

NEW COMPARISONS IN WORLD LITERATURE

Roberto Schwarz and World Literature

Critical Essays

Edited by
Thomas Waller

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New Comparisons in World Literature

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New Comparisons in World Literature offers a fresh perspective on one of the most exciting current debates in humanities by approaching 'world literature' not in terms of particular kinds of reading but as a particular kind of writing. We take 'world literature' to be that body of writing that registers in various ways, at the levels of form and content, the historical experience of capitalist modernity. We aim to publish works that take up the challenge of understanding how literature registers both the global extension of 'modern' social forms and relations and the peculiar new modes of existence and experience that are engendered as a result. Our particular interest lies in studies that analyse the registration of this decisive historical process in literary consciousness and affect. We welcome proposals for monographs, edited collections and Palgrave Pivots (short works of 25,000-50,000 words).

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Thomas Waller
Editor

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Praise for *Roberto Schwarz and World Literature*

"An exciting and ambitious volume, designed not so much to introduce Schwarz to an Anglophone readership (his translated works have already established him as one of the most important literary theorists of his generation) as to engage critically with his work, demonstrating its reach and power, drawing out its intellectual lineages and affinities and – above all – showing why his writings on Brazilian literature are so indispensable to contemporary debates on method in world-literary studies."

—Emeritus Professor Neil Lazarus, *University of Warwick*

"An outstanding collection of essays on the work and influence of Roberto Schwarz, one of the most important literary critics and critical theorists of our time. Thomas Waller has brought together a distinguished group of scholars who offer definitive assessments of Schwarz's impact on comparative and world literature, peripheral aesthetics, and Latin American studies. This will be the 'go to' reference for anyone interested in pursuing a materialist approach to literary and cultural analysis."

—Professor Keya Ganguly, *University of Minnesota*

"This volume will be deeply illuminating to anyone interested in how to bring the spirit of Marx's method to the analysis of peripheral aesthetics. Its reconstruction and close reading of Schwarz's method stays true to Schwarz's own form. As such, it fills the gap between world-literature theory and the practice of Marxist dialectical criticism."

—Associate Professor Colleen Lye, *University of California, Berkeley*

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CHAPTER 1

Roberto Schwarz and World Literature: An Introduction

Thomas Waller

Roberto Schwarz is not without admirers in the Anglophone world. A perusal of English-language assessments of his work is almost certain to yield either superlative epithets or insistences on his *nonpareil* status as a master of literary criticism. In Perry Anderson's words, Schwarz is 'the finest dialectical critic anywhere in the world since Adorno' (2011). Francis Mulhern, in a similar vein, has described him as 'the foremost literary and cultural critic of his generation in Brazil and the most significant Marxist inheritor of the Frankfurt School tradition' (Schwarz 2012a, viv). Franco Moretti, in a yet more emphatic register, claims that Schwarz is 'the greatest Marxist critic of our times' (2021, 97). Other references, taken almost at random from the secondary literature, tell a similar story: Schwarz's analysis of the inversion of ideas from core to periphery is 'extraordinary' (Jameson 2008, 379); his understanding of combined and uneven development is 'a masterclass' (Rosenberg in Schwarz et al.

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2021a, 209); his readings of Brazilian literature are 'dazzling' (Beckman et al. 2022, 12); his theory of literary form is 'paradigmatic' (Niblett qtd. in Waller 2021, 524); his writing is 'exquisite' (Lazarus 2023, 5); his contributions to critical theory are 'indelible' (Brown 2018, 465), where not themselves the cause of a 'quiet revolution' (Larsen 2001, 78); and even where critics have problematised the conclusions of Schwarz's arguments, they have still conceded the 'magisterial' character of his work (Hartley 2016, 228). It is rare that a critic should meet with such unanimous and enthusiastic endorsement from his readers and colleagues. It is even more unusual that such a critic should have gone so long—in the English-speaking world at least—without so much as an essay collection devoted to him.[1] It is precisely this gap that the present volume seeks to fill.

The fact that this collection is organised around the category of 'world literature' does not presuppose a consensus among its contributors as to how this category is to be understood, nor is it intended to collapse their essays into a single overarching critical 'project'. Nevertheless, each of the contributors would, I believe, accept some version of the argument that global capitalism functions as a 'baseline of universality' in the production of literary texts (Brown 2005, 2). As such, the organising rubric 'world literature' names an underlying materialist commitment that allows the essays to be anthologised in their difference. On the other hand, nor does the coupling 'Roberto Schwarz and World Literature' claim to be novel, for Schwarz's name has been a regular fixture in debates over the concept for more than two decades. Moretti's field-defining essay 'Conjectures on World Literature' (2000), for instance, cited Schwarz as a paragon of world literary reading; the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) frame their project as one of 'extend[ing] Roberto Schwarz's argument about Brazilian literature to the larger context of world literature' (2015, 97); while Auritro Majumder has more recently isolated Schwarz's '*partisan* approach' to peripheral literature as a source of both his continuing

[1] In Brazil, there exists a similar collection entitled *Um crítico na periferia do capitalismo: Reflexões sobre Roberto Schwarz* [A critic on the periphery of capitalism: Reflections on Roberto Schwarz] (Cevasco and Ohata 2007)—a pun on *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo* [A master on the periphery of capitalism] (1990), the title of Schwarz's celebrated study of Machado de Assis's novel *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*. The present collection shares the critical intention of this earlier volume and includes some of the same contributors, though differs in its overall outlook, which presumes less of a familiarity with Brazilian debates and thus serves a more introductory purpose.

relevance for, and persistent challenge to, world literary methodologies (2020, 23–25). Furthermore, works such as 'The Importation of the Novel to Brazil and its Contradictions in the Work of Alencar' (Schwarz 1992, 41–77) and *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism* (Schwarz 2001) have long been staple materials in world literature university syllabi. Schwarz is then a figure whom world literary critics have already been reading, or at least someone to whom they know to pay lip service if they haven't.

While explicit invocations of world literature in Schwarz's own work are rare,[2] he has often found occasion to stress the importance of the Marxist dialectical tradition for an appreciation of his thought. In the preface to *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo* [A master on the periphery of capitalism] (1990), he writes: 'My work would be unthinkable without the — contradictory — tradition formed by Lukács, Benjamin, Brecht, and Adorno, and without the inspiration of Marx' (2001, 4). Yet, what does it mean to speak of Schwarz inheriting a tradition that is itself fractured by disagreements and differences of approach?[3] Why exactly is Marxist dialectical criticism so crucial to an understanding of Schwarz's work? Is it more so than, say, the work of his mentor Antonio Candido, or simply the *oeuvre* of Machado himself? The task of responding to such questions is made difficult by the fact that, despite the rigour and originality of Schwarz's theories of form, ideology, and interpretation, he does not develop his project in a systematic way. On the contrary, Schwarz's sophisticated and nuanced version of Marxist literary

[2] One example is 'Competing Readings in World Literature' (2007), in which Schwarz masterfully maps out the contradictory implications of the consecration of Machado de Assis as a 'world literary' author, taking Pascale Casanova's theory of the 'world republic of letters' as a jumping-off point.

[3] Fabio Durão argues that Schwarz's 'inheritance' of the Frankfurt School means neither simply 'reading texts by Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse or Benjamin', nor 'dissecting their fundamental notions', still less 'applying their categories to different cultural materials'. Rather, Durão suggests that Schwarz successfully inherits the Frankfurt School to the extent that his work shares 'a mimetic element in theory, which we can characterize as a form of *critical comportment*' (2018, 547–548). See also Silvia L. López's argument, reprinted in this volume, that 'Roberto Schwarz's writings on the importing of the novel to Brazil present us today with one of the most exemplary Adornian contributions to the study of a literary phenomenon in the periphery of capitalism' (2011, 82).

criticism is for the most part elaborated through close readings of particular texts.[4] If one might legitimately discern a kind of 'programme' of dialectical criticism in Schwarz's writings, it is then one that emphatically resists distillation into easily digestible lists of 'key concepts', or straightforwardly reproducible literary-theoretical models. Of course, this resistance to reproduction as system or method is precisely what makes Schwarz's work dialectical. Which is to say, the moment one tries to carry out a 'Schwarzian' reading, one has already, to a certain extent, left Schwarz behind.

If dialectical criticism is neither more nor less than the writing of good dialectical sentences,[5] one way to approach Schwarz's work might be to focus on the experience of *reading* him.[6] Marked by a lightness of touch and a keen sense of humour, Schwarz's free-flowing writing style is just as likely to slide into an informal appeal to the reader's common sense as it is to deploy the abstract technical language of high literary theory, or the conceptual rigour of an historical materialist analysis. Unlike the totalising thrust and long, cascading sentences of Schwarz's friend and contemporary Fredric Jameson,[7] Schwarz's style has a more austere quality to it, an ironic edge and elegant understatedness that can occasionally lead the reader to overlook the sheer brilliance of his arguments. In this, Schwarz is closer to Adorno, who describes properly written texts as 'like spider's webs: tight, concentric, transparent, well-spun and firm' (2005, 87). If the grandeur of Jameson's style owes something to the Faulknerian

[4] As Nicholas Brown notes, to disentangle the various strands of Schwarz's writings and reformulate them in terms of a coherent intellectual project, while unavoidable in critical discussion of his work, is nonetheless to do 'a certain amount of violence to the texture of Schwarz's thought' (2018, 465).

[5] A paraphrase of Fredric Jameson: 'thinking dialectically means nothing more or less than the writing of dialectical sentences' (1971, 53).

[6] Of course, the non-Portuguese-speaking reader must work with Schwarz in translation and is thus bound to miss much of the cultural specificity of his writing style. Many of Schwarz's essays first appeared in newspapers in Brazil, for example (primarily, the *Folha de São Paulo*), which have their own special relationship with literary criticism. Mercifully, Schwarz has been well served in English by a set of more-than-able translators who are esteemed scholars and authoritative interpreters of Schwarz in their own right. Alongside Schwarz's primary translator John Gledson, Nicholas Brown and Emilio Sauri have published first-rate translations of several of Schwarz's essays in *Mediations*, the journal of the Marxist Literary Group (MLG).

[7] Jameson's 2009 book *Valences of the Dialectic* is dedicated to Schwarz and his wife Grécia de la Sobera.

run-on sentence, then Schwarz's is closer to the terseness of Machado. Schwarz is wont to modulate the length of his sentences and the size of his paragraphs to suit the particular point he is trying to make. He says what he needs to be said, and stops when he's said it. This alternation between punchiness and more explorative, processual sentences lends the experience of reading Schwarz a quasi-literary feel, without thereby mitigating the overall concision of his arguments. Reflecting on the *pleasure* of reading Jameson, Terry Eagleton once confessed that he often takes a Jameson book down from the shelf in place of poetry or a work of fiction (1982, 15). The same could be said of Schwarz, whose writings have been a regular source of pleasure to at least this reader.

In addition to politico-theoretical affinity, the influence of the Marxist dialectical tradition on Schwarz's thinking has as a personal and biographical aspect. Schwarz was born in Vienna in 1938 to a leftist Jewish family who moved to Brazil in 1939 after the Anschluss, when Austria was politically unified with Germany through annexation by the Nazis. In Schwarz's own words, his parents were: 'Austrians, left-wing intellectuals, atheists and jews' (qtd. in Santos and Moura 2004). During the 1920s, Schwarz's parents attended lectures given by Lukács, who had come to Vienna as an exile from Hungary.[8] Schwarz's exposure to Marxist literary criticism as a boy, the example of his parents' anti-Stalinist politics, as well as his fluency in German would all go on to shape his thinking in various ways. A pivotal point in the young Schwarz's career was the late 1950s and early 1960s, during which time he began reading Lukács, Benjamin, and Adorno for himself after obtaining copies of their work from German-language bookstores in São Paulo.[9] Around the same time, in 1957, Schwarz enrolled in a Social Sciences course at the University of São Paulo (USP) upon the suggestion of Anatol Rosenfeld.[10] The

[8] 'I heard of Lukács at home, as a boy. My parents attended lectures he gave in Vienna in the early twenties when he came as an exile from Hungary. Then as a student in the late fifties, I got hold of some of his essays on literature, two publications by the Aufbauverlag in East Germany, *Schicksalswende* and *Essays über Realismus*. I was particularly impressed by "Erzählen oder beschreiben?"' (Schwarz qtd. in Corredor 1997, 174).

[9] His formative encounter with these three great Marxist critics happened successively over a three-year period: 'I began to read Lukács in 1959, Adorno in 1960, and Benjamin in 1961, on a foundation of Marxist sympathies from before' (Schwarz et al. 2001, 170).

[10] The Jewish émigré and intellectual Anatol Rosenfeld encouraged Schwarz to take a university course while the latter was in the final year of secondary school. Initially uncertain about what to study, Rosenfeld told Schwarz to go and sit in on a few classes

year after, he participated in the now legendary 'Seminário Marx', which brought together professors and students from the fields of literature, sociology, and economics to read *Capital* with a view to comprehending 'the classic marks of Brazilian backwardness […] not as an archaic left-over but as an integral part of the way modern society reproduces itself' (Schwarz 2001, 3).[11] During the same period, Schwarz was also contemplating a career as an avant-garde writer of poetry and theatre, publishing the poetry collection *Pássaro na Gaveta* in 1959.[12]

Equipped with a thorough grounding in critical theory, sociological analysis, and Marxist political economy, Schwarz moved to the United States to complete a Master's degree in Comparative Literature at Yale University under the supervision of René Wellek. Schwarz's first published literary-critical essays date from this time and boast a range of subject matter that becomes more restricted to Brazilian themes as his career progresses. *A Sereia e o Desconfiado* [The Mermaid and the Mistrustful One], published in 1965, includes essays on Brazilian authors such as Mário de Andrade and João Guimarães Rosa, but in many ways the standout pieces are those that deal with foreign cultural production.

and see what interested him. After being unimpressed by the literature professor at USP, Schwarz enrolled in a social sciences course instead (Santos and Moura 2004). Schwarz discusses the life and work of Rosenfeld—who gave an informal philosophy course at the house of the theatre critic Jacob Guinsburg during the 1950s that Schwarz attended—in the essay 'Primeiros tempos de Anatol Rosenfeld em Brasil', collected in *Que Horas São?* (1987, 79–82), and in the essay 'Anatol Rosenfeld, a Foreign Intellectual', translated for the *Misplaced Ideas* collection (175–186).

[11] For Schwarz's reflections on this seminar, see 'Um seminário de Marx' in *Seqüncias Brasileiras* (1999, 86–105) as well as the more recent 'Sobre a leitura de Marx em Brasil' (2017).

[12] On a visit to Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal in Lisbon, I took out copies of the first editions of two difficult-to-access Schwarz books: the poetry collection *Pássaro na Gaveta* and his first essay collection *A Sereia e o Desconfiado*. When I opened the books, I discovered an inscription on the first page of each of them written by Schwarz himself and addressed to the Portuguese literary critic Jorge de Sena. The inscription in *Pássaro na Gaveta* reads 'A Jorge de Sena, ofereço com prazer e amizade' [to Jorge de Sena, I offer this book in pleasure and friendship] and is dated 2 August 1961; the inscription in *A Sereia e o Desconfiado* reads 'A Jorge de Sena, o melhor aperto de mão' [to Jorge de Sena, the best handshake] and is dated 26 July 1965. While anecdotal, this discovery reveals that Schwarz was not only trying to disseminate his literary criticism during the 1960s, but that he was also keen for himself to be viewed and read as a poet as well. Indeed, for any fledgling Portuguese-speaking writer in the 1960s, Jorge de Sena would have been a useful person to impress.

There are discussions of Federico Fellini's *8 ½*, of Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, of Kafka, Balzac, Hawthorne, and Lessing. Bar the essays on Kafka and the Brazilian authors, however, the pieces collected in Schwarz's first book of literary criticism were originally written in English as part of his postgraduate studies and then translated by Schwarz himself into Portuguese for publication, with the English originals now lost. The writing style of these essays is, as a result, dense and plodding, brimming with all the incisiveness of Schwarz's later work but with less of its charm.[13] Schwarz himself was aware of this shortcoming, as he confesses in the preface to the collection: 'não consegui livrar a prosa do anadamento esquemático e forçado comum em traduções' [I did not succeed in freeing the prose from the schematic and forced pace that is common in translations] (1965, 9). Nevertheless, if *A Sereia e o Desconfiado* is still 'Schwarz before Schwarz', one can at the same time detect in its contents a commitment to social and aesthetic problems that will inform all of Schwarz's later work, and which Schwarz himself summarises as 'as relações da coerência ou incoerência formal com o conteúdo ideológico das obras' [the relations between formal coherence or incoherence and the ideological content of works of art] (Schwarz 2021b, 189).

Despite what was evidently an intellectually fecund period at Yale University, Schwarz seems to have been frustrated by his encounter with comparative literary studies in the United States.[14] Adorno was by this point a strong influence on Schwarz's thinking: *The Authoritarian Personality* had been part of the course material on his sociology degree at USP, and in 1960, he discovered *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by chance in a bookshop in São Paulo.[15] On 7 October 1961, in New Haven,

[13] As Nicholas Brown puts it in a note to his translation of 'Henry James's Method', what the reconstituted English essays lack is 'the spark of the contrast between interpretive seriousness and ironic colloquialism, between long and short sentences, that contribute to Schwarz's characteristic tone' (Schwarz 2019a, 15).

[14] Schwarz's impressions of the North American academy were mixed: 'Tomei contato com a envergadura e opulência das Universidades, a presença frequente de nomes ilustres, a riqueza das bibliotecas, os professores e estudantes vindos de toda parte, o ritmo intenso de trabalho' [I had contact with scale and opulence of Universities, the frequent presence of illustrious names, the wealth of the libraries, the professors and students coming from all over the world, the intense rhythm of labour] (Schwarz 2021b, 188–189).

[15] Referring to his first encounter with *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Schwarz says: 'I had no idea what it could be, and I just opened the book because I sympathized with everything that had dialectic in its title. I soon realized that the book was going to be of

Connecticut, Schwarz drafted a letter to Adorno asking whether it would be possible for him to attend the latter's lectures on aesthetics.[16] Apologising for his bad German, Schwarz tells Adorno: 'I am profoundly interested in your writing and I would like to use a grant that I will receive in October to attend your classes on aesthetics'. Yet, the request to participate in Adorno's classes was motivated by more than just enthusiasm and the possible receipt of a bursary. As he concludes, 'I find myself at Yale and I am irritated with the lack of theory of literary theory [*die untheoritische Literatur-Theorie*] that is on offer here' (Silva 2019, 336). The young Schwarz would have to wait a full three months for a reply to this letter, which finally came in January 1962 with Adorno excusing himself for his tardy response. 'Dear Herr Schwarz', he writes, 'to my surprise, I see that your very kind letter from 7 October has remained unanswered. Please forgive me; it seems that it has drowned in the inundation of papers on my desk, over which I no longer have control'. Unfortunately, Adorno had by this point finished his lectures on aesthetics and had begun a course on philosophical terminology instead. Still, he insisted that, if Schwarz did decide to come to Frankfurt, he would surely 'not leave empty-handed', even 'if there was nothing immediately concerning aesthetics' (Silva 2019, 340).

It is tempting to imagine what would have happened had Schwarz attended Adorno's lectures on aesthetics, which would be reworked into the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*. Even more tantalising, in the summer of 1962, Adorno gave his famous seminar on 'Marx and the Basic Concepts of Sociological Theory' which exerted a major influence over figures associated with the *neue Marx-Lektüre* (NML).[17] What a dialectical thinker of Schwarz's calibre—and one with his own, by this point, sophisticated reading of Marx—would have made of this

great interest to me, although it was way too difficult, because of the density and intensity of its presentation' (Schwarz 2020, 441).

[16] The brief Schwarz-Adorno correspondence, which is held in the Theodor W. Adorno Archiv in Frankfurt, has been discussed by Eduardo Soares Neves Silva in a special issue of *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* dedicated to Schwarz's work (Silva 2019).

