3. Aporetic Performances, Contemporary (De)Formations

To begin with, it is important to note that in what follows I will mobilize different texts *for my own purposes*. When thinkers so widely discussed and that have generated such an amount of controversies are dealt with, it seems never enough to stress that what I will do next is to propose a frame of interpretation from different texts and that I have the aim neither at suggesting that all these texts form together a coherent whole or a general theory, nor at implying that this frame follows any theoretical label previously established and here applied. I am aware that approximating them without a careful discussion of their divergences or even of their possible changing positions across various texts often raises more questions than it gives answers. More precisely, this strategy could become vulnerable to the misleading inference that I am conflating them into a unified perspective, thereby flattening their different positions - a practice that is indeed not uncommon and that sometimes comes under labels such as "postmodernism", "poststructuralism", "postcolonialism", and alike.

On that, let me say that I will be moving *with and against* those different texts, with no aim at detailing the agreements and disagreements I may have in relation to them or that they may have in relation to one another. I move *with them,* in the sense that they will be crucial in order to make as clear as possible the way I approach the interpretations of Brazil; and *against them,* in the sense that my mobilizations have no ambition to be coherent with the entire oeuvre of the thinkers cited or even with all the aspects discussed in each of their texts.

Four are the main driving forces guiding my mobilizations. The first one is to propose a way to interpret those texts as *regularities in dispersion*, that is, to interpret them through certain aspects they share, but also through the differences they have in relation to each other. The second refers to how I conceive the relation between *text and context*, so that it may be clear my position on a fierce controversy among and beyond the "interpretations of Brazil" and so that I have laid out the way I will grasp the relation between each "text" and "extra-textual" elements (for instance, intellectual, institutional, political disputes) surrounding it. The third force

guiding my mobilizations refers to the relation between *inside and outside* exposed in the interpretations of Brazil. Accordingly, the fourth force is turned to the articulation between *past, present and future* in those texts. The third and the fouth driving forces are specifically related to how the traces of "formation" are expressed in the texts, that is, in their *aporetic performances*. That said, I will turn now to the mobilizations themselves.

As an entry point, I would like to resort to some of Michel Foucault's insights in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. According to him, the purpose of isolating certain statements and analyzing them is to show that they are not linked "with synthesizing operations of a purely psychological kind (the intention of the author, the form of his mind, the rigour of his thought, the themes that obsess him, the project that traverses his existence and gives it meaning) and to be able to grasp other forms of regularity, other types of relations" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.28-9). These other types of relations encompass

> relations between statements (even if the author is unaware of them; even if the statements do not have the same author; even if the authors were unaware of each other's existence); relations between groups of statements thus established (even if these groups do not concern the same, or even adjacent, fields; even if they do not possess the same formal level; even if they are not the locus of assignable exchanges); relations between statements and groups of statements and events of a quite different kind (technical, economic, social, political) (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.29).

The identification of these regularities leads to the notion of a "discursive formation" composed of "systems of dispersion", that is, a regularity "between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.38). These elements, then, are said to be submitted to "rules of formation", which are "conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.38).

These conditions of existence, in turn, imply a series of remarks (see Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.44-5). Firstly, the "objects" of a system of dispersion only

"[exist] under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations". Secondly, these relations involve "institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization". Thirdly, these discursive relations also relate with two other kinds of relations, that is, "what we might call 'primary' relations, and which, independently of all discourse or all object of discourse, may be described between institutions, techniques, social forms, etc" and also "the secondary relations that are formulated in discourse itself". And, fourthly,

> [d]iscursive relations are not, as we can see, internal to discourse: they do not connect concepts or words with one another; they do not establish a deductive or rhetorical structure between propositions or sentences. Yet they are not relations exterior to discourse, relations that might limit it, or impose certain forms upon it, or force it, in certain circumstances, to state certain things. They are, in a sense, at the limit of discourse: they offer it objects of which it can speak, or rather (for this image of offering presupposes that objects are formed independently of discourse), they determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal with them, name them, analyse them, classify them, explain them, etc. These relations characterize not the language (*langue*) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.45).

Hence, by saying that the rules of formation of a system of dispersion constitute the conditions of existence of "objects", Michel Foucault implies neither that these objects are merely textual products nor that they are pre-discursive entities awaiting to be brought to light by a referential operation. In other words, it is "[t]o define these objects without reference to the ground, the foundation of things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance";

ultimately, it is a matter of identifying the "nexus of regularities that govern their dispersion" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.47).[40]

The nexus of regularities does not mean that the establishment of a system of dispersion requires the depuration of all contradictions, out of which would emerge a system ultimately governed by the principle of non-contradiction. In Michel Foucault's words, "contradictions are neither appearances to be overcome, nor secret principles to be uncovered. They are objects to be described for themselves, without any attempt being made to discover from what point of view they can be dissipated, or at what level they can be radicalized and effects become causes" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.151). Instead, therefore, of clearing the field of residues of contradictions, the identification of systems of dispersion bring "different *spaces of dissension*" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.152, italics in the original).

Moreover, the identification at stake is not the outcome of descriptions "based on the attribution of influences, exchanges, transmitted information, or communications" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.161). This does not mean that these attributions are useless, but that the attention is given to "what made them possible", to "the points at which the projection of one concept upon another could take place", to "the isomorphism that made a transference of methods or techniques possible, to show the proximities, symmetries, or analogies that have made generalizations possible"; in sum, the purpose is "to describe the field of vectors and of differential receptivity (of permeability and impermeability) that has been a condition of historical possibility for the interplay of exchanges" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.161). To that aim, what is generally divided into "discursive" and "non-discursive" realms are, indeed, considered at once. The "rules of formation" governing the elements at play - objects, statement, concepts, or thematic choices - are thus historical conditions of existence of "positivities", that is, "the set of conditions in accordance with which a practice is exercised, in accordance with which that practice gives rise to partially or totally new statements, and in accordance with which it can be modified" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], pp.208-9). It seems clear enough, after all, how different this account on "positivities" - and on the "regularities in dispersion" to which they are linked - is from any dichotomous assumption related to

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[40] The suggesting of exploring the "interpretations of Brazil" as "regularities in dispersion" I take from Sergio Tavolaro (2014), although he did not develop that point further.

subject/object, discursive/non-discursive.[41] In this sense, the various texts, thinkers, oeuvres, themes, objects, areas (economic, social, political, geographical, artistic) whose relations are governed by certain conditions of existence "communicate by the form of positivity of their discourse, or more exactly, this form of positivity... defines a field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges may be deployed. Thus positivity plays the role of what might be called *a historical a priori*" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.144, italics in the original).[42]

The main effort, therefore, is directed neither to reach or reconstruct an extra-textual, pre-textual, or contextual, dimension of texts nor to reveal a deeper meaning they supposedly express. It is also neither a process of uncovering social or material relations that supposedly determine the texts nor the attempt to provide the texts with complete autonomy in relation to any contextual aspect. It comes as no surprise that this attempt at dealing with regularities in dispersion does not fit well with labels such as "intentionalism", "contextualism", "hermeneutics", "materialism", "sociologism", "(inter)textualism".[43] In the process of identifying

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[41] Gilles Deleuze helps in clarifying that, when he interprets the relation between the discursive and the non-discursive in Michel Foucault's text from a "third way [*troisième voie*]": "between the non-discursive formations of the institutions and the discursive formations of the statements [*enoncés*], the temptation would be great to establish, either a sort of vertical parallelism as one between two expressions symbolizing each other (primary relations of expression), or a horizontal causality according to which the events and the institutions would determine men as supposed authors of the statements (secondary relations of reflection). The diagonal demands, however, a third way, *discursive relations with the non-discursive milieus* [relations discursives avec les milieux non discursifs], which are in themselves neither internal nor external to the group of statements [*enoncés*], but that constitute the limit..., the determined horizon without which such objects of the statements [*enoncés*] could not appear and such place in the statement [*enoncé*] could not be assigned" (Deleuze, 2004 [1986], p.18, italics in the original).

[42] As he puts later, "[t]he positivities that I have tried to establish must not be understood as a set of determinations imposed from the outside on the thought of individuals, or inhabiting it from the inside, in

advance as it were; they constitute rather the set of conditions in accordance with which a practice is exercised, in accordance with which that practice gives rise to partially or totally new statements, and in accordance with which it can be modified. These positivities are not so much limitations imposed on the initiative of subjects as the field in which that initiative is articulated (without, however, constituting its centre), rules that it puts into operation (without it having invented or formulated them), relations that provide it with a support (without it being either their final result or their point of convergence)" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.208-9).

[43] Michel Foucault's resistance towards the use of "interpretation", insisting on "analysis" and "description" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, comes mainly from this rejection of a hermeneutical perspective that aims at "interpreting" a text to uncover a hidden meaning it conveys. My use of "interpretation" in this text does not endorse this hermeneutical precept, as it will become clear; at the same time, my own resistance towards "analysis" and "description" derives from the connections these terms generally have with objectivist undertakings - which is the case neither of Michel Foucault's perspective nor of mine. If I evade using the term "archaeology", it is because I do not propose an "archaeological" perspective following all the elements Foucault ascribes to it.

the regularities and the rules of formation, the statements are not equivalent to phrases, speech acts, grammatical articulations; they occupy a different position, neither hidden nor visible. In Michel Foucault's words, it is a paradoxical condition: reaching statements is not an attempt "to evade verbal performances in order to discover behind them or below their apparent surface a hidden element, a secret meaning that lies buried within them, or which emerges through them without saying so; and yet the statement is not immediately visible; it is not given in such a manifest way as a grammatical or logical structure" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.109).

The relations that form the regularities establish conditions "for such and such an enunciation to be made, for such and such a concept to be used, for such and such a strategy to be organized. To define a system of formation in its specific individuality is therefore to characterize a discourse or a group of statements by the regularity of a practice" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.74). This could lead to the conclusion that a discursive formation is a purely spatial metaphor, freezing time under strict spatial rules. But this is not the case. The point is that it "determines a regularity proper to temporal processes; it presents the principle of articulation between a series of discursive events and other series of events, transformations, mutations, and processes. It is not an atemporal form, but a schema of correspondence between several temporal series" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.74). The historical a priori defined above is constituted thus by rules that are not imposed atemporally and from an Archimedean point upon its constitutive statements, or rules that would be ultimately part of an unchanging core. The regularities in dispersion are not only relational by definition, but also, and most importantly, spatio-temporal in their articulation, since "[t]he a priori of positivities is not only the system of a temporal dispersion; it is itself a transformable group" (Foucault, 1972 [1969], p.145).[44] As Ian Hacking puts, "[t]he historical a priori points at conditions on the possibilities of knowledge within a 'discursive formation'... Yet they are at the same time conditioned and formed in history, can be uprooted by

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Indeed, for the time being I evade labeling my perspective in any possible way, sticking only with the already-too-loaded term "interpretation" and insisting that it is intrinsically related to an "identification" of regularities in dispersion. Finally, it is worth recalling that "identification" is also differentiation", and that this process of identification/differentiation does not assume a pre-existing "thing" or "object" to be identical with itself (and different from others).

[44] The expression "it is itself a transformable group" is the English translation for "il est lui-même un ensemble transformable" (Foucault, 1969, p.168), referring to the "a priori of positivities [l'*a priori* des positivités]".

later, radical, historical transformations"; or, "the *savoir* [knowledge] of a time, a place, a subject matter, and a community of speakers determines what may be said, there and then" (Hacking, 2002, p.5, p.91).

It is time to stop for a moment and indicate what is exactly at stake in resorting to *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* First of all, my point is that in the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil some regularities in dispersion can be identified. Following the terms being used here, the five "traces of 'formation'" could thus be conceived through the way they constitute relations between objects, statements, concepts and thematic choices across different areas, such as sociology, history, literary studies, economics. This interplay is thus constitutive of spaces of dissension enabled by the conditions of existence and the positivities linked to the formative process in Brazil. In this sense, the very notion of "contemporary Brazil" becomes inseparable from these spaces of dissension, or regularities in dispersion, in accordance with which the interpretations of Brazil are articulated.

