

Part III

Previously, I have interpreted some interpretations of Brazil, focusing on the concept of "formation" at play in the texts and the political positions they expose. Before moving on with my discussion, I will summarize very briefly some of the central aspects highlighted so far.

I have begun with the *tropical (de)formations* in Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande & Senzala* (The Big House & the Slave Quarters), *Sobrados e Mucambos* (The Mansions and the Shanties) and *Ordem e Progresso* (Order and Progress), three texts composing his "introduction to the history of the patriarchal society in Brazil", the series "in which I have undertaken to study the *formation* and disintegration of patriarchal society in Brazil, a society that grew up around the first sugar-mills or sugar plantations established by the Europeans in our country, in the sixteenth century" (Freyre, 1986, p.xi, italics added). As I have noted, their main concerns are indicated already in their respective subtitles: "formation of the Brazilian family under the patriarchal economy"; "decay of the rural patriarchy and development of the urban"; and "disintegration process of the patriarchal and semi-patriarchal societies in Brazil under the free labor regime: aspects of almost half a century of transition from the slave labor to the free labor; and from Monarchy to the Republic"

Those texts expressed through my reading five traces of "formation": (1) the central concern with the relation between order and nation, mainly through the notion of "balance of antagonisms" and through the nexus between order and progress; (2) the incomplete transition of the Brazilian civilization in the tropics, being already urban and still patriarchal; (3) the internal inequalities across different regions and different social times; (4) the external parameter related both to the revolutionary aspects of the other Latin American countries and to the encounters with modernities in Europe and in the United States; and (5) the singularity of Brazil as the first modern civilization in the tropics, capable at first of appropriating progressive features from the outside without dismantling order and stabilization inside, constituting a balance of antagonisms that would be challenged by attempts to reproduce in Brazil foreign models of society.

The next text interpreted was Antonio Candido's *aesthetic formalization of Brazilian formation* in *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (Formation of Brazilian Literature). The peculiarity of Brazilian literature is identified by Antonio as inferior comparing to other literatures: "[t]here are literatures that a man does not need to leave, in order to receive culture and to enrich sensibility; others, that can only occupy a parcel of his life as a reader, otherwise his horizon can be irretrievably restricted by them" (FLB1, p.9). In the case of Brazil, he says, "[o]ur literature is a secondary branch of the Portuguese, which is, in turn, a secondary bush in the garden of the Muses..." (FLB1, p.9).

The five traces of "formation" identified through my interpretation point out that: (1) the text is focused on the relation between literature and society, or, more precisely, between literature and nation; (2) the formed Brazilian literature coexists with the yet-to-be-completely-formed nation, which (3) is constituted by regional heterogeneity and its different patterns of internal development, that are internalized in literary works once a literary system is formed; (4) Brazilian literature and Brazilian society are interpreted from an external parameter that places "European model countries" above and Brazilian literature as secondary; finally, (5) this comparison and the condition of being secondary mark the specificity of the formation of Brazilian literature and society.

Then, I have approached the *coexisting forms within a specific formation* as interpreted by Nelson Werneck Sodré's *Formação Histórica do Brasil* (Historical Formation of Brazil), a text that, in his words, is a "historical revision... [that] does not derive from an academic interest, but from the necessity to know, from an objective point of view, the antecedents that, in their development, have led the Country to the situation in which it finds itself now (FHB, p.ix).

I have also identified five traces of "formation" in this historical revision: (1) the project of a truly national condition permeates all the historical approach; (2) the identification of the obstacles put to the formation of an authentic Brazilian nation is connected to the identification of an incomplete transition from colonial period to the national period, so that Brazil exposes the coexistence of old and new forms of production, being both dependent and independent, colonial and national; (3) this coexistence is intrinsically related to an internal inequality in Brazil, where some regions, represented by forces of progress, are advanced in the formation of capitalist relations while others preserve feudal reminiscences, being represented

by forces of backwardness; (4) the obstacles to development and progress in Brazil are interpreted from the links established with external and internal imperialism, as well as from an external parameter that compares the bourgeois revolution which has supposedly occurred in Occidental Europe and in the United States with the difficulties it faces in Brazil; and (5) the historical formation of Brazil expresses specificities that defy any linear logic of development.

The following text was Florestan Fernandes' *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil* (The Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil), and its interpretation of the *minimal decolonization* and the *maximum modernization* of the *capitalist (de)formation* in Brazil. Contrary to the position that a bourgeois revolution did not take place in Brazil, this text is devoted to "the determination of the way the absorption of a structural and dynamic pattern of economic, social and cultural organization has processed" (RBB, p.37) and it claims that peripheral and dependent Brazilian capitalist economy generated "a *minimal decolonization* with a *maximum modernization*" (RBB, p.209).

The traces of "formation" in this case are: (1) the concern with the formation of an integrated nation, supporting therefore Brazil in overcoming dependence and underdevelopment; (2) the incompleteness of the transition from the "old" or "colonial" to the "new" or "national", and the formation of an articulation between both sectors (old and new, archaic and modern) through the (de)formation of capitalism in Brazil; (3) the production of an internal inequality accompanying this articulation of the internal with the external and the inseparable articulation between the inside and the outside; (4) the comparative dimension constitutive of the definition of the bourgeois revolution in Brazil as incompatible with the model followed by central economies and; finally, (5) the singularity of capitalism and modernity in Brazil, exposing the coexistence of past, present and future, and also expressing a potential condition to be realized in other economies following the path of underdevelopment.