[17] Hans-Georg Backhaus—a key figure in the NML—included his notes on Adorno's 1962 Marx seminar as an appendix to his still-untranslated *Dialektik der Wertform: Untersuchungen zur Marxschen Ökonomiekritik* (1997, 501–513). For a discussion of the importance of Adorno's Marx seminar in the wider context of the NML, see O'Kane (2018).

seminar is a topic over which we can only speculate.[18] Nevertheless, the missed encounter between Schwarz and Adorno allowed a formative experience of a different kind to develop, for in 1963 Schwarz returned to Brazil to begin teaching at USP under the supervision of Antonio Candido, who would go on to become his literary and intellectual mentor. The names of Adorno and Candido often appear alongside each other in Schwarz's auto-biographical reflections on the development of his thought.[19] From the former, Schwarz took an appreciation of the 'social–historical substance' and 'objective logic' of aesthetic form; from the latter, a materialist theory of how extra-artistic elements 'get inside' of works of art, where they become structural and determining forces (Schwarz 2020, 441–442). While works such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Notes to Literature* were important in Schwarz's intellectual formation, the Adorno texts that left the strongest impression on him were those that deal with music, such as the 1949 essay *Philosophy of New Music*, which Schwarz considers to be 'unparalleled' (Schwarz 2020, 438).[20] What Schwarz derives from Adorno's musical writings is the conviction that weaknesses or limitations in otherwise successful works of art have less to do with the intentions of their author than they do with objective impossibilities that are social and historical in nature. As Schwarz puts it in *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, drawing from Adorno's essay 'Some Ideas on the Sociology of Music' (1999, 11–12)[21]: 'In the eyes of a dialectical critic, fractures in the form point to historical

[18] This is not to say that there is no point of contact between Schwarz's work and Germanophone theories and critiques of the value-form. In Brazil, Schwarz has played a significant role in the dissemination of the writings of the *Wertkritik* school, which shares a genealogical affinity with the NML, though differs on a number of political and theoretical issues. As the editors of *Marxism and the Critique of Value* write: 'since the mid-1990s, the still comparatively small but energetic and sustained study of *Wertkritik* that can be found in and radiating out from the University of São Paulo [is] thanks ultimately to the efforts of Roberto Schwarz, one of Brazil's foremost Marxist literary, cultural, and social theorists, whose influential review of the Portuguese translation of [Robert] Kurz's *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung* (The Collapse of Modernization) sparked the intense Brazilian interest in value-critique' (Larsen et al. 2014, xiii).

[19] For Schwarz's most extensive comparison of the critical programmes of Candido and Adorno, see Schwarz (2010, 179–180).

[20] Schwarz would concur with Jameson's assessment, in *Late Marxism*, that music is 'the ultimate test case of the aesthetic' for Adorno (1990, 127).

[21] Schwarz translated Adorno's essay into Portuguese for publication in the journal *Teoria e Prática* in 1968.

impasses. For all their aesthetically negative qualities, they thus represent important cultural facts, which also require interpretation' (2001, 114).

From Candido, Schwarz elicited a theory of dialectical criticism in which the activity of the critic is conceived as a process of 'discovery' (2012a, 20; 2021b, 214). Schwarz's great programmatic essay on Candido is 'Pressupostos, salvo engano, de "Dialética da Malandragem"' (1987, 129–156), translated into English as 'Objective Form: Reflections on the Dialectic of Roguery' (2012a, 10–32). Here, Schwarz offers a close reading of Candido's interpretation of Manuel Antonio Almeida's 1853 novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant* (Candido 2006), the key to which is what Candido calls a 'dialectic of order and disorder' that pervades the very texture of the work. It structures the oscillations of the plot, where the characters are constantly moving between the two spheres, but it is also there at the level of the sentences, in which, as Schwarz says, 'there is always room for both sides of any question' (2012a, 13). While this dialectic is the skeleton of the novel, it is also what Candido describes as 'the structural reduction of external data' (Candido 2006, 87). In this way, Candido's method of literary criticism is able to steer clear both of empty formalism and of historical reductionism. The real nexus that connects a particular work of literature to the society in which it was produced often cannot be identified at first sight, but rather exists alongside the other innumerable formal aspects of the text. This means that the critic must search 'for any and every nexus that subordinates others in the text' (Schwarz 2012a, 20), yet this search is also one that takes place in the light of 'extra-literary knowledge', for the real referent of the form is in the last instance historical reality. In 'National Adequation and Critical Originality in the Work of Antonio Candido' (2021a), Schwarz again praises Candido's ability to shuttle back and forth between aesthetic form and historical process. Even if it appears to be preoccupied with one or the other locally specific textual detail, this interpretive movement between literary interpretation and social analysis has a more general import for critical practice. By concretely identifying 'modes of continuity as well as rupture between the novel and the reality to which it refers', Candido leads us 'towards consideration of the value of the knowledge produced by the readings the [critic] offers' (2021a, 215).

In 1963, Schwarz returned to Brazil from the United States to begin teaching as an instructor at USP on a course that Candido had recently created called 'Literary Theory and Comparative Literature'. A year later, a dictatorship was established in the country after a coup d'état by the

armed forces. For the first few years of the new regime, the university was able to coexist more or less peacefully with military rule. As Schwarz notes in 'Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964–1969', his masterful conjunctural analysis of the early years of the dictatorship: 'to everyone's surprise, the cultural presence of the left was not suppressed during this period, rather it has continued to flourish and grow […] *Despite the existence of a right-wing dictatorship, the cultural hegemony of the left is virtually complete*' (1992, 127, emphasis original). In 1967, profiting from this still burgeoning leftist cultural scene, Schwarz co-founded the journal *Teoria e Prática* [Theory and Praxis], which became a platform for subversive intellectual production.[22] By 1968, however, the military regime had become so violent and repressive that many Brazilians were forced to emigrate.[23] In 1969, accordingly, Schwarz began a decade-long exile in Paris, where he completed his doctorate in Latin American Studies at the Sorbonne (University of Paris III) under the guidance of Raymond Cantel with a thesis that would become his first book-length study of Brazilian literature, *Ao vencedor as batatas* [To the Victor, the Potatoes!] (2019b). Far from alienating him from his homeland, this period of forced emigration allowed Schwarz to clarify his thoughts about Brazilian culture. 'While the socio-political circumstances that lead a person to leave a country might be terrible in themselves', he has remarked, 'being exiled can sometimes be productive at an individual level. In terms of my intellectual experience, the years in Paris were extremely productive […] It

[22] In the inaugural editorial to *Teoria e Prática*, the authors describe the fraught relationship between intellectual production and political activism as follows: 'A conjugação de interesse e raciocínio é subversiva, tanto para a objetividade acadêmica, desinteressada e desinteressante, quanto para as interesses vigentes, incompatíveis com o raciocínio crítico. […] Os que não sabem ou não costumam ler não serão, naturalmente, nossos leitores, mas são a nossa referência' [The combination of interest and reason is subversive, as much for academic objectivity, which is disinterested and disinteresting, as for active interests, which are incompatible with critical reasoning. Those that do not know how to read or do not make a habit of reading will obviously not be our readers, but they are our reference] (Schwarz et al. 1967, 1). For an account of the activities of *Teoria e Prática* journal, as well as an enlightening study of Schwarz's early intellectual and political formation, see Reimberg (2019).

[23] In Schwarz's words: 'à vista da prisão e tortura de pessoas próximas, julguei prudente viajar. Andei bem, pois pouco depois o meu apartamento foi visitado pela polícia' [at the sight of the imprisonment and torture of people close to me, I judged it prudent to leave. It was a good decision, too, for shortly after my apartment was visited by the police] (2021b, 189).

was, in a way, the space in which I started to develop my own sense of being a Latin American intellectual' (Schwarz qtd. Oquendo-Villar 2000). From the distance of enforced exile, Schwarz was also able to finish his play *A Lata de Lixo da História* [The Dustbin of History], a satire of Brazilian politics loosely based on Machado de Assis's 1882 novella *O Alienista* that was staged by a number of amateur theatre groups shortly after its publication in 1977.

It was also in Paris where Schwarz would write what remains his most widely-read essay, 'Ideias fora do lugar', originally published in French and later included as chapter one of *To the Victor, the Potatoes!*. Although the phrase is commonly translated into English as 'misplaced ideas', a more accurate rendering would be 'ideas out of place'. To 'misplace' an item implies that it might be re-found or restored to its rightful location, whereas Schwarz's use of 'ideias fora do lugar' has a more structural significance.[24] As a result of Brazil's integration into nineteenth-century world capitalism, the Brazilian elite were exposed to foreign ideologies and cultural forms which they adopted in new but often unconscious ways, with absurd and sometimes critical results. In Europe, Enlightenment ideals such as freedom, progress, and equality before the law had a very different relationship to social life, where they 'corresponded to appearances and hid the essential — the exploitation of labour' (1992, 20). In Brazil, however, these same ideals, by failing to correspond with the dominant mode of labour (slavery), became what Schwarz calls 'ideologies of the second-degree' (1992, 23). As they struggle to find an essence to which they can relate as an appearance, these imported liberal ideas become appearance pure and simple and therefore begin to look ridiculous. A breach is hereby opened up between base and superstructure: while slavery lacks the cultural form with which it would be ideologically justified, liberalism lacks an object altogether and becomes easy to denounce as highfalutin rhetoric. The result of the mismatch is a proliferation of absurdities and ornamental incongruities that are, as Schwarz puts it, 'recognizably Brazilian in their peculiar distortion' (1992, 25). Yet, in the absence of ideological unity, a third, mediating category becomes necessary, which is fulfilled in the Brazilian instance by the economic relation of 'favour' and the corresponding class of *agregados* or 'free' men and women. This intermediate, anomic social sector, with its precarious

[24] For a further discussion of the problems involved in translating 'Ideias fora do lugar' as 'misplaced ideas', see Ronald W. Sousa's introduction to Schwarz (2019b, x–xi).

and often-comic culture of dependency, was naturally more appealing to literary writers of the time than the 'impolitic and abominable fact of slavery' (1992, 19). But, by basing their interpretation of Brazil upon the *agregados*, these writers also ended up 'unwittingly disguising the violence that had always been essential to the sphere of production' (1992, 22).[25]

Schwarz's essay is now canonical in the field of postcolonial studies, where it has served as a model for the study of how peripheral societies are structured by a non-coincidence between pre-capitalist or archaic economic relations and ruling ideologies whose own material foundations are located elsewhere.[26] At the time of its publication, however, Schwarz's essay received critical pushback from his Brazilian interlocutors. In a well-known response entitled 'As ideias estão no lugar' [Ideas are in place] (1976), Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco argued that modern ideas in Brazil are not imported from abroad but originate instead inside the country, and that the notion of external influence is superficial and idealist.[27] Carvalho Franco claimed that Schwarz's analysis

[25] A subtle point made by Candido in his reading of Almeida's novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant* is that, by restricting its sphere of action to this mediating class of *agregados* and to the cultural life of favour, the novel elides the existence of slavery, which was the dominant mode of labour. Thus, the novel's success in artistically formalising a generalised rhythm of Brazilian society is at the same time a failure of documentary, veridical realism. Candido negotiates this interpretive dilemma by reading the novel *aesthetically*. As Schwarz puts it, Candido's reading privileges 'the mimetic value of the *composition*, as against the descriptive value of the parts' (Schwarz 2012a, 14, 17). This is just one example of the literary registration of favour in nineteenth-century Brazil.

[26] As Joe Cleary writes in the context of a reading of Irish literature: 'It might be argued, following Schwarz, that an obsessive "experience of incongruity" — occasioned by the fact that dependent cultures are always interpreting their own realities with intellectual methodologies created somewhere else and whose basis lies in other social processes — is indeed a typical characteristic of postcolonial societies' (2002, 107).

[27] As Schwarz later pointed out, ideas are always 'in their place' to the extent that they function ideologically in the society in which they were produced. However, this function is unevenly articulated throughout the world-system, and will differ depending on whether the society is a core-like or a peripheral formation. In Schwarz's words: 'Como tratei de explicar, ideias sempre têm alguma função, e nesse sentido sempre estão no seu lugar. Entretanto, as funções não são equivalentes, nem têm o mesmo peso. Considere-se, por exemplo, que o ideário liberal na Europa oitocentista correspondia à tendência social em curso, a qual parecia descrever corretamente, inclusive do ponto de vista do trabalhador, que vende a sua força de trabalho no mercado […] Ora, nas ex-colônias, assentadas sobre o trabalho forçado, o liberalismo não descreve o curso real das coisas — e nesse sentido ele é uma ideia fora do lugar' [As I tried to explain, ideas always have some function, and in this sense they are always in their place. Yet, not all functions are equal, they don't all

was wrongly invested in 'uma diferença *essencial*' [an *essential* difference] between cores and peripheries, falsely presupposing 'uma relação de *exterioridade* entre os dois termos em oposição' [a relation of *exteriority* between the two terms in opposition] (Carvalho Franco 1976, 61). Yet, what this critique fails to account for are the objective, historical, and material factors behind the structural 'misplacement' of ideas in Brazil.[28] The misfit between liberal ideology and slavocratic production, for instance, was an involuntary and practical result of capitalist development in the country, one which constituted 'the unavoidable frame of reference for everybody' (1992, 20). The category of favour, which sutured the incompatibility between liberalism and slavery in the manner of a'quasi-universal social mediation', was 'the local and opaque effect of a planetary mechanism' (1992, 22, 30). While the absurdities of the period's cultural production may have been quintessentially Brazilian, they also had their basis in 'the colonial process, which was international' (1992, 30). In short, the interpretive horizon of Schwarz's analysis is the capitalist world-system, and if Schwarz's presentation may seem overly dualist or 'diffusionist', it is because this system is itself reproduced through incongruity and dependency.

In 'The Importation of the Novel to Brazil and its Contradictions in the Work of Alencar', chapter two of *To the Victor, the Potatoes!*, Schwarz explores the literary consequences of his argument in 'Ideias fora do lugar'. The opening lines of the essay read as follows: 'The novel had existed in Brazil before there were any Brazilian novelists. So when they appeared it was natural that they should follow the European models, both good and bad, which had already become entrenched in our reading

have the same weight. Consider, for example, that liberal ideology in eighteenth-century Europe corresponded to the social tendency in existence, which it seems to correctly describe, even from the point of view of the worker, who sells their labour-power on the market […] Now, in the ex-colonies, rooted in forced labour, liberalism does not describe the real course of things — and in this sense it is an idea out of place] (2012b, 170–171).

[28] In an interview that appeared shortly after the publication of Carvalho Franco's response, Schwarz responded to his critic as follows: 'According to Maria Sylvia, ideas are a social product. For my part, I'm not going to deny that, but I still think they travel. As far as Brazilian literature in the nineteenth century is concerned, I even think they travelled by ship. They came from Europe every fortnight, by steamship, in the form of books, magazines and newspapers, and everyone went down to the harbour to wait for them. Anyone who deals with literary history […] cannot escape the notion of external influence, because these are areas in which the history of Brazil always appears as something backwards, as a continuous process of keeping up' (Schwarz 1992, 34).

habits' (1992, 41). Just as the importation of liberal ideas to Brazil led to their being taken up in absurd and unintentionally critical ways, flagging up ideology's own inherent falseness, so did the importation of the novel lead to vexed attempts by Brazilian writers at emulating the European authors, with critical implications for the novel as a form. As an example, Schwarz takes José de Alencar's novel *Senhora* (1875). He locates a dissonance in the form of the text between the local demand for verisimilitude and the plot structure of the European realist novel. On the one hand, the passages dealing with the morally headstrong protagonist Aurélia evoke Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, implicitly indicting the corrupting influence of money and social climbing. At the margins of the novel, however, there exists a set of characters who live by a rule of favour that 'in the bourgeois world would have been regarded as degrading' (1992, 59). European realism presupposes bourgeois social form, whereas what reigns in Brazil is the abomination of slavery, and so *Senhora* is split between two incompatible worlds whose reconciliation it struggles to achieve. In Schwarz's words: 'By remaining faithful to observable (Brazilian) reality and the accepted (European) model, the writer unwittingly replays a central incongruity in Brazilian intellectual life, leaving it unresolved' (46). The shortcoming of Alencar's fiction has to do with the fact that he tacitly accepts the liberal foundations of European realism as if they could be unproblematically assimilated to Brazilian society, treating second-degree ideologies as if they were of the first degree (1992, 50). Still, Alencar's quixotic attempt to write a European realist novel in Brazil produces, *malgré lui*, an immanent critique both of the novel form itself and of the imported liberal ideology, for it demonstrates the incompatibility between these social forms and Brazil's slavocratic mode of production. While the imbalance in the novel between the provincial world of favour and Balzacian sentimentalism results in a stylistic alternation that '*breaks the fictional spine of the book*' (1992, 60, emphasis original), it is therefore also one that has an objective correlative in the misplacement of ideas in Brazil. The consequences, for Alencar, are devastating: '[his] biggest contribution to the formation of the Brazilian novel resides in the weak points of his writing' (1992, 44).

This essay has unsurprisingly been widely influential within world literary studies, for insofar as economic dependency and cultural imitation are not specific to Brazil but are rather structural features of the world-system itself, Schwarz's reading has more general implications for

the peripheral novel as a genre.[29] In 'Conjectures on World Literature', Moretti highlights Schwarz's understanding of 'foreign debt' in the essay on Alencar as an optic through which to read texts produced throughout the world-system. Glossing Schwarz's reading, he writes that '[t]he one-and-unequal literary system is not just an external network here, it doesn't remain *outside* the text: it's embedded well into its form' (2000, 66). However, even after one has accepted the internal determination of literature by the uneven development of historical capitalism, there remains the question of how to read for this sociality at the level of aesthetics. Moretti inducts Schwarz into a pantheon of world literary readers—Itamar Even-Zohar (Israel), Meenakshi Mukherjee (India), Masao Miyoshi (Japan), etc.—and in this way seeks to enlist him as an implicit spokesman for Moretti's own project of 'distant reading'. Yet, by beginning with this aerial perspective, Moretti puts the cart before the horse: the worldliness of literature is foisted upon texts from above rather than organically demonstrated from below. As Ericka Beckman, Oded Nir, and Emilio Sauri have noted, Schwarz's dialectical method could not be more different from Moretti's critical programme, for while the latter argues that '[i]t is only through a strategy of "distant reading" predicated on constellations of huge sets of texts that the secrets held by world literature might become known', Schwarz, by contrast, holds that 'it is only by focusing on a small number of works, constellated within a specific historical context (in Schwarz's case, Brazil) that the critic can uncover new knowledge about either literature or society' (2022, 12–13).[30] To this

[29] At the end of 'Misplaced Ideas', Schwarz intimates a comparison between nineteenth-century Brazilian literature, for which 'progress is a disaster and backwardness a shame', and Russian realists such as Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Goncharov, and Chekhov, who were also forced to confront the 'system of ambiguities growing out of the local use of bourgeois ideas' (1992, 29). At the beginning of 'The Importation of the Novel to Brazil', similarly, Schwarz similarly argues that the obsession of writers with literary forms developed elsewhere 'occurs particularly in peripheral nations', and proceeds to invoke Henry James as an example, 'whose interest in the imaginative possibilities of England's social structure led to his emigration there' (1992, 41). Schwarz himself never explores these loose threads of latent comparativism, thereby leaving them as a challenge for word-literary scholars to pursue for themselves.

[30] See also Auritro Majumder: 'Schwarz — and his theory of objective form — belongs to a tradition of criticism that includes his teacher at the University of São Paulo, Antonio Candido, as much as the key figures of interwar Marxism, Georg Lukács and Theodor Adorno. While Moretti sees Schwarz's negative method as the precursor to his own

extent, Schwarz's readings of Brazilian literature do not offer a reproducible 'model' to be applied more or less unproblematically to other social contexts. On the contrary, *they throw down the gauntlet*. As readers, Schwarz challenges us to accomplish critical feats that would be comparable to his own interpretation of Brazilian literature and society. But the catch is that, because his work is so steeped both in the local specificity of Brazilian literature, and in the intellectual climate of mid-twentieth century Brazil, were one to have achieved a 'Schwarzian' reading, one would necessarily have immersed oneself in the object of study to such an extent that the critical results would bear little resemblance to those Schwarzian texts that had initially served as a model. Far from a reason not to engage with Schwarz, this double bind is part of the challenge of reading him.

