end of the love affair. This was one ambition too far, as Brasilia was built completely with local architects and planners, without the consultancy of Le Corbusier or international experts. The architectural establishment in the US and Europe turned against Brasilia, feeling that they were insufficiently experienced to design their own capital city (Fraser 2000).

Brasilia marked the climax of the modernist paradigm, as a new capital that formed part of a plan to industrialize and seek rapid development of rural and remote regions of Brazil, bringing egalitarian prosperity to the emerging country. However, this rush for progress did not last. In 1964 Brazil endured a military coup, and even though the new capital remained a powerful urban gesture, it was ultimately occupied by its antitheses: the very reverse of the democratic principles that informed its creation. Nonetheless, the capital remains full of symbolism and still represents the pinnacle of the modernist paradigm, attracting positive and negative comments from various intellectuals and critics. Simultaneously, the term 'Environmental Movement' came to be used extensively in the mid-1960s. Iconic publications, such as *Silent Spring* (Carson 1962) and the *Population Bomb* (Ehrlich 1968), described the heightened awareness of the environment at the time. The term, however, was first used in 1948 by Thomas Pritchard (Palmer 1998: 5) at a meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Resources (IUCNR), around the same time as Lewis Mumford's first article appeared in the *New Yorker* about Critical Regionalism. Due to Olgyay's efforts, the new term Bioclimatic Design surfaced and it was then spread through his book *Design with Climate*, in which he urged architects to adopt:

[...] techniques of analytical reasoning to mature properly. To meet the problem of climate control in an orderly and systematic way requires a pooling of effort by several sciences. The first step is to define the measure and aim of requirements for comfort. For this, the answer lies in the field of biology. The next is to review the existing climatic conditions, and this depends on the science of meteorology. Finally, for the attainment of a rational solution, the engineering sciences must be drawn upon. With such help, the results may then be synthesized and adapted to architectural expression (Olgyay 1963).

In the 1970s with the oil crisis there came growing awareness and major actions in support of energy efficiency and conservation, with the first Earth Day in 1970 and the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. Since then different vulnerable nations, with added socio-economic fluctuations and interests, have been addressing and discussing the world's climate change. The current agenda of environmental and sustainability issues seems to transcend the initial discussions of individualized nations: there is now a greater holistic view of nature and humankind, of the globalized impact, and of vulnerability beyond frontiers. Most nations now agree about the urgency to define the globe's common future, and Copenhagen 2009 stands out as a fundamental stage in almost 50 years of search for connections with a whole sustainable system of living. But regarding the essential message first stated by Olgyay, we find ourselves today at a disjuncture between discourse and practice, 50 years after his book was published.

Although the Modernist language has evolved, the arbitrary and predominantly aesthetic points of views are mainstream in twentieth-century architectural production. There is, however, the growing and incontestable search for sustainable solutions by many, with a focus on a systematic, balanced, and scientific method for architectural expression, in which architecture is processed as a multifaceted and complex progression, with bioclimatic principles as the foundation.

## **2.2 João Filgueiras Lima (Lelé)**

The selection criteria for the architects discussed in this study recognize the demonstration and application of strategies with environmental and socio-economic factors in an integrated design process. It is important to highlight that many other architects at that time were equally or perhaps even more concerned with such factors. However, given the scope and objectives of this study, it is appropriate to limit its critical focus to the four architects selected.

The construction of Brasilia and Brazil's apparent obsession with architectural and engineering progress in the 1960s brought two architects to attention as they represented a wide variety of transformations in the production of Brazilian architecture. Geographical needs started being addressed differently from the widespread modernist architectural theory. Architects such as Severiano Mário Porto and João Filgueiras Lima (Lelé) were examples of such practices. Porto and Lelé were trained in the National Architecture School of Rio de Janeiro's Federal University (UFRJ), and graduated respectively in 1954 and 1955. Both architects have described their formal architectural education as having a strong influence on their interest in bioclimatic vision and its technically applicable knowledge. As confirmed in an interview (Maciel et al. 2007), Lelé and Porto drew attention to the fact that their architectural education promoted a strong foundation in technical knowledge: applied physics, especially concepts of thermal transfer, pressure differential, and solar geometry. Moreover, Porto emphasized the importance of field-related activities as a means to stimulate his un-

derstanding of building construction. He also referred to the significance of familiarizing himself with the search for holistic references as an approach to design problems. Both architects had strong common interests in the technical issues of architecture, which were encouraged by their experiences in architectural education or in their past professional practice and references (Maciel et al. 2007). Porto believed in and continuously insisted on the idea that architects were not necessarily required to gain specialized skills; he stressed the importance of their responsibility to possess enough knowledge to manage and interpret specialist performance. In Lelé's case, after graduating from Architecture School, he began his professional practice at the same time as Brasilia was being built. He believed that by being exposed to this unique opportunity, he was able to consolidate the knowledge that he had gained at the School of Architecture. Porto started his architectural practice in Rio de Janeiro; after being invited to be involved with and lead projects in Manaus, capital of Amazonas state, he decided to settle in the Amazon Region.

### 2.3 Hospital Rede Sarah Kubitschek (Salvador, Bahia, Brazil):

#### Architect João Filgueiras Lima (Lelé) (1992)

The Sarah Kubitschek Hospital in Salvador (**Figure 1**) was the first of nine hospitals to be constructed under joint contract between the Foundation of Social Pioneers (a private institution) and the Federal Government. Today, with nine centres designed and constructed throughout Brazil, this hospital chain delivers high quality treatment to socially disadvantaged patients with locomotor problems. As a pioneer building of this type, the hospital in Salvador, Bahia, in the tropical northeast coast of Brazil (latitude 13°S), will be discussed. The building runs almost completely without air conditioning, in a city in which more than 70% of new residential apartment buildings are fitted with air conditioning systems.



**Figure 1:** Sarah Kubitschek Hospital, Salvador, Brazil (1992).  
Architect: João Filgueiras Lima (Lelé). Photos: Rosangela Tenorio.

