

Part I

2. "Interpretations of Brazil" and "Formation"

The field of the "interpretations of Brazil" has attracted a renewed attention over the last decades, as many publications indicate.¹⁷ It has also been submitted to different categorizations, based, for instance, on "matrices" (Santos, 1978 [1975]), "tendencies" (Ianni, 2000), "theses" (Ianni, 2004g), "lineages" (Brandão, 2005), or "approaches" (Tavolaro, 2005), antagonistic or complementary, according to their convergences and divergences. Moreover, the multiple areas of knowledge it is connected with and the varied problematizations (linked to state, region, race, gender, race, among others) its advances are other features constantly stressed and explored; as recently stated, "far from a limitation, this aspect seems rather an advantage in face of the labyrinth of the current academic specialization" (Schwarcz and Botelho, 2011a, p.11; see also Botelho and Schwarcz, 2009, p.15; Botelho, 2008a, p.18; and Botelho, 2012, p.15).¹⁸ It is also a potential advantage in face of the way the problem of the relation between "models of thought" and "Brazilian reality" permeates different areas of knowledge - including the "interpretations of Brazil" beyond the academic environment.

Reviewing very briefly the "great interpretations of Brazil of the XX century", Alberto da Costa e Silva states that it was "in search of the future that we have spent an entire century interrogating who we are, and what we want to be, as well as projecting images of ourselves, mirror against mirror" (Silva, 2000, p.38). Octavio Ianni states that the continuous process of self-interpretation is one of the

¹⁷ Among them, one finds individual and collective efforts. See, for instance, Silvano Santiago (3v., 2001), Gildo Marçal Brandão (2007), Bernardo Ricupero (2008b), André Botelho and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (2009), Gabriela Nunes Ferreira and André Botelho (2010), Fernando Henrique Cardoso (2013a), Luiz Bernard Pericás and Lincoln Secco (2014). For recent efforts on "interpretations of Brazil" less centered on specific thinkers, see, for instance, Lourenço Dantas Mota (1999, v.1; 2000, v.2), Carlos Guilherme Mota (1999, v.1; 2000, v.2), João Cezar de Castro Rocha (2003c) and the six-volume collection *História do Brasil Nação: 1808-2010* (History of Brazil Nation: 1808-2010), organized by Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (the last volume is dedicated to the iconography of the period).

¹⁸ See also the answers to the Symposium on "Brazilian Social Thought" (Schwarcz and Botelho, 2011b). Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and André Botelho use the expression "Brazilian social thought", instead of "interpretations of Brazil". I will opt for the latter in this text and will consider "Brazilian social thought" and "Brazilian political-social thought" to be "interpretations of Brazil" - for reasons that will become clear at the end.

"singularities of the history of Brazil" (Ianni, 2000, p.55) and that, "in Brazil, the social sciences are born and developed marked by the following challenge: to understand the conditions and the possibilities of modern Brazil" (Ianni, 2004 [1992], p.38). The projections made, the answers provided, and mainly the questions posed have always been constantly *iterated*.¹⁹

The conceptual chain linking "formation" and "modernization" has remained crucial to many interpretations of Brazil, as recent collections indicate. For instance, in the introduction of a two-volume collection entitled *Viagem Incompleta: A Experiência Brasileira* [Incomplete Journey: Brazilian Experience], Carlos Guilherme Mota poses the following question: "what is the reason for this sensation of strange cultural and political out-of-dateness that permeates our culture?" (Mota, 1999, p.15).²⁰ The notion of being "out-of-date" presumes the opposite condition of being "up-to-date". The most common way of expressing that has been through the language of "modernity", which came to represent what is "new", "up-to-date". In that same introduction, Carlos Guilherme says that "Brazil" shows in the XXI century a series of social, economic and cultural indicators that "do not allow it to be understood as a modern country" (Mota, 1999, p.17). The incomplete journey of "our formation" is considered a "dramatically unfinished process" (Mota, 1999, p.23).²¹

More recently, a collection was entitled *História do Brasil Nação: 1808-2010* (History of Brazil Nation: 1808-2010). The coordinator of its first volume, dedicated to 1808-1830, defines the changes taking place then as part of a "modernizing process" (Silva, 2011a, p.32). The coordinator of the second volume,

¹⁹ In 2000, Simon Schwartzman commented the results of an interview made with 49 so-called "social scientists" ("economists", "sociologists", "political scientists" and "anthropologists") that were asked about the most important Brazilian thinkers of the XX century. Each interviewee indicated up to five works considered "the most important" and up to five thinkers considered "the most influential". Simon Schwartzman calls the attention to the fact that almost all the texts mentioned have "Brazil" as the theme, and work with a distinction between a "real Brazil" and a "formal" or "legal Brazil", the latter linked to the importation of laws and worldviews from Europe by Brazilian elites (see Schwartzman, 2003 [2000], p.254). The thinkers were ranked in the following order (beginning with the "most influential" according to the aggregate results): Gilberto Freyre, Celso Furtado, Raymundo Faoro, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Victor Nunes Leal, Florestan Fernandes, Caio Prado Jr., Oliveira Vianna and Euclides da Cunha (for the table with the detailed results, see Schwartzman, 2003 [2000], p.257; see also Brandão, 2007, pp.24-5).

²⁰ The first volume is subtitled "Formação: Histórias [Formation: Histories]"; the second, "A Grande Transação [The Great Transaction]".

²¹ Brazil, as another of its interpreter states, "is a society in process of formation, in which some traces are already delineated and others, only sketched or even indecisive" (Ianni, 2004c, p.160); Brazil is composed of "various social formations within one comprehensive, integrative and contradictory social formation" (Ianni, 2004d, p.193).

although not using the notion of "modernization", says that 1830-1889 marks "the continuation of the long and painful birth" of the "nation-state" (Carvalho, 2012, p.19). From the coordinator of the third, one reads that 1889-1930 exposes "a superposition of temporalities and the affirmation of a peripheral modernity", where "the concept of modernization has been combined with the concept of tradition" (Schwarcz, 2012, p.21, p.22). The coordinator of the fourth volume says that one of the key-aspects of 1930-1964 was "nationalism, that, allied with developmentalism, made the country believe that it would be more Brazilian, more modern, more just socially" (Gomes, 2013a, p.25). Finally, in the fifth volume, the coordinator writes that from 1960 to 2010, "Brazil has transformed itself, modernized itself" (Reis, 2014, p.23). What stands out from those citations is the centrality of "modernization" in the interpretations of the "formation" of Brazil. All those thinkers also emphasize that the modernizing process has always been resisted by forces of tradition - for better or for worse.

Both in the assessment of how modernity has been processed and has faced obstacles in Brazil, and in the identification of an internal disparity in the country, a central position is occupied by the comparison between Brazilian formative process and processes in other parts of the world - most often "Europe" (mainly "England" and "France"), the "United States", and "Latin America". The comparison with "Europe" or the "United States" has often led to certain depictions of Brazilian modernity as "incomplete", "inauthentic", "peripheral"; a country that would be "neither traditional nor fully modern" (Tavolaro, 2008). In relation to the comparison with "Latin American" countries, it is very often stated that the hegemony of the Catholic religion and the language-unity were two fundamental reasons why the Portuguese colony in America has become one single country as opposed to the multiplicity of countries emerging out of the Spanish colonization in America.²²

The mobilization of external parameters in the interpretations of Brazil connects in an intimate way, on the one hand, how the formation of contemporary Brazil is interpreted and, on the other hand, how the production of knowledge is conceived. As the former is the immediate focus of this text, I will briefly discuss some aspects of the latter now. Conventionally - or at least so I have been often

²² Needless to say, those depictions, increasingly questioned, do not exhaust all the patterns of comparative mobilizations in the interpretations of Brazil.

taught to assume -, a "theory" is presented before a "case" is discussed, since it is the former that guides what will be said about the latter. There are multiple ways of tackling that, but what interests me here is how that stance presumes a certain link between a "place" and the task of "the intellectual" in the mobilization of "sources"; or, one could say, in "theorization".