In 1978, Schwarz returned to Brazil and was shortly thereafter elected head of the Department of Literary Theory at USP, a post which he held until 1983. The main strands of his thought had by this point coalesced into an original critical programme, incorporating Antonio Candido's work on the Brazilian novel, the Marxist studies on world-economic 'backwardness', and the historical-sociological interpretation of aesthetic forms practised by Lukács, Benjamin, and Adorno (Schwarz 2021b, 190). In 1990, while a Professor in the Department of Literary Theory at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Schwarz published his monograph on *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*, part of the research for which was carried out during his time as a Guggenheim fellow in 1977–1978 and as a visiting researcher at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University in 1980–1981. In the preface, Schwarz describes *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism* as the second half of *To the Victor, the Potatoes!* (2001, 3), which had ended with a study of paternalism in Machado's early novels (*Resurreição* [Resurrection] (1872); *A Mão e a Luva* [The Hand and the Glove] (1874); *Helena* (1876); *Iaiá Garcia* (1878)). In Alencar's novel *Senhora*, the marginal presence of local colour discredits the central dramatic nexus of the plot, which apes the European realist novel in an ornamental and decorative way. In the novels from Macahdo's first phase, the inverse process takes place: 'the reality of local relations finds vindication over against "literary" sentiments coming from Europe' (2019b, 58). However, by rejecting

positive model of distant reading, I believe — and genuinely wish to emphasize — that they are quite separate' (2020, 23–24).

European influences in this way, the early Machado limits his fiction to a provincial and conservative 'anti-Realism' with the essentially negative ambition of 'voic[ing] Brazil's historical backwardness' (2019b, 50). It is only with the publication of *The Posthumous Memoirs* in 1881 that Machado becomes the critical 'master' that Schwarz studies in his 1990 monograph *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*.

To attempt to summarise the argument of *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism* in a single paragraph would be to commit a crime against the book. In order to grasp the force and scale of its critical conclusions, to experience the intricate twists and turns of its close readings, the reader must confront the book for themselves and arrive at their own judgements. A key feature that can be highlighted here, however, is what Schwarz calls the 'volubility' of the novel's eponymous first-person narrator, who provocatively calls attention to himself through the use of stylistic tricks and a deliberately abusive tone. This combination of self-aggrandisement and affrontery is responsible for the 'peculiar rhythm' of the book, which alternately attracts and repels the reader (2001, 7). Insofar as the movement between invitation and expulsion is a 'technical necessity' of the composition, the progression of the narrative is determined by the periodicity of its interruptions. On the one hand, a law requires regularity and repetition, the predictability of events according to the veracity of some abstract rule or schema. But if the content of a law is the transgression of the norm, it must predict its own unpredictability and anticipate that which cannot be known in advance. For Brás to conform to the novel's formal principle, he must therefore intervene in the narrative, but by obstructing the succession of events, he explodes the applicability of the law, which presupposes order and consistency. In his reading of the theme of duality in Schwarz's work, Paulo Eduardo Arantes categorises this feature of *The Posthumous Memoirs* as a 'dialectic of norm and transgression' (1992, 62), one which had corresponded to the predicament of the Brazilian ruling elite in the nineteenth century, who were condemned to pursue liberal ideals of equality and bourgeois progress that remained structurally out of reach. As Schwarz says, this ideological dilemma finds 'an equivalent in the framework of characters and episodes in the *Memoirs*', whose form gives 'a complete impression of impasse, of repeated relapses' (2001, 45, 42). Thus, the concept of form that Schwarz is working with in *A Master* is twofold: '(a) rule for the composition of the narrative and (b) the stylization of a kind of conduct characteristic of the Brazilian ruling class' (2001, 7–8).

In the field of world literary studies, Schwarz's reading of *The Posthumous Memoirs* has been taken up by the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) as an exemplary instance of the cultural registration of combined and uneven development. WReC argue that what Schwarz calls the 'sore spots' and 'national oddities' in Brazilian literature reappear in texts throughout the peripheries as a formal mediation of the world-system's axial division of labour. There is much justification for WReC's innovative attempt to integrate Schwarz into their world-systems approach to cultural production. Participating in the 'Seminário Marx' at USP in the late 1950s and early 1960s, for example, Schwarz had read *Capital* alongside figures such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who became an influential voice in dependency theory (a theoretical forerunner of world-systems analysis), and a young Michael Löwy, who would later write a book on the politics of combined and uneven development in the writings of Marx and Trotsky (2010). One of this seminar's guiding questions is an unavoidable one for materialist world literary scholars and internationalist Marxists alike: 'Como imaginar a passagem da estreiteza das relações de dependência pessoal à abertura nacional e internacional da consciência de classe?' [How to imagine the passage from the narrowness of relations of personal dependency to the national and international opening up of class consciousness] (Schwarz 1999, 98). In 'The Practical Matrix', a key chapter of *A Master* that recapitulates many of the insights developed in the misplaced ideas essay, Schwarz explicitly cites Trotsky's 'law of uneven and combined development' as a way of capturing the topsy-turvy character of capitalist development in Brazil[31]:

> [O]ne has only to look at the new international division of labour, in which it was the ex-colonies' lot to be the consumers of manufactured goods and the providers of tropical products, to understand that the modern development of backwardness was only in the first instance a Brazilian (or Latin American) aberration. Its real basis lay in what Marxist tradition identifies as the "unequal and combined development of capitalism," an

[31] Denoting the continuation of non-capitalist economic forms within and alongside the trajectory of capitalist development, Trotsky's concept rethinks the notion of linear progress as 'an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms' (Trotsky 2007, 25). Thus, in Tsarist Russia, Trotsky highlighted what he described as a 'skipping of historical stages' in which a disordering of the classic Marxist schema for the development of industry (handicraft, manufacture, factory) gave rise to a mishmash of pre-capitalist and capitalist social formations.

> expression that points up the unruffled sociological calm peculiar to this mode of production, which achieves its economic aim — *profit* — either on the ruins of earlier forms of oppression or by reproducing and aggravating them. Quite the contrary to what the appearance of backwardness makes one suppose, the ultimate cause of Brazil's absurd social formation is in the advances of capital and in the planetary order created by these advances; the absurd conduct of our ruling class is as legitimate an expression of its *up-to-dateness* as is Victorian decorum. (2001, 22)

This situation of combined and uneven development thus gave rise to a series of dialectical reversals: Brazil was seen to be capitalist to the extent that it remained slavocractic, its development took the form of underdevelopment, its backwardness became the very expression of advancement, and 'up to the time when slave labour became less profitable than wage labour, the "uncultivated and abominable" slaveowners were in fact more thoroughly capitalistic than [Brazil's] defenders of Adam Smith' (1992, p. 21). With the narrative pyrotechnics of Brás Cubas, this inverted world of Brazil's economic backwardness becomes a principle of novelistic composition, as Machado aesthetically formalises the practical matrix of nineteenth-century Brazil within the vertiginous inconstancy of his prose style. In WReC's words, 'the aesthetic of *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* is not simply *uneven* — "fractured", its constituent elements uneasily juxtaposed, concatenated, imposed one upon the other — but also *combinatory*, its elements "telescoped" and "accordionised"' (2015, 64). For WReC, this formal operation is a paradigmatic instance of 'world-literature', which they hyphenate in order to tie the concept to the framework of world-systems analysis.

The essays in this collection share WReC's materialist and world-systemic approach to literary production, which is always implicit in Schwarz's analyses, even if they might disagree on how individual texts mediate this global horizon, and whether or not Schwarz is himself properly speaking a 'world-literary' critic. Indeed, there is room to push back against the attempt to enlist Schwarz as an ambassador for the theory of world literature with a hyphen, for while the world-system is undoubtedly the interpretive horizon of Schwarz's work, his argument about *The Posthumous Memoirs* is that its stylistic features transpose an ideological ambivalence that is specific to the history of Brazil, albeit one that is constituted through Brazil's trade relations with the rest of the world. Moreover, as Schwarz argues in the final chapter of *A Master on*

the Periphery of Capitalism, Machado's Brazilian breakthrough occurred through a local process of literary accumulation in which the author overcame both the aesthetic impasses arrived at by his predecessors in Brazilian literature, as well as the paternalistic framework of his own, earlier fiction (Schwarz 2001, 149–164). When WReC draw a comparison between, for example, surreal effects in the fiction of Viktor Pelevin, discordant discourses in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Machado's use of narratorial volubility, they necessarily abbreviate this pre-history and elevate Schwarz's interpretation to the level of model or paradigm. The passage is one from the diachronic to the synchronic, from historical specificity to reiterative uniformity, and from the idiographic features of capitalist history to its nomothetic tendencies. Instead of 'A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism', we have 'Machado on a World Scale' (Waller 2021, 525). One can here appreciate Joshua Clover's critique of WReC's book, in which he upbraids the collective for positing a static synchrony in which unevenness is turned into an inert object that no longer modifies the temporal progression of capitalist development (in Harlow et al. 2016, 520–527). Rather than a shortcoming of WReC's own theory, this tension names a distance inherent to the concept of world literature itself, for which close reading is more of a stumbling block than a test case. Yet, as a result, the collective runs the risk of abstracting from all that is compelling about Schwarz's project, which has to do with surrendering oneself to the text at hand and dialectically immersing oneself in the object of study. To paraphrase Adorno, the moment one turns the dialectic into a method it ceases to be dialectical.[32] Likewise, in Schwarz's readings, world literariness is a result to be achieved, not a quality to be supposed in advance. On the other hand, the fact that some degree of local specificity is lost in world literary theorising is not a fact that militates against such a comparativist approach, but is only the price of comparativism itself. The wager of WReC's book is that more is to be gained from such a perspective than is lost by it—with or without the hyphen, world literary studies stands or falls on the success of this trade-off.

[32] 'Paradoxically, we could say that the moment that dialectic becomes a kind of device, or a recipe, when it is manipulated as a method, then it is inevitably converted into untruth, and indeed in the strictly dialectical sense that it thereby comes into contradiction with its own concept' (Adorno 2017, 50).

Roberto Schwarz and World Literature is organised around three clusters of interlinked questions and objectives. Firstly, the volume seeks to underscore Schwarz's relevance for contemporary discussions of world literature by bringing his work into dialogue with a set of literary and cultural texts produced at distinct geo-temporal points over the *longue durée* of capitalist history. Maria Elisa Cevasco's chapter opens with a question that guides the volume as a whole: 'What is to be gained in bringing Roberto Schwarz's work into the current debate on world literature?' Cevasco provides historical and biographical details that are indispensable for understanding the critic's world literary formation, before reviewing the status of the concept of 'world literature' in Schwarz's own work, as well as in that of some of his most recent interlocutors. In 'Subjective Form: Registration and World Literature', Thomas Waller begins with a historical summary of the disciplinary development of world literature and then critically discusses WReC's category of literary 'registration', demonstrating how Schwarz both complements and nuances WReC's model. Silvia L. López takes up Schwarz's reading of the peripheral novel in the context of a discussion of the world literary theories of Moretti and Casanova, highlighting the challenge presented by Schwarz's Adornian understanding of literary form to aerial models of economic globalisation. Through a reading of contemporary Israeli science fiction, specifically the late work of Assaf Gavron, Oded Nir shows just how generative the concept of 'structural reduction' can be, beyond its original use by Candido in his reading of the 'dialectic of roguery', and by Schwarz in his essay 'Objective Form'. In G.S. Sahota's contribution to the collection, Schwarz's 'splicing' of Candido and Adorno provides a productive way to read the South Asian worlds of Urdu literature, in particular the narrative allegories of Rajinder Singh Bedi. Michael Niblett's essay takes its cue from the connection between Schwarz and Latin American dependency theory to read the dialectics of dependent capitalism in the Guyanese author Edgar Mittelholzer's speculative fiction. Rebecca Karl's contribution shows how the concept of 'misplaced ideas' can be used as a framework through which to approach the importation of political economic theories in early twentieth-century China.[33] Taken

[33] Karl's chapter builds on and expands her prior work on the Chinese political economist Wang Yanan, which argues that the importation of bourgeois liberal ideas to China (in particular the political economy of Adam Smith) created a reliance on theories that were 'removed from everyday life and social practice in their insistence on ahistorical

together, these chapters develop original responses to the following question: What does Schwarz's work, which is concerned above all with the specificities of literature and culture in Brazil, have to tell us about materialist approaches to the practice of comparativism, in which cultural forms register the combined and uneven development of capitalism on a world scale?

Another key objective of *Roberto Schwarz and World Literature* is to emphasise the importance of an understanding of Brazilian culture and society to an appreciation of the scope and legacy of Schwarz's work, since what is often lost in the reception of Schwarz outside Brazil are the local theoretical debates that underpin his writing. To this end, this collection brings together contributions from Brazilian scholars which seek to elucidate the influence of Schwarz's local intellectual formation on the development of his ideas. It features the first English-language translation of the second part of the eminent Brazilian philosopher Paulo Eduardo Arantes's study *Sentimento da Dialética* (1992), which remains one of the few attempts to assess the critical import of Schwarz's work in any language. In his chapter, translated by Emilio Sauri and Thomas Waller, Arantes offers a dense and illuminating discussion of Schwarz's sophisticated conception of the dialectic as 'dual but combined'. Furthermore, although Schwarz has published two collections of poetry and two plays, these works are either wholly unknown or under-discussed in the English-speaking world. Leandro Pasini's essay thus makes an important contribution to the Anglophone reception of Schwarz by taking the category of modernism as a way of exploring the vexed relationship between his artistic output and his critical work.

Insofar as Schwarz self-consciously positions himself as an intellectual inheritor of Marxist critical theory, the essays collected here seek to reflect, not only on the importance of the Marxist tradition for an understanding of Schwarz's work, but also on the role of Schwarz himself in challenging and reshaping the theoretical terrain of Marxism. It is the belief of the contributors to this volume that the relationship of Schwarz to theoretical traditions such as the Frankfurt School is not one of mere refinement, for there are blindspots even in the original

categorical absolutes', rendering these ideas as what Wang termed 'magical concepts' that did not correspond to the everyday economic reality of early-twentieth-century China (Karl 2017, 2).

theory, but rather one of reconstruction, in the sense that he adds something new. To this extent, the present volume of essays responds to the questions: What are the implications of Schwarz's work for ongoing debates in Marxist literary criticism? What are the points of continuity and discontinuity between Schwarz and the tradition of Marxist dialectical thinking? Fabio Akcelrud Durão's essay offers a measured assessment of Schwarz's engagement with the Frankfurt School, but also develops a wide-ranging account of the 'anatomy' of Schwarz's thinking that establishes his originality as a critic. In 'Presuppositions — Barring Error — of Roberto Schwarz, Antonio Candido, and Georg Lukács', Nicholas Brown compellingly argues that Schwarz's understanding of form as 'an active principle' in literary construction, developed on the basis of Candido's reading of the 'dialectic of roguery', presupposes the argument of Georg Lukács's 1936 essay 'Narrate or Describe?'. Bruna Della Torre draws from Lukács writings on realism, and Adorno's studies of the modernist novel, to demonstrate that the Marxist dialectical tradition is crucial to understanding, not only the shift from the first to the second phases of Machado's career, but also to grasping the importance of Schwarz's critical project itself. This collection also reprints one of the most widely-read essays in the secondary literature on Schwarz, with a new prefatory note from its author: Neil Larsen's 'Roberto Schwarz: A Quiet (Brazilian) Revolution in Critical Theory', originally published in his 2001 book *Determinations* (75–82). Larsen's argument—referenced by contributors throughout this volume—is that Schwarz's work has far-reaching implications both for the Marxist tradition of critical theory, but also for the field of postcolonial studies. The purpose of this volume of essays is to consolidate Schwarz's reputation both as the foremost Marxist intellectual in Brazil, and as a dialectical critic on a par with Adorno and Lukács.

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CHAPTER 2

Schwarz's Anatomy

Fabio Akcelrud Durão

I

Roberto Schwarz is no longer an unknown literary critic in Anglo-American circles. Four of his books have been translated into English,[1] as well as a number of his essays. The bibliography on his work is steadily growing,[2] and reviews of his latest volumes speedily appear in prestigious journals such as *New Left Review* and *Mediations*. Moreover, bolstered by such prominent theorists as Franco Moretti (e.g., 2021) and Perry Anderson (2011), who famously called him the greatest dialectician since Adorno, Schwarz is not an infrequent reference in debates on Brazilian, Latin American, and, more recently, world literature—indeed, this collection itself can be seen as the confirmation of what is by now a firm,

[1] *Misplaced Ideas*: Essays on Brazilian Culture (1992); A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism (2001); *Two Girls and Other Essays* (2013); *To the victor, the potatos!* (2019).

[2] Some references, among others, include Johnson (1999), Larsen (2001), López (2005), Cevasco (2014), Sauri (2015), Durão (2018).

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unquestionably deserving, transatlantic reputation. And yet, there is a subtle irony (I'm tempted to call it Machadian-Schwarzian) underlying such notoriety, for, rigorously read, Schwarz's work is consistently incompatible with the circulation logic it is submitted to. This claim will provide the basis for what is to be unfolded below, but before going into that it is worthwhile asking if there would not be something structural to this tension, yet to be explained, between the internal configuration of certain critical works, their impulse or animus, and the way they are received—or, more clearly stated, between dialectical thinking and analytical commentary. For it may very well be that Schwarz will eventually share Theodor. W. Adorno's paradoxical fate of being at the same time widely discussed theoretically and actually irrelevant as far as concrete interpretative practices are concerned. As an object of commentary, as something to be elucidated, dissected, applied, vilified, or endorsed, however passionately, Adorno has generated a massive body of texts. The *manner* in which he reads, on the other hand—his presuppositions, strategies, procedures, values, and so on—has become simply unintelligible and seems to come from another planet when compared to the modus operandi of contemporary academic scholarship and its own discursive protocols, which, incidentally, increasingly accommodate the demands of the neoliberal university.[3] It is an open question whether Schwarz may not before long join the club of innocuous monumentality. The intent to carry out an anatomy of his criticism comes as an effort to counter that: instead of primarily discussing ideas or arguments, the attempt here will be to describe the *functioning* of his texts in their different, interrelated layers (such interconnectedness, incidentally, is what makes the metaphor of an anatomy preferable to that of a mechanics of meaning or other inorganic image). The aims of such an undertaking are twofold: in the first place, a characterization of Schwarz's anatomy offers a good term of comparison to delineate and critique established reading practices; second, and more importantly, by focusing on how Schwarz's interpretations work, one may hope to facilitate the process of transmission, so that this kind of thinking can be reproduced in a strong way, preserving its impulse while changing it according to the needs of the material at hand—for

[3] Robert Hullot-Kentor (2010a, 2010b) has persuasively argued that Adorno's philosophy is becoming increasingly unintelligible as our horizon of the thinkable shrinks as a consequence of capitalism penetrating ever deeper social and psychic life; it would be interesting to ask to what extent this insight might be extended to Schwarz.

Schwarz's is a critical project that deserves to be carried on, not merely spoken about.[4]

The first dissonance between production and distribution, spirit and diffusion, is an extensive one and would by itself already justify a chapter of its own. Literary theory today is centered on and fueled by, to a great extent owes its very existence to, processes of concept formation and propagation which follow a well-structured geographical course (Durão, 2011). Even if forged elsewhere (as in France, Germany, England, Italy, or even Slovenia), concepts are branded in the US from whence they spread to the rest of the Anglophone academic system, ultimately, the world. These dynamics of diffusion mirror that of material commodities: as the machinery or technology of thought, concepts proceed from the center to the periphery, where they are discussed and elucidated, or applied, most likely to native cultural raw material. They may come in all sorts of sizes and formats, from huge ones which delimit entire research fields, such as "postcolonial", to more modest ones, which regulate the reading of particular objects. With enough momentum, they can grow so much in usage that they lead to the establishment of new areas in their own right, which in turn provide the perspective to read anything. The suffix "studies" designates precisely this expansion of conceptual validity from a limited corpus (affects in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*) to interpretative lenses (affect studies).