Due to Sarah Kubitschek's considerable initiative, with the approval of a National Congress exceptional law, the building of the Salvador Hospital became the embryo of a technological centre (created in parallel with the hospital) whose principal objectives would be to plan and execute works to be implemented across the whole chain, based on industrialization principles aiming at economy, speed in build-



ing, and convenient constructive unity among all of the association's buildings. In addition, it would design hospital equipment, and carry out maintenance, training, and promotion of the hospital work to be developed throughout the chain.

#### **2.4 Site, context, construction processes, and design principles (minimizing capital and operational energy)**

***Accessibility and urban site:*** The Sarah Kubitschek Hospital is located in Salvador's central commercial area, which has easy access to major public transport. But the site itself excluded access to buses, except for the hospital's especially designed bus transport for patients. The exclusion of public transport in most areas in the site has allowed for extensive creation of interactive spaces and green areas.

***Green spaces:*** The characteristics of a hospital demand, as therapeutic complement and for training technicians, the easy access of patients (both outpatients and inpatients) to green spaces adjacent to the treatment and internment areas so as to provide fresh air and exercise.

***Flexibility and expandability of the building:*** The architectural programme, as determined by a pre-established work routine and based on the use of techniques and equipment (which are constantly changing), made it desirable that the construction system adopted should allow for flexible spaces. Each sector would be able to grow independently, without detriment to internal circulation, allowing for the possibility of increasing the number of beds in the future, provided that the operational capacity was maintained and the rational occupation of the site was ensured.

***Flexibility and accessibility of facilities:*** The use of easily accessed piping has required the flexible disposition of internal spaces. Ventilation tunnels are also service tunnels that connect all the structural modules of the hospital.

***Thermal and visual comfort:*** The indispensable proximity of certain fields of activity, with a consequent reduction in circulation areas, partly explains the tendency in modern hospitals to transform certain floors into a compact mass of cubicles with artificially controlled lighting and air conditioned spaces. The generalized use of such systems to ensure visual and thermal comfort has been excluded as much as possible in the Sarah Kubitschek Hospital in Salvador, adopting natural ventilation and daylighting strategies. The surgery centre, sterilization centre, X-ray, and auditoriums have air conditioning and artificial lighting. The remaining rooms were designed taking into consideration factors of shape, fabric, ventilation, and fenestration for appropriate climate control: avoidance and dissipation of heat gains in surface-volume ratio, site orientation, shading devices, cross ventilation, ventilation tunnels and extraction vents on roofs/light sheds, operable windows, low absorbance materials and reflective and bulk insulation on roofs, and lightweight construction with soil cement panels.

***Standardization of construction elements:*** The working characteristics of a hospital combined with the building's large size created difficulties for maintenance services. To facilitate this type of administrative routine, a strict study of the standard-

ization of construction elements was essential (structure, divisions, fixed and movable equipment, lighting fixtures, etc.). The principle of repetition of the elements reduced labour costs and initial capital costs. Given the production of most of the partitions on site, there was also a reduction in costs of transport and embodied energy of materials.

### **3. Lessons Learnt from Baker, Porto, Lima, and González Gortázar**

#### **3.1 Pallikoodam School (Kottayan, Kerala, India): Architect Laurie Baker (1972)**

Simplicity, order and regularity—these are factors that guide Baker's search for design integrity. If an architect's contribution to society is looked upon as the public's perception of him as a socially responsible professional, and his work as a socially responsible act, then most of Baker's contemporaries have deliberately forsaken this responsibility in favour of wealthier clients and larger commissions (Bhatia 1991).

The principles adopted by Laurie Baker did not represent a return to traditional or romantic preferences in architecture. When using local bricks and tiles, there was no intention to produce a specific style or extend tradition into modern design. His focus was clear as to the production of an architecture which could reduce building costs, increase habitable spaces, be environmentally efficient and thermally comfortable. Baker was a believer in Quaker humanism, and his beliefs were truly expressed throughout the body of his work. For Baker, architecture should be honestly based on the culture of its setting, rejecting values alien to its context, together with wasteful building practices; it ought to connect directly to the needs of the social classes. He produced thousands of buildings throughout India (mostly in Kerala) over a period of forty years. Even though he was a profound critic of the international style that spread across India after the construction of Chandigarh designed by Le Corbusier in the post-1950s, Baker was also himself the result of such a period. He never accepted the idea that several human needs could be fulfilled by a pre-determined set of design options and materials. For him, individual needs, drawing on India's diverse environment, cultural background, and lifestyles, would be expressed through an architecture that would be responsive, locally contextualized, and expressive in many different forms. He believed in architecture as an organic, adaptable, and assimilative form, which interprets tradition, technology, and lifestyle. His work stems from ideology as much as from lessons of bioclimatic and sustainable practice.

I learn my architecture by watching what ordinary people do; in any case it is always the cheapest and simplest because ordinary people do it. They don't even employ builders, the families do it themselves. The job works, you can see it in the old buildings—the way wood lattice

work with a lot of little holes filters the light and glare. I'm absolutely certain that concrete frames filled with glass panels is not the answer. My clients have always been Indian. [...] I work primarily with the poor and I've always wanted to give people what they want and what they need, which obviously is all Indian. My feeling as an architect is that you're not after all trying to put up a monument which will be remembered as a 'Laurie Baker Building,' but as Mohan Singh's house where he can live happily with his family (Baker in Bhatia 1986).