Luiz Costa Lima published in 1991 a collection of essays entitled *Pensando nos Trópicos* (Thinking in the Tropics) in whose texts he "practices the taste of thinking as an inhabitant of the tropics, making them present in whatever object is dealt with, 'tropical' or not" (Lima, 1991, p.12). He adds that "the situation of third-world inhabitants" gives us the "strange opportunity" of thinking "literature from a poor perspective, so diverse from the metropolitan perspective, rich in books and material means; to think literature thus in the most elementary of its gestures, that is, what makes a work be part of literature?" (Lima, 1991 [1990c], p.21). Hence, "[w]hen I write about [Miguel de] Cervantes, [Denis] Diderot or [Stéphane] Mallarmé, I do not pretend to be an European analyst. I do not do that because I know indeed that, if any novelty exists in what I may say, it is meshed with the perspective that the almost hopeless third-world difficulties give me" (Lima, 1991 [1990c], p.21).²³ Years later, he would say, in a text with a different immediate focus, that "works that thematize the experience lived in marginalized and metropolitan continents internalize distinct *places* which tend to provoke differentiated configurations" (Lima, 2003, p.23, italics in the original). "Place" is seen and felt not as geographical delimitation, but as "a temporal hub [*condensador*] of expectations, possibilities and experiences [*vivências*]" (Lima, 2003, p.25, n.6). What is stake in this sense is the link between "different configurations" and "the place in which difference is processed or in which it is received" (Lima, 2003, p.25).

In an afterword he wrote to an Australian journal that dedicated a special issue to his texts, one reads: "let me say something about what it means to live intellectually there [that is, in some place of our despised hemisphere]: it means knowing beforehand that your work is going to have no diffusion, especially if your mother tongue is not a cosmopolitan language – it is the case of Portuguese". And,

²³ This problematization has accompanied Luiz Costa Lima for decades and he reiterates this position towards the "peripheral" or "marginalized" conditions in many instances, although the articulations he provides to deal with that have varied among them (as his many revisions of his own texts point out).

what seems worse, "it means that even in circles of local intelligentsia your reflection is received with a certain distrust, since it is not recognized as something descending from a legitimate 'source,' i.e., from a thinker or a movement whose headquarters are located in the first world" (Lima, 2009, p.122; see also Alcides, 2003, pp.935-8).

(I must confess my uneasiness in face of Luiz Costa Lima's notion that there is a "tropical", "third world" or "marginalized" place that is made present, however differently, in texts. I am obviously not saying that there are no differences - *and huge asymmetries and hierarchies* - among groups, societies, countries, continents. My uneasiness relates, rather, to the risk of taking those places as starting points and assuming binaries such as third world/first world, margin/center, even if they are not conceived in geographical terms. At the same time, this uneasiness would lead to naïveté, ignorance, romanticization or even self-denial, if some aspects raised by Luiz were easily dismissed. It is indeed the case that the Portuguese language poses some obstacles to the production of academic knowledge if - this is a big if - one aims at being read beyond the confines of the Portuguese-speaking academic world. This is particularly the case when the "topic of study" to which one is associated is of a "universal" concern (in this case, an option, often the only one, if you want a position at some university abroad is to be a "specialist" in "Brazil", "Latin America", and the more recent "Global South"). It is also not uncommon to be received with distrust by the "local intelligentsia" if, as a Brazilian thinker, one is not first recognized internationally; even more difficult can your situation become if you do not hold a "PhD" from a foreign university - better to be in "Europe" or in "North America". Realistic resentment aside, let me proceed...)

Speaking about the "Latin American intellectual", Luiz Costa Lima says that in face of the models of thought most often available (such as "biological sociology", "liberalism", "right-wing authoritarianism" or "Marxism"), this intellectual "has got used to see himself and to be seen as an adaptor and a diffuser of currents of thought previously legitimized in the metropolitan countries" (Lima, 1991 [1990d], p.134). Elsewhere, Luiz Costa Lima discusses why Brazilian "cultural system" is "dependent" and argues that "[w]hen it is internalized, the situation of dependence makes us see ourselves as followers of some line of thought

already produced, polished and exported from some legitimized metropolitan center" (Lima, 1991 [1990b], p.273). This has configured in his terms a "Latin American colonial economic-cultural status" (Lima, 1991 [1990d], p.134), which is sharply expressed, to take just one example, in the all-too-common practice of "applying" an up-to-date "theory" (generally formulated in "Europe" or "North America") to a "case" (no matter which case and which field of knowledge one is talking about).

Needless to say, what is at stake is by no means a call to reject "external sources" in favor of some "internal" or "national purity" or "authenticity". Luiz himself emphasizes that: "national isolation only helps in the preservation of the colonial status" (Lima, 1991 [1989], p.39).²⁴ Silviano Santiago, in turn, warns that "interpreters of Brazil" must not simply seek the emulation of what is dictated by "the evolutionary process offered by First World nations and by Western modernization"; but, at the same time, he says that "[t]o Brazilianize oneself does not mean to become xenophobic, with aversion towards foreign cultures" (Santiago, 2005, p.9).

A different angle to that problematization is given by Silviano Santiago in another text. According to him, "Brazilian intellectuals" are generally questioned in "metropolitan countries" about what contribution can "the cultural production in Brazil" bring to "critical theory" (see Santiago, 2004 [1999], p.194). Let me continue with Silviano, but proposing to extend what he is saying to the production of knowledge in general. To him, this question assumes a certain split: on one side of the intellectual world, one would have the metropolitan, superior and universal

²⁴ It is worth recalling the "Anthropophagic" movement in the late 1920s, mainly the figures of Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade, to realize how misleading the suggestion of isolation would be. Moreover, also talking in terms of "Latin America", Silviano Santiago once said that "[t]he biggest contribution of Latin America to the Western culture comes from the systematic destruction of the concepts of *unity* and *purity*" (Santiago, 2000 [1971], p.16, italics in the original). Although I have many reservations in relation to the precise words in which Silviano put the problem and the possible task at hand in 1971 - more precisely in relation to the chain he established between "destruction", "Latin America" and "the West" -, what is crucial for me here is the persistence of the problem to be tackled, which permeates all the spatio-temporal dimension my text will be focusing on. To Silviano, there is a certain "method" that must be rejected; according to it, the "source" and "influence" of a "metropolitan model" is what legitimizes "Latin American works": "[s]uch discourse [that is, such method] reduces the creation of Latin American artists to the condition of a parasite oeuvre; an oeuvre nourished by another one, to which it never adds anything proper to itself" (Santiago, 2000 [1971], p.18). For sure this is not an exclusively "Brazilian" or "Latin American" intellectual practice of production of knowledge, but a more general account on that would require a different angle of problematization that I am not able to advance here explicitly. For an engagement with Silviano's mobilization of "Latin America", see Evando Nascimento (2008).

locus of enunciation; on the other side, the peripheral, subaltern and particular. Silviano's answer aims at establishing, then, a certain "dialogue", which is not "the coarse *inversion* of the hierarchy of values proposed by the question", but one that seeks to show the questioner the hegemonic economic and political values his (I use "his" purposefully) question itself carries (Santiago, 2004 [1999], p.194, italics in the original). I would rather avoid the notion of "dialogue", which has often been interpreted (not exactly by Silviano himself) as a means to the achievement of a "consensus" stripped of "power relations". What interests me, instead, is the problematization of the split in the intellectual world; that is, of the distinction between "receivers" and "producers" of knowledge and models of thought, where the former becomes the destination of "cognitive, ethical-moral, aesthetic-expressive and institutional" references arriving from the latter (see Tavolaro, 2014, p.638).

From a yet different perspective, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto had raised decades earlier the limitations in the use of theoretical frameworks concerned with the economic development and the formation of the capitalist society in "developed countries" to the comprehension of "Latin American countries" (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979 [1970], p.139; see also Weffort, [2003] 1978, ch.VIII). J. Leite Lopes, in turn, stressed that the "utilization of science and technology for a faster development of Third World countries cannot limit itself to the passive importation of knowledge and techniques elaborated and certified abroad" (Lopes, 1977 [1967], p.154). Both texts are questioning, in short, the straightforward application of certain theories produced in "central" countries to other parts of the world.

Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos noted a similar pattern of importation of foreign models by "Social Sciences" in Brazil. According to him, their evolution have been conditioned by two processes: the "form of absorption and internal diffusion of methodological and substantive advances generated in foreign cultural centers" and "the stimuli produced by the unfolding of the economic, social and political history of the country" (Santos, 1978 [1975], p.17). In face of that pattern, he says that the important thing to have in mind is how this absorption will take place and how the interaction between "social events" and "scientific reflection"

will evolve.²⁵ Actually, as he would state years later, those "Brazilianists" - "North Americans, Europeans and Brazilians" - that assume the existence of "valid theories to the wealthy countries, and others that would be applicable to developing and poor, backward, stagnated countries" go against the "good and ancient norm of scientific investigation" (Santos, 1993, p.9). All "modern societies", in his view, face a set of common problems, such as the "formation of social identities", the need to enlarge public participation and to institutionalize political competition, among others. So, a "good theory, if it is a good theory of development, for instance, must be comprehensive enough to clarify development as well as underdevelopment. And that is for the same reason that it does not exist a law of gravity to round bodies and other to rectangular ones" (Santos, 1993, p.9).²⁶

The above-mentioned thinkers for sure have paved widely different tracks in face of the specific problems they have posed. But those problems can also be seen from a general problematization they share, as I am suggesting. The interpretations of Brazil have often been inspired by "European" and "North American" thinkers and texts (see Ianni, 2000, p.57; Lessa, 2011, p.22). But "inspiration" must not be "emulation"; it is not necessarily converted into the search for being a "copy", an "authentic copy" of the "original". The point is not to claim the necessity of an exclusive theory to "periphery", but to reject a certain form of theorization.

More recently, Gildo Marçal Brandão pointed out that a certain "international division of intellectual labor" must be resisted; according to it, some are in charge of "theory", while others are in charge of its "application" and/or of the production of "empirical material to the consumption and industrialization by

²⁵ In this text, Wanderley opposes himself to certain kinds of intellectual production at that time in Brazil. For instance, he rejects the way intellectuals in Brazil, since the 1950's, were neglecting the previous Brazilian intellectual production, in favor of "universal patterns of scientific work", marking a rupture between a "pre-scientific and a scientific period of Brazilian intellectual production" (see Santos, 1978 [1975], pp.23-7). Overall, his claim is that the "history of political and social ideas in Brazil" can be usefully mobilized in diverse ways, but must not be used exclusively as justifications to "methodological, theoretical or political options" (see Santos, 1978 [1975], p.57). I mobilize Wanderley's text for the problem and the pattern of importation it identifies, rather than the solution it proposes. For another take on that, see Luiz Werneck Vianna (2004 [1994]).

²⁶ Wanderley defines his text as a "book [that interprets] comparatively the political adventure of the country, since its subaltern entrance in XIX century modernity until its possible stagnation in the peripheral modernity of the following century" (Santos, 1993, p.10). To that aim, he draws heavily on a reinterpretation of game theory following a "scientific investigation"; one of his conclusions is that "for the time being, there is no civic culture in the country, only nature. Exuberating, for sure, as it is convenient to a tropical country" (Santos, 1993, p.115).

intellectuals from central countries" (Brandão, 2007, p.180). Christian Lynch built on a similar reasoning when he proposed a "history of the history of Brazilian political-social thought" from 1880 to 1970, and hypothesized that, "in Brazil, the elites have always considered their intellectual products more or less inferior than those developed in Europe and in the United States, in consequence of a wider perception of the peripheral condition of their country" (Lynch, 2013, pp.731-2).²⁷ This condition is linked with a temporal dimension ("backwardness") and a spatial one ("periphery") inscribed in a "international division of intellectual labor: in world geography, the 'center'... produced the 'universal' (philosophy, theory, science), whereas the periphery was in charge of applying it to its specific circumstances" (ver Lynch, 2013, pp.734-5, pp.758-60; see also Lynch, 2016, pp.82-6).

Nevertheless, as Edison Bariani notes in relation to "Brazilian sociology" and that can be extended to other areas of knowledge, if it is indeed the case that there has been a constant assimilation of ideas from "Europe", "the choice, the selection and the assimilation of those ideas... were historically and socially (and, therefore, politically) conditioned, and made according to the deliberation of the subjects" (Bariani, 2014, p.110).²⁸ In other words, although the replication of foreign models has been often practiced, it does not exhaust the effective mobilizations that have occurred of "European" or "North American" ideas to the interpretation of Brazil. Some of those "effective mobilizations" will be discussed

²⁷ Christian generalizes his hypothesis to the "Iberian-American elites", although his text deals only with "Brazilian elites".

²⁸ For another recent account on "sociology" in Brazil, see Enno D. Liedke Filho (2005). An account on "Brazilian political science" similar to Edison Bariani's discussion of "sociology" is provided by Renato Lessa (2011). Here, it is valid to mention the intense participation of "French intellectuals" in the building and consolidation process of the "social sciences" at the University of São Paulo, which would later be influenced also by the "American social science". I will bring that again later, as well as some features of the fields of "literary critic" and "history". Moreover, the "political science" practiced in the United States has also been deeply influential in some departments of "political science" in Brazil (see Keinert and Silva, 2010; Moreira, 2011; and Lessa, 2011), as well as in some departments of "international relations". In the case of "international relations", it is interesting to note that, besides the so-called "American political science", the constitution of the academic field has also been influenced by a certain "French" perspective on the history of international relations and diplomacy, and, more recently, by some theorizations identified as "post-structural", "post-colonial" and even "decolonial". As far as I can tell, however, the only sustained engagement with the "interpretations of Brazil" from any department of "international relations" is Luiz Feldman's 2009 master thesis *O Brasil no Mundo e Vice-Versa* (Brazil in the World and Vice-Versa), presented at the Institute of International Relations of PUC-Rio (IRI/PUC-Rio), under the advise of Professor João Pontes Nogueira. I take the chance to note that I am greatly indebted to Luiz in this enterprise.

later, when I turn to some texts devoted to the interpretation of the formation of contemporary Brazil.

In a direct or indirect way, all of the texts cited above refer to, and are situated in, an intellectual environment already marked by university institutions and disciplinary concerns.²⁹ But all that exposes a wider, more complex problem, that will permeate my problematization here. A detailed discussion of those texts would have to deal with the following aspect: from different perspectives and with different goals, many of the thinkers that rejected the replication of "foreign models" to "Brazilian" or "peripheral reality" have, deliberately or not, constantly resorted to other "foreign models". In addition to that, many of them have presupposed homogenous categories such as "modern", "central", "developed" countries or societies, as opposed to "dependent", peripheral, "underdeveloped" (later "developing") ones. This is not the place to tackle the varied solutions they proposed. Rather, my purpose in mentioning them, taking into account that they come from different fields of knowledge ("sociology", "literature", "economics", "political science" and even "science and technology"), is to expose a common, persisting concern. What is important to stress, then, is that a similar problem is being raised: the relation between theorization and places other than those considered "central" ones.

Being "a temporal hub [*condensador*] of expectations, possibilities and experiences [*vivências*]", "place" is not a necessary derivation of anything such as a previously conceived "third world" or "peripheral" condition. Actually, it can even problematize such conceptions and their implications.³⁰ There is an intrinsic

²⁹ Some will immediately recall the debate between Florestan Fernandes and Guerreiro Ramos on the tasks of "sociology" in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s. Guerreiro Ramos' texts has been receiving renewed attention devoted to their resistance towards "Eurocentrism" and their potential regarding a "post-colonial" theorization from "periphery" or from "the South" (see, for instance, Maia, 2011b; Filgueiras, 2012; and the Special Issue of *Caderno CRH*, v.28, n.73, 2015). In addition to that, it is important to mention that I will avoid tackling the otherwise significant problem of the "essayist" or the "pre-scientific" forms of writing as opposed to a "scientific" work that have generated many controversies since the university departments begun to be established in Brazil (the disagreements between Florestan Fernandes and Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos express part of what is at stake in that dispute). This has been recently discussed from various perspectives; see, for instance, Gildo Marçal Brandão (2005; 2007), André Botelho (2008a, 2010, 2012), Bernardo Ricupero (2007, 2011), Fábio Cardoso Keinert and Dimitri Pinheiro Silva (2010) and Renato Lessa (2011).

³⁰ To be clear, I am mobilizing Luiz's insight for my own purpose, and it is highly likely that he would disagree with my stance on that issue. Moreover, while he has on many occasions discussed (the obstacles to) the role of the "intellectual" in Brazil, my focus is rather different, as it will be clear ahead.

link exposed between, on the one hand, the production of academic knowledge and, on the other hand, the formative process of contemporary Brazil. It comes as no surprise that the regional disparity in the production of knowledge; the comparison with academic institutions of "Europe" and the "United States"; and the identification of deficiencies in Brazilian intellectual environment are related to some of the traces inscribed in the interpretations of Brazilian formation as a whole. Academia is not an ivory tower in this respect, even when it seems (and their members often are) so disconnected from "society", "politics", "people".