Nothing could be more foreign to Roberto Schwarz's critical practice, for in his case the emphasis lies on the interpretative practice itself, which confers to the artifact the freedom to generate its own concepts, which thereby resist application and unmediated circulation. His most well-known notions, those of misplaced ideas and ideology to the second degree, which are quoted as independent entities, have a strict post-factum character: they act as names, or titles, to specific hermeneutical courses, and cannot be transferred willy-nilly to other contexts without an extensive effort at adaptation, i.e., a reading of one's own. In other words, Schwarzian concepts are more useful as inspirations or analogical starting points than as prêt-a-porter ideas to dress interpretation. The dissonance between what Schwarz does and how literary theory operates becomes even louder when we realize that the Brazilian critic can only

[4] This applies to the Brazilian context, too, for, as far as I know, Schwarz has left no disciples and there are few scholars in the country who follow his steps in a compelling way.

think in terms of "works", self-delimited entities in which appearance and being are disjointed: they appear as more than what they are and are more than what they appear. Contemporary theory, on the other hand, relies and is dependent on the notion of "text", an open-ended entity, whose lack of boundaries makes it particularly liable not only to multifarious associations, but also to the accommodation of whatever new notions are presented. One might argue that this opposition would be in truth that of theory vs. criticism, a generalizable kind of discourse in contradistinction to an analysis with a restricted field of validity, but this would not be accurate, because Schwarz's readings of individual works culminate in arguments of a wide scope of validity, as when we move in Schwarz's interpretation of *Brás Cubas* from the volubility of the narrator to class position and eventually to the dialectic of center vs. periphery, whereby Brazil's position at the margins of the world's economic and ideological system reconfigures the center itself. Indeed, as we will see, the capacity to articulate textual minutiae into high-ranging theoretical claims may be Schwarz's greatest accomplishment.

Another disparity emerges when we turn to the intellectual context in which Schwarz was formed. The key realization here is that his work would be impossible without the consolidation of a native (in lack of a better word) line of thinking devoted to define and understand Brazil, including such founding works as Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Roots of Brazil* (1936), Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* [The Masters and The Slaves] (1933), Paulo Prado's *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (1942), and Antonio Candido's *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1959). To this heritage, one should add the work carried out by Schwarz's own contemporaries at the University of São Paulo (USP), with whom he kept intensive debates throughout his life, such as the philosopher Paulo Arantes or the sociologist Francisco de Oliveira. Incidentally, it is perhaps a sign of its peripheral character that the name "São Paulo School" has not gained as much currency as its German counterpart did in Frankfurt. Antonio Candido was a key figure in the consolidation of what we must emphatically call a *tradition*, for due to his longevity (he died at 98), he acted as link between generations of intellectuals and was instrumental to the constitution of literary criticism in Brazil, not only through its pathbreaking work in the characterization of what Brazilian literature is, but in its institutionalization (my own department at the State University of Campinas was founded by him).

Such effort to create a collective environment of thinking, with historical depth and material support, was also marked by political awareness regarding the specificity of underdevelopment. As Schwarz reminisces about his mentor: "It fell to the critic to deprovincialize Brazil, avoiding both obtuse nationalist introversion and subaltern fascination with metropolitan trends" (2017, 48). Underlying this was a concrete modus operandi: "Antonio Candido was explaining to Walnice Nogueira Galvão and me, his teaching assistants, something of his plans for the Department of Literary Theory, which he was then launching. Walnice, who had good English, was to monitor British and North American criticism, while I, who knew German, would follow the discussions in that language zone; he himself would continue to be responsible for Italian and French. Thus, our department would keep abreast of critical developments in five major centers, or, in other words, with the worldwide state of the art" (2017, 51). One can, of course, as Helgesson (2022) does, point to the partiality of this term "worldwide" and how it ignores other literatures in the Global South. One can also perceive in the informal setting and familiar tone something of the personalism that so strongly marks Brazilian culture, with everybody knowing everybody else and calling themselves by first name. Indeed, one might even detect signs of São Paulo-centrism; nevertheless, for all its possible faults, the program is conceived as an attempt to solve the dilemmas of doing literary criticism in the periphery.

Antonio Candido's project was one of mediating the particular and what was then considered universal. This model represented an attempt to at the same time control the conditions of the debate internally and remain open to innovations brought forth elsewhere. Schwarz's discussion of "A Marx seminar" may be read in the same spirit; apart from documenting an important chapter in the Brazilian reception of the German philosopher and capturing a heated moment in the reflection on international capitalism and underdevelopment, it lays bare a process of internal discussion, of analysis and appropriation for the Brazilian situation of a fundamental European theory. The establishment of a native debate brings with it the advantages of continuation, while findings from previous scholars can be appropriated without the need of renewed explanations and justifications. This is valid not only for concepts themselves, but also for questions of the delimitation of objects, adoption of tone, and negotiation of perspective.

This process of reading from the periphery contrasts sharply with a certain unreflecting way of dealing with theory in Brazil, which is the prevalent one. It might surprise certain readers, but the construction of this degree of intellectual independence is an achievement in itself and is far from being the norm. As Schwarz himself observes in a discussion of nationality "by subtraction":

> Let us examine the problem from a literary point of view. In twenty years of teaching the subject I have witnessed a transition in literary criticism from impressionism, through positivist historiography, American New Criticism, stylistics, Marxism, phenomenology, structuralism, poststructuralism, and now Reception theories. The list is impressive and demonstrates our university's efforts to overcome provincialism. But it is easy to see that the change from one school of thought to another rarely arises from the exhaustion of a particular project; usually it expresses the high regard that Brazilians feel for the newest doctrine from America or Europe. The disappointing impression created, therefore, is on of change and development with no inner necessity and therefore no value. The thirst for terminological and doctrinal novelty prevails over the labor of extending knowledge and is another illustration of the imitative nature of our cultural life. (1992, 2)

This is a vehement picture of underdevelopment in the realm of theory, a succession of critical schools and movements without any organicity in their movement or adherence to a concrete form of social life. But one just needs to replace the emphasis on subordination to, and wonder for, things coming from the so-called First World, by a progression based on novelty or even fashion, to have a possible characterization of the functioning of theory in the United States.[5]

This leads us to another, curious question, which is the way Schwarz handles the intellectual tradition of the Frankfurt School, whose work he himself carries on (Durão 2022; Lopéz 2005). What is striking here is how he systematically shuns metacommentary. While his indebtedness to the tradition of Western Marxism is clear, and is occasionally strategically acknowledged by him, it is never the focus of critical attention; Schwarz's

[5] It is useful in this context to recall Graff's well-known argument that schools in literary studies have progressed through attacks and not dialogue. Schwarz's point, in turn, throws a new dimension to Graff's (2007) insight in his celebrated institutional history of English.

references to Adorno, Benjamin, Lukács, or Marcuse are scarce and direct quotations, even rarer. Many of his readers are puzzled by this avoidance of metatheoretical work, as one may witness, for instance, in several of the interviews included in the recent volume, *Seja como for* (2019). It would not be hard to relate Schwarz's readings to a Frankfurt School conceptual universe. Take for example the key notion of favor as investigated in Schwarz's reading of Machado de Assis, with its strong element of whim (*capricho*) in the relationship between nineteenth-century Brazilian oligarchy and poor white people, which could be fruitfully approached through Adorno and Horkheimer's notion of mimesis as theorized in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Or, to continue with this book, one might interpret the effects of lingering slavery and the resulting restriction of the labor market in terms of concept the exchange principle (*Tauschprinzip*), and its effects on the process of subjectivation. The reason for not proceeding metatheoretically, however, is itself inspired by a methodological principle issuing from Adorno himself, that of the primacy of the object (*Vorrang des Objekts*), which designates the need for the subject to subordinate itself to the logic of that which it is trying to understand (Lopéz 2011).

At the next level of Schwarz's anatomy, we finally enter the textual realm as it materializes a specific critical program. Not surprisingly, methodological considerations are sparse in Schwarz's essays, and frequently receive only secondary focus, generally in subordinate clauses. The best place from which to derive the basis for Schwarz's reading practice is his piece on Antonio Candido's interpretation of *Sargento de Milícias* (de Almeida 1991; Schwarz 2012a). By describing how his mentor elucidates this nineteenth-century Brazilian novel, Schwarz is indirectly laying bare his own goals as a critic. The essay starts assertively: "The defining concern of Marxist criticism of literature is the dialectic of literary form and social process" (10). The former, we learn a few pages further on, "is at once the skeleton that supports the novel and the *structural reduction* of a social situation, external to literature, belonging to history. It is the *aesthetic formalization* of a generalized rhythm in Brazilian society in the first half of the nineteenth century" (13–14). In order to avoid misunderstandings, "structural reduction" and "aesthetic formalization" must be explained: form here should not be understood as a fixed structure or as a preexisting pattern, as something given that one could easily point to; rather, it should be conceived as an underlying organizing principle that has to be analytically detached by the critic

from the textual mass. In other words, deciding what counts as form is already the first interpretative act and as such represents an initial result from the exercise of critical imagination. Also, forms can change with time, as history reveals formerly invisible layers of meaning and obscures others. Likewise, "aesthetic formalization", that which is revealed about society, need not be something sociology has theorized; on the contrary, it should, ideally, also be a finding. We have, then, a double process of discovery, whereby the determination of a previously unobserved form allows us to obtain new knowledge about society. The result is enhanced cognition, the generation of a kind of sensible knowledge which could not otherwise be obtained.[6] One must be only minimally acquainted with standard current literary criticism to perceive the immense distance to this interpretative program. The sheer fact that starts with a theory or even with a concept already precludes the dynamics that Schwarz is discussing here. And to make things even worse, describing this hermeneutical aspiration does not substitute its practice; it actually exemplifies the logic of commentaries on Adorno mentioned above.

The next component of Schwarz's anatomy is his style, which is both highly personal and part of a tradition (Pasini 2021). The Brazilian critic writes essays in the vehement sense of the notion, that of the young Lukács and Adorno, which means, first, that writing does not follow a preestablished plan. As far as the movement of thought is concerned, ideas do not proceed from a fixed, preestablished order, but follow a particular logic whereby the progression of arguments advances more from what has been exposed than from a point clearly stated and subsequently exemplified and proven. In other words, the scheme of thesis and verification does not apply in Schwarz's compositions. In fact, one way of destroying his essays would be to submit them to the form of presentation of articles, with the abstract functioning as an argumentative spoiler. Dialectical writing evinces a struggle between thinking in its attempt to deal with non-identity and the predicative impulse of syntax. Nothing is sadder than a kind of exposition that invokes contradictions, instead of showing them, or which handles them well in an orderly, analytical way. In Schwarz, there

[6] See Brown (2020) for a brilliant defense of this idea. That literary works, as autonomous objects, can yield a specific kind of knowledge is strong argument for the institutional validation of literary studies as a discipline, at a time when the humanities are in urgent need of justifying their existence.

is no performative paradox, no tension between the content of an utterance and its *Darstellung*; the dialectical play of opposites may take place between different sections of the text, different paragraphs, sentences, or even among subordinate clauses. Concepts do not have to be defined or explained before being used. If, on the one hand, they point outside the text to a theoretical corpus, on the other, they have their meaning derived from the context in which they appear, which facilitates the dialectical movement.

Second, since the focus is the literary work, from which the essay strives to speak, the question of writing from and intervening in a research field disappears from the horizon. This means that there is no concern to being up to date, of taking account of the latest publications, necessarily responding to the issues raised by recent scholarship: that is, there is no need to offer a *contribution* to the field. Likewise, references are made to texts assisting directly with the interpretation at hand, not according to their impact or citation factor. From the point of view of the choice of words, Schwarz has an idiosyncratic combination of an erudite lexicon and highly colloquial expressions, which unfortunately is very much lost in translation.[7] In other circumstances, this would produce Frankenstein-like essays, but here the articulation works, generating a kind of modernist style with a peculiarly interesting tone and the accompanying question of distance. The long sentences with the preponderance of subordinate clauses point to an elevated critical register, while colloquialisms signal proximity. The result is a difficulty to construe a clear critical voice, which at times seems too formal, or too personal. Interestingly, this ambivalence in tone mirrors Schwarz's theorizations, for the dialectic of linguistic pedantry (*bacharelismo*, as it were) and familiarity is a strong locus for his interpretation of Brazil.

The last component of Schwarz's anatomy is the most important, namely the kind of close reading he practices. Differently from the New Critics, he does not postulate an organic totality to literary works, which means that the exploration of the potential of words does not have to eschew what traditional criticism would deem extrinsic elements. "External" concepts, such as class struggle, ideology, or nationalism, are mobilized in the hermeneutical process, not as items to be applied or identified, but rather as inhering in the concreteness of the textual

[7] He also has his own mannerisms, as *digamos* (let us say), which resembles Fredric Jameson's "meanwhile".

material. Inversely, one does not feel in Schwarz the rigidity that one occasionally encounters in Adorno's literary criticism in the employment of concepts taken from his aesthetics, such as mimesis, construction, and enigmatic character. Indeed, the nucleus of Schwarz's interpretative dynamics lies in the way he discovers in the specificity of literary elements, both in what one would call content and technique, the workings of broad ideas. We can call this main exegetical gesture one of extrapolation, whereby a wide conceptual context resonates in the singularity of individual items. To be sure, taken atomistically, they may seem like the imposition of a general master code on a separate item, as when, for instance, Machado de Assis's Capitu in *Dom Casmurro* is viewed as representing the Enlightenment. As they accumulate in a web of cross-referencing, however, the effect is astoundingly convincing. It is from this accumulation that Schwarz's idea, his "theory", emerges.

The reader will have reason to object that this discussion of tradition, critical project, practice of writing, and mode of reading has been too abstract. In order to mitigate this impression, we can turn to a particular case which requires us to talk about cucumbers.

II

Minha vida de menina (Morley 2019) [My life as a young girl] is a sui generis book in late nineteenth-century Brazilian literature. First published in 1942, and translated into English as *Helena Morley's Dairy* (Morley 1981) by Elizabeth Bishop in 1957, it is a journal spanning from January 1893 to December 1895, written by Alice Dayrell Caldeira Brant under the pseudonym of Helena Morley. It narrates the quotidian routine of an enchantingly questioning girl in the small city of Diamantina, a now decadent mining place in the State of Minas Gerais ("diamante" is diamond in Portuguese). The daughter of an English immigrant, the red-haired Helena stands out not only because of her different religious background and skin color, but also on account of her capacity for observation and naturally inquisitive stance. What could otherwise appear as the unbearably dull existence of the countryside, from her eyes, emerges as an eventful and exuberant social environment, a collective ecosystem, as it were, with its human interconnections and exchanges with nature. In sum, a diary of penetrating mimetic force originating in an adorably unquiet young mind, an achievement in naïvely potent, or potently naïve, realism.

This, however, corresponds to just a superficial reading of *Minha vida de menina*. The book is shrouded in mystery because the manuscript has been kept secret and few people have ever managed to peruse it, which of course raises questions about its authenticity, whether the words of the thirteen-year-old girl were published *ipsis litteris*, or passed through different degrees of revision (something which is quite likely given that the family had strong ties with modernist writers in the State of Minas Gerais). In his introduction to the book, Alexandre Eulálio mentions a conversation with the great Brazilian writer João Guimarães Rosa in which the latter observes that "if the book is a literary imposture, and had been written, let us say, by the author as an adult […] in this case we would be dealing with an even more extraordinary 'case', for, as far he knew, one couldn't find in any other literature a more exuberant example of such literal *reconstruction* of childhood" (8). This solution, which argues that a successfully contrived representation of authenticity would be superior to a genuine depiction of childhood, thereby enhancing the merit of the book even more, leads to a conception of the diary as a charmingly direct representation of the questioning mind of a lively girl in her early teens in a small town in the interior of Minas Gerais. Schwarz will go in the opposite direction of this homey, local, unpretentious conception of the book, for he interprets it, as we will see, as yielding wide-ranging insights on transformations in Brazilian social structure.

Before turning to how Schwarz manages to convert a girl's candid and unassuming transcriptions of her everyday experiences into the source of insight about the potentially liberating consequences in the succession of modes of production, however, it is worthwhile to call attention to the fascinating effect generated by the 1942 preface. Here, the 62-year-old author explains her reason to publish these "notebooks and loose sheets," which "were hidden away for years and years and forgotten". "Finally", she writes, "I began to go over them and arrange them for my own family, chiefly for my granddaughters. It was their idea, to which I consented, to make a book that might show the girls of today the differences between present-day life and the simple existence we led at that time." She then states that "[n]o alterations have been made in these journals except for a few minor corrections and the changing of a few names for motives that will be easily understood" (xxxv–xxxvi). And to conclude a word to her granddaughters: "you who were born in comfortable circumstances and who feel sorry when you read these stories of my childhood, you do not need to pity poor little girls just because they are poor. We were

so happy! Happiness does not consist in worldly goods but in a peaceful home, in family affections, in a simple life without ambition – things that fortune cannot bring and often takes away" (xxxvi). Should these remarks be read at face value, as modest words from a placid old lady praising the merits of a simple country life? Or might they rather be read as one more turn of the screw of literary manipulation and dissimulation? But even if no artifice is involved, the question still remains regarding the wide-ranging implications of a plain, artless kind of writing, the mystery, in other words, of a strong aesthetic effect in the sense indicated above, and an unaesthetic intention. Schwarz is fully aware of this, even though he declines to elaborate theoretically on it.[8]

From another angle, we witness the apparent discrepancy between the simplicity of the material and the far-reaching significance of meaning in the conclusion Schwarz (2012b) draws from *Minha vida de menina*. In the book, he sees the depiction of a state of relative suspension of domination: "Slavery had just been abolished, and free labor was not yet set in the alienation of the wage system. While the brutality of the slave-owning economy was coming into question, the degradations specific to abstract labor were as yet remote, and this created an interregnum, promising or chaotic [*desregrado*] according to the circumstances, an ill-bounded space in which the sociable, human idea of collaborative effort, which Helena invests in, and which today sounds utopian, could more easily make its way" (120). This is a radical critique of the idea of progress (incidentally, inscribed in the Brazilian flag) without appeal to Walter Benjamin, joined to a vision of a concrete utopia, and without reference to Ernst Bloch. Schwarz is careful to point out to the precariousness and instability of this in-between situation, its short-lived and fragile character, just a few years before capitalism could lay firmer roots and spread the process of commodification. Indeed, the Morley family only overcomes poverty as Helena's father is hired. These are the book's last words:

[8] "In many ways Helena Morley's writing realizes, quite spontaneously, one of modern poetry's ideals. Far removed from the over-abundance or the parsimony of literary schools and sustained by the good luck of a particular historical situation, the girl, without trying, hits the spot that others aim for in vain. There is something utopian in such ease, which, though it cannot be repeated at will, remains an achievement to ponder" (180). The same logic holds, albeit in a less striking manner, for Schwarz's (2012c) reading of Caetano Veloso's autobiographical account *Tropical Truth* (1997). Veloso is much more of a consciously literary writer than Brant, but the formal richness and cognitive potential Schwarz finds in *Tropical Truth* are nonetheless startling.

> The money that grandma left for mama was very little and papa paid all his debts and kept mining. But things changed immediately and our life was improved so much that I can only attribute it to grandma's soul watching over us. Papa joined the Boa Vista Company and the foreigners do everything through him because he is the only one who speaks English and knows the mines well. We shan't suffer for lack of the necessities any longer, thank God.
> But isn't it really grandma watching over us there in heaven? (281)

It is formally fitting—indeed, one more case in which luck and artistry seem to become indistinguishable—that a narrative which opens with "the best day of the week" (4), when the family, without the father, goes to wash clothes in the river, fish, collect wood, and capture birds to sell, concludes with the final insertion of the head of the family into the formal, salaried labor market. Under this light, the presence of religion becomes amusingly ironic. The grandmother, the rich member of the family, the source of authority and object of flattery, is dead not only physically, but also as the world she represents.