It seems plausible to further specify the expression "regularities in dispersion". By "regularities" I mean more precisely the traces of "formation" identified across the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil dealt with throughout this text. By "dispersion" I mean the differences or specificities of each of those interpretations, in particular in the links between them and the political positions they expose. As Michel Foucault reminds, the regularities in dispersion are neither visible nor hidden; neither are they placed in a material, social or linguistic context to be deciphered or reconstructed from the text nor are they situated in a textual domain alien to any supposedly extra or pre-textual realm. What is more, these regularities are neither controlled by conscious or rational subjects/authors nor abstractly situated in an atemporal and a-spatial structure; rather, they are inseparable from spatio-temporal dimensions of the historical a priori and its positivities. Here, it is fundamental to have in mind that the nexus of regularities in dispersion is not established after a process of depuration of contradictions within this historical a priori. It is in this sense that I want to recall that those interpretations operate both as modernizing perspectives on the formative process of Brazil and as critiques of modernization - this is their aporetic performance.

All that said, it remains to be discussed why do I insist on "interpretation" and "trace", rather than "description" and "rule of formation", as the resort to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* would indicate. Here, I want to mobilize some of Reinhart Koselleck's theoretical and methodological considerations on the "history of concepts" (*Begriffsgeschichte*).[45]

Reflecting upon the relation between the domain of objects and the domain of concepts, between social history and the history of concepts, Reinhart Koselleck claims that "[w]ithin the practice of textual exegesis, specific study of the use of sociopolitical concepts and the investigation of their meaning thus assumes a sociohistorical status. The moments of duration, change, and futurity contained in a concrete political situation are registered through their linguistic *traces*" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.79, italics added). In other words, these linguistic traces register the "social conditions and their transformation", which, then, become "objects of analysis" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.79). No ontological deterministic priority is given either to the "material" or to the "conceptual": "historical clarification of past conceptual usage must refer not only to the history of language but also to sociohistorical data, for every semantic has its link to nonlinguistic content" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.81; see also Koselleck, 2002, p.25).

The history of concepts goes even further in terms of the assessment of the links between the social-political and the conceptual dimensions: "in the history of concepts it became possible to survey the contemporary space of experience and horizon of expectation, and also to investigate the political and social functions of concepts, together with their specific modality of usage, such that (in short) a synchronic analysis also took account of situation and conjuncture" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.81). Or, as he insisted later, "the history of concepts deals with the use of specific language in specific situations, within which concepts are developed and used by specific speakers" (Koselleck, 1996, p.62). The translation of the past meanings to "our present understanding" supplements this synchronic analysis with a diachronic aspect. The constant use of a word over time does not imply that its meaning has not changed, and diachrony becomes crucial in bringing any

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[45] In what follows, my main purpose is to extract from Reinhart Koselleck's texts some insights that will help me in my main effort in this text, that is, the interpretation of the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil. To that aim, I am compelled to leave aside his substantive discussions on "modernity", in order to focus on his methodological and theoretical precepts.

transformation to the fore. Hence, the specificity and situatedness mentioned above do not preclude a concept to be mobilized in other instances, historically unrelated at first sight with the situations in which the concept had been previously used. So, the history of concepts also encompasses "the translation of concepts first used in the past but then pressed into service by later generations" (Koselleck, 1996, p.62). One must not embrace the notions of "original context" and the generational metaphor used by Reinhart Koselleck in order to grasp what seems to me the most important point, that is, that concepts do have a history, but it is a multifaceted one that is not intrinsically tied to one specific "context" or "historical usage".

Concepts have many meanings, since they mobilize diverse social realities and historical situations. It must be clear, however, that concepts are not mere reflections of these socio-political realities; they are also part of them. And, what is more, the history of a concept can only be made from that which is conceptualized, since no reality as such is assumed as a referent that must be immediately grasped. To put it differently, the relation between social and political history, on the one hand, and the conceptual articulation, on the other hand, is neither one of identity nor one of mutual independence, but one of a permanent tension (see Koselleck, 2002, p.23; 2004 [1979], p.157, p.159). To be clear: to the history of concepts, there is no back-and-forth between the "material" and the "conceptual", but the tracing of how the latter register socio-political conditions. In this sense, my focus on the uses of the concept of "formation" aims at stressing how they expose - or, linguistically trace - certain sociopolitical conditions, some of which I will point out during my discussion of each of the texts.

Reinhart Koselleck proposes a distinction between event and structure that can be approximated to Michel Foucault's account of the identification of regularities in dispersion. According to the former, events are experienced by subjects as unities of narration, while structures have a "supra-individual and intersubjective" character, and can even become "part of the unconscious or the unknown"; this does not mean they are atemporal, but, rather, that they have a "processual character, which can then enter into everyday experience" (see Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.108). The event and the structure is not reducible to each other: neither structural pre-given elements determine the former nor events take place irrespective of structural conditions. In this sense, "[e]very event produces more and at the same time less than is contained in its pre-given elements: hence its

permanently surprising novelty" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.110). But this novelty is never completely detached from a pre-given linguistic dimension that conditions its irruption (see Koselleck, 2002, pp.30-1, pp.123-6). So, it is worth recalling, first of all, that socio-political situations and events are irreducible to linguistic articulations or conceptualizations; and, secondly, that these events can only be grasped through their linguistic traces, and therefore concepts become "conditions of possible histories" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.112). This is the methodological aporia Reinhart Koselleck formulates and that is here shedding light on my previous discussion of Michel Foucault's accounts on the discursive and the non-discursive.

Hence, despite their differences, both Michel Foucault and Reinhart Koselleck are helpful in the problematization of dichotomous perspectives on the relation between the discursive and the non-discursive, or the linguistic and the extra-linguistic. Recalling Michel Foucault, the regularities in dispersion constitute the conditions of existence - or the historical a priori - that are neither internal nor external to discourse; rather, they are formed by relations without which it is not possible to speak of objects, to name and classify them. In the same vein, it is plausible to say that, to Reinhart Koselleck, the extra-linguistic and the linguistic are inseparable from each other, the former being aporetically registered in the traces of the latter. This way, the main reason why I mobilize the notion of *traces* of "formation" in the interpretations of contemporary Brazil begins to be clear.

Nevertheless, much is still to be exposed in terms of the general lines of my perspective. The path now will lead me from Reinhart Koselleck to Hayden White. Discussing the latter's *Tropics of Discourse*, the former stressed that this text examines "how interpretations of the world can both mediate and facilitate political and ethical decisions" and claims that "interpretations of history are not just composed of the free choice between always available linguistic options but are instead subject to a sequential constraint of metaphorical language"; in this sense, "[h]owever the difference between so-called actual history and its interpretation is determined, the determination of the difference itself can only be made by linguistic means" (Koselleck, 2002, p.42, p.43, pp.43-4). In Hayden White's preface to Reinhart Koselleck's *The Practice of Conceptual History*, in turn, the link and gap between language and reality are tracked in the following terms: "a critical historical consciousness is born of an awareness of a gap between historical events and the language used to represent them - both by agents involved in these events

and by historians retrospectively trying to reconstruct them" (White, 2002 [2000], p.xiii).[46]

The considerations above open up a site yet to be explored. The vocabulary of "description", used in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, becomes one of "interpretation", but the problem remains the same, that is, the relation between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic. On that, the paragraph above raises two main aspects. Firstly, that reality and interpretation are not one and the same, neither they establish relations of complete mutual exteriority - in other words, they are neither identical to each other nor mutually exclusive or unidirectionally determined in either way. And, secondly, that the gap between events and language takes place not only in the historian's efforts to reconstruct those events, but also in the efforts of those agents themselves to represent the events they experience.

To Hayden White, a historical work has two levels: a manifest and a deeper one. The former is composed of the concepts explicitly used by historians in order to "explain" - "such concepts comprise the manifest level of the work inasmuch as they appear on the 'surface' of the text and can usually be identified with relative ease" (White, 1973, p.x). The other level is what he calls the "deep level of consciousness on which a historical thinker chooses conceptual strategies by which to explain or represent his data" (White, 1973, p.x). This is the level of the "poetic act", or the "prefigurative (tropological) strategy" (see White, 1973, pp.x-xi). Among his general conclusions, one reads that "there are no apodictically certain theoretical grounds on which one can legitimately claim an authority for any one of the modes over the others as being more 'realistic'"; "we are indentured to a *choice* among contending interpretative strategies in any effort to reflect on history-in-general"; and "the best grounds for choosing one perspective on history rather than another are ultimately aesthetic or moral rather than epistemological" (White, 1973, p.xii, italics in the original).

In order to avoid misunderstandings, two considerations are necessary. Firstly, I resort to Hayden White for two main reasons. One is that he raises the role of "interpretation" in a historical work. Extending his terms a little further, it seems

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[46] Hayden White also points out that, regarding his interpretation on the relation between language and reality, "Koselleck's work converges with that of [Roland] Barthes, [Michel] Foucault, and [Jacques] Derrida, all of whom have stressed the status of historiography as discourse rather than as discipline and features the constitutive nature of historical discourse as against its claims to literal truthfulness" (White, 2002 [2000], pp.xiii-iv).

plausible to say that any kind of "interpretation", historical or not, carries a tropological dimension. Or, to put it differently, the performance of a tropological dimension is intrinsic to the act of interpretation.[47] Linked to that is the second main reason why I think Hayden White is helpful here: the relation between "interpretation" and "reality" cannot be fixed from exclusively epistemological grounds, but also needs to grasp the moral and aesthetical aspect at stake. If I may extend his terms once more, I would like to suggest that political aspects can also permeate the relation between "interpretation" and "reality".

This brings me to the second consideration. My resort to Hayden White could suggest that I endorse two positions: first, that the tropological strategies are a matter of "choice" of the interpreter; and, second, that interpretation is a kind of hermeneutics that searches for the deep, or latent, level beginning from that which is the surface, or manifest one. This would be at odds with what I have claimed above from Michel Foucault's and Reinhart Koselleck's texts. To be clear, let me state that, in my view, the relation between "interpretation" and "reality" - or the "linguistic" and "extra-linguistic", "discursive" and the "non-discursive" - is not reducible to a deliberate or conscious choice of the interpreter.[48]

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[47] Hayden White defines historical work as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of *explaining what they were by representing* them" (White, 1973, p.2. italics in the original). As far as a historical work is not taken to be exclusively linked to a certain kind of archival research, or any other method unique to a field of study dedicated to assess historical "reality", one can consider that the tropological dimension Hayden White talks about is constitutive of any effort to interpret "reality". I cannot unfold the discussion in this text, but I want to note that this does imply that "history" and "poetry" or "literature" are ultimately necessarily undifferentiated from each other since they all have a certain tropological dimension. Rather, my point is that Hayden White's insights provide a thinking site to discuss the "interpretation of reality" that can contribute to what I have been developing here.