According to Homi K. Bhabha, "[w]hat is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). That effort requires the problematization of the (self-)imposed necessity of following, replicating and/or applying a model of thought developed in "metropolitan" sites. In that sense, the "epistemological 'limits' of those ethnocentric ideas" can also be explored as "enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices - women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities" (Bhabha, 1994, pp.4-5).

But, so as not to promise my reader what I will not deliver here, let me say right away that I will not deal with those histories and voices directly; rather, I will be more focused on those "epistemological limits" and their operation in the interpretations of Brazil. To that aim, the texts selected are interpreted as performing a double role: on the one hand, they endorse (most often explicitly) a modernizing perspective on "Brazil"; on the other hand, they are potential sites of critique of modernization. This aporetic performance is conditioned by certain "places" - or, "enunciative boundaries" - in which they can be situated, once they are not approached merely as expressions of "obsolete theoretical perspectives" or, what is worse, as nothing more than expressions of an "incomplete", "inauthentic", "failed" modernization in Brazil. So, my effort has some connection with Homi K. Bhabha's, in that I also try to "[depart] from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or 'dependency' theory" and to "[resist] the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres" (Bhabha, 1994, p.173). When it comes to the interpretations of Brazil selected in

this text, forcing this recognition and "provincializing Europe" (as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) proposes) encompass the task of problematizing how the places of enunciation constituted in those texts have come to reproduce a certain "European historicism" linked to modernization while they have also provided potential sites of its critique.

When I turn to the assemblage of texts named "interpretations of Brazil", it is not in order to address the possibilities and impossibilities of encountering the other, the subaltern, the "native informant", as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak puts (see Spivak, 1999, 2003). It is also not to bring to the fore some variation of a "'Third World' input into Western knowledge or politics", as Robert J. C. Young does (Young, 2004, p.15). Both tasks are crucial, no doubt, and I hope they will be resonating in some way or another in this text. I am indeed interested to a certain extent in how "the West" (I am using the expression only to keep with the terms of the paragraph) has silenced "the subaltern" or the "heterogeneity of the Other"; furthermore, I am interested in how "Third World inputs" have been dismissed or co-opted by that same "West" - in politics and in the politics of knowledge. All that permeates my discussion. However, my explicit concern comes from a rather different angle. What is absolutely central to me in this text is how those practices can be reproduced in a certain way in the so-called "Third World"; that is, I turn to "interpretations of Brazil" in order to problematize the replication of some practices often associated to "the West". More precisely, bringing to the terms I use here, those texts are interpreted as variations of a modernizing perspective - variations in politics and in the politics of knowledge. At the same time, however, they are also potential sites to problematize that perspective, and this is also a fundamental reason why I turn to them.

Instead of rejecting or endorsing myself the desire of modernization differently expressed in those texts, I implicitly situate my stance in relation to a "double bind" to which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak called the attention. According to her, the "arrogance of the radical European humanist conscience", which obliterates the historical, cultural, linguistic limits of the figure of "Man", cannot be solved, in any easy way-out, by "[t]he opposite point of view... that only the marginal can speak for the margin", however relevant this point of view is (Spivak, 1999, p.171). The indissociable figures of "Man" and "Europe", and their relation with "other-than-Man" and "non-Europe", are crucial to my discussion in this text.

In Jacques Derrida's formulation, one reads: "[m]etaphysics - the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own *logos*, that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason. Which does not go uncontested [*Ce qui ne va pas sans guerre*]" . And: "[w]hite mythology - metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in the palimpsest" (Derrida, 1972 [1971], pp.213-4. I have also used the English translation in Derrida (1982)).

The "Eurocentric arrogance" and the "unexamined nativism" share the assumption that "the other" can be fully known - either by some supposedly universal standard or by the multiplicity of particularistic subjectivities. As modernizing texts, the interpretations of Brazil selected internalize and replicate this "European arrogance", expressed by that pattern of importing "models of thought" to a different "place". As potential critiques of modernization at the same time, they help in problematizing this arrogance, without merely reproducing that kind of nativist opposition. In this sense, I agree with João Marcelo Maia in that the "interpretations of Brazil" can speak at once about "Brazil" and about "global modern dilemmas" from a different place, other than a certain "European" and a certain "Anglo-American" one (see Maia, 2009, p.156) - I will get back to that below.

In short, it is not a matter of rejecting or endorsing modernization, but of problematizing how the desire to be modern can be rethought. Appropriating Gayatri's words again, the point is to stress how crucial it is the "persistent critique of what we cannot not want" (Spivak, 1999, p.110). Or, if I may add, a persistent critique of what "we" - as modern subjectivities - cannot not want *and* what "we" - as modern subjectivities - may never fully achieve. Ultimately, this effort would imply that distinctions such as "First World" and "Third World", "Center" and "Periphery", "West"/"Europe" and "Its Others", have to be rethought - in politics and in the politics of knowledge.

Instead of "presenting" ("making *present*") a certain "theoretical framework" in order to "apply it" to my "case" or to "individual texts", I will mobilize different texts that occurred to me throughout and from the engagements with the interpretations of Brazil. Ultimately, "(the interpretations of) Brazil" will

be neither another "example" corroborating the success of a "theory" or contributing to its "improvement", nor an exotic "thing" escaping any kind of previously legitimized theorization. It will be something other than that...

Before moving on, some notes should be put. As I will constantly resort to thinkers born and/or raised in "metropolitan countries" throughout this text, in order to propose an interpretation of "(interpreters of) Brazil", and as "Brazil" and "Latin America" have appeared a few times already, it is important to make explicit my stance on a certain controversy.

If I build my interpretation from some "metropolitan" texts, it is not because I think they have some kind of universal applicability or even a general applicability to the "non-Western" world. I am aware of (although I do not entirely agree with), for instance, Homi Bhabha's claim that "Montesquieu's Turkish Despot, Barthes's Japan, Kristeva's China, Derrida's Nambikwara Indians, Lyotard's Cashinahua pagans are part of [the] strategy of containment where the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation" (Bhabha, 1994, p.31); moreover, I agree with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's interpretation of the conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, when she claims that they "ignore both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labor", and this is even more serious since they "touch on third-world issues" (Spivak, 1988, p.289; and 1999, p.277). Nevertheless, as Gayatri and Homi themselves (to name but two among many), I do not think that there is any incompatibility in principle in mobilizing "metropolitan" texts to the problematization of a "peripheral" condition.

But there is another issue to that. As I resort to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, often identified as "post-colonial" thinkers, a further note must be made. In 1993, inspired by the South Asian "Subaltern Studies Group", it was found the "Latin American Subaltern Studies Group".³¹ In its "Founding Statement", the group affirms that "the signifier *Latin American* itself now refers also to significant social forces *within* the United States" (Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, 1993, p.141, italics in the original). One of its concerns was to avoid "repeating the mistake of classical Marxism on the question

³¹ The founding members were John Beverley, Jose Rabasa, Ileana Rodriguez, Javier Sanjines and Robert Carr. Other names would later join the Group.

of how social agency is constructed", which meant that the "subaltern" could not be restricted to the laboring subjects (Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, 1993, p.146). In this sense, the Group sought to move beyond a certain "Marxism", without simply rejecting it. A 1995 compilation edited by John Beverley, José Oviedo and Michael Aronna, *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*, republished the "Founding Statement", together with other texts produced in "Latin America". In the introduction, John Beverley and José Oviedo say that the compilation offers "a vision of the Latin American discussion that not only [emphasizes] its affinity with the project of the left but also [sees] it as an important means of renovating the left's exhausted or discredited political imaginary" (Beverley and Oviedo, 1995, p.2). Most of the texts in this compilation are devoted to the problematization of the so-called "postmodernism" in face of "Latin American" condition.