That this period of suspension, resulting from a transition in economic organization, appears as brief and uncertain does not mean that it cannot be critically fertile. Toward the end of *Two Girls*, Schwarz expands this insight for a broader scope in Brazilian literature:

> Now, if we look at the substance of Brazil's most salient cultural formations, those in which, for good or ill, we feel energy and vitality, we will find – I believe – that they will involve some kind of desegregation, of liberating mobilization – illusory, in general – within the deformed world produced by the modern-day recycling of the colonial matrix. It is as if they were pointing to the country's historical duty, the worldwide disaster to be made good, the real strength that confers universal significance on the provinciality of our internal problems. When any prospect of overcoming them seems possible, the lamp of interest is lit. When this fails to happen, it's back to the old routine. (182)

"Desegregation" is a concept, as we said at the beginning, which names an interpretative course or line. It is proposed in connection with readings of some Brazilian authors, including a fascinating analysis of the placing of pronouns in modernist writer Mário de Andrade, and examples from abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco and Gilberto Freyre (the latter two inexplicably not included in the English translation of *Two Girls*). One could

of course expand this idea by imagining other possible contexts in which desegregation might happen, always keeping in mind that, as *Minha vida de menina* demonstrates, it is not dependent on the development of the forces of production. Nonetheless, Schwarz refrains from taking the logically next step, which would situate the productivity of his hypothesis in the abstract and generalizing sphere of theory.

As indicated above, discussions of Schwarz normally remain at this level of ideas; for our purpose of carrying out an anatomy of his critical practice with a view for its continuation, it is important to focus on the reading dynamics at stake. Here is the entry for Sunday, February 19, 1893:

> Siá Ritinha, the chicken thief of Cavalhada [a large, open square in Diamantina], spent the whole evening here in the house, telling stories about people who got sick from eating cucumbers, and she finished saying, "Dona Carolina, you watch my words, the cucumber is so poisonous that if it so much as touches the hem of your skirt, it's dangerous."
> During the whole conversation, I kept expecting mama to tell her that I won't eat porridge but that I eat two cucumbers with salt every morning. Mama said to me, "Do you hear what she is saying? Are you listening?" I wanted to ask Dona Ritinha, "And isn't it dangerous to steal your neighbor's chickens?". (9)

A superficial reading would identify here the freshness of the narration, its simplicity and sincerity in describing local aspects typical to late nineteenth-century interior of Brazil: the communal life in which unannounced visits are common and spending the whole evening chatting is something natural, as natural a thing as the sharing of preposterous superstition. A second step, already part of Schwarz's reading, amplifies the latter: the belief in the poisonous character of cucumbers acquires exegetical transitivity, as it were, as it starts to be indicative of a specific worldview, that of archaic, colonial Brazil, which immediately calls to mind its opposite, that of demystifying reason, of which Helena is the bearer. If the interpretation were to stop here, it might ring true, but would not be particularly cogent. Schwarz adds another layer of meaning when he throws light in the personal dynamics underlying the scene. In relation to the Morleys, Sinha Ritinha is in a subordinate position, one which relies on favors. For this reason, her talk is not just a sign of obscurantism but is also astute, since it creates a good impression for Dona Carolina, Helena's mother, at the latter's expense. Add to this that the cucumbers come in handy in a context of food scarcity, which makes

them part of a concrete and smart strategy for breakfast on Helena's part. Finally, the cucumber does not appear here only, but is mentioned in other passages as well (March 11, 1893; May 24, 1894; July 12, 1894; June 18, 1895; December 19, 1895), in which the same physical and symbolic properties are present but under different configurations. On July 12, 1894, for instance, they become gifts, thus taking part in a logic of favor: "'And your vegetable garden, Dona Carolina, is it doing well?' 'Doing nicely. We can't plan green vegetables in this weather. Now I've got cucumbers, squash and *xuxus*.' Siá Ritinha: 'I got what the Senhora sent us and I was very grateful. The Senhora doesn't realize how much it means to us. Inhá kept saying "we're very fortunate to have people like Dona Carolina and Seu Alexandre for neighbors, they only give us pleasure.'" The cucumbers, then, form a cluster of meaning in a web of references, which intersect with other concrete items, such as diamonds, laughter, or chickens, which "may go into the pot because they are homebred or as a favor from a neighbor, as an occasional theft or as a merchandise bought and paid for"" (119).

But here is how Schwarz writes this all out, in an unavoidably long quotation:

> The object of this intervention, soon worked out, is to curry favor with Helena's mother and support her in her struggle to make her daughter lose her taste for eating cucumbers with salt in the morning and go back to porridge. An alliance has been sealed by the right-thinking, spoilsport adults against the fancy and enjoyment of others. If Helena likes cucumbers, why this objection to them? But the neighbor is poor, owes the Morleys favors and needs their protection, so that her teachings about cucumbers not only are not disinterested, they are a shameless service rendered to Dona Carolina, to the detriment of the happiness of the more vulnerable member of the family, with the added advantage of compensating for the added humiliations for by stirring it a bit. Besides, Sinha Ritinha has the reputation of being a chicken thief, something which Dona Carolina, at the moment she gets her support conveniently forgets – unlike her daughter, who understands all the clientelist jockeying on which the imposition of a certain diet, and, by extension, maternal authority, depend. […] in the defense of her taste for cucumbers in the morning, or for less common usages of *fubá*, Helena uncovers the obtuse, blinkered side of those responsible for order, who like to prohibit, even when the prohibition seems to make no sense. In this way, it produces the didactic effect of Brechtian estrangement, revealing in detail the authoritarian substratum

> of the very Brazilian alliances between the cultured classes and *agregados* and their many hidden dimensions, with which aspirations to freedom are bound to conflict, even when the subject is only cucumber. And what if the approval surrounding school, study and intelligence were no different, in substance, to that which imposes porridge? (134)

This passage is useful to discern the textual play we discussed earlier, in which choice of words and style combine to give flesh to a personal form of expression. The formal "adular" [curry favor] contrasts with the "a liga adulta dos estraga prazeres bem pensantes", much more colloquial than the "alliance of the right-thinking, spoilsport adults", which in fact adopts the tone and point of view of the girl, almost as in free indirect speech. "Acontece", translated as "but", but literally "so it happens", is a brilliant connective, for in its informality and in the absence of a subject, it gives speed to the transition of thought, which adds a different perspective in a long sentence with seven clauses, in perfectly smooth syntax, in which "pirraça" and "vassalagem" stand side by side: "reequilibrar por meio da pirraça as humilhações da vassalagem" [compensating for the humiliations of vassalage by stirring it a bit]. "Além do que" [besides] is another colloquial connective, which introduces a further twist in the characterization of the scene, that of mild criminality. The achievement of the diary entry, finally, is to lay bare the "authoritarian substratum of the very Brazilian alliances between the cultured classes and *agregados* and their many hidden dimensions"—for those who have not followed the reasoning and the writing, the leap from the homey scene to the unveiling overarching structures of domination through *Verfremdungseffekt* can only seem far-fetched; for those who have, the interpretative articulation is stunning.

There is still one last element of Schwarz's anatomy, with which we can conclude. Note that the girl is called by name in the passage we discussed, not as "Morley", but as "Helena", and that she figures with strong capacity for agency, to the point of uncovering the obtusity surrounding her. Throughout "Another Capitu", the reader has ample opportunity to perceive Schwarz's admiration, even affection, for the little heroine, who, however, is a literary character, as the author's pseudonym makes clear. In the fragment we are reading the following has not been translated: "Sem prejuízo da inocência relativa do episódio, ou por causa dela" [without hampering the episode's relative innocence, or precisely because of it]. Innocence here may be an impediment or a tool, and if Schwarz does not

care to determine which, it is because this uncertainty is a typical artistic effect. The sense of wonder extends from the girl to the work. Together with the use it is put to, as we saw, that of generating new knowledge from its formal, internal articulation, literature fascinates for the sheer fact that it exists. Compare this to the widespread critical conception of literature as something suspicious, ideologically guilty, bearer of symbolic capital, canonically oppressive, and so forth. Not the least of Schwarz's achievements is to show that literature can be at the same time a vehicle of liberation and an object of amazement, if love is too strong a word for you.

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CHAPTER 3

A Quiet (Brazilian) Revolution in Critical Theory

Neil Larsen

Introductory Note

The following short essay was written in 2000 and published in 2001 as a chapter in my book *Determinations: Essays on Nation, Narration and Theory in Latin America*. I think (and hope) that the assessment of the work of Roberto Schwarz it sought to formulate with respect to what was then the academic "theoretical" landscape in the Anglophone humanities remains, overall, apposite today, over twenty years later. But more than enough has undoubtedly changed since then to require some additional reflection and a re-contextualization.

At the time it was written, the "postcolonial"—modifying both "studies" and "theory" more or less interchangeably—was still the order of the day (or one of them) in "theory" circles in Anglophone universities. Having entered the latter in the 1980s, postcolonialism had by that

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point shed the dwindling quotient of controversy habitually aroused by new theoretical vanguards, including the poststructuralism and postmodernism from which it had inherited its prefix. It had then fairly quickly gained a secure foothold in Anglophone literature (mostly English) departments, where one had learned to refer, always somewhat ironically, to postcolonialism's triumvirate or "holy trinity" of Said, Spivak and Bhabha.[1] Marxist critiques of the latter had by then, it is true, already begun to take on a certain notoriety, as witness the controversy and, in some quarters, outrage sparked by the late Aijaz Ahmad's polemical critiques of Said and Jameson. It thus seemed, twenty years ago, like an adventitious moment to propose a hypothetical fissure in the institutional discourse of theory and see what might become apparent if Schwarz's particular articulation of Marxist critical and literary theory were—hypothetically—projected into it. I had selected a passage from Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine* for this purpose in part because of an initially striking but essentially superficial similarity between the deconstructionist concept of "catachresis" therein invoked and Schwarz's concept of "misplaced idea"—a similarity that could potentially serve to further dramatize and demonstrate the more profound, underlying difference between the two theoretical approaches.

That such a fissure and projection—a Schwarzian penetration of the battlements of academic high theory—were unlikely if not downright fanciful developments was readily apparent twenty years ago, and, as "A Quiet Revolution" had already acknowledged at the time, especially given all that has evolved since, this was just as well. Postcolonialism's institutional shelf life isn't especially threatened, if only because the term itself can now, uncontroversially, be taken to encompass and predicate most if not all of the Global South as concerns literature, culture and much else—making it a bit of jargon extremely well suited to the age of administrative

[1] Strictly in terms of their contemporary notoriety, it is, of these three, Bhabha's name that (not necessarily to his discredit) has most seemed to fade from view. A passing mention of Bhabha's concept of "ambivalence" in the body of "A Quiet Revolution" refers back to an earlier chapter in *Determinations (*chapter two) which had questioned whether, by referring to them with this more neutral, secular, and seemingly historicizable term, what are clearly the orthodox Derridean philosophemes of 'Entstellung' or "the double inscription" lend themselves any the less to historical materialist skepticism and critique. Meanwhile, other names, familiar to the 'theory' debates within Latin-Americanism at the time make brief appearances here as well—inter alia., Nestor García Canclini, Nelly Richard, and Doris Sommer.

cost-cutting and consolidation that was already on its way to becoming permanent in the early 1980s.

But while the air of metropolitan theoretical vanguard that perhaps still adhered to it two decades ago has long since been drained away from a postcolonialism that has since settled securely into a familiar academic division of labor, the work and reputation of Roberto Schwarz have followed a steadily rising trajectory. The comparison, it is true, may be somewhat misleading, as we are speaking here—as, for the most part, was the case twenty years ago—of two largely disconnected intellectual universes. The former, like analogous periodical eruptions in "Theory," remains an intellectual phenomenon mostly restricted to English departments in the Anglophone University, where, in any case, its erstwhile status as theoretical vanguard has arguably been taken over by the more recent *éclat* surrounding such things as "decoloniality." Schwarz's profile as one of the outstanding public intellectuals in Brazil, meanwhile, has few if any real counterparts in the Anglophone world. The frequency with which his views and opinions continue to be featured, for example, in Brazil's newspaper of record, *A Folha de São Paulo*, albeit mostly on literary and cultural matters, can scarcely be matched even by the late Fredric Jameson, by a Perry Anderson or by a Judith Butler—a fact that perhaps says as much or more about how scandalously little attention is paid and respect is accorded to genuinely critical intellectuals in the English-speaking public sphere than to be sure it does about anything else.

But it is also outside Brazil, above all among English-speakers, that an awareness and estimation of Schwarz's significance and value as an intellectual have literally taken off in the last two decades. My erstwhile and modest brief on behalf of his work in *Determinations*[2] can claim little to

[2] I was first introduced to the work of Roberto Schwarz in graduate school in the late 1970s, long before the existence of any English translations, by my Portuguese TA, Robert Krueger, a fellow graduate student and member of SDS who, having come to Brazil as a Peace Corp volunteer just prior to the 1964 coup, had been radicalized there and convinced by local Marxists to leave US government service and join their ranks. "Cultura e politica, 1964–1969," among other writings of Roberto's I was able to find, figured prominently in my PhD dissertation, written during the early 1980s and later published as *Modernism and Hegemony*, in 1990. I had begun corresponding with Roberto in the early 1990s, met him for the first time in New York in 1993 and finally, thanks to a FAPESP scholarship arranged by Roberto, arrived for the first time in São Paulo in 1995 to teach the somewhat problematical seminar on "postcolonial theory" at the University of São Paulo herein discussed. Roberto's has never, since the late 1970s,

none of the credit for this long overdue acknowledgment, but it turns out that a "quiet"—and perhaps not so quiet—"revolution" has now secured for Roberto Schwarz a virtually unequalled degree of recognition among some of the most authoritative voices in Critical Theory, from Perry Anderson ("the finest dialectical critic since Adorno") to Franco Moretti ("...the greatest Marxist critic of our times") and Francis Mulhern ("...the most important Marxist practitioner in the tradition of the Frankfurt School writing anywhere today"). The key events responsible for this are, above all I think, the publication in 2001 of the English translation of Schwarz's *magnum opus*, *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, followed by the 2012 publication of *Two Girls* in an edition that included both an English rendering of *Duas meninas* and, among several shorter works, the translation of one of Schwarz's most seminal methodological essays, "Objective Form: Reflections on the Dialectic of Roguery."[3] And the appearance of these works in English no doubt led many new readers back to the 1992 essay collection *Misplaced Ideas* that had included the by then classic essay named in the title as well as "Culture and Politics, 1964–1969," the essay, originally published in French in Sartre's *Les Temps Moderns* while Schwarz was exiled from the Brazilian military dictatorship in France and that first established him as a major new critical voice in Brazil. 2001, finally, also marked the year in which Schwarz's essays began appearing regularly in *New Left Review,* on subjects ranging from Machado de Assis, Paulo Lins' *City of God*, Brecht, Caetano Veloso and Bolsonaro.

Looking back over the nearly forty-five years during which I have been an avid and committed student both of the work of Roberto Schwarz and of the Marxist critical theory, above all that of both Lukács and Adorno, that constitutes a common source and tradition, it now strikes me however that, timely and rhetorically convenient as it may have been

ceased to inspire and guide my own work, making of him, for me as for numerous others, our own 'mestre na periferia do capitalismo.'

[3] Doubling as a meta-critical homage to Antonio Candido's earlier classic essay on Manuel Antonio de Almeida's *Memórias de um sargento de milicias,* "Objective Form" should be read as a companion piece alongside "National Adequation and Critical Originality" (originally appearing as "Adequação nacional e originalidade crítica" in *Sequencias brasileiras* in 1999; translation, 2001), a reading of and critical reflection on Candido's discussion of another nineteenth-century Brazilian novel, Aluisio de Azevedo's *O Cortiço.* One should mention here as well *To the Victor the Potatoes,* Ronald W. Sousa's excellent new translation of Schwarz's *Ao vencedor as batata*s.

a generation ago to recruit Schwarz for purposes of a polemical, if no less self-interested engagement with postcolonial theory, I was missing the point. For it now becomes clear, not only that appropriating the notion of misplaced idea as the more adequate conceptual centerpiece of a new and improved postcolonial theory was not or would not have been either successful or worth the effort anyway. My mistake was also in focusing and centering polemical and critical energies on the *theory* so predicated. For what was perhaps never a surprise to his Brazilian readers and students and has now, thanks to publication of *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, *Two Girls* and to essays such as "Objective Form" been made clearer to his Anglophone public, is that what makes Roberto Schwarz "the greatest Marxist critic of our times" has everything to do with a question of *method*, namely that of *immanent critique*. At least one other contribution to this volume, to which the reader is hereby referred,[4] focuses much more fulsomely and systematically on this question. My modest supplementary contribution here is simply to observe, for the benefit of anyone, especially literary-critical students of Marx and *Capital*, in search of what it means and *how* to construct an immanent critique in relation to literary objects, that it is this that Roberto Schwarz has been patiently modeling if not precisely demonstrating for the rest of us all along.

This, surely, is Schwarz's genuine "quiet revolution," and grasping it ought, potentially, to enable the kind of progress in critical theory that those proclaiming him to be the heir to Lukács and Adorno and dialectical criticism generally are doubtless sensing in his work. As revolutionary and dramatic as the implications of this for the work of interpretation and critique may be, however, that work itself is not bound to become any easier. Rather, if anything, the opposite. This in fact has been my own experience in attempting, so far without any certainty of success, to extrapolate the practical principles of immanent critique evidenced in Schwarz's Machado criticism and in the concepts—e.g., those of "structural reduction" and "principle of generality"—developed in Schwarz's more methodologically-focused essays on the order of "Objective Form" and "National Adequation and Critical Originality" when the literary object is transposed from nineteenth-century Brazil to nineteenth-century North America, specifically to Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This is a novel that I thought I knew well … until I attempted this

[4] See the contribution in this volume by Silvia López.

experiment. What I was to discover, however, is something made abundantly clear in Schwarz's own meta-critical extrapolations from the work of Antonio Candido, namely that, for immanent literary critique,[5] there is no substitute for a breadth and depth of objective knowledge—of the sort, for example, that, as Schwarz pointedly notes, enables Candido to discover the potentially illuminating and mediational quality of a racist anti-Portuguese and anti-black joke (that of the "three p's") popular in Rio when Azevedo was writing *O Cortiço*. After months of reading and research on Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*, slavery, the Civil War, the rise and demise of Reconstruction, etc., I discovered that, although clearly getting somewhere, I could not yet approximate Candido's or Schwarz's grounding in—their immanent connection to—a nineteenth-century Brazilian literary object—and I was running out of time. Herein lies more than one cautionary tale. But the discovery enabled here by careful study of the work of Roberto Schwarz, however negative its form in this instance, remains. Next time I'll know where to start.

* * *

During July and August of 1995, I taught as a visiting professor at the University of São Paulo. The official subject of my course was "a teoria literária e o 'postcolonial'," under which rubric I had included readings not only by the "usual suspects" (Said, Jameson, Spivak, Bhabha, Fanon, Ngugi, et al.) but by a number of Latin American critics and theorists as well. I had never really doubted that my students at USP would be at least generally familiar with Said and Jameson, and I was certainly confirmed in this from the very first class. Even Bhabha was already widely known and cited by many of them, particularly those who were doing graduate work in English or Comparative Literature. What I was not prepared for, however, was the general lack of familiarity—thinly disguising, perhaps, something even more perplexing: a lack of concern—with the works of, for example, Mariátegui, Fernández Retamar or Monsivais. Part of this had to do, of course, with the considerable cultural and literary barriers that still separate Brazil from the rest of Spanish-speaking Latin America. All my Brazilian students certainly had profound involvement with their own national intellectual and literary-critical traditions, above all that

[5] Not *literally* a term that, so far as I can tell, either Candido or Schwarz are at pains to reference or invoke—not that this is what ultimately matters.

of Antonio Candido, whom they regarded—no doubt, correctly—as the unquestioned founder of modern Brazilian literary studies. But to know Bhabha and not, say, Angel Rama? This was a mild shock for me, and it complicated my already ironic position as a white, North American, male purveyor of "postcolonial theory" to Brazil even more so as I was now also converted into the inadvertent—and underqualified—ambassador of Peruvian, Cuban, Uruguayan and Mexican critical theorists as well. The lesson implicit in all of this, however, gradually became clear: the walls dividing Brazil from the rest of Latin America were the same as those dividing it, say, from India or China. They were not insuperable; they had a gate. And that gate was both single and universal: it was the Euro-North American metropolis. Bhabha had passed through it and therefore was an acknowledged figure. Rama, at the time the most prominent literary theorist and critic from Brazil's neighboring country, Uruguay, had not as yet passed through it—or at least, had not, having entered the metropolis through it, passed out of it again—and was therefore a relative unknown. The "post" in "postcolonial," already subject to multiple and indefinitely limiting qualifiers, had suddenly become even more tenuous and ephemeral.