[48] In other words, I am suggesting that the conception of a tropological dimension in the act of interpretation can be mobilized departing from the notion of "choice" attributed by Hayden White to the interpreter. For more on how "choice" works to Hayden White, see White (1978 [1972-3], pp.69-70). Let me take the chance to note that, following the notion of "interpretation" I am proposing here, I am taking a direction that is importantly different from Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's somehow periodized distinction between, on the one hand, "meaning effects" and "meaning culture" and, on the other hand, "presence effects" and "presence culture", and his corresponding effort to recapture the force of the latter in face of the supposed predominance of the former in the production of knowledge of "modernity" (see Gumbrecht, 2004). Both "cultures", he warns, have to be seen as "ideal-types", in Max Weber's sense; but he also says that "meaning culture, of course, [is] close to modern culture and presence culture close to medieval culture" (Gumbrecht, 2004, p.79). He tries, then, to "reestablish our contact with the things of the world outside the subject/object paradigm (or in a modifed version of it) and by avoiding interpretation", even if he concedes that the relation between "presence" and "meaning" (the latter linked to interpretation) is always a tense one, therefore it would not be the case of simply going against interpretation (Gumbrecht, 2004, pp.56-7). A lot is at stake in this attempt towards the recapture of "presence" without being a simple move back in history; however, I am not able to advance this discussion here. I just want to stress that this

Hence, so far I would summarize the general lines of the perspective I am proposing here in the following terms: *the regularities that constitute the historical a priori of the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil can be interpreted through at least five linguistically-registered "traces".*

That said, it remains to be understood the performance of the political aspect in the act of interpretation. To Hayden White, there is "an irreducible ideological component in every historical account of reality", since

> the very claim to have distinguished a past from a present world of social thought and praxis, and to have determined the formal coherence of that past world, *implies* a conception of the form that knowledge of the present world must take, insofar as it is *continuous* with that past world. Commitment to a particular *form* of knowledge predetermines the *kinds* of generalizations one can make about the present world, the kinds of knowledge one can have of it, and the hence the kinds of projects one can legitimately conceive for changing that present or for maintaining it in its present form indefinitely (White, 1973, p.21, italics in the original).

The quotation above needs two remarks in order to be taken in the direction I am proposing here. First, the "ideological component" can be understood as the "political position" exposed in a text.[49] Second, instead of a focus on how a "form of knowledge" predetermines generalizations and projects, one can say, recalling Michel Foucault, that certain regularities and the positivities associated with them condition the knowledge of the past, the account on the present and the projects held in face of this present.

These two remarks being made, the notion of "tropics of discourse", as Hayden White formulates in a collection of essays published in 1978, gains even more relevance to the path I am tracking in this text. To him, "tropics is the process

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"longing for presence", as he puts (Gumbrecht, 2004, p.20), is not an implication or a motif to the problematization of periodization I am conducting here.

[49] For another instance of Hayden White's consideration on the relation between interpretation and the ideological component, see White (1978 [1972-3], pp.69-70).

by which all discourse *constitutes* the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and to analyze objectively" (White, 1978, p.2, italics in the original).[50] It is not the place here to detail the notion of discourse in Hayden White's text; suffice to say that it occupies a position that is "both interpretative and preinterpretative", that is, it is linked to interpretation at the same time that it is linked to the subject matter (see White, 1978, p.4).[51] The parallel between Michel Foucault's notion of the historical a priori and Hayden White's notion of the tropological dimension is only possible if Hayden White's linguistic ground is mobilized without being conceived as a deliberate choice of the interpreter and if his notion of interpretation is not taken as an act of unveiling a deeper level of what is manifest.[52]

In sum, I resorted to Hayden White in order to raise the performance of interpretation in the relation between concepts and reality, but I ended up rejecting his kind of hermeneutics and his focus on historical consciousness. In the perspective I am proposing here, interpretation is at once the identification of the regularities in dispersion that constitute the historical a priori and the identification of the linguistic traces of the extra-linguistic. To bring that to the specific concerns of this text, the act of interpretation aims at identifying the traces of "formation" in each interpretation of Brazil previously discussed and also the regularities in dispersion that constitute the historical a priori - and the more general traces of "formation" - in relation to which all those texts can be considered together.

But, if this further clarifies my act of interpretation in relation to the texts approached, it leaves untouched why do I consider those texts themselves to be

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[50] To him, "troping is the soul of discourse, therefore, the mechanism without which discourse cannot do its work or achieve its end" (White, 1978, p.2).

[51] To reinforce, I am exploring this position Hayden White ascribes to "discourse" without endorsing his claim that "discourse... [is] a product of consciousness's efforts to come to terms with problematical domains of experiences" (White, 1978, p.5). I am not denying that some kind of conscious process may take place (and generally it does take place) in the formulation of a discourse - or, to follow my terms here, in the act of interpretation. Nevertheless, the purpose of my interpretation is not to search for deliberate reasons or intentions following which the interpretations articulate the traces of "formation". To put it differently, my attempt to provide an interpretation of those traces does not endorse a theoretical or methodological precept that requires the investigation on cross-influences, intentions, consciousness, as my resort to Michel Foucault's text indicates.

[52] The approximation between Hayden White and Michel Foucault was once carried forward by the former himself. Focusing on the latter's earlier texts until *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Hayden White points out that Michel Foucault "[rediscovered] the importance of the projective or generational aspect of language, the extent to which it not only 'represents' the world of things but also constitutes the modality of the relationships among things by the very act of assuming a posture before them" (White, 1978 [1973], p.254). For Hayden White on Michel Foucault see also White (1978 [1976]).

"*interpretations* of Brazil". In this sense, my claim for now is that they are not statements about an extra-linguistic reality or object ("Brazil"), but processes of articulation between "reality" and its "linguistic register" without which the very notion of "Brazil" is not conceivable. To put all that in the terms I am proposing here, I would state that *the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil expose different political positions through variations of the articulations of past, present and future and between inside and outside*.

I am aware, however, that the notion of interpretation I am mobilizing is still vague and more on that needs to be said. Discussing Hayden White's *Tropics of Discourse*, Dominick LaCapra emphasizes its account on "interpretation": it "is not a necessary evil in the face of a historical record that is always too full (hence the need for selection) and too empty (hence the need for auxiliary hypotheses to stop gaps). Interpretation is at the heart of historiography, for it relates to the way in which language prefigures and informs the historical field" (LaCapra, 1983 [1978], p.75). Instead of avoiding the act of interpretation, then, it is crucial to problematize how it works in the "reconstruction of the past".[53]

After praising Hayden White for his achievements, Dominick LaCapra advances some resistances towards the former's approach. For my purposes here, three aspects of these resistances are worth mentioning. Firstly, he points out that Hayden White's conception of language and discourse sees both "predominantly as instruments or expressions of consciousness"; secondly, Dominick LaCapra claims that he "assumes the mastery of 'logocentric' philosophy over rhetoric... [that is,] he writes from a position itself constituted and secured after an important battle has seemingly been won and without inquiring into the *casus belli*"; and, thirdly, the free choice of the tropes by the historian is taken as "moral or ideological", which "oversimplifies the relations between chaos and (moral or narrative) order in life, in art, in historiography, and in the interactions among them" (LaCapra, 1983 [1978], p.76; p.76; p.79, n.2). Without going into details of the dispute at stake, I should note that the crucial point is that, in Hayden White's texts, the act of interpretation is often projected onto a "historical record" that is considered an "inert object to be animated by the shaping mind of the historian" (LaCapra, 1983

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[53] If I may recall, the "reconstruction of the past", as I have been discussing here, is inseparable from accounts on the "present" and on the "future", as well as it is linked to "political positions" in the interpretations of Brazil.

[1978], pp.79-80) - this goes in the same direction of my two main resistances towards his texts, that is, their hermeneutical perspective and their account on consciousness.

At the same time, Dominick LaCapra claims that Hayden White's text can be explored from another perspective. Among the quotations from *Tropics of Discourse* that he reproduces to make his point is the one I partly reproduced myself above: "[Discourse] is both interpretative and preinterpretative; it is as much *about* the nature of interpretation itself as it is *about* the subject matter which is the manifest occasion of its own elaboration" (White, 1978, p.4 *apud* LaCapra, 1983 [1978], p.81, italics in the original). He then argues that Hayden White does not specify the way the prefigurative, or tropological, dimension actually works in texts. If discourse is about both interpretation and the subject matter and if text is the way through which discourse comes into scene, it seems plausible to say that Dominick LaCapra's problematization refers to how the extra-linguistic works in the linguistic dimension. Or, to put it differently and recalling my previous discussion, he is putting into relief the process through which socio-political situations, and the non-discursive in general, are registered in linguistic *traces* and in the *regularities in dispersion* constitutive of a historical a priori.

Let me recall that above I have stressed that, in my use here, the act of interpretation, on the one hand, identifies the regularities in dispersion that constitute the historical a priori and the linguistic traces of the extra-linguistic; and, on the other hand, relates to the processes of articulation between "reality" ("Brazil") and its "linguistic register" (traces of "formation") without which the very notion of "Brazil" is not conceivable. Here, Dominick LaCapra can help me to give a step further. In his terms, the prevalent opposition between the "historian" and the "historical agents" needs to be reconceptualized in more "dialogical" terms. This has two main implications: first, it points out how "historical agents themselves are involved in attempts to make sense - or to explore the limits of sense-making - in their texts or other historical acts"; and, second, it "questions historians' rights to the position of omniscient narrators... for historians in an important sense do not know how it all turned out" (LaCapra, 1983, p.18). In this sense, historians are situated in-between two meanings - one related to "what something meant in its own time" and the other, to "what it may mean for us today" -: it is at this "liminal

point that the dialogue with the past becomes internal to the historian" (LaCapra, 1983, p.18).

To bring this consideration to my purposes here, "interpretation" is linked, on the one hand, to identifying how the "interpreters of Brazil" try to make sense of its formative process and how their texts expose different political positions; and, on the other hand, to how their interpretations, taken separately and taken together, are aporetic performances of modernization and critique of modernization. But I am anticipating things a little bit. Let me go back to Domick LaCapra.

To him, the very opposition between what is inside and what is outside texts - between text and context - should be problematized in the discussion of the interaction between language and world, since "the very reconstruction of a 'context' or a 'reality' takes place on the basis of 'textualized' remainders of the past" (LaCapra, 1983 [1980], p.27).[54] In such a controversial topic, it is important to be as explicit as possible: I am not resorting to Dominick LaCapra in order to endorse the position that defends that "everything is textual", that "there is nothing outside text" or that "context does not exist" - this is neither his position nor mine, but I will get back to that in a moment. Text, then, is defined as "a situated use of language marked by a tense interaction between mutually implicated yet at times contestatory tendencies" (LaCapra, 1983 [1980], p.26).

From this definition, the dichotomy between text and context - and its related dichotomies, such as author's intentions and text, author's life and text, society and texts, culture and texts, author's entire oeuvre and his particular texts, structures and particular texts - is cast into doubt: instead of a methodological solution to the act of interpretation, it becomes the problem to be tackled (see LaCapra, 1983 [1980], pp.36-61).[55] Moreover, interpretation becomes an act with political implications, "a form of political intervention that engages the historian [I would extend, the interpreter in general, VCL] in a critical process that relates past, present, and future [I would supplement, inside and outside, VCL] through complex

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[54] In this text, Dominick LaCapra has as its main references Hayden White's texts I have briefly dealt with above, *Metahistory* and *Tropics of Discourse* (see LaCapra, 1983 [1980], p.27, n.1).

[55] A detailed discussion of those related dichotomies would require the assessment of perspectives often labeled for instance as "contextualism", "Marxism", "structuralism", "formalism", "intentionalism", and even "biographical" and "psychological" approaches to texts. It is beyond my scope here to advance this discussion.

modes of interaction involving both continuities and discontinuities [or, identifications and differentiations, VCL]" (LaCapra, 1983 [1980], p.63).

Dominick LaCapra stresses that "context itself is a text of sorts", and cannot become the instrument for "a reductive reading of texts" (LaCapra, 1983 [1979], pp.95-6); in this same sense, texts cannot be a source for a reductive reading of contexts. So, "intertextuality" implies similar problematizations than "intercontextuality". That is to say, the interpretation of a text can resort to other texts that more or less pertinently relate in various ways to the former, as well as it can resort to different contexts that more or less pertinently relate in various ways to the text interpreted. For instance, a text approached as an "interpretation of Brazil" can be linked to other texts also approached as "interpretations of Brazil", as well as it can foster innumerable other, not necessarily mutually excluding, associations with innumerably different "interpretations" - "interpretations of Latin America", "interpretations of modernity", "modernizing" and/or "counter-modernizing interpretations" being only the most common ones. In the same line, the text approached as an "interpretation of Brazil" can be linked to various contexts, such as "a political context", "an institutional context", "a (pre, late, post)modern context", all that being "Brazilian contexts" or also larger ones.