In 1998, another group of thinkers from different countries formed a "collective project" called "Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality". Their first meeting entailed the publication of *La Colonialidad del Saber: Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* (Coloniality of Knowledge: Eurocentrism and Social Sciences. Latin American Perspectives), edited by Edgardo Lander (2000). Among the participants were Walter D. Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, Arturo Escobar and Fernando Coronil. The project gathered different theoretical and political perspectives, and it is beyond the scope here to summarize them. I will take Walter Mignolo's stance as a way to specify something important to my text. In his words, "the analytic of coloniality and the programmatic of decoloniality moves away and beyond the post-colonial", introducing a "fracture" in both "the Eurocentered project of post-modernity and a project of post-coloniality heavily dependent on post-structuralism as far as Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida have been acknowledged as the grounding of the post-colonial canon: Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi [sic] Bhabha" (Mignolo, 2007, p.452). The claim is that "de-coloniality" has different sources, which include various thinkers (such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Mahatma Gandhi, among many others), and aims at "de-linking" or "de-colonization". It rejects "post-colonial criticism and theory", insofar as the latter is seen as a "project of scholarly transformation *within* academy" (Mignolo, 2007, p.452, italics added). Delinking, following Walter Mignolo's proposition, does not

seek "alternatives modernities", but "alternatives to modernity and neo-liberal civilization" (see Mignolo, 2007, p.465, p.492).³²

In both groups and in the compilations mentioned, one can see different stances towards "European" thinkers associated to "Marxism", "postmodernism", "post-structuralism", and the like. If, to them, one adds the controversies around the so-called "Lusophone postcolonialism" (see Santos, 2003; and Madureira, 2006), the picture gets even more complex.

To state as clearly as possible my position on all that: despite the very important differences among texts generally labeled in one way or another, I think that the labels themselves are the problem in the first place, since they relapse too often into easy rejections or easy acceptances of a text based solely on its supposed affiliation to a certain label. My mobilization of different thinkers not only resists any label, but also departs from any commitment to be faithful to the "entire work" or "oeuvre" of any thinker. This is not a way to flatten potential differences, but a way to avoid turning those differences into impediments to encounters among those thinkers and further mobilizations of their texts to different problematizations. Moreover, it is not uncommon for one to meet the claim that "deconstruction", "post-structuralism" or "critical theory" are incapable of fully grasping a "post-colonial condition", since they remain somehow "Eurocentric"; or the related claim that "post-colonialism" and the "subaltern studies" do not fit "Latin America" or "Portuguese-speaking countries", since they are concerned with the XVIII century modernity, while the latter must deal with a previous colonialism. Without going into the details of that, I would state that these claims eventually run the risk of essentializing a "post-colonial condition" or a "historical mark of origin" and/or reproducing, if only from the inverted pole, the dichotomy between "modernity" and "non-modernity". In that sense, I agree with Breno Bringel and José Maurício Domingues, in that the "peripheral sociology" - I extend that to any production of knowledge - "should not be based on birth certificates, but in the commitment to the elaboration of certain intellectual debates and research agendas" (Bringel and

³² In the original, "alternatives to modernity and neo-liberal civilization" is in italics. I will not dispute the relation Walter Mignolo establishes between "neo-liberalism" and "modernity" (see also Mignolo, 2007, p.450, pp.455-6, p.469, p.483), I would like at least to warn against any - historical and political - conflation between the two or even the conception that the former is nothing but a contemporary disguise of the latter.

Domingues, 2015, p.63). I part company with them, however, in their quick dismissal of what they call "post-colonial thinking".

In sum, in face of the questions raised by those groups mentioned above, and by thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Homi Bhabha, my stance is twofold: firstly, there is no incompatibility in principle in the mobilization of "metropolitan thinkers" or "texts" to my engagement with "(interpretations of) Brazil"; and, secondly, the very distinction between "metropolitan" and "peripheral" texts should be understood in terms of the problematization they expose, and not in terms of their country of "origin", their "object of study" or the "label" to which each text is associated. My attention is devoted, then, to the "place" *identified* in them, which is neither a pre-conceived "reality" or geographical origin, nor a purely literary construction bearing no relation to any "reality". My option here is to do that focusing on the uses of "formation", as I will begin to discuss next.

2.1(De)Forming "Brazil", Encountering "Modernity"

It has been stressed for quite some time the recurrence of the concept of "formation" in the interpretations of Brazil, especially since the first half of the XX century. Gabriela Nunes Ferreira and André Botelho pointed out the centrality of that concept to many of the 1920-1940s interpretations of Brazil, which focused on "the question of national formation, allied to modernization" (Ferreira, 1996, p.229) and on the study of the "formation of Brazilian society" (Botelho, 2010, p.47); Simone Meucci affirmed that "[i]n the 1930s, it appeared that interpretations of Brazil had in common an obsession: the idea of deciphering the *formation*, the *origins*, the *roots* of Brazil" (Meucci, 2010, p.311, italics in the original). Bernardo Ricupero, in turn, said that "it is not by mere chance that in a country with a colonial past, such as Brazil, formation is a recurrent theme of its intellectuals" (Ricupero, 2008a, p.66). According to Vera Alves Cepêda, "formation", as well as "interpretation", are "key-words when we talk about classic Brazilian social thought" (Cepêda, 2012, p.105). Marcos Nobre even identifies the existence of a "paradigm of 'formation'" in Brazilian thought - "worn-out, but still alive" (see Nobre, 2012). In a 2011 colloquium in Princeton University, Silviano Santiago said that the XX

century in Brazil "had as episteme the idea of 'formation'";³³ and, in 2012, he said that "formation", as an "episteme" or "paradigm", "grounds and structures in the XX century in Brazil the multiple confessional, artistic and scientific knowledges [*saberes*] that share - despite their specificities and the different objects to which they refer - certain general forms or features of our being [*ser e estar*] in development" (Santiago, 2013 [2012], p.259). Evando Nascimento, referring more specifically to the interpretations of "literature and nationality", identified "two models of reflection" in the XX century in Brazil that have precedence in history. The first model relates to the "idea of formation", "decisevely well-behaved, civilizing and humanist", and implies the necessity of importation of a "metropolitan myth" to the construction of "the corresponding myth of the young and independent Brazilian nation"; the other model relates to "the 'barbaric' and 'bad' myth of anthropofagy", which is a myth "de-formation", linked to the colonizing process (Nascimento, 2011, p.335).

It is my purpose in this text neither to vindicate the existence of some "paradigm", or "episteme", of "formation", nor to delimit one myself. It is also not my claim that it is time to move away from the notion of "formation" towards a "new paradigm", or "episteme". What I want to explore is a certain perspective on the uses of "formation" in the interpretations of Brazil (focused on the five traces identified above), problematizing two crucial aspects they *expose*: the centrality of the nation and the periodization marking the relations established between past, present and future in contemporary Brazil.

(I use "expose" deliberately in the paragraphs above and throughout the text. The interpretations of Brazil *exhibit, display, make knowable* those two crucial aspects, at the same time that they *lay them open to the risk* of further (re)interpretations. Hence, exposing is, at once, to make visible and to put at risk. What is more, by exposing my interpretation of the interpretations of Brazil, I also expose *myself* to risk: I make visible, I show my position or stance, the *place* from which I speak; and I also lay that position and that place open to risk. This form of exposition does

³³ Silviano's speech was part of the colloquium "Delicate Art: Transparency and Opacity".

not seem completely alien to other forms - "non-academic" ones, so to speak - through which one exposes something, someone, oneself. But, then, a certain academic register becomes strangely in touch with non-academic ones, even autobiographical ones, so that it risks itself, it risks the privilege it often receives. In any case, I will place *myself* in this text within the limits of the academic register - or, rather, at the limits, at the threshold of this register...)