**Figure 2:** Pallikoodam School, Kottayam, Kerala, India (1972).  
Architect: Laurie Baker. Photos: Rosangela Tenorio.

The Pallikoodam School (**Figure 2**), designed by Laurie Baker in 1972, is located in Kottayam, Kerala. In this project, the important focus was on the child's experience in learning and playing; it represents Baker's views on school buildings. A strong reference to Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy (Tagore 1996) can be found in this project, in which the interdisciplinary approach and permeating role of the arts are core institutional values. Baker achieved these mainly through the playfulness of planning and organization of spaces, in which none of the classrooms are alike and the spaces merge, breaking the order of squares and regularity of traditional school buildings. The use of daylight, natural ventilation and protection from rain, was solved with the variety of brick patterns, which resembled an interpretation of the old Jali found in traditional constructions. In Baker's words:

The old Jali wall is ideal for giving plenty of light and ventilation. Very often the fourth wall of a classroom is not a necessity and from experience we have learned that a class functioning in an open-sided room does not disturb adjoining classes. All classes can, when desired, turn towards the open wall and a form of common auditorium is available at no extra cost (Baker in Bhatia 1991).

A strong characteristic of Baker's work is the manipulation of building components, like the Jali (a perforated screen made of bricks), as elements that can be produced in large scale, at very low cost, by the majority of people, and that can create spaces which are adaptable and representative of their time, climate and context. His focus on the Jali, an element that can produce intricate patterns of light and shadow, solved the problems of windows elegantly, with simplicity, giving privacy and security; it could easily be handled with traditional craftsmanship available in the region. A Jali opening encourages air flow and diffused glare, and is economical. His strong resistance to the use of concrete-and-glass, given its impact on the whole lifecycle process of construction (operation and capital), and search for alternatives which are cost-effective as well as environmentally friendly, demonstrated his commitment to what Szokolay describes as issues of sustainability (2003): materials, site, energy, waste. Baker understood bioclimatic design as a core part of sustainability that dealt with dual concerns of energy use and human comfort. But he has been overtaken by wider definitions of sustainable practices as we understand them today.

### **3.2 Parallels in João Filgueiras Lima (Lelé)'s work in Brazil**

It is possible to find parallels to Baker's approach in both Lelé's and Porto's work. The extensive research and application of Lelé's work with soil cement in Brazil, aligned with the ultimate goal of an architecture that could respond to the needs of cost-effective public buildings in Brazil, along with strong bioclimatic concerns, is very similar. In Lelé's case, in the context of Brazil at the time, pre-fabrication was used as his ultimate tool to minimize production costs, reduce waste of resources, and minimize impact throughout the entire lifecycle chain of building construction. His innovative approach to building site, can be compared (given the differences in scale and context) to the social, environmental and economic design agenda with which Porto was involved, and to which he gave original solutions.

### **3.3 Severiano Porto's work in Manaus (Amazonas, Brazil):**

#### **New challenges and solutions**

Severiano Porto's philosophy is comparable to some extent with that of both Lelé and Baker, but the reality of Manaus proved to be extremely challenging, and the commissions and conditions of Manaus as an 'island' were possibly much harder than what Baker and Lima encountered. Porto's work is strongly based in bioclimatic design as a guiding design principle, which links the understanding by all three architects of an architecture that needs to respond to human comfort and maximize nature's resources. However, Porto's search for an architecture that extends the concept of bioclimatology is not as constant throughout his career, and the impact of resources is not as fully acknowledged as in Lelé's later work and most of Baker's production.

The context and conditions of Manaus were extremely adverse to the development of a Modern expression. The option of studying the resources of the region was

the direct approach taken by Porto and his architecture proves that it was successful. The scarce specialized labour, the fact that the majority of industrialized products would come by boat or airplane (which is still the case today), and the circumstance that the majority of the population were migrants from all over Brazil since the end of the nineteenth century—all of this made Manaus a passageway. From the ‘Paris of the Tropics’ to the ‘Miami of Brazil,’ with the creation of the ‘Zona Franca’ in the 1960s, Manaus has experienced an escalated and unplanned urban growth, with a population increase from 360,000 inhabitants to 1,600,000 in less than 50 years. Some of Porto’s architectural works, which were originally planned to be integrated with the original landscape and passively designed for the already low ventilation speeds, have become unbearable in terms of liveability; as a result these buildings had to be retrofitted with air conditioning units. Manaus experiences ‘heat island’ effects, with very low green areas and few alterations in climatic patterns within the city.



**Figure 3:** Aldeia SOS, Manaus, Amazon, Brazil (1994).  
Architect: Severiano Porto. Photos: Rosangela Tenorio.

Porto’s architecture remains a pioneering one (see Aldeia SOS, Manaus 1994, in **Figure 3**). Studies have been carried out which bear light on the design process and post-evaluation aspects of his work (Neves 2006). The importance of Porto’s contribution is aligned with that of Baker’s: an architecture that acknowledged regional differences, produced creative spaces relevant to its cultural and social contexts, and was ultimately environmentally conscious. Lelé remains in the middle ground: with a strong social, environmental, and economic balance in most of his work, grounded in the Modernist foundation of his formal education and previous experiences. In contrast, perhaps Porto and Baker can be positioned at opposite ends of a ‘bioclimatic scale’: Porto is more concerned with questions of cultural identity and appropriation of Modernity, while Baker is more consumed by an architectural ideal based primarily on socio-economic values, followed by environmental and aesthetical concerns.

### **3.4 Museo del Pueblo Maya de Dzibilchaltún (near Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico): Architect González Gortázar (1994)**

Fernando González Gortázar, born in Mexico City, moved to Guadalajara in 1947 where he studied Architecture. According to Larrosa (1998), he became a mis-

sionary for the unification of the environment. He accomplished his mission in the public art realm, as he produced environmental urbanism, architecture and urban sculptures. His capacity to integrate his work into the built environment was based on the constructive character that is still present in the expressions and references of his architecture. This creative capacity was also embedded in his role as an intellectual and social agent, and in his main personal beliefs. As ideas intrinsic to regionalism and critical regionalism were previously discussed, it is pertinent to bring into perspective the ideas of an expanded regionalism, with which González Gortázar has been aligned. As Larrosa (1998) maintains, expansive regionalism goes one step further than critical regionalism. It is a trend that incentivizes architectural culture; it motivates an architectural search for roots and at the same time maintains connections with universal and contemporary values. It represents a solution that is permanent, not fashionable, for urban and architectural spaces. Architects who are part of such regionalism are not concerned with the reproduction of a style or set of norms of action: they are usually provoked by the manifestation of many identities, different from regionalist ideas at one end of the pole, and from an international style at the other end.