Before one concludes from the above that I am preserving a dichotomy between "texts" and "contexts", however variegated I conceive them, and their mutual relations, to be, it is crucial to recall that what is generally taken as "contexts" can only be interpreted through their linguistic traces, which does not mean that "contexts" are malleable raw-material to be molded by interpreters' free, deliberate and always conscious choices. It is in this sense that Dominick LaCapra's words seem to be more fruitfully grasped. Instead of an interpretation that aims at unvleiling "contexts" to which texts are "made to conform", a reversal is proposed, and the relationship between text and context becomes one "which cannot be addressed on the basis of reductionist oversimplifications that convert the context into a fully unified or dominant structure saturating the text with a certain meaning. Meaning is indeed context-bound, but context is not itself bound in any simple or unproblematic way" (LaCapra, 1983 [1979], p.117).[56]

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[56] Needless to say, the path I have tracked has left aside a number of other thinkers that have dealt with issues of central importance to me here, for instance those associated to the so-called "Cambridge School" or "contextualism" ("contextual history"), in particular Quentin Skinner and

Extending the considerations already made and mobilizing them to my specific purposes, I would claim that the acts of interpretation of the interpreters of Brazil expose political positions in the way they relate past, present, and future, inside and outside, through traces of "formation" that express multiple series of identifications and differentiations - to recall, (1) identification of a certain sense of Brazilian nation; (2) the identifications and differentiations between the old and the new in contemporary Brazil; (3) the internal differentiations (or inequalities) within the country; (4) the identifications and differentiations in relation to external parameters (in particular external "modern" configurations); and (5) the identifications and differentiations marking the specificities of Brazilian formative process.

I still want to make further moves in the general lines of the interpretation I am proposing here. To that, I will resort now to Jacques Derrida. According to him,

> [t]here are... two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign and of play [*du jeu*]. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology - in other words, throughout his entire history - has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring

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John Pocock. Bringing them, however, would run the risk of side-tracking the discussion I am proposing. In any case, at least one remark with an implicit allusion to both Quentin Skinner's and John Pocock's perspectives seems timely. The perspective on "interpretation" I am proposing is clearly not one that aims at, or implies, a de-historicization or "de-contextualization" in name of a history of "ideas" or "concepts" that supposedly disregards their effective historical and situated linguistic traces. The relation I have been weaving between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic, and my insistence on "traces", comprises a direct challenge on any hypostatization or reification of either (and of its often related notions such as "text", "discourse", "concepts", "social reality", "structure", "material relations"). I will tackle the potentialities of approximating Skinner, Pocock and the thinkers I am mentioning here in another occasion, especially in relation to how "past" and "historical distance" are conceived in the relationship between "text" and "context". Part of this effort I am carrying forward with Paulo Chamon, to whom I am deeply indebted in this text. Nicholas Onuf has been another major stimulus here.

foundation, the origin and the end of play (Derrida, 1978 [1966], pp.369-70).[57]

Then, he adds that "these two interpretations of interpretation - which are absolutely irreconcilable even if we live them simultaneously and reconcile them in an obscure economy - together share the field which we call, in such a problematic fashion, the social sciences" (Derrida, 1978 [1966], p.370). Instead of posing the problematization as a matter of choice on behalf of the interpreter, Jacques Derrida widens and deepens, so to speak, the problem at stake, by saying that "although these two interpretations must acknowledge and accentuate their difference and define their irreducibility, I do not believe that today there is any question of *choosing*" (Derrida, 1978 [1966], p.370, italics in the original).[58] His warning in relation to choice as a way-out is justified on two grounds: first, "because here we are in a region - let us say, provisionally, a region of historicity - where the category of choice seems particularly weak [*bien légère*]"; and, second, because "we must first try to conceive of the common ground, and the *différance* of this irreducible difference" (Derrida, 1978 [1966], p.370).

The epigraph of his text comes from Michel de Montaigne: "there is more ado in interpreting interpretations than in interpreting things" (Derrida, 1967 [1966], p.409).[59] Recalling what has been discussed so far, interpreting interpretations and interpreting things are two inseparable aspects of the relation between the linguistic and the non-linguistic in a historical a priori and its regularaties in dispersion. Therefore, I am tempted to somehow displace Jacques Derrida's insight to my own concerns here, and propose that the common ground mentioned above can be taken as constitutive of the historical a priori of the

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[57] This text, first published in 1967, was first presented in a lecture in 1966. I have modified the English translation of Jacques Derrida's text whenever I felt necessary in order to be more faithful to the French text (for the French text quoted above, see Derrida, 1967 [1966]).

[58] Elsewhere, talking about "humanism", "Man", Jacques Derrida raises two strategies: "to attempt the exit and the deconstruction without changing terrain", which implies the risk of confirming what one intends to deconstruct in the first place; and "to decide to change terrain", placing oneself outside, but then running the risk of being caught in this displacement and being placed exactly inside what one declares to have exited. Facing that, "it goes without saying that the choice between these two forms of deconstruction cannot be simple and unique. A new writing must weave and interlace these two motifs of deconstruction" (Derrida, 1972 [1968], pp.162-3. I have also used the English translation in Derrida (1982)).

[59] The French text brings: "Il y a plus affaire à interpréter les interprétations qu'à interpréter les choses". The translation I suggested above is different from the one in the English-edition: "We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things" (Derrida, 1978 [1966], p.351).

"interpretations of Brazil" I have been dealing with in this text. I will elaborate more on that.

The coexistence of those two interpretations in a common ground puts in motion two kinds of acts: on the one hand, the act of deciphering, linked to the search for truth, origin, presence, foundation, in sum, the end of play and ultimately the end of the act of deciphering itself once the thing is completely deciphered; on the other hand, the endless act of affirmation of play and the attempt to move beyond man and humanism, that is, beyond the act of deciphering.[60] The search for an origin, or for the center of a structure, aims at interrupting the play in name of fixity, presence; at the same time, the persistence of play is a continuous act of de-centering. This coexistence, or simultaneity, following Jacques Derrida, does not stem from the impossibility of reaching *the* center, but, rather, from the absence of this center within the common ground shared by the two interpretations of interpretation. In his words, "instead of being an inexhaustible field..., instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions" (Derrida, 1978 [1966], p.365). The lack of the center is not, however, a primordial or founding moment of play [*jeu*]. The relation of absence and presence is indeed situated: "one must conceive being as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around" (Derrida, 1978 [1966], p.369).[61]

The interpretations of Brazil expose the play Jacques Derrida talks about. The search for a center, "Brazil", coexists with the absence of this center. This is a matter neither of a mere conflict of interpretations nor of a metaphysical inversion from presence to absence. It is rather a structure of iteration that *identifies* "Brazil", but always *differently.* To anticipate the path being tracked, a collage of three quotations will suffice for the time being: "[t]he refutation of an interpretation of Brazil is only possible with another interpretation of Brazil" (Lessa, 2009, p.75); "the unique character of this structure of iterability... lies in the fact that, comprising identity *and* difference, repetition *and* alteration, etc, it renders the *project* of idealization possible without lending '*itself*' to any pure, simple, and idealizable

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[60] The immediate focus of Jacques Derrida's text is "structuralism" and "humanism" in "human sciences", but I am mobilizing it for my own immediate concerns.
[61] "Play" is thus related to "*différance*" in the quotation above. "De-centering" does not presuppose that an "original center" has been or had been established.

conceptualization." (Derrida, 1988 [1977], p.71, italics in the original); and, "'Brazil' does not exist, but it is the same 'Brazil' that does not yield to the attempts of translating it in substantial volumes of cultural and literary history" (Rocha, 2003b, p.17).

The collage implies that iteration operates as a play of identifications and differentiations that opens the possibility for a project whose realization is not the unveiling of anything (of some "thing") that is hidden or that has always been already "there" and/or "then". In terms closer to my concerns here, the collage implies that the interpretations of Brazil express a formative process that works through a play of identifications and differentiations that opens the possibility for a political and historical project whose realization is not the final accomplishment of a "nation" or of a "modern form" as if either or both had already been "present" - somewhere, somehow - in "Brazil" or had to be brought from "outside". In the following passage, let me suggest that where Jacques Derrida writes "life" one reads "Brazil": "[n]o doubt life [Brazil] protects itself by repetition, trace, *différance*. But we must be wary of this formulation: there is no life [Brazil] present *at first* which would *then* come to protect, postpone, or reserve itself in *différance*. The latter constitutes the essence of life [of Brazil]... Life [Brazil] must be thought of as a trace before Being may be determined as presence" (Derrida, 1978 [1967], pp.254-5, italics in the original).[62]

The notion of "trace" brings back what I proposed above: the elements of a concrete political situation are registered through their "linguistic traces". To put it differently, the *presence* of the extra-linguistic is not detachable from its linguistic *traces*. Let me recall that the traces of "formation" are constitutive of the regularities in dispersion of the historical a priori at stake in my discussion here and that these traces operate through a play of identifications and differentiations. In this vein, the linguistic traces can be considered - without much distance from Reinhart Koselleck's texts - as a play of tracing. From that, and having in mind the collage above, it seems plausible to conceive the interpretations of the formation of

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[62] Elsewhere, he writes that "*différance is not*, does not exist, is not a present-being (*on*) in any form"; "[w]hat is written as *différance*, then, will be the movement of the play that 'produces', by means of something that is not simply an activity, these differences, these effects of differences" (Derrida, 1972 [1968], p.6, p.12, italics in the original. I have used also the English translation in Derrida (1982), modifying it when I felt necessary).

contemporary Brazil as a process of iterability - repeating and altering, identifying and differentiating "Brazil".

The notions of "trace" and "iterability" carry the dimension of historicity to the stage. Here, it seems that Jacques Derrida and Reinhart Koselleck can be fruitfully mobilized together.[63] One should recall the latter's considerations on the "history of concepts" (*Begriffsgeschichte*). He highlights that "historical events and their linguistic constitution are folded into each other" and that "a tension prevails between these two poles that undergoes continual historical change" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.195). Moreover, he distinguishes a concept from a word saying that "a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.85).[64] Well, one of Reinhart Koselleck's main efforts was exactly to advance a "semantic analysis" on how the very "words" *"Historie*" and *Geschichte*" gain different "concepts" over time. It is not relevant to me the conclusions he extracts from the analysis (which will point out basically a periodization that marks a distinctively "modern" linguistic usage of both terms), but rather a more fundamental aspect of his effort: to advance his analysis, Reinhart Koselleck relied on the linguistic traces of the historical usages of both words (and the different concepts they have acquired). In short, the very possibility of historicity - including of the historicity of the concept of history - is linked to the possibility of the linguistic traces.[65]

According to Jacques Derrida, "historicity itself is tied to the possibility of writing... Before being the object of a history - of an historical science - writing opens the field of history - of historical becoming. And the former (*Historie* in

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[63] If the scope of this text allowed me the careful exploration of a possible track connecting Reinhart Koselleck and Jacques Derrida, I would deal with two other figures, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger. Indeed, for that matter, Jacques Derrida, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Reinhart Koselleck can be seen as three routes taken by Heideggerian texts. While there is a history of the encounter between the first two and between the last two, as far as I can tell no direct engagement took place between the first and the third.

[64] The continuation of the page brings an example of that relation: "[c]onsider the variety of objects that enter the word 'state' such that it might become a concept: domination, domain, bourgeoisie, legislation, jurisdiction, administration, taxation, and army, to invoke only present-day terms. A variety of circumstances with their own terminology (and conceptuality) are taken up by the word 'state' and made into a common concept. Concepts are thus the concentrate of several substantial meanings" (Koselleck, 2004 [1979], p.85). The same can be said to "formation".

[65] I am deliberately evading the discussion of "periodization" in Reinhart Koselleck's texts, which would lead me to a whole different problematization, focused on his definition of "modernity". I will develop that in another moment, more precisely in relation to the notion of "historical distance" (see note 57).