My experience in São Paulo nicely dramatizes, I think, the peculiar ambiguities that accompany any legitimate effort to promote greater intellectual intercourse and "dialogue" between the two Americas. For not only is there the chronic and familiar danger that Latin Americanism in the North and in Latin America itself may tend to become two separate entities, the former simply draining off the resources of the latter. There is likewise the problem that, even within Latin America itself, the familiar, still effectively neocolonial structures of intellectual distribution and consumption tend to persist. As Latin Americanism becomes more and more of a "growth industry" in the North[6]—and as it finds itself getting absorbed into "theoretical" waves such as postcolonialism—those who seek a genuine North/South dialogue must (to borrow Doris Sommer's erstwhile *mot*) "proceed with caution" (Sommer 1999). By this I mean: one must avoid not only the flagrant intellectual opportunism and "cultural imperialism" of simply re-packaging the South for the ever-shifting intellectual consumer demands of the North, "theoretical" and otherwise; one must also avoid the less obviously false assumption that

[6] See, on this subject, de la Campa (1999).

the South itself does not already participate, under its own steam, in this process.

The path toward real dialogue has to be sought in a careful and nuanced understanding of what—in a rigorously material sense—the real North/South relation is, and what patterns of intellectual traffic it makes both desirable and necessary. Much about this relation has changed in the wake of expanded and accelerated "globalization," but the fundamental economic and political inequality it entails, and that used to go by the name of "dependency," has only grown more complex and disguised, not less essential. It is an error to equate the surface trend toward greater integration with any sort of structural revolution. There is, for instance, much excitement and interest generated by the new, "hybrid" and "border" cultures within which, in effect, North and South begin to lose what were assumed to be their distinct contours (see Larsen 2001, 83–96). The continuously self-displacing location of the "border" has, up to a point, become a new species of master metaphor or paradigm for Latin Americanism. But, salutary as this is in respect of older, "essentializing" paradigms of straight-faced Eurocentrism or cultural nationalism, even the de-centering "border" perspective risks keeping the northern academy complacent in its imperial provincialism, distracting it from the possibility that the South, while not the locus of the absolutely subverting and authenticating "otherness" once attributed to it by an erstwhile "third-worldism," might nevertheless be just as likely an incubator of critical-theoretical breakthroughs as the North. For, just as "globalization" does not automatically lead to the breaking down of all cultural and intellectual "trade" barriers and disparities (as my experience in São Paulo showed), neither does it necessarily equalize nor de-center the particularities of national or regional intellectual cultures that go into producing "world-historical" ideas. A genuine dialogue with the South might, that is, have to start by re-authorizing the South not only to speak to us of itself but to speak to the North about theory—i.e., about ourselves as well—in the very process of speaking of itself.

It is this possibility that I want to explore in more detail by discussing the work of the Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz, work in all respects central to my own. Although some of his most important work is now available in English (Schwarz 1992), Schwarz may not be the first name on the lips of northern Latin Americanists and postcolonialists when queried about important Latin American critics. Even my students at USP, although they had all heard of Schwarz and had even read him

on occasion, were surprised at my claims for his significance and thought of him mainly as an important Machado scholar and disciple of Candido. (He is, in fact, both of these as well.) But Schwarz's critical approach to problems of Brazilian culture and society has, in my view, profound if still relatively unexplored implications for Latin Americanism as a whole, and perhaps no less so for a theory of "postcolonial" culture and society. Indeed, as the title of my essay suggests, I think the careful extrapolation of Schwarz's core theoretical insights—that of "misplaced idea," for example—to other, not necessarily Brazilian contexts promises to lead us straight into certain of the most fundamental questions of critical theory as such, in particular that of the possibly changed structure of mediation linking the socio-historical totality to its political and cultural levels. This is not to argue that Schwarz can or should simply be lifted out of Brazil and installed as still another contemporary oracle of "Theory." In fact, it is just Schwarz's modest and scrupulous insistence on working out of and through the concrete Brazilian conditions that are his given intellectual and political circumstance, his ability to resist the urge of a jejune and abstract globalism, that—not so paradoxically, really—give to his critical departures their broader, global implications.

Schwarz, of course, belongs to a critical tradition that, as much as any other, makes good to transcend the barriers and disparities of a neo-colonialized intellectual culture. This is the tradition of Marxism. (The son of Austrian-born, left-wing Jewish refugees from Hitler's *Anschluss*, Schwarz might claim nearly as direct a descent from a Central European school of dialectical critique that includes Lukács, Adorno and the Frankfurt School as from Brazil or Latin America.) Until recently at least, no one would consider this as in any way an anomaly for a Latin American intellectual, Marxism, in one of its modes at least, being as commonsensically *Latin* American as it is stereotypically *un*(North)American. But Schwarz is also atypical in this context as well. I do not know how he would respond personally to the insinuation here, but, reading him, I am reminded of Lukács's well-known and still controversial claim in *History and Class Consciousness* to the effect that, even if all of Marx's historical and political theses were shown to be mistaken, it would be possible for a Marxist to concede such mistakes without conceding an orthodoxy that, as Lukács unequivocally states, "refers exclusively to method" (1993, 1). It strikes me that in Schwarz's contributions to a social and cultural theory of the (neo-/post-) colonial condition we find a set of ideas as challenging

and disturbing to the dogmas of a Marxist "orthodoxy" of "theses"—dogmas no less familiar in Latin America than anywhere else—as they are rigorously orthodox to the dialectical method of Marx.

I cannot make a systematic case for these assertions here. But I think a more concrete insight into Schwarz's "quiet revolution" can be obtained by a brief, contrastive pair of citations, followed by some modest commentary. Let me try to demonstrate:

Writing in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Gayatri Spivak responds to Benita Parry's criticisms of her positions as follows:

> Whatever the identitarian ethnicist claims of native or fundamental origin (implicit, for example, in Parry's exhortation to hear the voice of the native), the political claims that are most urgent in decolonized space are tacitly recognized as coded within the legacy of imperialism: nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, even culturalism. Within the historical frame of exploration, colonization, decolonization--what is being reclaimed is a series of regulative political concepts, the *supposedly* authoritative narrative the production of which was written elsewhere, in the social formations of Western Europe. They are being reclaimed, indeed claimed, as concept- metaphors for which no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space, yet that does not make the claims less important. A concept-metaphor without an adequate referent is a catachresis. These claims for founding catachreses also make postcoloniality a deconstructive case. (Spivak 1996, 60)

In his article, "A Seminar on Marx," Schwarz, commenting here on the fundamental theoretical departure achieved in F.H. Cardoso's 1962 monograph, *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional*, but in an indirect characterization of his own work as well, writes in what seems a remarkably similar vein:

> The most innovative implication, though, concerns the application of European social categories (not excluding the Marxist ones) to Brazil and to the other former colonies, a procedure that induces error but is at the same time indispensable. Let us set aside criticism of the rote following of formulas, a just criticism but valid in the Old World as well as here. Our difficulty is more specific: in the countries that have emerged from colonization, the system of historical categories shaped by European experience comes to function in a space with a *different but not an alien* ("diverso mas não alheio") sociological conjunction in which those categories neither apply properly nor can help but be applied; better, they

> circulate in counterfeit but are an obligatory reference and even tend toward a certain formalism. This space is *different* because colonization did not create societies similar to that of the mother country, nor did the subsequent international division of labor make them equal. But it is a space *of the same order*, for it too is controlled by the embracing dynamic of capital, whose developments give it a standard and define its guidelines. From a distance, the partial operativeness of European coordinates—a disconcerting, sui generis configuration, which requires the observer's differentiating astuteness—is a tangible effect of the modern world's tendencies or of capitalism's uneven and combined development. (Schwarz 1999, 95)

"Concept metaphor for which no historically adequate referent can be advanced from postcolonial space"; "a space ... in which those categories ['shaped by European experience'] neither apply properly nor can help but be applied." There seems no question that both Spivak and Schwarz are, at the outset, describing the same "space," the same, seemingly insoluble historico-epistemological puzzle here. And Spivak's formal, discursively oriented term for this puzzle—"catachresis"—might serve both attempts to theorize it as a useful shorthand. Is not "catachresis" a reasonable alternate locution for "misplaced idea," i.e., in Schwarz's own (translated) words, "the dissonance between representations and what, upon consideration, we know to be their content" (1992, 27). I emphasize this formal, abstract point of convergence between the deconstructionist Spivak and the Marxist Schwarz (an opposition that, of course, Spivak herself would not allow as final) as a way of stressing that those who, like myself, argue against the poststructuralist variant of postcolonial theory on historical-materialist grounds must grant that, despite the mystification, some partial truth is run up against in theories of "catachresis," "hybridity," etc. There is a genuine problem to be grappled with here, and it will do no good simply to cast off as specious jargon something that earlier versions of third-world cultural nationalism, often with a false consciousness and jargon of their own, tended to treat as a simple matter of "returning to the source." Aijaz Ahmad justly singles out this same passage from *Outside in the Teaching Machine* as evidence that Spivak unwittingly converges on the right-wing cultural nationalism of Hindu fundamentalists (who also insist that no "historically adequate referent" can be had in India for such "western" things as democracy and constitutionality) (Ahmad 1995, 5). But he thereby risks conveying a tacit

belief that the exposure of the poststructuralist mystification obviates the need for a historical-materialist understanding of "catachresis."

It is precisely this latter understanding that Schwarz, more than anyone working today I think, has substantially clarified in essays such as "Misplaced Ideas," "Nationalism by Elimination" and in as yet untranslated work appearing in the 1999 volume of essays, *Sequências brasileiras*. The central insight running throughout is, rather than to think out the puzzle of catachresis as ultimately resolvable on its own terms, to "stand" it instead back on its "feet" and thus to grasp it as that precise form of "inverted consciousness" corresponding to a concrete mode of *socio-economic being*—"Brazil," for Schwarz—that *itself* constitutes the radical "difference" of the "postcolonial space." The problem of catachresis—of imitation, of "misplaced ideas"—is a *false* one, and yet its very falsity obeys a social and historical *necessity*. The *solution* to such a necessarily false problem cannot be to solve it on its own (false) terms; but nor can it be to reject the problem out of hand, as if it were merely the result of a chance mistake or a lapse of consciousness. The "return to the source" as a search for origins leads, as in the peeling away of the skins of an onion, to nothing. But "one cannot solve the problem by going to the opposite extreme. Philosophical objections to the concept of originality tend to regard as non-existent a real problem, that it is absurd to dismiss."

Schwarz, that is, simply brings the Marxian theory and critique of ideology to bear on the catachrestic puzzle. But note that this conceptual move, obvious as it may at first seem, requires that we think not just the "idea" in its positive content but *also and equally* its accompanying effect of "misplacedness" as ideological reflexes. The seemingly self-evident truths of a nineteenth-century European liberalism—e.g., the right of the individual to be judged on his or her own "merits"—become, in the setting of a slavocratic Brazil, "ideologies to the second degree," "necessary illusions" no longer (as in "first degree" ideology, per Schwarz's wonderfully succinct definition) "well grounded in appearances," but still grounded, nonetheless, in the social, economic being of a ruling class so conditioned by the extreme "social duality" of "its" national formation that it cannot generate "ruling ideas" of its own. "Favor" not "merit" decides the fate of the individual, but if it were to acknowledge and defend this reality openly and directly, the official, ruling consciousness would already be undermining its own exceedingly narrow basis for self-legitimation. It is because of this, reasons Schwarz, that the "misplaced idea" much more readily lends itself to its social, emancipatory critique:

"widely felt to be a defect . . . this system of displacement certainly did debase ideological life and diminished the chances for genuine thought. However, it made for a scepticism in matters of ideology which could be both thorough and effortless."

But, in order to raise this critique itself to the highest level of theoretical consciousness, one must carefully avoid falling back into the more Eurocentrically Marxist procedure of representing the "ruling ideas" as if the self-transparency and, so to speak, nation-centeredness of their enveloping social space were automatically assured. The very social, class space in which the ideological mechanism functions must never cease to be thought of in its simultaneous condition of provisional self-integration *and* extrovertedness—"*diverso mas não alheio.*" That is, one must think critically by means of the already developed Marxian categories, but at the same time think against their own tendency to "catachresis" or "misplacedness" by working a social and economic reality never systematically addressed by Marx back into the categories themselves. For, if, as Marx writes, the categories of social and political-economic theory are themselves "but forms of being, conditions of existence" raised to the level of consciousness, then so too raised to consciousness must be the differential gap—social and historical, i.e., "material" in nature—that appears, on the superficial plane of ideology, merely to "misplace" them in relation to a "Brazilian" or "postcolonial" material being. It is in this way that I understand Schwarz when, commenting again on Cardoso's *Capitalismo e escravidão*, he notes that the "rather macabre dislocation" between concepts of productivity and capitalist economic rationality and the reality of the nineteenth-century Brazilian slave economy neither "disqualifies" these concepts nor is itself "insignificant." "Quite the contrary, then as now, discrepancies [the original Portuguese here is "*inadequações*" or "inadequations"] of this sort opened our eyes to the dark but decisive side of contemporary history, to its global side of unintended consequences that developed behind the backs of the principal parties."

Returning to Spivak, I think it must be evident by now that in posing the question of postcoloniality in the terms of a relation of catachresis she rightly seeks to avoid the relapse into the nativist position apparently prescribed by Parry. But she does so only so as to take up an uncritical stance herself with respect to the *social and historical conditions* underlying catachresis as "ideology to the second degree." The abrupt assertion that postcoloniality, because it must always start out from the place of its own "founding catachreses," is therefore a "deconstructive case" marks,

in fact, the precise place of Spivak's own—and much contemporary postcolonial theory's—failure to consider the postcolonial as a "case" for a critical *social* theory. True, there is no illusion here as to the possibility of solving the catachrestic puzzle *qua* puzzle, whether through a neo-third-worldist cultural essentialism or a surrender to Eurocentric "universals." And Spivak does not deny that claims for "democracy" must still continue to be made from "postcolonial space," despite the absence of "historically adequate referents"—although just why this should be so is not explained. The uncritical turn here is not, to repeat, the pointing out of a historical inadequation of concepts, but the stubbornly and rather conventionally literary-formalist failure to attribute this inadequation to historical and social factors themselves, as if its explanation could only be sought in the abstract, formal content of the concepts or "concept-metaphors," or in their discursively structured field. Once this failure is in place, the turn to a supposed "politics" of deconstruction, in which, for example, the postcolonial plots to subvert Western imperialism itself by revealing the catachreses lying at its own foundations, or by exposing the West's transcendental need for a "subaltern" or "hybrid" other, etc., strikes me as practically a matter of indifference. One might just as well believe in the propensity for imperialism to deconstruct itself.

It seems to me painfully typical of our present political and intellectual moment that the most theoretically impoverished aspects of "postcolonial studies" should now be aggressively exported from the metropolis to regions such as Latin America, while the genuinely thoughtful and rigorously theoretical work of a Roberto Schwarz still (circa 2001) languishes in relative neglect outside of Brazil. Here, as I have already stressed, we see a certain colonialism still at work, not to mention a universal and unabated hostility to Marxist thought. Indeed, even Marxists sometimes have to learn to turn their faces to the South. Inducting Schwarz into the vanguard corps of metropolitan "Theory," however, while it would surely have many beneficial side effects, would ultimately be self-defeating. And in any case, it is not a likely scenario. The still predominantly poststructuralist literary-academic ambience that quickly finds a niche for a Néstor García Canclini or a Nelly Richard will find little to tempt it in works such as "Misplaced Ideas." Rather, it will have to be the northerner's job, Latin Americanists and otherwise, to extrapolate and disseminate. What we need, to be precise, is not just to reproduce the theoretical space cleared by the work of Roberto Schwarz but to reproduce, for purposes of our own, local intellectual and cultural politics, the United

States, say, as the conceptual equivalent of Schwarz's "Brazil." "Brazil," that is, neither as globalized simulacrum nor as endless catachresis, but as the space, "*diverso mas não alheio,*" of our own millennial version of the mediated, concrete universal.

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CHAPTER 4

Misplacing World Literature

Maria Elisa Cevasco

What is to be gained from bringing Roberto Schwarz's work into the current debate on world literature? Critics and readers who make use of his ideas tend to emphasize two main lines in his output: the originality and explanatory power of his rendering of what he himself calls the 'Brazilian matter'—that is, the constellation formed by the complex relations and positions that constitute the peculiarities of our local life—and the continuation of the central theoretical project of Western Marxist criticism, namely the deciphering of the lineaments of contemporary social life as materialized in the form of works of art.

The study of the Brazilian matter is determined by his location. Born in Vienna, his Jewish family fled to Brazil from the Nazis months after he was born in 1938. He was formed in the intellectual milieu of the University of São Paulo's School of Humanities, founded in 1934 under the influence of the São Paulo bourgeoisie. The idea was to provide the rapidly industrializing city with one of the central attributes of civilization, and to educate the children of a rising class that had accumulated

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money through coffee plantations and was on the high tide of a rapidly industrializing economy. It turned out better than this. As in many other circumstances in ex-colonies, the university had recourse to foreign aid to give luster to the locals. There were only three courses in the humanities in early 1930s Brazil, one in Rio de Janeiro, one at the Catholic University in São Paulo, and this one at the University of São Paulo, and they were largely conducted by foreign missions. It was thus that intellectuals like Claude Lévi-Strauss, Fernand Braudel, Roger Bastide and later Michel Foucault taught there (Cevasco 2014; Satterfield 2016, 170).

In his recollection of those formative years for the humanities in Brazil, Antonio Candido (born 1918), who studied and taught there, and was to become the central figure in Brazilian cultural criticism, singles out somebody less famous, Jean Maugüe. A friend of Jean-Paul Sartre's, he brought his unconventional Marxism to the group of students who were to become the first generation of Brazilian academic intellectuals. Maugüe taught more than philosophy, which for him was not just another academic discipline — it mattered as a reflection on 'daily life, on feelings, on politics, on art and literature' (Candido 1980, 147). From him the young provincial students gained a worldview and an intellectual attitude that was to thrive among young critics in a country where the basic inequalities of social life determine a particular engagement that is the hallmark of the work of its most relevant thinkers. Soon, the university founded for the children of the bourgeoisie was able to start a tradition of modest—because still within the framework of the existing social relations—radicalism. The early important work of this generation was characterized by an attempt to understand the peculiarities of Brazilian society, including in particular the ways it dealt with poverty or with racism, and the problems of interpreting a cultural production according to standards and models that were produced elsewhere. These scholars sought to respond to the many challenges of formulating relevant thought in a new country that was still in the process of cultural formation and in great need of interpretations of socio-reality that would contribute to effective social change.

Of course, as intellectual work alone can never do, they did not succeed in producing a more just society, but they planted a seed that to this day invigorates the best intellectual work produced in the country. The young students of the late 1930s at the University of São Paulo became the leading figures in Brazilian cultural life, producing the most influential work in film criticism, drama studies, visual arts and literature.

From them, succeeding generations learned to value the social import of work in the humanities. Adapting a formulation by Antonio Candido, we can say that in this influential tradition the task of the humanities is 'to discover and interpret social reality'. In unequal societies where opacity is of the essence, we must work to discover the true lineaments of our social life and to interpret reality, because the objects of study in the humanities, whether they are works of art, institutions or social projects, are materializations of the meanings and values that constitute such societies. The direction of the necessary engagement with the Brazilian matter was laid out by Candido's generation.

The nature of this engagement is of particular significance for contemporary discussions of world literature. Candido opened up a new perspective on the functioning of a national culture in ex-colonies striving to achieve a culture of their own, while always having recourse to models and ideas from the most prestigious central cultures. His pathbreaking study of 1959, *The Formation of Brazilian Literature: Key Moments*, studied the formations of a national literary system in a post-colonial society (Candido 1975). His dialectical point of view enabled him to clarify not only the decisive moments of this formation but also the ways in which the social conditions of Brazil had modified the literary styles the country had borrowed from the most prestigious European models. Claims to the universalism of literary forms, Candido found, were false, as these forms acquired different characteristics in different contexts. The malfunctioning of prestigious cultural forms in unremarkable corners of the world are perceived neither as an advantage nor as a structural defect, but as a consequence of the forces of social processes working on cultural forms. This has consequences both for literary theory *tout court*—as it demonstrates the shaping impetus of context over text—and for understanding the inter-constitutive nature of concepts we tend to consider separately, most notably centre and periphery, metropole and colony.