González Gortázar's works are part of an expanded regionalism, following on Luis Barragán Morfín's creations. The simultaneous achievement of universal and individual values, while integrating local contexts and vernacular roots belonging to distant cultures, can be perceived at many stages of their respective architectures. The tension in expressing an identity found in González Gortázar's work is brought under control by the understanding of multi-faceted cultures and places that interconnect us globally today. His work stands out with as strong a bioclimatic foundation as that of Porto, Lelé, and Baker, but is more concerned with deep cultural and aesthetic values, which are embedded in his own Mexican background and context.

In contrast to Brazil, Mexico experienced the first socialist revolution of the twentieth century from 1910 to 1917. The appearance of the Modern Movement in the country followed the emergence of great muralists who expressed political views as popular art forms. Artists such as Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco were among the significant representatives of the rising art. 'Their work began to appear in prominent places from the early 1920s, and they quickly achieved tremendous popular support both in Mexico and abroad' (Fraser 2000). Muralism and functionalism became intertwined in Mexican Modern Architecture, as problems of nationalism, internationalism, and ideology permeated the background of Mexican artists and intellectuals at the time. On the one hand, the revolution was a resurrection: a rediscovery of the Mexican past, Indian civilization, popular art, buried spirituality, or forgotten peoples. On the other, in political, juridical, and figurative senses, it was a thorough, on-going act of beginning anew. It is in this context that the work of Fernando González Gortázar appears. In his project for the Museo del Pueblo Maya de Dzibilchaltún, there is a very strong urban expression of his understanding of how one can redirect all the complex multi-faceted aspects of his culture and context.

The project for Museo del Pueblo Maya aimed at expanding the urban dimension of the pre-Hispanic precinct. The complex interaction of old and new is accentuated by the urban organization derived from the existing cardinality of the site. Moreover, the project was fully embraced by the perceived path of the sun across the landscape. The use of light and the large scale of the exterior spaces are the two factors that shaped Mayan architecture the most (Tenorio 2005). The Maya made remarkable use of the sun's angle of incidence, as in tropical latitudes the smallest projection can actually produce quite deep shadows. The use of contrast is extensively explored by smooth walls as well as endless decoration, as it is clear that the Maya gained their effects mostly by association and contrast. Between the huge façades, with their generous proportions radiant in the sunlight, and the tiny, dark, almost oppressive interior spaces, they established a dialectic of architectural symbolism. The world of the ancient Maya was governed by a cosmological order that transcended our distinction between the natural and supernatural realms. As stated by Morley (1946)/Sharer (1994), all things, whether animate or inanimate, were imbued with an unseen power. 'Spirits,' which would inhabit trees, rocks or other elements, were sensed as invisible powers. The Museum attempts to capture such qualities, and it succeeds. González Gortázar's built intervention uses the landscape (the forest) as a mediator, where it is never possible to see the new buildings from the old complex. The use of mixed material of high thermal capacity, the *pérgola* created by González Gortázar, the massing and compacting of forms to dilute the programme within the landscape, all produce an urban precinct which is adapted to the Yucatan climate. Furthermore, there are architectural spaces which remain passively lit, thermally comfortable, and engaged with immediate and past contexts. Manuel Larrosa in his final comments about this work asks, as González Gortázar would have done: '¿No fue ése, siempre, el compromiso de la arquitectura? ¿Por qué se nos olvidó?' [Wasn't that always architecture's commitment? Why did we forget it? (trans. editor R.J.G-C.)].

#### 4. Conclusions

We have discussed four architects, examining their work for evidence of the strong dominance of a bioclimatic agenda, alongside the aspects which form the discipline of architecture. We have also discussed the trends of thought that derived from the environmental movement of the 1960s towards current sustainable design concerns, due to climate change and resources depletion. It has become imperative for the architectural profession that aesthetic aspects alone not dominate the urban and architectural scene any longer. As Tombazis (1994) states: 'It is impossible to design in a vacuum. If form giving is the only concern, then the result is sculpture and not architecture.' Our training in architecture schools is still mainly concerned with exercising our eyes. Scientific thinking must penetrate the early design stages to prevent architecture from going back to becoming simply a form of art, which has no objective way of being classified or qualified (Szokolay 2003). As Vale and Vale (1991) affirm:

'For too long architecture has been dragged into the inaccessibility of fine art, only obtainable by the very rich or in a poor reproduction by those less wealthy. Maybe a green approach to the built environment will succeed, not least because it can provide again an architecture for all.'

The lack of balance between technical, scientific, and artistic values has culminated in a separation between knowledge and its applications. It has reinforced the creativity myth in which the practice of architecture relies exclusively on vocation supported by artistic values. The personal examples of the four architects studied here have demonstrated that technical knowledge and practical experience played essential roles during their formal education. We are not arguing that architects must master what specialists should do, especially with the complex structures that we have today and the number of stages that we must deal with. But still the idea of the architect as a synthesizer is valid, and it should be strongly advocated so that sustainable design practices can flourish. There are issues that the architect cannot rely on specialists to solve. 'After all, being the generalist, he [architect] should be in a better position to grasp and evaluate, learning the basics and the differences from case to case and then moving on to make use of this experience' (Tombazis 1994). Architectural schools need to take a strong stand and position themselves as important stakeholders. If we are to survive the twenty-first century, architecture with its huge contributions towards greenhouse gas emissions will need to be neutralized and its relationship with nature *re-established*. Furthermore, the concept of beauty should be determined by other aspects: by performance-oriented and knowledge-based learning and practice.

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**Note on Illustrations:** All the images in this essay are photographs by the author.