Paulo Arantes says that "[e]xcept in flagrant cases of deliberate self-deception, every Brazilian intellectual minimally mindful of the singularities of a social background that steals his/her speculative breath knows the weight coming from the absence of more or less continuous evolutionary lines to which it is usually given the name of *formation*" (Arantes, 1997, p.11, italics in the original; see also Arruda, 2004, p.109). To Paulo, this is a matter of a "national obsession":

Such a proliferation of kindred expressions, [book] titles and subtitles cannot be neglected [since it is] a cipher of a basic intellectual experience, in broad terms more or less the following: in the form of great interpretative schemes in which real tendencies in society are registered - tendencies related, nonetheless, to a kind of congenital atrophy that persists aborting it -, it was caught from that *corpus* of essays first and foremost the collective purpose of giving to the jelly environment [*meio*] a modern backbone that would support its evolution. A notion at once descriptive and normative, it is understandable in addition to that that the horizon unveiled by the idea of *formation* ran towards the European ideal of a relatively integrated civilization - a point of escape to every well-formed Brazilian spirit (Arantes, 1997, p.11-2, italics added)³⁴

³⁴ In a footnote I suppressed from the citation, Paulo Arantes gives the credit to Roberto Schwarz, for having recognized the "kinship sensation that gathers our diverse 'formations' around the same focus" (Arantes, 1997, p.63, n.2). Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda reinforced recently, building on Paulo Arantes' text, that "the principle of formation and its recurrence in Brazilian

The iterated use of the concept of "formation" in the interpretations of Brazil exposes an intellectual experience of being situated, and/or of situating oneself, in-between two realities (see Arantes, 1992, p.16); it is, in other words, "a long dissonant commentary in permanent confrontation with the capitalist normality of the organic core" (Arantes, 2014 [2011], p.343). The formation of contemporary Brazil is thus understood through the insertion of the country in the global process of capitalism. In other words, Brazilian formative process is inseparable from "the international movement of capital" that produces elements that are "different and asymmetrical" (Arantes, 1992, p.38). Hence, our "dual way of being" is not an outcome of some idiosyncrasy, but a production of capitalism (see Arantes, 1992, p.89). This has intimate relation with the intellectual experience, which marks an "oscillation" that characterizes the "intellectual condition in the periphery of the international capitalist order": at times establishing some empathy to those modernization left behind, at times "dreaming at an accelerated Westernization of the country, otherwise condemned to insignificance" (Arantes, 1997, p.51).³⁵ Again, politics and politics of knowledge related. The focus ascribed to global capitalism can be extended, with no loss of interpretative force, to a global process of *modernity*.

It is worth noting that the references to this "point of escape" have oscillated, according to different moments and groups in Brazil - "France", "England", and later the "United States" have often represented the ideals of "modernity" and "civilization" in various ways. The imaginary related to "Latin America" and specially "Cuba" is perhaps even more complex. "Latin America" is sometimes evoked as a way to include "Brazil" in a wider formative process, while sometimes it is evoked in order to differentiate "Brazil" from its neighbors. "Cuba", in turn, has been often considered a mirror-image of what the "United States" have represented in terms of capitalism and it has been evoked in very diverse ways since the second half of the XX century by groups from different positions in the social-

thought reveal decisive intellectual questions" (see Arruda, 2010, p.24). The expression "jelly environment [*meio gelatinoso*]" recalls me of Mário de Andrade's letter to Carlos Drummond de Andrade, where he defines Brazil as a "pappy and indecisive monster" (letter sent in November 10, 1924; see Santiago, 2002, p.51).

³⁵ For a recent formulation of that, see Paulo Arantes (2004 [2001], pp.46-7).

political spectrum (including in the spectrum associated to political parties). It is not my purpose to provide a comprehensive history of those mobilizations, but their importance will be verified in the interpretations of Brazil to be dealt with later.

Now, as a point of departure to this text, I want to bring Roberto Schwarz's *Ideias Fora do Lugar* (Ideas Out of Place). Roberto's main point to begin with is the relation between "European liberalism" and "Brazilian society"; in the XIX century Brazil, he claims, the theoretical principles of the "European bourgeoisie" against arbitrariness and slavery were eagerly defended, while, in practice, the personal relations of "favor" remained pervasively powerful: "having adopted the European ideas and reasons, they could serve, and often did serve, as justification... to the arbitrary moment that characterizes the nature of favor" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.18, italics dropped). But the relation between liberalism and favor in Brazil leads him to a further move, a problematization of capitalism.

To Roberto, "Capital" has not achieved in Brazil a "classical form", as the mutual relation between liberalism (and its bourgeois vocabulary linked to merit, equality, reason, labor) and favor makes explicit. This is often understood, as he notes, as the confirmation of Brazilian malformation. "*Nevertheless, may the other side be seen*", he insists (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.20, italics added). In "Europe", "the bourgeois ideas, in principle turned against privilege, have become apologetic since 1848: the wave of social struggles in Europe had shown that universality disguises class antagonisms" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], pp.20-1). Hence, if it is true to Roberto that "ideas are out of place" in Brazil, where liberalism is inappropriately evoked, "it is necessary to consider that our inappropriate discourse was void also when used properly" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.21). In sum, "our national oddities" have a "world scope" in terms of how they expose a problematization of the modernizing process accompanying capitalism; in short, Brazilian formative process becomes, in this interpretation, "a sore point through which world history passes and is revealed" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.29).

I am not concerned with the specific kind of Marxism at play in Roberto's text, but with the move it makes: instead of looking at the malformation of "Brazil" and contrasting it with what would be a perfect formation in the "liberal bourgeois Europe", it exposes a connected history of capitalism through a "globalizing step"

of his perspective (see Arantes, 1992, p.97). The ideas out of place *here* shed light on the ideas out of place *there*; and, what is more, *Brazilian* discrepancy sheds light on a *global* process. The interpretation of Brazil brings an interpretation of modernity.

In order to make clearer what exactly I want to stress in Roberto's problematization, a contrast with Alfredo Bosi's considerations seems fruitful. To the latter, liberalism was the world common denominator in the XIX century and, in face of that, the ruling classes in Brazil adapted it to "national particularities": "ideological filtering" and "compromise" were the strategies of "our intra-oligarchic liberalism" during all the period in which the national state was built (see Bosi, 2005 [1992], p.211, p.217, p.237). Ideas were, then, adjusted to specific interests. The relation between the internal and the external, according to him, exposed the following characteristic: "[t]he confrontation between our particularities and the movement of world History... at times points towards variations of a *great scheme of post-colonial integration*, while at other times stresses certain differentiated aspects, racial and cultural, that are conceived as proper of the *new national formation*" (Bosi, 2005 [1992], p.238, italics in the original). As he would reinforce later, this is part of a "dialectics of ideas in social formation that oscillated between a neocolonial integration and a national model" (Bosi, 2013b, p.264).

Roberto Schwarz had said in his text that the relation between liberalism and slavery in Brazil had set an "ideological comedy, *different than the European one*" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.12, italics in the original). If it was true for him liberalism was an "ideology" in both places, since it covered labor exploitation in "Europe", in Brazil liberal ideas were "false in a diverse way; in an original way, so to speak" (Schwarz, 2000 [1973], p.12). Now, let's follow Alfredo Bosi's use of almost the same language: "[i]t is at least strange to say, in good or bad faith, that liberalism was and is synonym to economic and social democracy". So far, he is moving together with Roberto. But he continues: "Or that *only in Brazil* the imperial bourgeoisie and its spokespersons in the Parliament staged an ideological comedy when the abolition of slavery was postponed. If there was any farce, it was staged in diverse contexts and in the entire Occident since liberalism was created" (Bosi, 2013c, p.275, italics in the original). As a consequence, "there is no reason... to

isolate Brazilian state as a unique and farcical case of the coexistence between liberal ideology and slave practice. Here and there..." (Bosi, 2013a, p.239). "Ideological comedy" *here* and *there*, as he insisted.

Nevertheless, getting back to Roberto's text, one sees that to him, also, the ideological comedy took place *here* and *there*. But an importantly different configuration is established. The crucial aspect lies in the relation between the filtering of ideas and the world process. To Alfredo Bosi, as it was said above, much more important than the geographical origin of ideas is their adjustment or filtering in specific places. To him, once they have become "functional" in a certain place, ideas could not be considered "out of place". To Roberto, in turn, both conditions are not mutually exclusive: "liberalism and the other modern institutions" did in fact convey an "absurd connotation in the country" to the XIX century men [*sic*] (see Schwarz, 1999, pp.81-5). In short, modern ideas were both adjusted and out of place to those men.

The notion of "filtering" advanced by Alfredo is considered by Roberto an improvement in relation to diffusionist perspectives on the movement of ideas. More precisely, it deals with asymmetrical relations - "rich and poor countries", "advanced and backward", "center and periphery" - in terms other than those assuming a passive reception by the weaker pole. At the same time, however, the metaphor of the filter has a fundamental problem: it reproduces "a simple scheme, polarized between what units are and what they are not"; following that scheme, the "specific contexts" through and to which ideas are filtered "work as final instances" (Schwarz, 1999, p.83). The multiplication of units exterior to one another would let go the way the "European" sense of liberalism impacts on "our" sense of it. Local or national differences are not disentangled from "global conditions and antagonisms": "Brazilian uneasiness in relation to modern ideas... belongs to that sphere of global effects" (Schwarz, 1999, p.84) that cannot be captured by any notion that assumes some variation of methodological nationalism, such as that of "filtering". So, the discrepancy between the local social relations and modern ideas belongs to "the global dialectics of the system" (Schwarz, 1999, p.84). Brazilian uneasiness and discrepancy become constitutive of a *place* from which one can have access to that global process.