Candido was Roberto Schwarz's mentor and to this day, Schwarz remains the best interpreter of the significance of his work for cultural criticism. The title of one of a number of essays he wrote on Candido sums up this significance: "National Adequacy and Critical Originality" (Schwarz 1999, 24–45). This critical originality is a function of the adequacy to the Brazilian matter. In order to 'describe and interpret' how literature functions in the context of a permanent and insoluble clash between the internal and the foreign, he devised an original way of reading that renders visible the dialectics between social process and

literary form. This way of reading has parallels with the best criticism produced by the materialist tradition elsewhere. In an oral presentation on Adorno, which was then published in 2009, Schwarz persuasively argues that Antonio Candido constructed something unique for literary criticism. "Like Adorno, Antonio Candido (and I am not exaggerating) developed a formal analysis in the dialectic spirit, in which the formal operation acquires significance through the materials it works on; like Adorno, Antonio Candido reads this formal operation with no prejudices, no optimism. He tries to grasp what the formal organization of a novel tells us about Brazilian society" (Schwarz 2009, 179–180).

The last phrase introduces a difference between the two critics: they both trust their 'aesthetic intuitions and the feeling for aesthetic form', and both produce new knowledge about art, culture and society, but Candido's interpretation is centred on Brazil, while Adorno's is centred on 'the history of humanity, on the present state of the bourgeois era, … beyond the question of nationality' (185). This is not a value judgement. Candido's originality takes into account what more universalist positions leave aside, namely that one of the most decisive aspects of the contemporary world is precisely its division between centre and periphery. By clinging to his situation, the peripheral critic is saying that 'the universalism implicit in the conceptualization of central countries is unreal, as it does not take into account the fact that things appear in one way at the center and in another on the periphery' (186).

While the centre legislates, the periphery strives to find its place in this false generality. The film critic Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, who is of Candido's generation, sums up one of the central questions for a non-central nation: 'We are neither European nor North American. We are destitute of an original culture, and thus for us, since everything is foreign, nothing is really so. The complex construction of ourselves takes place within the rarefied dialectics of being someone else or not being at all' (Salles Gomes 1986, 88). In a lucid and moving tribute published in *New Left Review* after Candido's death, Roberto sums up the heuristic advantages of such a position:

> Asserting that we were not Europeans or North Americans, an advantage otherwise lamented by many, we remained mute about what we effectively were — and for better or worse, we had to be something. There arose a different possibility …: that of testing — repeat, *testing* — those dominant traditions, their terms, their forms, in the light of our own more or

> less repressed historical experience as an underdeveloped one-time colony, which in this way could find a voice in the story. This is what happens in two of Antonio Candido's boldest and most complex essays, 'Dialética da malandragem' and 'De cortiço a cortiço', path-breaking texts in which forms and concepts from the Western tradition are examined in the light of Brazilian reality, relativizing them and imparting to them the inflexions of a particular history. Note here the counter-hegemonic inversion. Now the Western tradition measures Brazilian reality and in turn is measured by it — which is new. In this to-and-fro movement, Brazilian experience becomes universal and identifies itself in its originality, which may be positive but negative too, or even hateful. (2017, 53–54)

The essays mentioned by Roberto 'Dialética da Malandragem', was published in 1970, and the complete version of 'De cortiço a cortiço', was published in 1991 (Candido 1993). In 1973, Roberto published his own version of the specificities of the functioning of foreign ideas in Brazil and its world historical significance, to use an old-fashioned expression. 'Misplaced Ideas' is his best-known essay, laying out the problematics that were going to be fundamental to his own work and, in my view, presenting a roadmap of where productive discussions of the circulation of ideas and of literary works can take us, which I take to be one of the basic questions for a discussion on world literature.

The essay was planned as the first part of a study on Machado de Assis, Brazil's first world-class novelist. The first critical challenge was to explain Machado's whimsical style. What is the social position of his intriguing prose? This formal problem provides the thread to join together a number of apparently disparate phenomena, whose assemblage produces new knowledge about the country and about the world system towards which it gravitates.

He starts from a commonplace observation of the incongruities that constitute social life and ideas in Brazil, ranging from Santa Claus in an Eskimo outfit in a tropical December, as he puts it in another essay (Schwarz 1992, 1), to the idea, widespread in overtly violent times, that human rights are too advanced for the country. The essay sets out to explore the social and historical reasons for this constant feeling of incongruence. Like most ex-colonies, the country imports ideas, ways of life and political systems from abroad, and they do not necessarily fit local practices. The most glaring example is from 19th-century Brazil, when Liberalism was the official ideology—Roberto reminds us that parts of "The Declaration of the Rights of Man" were inscribed in the 1824

Constitution of the new nation—but economic production was based on slavery! In this case, as he puts it magisterially, the ideology of Liberalism, which in Europe served to disguise the exploitation of labour, 'does not describe our reality, not even falsely.' As such it constitutes an 'ideology to the second degree', with a potential to interrogate those ideas, and put in motion the 'to-and-fro' movement he mentioned in relation to Candido's work. In terms of the internal discussions, the essay shows the pointlessness of the two camps that historically dealt with the importation of ideas: those who lamented this fact treated it as an inferiority, something that would disappear when the country finally caught up with the producers of hegemonic ideas (as if that were possible in a system that depends on inequality); and those who thought the flow of foreign ideas should be stopped in the name of an unattainable authenticity.

The social structure in a country whose system of production was organized around *latifundia* and slavery produced three classes: the proprietor of the *latifundia*, the slaves and the so-called 'free men', who depended on the proprietors for their social reproduction. This social structure made the adjective 'free' somewhat incongruous: 'neither proprietor nor proletarian, the free man´s access to social life and its benefits depended, in one way or another, on the favour of a man of wealth and power' (Schwarz 1992, 22). While slavery gave the lie to liberal ideas, a new ideological favour, more insidiously, used them for its own purposes, originating a pattern that is the key to understanding the country's peculiar 'ideological comedy'. 'The element of arbitrariness, the fluid play of preferences to which favour subjects whatever it touches, cannot be fully rationalized' (22).

Reason itself, which had been central to the European questioning of feudal privilege, and to the achievements of the bourgeois new order, was here subject to the deformations of favour. But while no local thinker would have the energy to try to universalize our social order and become, as he wryly puts it, the Kant of favour, the peculiarities of the functioning of ideas in these circumstances questions their claim to general validity. In our local conditions, 'instead of functioning as the horizon of thought, they appeared on a vaster background that rendered them relative: the back-and-forth of arbitrariness and favour' (28). This makes our oddities significant to the history of culture: 'When in its peculiar orbit, the most prestigious ideology of the West was bound to cut the ludicrous figure of a mania among manias' (29).

He finds the same pattern of inadequacy in Russia, where Western-style modernization had to come to terms with the immensity and diversity of the country. The ideology of progress and modernization fared badly when confronting the vast social differences of the country. As happened in Brazil, this inevitable confrontation had a double effect: the clash was felt by many as a 'national shame', while it gave others 'the standard by which to measure' the insanity of individualism and of the relentless pursuit of progress that the West 'imposed and imposes upon the world' (29). The analysis of how ideas acquire distinct significance in different places is a productive way of assessing their validity both at the centre and in the periphery of capitalism.

In a talk, later reprinted in a collection of his essays, which was given at a conference organized in Buenos Aires in 2009 to celebrate the essay—which became a classic of Latin American cultural theory—Roberto recaps two objections that were made to misplaced ideas that were raised in the Brazilian debate (2012, 165–173). They can be read as symptoms of the very situation the essay so powerfully describes. The literary critic Alfredo Bosi claims that the essay fails to see that Liberalism was in place in Brazil, as it performed the same ideological function as in Europe, namely to disguise the exploitation of labour. Roberto obviously does not deny that, but points out that this dedifferentiation masks the very real differences between exploited labour in liberal England and exploited labour in a society based on slavery and patronage. If ideas and ways of life are determined by their situation, the similarities must be qualified.

The other objection is associated with the sociologist Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco (de Carvalho Franco 1976).[1] In an interview given in 1976, she contends that the concept of misplaced ideas presupposes a disjunction between the centre, which produces the ideas, and the periphery, where they circulate. She claims that the supposed disjunction masks the fact that centre and periphery are parts of the same mode of production, even though they correspond to different moments in the processes of production and reproduction of capital. They would, however, be equivalent insofar as they are both determined by profit. Her objection is directed not only at Roberto's essay but also at a long tradition of Brazilian thought which considers centre and periphery,

[1] For a discussion of the reception of 'Misplaced Ideas', see Ricupero (2013).

metropole and colony, as separate phenomena that should each be considered on their own.

I see no disjunction in his argument. On the contrary, his dialectical approach demonstrates the blindness of this tradition of Brazilian reformist thought, which made use of what Francisco de Oliveira aptly refers to as 'the dualistic reason' (Oliveira 2003). In this light, Brazil, like many other ex-colonies, would have different development from the metropolitan centres and would need to catch up with them in order to … and here the list varies: 'be a fully developed country, be able to have a functioning democracy, be able to generate its own ideas, be able to, finally, modernize'. Roberto is no reformist and no believer in the ideology of modernization, and the essay makes it clear that he is fully aware of the inter-constitutive nature of centre and periphery. In fact, one of the essay's key contributions is to eliminate the dualistic approach and show that centre and periphery are two different but inextricably linked aspects of the capitalist mode of production. As Roberto shrewdly puts it in another essay, in ex-colonies the categories formed by the intra-European experience function, or malfunction, in a space that is 'diverse but not alien to' the centre (Schwarz 1999, 95). It is diverse, he explains, because colonization did not create societies similar to themselves in the colonies, and neither did the subsequent international division of labour create equality among nations. But it is a space of the same order as is also under the aegis of capital that determines the dynamics of the process. In this sense, 'backward' countries demonstrate the many regressions that constitute progress (whose progress and to what purpose?).

Roberto does not claim this recognition of the ways the 'combined and uneven development of capital' fared in Brazil as an individual achievement. He tells us that in the late 1950s, a group of young professors and students who got together to read *Capital* came up with a 'new intuition' of Brazil that articulated what other thinkers took to be separate developments (Schwarz 1999, 93). This new intuition is the basis of what I have called elsewhere the refunctioning of the idea of the periphery. It is now seen as a relational concept, formed by a system of peculiarities that are local and at the same time part of the present of the world system which those peculiarities express.

This has, of course, a number of consequences for the debate on world literature. Cultural critics endeavouring to claim the new field in terms of the materialist tradition use Roberto's ideas to ground and develop their positions. Let me give three examples to illustrate such use. In his

pathbreaking essay 'Conjectures on World Literature', published in 2000, Franco Moretti makes extensive use of Roberto's ideas to ground what he calls the first 'law of literary evolution': 'in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials' (Moretti 2000: 58). This is a phenomenon that Roberto 'had discovered independently', as Moretti puts it. He also notes the productivity of Roberto's insight that this compromise is inscribed in the form of works of art. For Schwarz, 'a part of the original historical conditions reappears as a sociological form … In this sense, forms are the abstract of specific social relationships' (65). Moretti goes on: 'in our case the historical conditions reappear as a sort of "crack" in the form; as a faultline running between story and discourse, world and worldview: the world goes in the strange direction dictated by an outside power; the worldview tries to make sense of it, and is thrown off balance all the time' (65).

In this sense, the periphery introduces a welcome crack in the ideology of the form, opening up new ways of reading and interpreting artistic forms, both when they are in their place and … misplaced. The Warwick Research Collective (WReC), an influential voice in the materialist debate on world-literature (their hyphenation), is my second example of the ways in which Roberto's insights are embedded in recent theories on world literature. For WReC, his conception of how to read the combined and uneven development of capital in literary forms is 'paradigmatic'. They make extensive use of the formulations articulated in 'Misplaced Ideas' and in *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism* for their proposition of reading the ways in which the world system is registered in different literatures, which is the core of their definition of world-literature.

In an interview three members of the collective gave to Thomas Waller, they point out the centrality of Roberto's demonstration that the world system is inscribed in the logic of literary form. The interviewer asks them a question that sums up the importance of Roberto's theory to their view: 'In a sense, is the WReC's theory of world literature something like a "Machado on a world scale?"' The answer is that the dynamics of combined and uneven development take place everywhere in the world system but are more obvious and explicit in regions that have suffered the violence of the colonial system and of imperialism. That is why Schwarz is so useful and his reading so 'paradigmatic' (Waller 2021,

525). The WReC extend Roberto's argument about Brazilian literature to the wider context of world literature, arguing that the '"sore spots" and "national oddities" in literatures from the peripheries that reflect the asymmetry of the world system are first reflected as generic discontinuities or unconscious incongruities, then transformed into conscious aesthetic experimentation which embodies negative critique of the world-historical order' (WReC 2015, 93).

In this perspective, the dialogue among cultures enabled by world literature works in more than one direction. We do not read the myriad of works made available in the globalized world only to get in touch with the diversity and otherness of artistic productions, and enjoy their difference, or praise their 'abstract universality'. Rather than a dialogue of juxtapositions between centre and periphery, what is at stake here is the heuristic potential of the reading experience, the kind of knowledge it makes possible, allowing us to see where we are and what time it is on the historical clock. Stressing the explanatory power of works of art is part of the effort to politicize, and hence to foster, the social relevance of artistic representation.

My third example is Auritro Majumder's *Insurgent Imaginations: World Literature and the Periphery* (2021). He references Roberto's work to propose a thoroughly politicized approach to world literature, defined by what he calls peripheral internationalism, an internationalism that 'pitted intellectuals and writers not only against the ex-imperial center but also against their own national elites' (Majumder 2021, x). 'The conditions of possibility for a peripheral aesthetics is the combined and uneven development of capital, and the consequent contradictions it generates in social life.' Those contradictions are represented in the formal features of works of art. He agrees with Roberto who, 'drawing mainly from Adorno', contends that 'it is literary form that best captures the contradictions of social form' (25). The work of criticism is to link the specificities of peripheral cultural production to the totality of the determining order of world capital whose real features they expose: 'Peripheral aesthetics not only arises out of unevenness but also, as a resisting impulse, seeks to abolish its conditions of emergence' (27).

Majumder makes it very clear that he understands the difference Roberto's approach makes to world literature. When recapping the debate about the imitative character of peripheral countries, which gives rise, as we saw above, to the endless dispute between originality and imitation, Majumder highlights that for Roberto, this is only a smokescreen that

prevents everyone from talking about what really matters, that is, the exclusion of the poor from contemporary culture:

> By focusing on the exclusion of the poor from the universe of culture, what Schwarz testifies to is the partisan nature of cultural activity. His work gives concrete theoretical shape to that which is immanent within a given cultural formation, but which is activated only by purposive labor of the collective. Or to put it differently, the negation of the present order rests with the "workers gaining access" to their conditions of existence, and "redefin[ing] them through their own initiative". Situated squarely within the realm of creative human practice, the outcome of such processes is unpredictable, "either promis[ing] or catastrophic". (25)

This is, of course, to reinstate class struggle at the centre of the debate on world literature. As is to be expected, this radicalizes the discussion and sets its aims high above the usual expectations of literary criticism. Writing in 2024, when the aspiration for revolutionary change can hardly find any representation, one question comes to my mind. What can account for this centrality of Roberto's radicalism in today's debate? The first Verso translation of some of his essays, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture,* came out in 1992, and his book on Machado, *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism,* in 2001, both translated by John Gledson. Why now?

I would like to venture a hypothesis, based again on Roberto´s own suggestions. In a conversation with me and other editors of a short-lived periodical (1998 the periodical is praga: revista de estudos marxistas. 5, pp 7–17), he drew our attention to the fact that up to 1964, the year of the military coup that was to install a 40-year dictatorship, with the support of a large part of the Brazilian elites, critics did not tend to comment on Machado de Assis. It was the historical circumstance that added another layer of significance to a work that portrayed the hard core of Brazilian class relations and exposed (in their own words, if we remember that the first-person narrators of his late novels are all from the upper class) the unacceptable privileges and indifference to the poor that are typical of the upper classes everywhere, but acquire more visibility in the particular social organization of the periphery. Machado had already seen what the 1964 coup made clear: the elites are ready to accept anything, no matter how noxious, to keep their privilege. We learned with Machado that 'we

are not supposed to believe anything those "prestigious" people of high standing say, no matter how elegantly they put it' (Schwarz 1999, 235).

In the same conversation, Roberto added that it took him 20 years to finish his *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*. It so happened that the book was published during yet another period of the rule of scoundrels, in this case the later impeached president Collor. 'It turned out that I was about to finish a book on the present, a book I had been writing for 20 years, about an author that had written more than a hundred years ago!' (Schwarz 1999, 235). So much for the structural characteristics that keep resurfacing every couple of years. My hypothesis is that the centrality of Roberto's work for contemporary world literature can be viewed as part of the crescent awareness of the illusions a great many intellectuals, including theoreticians of world literature, had about globalization. Once again it is becoming evident to anyone who wants their theory to at least describe reality that capitalism is, as always, delivering not a pluralism of options but the same old inequality and exploitation, now more evidently on a world scale. Drawing on Roberto's lucidity, World Literature theoreticians are working hard to turn the new discipline into a site of resistance.

I want to finish this account of the relevance of Roberto's insights to the current debate by summarizing one of his more recent essays, 'Competing Readings in World Literature' (Schwarz 2007). His main point is to demonstrate how a detailed reading of Machado's mature novels provides an argument for the cognitive potential of a Marxist rendering of world literature. Particularly with the novels written between 1880 and 1908, which constitute his second phase, Machado has secured a place in the world literary canon. After initial and very early translations into French, his books began to be translated into English in the 1950s. But his boom as a master coincided with the rise of world literature. As Roberto sardonically notes, 'based in the countries at the centre of the world literary system, a vanguard of readers—the polyglot, expert intermediaries to which Pascale Casanova refers—strives to identify distant and disparate masterworks that they can incorporate into the repertoire of international classics' (Schwarz 2007, 91). The price exacted for this inclusion is an erasure of the dialectics of local/foreign, artistic/social formations that constitute Machado's mastery. He opens the essay with a quote from the Argentine critic Beatriz Sarlo. In her book *Borges: A Writer on the Margins*, she 'describes the "curious sensation" of lecturing on Borges at Cambridge: "There I was, an Argentine woman in an

English university, talking in English about another Argentine who today is considered "universal"... Borges's international reputation had purged him of his nationality"' (Schwarz 2007, 85). Schwarz goes on to demonstrate how this process of integration into world literature often disguises specific interests and antagonisms, both local and universal, national and international, progressive and regressive, beneath a conceptual matrix that prevents us from questioning what is really at stake in those apparently opposed categories. And he does so through a detailed reading of the form of the novels. Having insisted here on the centrality of form for literary interpretation, I think that to materialize Roberto's analytic points I have to quote a sample of Machado's work from the opening of his *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (1880):

> That Stendhal should have confessed to writing one of his books for only a hundred readers is a source of surprise and consternation. What comes as no surprise, nor will likely provoke any consternation, is if this book fails to garner even Stendhal's hundred readers, nor fifty, nor twenty, nor even ten, if that. Ten? Perhaps five. This is, it's true, a diffuse work, in which I, Brás Cubas, if I have adopted the free form of a Sterne or a Xavier de Maistre, may have added a few grumbles of pessimism. That may be. The work of a deceased man. I wrote it with the pen of mirth and the ink of melancholy, and it is not difficult to predict what may come of such a union. Add to which the fact that serious people will find in the book some likeness to an out-and-out novel, while frivolous people will not find their usual novel here; it will thus be deprived of the esteem of the serious and the love of the frivolous, which are two chief pillars of public opinion.
>
> But I still harbor hopes of winning the sympathies of that opinion, and the first remedy is to avoid a drawn-out, exhaustive prologue. The best prologues have the fewest things, or say them in an abrupt, obscure manner. Accordingly, I will refrain from relaying the extraordinary process that I have employed in composing these *Memoirs*, crafted here in the otherworld. It would be of interest, but tediously lengthy, and superfluous to one's understanding of the work. The work in itself is all: if it should please you, my fine reader, I am paid for my labors; if it should not please you, I will pay you with a flick of a finger, and farewell.
>
> …

> I debated for a time as to whether I ought to open these *memoirs* at the beginning or at the end — that is, if I would start out with my birth or with my death. Granting that the common practice may be to begin with one's birth, two considerations led me to adopt a different method: the first is that I am not exactly an author recently deceased, but a deceased man recently an author, for whom the tomb was another cradle; the second is that this would make the writing wittier and more novel. Moses, who also recounted his own death, did not put it at the commencement but at the finish: a radical difference between this book and the Pentateuch. (de Assis 2020, 3–5)

As you can see, Machado's narrator immediately sets himself above existing rules. The tone is facetious and subtly authoritarian. He is totally beyond localism and universalism. As a true representative of his class—civilized in the European fashion, at ease among the likes of Stendhal and feeling superior to his fellow countrymen, the readers to whom he offers a snap of his fingers (as well as uncivil in the Brazilian fashion)—his narrative, full of twists and ironies, ends up revealing the savagery with which he defends his interests and monstrous privilege. Like the other narrators of Machado's mature novels, Brás is a highly civilized bourgeois, up to date with the most civilized ideas, but he places them at the service of maintaining a barbaric social order of which, of course, he is a beneficiary. In the process, he forces the attentive reader to face the degree of barbarism implicit in civilized bourgeois talk, which is one of the many manifestations of the barbarism implicit in a mode of production that breeds inequality and is, thus, constitutively incapable of extending its idea of civilization to more than a chosen few.