German) presupposes the latter (*Geschichte*)" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.27). Therefore, history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*) should be focused precisely on this tie, which can better be conceived as the continuous tracing of historicity in language. In a certain sense, then, trace comes before thing or entity. But "before" means here a presupposition: historicity of an entity presupposes the possibility of language. In Jacques Derrida's terms, "[t]he trace must be thought before the entity" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.47), which means that the entity is not a presence in itself, an origin from which trace is articulated. Indeed, "[t]he trace is not only the disappearance of origin - within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.61). This "origin of the origin" is not a new center, or an essence, or a presence, or a thing in itself; rather, it is a movement that produces identity and difference; iterability; trace.

It strikes me a little some of the fierce receptions Jacques Derrida's texts have provoked throughout the years, and in particular how some of his words (not infrequently mistranslated) have become shortcuts to the rejection of his entire "work". So, in order to avoid - as far as I can - some kind of misunderstanding regarding what I am saying here, let me suggest an interpretation for the infamous "*il n'y a pas de hors-text*" (Derrida, 1967, p.227). This phrase is written in the second part of *De la Grammatologie* (Of Grammatology), devoted to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in a section significantly entitled "*L'Exorbitant. Question de Méthode*" ("The Exorbitant. Question of Method"). Jacques Derrida is there saying that the reading of a text must be satisfied neither with "doubling the text" nor with transgressing it "toward something other than it, toward a referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychobiographical, etc.) or toward a signified outside the text whose content could take place, could have taken place outside of language". Then, he states: "*There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*]" (Derrida, 1967, p.227, italics in the original; to the English translation, Derrida, 1997, p.158).[66] Following this statement, one reads a series of reasons supporting it:

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[66] Later, Jacques Derrida would specify that "doubling commentary" does not allude to the possibility of a transcription of "the originary and true layer of a text's intentional meaning, a meaning that is univocal and self-identical, a layer upon which or after which active interpretation

And that is neither because Jean-Jacques' life, or the existence of Mamma or Therese *themselves*, is not of prime interest to us, nor because we have access to their so-called 'real' existence only in the text and we have neither any means of altering this, nor any right to neglect this limitation. All reasons of this type would already be sufficient, to be sure, but there are more radical reasons. What we have tried to show by following the guiding line of the 'dangerous supplement,' is that in what one calls the real life of these existences 'of flesh and bone,' beyond and behind what one believes can be circumscribed as Rousseau's text, there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the 'real' supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus to infinity, for we have read, *in the text*, that the absolute present, nature, that which words like 'real mother' name, have always already escaped, have never existed; that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence (Derrida, 1997 [1967], pp.158-9, italics in the original).

The first group of reasons he provides is already immediately rejected by those defending a dichotomous relation between language and reality.[67] But I guess

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would finally begin... No, this commentary is *already* an interpretation... I do not believe in the possibility of a pure and simple 'doubling commentary'" (Derrida, 1988, pp.143-4, italics in the original). Therefore, by "doubling commentary" he is referring to "a relative stability of the dominant interpretation... of the text being commented upon" (Derrida, 1988, p.143); this stability is dependent upon "socio-institutional conditions, hence upon nonnatural relations of power that by essence are mobile and founded upon complex conventional structures that in principle may be analyzed, deconstructed, and transformed" (Derrida, 1988, p.147). This gives a sense of how I conceive that the traces of "formation" in the interpretations of Brazil are exposing certain socio-institutional conditions (sometimes profoundly stabilized and taken for granted).

[67] One could recall, for instance, some approaches that presuppose the "material existence" of "class relations" defined in socio-economic terms; or other approaches that "explain" social and political relations through the methodological account on the "material distribution of power" and/or

it is the "more radical reasons" that exemplify an instance in his texts that can trigger two different kinds of reaction I want to mention:[68] on the one hand, there is the acceptance of the first group of reasons coupled with the rejection of the radical reasons and its supposed endless deferral of meaning, the infinite movement that makes natural or absolute presence disappear and that is said to hamper any (conceptual, individual, social, political) stability or decision; on the other hand, those that read in his texts the announcement of a "new", "post-modern" world, in which there is nothing outside text, meaning by that that everything is textual (as opposed to real), and in which borders are waning.

Nevertheless, continuing with the text, another interpretation seems more plausible. Jacques Derrida writes that the impossibility of separating inside-text from outside-text is "historically articulated" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.159). The writer (or, in my case here, the interpreter) "is inscribed in a determined textual system. Even if there is never a pure signified, there are different relationships as to that which, from the signifier, is presented as the irreducible stratum of the signified" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.160). Jacques Derrida has persistently insisted that what is at stake is not a matter of positioning oneself for or against metaphysics - recall the relation between the two interpretations of interpretation discussed above. His texts have proposed an alternative which is not a mere escape, a way out, a move beyond or back. Instead, the point is to move with and against, replacing an either/or dichotomy by a both/and interpretation. In this sense, he writes: "[t]he opening of the question, the departure from the closure of a self-evidence, the putting into doubt of a system of oppositions, all these movements necessarily have the form of empiricism and of errancy" (Derrida, 1997 [1967] p.162). But this does not imply that it is in vain to begin, to act, to decide, to move, as if nowhere is reachable that is not the same as what was before (for better or for worse): "We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace, which cannot not take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are*: in a text where we already believe ourselves to be" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.162, italics in the original). Hence, history is neither

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"capabilities", and its related "causality"; or still other approaches that assume an intentional, a conscious or a rational subject as their starting point (methodologically and sometimes ontologically).

[68] As I am not going into the controversies, therefore not giving names to the reactions depicted, I will take these reactions as parameters to the interpretation I am proposing.

the empire of the eternal repetition, nor of the irreducible difference of the historical fact; it is neither fact nor fiction; neither presence nor absence. "It" is always both, always conditioned by trace, iterability.[69]

Above, I proposed that Brazil protects itself by repetition, trace, *différance*.[70] But that there is no Brazil present *at first* which would *then* come to protect, postpone, or reserve itself in *différance*. The latter constitutes the essence of Brazil which must be thought of as a trace before "it" be determined as presence. The chain comprising "trace", "*différance*", "iterability", on the one hand, and "Brazil", on the other, has been already delineated here. What is perhaps not clear yet is, first, how this relates to my specific concern on the formation of contemporary Brazil and, second, how this relates to the political positions the interpretations of Brazil expose.

A short move will suffice to the first point. Continuing for yet another moment with Jacques Derrida, one reads that "trace is différance" and that "[d]ifférance is therefore the *formation of form*" (Derrida 1997 [1967], p.95, p.92).[71] Trace is thus the *formation of form*. This means, as my discussion so far implies, that past, present and future, inside and outside are tied to the traces of "formation". More precisely, (1) the centrality of the *nation*; (2) the *incompleteness* of the transition from the colonial to the modern, marking a coexistence of the old and the new; (3) the *internal inequality* within the country; (4) the mobilization of *external parameters* in the definition of Brazil; and (5) the focus on the *specificities* of Brazilian formative process, can now be conceived through the play of

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[69] Elsehwere, Jacques says that saying that "*il n'y a pas de hors-text absolu*" does not mean the affirmation of an "an ideal immanence" or "the unceasing reconstitution of a relation of writing [*écriture*] with itself"; it is not an idealist or theologian operation suspending "the outside of discourse, of logos, of concept, of idea. The text *affirms* the outside, marks the limit of this speculative operation, deconstructs and reduces to 'effects' all the predicates through which speculation appropriates the outside" (Derrida, 1972, p.42, italics in the original); hence, "*il n'y a que du texte, il n'y a que du hors-text*" (Derrida, 1972, p.50). In an Afterword included in *Limited Inc*, Jacques Derrida writes that "[t]he phrase which for some has become a sort of slogan, in general so badly understood, of deconstruction ('there is nothing outside the text' [*il n'y a pas de hors-text*]), means nothing else: there is nothing outside context. In this form, which says exactly the same thing, the formula would doubtless have been less shocking" (Derrida, 1988, p.136). Then, "[w]hat I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real', 'economic', 'historical', socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that 'there is nothing outside the text'... [E]very referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretative experience." (Derrida, 1988, p.148).

[70] As Gayatri Spivak stresses, Jacques Derrida uses the word "trace" in the same way as he uses a number of other words, including "*différance*" and, I would add, "iterability". *Trace*, in French - and in Portuguese, if I may add -, "carries strong implications of track, footprint, imprint", presenting "itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master" (Spivak, 1997, p.xv; see also p.lxx).

[71] The first phrase is in italics in the original, while I added italics to the second phrase.

identifications and differentiations constituting the regularities in dispersion of the continuous formation of form.

Now, to the second point, the path will take me from Jacques Derrida to another thinker. A transition is at hand in the Jacques' text itself: "[w]hy of the *trace*? What led us to the choice of this word?" (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.70, italics in the original). I follow him in part of his answer, so as to move on in a different direction shortly later:

> If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences [recall Reinhart Koselleck's relation between word and concept, VCL], one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic and an historical strategy. The justification can therefore never be absolute and definitive. It corresponds to a condition of forces and translates an historical calculation. Thus, over and above those that I have already defined, a certain number of givens belonging to the discourse of our time have progressively imposed this choice upon me. The word *trace* must refer to itself to a certain number of contemporary discourses whose force I intend to take into account. Not that I accept the totality of those discourses. But the word *trace* establishes the clearest connections with them and thus permits me to dispense with certain developments which have already demonstrated their effectiveness in those discourses (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.70, italics in the original).[72]

Needless to say, the previous path tracked by Jacques Derrida until he arrives at the concept of "trace" as well as the continuation of his journey are different than what I have chosen *and* what has been imposed on me here. No problem, as I am moving with and against him. In any case, trace - the traces of "formation" - here also "refer to itself to a certain number of contemporary discourses [on the formation of contemporary Brazil] whose force I intend to take into account", although I also do

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[72] I have adapted the English translation following the French text.

not "accept the totality of those discourses". More specifically, the aporetic performances of the interpretations of Brazil expose forces I want to stress, including the political positions at stake, even if I do not necessarily endorse them.

That said, it is necessary to recall, first, that the "contemporary discourses" I am dealing with in this text refer to the interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil, and, secondly, that the "condition of forces" I am tackling are linked to the political positions they expose. It remains to be discussed, however, how do I conceive the notion of "contemporary" and how the notion that a political position is exposed in a text has been understood here.

Giorgio Agamben has recently raised different aspects concerning the notion of "contemporaneity". It appears in his text as a "relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism", which means that the contemporary "are those who neither perfectly coincide with it [their time] nor adjust themselves to its demands" (Agamben, 2009 [2008], p.41, italics dropped from the original; p.40). The contemporary is also "he [or she] who firmly holds his [or her] gaze on his [or her] own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness", which is not, however, "separable from those lights" (Agamben, 2009 [2008], pp.44-5). To perceive this darkness requires, more precisely, perceiving, "in the darkness of the present, this light that strives to reach us but cannot"; this requirement make the contemporary a "rare" and "courageous" person (see Agamben, 2009 [2008], p.46).

The anachronism mentioned above enables the "grasp of our time in the form of a 'too soon' that is also a 'too late'; of an 'already' that is also a 'not yet'" (Agamben, 2009 [2008], p.47). Contemporariness relates to the past in at least to different ways: it can "tie together that which it has inexorably divided - recall, re-evoke, and revitalize that which it had declared dead" and it "perceives the indices and signatures of the archaic in the most modern and recent" (Agamben, 2009 [2008], p.50). The archaic is not thus a dead past, but a force operating in the present, graspable only through an "archaeology" that "returns to that part within the present that we are absolutely incapable of living"; in this sense, "the present is nothing other than this unlived element in everything that is lived" (Agamben, 2009 [2008], p.51). Finally, besides perceiving the light in the darkness of the present, the contemporary is also "the one who, dividing and interpolating time, is capable

of transforming it and putting it in relation with other times" (Agamben, 2009 [2008], p.53).