Caio Prado Júnior's *Evolução Política do Brasil* (Political Evolution of Brazil) and *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo: Colônia* (Formation of Contemporary Brazil: Colony) came next, expressing an interpretation of a process of *formation without a form*. Both texts claim that the formation of Brazil has not witnessed the configuration of feudalism as Europe supposedly has. For instance, one reads that "[w]e can talk about a Brazilian feudalism only as a rhetorical device,

but not to express a parallel, that is inexistent, between our economy and medieval Europe's" (EPB, p.18, n.8). In what regards colonization, it is stated that "[i]f we assess the essence of our *formation*, we will see that, in fact, we were constituted to supply sugar, tobacco, and some other commodities; later, gold and diamonds; then, cotton and, even later, coffee, for the European trade" (FBC, pp.31-32); that is to say, the "meaning" of tropical colonization was oriented towards the outside, thereby constituting the inside.

Here, the five traces of "formation" identified express: (1) the concern with the "nation" as a possible achievement in an uncertain future when a national form would be finally consolidated; (2) the incompleteness of the transition from the colonial period to the national period; (3) the internal disparity between two sectors and two temporalities coexisting in Brazil; (4) the reference to an external parameter, conditioning the comparison between Brazil and other national formations, mainly the one in the United States; and (5) the specificities of the encounter of Brazil with capitalism and with modernity.

Following Caio's texts above, I have dealt with how Celso Furtado's *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (Economic Formation of Brazil) interprets the *episodic formation of underdevelopment* in Brazil. This text is defined as "merely a sketch of the historical process of the *formation* of Brazilian economy" (FEB, p.1, italics added). To him, the "economic occupation of the American lands constitutes an episode of the European commercial expansion" (FEB, p.5) and "[t]he peculiar form through which the independence of the Portuguese America was processed had fundamental consequences in its subsequent development" (FEB, p.36).

The traces of "formation" indicate five aspects: (1) the focus on the potentialities of an authentic national - that is, independent, autonomous, developed, industrialized - condition in Brazil; (2) the attention to the reminiscences of the colonial past in the underdeveloped condition of the present, which hampers the complete rupture with the structural condition formed in previous centuries; (3) the stress on the internal regional inequality, mainly between the archaic Northeast and the modern South; (4) the assessment on the external dynamics constituting dependency relations between modern countries and dependent economies, which is also linked to a comparative account that contrasts the formation of modernity in independent economies with the formation of an incomplete and underdeveloped modernity in dependent economies; and (5) the stipulation of the specificity of

Brazil, a country that became politically independent from Portugal, but remained economically dependent, first upon England then upon the external trade more broadly.

From Celso's text, I have moved to the *completely other formation* as it is interpreted by Oliveira Vianna's *Populações Meridionais do Brasil* (Meridional Populations of Brazil) and *Instituições Políticas Brasileiras* (Brazilian Political Institutions). The former, according to the interpreter, is devoted to "the interpretation of our history and the study of our national formation. All my intent is to establish the social characterization of our people, as close to reality as possible, in order to put into relief how different we are from other peoples, especially from those great European peoples, due to the particular and original history, structure, formation" (PMB1, p.15). The latter marks his return, after a decade of "forced interruption", to the studies of "our formation and our historical and social evolution" (IPB1, p.60).

From these texts, I have identified the following traces of "formation": (1) a core of Brazilian nationality is projected on the country's social and political formation, becoming the starting point and the regulative ideal of Oliveira Vianna's political project; (2) the incompleteness of the nation is related to a set of absences in the formation of Brazil, in particular the lack of solidarity; (3) the Brazilian formative process exposes regional differentiations and different kinds of Brazilians; (4) the diagnosis and the political project are built from comparative mobilizations that take into account other national formative processes, especially those of the advanced countries and of the other Latin American countries; and (5) the social and political formation of Brazil is interpreted as a specific process, in terms of its configuration (diagnosis) and in terms of the model to be desired (political project).

Next, I have dealt with the *present and absent formations* in Raymundo Faoro's *Os Donos do Poder: Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro* (The Owners of Power: Formation of the Brazilian Political Patronage), whose historical ambition is stated as follows: "[a] long period, from the Master of Aviz to Getúlio Vargas, valorizes the Portuguese roots of our political formation, until now disregarded in favor of the anthropological past and forgotten by the influence of ideological currents from France, England and the United States, translated only in the last a hundred and fifty years" (DP, p.14). His interpretation concluded that a

round journey was made in the formative process of Brazil: "[f]rom John I to Getúlio Vargas, in a six-century journey, a social-political structure resisted to all of the fundamental transformations, to the deepest challenges, to the crossing of the long ocean" (DP, p.819).

In my interpretation, the traces of "formation" this round journey leaves are the following: (1) the resilient dissociation between state and nation, such that the formation of the former is inseparable from the non-formation of the latter; (2) this dissociation results in an incomplete modernity or, at least, in a modernity that is structurally pervaded by colonial reminiscences; (3) these reminiscences constitute an internal inequality that privileges the estament above the classes and reproduces a disparity between the coastal area of the country and the interior; (4) the coexistence of the old and the new, the colonial and the modern, is constitutive of a politically-oriented capitalism, that is contrasted with the industrial capitalism of fully-modern capitalist countries; finally, (5) this journey evidences the specificity of Brazilian history, irreducible to any linear conception of history.