From that disagreement between Roberto Schwarz and Alfredo Bosi, I want to retain two crucial considerations. Firstly, as the latter insists in his more recent text, liberalism and slavery coexisted *here* and *there*, albeit through different filtering or *formative* processes, something that had not been so clearly posited by Roberto's 1973 text. But, secondly, to say that this occurred in both places is not enough. Their connection is crucial. And that is what Roberto's texts have insisted upon. That said, let me adjust a previous proposition a little bit: the ideas out of place *here* shed light on the ideas out of place *there*; *Brazilian* discrepancy sheds light *both* on other discrepancies *and* on a *global* process.

(Mário de Andrade wrote once that, "as it happens to all the other American peoples, our national *formation* is not natural, is not spontaneous, is not, so to speak, logical. Hence the filthiness of contrasts that we are" (Andrade, 1974 [1931], p.8, italics added). Less academically, then, one could say, with and against Mário, that "the filthiness of contrasts that we are" exposes a "globally-produced filthiness of contrasts"...))

Roberto Schwarz's problem has been explored recently by Bernardo Ricupero and João Marcelo Maia in ways that speak to my purpose in this text. According to Bernardo, Roberto's problematization should not be taken as an assertion on the mere inadequacy of foreign ideas to a certain social reality, but as an expression of a "certain tension in the relation between form and environment" (Ricupero, 2008a, p.68; see also Ricupero, 2008b). A tension which is at once intellectual and political, and inseparable from a comparative account bringing a difficult connection between foreign intellectual references and the social reality in which they then act. But this tension, instead of a straightforward evidence of incompleteness and/or inauthenticity, becomes a *place* in which the global dynamics of capitalism is exposed (see Ricupero, 2008a, p.65); or, as he formulates elsewhere, "from the periphery, it is possible to question what is taken for granted in the center" (Ricupero, 2013, p.530). In that sense, instead of the "thesis" of the

text, "ideas out of place" is the "problem" addressed in the very first place (see Ricupero, 2013, p.528).

To João Marcelo Maia, Roberto Schwarz's text cannot be read as a "nativist affirmation" or a "nationalist program" in search for some "authentic" place; instead, it is an expression of a discomfort peculiar to intellectuals in countries such as Brazil, where modernity was accompanied by dependence. It is precisely the "dialectical incorporation" of that discomfort, transforming it into "a relative advantage of the peripheral world, that could better visualize the contradictions of liberalism and capitalism existing at the heart of the European world" (Maia, 2009, p.163; see also Maia, 2010, p.11). To that aim, João Marcelo warns that two traps must be avoided. On the one hand, the "interpretations of Brazil" cannot become the background for any naturalization of what "Brazil" or "Brazilian" mean, "as if it was possible to transform Brazilian identity into a concrete entity available to interpretation"; on the other hand, the resort to those interpretations cannot be a way of identifying texts that would be "as modern as" those produced in "Europe", replicating the "European pattern" in the evaluation of "Brazilian thought" (Maia, 2010, p.9). Let me add a third trap. The "relative advantage of the peripheral world" should not be converted into the statement of the "advantages of backwardness", as if the "peripheral" condition provided, by (spatio-temporal) definition, the privilege of a different gaze at modernity in relation to the "center" and the possibility of skipping stages within the modernizing path.

One fruitful possibility to avoid these traps is the problematization of the notion of "place", which is linked, in his words, to "different modes of cognition of the social world produced in a boundary situation" (Maia, 2010, p.10). Although Luiz Costa Lima is not mentioned by João Marcelo, his stance can be related to the former's on that aspect - to recall, "place", to Luiz, is "a temporal hub [*condensador*] of expectations, possibilities and experiences [*vivências*]". With that, one gets 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 being restricted to the "limits of the nation-state" (see also Maia, 2011b,

pp.81-9).³⁶ Phrased differently, a global process can be problematized exactly from one of the places that should be in principle a peripheral copy of a central and original modernity.

In this sense, the notion of "formation" seems particularly fruitful to problematize, as I said above, the centrality of the nation and the periodization often inscribed in efforts similar to the one I am unfolding here. Marcos Nobre emphasized that the "paradigm of formation" is obsolete, since the national logic has been trumped by a "new logic of economic integration" that is no longer "international": "subordination is no longer organized in terms of nations, countries or states" (Nobre, 2012, italics in the original).³⁷ For now, I will not dispute Marcos' assertion regarding a change in times - this would lead me to question his claim that nations were overcome in terms of economic integration. Rather, I want to draw the attention to the limits of "formation" he sets and to the necessity of rethinking the centrality of the nation in that interpretative framework. In that sense, I have one important agreement in relation to his perspective and one departure from it. I agree that "the umbilical relation between the 'inside' and the 'outside' returns to the scene, under a new configuration, as determinant on the formation of the country" (Nobre, 2012). I depart from his view, however, when he assumes that from the 1930 to the late 1980 the texts on "formation" inescapably lead to some variation of "nationalism". I am not denying, for sure, that "the nation" is central to them; but, at the same time, they should be interpreted through how they expose the links between the inside and the outside in Brazilian formative process. Hence, instead of a replacement of "formation" by some other concept, I will rather move with and against it in this text.

Luiz Felipe de Alencastro has contributed to that effort when he said that "Brazil *has been formed* outside Brazil" (see Alencastro, 2000, p.9, italics added); that is to say, the formation of contemporary Brazil is a process that is not confined to the territory of the colony and that also takes place in the South Atlantic triangle linking "Africa", "Europe" and "Brazil" through slavery, commerce and

³⁶ Sergio Tavolaro is another thinker that has been tracking a problematization similar to João Marcelo Maia's; I will discuss some of his texts in detail ahead.

³⁷ Marcos Nobre's texts is online, available at: < <http://revistapiaui.estadao.com.br/edicao-74/tribuna-livre-da-luta-de-classes/depois-da-formacao>>. Last access on June 25, 2015.

colonization: "those two parts united by the ocean [that is, the Portuguese colonies in the African continent and in South America] complete each other in a single system of colonial exploitation whose singularity still deeply marks contemporary Brazil" (Alencastro, 2000, p.9).³⁸

It is never enough to emphasize what is being raised here. To put it crudely: blacks becoming part of a gigantic route of slave trade; slaves producing agricultural goods in big land properties; agricultural goods supplying the European commerce (a commercial capitalism, if you want). To put in snapshots: a formative process of "Brazil", of some countries in "Africa", *and* of some countries in "Europe". A formative process of modernity.

The transoceanic travels have been forming "(the interpretations of) Brazil" since at least the encounter with the "New World". The South Atlantic triangle is only the more "materially" impressive aspects of that. But those travels, as it has been noted here, are also "intellectual" ("spiritual", as Paulo Arantes would have it); one or many "points of escape" are almost invariably inscribed into the interpretations of Brazil. What is "foreign" is at times what is most desired (economically, morally, politically and/or culturally); at other times, what is most repelled; at yet other times, what must be internally adjusted somehow. In all those cases, the foreign is external *and* internal to how Brazil is conceived. As João Cezar de Castro Rocha proposes, the country "was constituted through an exteriority that has become the very structure of the nation"; it is "as if decentering constituted, so to speak, the very axis from which the country could (and still today can) think itself" (Rocha, 2011, p.11).

As a final suggestion, two observations are worth raising. The first one, I build from Gildo Marçal Brandão; the second, from Bernardo Ricupero and João Marcelo Maia. Gildo once said that the interest on the "interpreters of Brazil" seems to have an "intimate relation" with the dynamics of Brazilian politics. There is, in his words, "some connection of meaning between this intellectual explosion and the

³⁸ He adds: "[s]uch geographical and economic context configures an a-territorial, South Atlantic reality, that evidences how gross is the anachronism inscribed in the procedure consisting in transposing the contemporary national space to the colonial maps in order to take conclusions about the *Terra de Santa Cruz*" (Alencastro, 2000, p.20).

critical conjunction that we are living"; in his words, a transformation that is global and somehow concentrated in time "is forcing the reorganization of the spheres of our existence and the reformulation of the metal frames that have schematized our knowledge until now" (Brandão, 2005, p.235). It is as if the act of "thinking the thought" was brought to the foreground in moments when "our *mal formation* gets more evident" (Brandão, 2005, p.235, italics added).