Giorgio Agamben's vocabulary - especially, the "light" and the "darkness" of an age, the "rarity" and the "courage" of a contemporary, the "revitalization" of a "past declared dead" - would demand a very careful discussion, since the use of these words is generally associated to highly controversial theological, philosophical, political and ethical aspects. I will escape from that here, retaining only that which I think is helpful to the contours of what I mean by "contemporary". Discussing Giorgio Agamben's text, Silviano Santiago stresses that the contemporary human being does not coincide with his or her time, does not become "an imitation or copy of the situation in which he or she lives"; the contemporary is tied to an "in-betweeness" in which past, present and future encounter one other (Santiago, 2013). The potential inscribed in this notion of "in-betweeness", if I may push a little further Silviano's words, is that it can relate both to time and space: in-between past, present, and future, as well as in-between inside and outside.

To bring Giorgio Agamben's considerations closer to my specific concerns here, I am suggesting that a possible reading of the interpretations of Brazil approached in this text is exactly one that considers them "contemporary". Hence, they are interpreted neither as ineluctably tied to "their time", which could lead to the conclusion that they are "outdated" or do not speak anymore to "*our* time", as if the "present" they "represent" is already gone and/or the "future" they anticipate has failed to "arrive"; nor as atemporally relevant or even prescient, irrespective of their historicity or situatedness. Rather, they are interpreted through the way they express in different ways the play of past, present, and future, as well as inside and outside that is constitutive of the formation of contemporary Brazil. That is to say, by registering the traces of "formation", their varied problematizations enable alternative gazes on the encounter of times and spaces with one another, opening up alternatives to think the iterability of identifications and differentiations in *contemporary* Brazil and in modernity. So, my insistence on the use of "contemporary" is linked to the effort of providing an alternative interpretation of "modernity", drawing on the aporetic performance to be identified in the texts I will deal with later.

That said, I can now proceed with the other aspect in need of precision: the political positions exposed in the texts. First and foremost, it is important to say that the political positions are identified neither from a "pre-textual" ("biographical" or "contextual") information nor from a different "textual" source which could then be superimposed upon the text being focused on. In this sense, I resort to "extra-textual" aspects only insofar as they help me in clarifying my reading of the specific interpretation of Brazil to be dealt with and/or when I am able to identify in the text selected how this "extra-textual" aspect is registered, or linguistically-traced.

Therefore, when I refer to "political position" I have most often two major dimensions in mind. One relates to the immediate disputes in which the interpreters of Brazil were engaged, such as institutional struggles, including (but not restricted to) the direct involvement with political parties. Another dimension relates to the aporetic performance of the texts. As they at once endorse different modernizing perspectives and advance different critiques of modernization, they open up a site to problematize modernity from a different *place*. To recall something already pointed out and to anticipate something I will discuss again later, these aporetic performances are linked to a conception of place understood 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), delineating 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).

My next move takes me to some of Luiz Costa Lima's texts, through which I will raise further aspects of the relation between "(con)text", "place" and "political position". The path will become somehow sinuous and perhaps exceedingly selective, but I would not be able to fulfill my purpose without first proposing an explicit connection between his perspective and what I have been discussing so far. As I have already mobilized some of Jacques Derrida's texts, raising a few instances in which Luiz articulated his divergence with them seems a good way to proceed.

My entry point is thus his position "towards the outcomes of the so-called deconstructionist critique" (Lima, 2003, p.17). Previously a "fellow traveler" in the "harsh battle against sociologism... against the documentary approach of literature", over time the "traditional dependence of literature upon reality converted itself into something closed in itself..., with the exclusion of the *cursed external reference*"

(Lima, 2003, p.17, italics added). Facing this situation, Luiz posed the following question: "But how could I assume the disagreement without relapsing into the mirror complex against which I have always fought?"; or, "how to do it without renouncing and without even softening the fight against the positivist documentalism?" (Lima, 2003, p.17).[73] From a fellow combatant, "deconstructionist critique" has become the challenged fellow. Still a fellow, though. On what follows, the notion of "the exclusion of the cursed external reference" should be constantly at sight.[74]

According to Luiz Costa Lima, "[t]he move to a predominantly historical level of analysis enables one to show that the *difference* achieved by works that have as theme the experience lived in marginalized and metropolitan continents internalizes distinct *places* which tend to provoke differentiated configurations" (Lima, 2003, p.23, italics in the original).[75] In this text, Luiz Costa Lima is approaching certain "fictional texts" that dealt with the theme of "horror", and he enunciates his theoretical position as follows: "[t]he socioeconomic conditionings are not determinant: they serve as resources [*subsídio*] of a theory that aims fundamentally at the fictional text" (Lima, 2003, p.24, italics dropped from the original).[76] Hence, what is stake in his considerations is the attention to the link between the production of difference and "the *place* in which difference is processed or in which it is received" (Lima, 2003, p.25, italics added).

In the 1991 collection of essays *Pensando nos Trópicos* (Thinking in the Tropics), one had read, as I have already said above, that he is practicing thinking

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[73] The "documentalist approach" is defined by Luiz Costa Lima by three characteristics: first, it considers unquestionable that there are works categorized as "literary"; second, it posits that these works are explained, perhaps determined, by social conditions; and, third, that social analysis is crucial to grasp the meaning of a literary work (see Lima, 1991 [1989], p.38).

[74] I apologize the reader for iterating here some points already discussed before in this text, but I hope the gain in recapturing them will justify it.

[75] The production of "difference" is discussed through an interpretation of the concept of "mimesis", which has been a central concept in Luiz Costa Lima's texts throughout the last decades. Instead of conceiving it as the production of similitude, it is conceived as the production of difference: "only in the most anomalous cases can *mimesis* be taken as a producer of similitude. Its own potentiality is fulfilled, instead, in the sense of the production of difference" (Lima, 1991 [1990], p.22). I am unable to do justice to his dense discussion on the concept of *mimesis* and I suspect that those familiar with his work will be somehow disappointed with my selective mobilization of his texts. I insist, however, that some of his insights can be explored here even if I will leave aside the main concepts he developed.

[76] There is, according to Luiz, a "minimal requirement of the fictional... That the work, not intending to be faithful to what has (already) taken place, does not also exhaust itself in a lie" (Lima, 2003, p.36). In an earlier text, he says that the fictional does not "propose some truth"; rather, it "questions truths" and "[t]o demand from it more than that is to mystify it; [while] to demand less than that is to aestheticize it" (Lima, 1991 [1990], p.118).

"as an inhabitant of the tropics, making them present in whatever object is dealt with, 'tropical' or not" (Lima, 1991, p.12). This is closely related to the position according to which works that deal with the experience lived in marginalized and metropolitan continents internalizes distinct places, which tends to generate differentiated configurations. In sum, on the one hand, "fictional texts" internalize distinct places; on the other hand, as soon as one thinks from "the tropics", theorization also internalizes distinct places.

Another way to see the above is through the relation between the linguistic and the extra-linguistic. To Luiz Costa Lima, the notion of "discourse" indicates that language is comparable to a "two-way street"; "[i]n this sense, we emphatically endorse what Foucault said: 'discourse is not simply what translates the struggles or the systems of domination, but that by which and for which one struggles, the power one tries to empower oneself with' (Foucault, 1971, p.12)" (Lima, 2003, pp.39-40).[77] Hence, discourse neither expresses nor reflect reality, that is, it is neither a transparent conveyor of reality nor an instrument mastered by the subject. In discourse, "reality... and subject present themselves at the same time that, in discourse, they receive what was not thought [*atinava*] to be in reality or what the subject did not know it was in him/herself" (Lima, 2003, p.40). Not a mere register of reality, "even when discourse is that of history", it thus "internalizes what is outside itself - in reality or in the subject - and configures it with what only from itself becomes something" (Lima, 2003, p.40). In other words, the internalization of the external creates something that has a presence only within language.[78]

Taking into account the chain linking "interpretation", "regularities in dispersion", "linguistic traces", "iterability", "traces of formation", "contemporary"; the internalization mentioned above requires a further discussion. As I have warned, there is a clue signaling one of the central aspects that make Luiz Costa Lima part

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[77] The quotation comes from Michel Foucault's *L 'Ordre du Discours* (The Order of Discourse) (Foucault, 1971). Let me note that Luiz Costa Lima does not fully endorse Michel Foucault's conception of discourse; in his interpretation, "to [Michel Foucault], the control established by discourse has a forcibly restrictive character. To the contrary, I defend that the term 'control' has a double-faced character: it is both positive and negative" (Lima, 2013, p.363). In other words, there is no society that does not require forms of control; at the same time, the control of power by the ruling group leads to a series of restrictions, inhibitions and prohibitions against that which is not in accordance of its interests. Nevertheless, "there is no way of establishing a priori the distinction between the two faces of control" (Lima, 2013, p.364). I will not dispute here Luiz Costa Lima's interpretation of Michel Foucault's notion of "discourse".

[78] The difference set by Luiz Costa Lima between the discourse of "literature" and the one of "history" is not relevant for me here. On that, see, for instance, Lima (2003, p.80).

company with the so-called "deconstructionist critique": "the exclusion of the cursed external reference". In a text from 1990, after discussing Sebastião Uchoa Leite's poetry, Luiz Costa Lima concludes by saying that Sebastião's gesture is not only "destructive": "[d]econstructionism can excite those that have excellent museums, collections and libraries. This one not being our case, we also have to construct. Even if ultimately the game is lost. Even if no one recognizes the game played" (Lima, 1991 [1990], p.187). This passage gives a hint of what is at stake: the equivalence of "deconstructionism" with "destruction" and the corresponding insufficiency of this gesture in and to a place supposedly plentiful in absences such as Brazil. In adittion to that, he marks his opposition to the study of literature that is concerned only with "texts" and not with "ideas", "with texts as pure entities, loose in space and not contextually situated" (Lima, 1991 [1990], p.252). Although not mentioning it, this second passage gives another hint: approaching texts as pure entities implies a misleading de-contextualization, a negligence of the situatedness of texts. Moreover, the passages just quoted identify a "place" which would be hospitable to "deconstruction", as opposed to another "place", to which "deconstruction" would not be enough as a "political project".

In a text from 1999, one reads: "my theorization of *mimesis* has nothing to do with Derridean *différance*. The latter seems to me to derive from [Ferndinand de] Saussure's principle: in *langue* everything is form. That is, everything is difference, elevating it, however, to an ontological status" (Lima, 1999, pp.373-4). On the contrary, *mimesis,* he stresses, is the "production of difference under [*sob*] an horizon of similitude", without any metaphysical connotation; it is, after all, an opposition to "the realist tradition, without relapsing as a consequence into deconstructionism" (Lima, 1999, p.374).[79] In a interview published in 2001, he explicitly refers to Jacques Derrida: "I must say that my struggle in favor of a reinvestment in *mimesis*... is implicitly a struggle against his deconstructionism" (Lima, 2001, p.14). In another interview, seven years later, Luiz Costa Lima makes a reference to Michel Foucault's contribution, saying that he developed in his later works a "prismatic - I would say fractured - conception of the subject", avoiding the opposition between a "self-centered subject..., on which the most frequent

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[79] Almost the same statement - that is, the definition of mimesis as "*the production of difference on* [sobre] *a horizon of similitude*" (Lima, 2013, p.162) - is read in a more recent text, where Luiz Costa Lima gives an overview of his efforts regarding the central concepts of his texts.

contemporary clichés are based", and the "annulment of the subject, a basic chapter of the so-called desconstructionism" (Lima, 2008, p.424). If, above, the resistance towards "deconstructionism" raises the importance of the specificities of a place (a situation), such as Brazil (or "the tropics", "the margins", the "periphery"), these previous passages raise another dimension to that: the erasure of the subject. This sheds light on his already-quoted definition of discourse as an internalization and reconfiguration of what is outside itself - in reality or in the subject (see Lima, 2003, p.40).