Finally, I have proposed an interpretation of the *(up)roots of formation* in Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Raízes do Brasil* (Roots of Brazil), which would later be described with the following words:

[i]n order to understand any lifestyle strange to my original one, without renouncing to the latter, without eschewing the implications of a formation - that, in me, would be almost converted into a second nature -, it was necessary first of all to try to study this formation. The point is that, the word 'formation' itself already implies that, to such an attempt, it is important first and foremost to excavate from our own origins, from our national past, the real reasons of our present and - who knows? - of our future; it is important thus to investigate these reasons from what seemed to me to represent their sources or their roots (Holanda, 2008 [1967], p.618).

After a sequential and comparative reading of the editions of the text, I have identified five traces of "formation" marking all these editions: (1) the centrality of the "nation" in relation to the articulation of inside and outside in its formative

process, as well as in terms of the possibilities and impossibilities of a Brazilian revolution eliminating the distance between politics and society; (2) the attention to the reminiscences of certain aspects of the past in the present, marking a coexistence between the old and the new; (3) the approach of an internal divide related to the agrarian and the urban, and to the Iberian and the American aspects of contemporary Brazil; (4) the mobilization of external parameters, such as the Protestant countries and the Spanish colonization, in order to define the traits of Brazilian formative process; and (5) the highlight of certain peculiarities coming out from this formation, making Brazilians different from any other people in the world, including the Portuguese.

The traces in each of the texts previously discussed can be interpreted through a different angle, highlighting their common aspects. In this sense, from a more general perspective, the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil can be interpreted as expressing in different ways five traces of "formation": (1) the centrality of the *nation*; (2) the *incompleteness* of the transition from the colonial to the modern condition, marking a coexistence of the old and the new; (3) the *internal inequality* within the country (across regions and/or among social groups); (4) the mobilization of *external parameters* in the definition of Brazil; and (5) the focus on the *specificities* of Brazilian formative process.

Let me recall three caution notes on my effort in this text. First, the texts selected here do not exhaust the interpretations of Brazil that have such ascribed some centrality to the concept of "formation". Second, they cannot be taken as metonymical expressions of the entire oeuvre of their respective writers. And, third, dealing with such a number of more or less widely read and discussed texts (at least in the academic environment) prevents a detailed discussion of each of them. These precautions do not lead, I insist, to the impossibility of such an effort or to the deactivation of its potential. To the contrary, I am convinced that bringing these texts together is crucial to a more comprehensive interpretation of some of the fundamental aspects in the interpretations of contemporary Brazil (within and, I suggest, beyond the academic environment).

Each of the texts above, taken separately, has been approached with the focus on the links between their uses of "formation" and the political positions they expose. I have claimed that each text can be seen as an *aporetic performance*, that is, *both* endorsing a kind of modernizing interpretation of Brazil *and* providing a

certain critique of modernization. In this sense, one can recall that, on the one hand, their respective interpretations of Brazil imply in a certain way a challenge to homogenizing perspectives on modernization, since they emphasize, through comparative accounts, the specificities of Brazilian formative process and how the new and the old have been coexisting over time and across space. On the other hand, they raise different considerations regarding the obstacles to modernity in Brazil, for instance in respect to the consolidation of the nation or of a complete independence; in sum, obstacles to the achievement of a fully modern condition.

Having stressed these elements in my previous discussions, I now proceed to a more general perspective regarding those texts and their aporetic performance. To that aim, I will approach ahead some recent efforts to which I am particularly indebted and that have taken paths related to the one I am tracking here. Namely, some texts from José Maurício Domingues, Jessé Souza and Sergio Tavolaro. Before that, however, I would like to address very briefly a certain controversy that followed a text published in 1988 and that gathers much of what has been raised in the interpretations of Brazil already discussed and that remains pressing in current debates.

After dealing with this controversy (chapter 13) and with some texts written by José Maurício (chapter 14), Jessé (chapter 15) and Sergio (chapter 16), I will proceed to the last part of this text (Part IV, chapter 17), in which I will propose some reflections from the five traces of "formation" that have been orienting my problematization in this text.

13. Mirroring (De)Formations

I have noted in many instances so far some variations of the *presence* of the "United States" in the interpretations of "Brazil". At times, a model to be followed; at other times, a model impossible to be followed due to "local" ("national" or "regional" conditions). At times, a model to be rejected; at other times, a model to be adjusted. If "Europe", as an external parameter, has been mobilized in different ways, the variations do not seem less wide regarding the "United States".

It is not my purpose here to summarize the forms through which the "United States" were mobilized in the interpretations of Brazil. What I want to address very briefly is some resonances of a certain text that could be understood as part of that problematization. I am referring to Richard Morse's *Prospero's Mirror: A Study in New World Dialectic*, translated into Portuguese as *O Espelho de Próspero: Cultura e Ideias nas Américas* (Prospero's Mirror: Culture and Ideas in the Americas), published first in Spanish (1982), then in Portuguese (1988) - interestingly, never entirely in English, the language it was written. More than its specific arguments, my interest is turned to some of its receptions regarding the comparison it proposes between "the Americas of the South" and "Anglo-America".⁶²⁶ As one will be able to identify, those receptions raise many considerations that were crucial to the interpretations of Brazil previously discussed and the texts I will address in my next move. So, as my focus goes to those receptions, I will not discuss the text in detail, laying out, instead, only the main aspects that deserved a direct reaction from other thinkers.