# Oscar Niemeyer 1907-2012: Typologies and Plastic Freedom

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Oscar Niemeyer 2008  
Valter Campanato/ABr

## 1. A centennial myth 1907-2007

This is how Oscar Niemeyer defined human smallness in the face of the unfathomable Universe: *'Life is a breath of air'* (see Maciel's 2007 documentary film). It is infinite time in the face of the slow paced history of civilization rendering itself as a laborious decantation in the course of centuries and millennia. A century is the temporal meter that comes closest to the human being, but hardly ever has someone's life lasted this long. In terms of sound health, only Bulgarian peasants, dwellers of the Siberian steppe, and Japanese ascetics are known for having adapted to the slow evolutionary cycle of nature. Traditionally, the longevity of city dwellers and in particular dwellers of contemporary metropolises exposed to the stress and anguish of tough everyday life has been lesser. If on the one hand today's medicine has contributed to people's good health, on the other hand reaching the coveted age of one hundred years is nearly a miracle. The festivities and folk commemorations that celebrate each turn of century for its ethical and religious signification is fully justified: let us not forget that the tempo of Western civilization was set by the birth of Christ.

Hence the extraordinary worth of celebrating in 2007 the centennial of Oscar Niemeyer, the only twentieth-century architect who reached this age. Let us note that architects Philip Johnson, from the United States, Alberto Sartoris, from Switzerland, and Leonardo Ricci, from Italy came quite close to being 100 years old. Even more amazing for someone living past his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, Niemeyer was perfectly lucid and in full charge of his creative work: almost until his death on 5 December 2012 he continued to design new projects that were promptly rendered into finished constructions. The architect was an active member of the twentieth-century avant-garde and author of paradigmatic works that came to reflect the extreme changes introduced by the Modern Movement. Even so, he managed to follow the imaginative and reinvigorating pace of the newer twenty-first-century generations. Not by chance, in 2003 Niemeyer designed the Serpentine Pavilion at the Kensington Gardens, in London, that integrated the annual roster of works with similar programs designed by members of the international architectural jet set, including Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, Toyo Ito, Rem Koolhaas, Snotena, Álvaro Siza, and Eduardo Souto de Moura.

To commemorate the magic of Niemeyer's centennial in 2007, 100 significant works were selected (see the photos and notes included in Ohtake 2007), from among

more than 300 implemented plans from a collection of approximately 2000 projects that he designed in the course of his 70-year professional career. In world terms, Niemeyer was indubitably the twentieth-century architect with the largest number of completed buildings, which are scattered in several continents. To showcase the 100 buildings, a unique organization was devised, different from those in previous publications. According to Ohtake (2007), more than 50 books have been published on Oscar Niemeyer's work. Some of these feature examples of works or specific themes organized according to their function; others cover his production in chronological order, from the early days to the present time. In an attempt to tread an alternative path, the possibility of grouping examples according to formal typological families that define the expressive language of Niemeyer's body of works was explored. This procedure did not entail assuming a positivist attitude or one of taxidermy, one of a rigid separation of formal, spatial or structural elements; on the contrary, it involved searching for creative alternatives that had dictated the aesthetic options and solutions devised to meet the functional and symbolical requisites of the constructed works.

As Italian critic Giulio Carlo Argan accurately points out, the type was a frequent presence throughout the history of universal architecture (Argan 1984). It was conceived as an ordering and rational system in the organization of social functions and application of constructive elements, or as a means of expression of aesthetic enunciations that derive from psychological, physiological, and symbolical components of human beings. Once the particularity of the archetypes—shed, tent, cave—had been defined, the principles of compositional geometric regularity, symmetry, eurhythmy, harmony, modulation, character, hierarchy, and monumentality became frequent presences in the history of Western architecture and, in particular, its classical vocabulary. Although the Modern Movement had freed itself from a few typological norms that dictated enclosed formal solutions, the essence of these principles remained in the plastic freedom that informed twentieth-century works. Niemeyer did not reject them, nor did his radical and formal innovations discard the typological schemes of classic tradition that gave him the basis for reaching the unprecedented formal solutions that characterize some of his designs. In this sense, he assumed the conceptual values contained in typologies of theme and function, without falling into the trap of a model so repeatedly used in the historicist architecture of the nineteenth century, and in examples of the so-called International Style of the twentieth century.

## **2. Persistent rationality**

A morphological analysis of Niemeyer's oeuvre that we might refer to as 'schematic' would be based only on the interpretation of designs in which he used curved shapes, in conformity with his statement that 'the universe—Einstein's curved universe—is made with curves.' On the other hand, the human being has also created a persistent 'inflexible, hard, straight line' that subsists in formal and spatial structures of architecture, as well as of cities throughout the world. The fact is that Niemeyer

himself did not set aside the Cartesian geometric system used in towers, slabs, cubes, cylinders, and pyramids that he designed and built in the course of his lifetime. Particularly noteworthy here is the way in which he transformed, with ever-renewed imagination, the abstract shapes of Philebian solids—the cube, sphere, and pyramid that Plato so praised—in freestyle compositions. In so doing he attributed new meanings to the shapes that set them apart from the principles of classic aesthetics, regionalized as they are in a process of anthropophagic assimilation of the academic heritage. A manifest example of transmutation of volume and shape of historical models—that has the pyramid as elementary example of the weight of matter—is the inverted pyramid that Niemeyer used in the design of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Caracas building (1954), soon sublimated in the shape of a wine goblet or flower in the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói (1996).