In a more recent formulation of his position towards "deconstructionism", Luiz Costa Lima approaches again the question of the subject: "[s]ince the Frenchified [*afrancesado*] [Martin] Heidegger entered, under the designation of deconstructionism, in big North-American universities..., the wave of the *thinking without subject* [pensamento sem sujeito] received a notwithstanding basic objection: if language brackets its agent, who becomes responsible for what is said and done? If the question of responsibility of the agent is excluded, how then this orientation could consider itself transformative?" (Lima, 2013, p.358). He rejects, then, the renunciation of the condition of a "thinking being [*ser pensante*]" which he ascribes to "deconstructionism". Even if it is beyond the scope of this text to reconstruct his complete argumentation, it is helpful to highlight what is at stake: the opposition to the "thinking without subject" is coupled with the insistence regarding the "spatio-temporal" position of the subject. Nevertheless, in order to avoid misunderstandings, it is important to have in mind that, to Luiz, "[t]o repudiate the death of the subject and the primacy of language does not mean the proposition of some return to some form of Cartesianism" (Lima, 2013, pp.359-60).

I would beg the question if I took Luiz Costa Lima's rejection of "deconstructionism" as a rejection of Jacques Derrida's texts as a whole. The former, the label, has taken many routes, especially the one that took it to North American universities, turning the so-called "French theory" - and "deconstruction" - considerably influential in some Humanities departments.[80] When it comes to Jacques Derrida's texts more specifically, Luiz Costa Lima's divergence is expressed, for instance, in his discussion of *mimesis* and *différance.* This goes straight to my concerns in this text, since, as it is clear from the above, the chain

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[80] On that, see, for instance, François Cusset (2008 [2003]).

comprising *différance,* iterability, trace, is crucial to my general interpretative effort. So, it is crucial to specify what Luiz's texts say about Jacques'.

Recently, Luiz Costa Lima claimed that "critique", following "deconstrutionism" - he names Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man as its main proponents -, "questions the very relationship between art and society", replacing this presupposition by one according to which "language is formed by a metaphorical ballast, even if erased... If in everything we say there is a metaphorical chain, verbal art (literature) is characterized by the intensification of the metaphoricity that is present in all language" (Lima, 2013, p.493). The implication is that "critique unveils that, in literature, no formulation decides, that is, it postpones and retards its final understanding. As a consequence, verbal art is by definition what [Jacques] Derrida called product of *différance* (product of a permanent defferal [*diferir*])" (Lima, 2013, p.493).[81]

What interests me the most in bringing Luiz Costa Lima and Jacques Derrida together is the link between the conceptual divergence that emerges and the political implications that are raised. By approximating two passages where Luiz deals directly with Jacques' texts, we get a sense of what is stake:

> it calls my attention that deconstructionism had proved itself effective only in dismantling; in dismantling, in this case, the 'phonetic' grammar without even seeking to propose an alternative. Would that be a limit of deconstructionism itself? Even without carrying forward this questioning, it is regrettable that the plea of logocentrism had served [Jacques] Derrida as a measure to accept or refuse other authors (Lima, 2012, p.64);

> it is because of that that the criticism [Jacques] Derrida develops in his first phase - the only one we have ultimately highlighted - has had academia as the exclusive home, where its representatives, not backed by an alternative *political project*, can be considered advanced without running the risk

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[81] The main point raised by Luiz Costa Lima in his opposition to Jacques Derrida's texts relates to the interpretation of "mimesis"*,* as I pointed out. In passing, I should note that Luiz is often much harsher with the reception of Jacques' texts in North American universities than with his texts themselves (as some passages I quoted indicate).

of being deemed subversive; advanced in that they are willing to deconstruct the uncountable ramifications of metaphysical logocentrism (Lima, 2012, pp.84-5, italics added).

I have mentioned above that, interviewed in 1999, Luiz Costa Lima explicitly differentiates his discussion of "mimesis" from Jacques Derrida's "*différance*". In 2012, he brings back that issue again, saying that "undecidability, resulting from *différance*, will have, in the domain of literary critique, an effect that is sometimes positive, sometimes reductionist" (Lima, 2012, p.66). On the positive side, it enabled the radical contestation of determinist analytic models that subordinated the literary work to previous and determinant causes, such as an epoch, a biography, a moment of certain society. On the reductionist side, the literary work, considered undecidable, could not be ascribed a meaning that was not "partial, limited, and therefore, arbitrary. As a consequence, every relationship between the text and what is usually called referent or referential is drastically prohibited, since it would derive from a metaphysics of presence" (Lima, 2012, p.66). The escape from "metaphysics of presence" means, to Luiz, that "while [the literary work's] internal articulation did not lose its interest by a culture, it would never be concluded", that is, its meaning would be indefinitely deffered; its conclusion would be a submission to "the order of representation - something that deconstructionists consider a barbarity" (Lima, 2012, p.66).

The articulation of the concept of "mimesis" leads Luiz Costa Lima to reject the angle of the metaphysics of presence. Instead of Jacques Derrida's opposition between mimesis (taken as a reduplication or imitation of an external reference) and undecidability, he claims that mimesis does have "some correspondence between its product, the verbal or plastic mimema, and something that strictly or analogically works as a referent; a correspondence that, in order not to be confounded with duplication - redundant affirmation of truth -, needs the vector of similitude, making itself present, to be a background on which difference is raised" (Lima, 2012, p.75-6). In other words, the condition under which similitude enables the production of difference is that of the (discursive) internalization of an external reference. Hence, to Luiz it is crucial to specify what is positive and what is negative in the notion of "undecidability": it is positive when it implies the rejection of a deterministic

interpretation of a fictional text that seeks to grasp it as an effect of an external reference; it is negative when this position leads to what Luiz claims it is its opposite, that is, a position according to which every meaning-attribution becomes then arbitrary, partial, limited. Undecidability (and, I would add, *différance, iterability, trace*) cannot thus be equated with associative arbitrariness - that is, it cannot be reduced to a practice of writing through endless (inter-textual) associations. But, "if it is not arbitrary, it must have some contact with the infamous truth" (Lima, 2012, p.71). It is the "cursed external reference" that is at stake.

Let me recall two aspects stressed by Luiz Costa Lima. First, discourse is not a register of reality; it "internalizes what is outside itself - in reality or in the subject - and configures it with what only from itself becomes something" (Lima, 2003, p.40). And, second, he rejects the renunciation of the condition of "thinking subject", which he sees as an implication of the wave of "thinking without subject" triggered by "deconstruction". The (discursive) internalization and the production of difference it enables require precisely that a reality and/or a subject are not dissolved within discourse (or language), otherwise the very possibility of a political project is hampered. This happens to Jacques Derrida's perspective, according to Luiz: "[he] did not develop a political strategy that operationalized his antagonism towards metaphysical logos. But this absence had a politically perverse effect: the dogmatism propagated by its followers"; moreover, its "[c]ritical dimension leaves social (dis)order in peace and gets focused on writing" (Lima, 2012, p.83, pp.84-5). In short, no political project can be articulated, in his view.

Luiz Costa Lima's divergence in relation to "deconstruction" being clear, my next move could be a long return to Jacques Derrida's texts, in order to assess them in light of Luiz's considerations. But this would only side-track the discussion here. For my purpose, more important is to explore the aspects he raises in relation to the link between the "internal" and the "external" (or "text" and "context"), on the one hand, and the "political position", on the other. So, now that it is already stressed how crucial the "political" dimension is to Luiz Costa Lima's work, I will mention an instance in which he formulated how a "political position" should be grasped in a "text".[82]

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[82] I had warned above that my selective mobilization of his texts would perhaps disappoint those familiar with them, because I would leave aside a detailed discussion of his main conceptual contributions ("control of the imaginary", "mimesis", "fiction"). Another instance of this possible

A glimpse of where I am heading to is given in a footnote to the already-quoted 2003 text. Discussing Fernão Mendes Pinto's (1509-1583) *Peregrinação* (Pilgrimage, 1614), a text that derives from his activity as a sailor and explorer linked to the Portuguese Crown, Luiz Costa Lima identifies an "indirect" insinuated presence of the "modern subject"; "[i]t is the experience in ignored lands that, little by little, brakes the integrated vision of the Christian cosmos" (Lima, 2003, p.109). It is nothing but an "insinuated presence" since, according to Luiz Costa Lima, the first manifestation of the "modern subject" takes place only in Michel de Montaigne's *Essais* (Essays), whose first edition would be published five years after Fernão Mendes' death. The point is, then, related to how this "modern subject" can be identified in a text that was published before his first textual manifestation.[83] So, Luiz says that "[a]lthough Fernão Mendes continues to firmly and automatically believe in the particularized God, *his text already knows* that, shipwrecked or triumphant, cosily resting in their castles or anxious in the search for wealth, men are alone. It knows that we are obliged to learn how to look inside ourselves" (Lima, 2003, p.110, italics in the original). It is precisely in this passage that the footnote is added, coming right after the words "his text already knows", and bringing the following: "[w]e are affirming a discrepancy between the understanding that the author, [Fernão] Mendes Pinto, has of its text and what the text shows *beneath* the author's consciousness. We are saying thus that there is a textual unconscious" (Lima, 2003, p.110, n.16, italics in the original).[84]

Later in the same text, this time approaching Joseph Conrad's texts, Luiz Costa Lima claims that "[t]he definition of [Joseph] Conrad's political stance must

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disappointment comes now: instead of exploring how Luiz Costa Lima has been working his "political alternative" - that is, the links between his conceptual contributions and his political position (his reader will recall, for example, his extensive discussion on Brazilian literature, society, culture, intellectual system) -, I have decided to orient his divergence in relation to Jacques Derrida towards a different direction, which will lead me back to the conceptual chain I have been proposing here as the general lines of my perspective.

[83] It is beyond my scope here to problematize Luiz Costa Lima's periodization regarding the "first manifestation of the modern subject"; my interest is, rather, in *how* his interpretation makes the identification.

[84] The textual unconscious is linked, in the case mentioned, to a future mutation, the one that would give rise to the "modern subject". The performance of the future in the interpretation becomes clear when Luiz Costa Lima reinstates what he meant when he said that the text knows what the author was still unable, for historical reasons, to consciously anticipate. In his words: "[w]e have never supposed that Mendes Pinto *recognized* what his text *said*. It is not that he systematically pretended to be naïve, which *would imply knowing very well what could not be said*; rather, the point is that the narrated experiences, while lived or invented, implied a horizon still in formation, that is, with consequences of which he could not be mindful" (Lima, 2003, p.122, italics in the original).

precede the study of his work because the latter is not the mere expression of the former. Mostly to the contrary, once his political position is known, we will have better conditions to see that Conrad's work often achieves a level of complexity that his political position would not explain" (Lima, 2003, p.151). The question linking the consciousness of the "author" and what the text "says" appears again, this time through the contrast of "an absolutely realist conception of language" to a "nominalist" one: the former precludes any understanding of that parcel of the text that is not dominated by the intentionality of the "author", while the latter conceives that the "intentional project" of an "author" never corresponds to what, "in fact, the subject names" (see Lima, 2003, pp.197-8). Following the second conception of language, one has that "the text projects an unconscious *that does not confound itself with the author's unconscious*" (Lima, 2003, p.198, italics in the original). More precisely, as he puts later, the textual unconscious marks the "presence of a meaning that is neither derived from authorial intentionality nor explained by the author's personal unconscious" (Lima, 2003, p.323).[85] So, two extremes become problematic: one, "sociologism", sets a causal arrow from the external reference to the text; and the other, marked by an "exclusive textualism", isolates the text from everything external to it. In relation to the second, Luiz Costa Lima states that "the emphasis on the formal construction disregards the political position of the author in the wider sense of the expression, that is, his/her reflection on the situation of the world" (Lima, 2003, p.274).[86]

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[85] I am not endorsing, however, another aspect of Luiz Costa Lima's discussion of the "textual unconscious", according to which the "author is... he/she who unveils difficult circumstances [*transes*] and impasses that he/she captures in a confusing way from his time. Thus, in order to be understood, it is necessary that the physiognomy of time has changed" (Lima, 2003, p.323). Hence, it is in a certain sense through a retrospective interpretation that what this textual unconscious produces can be more sharply grasped. I am not very comfortable with this formulation, since it seems to suppose a clear-cut separation between "us" and "them", "present" and "past". Another passage will link this point to the uneasiness already expressed: "It is not strange that one knows how to recognize only what already has a consolidated past. Moreover, we only know that some margin of the unnamable is mixed with that which is identified. In *Redemunho* [Swirl], we have been trying to question it from one of the zones of this world. The zone of the marginalized countries" (Lima, 2003, p.325). Above I made manifest my uneasiness in relation to Luiz Costa Lima's statement that, "like an inhabitant of the tropics", he would make "them present in whatever object is dealt with, 'tropical' or not" (Lima, 1991, p.12). As I am not able to unfold the point, I will leave it at that, as just the expression of an uneasiness and a promise to get back to that in another opportunity. Let me suggest, however, that the notion of "textual unconscious" does not seem to require that kind of retrospective periodizing claim - which would need actually to be problematized, in my view.