Richard Morse's initial words put his goal like that: "[I] intend to consider the Americas of the South neither as victim, not as patient or 'problem', but as mirror image in which Anglo-America will be able to recognize its *own* diseases and its 'problems'" (Morse, 1988 [1982], p.13, italics added). This mirror returns a certain image, but does not simply invert valences, turning a "good" "Anglo-America" into an "evil" place or a place where everything is simply "wrong", while a "failed"

⁶²⁶ The history of the mobilizations of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* deserves a separate treatment, which I am not able to do here. In the XX century, mainly since at least José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel*, published in 1900, the play has been recaptured in different interpretations of "Latin America".

"Iberian-America" becomes the new paradigm to be emulated (see Arocena, 1993, pp.15-6). I will get back to the play of mirrors in a moment.

In face of that, "Iberian-America" (as Richard also calls it) is not taken as a "case-study of a failed development, but as the experience of a cultural option" (Morse, 1988 [1982], p.14). "Option" means both the way a certain cultural set has been formed and experienced, and mostly a possibility for the future. The question his text raises thus is not whether "Iberian-America" is able to "support or somehow ennoble the Great Western Design"; rather, the point is questioning in the first place if it is, "by historical constitution (for better or for worse), impenetrable to that Design": "What if the transition was unachievable, instead of unachieved?" (Morse, 1988 [1982], p.127). In other words, Richard Morse explores the possibility of interpreting "Iberian-American" not under the signs of the "not yet", the "failure", the "obsolete", but as a region with its own culture, where the "Western disenchantment" has not become completely overwhelming, "even in its modern or bourgeois sector" (Morse, 1988 [1982], p.135). This culture is said also to bring a potentiality as an alternative to the Anglo-American individualism. This potential alternative lies on a long-term perspective. At one extreme, Richard Morse goes far back in time to justify his stance - and hope. According to him, "[t]he European pre-history of the Americas goes from the XII to the XVII century" (Morse, 1988 [1982], p.26). At the other extreme, Richard projects his hope far ahead in time. His last words are: "[w]e here speak of decades, maybe centuries, not of years" (Morse, 1988 [1982], p.164).

In a text first published in 1988, he insisted that "Latin America [is] a civilization unto itself with its own political culture" (Morse, 1988, p.15). The "Iberian tradition" is different from those coming from "the British from Hobbes to Smith and beyond" and from "the Germans from Fichte to Hegel to Marx" (Morse, 1988, p.35). Later, he contrasts "Latin American societies", constituted by "multiple ethics", to "the industrial West", where there is a "unitary ethics of, as the Americans like to put it, uniform *rules of the game*" (Morse, 1988, p.41, italics in the original). As Beatriz H. Domingues claims, the "Anglo" and the "Iberian" models are seen by Richard as two different developments coming out of "a same matrix and a same European pre-history" (Domingues, 2010, p.92; see also Barboza Filho, 2010, p.224). All those differentiations lead Richard Morse to state that the

paths towards "liberation" in "Latin America" must be different than what was tracked in other societies, constituted by other "traditions".

This position also implies that the "United States" (or any other formative process) cannot be seen as a model to be simply followed; actually, in a 1988 interview, Richard says that one of the reasons why the text was not published in English was due to the fact that "[Americans] has an evolutionary view of history, thinking the United States have evolved a lot and that the question is how they can teach Latin America to become civilized" (Morse, 1989 [1988], p.82). In relation to the "Latin American" reactions to the text, he says that his focus was not on the immediate political conjuncture of the continent, but on a wider historical and cultural view. Hence, he resisted providing "solutions" to the continent and also moved his gaze away from the focus on "dictatorships" and other immediate elements of his "current situation" towards a long-term culturally-oriented perspective (see Morse, 1989 [1988], p.15).

Before proceeding to some reactions to *Prospero's Mirror*, it is worth mentioning the reference to the "United States" in Antonio Candido's *Dialética da Malandragem* (Dialectics of Malandroism), first published in 1970. Although I am unable to do justice to this text, I mention it because its approach to the relation between norms (or laws) and conduct (or customs) expresses a certain reading of Brazilian society that has been powerful in the interpretations of Brazil (within and beyond the academic environment) and that resonates in the debates around Richard Morse's text.

Dialética da Malandragem is a study of a novel published in Brazil in the mid-XIX century.⁶²⁷ Brazilian society, in Antonio's reading of the novel, is seen through the notion of the "dialectic of order and disorder" which would ultimately blur the clear-cut divisions between "good and evil", "order and disorder". He, then, contrasts the "historical formation" of the United States with that of Brazil, claiming that, in the former, law has always operated stressing identity differences and dehumanizing relations with others within society, "mainly with the individuals of other groups, that do not belong to the same *law*, and therefore can be manipulated

⁶²⁷ The novel is *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias* (Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant), by Manuel Antonio de Almeida - first published in a newspaper (1852-3), then in a book form (1853-4).

as one pleases" (Candido, 1978 [1970], p.340). In Brazil, groups and individuals "have never had the obsession with order, except as an abstract principle; nor with freedom, except as mere whim. The spontaneous forms of sociability acted with more affluence and as a consequence softened the clashes between norm and conduct, making the conflicts of conscience less dramatic" (Candido, 1978 [1970], p.340). By focusing on the intermediary layer of XIX century Brazilian society (excluding, therefore, the slaves and the rich people from the central position of the narrative), he claims that the novel formalizes "the vast general accommodation that dissolves the extremes, removes the meaning of law and order, [and] manifests the reciprocal penetration of the most disparate groups, ideas and attitudes" (Candido, 1978 [1970], pp.340-1).