The foundation of the architect's 'rational' training dates back to his early years of university study. In 1929, he took up architectural studies at the National School of Fine Arts. Soon, however, he had the curriculum of classical architecture reduced to a minimum by the short-lived reform that Lúcio Costa introduced in 1930, changing the guidelines of academic education. After graduating in 1934, Niemeyer went to work at Costa's architectural firm, where he assimilated theoretical principles of the Modern Movement and its relations with the history of world architecture as well as with the Brazilian reality, as described in the fundamental essay 'Razões da Nova Arquitetura' (Reasons for the New Architecture). Niemeyer combined theory and practice in his design when, in 1936, he worked for a month side by side with Le Corbusier. From the French master he not only learned about the applications of the five canonical points of architecture—free plan, pilotis, free façade, strip horizontal window and roof garden—, but also appropriated the drafting methodology and keen perception of the Rio de Janeiro landscape. His formative cycle ended in 1937, when he joined the team of the IPHAN (the National Artistic and Historical Heritage Institute) founder and came in direct contact with Brazilian colonial architecture, from the constructive simplicity and honesty of popular buildings, to the decorative exuberance of the Minas Gerais baroque.

According to Niemeyer, the principles of structural and functional logic learned from Le Corbusier, the importance of nature and landscape, and the significance of history and tradition ultimately complement one another through the necessary rationality that demands solutions for issues involved in architectural design, namely the study of the program, of the plot of land, the building situation, costs, materials, building systems, and relations with the urban or natural environment. Then the idea comes up—the invention, the final and innovative proposal—that combines intuition and rationale. Yet there are themes and functions that can hardly avoid the Cartesian prescription: office buildings, schools, hospitals, hotels, and residential towers, among others. Let us bear in mind the towering slab of the United Nations headquarters in New York (1947) that Niemeyer designed together with Le Corbusier

to serve as a symbol of global concord; the series of ministry buildings in Brasilia, built along a 'Monumental Axis' that integrated a system devised by urban planner Lúcio Costa (1958); the towers of the JK (Juscelino Kubitschek) housing development in Belo Horizonte (1951); 500 CIEP (Centros Integrados de Educação Pública) schools in Rio de Janeiro (1984); and the more recent designs for Brasilia, such as the Brazilian Bar Association headquarters (2002) and the National Library (2007). In this sense, whereas the curve is an expression of creative freedom, Cartesian geometry is a manifestation of human reasoning in search of knowledge, clear thinking, and legibility of the world by means of scientific development. In architectural terms, it has contributed to the visible evolution of orders—from Greek temple to the pure geometric shapes in Boullée and Ledoux at the time of the French Revolution—as visible rendition of ethical and moral values of democratic society. In philosophical terms, trust in the progress of Humankind formulated by the Enlightenment is what subsequently remained with the new social and economic foundations of Marxism, impacted as it was by the failed twentieth-century socialist Utopia. Niemeyer was a Communist party militant who shared in this aesthetic and ideological dynamic fueled by the hope for a more balanced and socially just human world—a world deserving of beautiful cities and architectures.

Niemeyer neither delivered rationalist enunciations mechanically, nor did he reproduce formal European models. Rather, in each case they were reworked in his quest for an original contribution adaptable to local conditions. In his designs for the Ministry of Education and Health building in Rio de Janeiro, Le Corbusier's low pilotis were transformed into elegant 10-meter-tall supporting columns (1937). The banal reiteration of the modulated supports on which slabs were propped were converted into V- and W-shaped sculptural columns in the JK building in Belo Horizonte (1951), the Hospital Sul América in Rio de Janeiro (1952), and the Interbau apartment block in Berlin (1955). Likewise, in the installation of *brise-soleils* (wing-like sunscreens) on façades he adopted multiple solutions, from the moveable vertical fins of the *Obra do Berço* building to the horizontal fins of the Ministry building in Rio de Janeiro, and the continuous horizontal bands of concrete in the residential buildings in Belo Horizonte (1954). Niemeyer's anonymous and quiescent glazed façades attained an undulating appearance in the Banco Boa Vista building (1946) and a dynamic vibration in the *Manchete* building (1978) in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, the rational composition system that the architect adopted at the Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto (1940) blended with the historical context and the regional language, in terms of both the building scale and the use of local materials.

The box-inside-a-box notation—the structural cage containing a virtual glass box—, in turn, when used in multiple solutions, allowed the transformation of the rigid rectangle into a sculptural piece informed by the dimensional freedom of supporting columns, for example in the Planalto Palace (1958) and Itamaraty Palace (1962) in Brasilia, and the headquarters of the Mondadori Publishing House in Milan, Italy

(1968). Such freedom is conveyed in the external image that alternates opacity and transparency; furthermore, it is complemented by the spatial dynamics of interior environments, and today is applied in minimalist and technological works by Jean Nouvel, Norman Foster, or Peter Zumthor. Lastly, the ‘Brazilian’ heritage of European rationalism that so scandalized Max Bill is rendered as colorful or figurative murals covering walls of building foundations, for instance in ceramic tiles by Cândido Portinari at the Ministry of Education and Health, or the projects that Athos Bulcão indefatigably designed ever since the early days of the construction of the new capital, for example for the Brasilia Palace Hotel (1957).

### **3. Curves, shells and supports**

Since the early days of his professional career, Niemeyer adopted reinforced concrete as a staple in his architectural production. His excitement about this material sprang from the easy availability and low cost of cement in Brazil, as well as from the creative building tradition engendered by local engineers who persistently challenged the rigid structural norms imported from Europe and the United States. Eventually, the innovative application of these norms yielded unprecedented technical solutions. Niemeyer’s objective was to explore the building potential of the new material, the use of which first reproduced the trilitic system of support and beam used in structures of wood and steel. However, as the Expressionist German architects of the 1920s clearly demonstrated—Rudolf Steiner’s Goetheanum, for example—, the plasticity of the material motivated them to investigate new formal paths. At the same time, through the use of arches and faults, it was possible to cover spaces with large dimensions as did the engineers Freyssinet in France and Maillart in Switzerland.