[86] Below, I will propose this wider sense as a reflection on "contemporaneity", in line with my discussion of the "contemporary" above.

The relation of the subject and of reality with the text is posed again some pages later, this time with explicit reference to "deconstructionism". It is stated there that "[t]he fact that the work does not refer to space and time determined as its previous reference, instead of enclosing it in itself, promotes the possibility of a multiple and mutable relationship" (Lima, 2003, p.283). In this sense, "the critique of the referential function does not equate to its negation: *instead of neutralizing it, the work of art transforms it imaginarily in the scene of the text;* as a consequence, without pointing towards the outside, it finds the outside within itself; it is certainly not anymore the referentiality of the linguists: it is the poetics of the fictional" (Lima, 2003, p.284, italics in the original). I should mention that Luiz Costa Lima is tackling in this part of the text the "novel" as a "fictional text"; his persistent effort throughout the decades in distinguishing various modalities of discourse, such the "literary", the "historical", the "scientific", and different kinds of "fiction", such as an "internal" and "external fiction", could not simply be dismissed in the mobilization I am proposing. Nevertheless, this does not mean that his position against "deconstructionism" and his considerations on the political dimension of a text are of exclusive interest to "literature" or to "novel". This remark paves the way for the mobilization of his texts to my specific purpose here - the interpretation of the interpretations of Brazil.

Before a next move is made, however, some more time in this text seems helpful. It is already clear that Luiz Costa Lima rejects what he conceives "deconstructionism", "textualism" and "sociologism" to be. In the following passage, he articulates this position again, now in terms of "text" and "context". To him, "the understanding between text and context escapes the identification with what is inside and what remains outside literature" (Lima, 2003, p.341). Context, then, is not what is outside the text, but the "vector whose parameters are incorporated and concede meaning of orientation [*sentido de orientação*] to the text - the outside migrates to the inside... [The context] is transformed, that is, it is *unrealized* by the story with which it merges" (Lima, 2003, p.342, italics in the original). This process of internalization performed in the production of the unreality of the story does not mean, however, that the outside is erased; instead, the context keeps "the effectiveness of the *place* which, consciously and unconsciously, motivates it" (Lima, 2003, p.342, italics in the original). The place is thus inscribed in the textual unconscious, which means that it leaves the condition

of "a point in space" and is converted into "a temporal inscription"; in this sense, Luiz Costa Lima quotes Michel De Certeau, saying that what the latter said about the "real" in the task of the historian can be taken as the former's notion of "place": "[...] the real is the *result* of the analysis and, on the other hand, its *postulate*" (De Certeau *apud* Lima, 2003, p.342, italics in the original).

I would like to suggest a connection between Luiz Costa Lima's notion of "textual unconscious" and Jacques Derrida's notion of "structural unconsciousness", which is closely connected to "context". What I have already written about Jacques Derrida's texts will help me in making my point quickly. As he reminds, every sign, linguistic or not, can be quoted or cited in different situations, in an unlimited number of new "contexts"; in other words, the quotation marks of a citation are not "outside contexts", but always within a certain "context", otherwise the sign itself would not be possible (see Derrida, 1988 [1971], p.12). At the same time, however, taking into account the unlimited possibilities of citation, intentionality cannot mark its presence in controlling the indefinite process of (re)contextualization. So, if the determination of a context "can never be entirely certain or saturated" (Derrida, 1988 [1971], p.3), the supposed intention that motivates the articulation of a sign "will never be through and through present to itself and to its content" (Derrida, 1988 [1971], p.3). The same takes place in relation to the "object", which will also not be through and through identical to itself. Those unlimited possibilities of citation are intrinsically linked to the identification of the object "itself".[87] In sum, this process of (re)contextualization is linked to iterability - repetition *and* alteration - and to what Jacques Derrida calls "structural unconsciousness" (Derrida, 1988 [1971], p.18) or, in another text, "structural possibilities" (Derrida, 1988 [1977], p.57).[88]

The main aspect of this notion is that it does not replace the original presence of an intention by its subsequent absence. There is no absolute origin, no absolute

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[87] In a response to John Searle, Jacques Derrida reaffirmed that it is not a matter of simply denying the presence of intentions or the object, but their "*telos*, which orients and organizes the movement and the possibility of a fulfillment, realization, and *actualization* in a plenitude that would be *present* to and identical with itself" (Derrida, 1988 [1977], p.56, italics in the original). Or, "[w]that is valid for intention, always differing, deferring, and without plenitude, is also valid, correlatively, for the object (qua signified or referent) thus aimed at. However, this limit, I repeat ('*without*' plenitude), is also the ('positive') condition of possibility of what is thus limited" (Derrida 1988 [1977], p.58, italics in the original). See also Spivak (1980, p.32).

[88] As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, the "structural unconscious" refers to the "radical alterity", that is, to the impossibility of the plenitude of presence (see Spivak, 1980, p.34) - of the "subject" and of the "object", as Jacques Derrida reminds.

end in iteration. Rather, iterability is the condition of *possibility* of any presence, since without repetition presence is not presented; it is also the condition of *impossibility* of any full presence (presence to itself), since repetition is always an alteration. By the same token, if the non-saturation of the context is linked to the unlimited possibilities of the text, and if the text iterates (repeats and alters) a context, one gets that textual articulations are also contextual articulations. The structural unconsciousness marks the movement of (con)textualization.

Let me put what I have just said above in the terms of my general perspective. Being both the postulate and the result, in other words both what is presupposed in a certain sense and what is produced in another sense, "reality" or "place" can be interpreted only through the identifications and differentiations at play in the text. At the same time, this play can only be identified from a certain "reality" or "place" that is interpreted as being presupposed and produced in a text. "Brazil", as a "sign", a "reality", a "place", can only mark its presence within the unceasing possibilities of (con)textualization conditioned by the "interpretations of Brazil", some of which I will discuss next. In Pedro Meira Monteiro's formulation, the reference corresponding to the "sign-Brazil" is lacking and "[i]t is not just a question of imagining that the roots are loose, and that it would be good to re-plant them in national or international soil. The problem is that these roots continue to point towards an Other that challenges me. It is an Other which take roots in me, at the very time that I recognize and I assume him/her as another" (Monteiro, 2008a, p.79). The "sign-Brazil" is thus neither originally present nor achievable in a future consolidation of its presence. Its "presence" marks the encounter of past, present and future, inside and outside; it is "contemporary" - in the sense I am using here.

This leads me back to "the cursed external reference" and the notion of "political position". "Contemporary Brazil" can be conceived as this "place" internalized in different ways by those interpretations, that is, "it" can only be grasped through the linguistic traces and the play mentioned above. In other words, those interpretations are, indeed - as *deeds* -, performative acts. In Giorgio Agamben's terms, they bring a "connection between words and things [that] is not of a semantico-deductive type, but performative, in the sense that... the verbal act brings being into truth" (Agamben, 2011 [2008], p.55). "As interpretation does what it says... It is already performative in a way", as Jacques Derrida once put (Derrida, 2007 [2003], p.447). André Botelho, from a very different perspective,

puts that with the following words: "the interpretations of Brazil work not only in cognitive, but also in normative terms. They are social forces that directly or indirectly contribute to the delimitations of positions, giving them intelligibility, in different power struggles in society" (Botelho, 2010, p.61; 2012, p.32). The iterability of this process carries different links between the textual articulations and the political positions exposed. In this vein, it is plausible to claim that "external" elements are, deliberately or not, "internalized" in interpretations.[89]

It should be clear that the notion of "political position" is neither necessarily tied to a deliberate or conscious control or intention of the writer, nor is it a mere derivation of an external reality. Moreover, the "internalization" of "external elements" should not be understood *only* in terms of the immediate institutional and political concerns the interpreters may have. That is to say, the texts very often expose struggles within the intellectual environment, as well as within and among political parties. But there is more to that. "Political positions" are also linked to how questions of race, gender, indigenous populations, class struggles, state-building, among others, are exposed - or silenced, which is also a way of exposing a political position.

All that implies that *I am not cursing external reference*. The interpretations of the formation of contemporary Brazil, taken as contemporary texts themselves, internalize many conditions of forces through the political positions they expose. These conditions of forces can now be better understood if a previous quotation is recaptured:

> If words and concepts receive meaning only in sequences of differences, one can justify one's language, and one's choice of terms, only within a topic and an historical strategy. The

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[89] It should be clear by now that the perspective I am proposing in this text does not endorse the kind of "social history" Sergio Miceli has been advancing since at least the 1970s (see mainly Miceli, 2001 [1979]; and also 2004). In one of his more recent formulations, Sergio says that "[a] social and intellectual history of the Brazilian modernist movement will have to prioritize the bond of elements related to the family, educational and professional experience of writers and artists, linked to the institutional and political conditionings that tend to mold the authorial projects, the doctrinal orientations and the position-taking of those intellectuals in party disputes" (Miceli, 2004, p.167). From what I have already said so far, one can see a different take on the relation between the "experiences of the intellectuals" and the "authorial projects, the doctrinal orientations and the position-taking in party disputes" - or, between "text" and "context". For some appraisals on Sergio's perspective, see Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda (2004), André Botelho (2002), and Elide Rugai Bastos and André Botelho (2010), not to mention the short, but precise preface written by Antonio Candido (2001) to Sergio's 1979 text.

> justification can therefore never be absolute and definitive. It corresponds to *a condition of forces and translates an historical calculation...* The word trace must refer to itself to a certain number of *contemporary discourses whose force I intend to take into account...* [T]he word trace establishes the clearest connections with them and thus permits me to dispense with certain developments which have already demonstrated their effectiveness in those discourses (Derrida, 1997 [1967], p.70).[90]

To recall, the first time this quotation appeared in this text, it preceded my take on the notions of "contemporary" and "political position". In a 2004 interview, Jacques Derrida said that "deconstruction is a way of thinking philosophy, that is, the history of philosophy in the Western strict sense and, consequently, it is a way of analyzing its genealogy, its concepts, its assumptions, its axiomatic; besides doing that in a theoretical way, it also takes into account Western *institutions, social and political practices, political culture*" (see Nascimento, 2004, italics added). If I brougth that long citation back now, it was not to suggest that the move to Luiz Costa Lima simply reaffirmed what was already implicit in the Jacques Derrida's texts. Rather, my purpose was to explore a certain mobilization of the latter, moving with and against what it enables, supplemented now by what Jacques said in that interview. Iteration.

With that move, I consider that the conceptual chain proposed as the general lines of my perspective is sufficiently laid out. Part II will now be devoted to the interpretation of the interpretations of Brazil previously mentioned, in order to highlight the uses of the concept of "formation" and the traces mentioned before, as well as the political positions exposed.

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[90] In the original, only "trace" is in italics.