Coming out of that interpretation is thus a "Brazilian" relation between norm and conduct that is not a mere (imperfect) copy of a foreign model. And, what is more, this relation provides an alternative to the rigid frame characteristic, according to Antonio, of the "United States". It is certainly not an implication of his text that societies have to be seen on equal foot in terms of their "modern" condition, as if no inequality existed between and within them. This is not the focus of his text; or, at least, this is not the *force* of his text. The point is that Antonio Candido's comparative mobilization differentiates two kinds of "historical formations", without reproducing a hierarchical scale in which Brazil would be interpreted from what its formation lacks in face of some other national formation supposedly "complete" or at least in a more "advanced" stage. In this sense, the reactions to Richard Morse's text approached next should not be reduced to reactions of "Brazilians" against foreign thinkers, or "Brazilianists". The kind of interpretation Richard formulates is far from completely alien to the "interpretations of Brazil" written by Brazilians.

(What is more, the venue tracked by Antonio Candido in that text has some history, as Pedro Meira Monteiro reminds, mentioning Mário de Andrade's and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's different, but similarly ambivalent stances towards "order" and "disorder" in Brazil (see Monteiro, 2012a, pp.207-8). Part of the deeply heterogenous "Brazilian modernism" can be fruitfully read that way - it comes as

no surprise that Richard Morse has resorted to that. Gilberto Freyre's interpretation of Brazil, as I have discussed before, holds another variation of that.

Among "foreigners" ("*gringos*"), Richard Morse was not the only one to situate his "civilizing" hope in "Brazil". As it is beyond my reach here to deal with those "foreigners" (I will avoid calling them "Brazilianists" because of the pejorative tone it sometimes brings), Jorge Mautner (with Gilberto Gil) will do the job for me of listing some names. The song is called "Others saw": "What Walt Whitman saw/ Maiakowski saw/ Other saw, too/ That Humanity will come/ To be reborn in Brazil!/ Teddy Roosevelt saw/ Rabindranath Tagore./ Stefan Sweig also saw/ All said Amen/ To that light that came out".)

Now, going back to Richard Morse's text, let me address some of the reactions it triggered. *Prospero's Mirror* was considered, ironically, a "music to our ears", by José Guilherme Merquior, and a "seductive message", by Simon Schwartzman. According to José Guilherme Merquior's irony, Richard Morse's way of looking at the "South" - "backward, but not disenchanting" - "sounded as music to our Latin American ears" (Merquior, 1993 [1990], p.94): "[b]arbarians under modernity, we are warned that we have no reasons to be concerned", and that "there is nothing wrong with Iberia, evil resides in modernity, ugly and inhuman" (Merquior, 1993 [1990], p.98, p.99). Keeping with the irony, José Guilherme says that Richard holds a very positive view of "Iberian social culture", which according to the former is "more inclined to populism than to democracy", even in its "leftist versions"; "liberal democracy" and its "genuinely democratic practices" end up relegated or at least seen with suspicion in terms of their functioning in the "South" (see Merquior, 1993 [1990], pp.95-7).

Having identified Richard Morse's overall stance, José Guilherme Merquior provides a different interpretation of "Latin America". Instead of the site of a cultural alternative to "disenchantment", it is depicted as being much closer to it than Richard acknowledges. The continent is, in fact, living a "transitional situation, when a series of traditional attitudes and values are being dilapidated by the corrosive impact of an unequal development and an irreversible, although incomplete and distorted, modernization" (Merquior, 1993 [1990], p.99). In face of this diagnosis, he affirms: "only modernity seems to offer a promise of social and psychological reintegration" (Merquior, 1993 [1990], p.99). And this promise can

only be met if various elements "from the past" - the "enemies of progress" - are overcome, namely "the patrimonial state, the peripheral capitalism and the superficial modernization"; in short, a "triple rupture" with "pre-modern" reminiscences (Merquior, 1993 [1990], pp.105-6).

In that sense, José Guilherme Merquior classifies as "myth" - when he uses that word, he means something opposite to "truth" - the notion that there is a "non-Western Latin America". It seems to him a matter of resentment, desire and denial: "a denial of something we have always endeavored to obtain and, however, have always failed to achieve, that is, a part and parcel in the modern world, liberal and democratic. In sum, a universe identified with the West" (Merquior, 1993 [1990], p.109). Nevertheless, this denial does not make "Latin America" exterior to the "West". Neither its antithesis, much less an alternative to it. "Latin America" is "the other West" (see Merquior, 1993 [1990], p.110), whose project must be pointed towards the annihilation of a certain "past" that hinders the coming of a certain "future" - liberal and democratic. The triple rupture desired is a modernization/Westernization process.