Without a doubt, Niemeyer took his first lesson in practical design at the Ministry of Education and Health building, for which engineer Emílio Baumgart designed the original structure. In this job he came in contact with the lightness of horizontal slabs without supporting beams, achieved through a totally unprecedented method in Brazil. In other words, the architect learned that, by resorting to creative structural initiatives, everything that he imagined would come true by means of reinforced concrete. He also learned that he could build free forms without the regular, traditional modulation established throughout the centuries by wood and, subsequently, steel. On the one hand, reinforced concrete does not require fixed modular ‘components’; on the other hand, the building construction project executed with low-cost labor does not require the on-site discipline found in developed countries. Niemeyer first used a vault design in the church of St. Francis in the Pampulha district of Belo Horizonte (1940). Here, the shape of the vault is dictated by four self-supporting arched structures of different dimensions—a solution that facilitates the entry of natural lighting in the nave. Now devoid of the traditional supporting walls, the original solution was viewed as an expression of a new path for Brazilian architecture. Niemeyer persistently adopted the typology of the vault; however, his familiarity with technique and the

input he received from engineers Joaquim Cardozo, Bruno Contarini, José Carlos Sussekind, and Fernando Rocha Souza, among others, allowed him to cover large free spans by hanging slender curved slabs from huge beams so as to generate internal spaces, such as the butterfly roof at the auditorium of Constantine University (1969) in Algeria, the hanging vaults of the auditorium and library at the Memorial de América Latina in São Paulo (1986), and the Teatro Popular in Niterói (2007).

Yet Niemeyer's 'nearly unlimited plastic freedom'—that is, a design devoid of structural constraints—appeared in the free forms of horizontal slabs. The first one appeared in the design for Casa de Baile in Pampulha (1940), whose curvilinear shape matches the sinuous lake margin. This is where an architectural language of free forms was first rendered that, according to English critic Kenneth Frampton, expressed a dialogue with a natural element—in this case, water—that generates sinuousness, the flexibility of the body assumed as model, and the hedonistic vocation inherent in the Master's Rio de Janeiro culture. The architect's creative genius and inspiration surpassed the limits dictated by reason and fed on life experiences, the absorption of a multifaceted quality of the landscape, the beauty of female bodies, and the quest for lifestyle happiness through hedonism and pleasure, thereby generating works that stirred up vital sensations in users. Oscar Niemeyer first rendered his urban dimension at Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo (1951), in the marquise of sinuous design that stretches across the greenery, constituting an animated covered salon that invites leisurely strolls, while at the same time facilitating a multiplicity of social activities. The personal dimension appeared in the architect's Canoas residence (1953) in Rio de Janeiro, the curvilinear slab of which defines the social space for its dwellers. This design is like a cloud captured from the sky and set in a clearing of the Atlantic forest. Here the constructive and aesthetic reasoning of pure geometric forms was subjected to the expressive luxuriance of nature and to the human body's desire to move about freely in space—in other words, to the elements that informed the Master's spontaneous freehand line work. Once Niemeyer's designs became known, this language of forms that emerged from spontaneous line work, as well as from new structural possibilities afforded by both reinforced concrete and innovative light materials, remarkably resounded in the United States, Europe, and Japan, in such works as the TWA air terminal at JFK airport in New York (1962) designed by Eero Saarinen; the Olympic stadiums in Tokyo (1964) by Kenzo Tange; and the German Pavilion at Expo 67 in Montréal (1967) by Frei Otto and Ralf Gutbrod.

The cupola as an independent form, freely standing in the natural environment—a token of the communal hut of the Brazilian indigenous peoples—is another typology that persistently attended Oscar Niemeyer's body of works. It is a form appropriated from universal historical tradition, yet its internal spatial dimension is dilated. It is a rational metaphor for perfection and, at the same time, for the rigor and formal clarity that democracy demands for the concentric space. Niemeyer's first cupola was built in reinforced concrete as the exhibition pavilion (Oca) at Ibirapuera



Park, in São Paulo (1951), at about the same time as the metallic cupola that architects Powell and Moya designed for the Festival of Britain. Subsequently, his design was emulated in geodesic cupolas by Buckminster Fuller, for instance at Expo USA in Moscow (1959). The success of the architect's design at Ibirapuera Park yielded the two cupolas—one of them inverted—that house the Brazilian Senate and the House of Representatives in the National Congress in Brasilia (1958). In recent times, different versions of the cupola have been designed for Fundação Oscar Niemeyer in Niterói (1999); Centro Cultural de Goiânia (2006); the water park in Potsdam, Germany (2005); and the Museu de Arte de Brasilia (2007). Whereas in the case of the National Congress form is directly related to function—plenary sessions are held in the two hemicycles—, in the case of the Oca at Ibirapuera Park and the Museu de Brasilia, the static nature of the cupola is energized by the free forms of interior slabs and circulation ramps. As a result, an intense dialogue is established between reason and feeling; between geometric rigor and plastic freedom. In this sense, Niemeyer shared Charles Baudelaire's opinion that 'The unexpected, the irregular, as a surprise, and the amazing are an essential part and characteristic of beauty.'

For a while, the structural typologies of the vault, the cupola, and the slab provided the base for a significant group of works that emerged from the Rio de Janeiro master's elementary line work. These typologies marked the liberation of the simple formal schemes in pursuit of more complex and plastic representations, whose image was to have a symbolical expression associated with Brazil. That was a time of a quest for a national identity propped on cultural heritage while, at the same time, developing parameters that were to guide the construction of the country's present and future modernity. This aspiration had to do with Bossa Nova in music, the so-called Cinema Novo in film, and the Neo-Concrete movement in painting. And thus the original and unexpected supporting columns of the Alvorada Palace were designed, with a lightness and rhythmic continuity that abandoned the static image of the classical self-standing support, and thereby assumed the iconic signification of Brasilia, disseminated *urbe et orbi*. Variations on the same theme were soon developed for the Planalto Palace and the Federal Supreme Court building (1958). The framework as starting point of a building first appeared in the sinuous element of reinforced concrete utilized in the synthesis rendered at the Cathedral (1959). The sculptural character of volumes, the surpassing of elementary geometries and the inspiration drawn from complex natural forms are found in the asymmetries of two volcanoes in the Maison de la Culture at Le Havre (1972), and in the plastic form resembling an animal's hoof of the roof of the Bobigny Labor Exchange auditorium (1972).