Bernardo Ricupero, in turn, establishes another connection. First, in an earlier text, he said that,

if the possibility of the non-realization of formation has always been implicit in the literature on the topic, this seems to be particularly the case in Brazil today. Besides all that, this situation becomes increasingly a reality in countries which have always served as models; countries that, in the past, seemed to us so well-formed.

On the other hand, paradoxical as it may seem, *our mal-formation perhaps gains special interest, since it is becoming general, with a world dimension...* (Ricupero, 2008a, p.68, italics added).

Later, in another text, he warns against any perspective that dissolves the difference between "center" and "periphery", as if globalization has homogenized the world, for better or for worse. I am in full agreement with his resistance.³⁹ What Bernardo proposes next, however, seems somehow different from what I want to advance here. In his view, one of the main contributions of texts such as Roberto Schwarz's

³⁹ I would also resist any attempt to turn the notion that "our mal-formation" is being generalized into another justification for a full-scale modernizing perspective or for a conservative position that not rarely supports the intensification of anti-immigration laws in "Europe" and in "the United States". For a discussion of the so-called "Brazilianization of the world", see Paulo Arantes (2004 [2001]). I do not resist recalling, however, that, if that was indeed the case - "our malformation" served as a lesson to the "center" -, it would not be the first time this would have been raised. A certain "mirror-effect" has an interesting history beyond the travel writings. Michel de Montaigne, for instance, said: "We are justified therefore in calling these people barbarians by reference to the laws of reason, but not in comparison with ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity" (Montaigne, 1993 [1588], p.31). One could also bring to the table considerations on the "state of nature" and the "social contract" by "modern political theorists", which often pointed to "the Americas" as an image, at least an approximated one, of the former...

comes from the way they deal with "the particularity of Latin America - connected to international capitalism, but having a history of its own" (Ricupero, 2013, p.542). What interests Bernardo first and foremost thus is "the tension between the European form and the local Brazilian substance [*matéria*]" (Ricupero, 2013, p.542).

Leaving aside in this text my resistance towards the emphasis on "Latin America", I want to note that, despite agreeing with Bernardo in relation to the problematic political implications of dissolving the difference between "center" and "periphery", I do think that the production of inequality linked to modernity demands an alternative interpretation of that difference, and, as a consequence, of the notion of "place". The "interpretations of Brazil" are a potential site to that, once they are addressed beyond the exclusive confines of the "nation-state" and of an "autonomous" Brazilian intellectual environment - as João Marcelo Maia stresses (see Maia, 2009; 2010; 2011a). It is not a matter of making them "universal texts" or "theories", but of exploring their potential as modernizing texts and critiques of modernization.

In sum, these two observations bring two connections: on the one hand, the connection between the renewed focus on the "interpretations of Brazil" and the situation of Brazilian politics (encompassing, for sure, society, culture, economy); on the other hand, a connection between Brazilian formation and a world process. I do not want to convey the sense that this is a problem of "our time" (whoever this "we" may be referring to); rather, my purpose is to suggest that the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil open a site to a wider problematization related to "modernity" and "modernization" as a process that links inside and outside, and that is inscribed by certain relations between past, present and future. The formative process of modernity.

It would be an overgeneralization, to say the least, if the central claim here was that the interpretations of Brazil unfold similar problematizations of modernity. This is certainly not the case. Their conceptual apparatuses and their political implications vary immensely. My separate treatment of them intends to do some justice to the variety of the parts, without losing the potentiality of exploring the whole. In this vein, I recaptured Roberto Schwarz's discussion of "ideas" and

"place" not in order to suggest that the texts approached next will be variations upon the theme or the problem formulated by Roberto. My point relies on exploring the problematization his text exposes, not the answers it perhaps gives. In short, I am *mobilizing* his text, *with and against* it.

(Had I chosen to deal in detail with how I departure from Roberto Schwarz's answers, I would have to dwell on a very complicated issue regarding "Marxism" and its interpretation by thinkers as diverse as Jacques Derrida, Silviano Santiago, Michel Foucault, Luiz Costa Lima, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, among many others. I will evade that deliberately, but not without two brief notes.

First. In a 1987 text, Roberto Schwarz said, ironically, that thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida - figures of the "current European philosophy" or of the "French philosophy" -, by challenging hierarchies and by being appropriated by "Latin American intellectuals", would provide the latter a "relief": "[f]rom backward, we would become advanced; from deviant, paradigm; from inferior, superior..." (Schwarz, 1987, pp.98-9). It would remain to be seen, according to Roberto, "if the *conceptual rupture* with the primacy of origin leads to solving or fighting the relations of *effective subordination*" (Schwarz, 1987, p.99, italics added). He then warns that, as opposed to what that analysis supposes, "the *break of the cultural dazzle* of underdevelopment does not affect *the foundation of the situation, which is practical*" (Schwarz, 1987, p.99, italics added; see also pp.109-10). I hope it is already clear that the dichotomy Roberto puts forward between the "conceptual" and the "effective", or between a "cultural break" and a "practical foundation", is not endorsed in this text. Moreover, the "conceptual rupture" he alludes to is far from being an erasure of hierarchies, subordinations or inequalities - even "material" ones, to put in his language. In this sense, I am ready to say that I want to understand something similar to what he seeks to see - that is, how the "foreign" is already inscribed into what is "proper"; the "imitated", in the "original"; and the "original", in the "imitated". But I part company with his interpretative frame to pursue that. Again, I explore his question, not his answers.

Second note. Roberto Schwarz's stance in the above-mentioned text (as well as in many others) has profound political implications to what is generally called "political left"; or, more precisely, to the relation between "Marxism" and "left"

both in the "production of knowledge" and in "political practice" - not to mention that it ultimately raises questions to the very separation between "academic knowledge" and "political practice" and the long-standing perceived gulf between "intellectuals" and "activists". This gets even more complex when one takes into account some "intellectual" cleavages connecting and most often separating "sociologists", "political theorists", "literary critics", "economists", even when all of them are (self-)identified as variations of the "left". All that said, I have enough reasons not to tackle that in this text. At the same time, however, there are enough reasons not to simply eschew any kind of approximation between those thinkers. This text is an effort to explore that. And, I should perhaps say, addressing Roberto's text and then tracking a different direction is a way to make somehow explicit my stance in relation to those issues pointed out.)

In sum, from what has been said, it is plausible to say that the uses of "formation" in the interpretations of Brazil perform at least three crucial roles. Firstly, they point to and connect in different ways certain events in the history of "Brazil"; that is to say, they *identify* historical trajectories of "Brazil". By "identification", I mean at once "construction" *and* "reference", since the interpretations of Brazilian formative process cannot be taken as either textual constructions of a historical narrative or as textual correspondences of a pre-conceived historical reality. Hence, "identification" *refers to* and *brings* something/someone *into being*. Secondly, they expose a hub of "intellectual experiences" linked to a wide range of political positions. Analytical and normative considerations are very often deeply intertwined. "Interpretations of Brazil", as I have already noted, go beyond the academic environment (even if, in this text, I rely on so-called academic texts). Finally, they also expose a site to problematize "modernity", when they are interpreted as aporetic performances.

Some final notes will connect me to the next discussion. First, I will deal with the "interpretations of Brazil" not in order to search for a "truth" about "Brazil", but to expose the various ways in which "it" is identified. Second, I do not conceive the texts as conceptual articulations of an extra-linguistic "reality" or "context" - that is, they are neither instruments to describe and explain that "reality" nor concepts to assess a deeper ontological layer corresponding to "Brazil". Third, in my interpretation, I do not propose counter-narratives on (the history of) Brazil to

contrast their interpretations of the "formation of contemporary Brazil"; rather, one of my main objectives is to identify how those texts "internalize" "external" elements, including institutional disputes and immediate political parties struggles. Finally, fourth, the "internalization" of those "external" elements are not derived necessarily from deliberate or conscious conceptual articulations; the notion of "aporetic performance" implies that "political positions" can also be understood from what the texts themselves do. All that is yet unexamined, and next chapter lays out the general lines of the perspective from which I will interpret the interpretations of Brazil selected.