In Simon Schwartzman's words, published in the same year the Portuguese version of Richard's text was released, "despite our poverty, our tragedies, our truncated horizons, and despite the wealth and safety that 'they' exhibit all the time, we are superior, we have the secret of life and of future. Finally, they have now recognized us. No matter the extent to which all the empirical evidence, all the daily life, goes against that [depiction]" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], p.122). When Simon switches to a serious tone, he is crystal clear: "it is important not to let oneself be tempted by this deceitful play of mirrors and say with all the letters that it is a profoundly wrong book and potentially noxious in its implications" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], p.122). No matter how hard it is to avoid the temptation, as Simon recognizes, one must be strongly committed to that task. After all, this is a matter of avoiding illusions in face of reality - empirical and historical.

Simon *accuses* - I mean it - Richard of inducing his readers to the mistake of conflating "continental Europe" and "Anglo-American" experiences under the "Great Western Design". It is the search for an "European" alternative, more than any other, that has been a "constitutive element of the Latin American political culture, and one of its core dynamic elements" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], p.127). A further moving contradiction in "Latin America, "particularly in Brazil", is the

one between the "bureaucratic-patrimonial structures" and the "rational-legal alternative of political modernization" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], p.127). So far relatively failed, the latter remains as an option - the one that Simon thinks Brazil should adopt. In his own comparative mobilization, on the one hand, one has "Western societies" - which "preserve an incomparable repertoire of creativity, pluralism and capacity of moral and ethical commitment" - and, on the other hand, "Latin America" - overwhelmed by "provincialism and corporatism" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], pp.129-30).

It is important, no doubt, to consider the moment in which he is writing: 1988 was the year Brazil promulgated its first Constitution after more than 20 years of dictatorship. But, one cannot lose from sight that wider questions are exposed in such a stance that defines "Brazil" by what it lacks in comparison to "modern countries". If that is missed, the risk is to erase some crucial political implications regarding "Brazil" and/in "modernity". Pluralism, freedoms, individual rights, technical and scientific knowledge, disease- and hunger-control, democracy. Those are some of the things Simon mentions as lacking in "Latin America": "we are not even close to those achievements" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], p.130). The *presence* of the "colonial and peripheral heritage" still precludes the *presence* of "rationality and modernity" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1988], p.131).

Richard Morse's reply to Simon Schwartzman kept the temperature of the debate tropically high. The accusation he sees in Simon's text made him question - politically and intellectually - how can one define someone else's ideas as dangerous and potentially noxious, and at the same time define oneself as a liberal. One of the points recaptured concerns the movement of history Simon would follow a "linear conception of history, despite his awareness of the unequal advancement, of the points of friction and, I believe, of the instances of backsliding in history"; Richard, in turn, sees that movement composed of "limited instances of historical linearity" and, first and foremost, as a process occurring "in many levels, including persistence, resonance, unexpected recuperations and novelties or surprises, together with ironic juxtapositions and outcomes" (Morse, 1993 [1989], p.137). He also insists that "Latin America" is indeed "Western", but not the "Industrial West"; both, he continues, have their own "pathologies" and they appear differently depending on the historical frame one mobilizes (see Morse, 1993 [1989], p.146, p.152).

Simon Schwartzman, in yet another reply, takes the chance to specify what he means by "backwardness": a backward country or region is one in which "people starve and die prematurely, where there is no minimally satisfying educational systems, where governments do not have the minimum competence, where human rights are not observed" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1989], p.164). In "Latin America", he continues, one finds "more and less backward countries", and that variation is conditioned by how each has "incorporated" all the ambivalent elements of "modernity": "one does not need to be a naive evolutionist to understand that" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1989], p.165). He insisted that his fundamental disagreement with Richard relied on the answer the latter provides to the problems raised: "the return to an authentic community lost in the shadows of the past", an "utopian Iberian past" (Schwartzman, 1993 [1989], p.159). As I said above, however, the return to a lost past is not Richard's proposition to "Latin American" future.⁶²⁸ In any case, Simon's formulation of his disagreement makes clearer how he conceives "modernization" - or, more precisely, it exposes the "modernization" he desires as a remedy to "backwardness".

Luiz Werneck Vianna explores with more complexity the relation between "backwardness" and "modernization", drawing on some Russian thinkers before Karl Marx, on Karl Marx himself, among others, to raise the problematization known as "advantageous of backwardness". The main point at stake is the assessment of the potential political advantages inscribed in the condition of backwardness to a revolutionary path towards socialism, enabling the skip of the stage of a consolidated capitalism. When it comes to the XX century "Latin America", Luiz Werneck says that "the condition of dependence in relation to the hegemonic centers of world capitalism, but the predominance of the agrarian world, created a friendly terrain to the transplantation of the revolutionary praxis that imposed itself in the Orient" (Vianna, 1993 [1988], p.207). This revolutionary path endorsed by self-identified "left" thinkers coexisted with other, "right-wing" perspectives; to the latter, the "West" is was a value to be pursued, but that does not mean that "tradition" must be overcome (see Vianna, 1993 [1988], p.208).

⁶²⁸ Otávio Velho (1989, p.95), Felipe Arocena (1993 [1990], pp.191-8) and Eduardo de León (1993, pp.229-30) also note that. For a more detailed account of the debate between Richard and Simon, see Lucia Lippi Oliveira (1990).