#### **4. Monumentality and urban dimension**

In New York in 1943 Sigfried Giedion, Fernand Léger and José Luis Sert published an essay 'Nine Points on Monumentality' (Giedion 1943/1958) to differentiate the typology of modern architecture from academic and historicist attributes, taking

the axial symmetries in the language of classic styles as representative of authoritarian power. On the contrary, it is precisely the social contents of function, its identification with the community, and the iconic representation of democratic political structures that would justify the exceptional condition of an architectural solution. With his capacity to control the aesthetic quality of forms created in different scales, from furniture items to sculptures and urban solutions, Niemeyer duly adapted his project designs not only to meet functional and symbolical requisites, but also to focus on the relationship and integration with both landscape environments and particularities of a given city. His formal vocabulary based on simple geometric elements and complex spatial relations sought perceptive clarity, the lightness of volumetric components, and its immediate iconic reading in urban surroundings. In this sense, let us bear in mind the symbolical significance of the Copan building in São Paulo, Museu de Arte Contemporânea in Niterói, and Museu Oscar Niemeyer in Curitiba, among others.

For his designs, Niemeyer devised two paths along the predominance of abstract forms in the organic rendition of nature: one was based on dialogue and articulation with the natural environment; the other generated a second nature through the creation of great platforms to contain his buildings. The first time he designed anything for the Pampulha district, he fully assimilated the specificities of the geographic dimension when situating the buildings around the lake. By building the Casino in what was visibly a high promontory, he hierarchized the hegemonic function of the building complex, while on the other hand he camouflaged the dance-hall-cum-restaurant Casa de Baile on the lake margins. At Ibirapuera Park, he articulated the rigid geometries of buildings by means of the sinuous marquise that conforms to the irregular terrain and the free-styled landscaping. And there are the site's organic relations that absorb the architectural form, for example in the design of the Dominican monastery at Saint-Baume, France (1967); or that condition the free and irregular arrangement of volumes, for instance in the proposal for the land development of Pena Furada in Algarve, Portugal (1965), the curved slabs of the financial and commercial center of Cloughton Island in Miami, the vertical towers contrasting with the horizontalness of the Negev desert in Israel (1964), and the extension of social functions in the city of São Paulo alongside the Tietê River (1986).

According to Niemeyer, the persistent attendance of the platform or esplanade derives from his admiration for Italian piazzas, in particular Saint Mark's Square in Venice. However, considering the nearly geographical scale of the spaces he creates, the reference is more akin to the great pre-Columbian ceremonial complexes of the Aztec and the Maya. Given his design of a platform, the Philebian solids or volumetric articulations become easily perceived by visitors who stroll around at random, without any pre-established guidance, thereby countering the classic composition system. At the same time, the platform is imagined as a democratic public venue, one of social gatherings and community events. Hence Niemeyer's disagreement with Le Corbusier in the design of the United Nations headquarters, for which he proposed a

large plaza for public activities that would also provide a link with New York City. In several of Niemeyer's project designs, the platform appears as a horizontal continuum, for example in the International Fair of Tripoli in Lebanon (1962), the main building of Haifa University (1964), the campus of the University of Constantine in Algeria (1968), and in the Centro Cultural Oscar Niemeyer in Goiânia (2006). In other instances, the esplanade is set at different levels when excavated in the ground, such as at the Le Havre Cultural Center in France (1972), or compartmentalized, as in the Memorial de América Latina complex in São Paulo (1986).

Without a doubt, the climax of Oscar Niemeyer's creativity in terms of proposing a monumental development is the urban system that comprises the Esplanade of the Ministries, National Congress complex and Plaza of the Three Powers in Brasília. In this system, Niemeyer adequately rendered the necessary symbolical dimension to an architectural design based on ideas contained in Lúcio Costa's Pilot Plan. In those days, a need arose to create an iconic image for a new Brazil, one capable not only of representing the country's new capital but, at the same time, of being readily recognizable by the entire Brazilian population. The continuance of the classic axis outlined by the lawn expanse was an indispensable condition for its vision from a distance. Yet Niemeyer's most ingenious creation was a nearly virtual, suspended platform on which the two cupolas of the Senate and the House of Representatives perch, structured as they are in a horizontal asymmetric composition that contrasts with the verticalness of the two congressional Secretariat towers. Although gathered into a set, these enclosed volumetric elements seem extremely light in their reflection on the reflecting pool that separates them from the Plaza of the Three Powers.

Finally, conventional monumentality disappears in the re-interpretation of Niemeyer's innovative language. One of a kind in the world, and indeed irreproducible, Chandigarh—the capital of Punjab (India) designed by Le Corbusier—did not earn international status as an icon. In 1962, when Nelson Rockefeller tried to adopt in Albany, the capital of the state of New York, a formal system that resembled the one adopted in Brasília, Wallace Harrison's project turned out a complete failure. However, Niemeyer's mastery of scale and volumetric articulation—as in the case of the Copan building or the JK complex, for example—, anticipated more recent experiences with oversized buildings constructed in the developed world, to whose condition Rem Koolhaas refers as 'Bigness' (Koolhaas and Mau 1998).

Niemeyer's over-a-centennial lifetime summarized the pathway of Brazilian modern architecture, whose language, creativity and expressivity have cast it in the modern world, thereby not only demonstrating its significance for Brazil, but also duly representing Latin America and Third World countries. Ultimately, more even than Niemeyer's architecture as a formal or aesthetic presence, first and foremost it was the emergence of creativity among historically exploited peoples that for centuries had remained repressed which accompanied the processes of political emancipation in the second half of the twentieth century. After his death in 2012, the Master's oeuvre will

continue to serve as a concrete rendition of his creative genius, and also a lasting expression of his ideological commitment to democratic and popular social movements.

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