After assessing the risks in those perspectives ("left-" and "right-wing") linked to the "advantageous of backwardness", Luiz Werneck identifies in Richard's text something to be carried forward, that is, some "original traits of Iberian matrix that preceded our [Brazilian] formation" (Vianna, 1993 [1988], p.221). Those traits, he continues, "point towards the primacy of community to the detriment of a modern conception of the individual, consisting in a focal point of cultural resistance... to properly capitalist values" (Vianna, 1993 [1988], p.221). On that specific aspect, he thinks, Richard Morse "is completely right in his analysis". At the same time, however, one cannot lose from sight that, "left by itself, this culture of backwardness does not become an active part in the democratic construction" of modernity (Vianna, 1993 [1988], p.221). On that also lies the risk of perspectives such as Richard Morse's. In sum, it could be said that Luiz Werneck's interpretation of the text is more ambiguous and explores the impasses and potentialities of it, instead of advancing some sort of accusation and of endorsing some sort of full-scale liberal-capitalism-democratic modernizing political position.

Richard Morse's text, and the reactions to it mentioned so far, circle around the relation between "tradition" and "modernization". It is possible to say that all of them endorse some variation of "modernization"; nevertheless, they not only conceive it in different ways, but also understand the role of "tradition" in the process from conflicting positions. In other words, each text exposes a specific relation between "past", "present" and "future" and a different uneasiness in relation to "modernity": while Richard's focus is on the pathologies of modernity in the United States, the others are crucially concerned, in addition, with the problems of modernization in "Latin America", "Brazil" included - this statement is not obvious, by the way, since the latter is not always understood as part of the former, as the reader easily recognizes from the previous discussion of this text.

What is at stake here is a play of different mirrors, exposing various models of "modernization" and its relation with "tradition". If one recalls my previous discussion of some "interpretations of Brazil", one will identify right away the iteration of the comparative mobilization between "Iberianism" and "Americanism". Richard Morse's long-term perspective can also be seen in thinkers such as Gilberto Freyre and Darcy Ribeiro, as part of those who resort to "long term processes" to ground a certain "optimism" regarding the past and the future of the formation of "Brazil" (see Bomeny, 2010, pp.135-6; and Domingues, 2014,

especially pp.140-1).⁶²⁹ Luiz Werneck Vianna (mainly in the text cited above and in Vianna, 1991) could be included among them, too, given his constant mobilization of the "Iberian tradition". And, as Pedro Meira Monteiro notes, *Prospero's Mirror* shares with Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Roots of Brazil* a certain seduction for the "Iberian path": even if the latter had not showed the same degree of faith in that path, "it is plausible to say that, in both cases, the mistrust in relation to the liberal matrix is what impels them, being the primary cause of their writings" (Monteiro, 2010a, p.190, italics dropped from the original; see also Monteiro, 2010b, p.191, pp.212-4).

In relation to part of the "Anglo-American" audience, then, *Prospero's Mirror* challenges the all-too-common evolutionary and liberal view of history that puts the United States as the apex of civilization. This can be an indication to the account of the deaf ears with which this audience received the text - to recall, the text has not been published in English. Yet, in relation to part of the "Iberian-American" audience, it questions its desire of emulating the "Anglo-American" model as a solution to the otherwise undeniable material pathologies of "Latin America" (see Barboza Filho, 2010, pp.219-221, pp.231-2), as well as the extent to which it neglects the "cultural option" posed by "Latin American civilization". According to José Maurício Domingues, Richard Morse's texts carry an "essentialism" that works as a way to cope in an "uncertain way" with "the theme of the (north-) westernization of [Iberian-American countries]", being, on the one hand, a sign of "respect... for our trajectory" and of a "sympathetic approach to our heritage as a possibility of universal option that goes beyond the borders of the region"; and, on the other hand, something that leads to a "refusal to accept a built-in utilitarian strand in our culture" (Domingues, 1995, p.166). This can be an indication to the fierce resistance, from "liberals" and "Marxists", against the possibility of his text, considered to be "culturalist", being interpreted as a seductive and deceptive music to "our" ears.

Contrasting different formations and deformations of societies, the debates arising from Richard Morse's text bring to the fore how controversial it is to hold homogeneous conceptions of "the modern" and linear accounts on a supposedly inevitable "(world) modernization process". Those debates exhibit conflicting

⁶²⁹ On that, see also Jeffrey D. Needell (2010, p.143).

spatio-temporalities regarding, first, when did the "modern" begin in "European history" (and whether "Latin America" has always been somehow modern); second, the temporal frame from which to conceive "Latin American" pathologies and its potentialities, in contrast to the (de)formation of the "industrial West" (and whether the immediate "Latin American" political conjuncture invalidates any more "positive" long-term historical interpretation of the region); and, third, the role "tradition" should perform in the continuation of the "modernization process" (and the extent to which the "past" must be overcome in the "future").

Richard Morse's problematization, placed within the wider scope of the XX century, points to a certain view of the "periphery" not as mere receiver of "central" (modern) models, but also as a site of potential creation. One of the assumptions that come out of *Prospero's Mirror* is that "the relation between center and periphery should be understood in a dialogical perspective, instead of a hierarchical one. This can involve a geopolitical difference (Western Europe and United States versus the rest of the world; United States versus Latin America) or peripheral situations internal to the center or to the periphery" (Domingues, 2014, p.140). As Pedro Meira Monteiro observes, the play of the "mirror" is related in a certain sense to a "reverse teleology", somehow "Quixotic", through which the supposedly "deviant" society is invested as a place from which "modernity" can be rethought: "[o]ther West, other America, other Europe, other geography", all that pointing to the paradox of a "promising past" when "modernity" had not yet been disenchanting, in Max Weber's terms (Monteiro, 2010, p.195), instead of reproducing the desire for a "promising future" dictated by what the "United States" have already supposedly achieved (see Barboza Filho, 2010, p.231).

It is well known, to be sure, the risks inscribed in the search for "meaning" in the midst of a "disenchanted" world. Nevertheless, this is not enough reason to simply dismiss it - to the contrary.

"Mirroring" can be said to have a triple sense in those textual encounters following *Prospero's Mirror*. *First, it involves the production of reflected images out of different comparisons of varied formative processes; second, it involves the possibilities, impossibilities and problems inscribed in the practice of imitation or emulation of a model once those images are scaled in a hierarchy; and, third and more generally, it involves the implications of the construction of the mirror itself,*

that is, the comparative mobilizations so often practiced in fields of knowledge such as "literature", "sociology", "politics", "history", "economics".

I will allow myself for the moment a step back in history. In Michel de Montaigne's "*Des Cannibales* [On Cannibals]", one reads:

I am not so anxious that we should note the horrible savagery of these acts as concerned that, whilst judging their faults so correctly, we should be so blind to our own. I consider it more barbarous to eat a man alive than to eat him dead; to tear by rack and torture a body still full of feeling, to roast it by degrees, and then give it to be trampled and eaten by dogs and swine - a practice which we have not only read about but seen within recent memory, not between ancient enemies, but between neighbours and fellow-citizens and, what is worse, under the cloak of piety and religion - than to roast and eat a man after he is dead (Montaigne, 1993 [1588], p.113).

Turning his gaze to the "New World", Michel de Montaigne puts into question the practices of his own land: the savagery of the cannibals could not let his fellow-citizens be blind to their own barbarity. From a certain "European" situation, living by that time intense struggles between Catholics and Huguenots, his essay was deeply concerned with the condition of his own land, perhaps even questioning it as a model to other peoples. Let me rephrase that as follows: the *peripheral* barbarian practices work as a mirror reflecting the *central* own barbarian practices. The play of the mirror in Richard Morse's text performs a connected, but different move. Pointed towards the "Latin American" promising modern cultural option, it exposes the "Anglo-American" modern pathologies. Phrased differently: the *peripheral* potentialities work as a mirror reflecting the *central* disenchantment.

Michel de Montaigne's mirroring exposes problematic features coming from a place often seen as a desired model; Richard's mirroring, in addition to that, shows a promising option from a place often seen as a mere imperfect copy. All that has a profound implication to the "interpretations of Brazil". When "our" potentialities and "their" problems are highlighted, the costs of desire and satisfaction linked to "modernization" get more complex. Those mirroring practices problematize, in

other words, Brazilians' desire to be "modern" - not as way to eradicate it, but in order to avoid taking it for granted.

What seems to be lacking, or at least less emphasized, in those mirroring practices, however, is how the pathologies and potentialities - *here* and *there* - expose a *world* process. In that sense, the comparative mobilizations cannot stop with reflected images of different societies or even with images of different traditions sharing a "Western matrix". It is crucial to understand how those societies and those paths (as well as many others) are connected through a global process of identifications and differentiations that constantly produces boundaries discriminating centers and peripheries - not to mention centers in the peripheries, and peripheries in the centers.

In this sense, Richard Morse's and Michel de Montaigne's mirroring acts must be somehow *mobilized* from an alternative *place*. Iterating what I have been insisting here, my purpose in interpreting the "interpretations of Brazil" is to expose the connection between Brazilian (de)formation and a world process. To that aim, I mentioned previously three traps to be avoided (the first two with the help of João Marcelo Maia): firstly, the "interpretations of Brazil" cannot become the background for any naturalization of a "Brazilian" identity; secondly, those interpretations cannot be a repository of texts that would be "as modern as" those produced in "Europe", replicating the "European pattern" in the evaluation of "Brazilian thought"; and, thirdly, the relative advantage coming from a certain "peripheral" gaze should not be converted into some advantage of being "backward", as if the "peripheral" condition represented some privileged gaze at modernity and, along that, the possibility of skipping stages in a "linear development".

One fruitful possibility to avoid these traps is to explore the notion of "place" as "different modes of cognition of the social world produced in a boundary situation" (Maia, 2010, p.10) and as "a temporal hub [*condensador*] of expectations, possibilities and experiences [*vivências*]" (Lima, 2003, p.25, n.6). This way, one can identify a "discursive place that thinks the modern in a global and de-centered way, without reducing the periphery to a simple receiver from the center" (Maia, 2009, p.163) and without reproducing some variation of a methodological nationalism (or even regionalism, as the use of "Latin America" in the pages above can entail). In sum, a global process can be problematized exactly from one of the

places that are often taken to be a mere peripheral, imperfect copy of a central modernity. This is what is potentially at stake in a displaced mirroring practice.

That said, I proceed next to a discussion of some texts published by José Maurício Domingues, Jessé Souza and Sergio Tavolaro.