Roberto traces the way in which a change in technique in Machado's mature novels structures a change in consciousness. Machado opts for a literary device that is really a technical breakthrough: he adopts the point of view he wants to expose. Instead of authorial commentaries upon or denunciations of the glaring inequalities of social life, he literally lets his objects of critique speak: his mature novels are narrated by highly educated Brazilian bourgeois who place the most advanced ideas of Europe at the service of justifying the appalling local social order. The result is crushing for a number of highly held tenets of social life. At first sight, they are charming protagonists—the prevailing ideology has taught us all to appreciate a highly civilized man, who can quote philosophers and artists within his fluent narrative. The discrepancy begins to be felt when we compare what kind of life those ideas justify, and realize not

only what we already knew, that is, that the elite makes use of language to conceal its privilege under rubrics such as human nature, man in general and other metaphysical banalities, but also that the cluster of ideas we consider part of our cultural inheritance serves to justify unacceptable circumstances. The irrational core of bourgeois rationality materializes in front of our eyes. The highest ideals of civilization coexist comfortably with the horrors of arbitrariness and exploitation. Machado's anti-heroes' narratives and actions make explicit the dreadfulness, but also the delights, of participating in the advances, both material and ideological, of modern life without relinquishing the benefits of an unjust social order—that is, without paying tribute to the formal equality of all human beings. The specific social setting of Brazil, with all the latitude it gives to privilege and exploitation, is not, however, an exception to the generality of life elsewhere: it only gives this generality more visibility.

Thus, together with the history of a national malformation in the conditions of an ex-colony, Machado's literature maps out an instance of the grotesque and catastrophic march of the dominant system. His heroes constitute a revealing incarnation of the subjectivity such a system generates. In this sense, they are the typical heroes of the world system.

An analysis of the specific formal arrangement of a work of art can destabilize the categories we use to think about the current situation and render visible its intricacies and contradictions. Roberto's handling of world literature shows how the various combinations of the local and the universal, the national and the foreign, the exotic and the consecrated, can shed light on the social formations that traverse them all. This is of paramount importance for 'reading', that is, for comprehending, describing and interpreting, our present situation. It is an analysis that demonstrates that 'the local' and 'the global' are both constructs that describe the appearance of reality, while preventing us from taking into serious consideration the unequal and combined development that continues to structure the world system. As for world literature, Schwarz makes us conscious that a reading of the periphery viewed as part of the totality can elucidate the workings of the world system. That is indeed a revolutionary aim for cultural activity in general and the new discipline in particular.

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CHAPTER 5

Dialectical Criticism in the Provinces of the "World Republic of Letters": The Primacy of the Object in the Work of Roberto Schwarz: Ten Years Later

Silvia L. López

Introductory Note

The fundamental premises of immanent protocols of reading that have been at the center of dialectical Marxian aesthetics and critical theory remain the most powerful tool for advancing an understanding of the codification of the social world. Different artistic forms that coexist in the time and place of advanced capitalism under different conditions of articulation demand a dialectical understanding of their specificity in the

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larger social world. Ten years ago, I maintained that the turn toward a global understanding of literature was an attempt of what Heidegger called "the worlding of the world". It suffered from a theoretical deficit, namely, the absence of an understanding of literature as a local codification of the center-periphery dynamics proper to global capitalism. In that sense, and at that time, Pascale Casanova (2004) and Franco Moretti (2005) had proposed different models of relations between center and periphery: in the case of the former, in terms of institutional power differentials in the literary field; in the case of the latter, the effort of collecting and classifying literary objects from all over the world to demonstrate empirically that our understanding of literature, and of the novel form in particular, was rather a European exception than the norm. At the time, Moretti's project may have debunked some normative understandings we had about literature, but it did not advance our understanding of how literary forms mediate the specificities of the local–global dynamics of capitalism. In other words, a shortcoming of Moretti's was that he demonstrated that forms traveled and became local but did not understand how exactly the inner logic of the form was manifested in relation to the capitalist totality. Casanova's sociological attempt at a relational analysis of the literary relations between writers in metropolitan centers understood the global character of literature as a radiating vector with its reference point still in Europe. Circuits and institutions, while embedded in the power relations of center and periphery, were too large a unit of analysis to bring us close to understanding an object or form in relation to global capitalism.

I placed Roberto Schwarz's work at the center of my reflections on this problem. Focusing on the dialectic of form, his criticism contributed the most original and theoretically viable thesis of how metropolitan forms are always affirmed improperly in the periphery of capitalism. The task of the critic is to discover how those forms revealed the specific dimension, not only of the local and the national, but also of its precise articulation in the capitalist formation of its place and time. Ten years later, I stand by this affirmation more than ever.

What has changed and what has remained the same in this past decade in the anglophone market of models of literary analysis? What remains the same is the need for constant innovation and destruction so proper to the capitalist system in which the academy is embedded, and which it reproduces. I could cite a long catalog of the models of the seasons, from surface reading to affect theory, but I will not. What is pertinent to my

essay is what notable contributions within materialist models of analysis have appeared to advance our understanding of the global dynamics of capitalism and local aesthetic production. On the one hand, north–south and south-south comparative models have emerged. The displacement from globalization to new spatialized models seeks similarities among southern regions of the world in relation to wealthy northern parts of the globe, comparing colonial experiences and outcomes. However, such models avoid the key problem of the articulation of the then, here, and now of capitalism that is the imprint of these regions' differential relations. This locational/spatial relational analysis tells us little about the codification of the local and the global within the languages and forms of its specific place, regardless to which spatial part of the globe they are assigned. Literary artifacts are coded in specific languages and reveal the specificity of the dialectical mediation of the global.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the decade was made by the Warwick Research Collective (WReC 2015). This project provides a vast collection of materials and readings from different parts of the world, identifying literature that engages the crisis of capitalism and its representation. The revived category of "world literature" is here one that reveals the inherent uneven and combined development of the world system and the particular local resistance offered by cultural forms to dominant modernist understandings of literature. The project is expansive and ambitious in its scope, translating the categories of social analysis into a reading of the literature of the world through a Trotskyist lens. Its main weakness is that its corpus, however problematic that is in world terms, depends on English translations and superficial understandings of specific histories and traditions of writing and interpretation. The anti-colonial stance of the Collective, however admirable, reinscribes without intent the colonial reproduction of a corpus that is entirely dependent on the geopolitics of translation. Only what metropolitan critics can read in English makes it into this project, reproducing in this way a more-than-uncomfortable relationship with materials that resist, in their own languages, anglophone interpretations of world literature. This is an important project for the education of the anglophone public and academy, but does not engage the imperative of Marxian dialectical principles of Schwarz's criticism, even when they claim in the book that his work has been an important theoretical lynchpin.

Recently, Franco Moretti has written an excellent primer on why, after many twists and turns through graphs, trees, and other method-metaphors for world literature, he has come to the conclusion that, after all, it is Schwarz's analysis of Machado de Assis that gives an exact idea of form. In *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, Schwarz defines his understanding of form as: "(a) a rule for the composition of the narrative and (b) the stylization of a kind of conduct characteristic of the Brazilian ruling class" (2001, 7–8). Drawing attention to this passage, Moretti adds: "If one wonders what a Marxist analysis of narrative should be like, *Master* is it" (2021). Schwarz sees in form the abstraction of social relations rendered truthfully. While peculiarly mediated by ideas out of place, form is proper to the dialectics of capitalist relations in the periphery of the world. Ten years ago, much like today, Marxist criticism continues to find its inspiration and most promising theoretical example in the work of Roberto Schwarz. Its truth content resists the test of time.

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Das Ganze ist das Unwahre.

—T.W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

The "third world" mystique covers up class conflict and gives a naïve, though violent, view of conflicts between nations, and above all of their interdependence. The aesthetics it inspires does exist, and inherits retrograde aspects of nationalism. It is a relative question, however—it should be pointed out that there is no such thing as *the* aesthetic of the "third world."

—Roberto Schwarz, "Is There a Third World Aesthetic?"

Nowadays, it has become almost impossible to sit down and write anything sensible about aesthetics and globalization without immediately entering into a pre-defined order of clichés about the unprecedented compression of time and space reflected in the intensification of social, political, economic, and cultural interconnections of today's world. Literary theory has not been immune to the pressures to rise up to the challenge of the discourses on globalization, producing in turn different attempts to apprehend, comprehend, and theorize its object in step with the dominant ideology of the time. Critics like Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova have embarked on ambitious projects in search of establishing new paradigms that re-create a globalist literary discourse and a systematic apparatus that can render a literary world comprehensible. While the intent and matrices of this new worlding of literature may be different in conception, the critical-historical impetus behind them is a shared one: to take distance from the discourse of postcolonial studies and to reinstate models of a global understanding of literary production that has in the long run a depoliticizing effect, be this achieved through the adoption of an empirical Darwinian model of the evolution of literary forms or through the redeployment of the concept of literary autonomy, this time with all the clocks set to the Greenwich Meridian.

For the Latin American critic, the constant replay of Eurocentric all-encompassing phenomenological campaigns of re-worlding literature become in their tedium quite interesting, as they always unfailingly signal the erasure of Marxism as the critical-theoretical apparatus that put at the center of knowledge construction a metacritique of epistemology, thereby setting a radically different framework for the analysis of culture and reification in late capitalism. In the pages that follow, after reviewing some of these attempts at a logic of "third world" literary production, I will present the work of the Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz, whose immanent critical-theoretical protocols, rigorously take us to the basic principle of modern Marxian/Adornian aesthetics: that of the primacy of the object. This kind of work provides a different answer to the perennial problems of external models of analysis versus text-based interpretations, of levels of particularity in literature versus extrapolating general models, as well as more specifically addressing how it is that foreign aesthetic ideas and forms are always affirmed improperly in the peripheral context, thereby ciphering according to a law of their own the truth of the social world.

Das Ganze ist das Unwahre: On the Limits of the Category of "Third World Literature"

Historically, let's not begin this review with Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* nor with the one sentence in the *Communist Manifesto* where world literature makes its appearance. Instead, let's situate this discussion within the institutionalized framework of the Anglophone academy since this is a problem that pertains exclusively to the discursive formations of that location and involves actors defined by those institutional demands. For this reason let's go back to the old and exhausted debate that took place almost twenty years ago between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad; a debate that at that juncture in the Anglophone academy, and assessed now in retrospect, seems to have had more to do with the need for a justification for the emerging field of postcolonial literatures and for the legitimation of the space and rubric of "World Literature" in English departments, than with any preoccupation with the attributed structural allegorical capacity of "'third world' literatures. It is worth remembering and resituating the legacy of this debate, now that both the discourses of globalization and of the bio-concept of "empire" seem to fold all cultural problematics into themselves. While the Jameson-Ahmad debate in itself is no longer at stake, the fundamental dynamic of that debate, its consequences, and the preoccupation with the global character of cultural analysis, return again to occupy center stage. In other words, the current articulation of this problem in the models of Moretti and Casanova is really only a continuation of the same epistemic enterprise, this time stripped of the political imaginary of the Bandung era, but now recast under the wider semiotic apparatus of a globalized world.

From that original debate we learned of the theoretical poverty of terms like "third world," of the impossibility of posing at such a level of generality the problems that delimit the study of literature—such as those of social and linguistic formations, political and ideological struggles within the field of literary production, contested cultural institutional contexts, and periodization models—and learned of the highly contradictory experience of non-metropolitan intellectuals and how precise one had to be when studying the way in which these writers entered into commerce with the institutions of culture in their own contexts. What would constitute a differential study of culture in modernity could not follow Fredric Jameson's proposal of the study of "third-world" literature in the era of multinational capitalism (1986, 1987). Among the most

serious objections that were posed to Jameson then were the generalizations regarding the problem of nationalism and the "necessarily allegorical character" that he attributed to those literatures. Aijaz Ahmad in his well-known reply to Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" pointed out that the term "third world" had no theoretical status whatsoever, nor an epistemological foundation, but also that the attempt at formulating it is empirically ungrounded. Ahmad asked at that point, how one would classify countries like India or Brazil, given their level of capitalist economic activity? What would the empirical criteria for classification be?

In light of the merely empirical problems for such classification, Jameson's recourse to the experience of colonialism and imperialism as the basis for setting up this division also seemed insufficient. To discern from the general experience of colonialism a general trend of nationalist responses seems only to trivialize the problem of nationalism in peripheral contexts in an axiomatic fashion. Jameson's general assumptions about nationalism led him to pose allegory as a main form of cultural expression in the "third world." As Ahmad pointedly noted, this could only be sustained if no inquiry were made into the way writers enter into commerce with the institutions of culture in a peripheral context. The actual experience of "third world" intellectuals in highly contradictory societies may actually inhibit any kind of capacity for allegorization and exhibit a more profound experience of alienation and desolation than any of their postmodern counterparts in the "first world."[1]

Between China and Africa, Latin America danced in and out with great unease in Jameson's text, an uneasiness that was symptomatic of precisely the historical *differences* from the Chinese and African examples that Jameson discussed. These were differences based on the *national* configurations in which Latin American literature had been produced. It seemed clear that the nation, as empty coeval form and as sociopolitical reality, remained the locus of the inscription of the institution of literature. While the political claim of comparativism made itself evident in the urge to globalize the understanding of this literature in an effort to deprovincialize the metropolitan reader, the effect of allochronic distancing was

[1] See Schwarz (1992). According to Schwarz, Machado de Assis's literary production points to this increased awareness of cultural contradiction between the liberal ideas of a political elite and the slavery-based economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Brazil.

unavoidable in a text that divided the world into three different ones. Perhaps, the most significant consequence of the result of this spatialization of time was the production of a sovereign metropolitan reader in the unending quest for doing justice, in political terms, to their reading of these literary objects, always from the vantage point of their own construction of them.

An alternative at that point would have been to explain the current diversification process through the study of national cultures under conditions of modernity. The basic premise of that undertaking is the assumption of the coevalness of cultural processes under global capitalism. Modern cultures are neither "belated" nor "underdeveloped"; neither are they to be assumed as a priori belligerent, revolutionary, or admirable utopian loci. Their own specificity can be found in the historical experience of modern capitalism and in their specific colonial histories. The presence of certain forms of writing in different cultural contexts does not depend on the quality of the shared experience of the writers but rather these forms vary in direct relation to the institutionalized traditions and conventions of their contexts. Writers choose forms consciously depending on the social and historical circumstances that define the institutional space from which these writers produce.

It is clear that any attempt to theorize globally about literary production in terms of the "third world" has been, at best and so far, a failed promise. However, Jameson's claim about the preoccupation with nationalism in the "third world" deserved important consideration in its moment because the history of its theorization provided a good example of how the logic of difference had been inscribed in world historical terms. In other words, the very conditions of possibility of such a dichotomy can be found in the historical treatment of the problem of nation formation and nationalism available to us since the Enlightenment.[2]

Against Jameson's hypostatizing of "'third world' Literatures," and in spite of the strategic claims that such a rubric may have had on the politics of the American academy, the task of articulating a project of the study

[2] An analysis of the different theories of nationalism that would prove this point is beyond the scope of this paper. One can, however, point to important debates of the past twenty years. The work of Benedict Anderson, for example, questions previously held assumptions about the origin of nationalism, and as consequence puts into question the developmental logic that has characterized the thinking of nationalism in metropolitan centers in the past.

of national cultures under modernity remains crucial for Latin American intellectuals. This kind of project would permit a negation of the logic of alterity that makes the cultural products of "lesser developed regions of the world" necessarily this or that (i.e., allegorical readings of the nation, anti-canonical, revolutionary, anti-representational, emergent, etc.), and would confront the provincial understanding of modernity supporting these schemas of classification.[3]

The coevalness of modernity as experienced in the globalization of monopoly capitalism, from the end of the nineteenth century on, poses the challenge of a differential theory of modernity that can account for the status of cultural production under conditions of modernity in the periphery of the industrialized world. It is only through these comparative and differential understandings that European cultural modernity can be shown to be the exception rather than the rule in the global context. As far as the political repercussions of such a stance, it would prove to be far more radical than the ghettoization of diversity in the American university where through the visible marking of gender and race a different form of knowledge is institutionalized. This difference and its current recognition through classifications like "Third World Literature" (as just one example) reinscribe the racism of alterity politics. It is perhaps the fear of places and peoples all too contemporary and coeval, the disavowal of global capital relations, and the denial of the minority status of "first world" culture that prevents a different kind of politics in the institutionalization of new ways of understanding modern cultural developments on a global scale.

The institutionalization of the study of "Third World Literatures" in the United States says more about the status of the institution of literature in this part of the globe than about the cultural processes of those countries considered under the rubric "'third world'." The rapid and

[3] The genealogy of how this has been attempted in the Latin American tradition is the subject of a different chapter in this project and cannot be engaged here. In that chapter, the ideological battles for an anticolonial approximation to the problem of cultural production and its analysis reveal also the tensions between the Marxist tradition and alternative decolonizing intellectual models proposed by thinkers as different as Enrique Dussel and Aníbal Quijano. That chapter proposes a matrix of interpretation that requires an operational category of modernity, that follows the historical semantic model of Reinhart Koselleck who conceives of it as a category of historical periodization, as a quality of social experience, and as an incomplete project, its historical semantic limits and its inseparability from the uneven and combined relations to European modernity, and by extension of the working of capital.

intensified process of sanctioning and canonizing cultural products from other parts of the world preempts the possibility of posing important questions about the "rest of the world" in a more radical way. By this I mean questions that would illuminate the coeval economic, cultural, and political processes of modernity and the relation between these processes, rather than remaining at the level of the construction of their otherness and thereby reaffirming European notions of culture and modernity precisely through gestures of inclusion.[4]

The "Worlding" of Literature: Trees, Maps, and the World Republic of Letters

Twenty years later we find ourselves in the midst of a new effort to theorize the literary field as one global phenomenon. Moretti and Casanova propose new structures of interaction between literature and history to try to answer questions that have been posed before: Is it possible to find the conceptual means to restore the link between literature, history, and the world without losing the specificity and irreducible particularity of texts? Can we avail ourselves of theoretical tools that combat the arbitrary principle of the autonomy of literary texts? What are the laws that govern the multiplicity of literary forms? (Casanova 2005). Given the fact that the questions have already been posed before, answered and debated from various theoretical vantage points, the more puzzling question is why are they being posed again? What answers to these questions were never heard and why not? I'll speculate on these questions a bit later on.

[4] To what degree that problematic relationship between the conceptualizing of the center vis-à-vis the object of the periphery can escape a constitutive racism is, perhaps, a question worthy of another discussion but must be brought up here briefly. Could it be, as Žižek maintains, that "postmodern racism is the symptom of multiculturalist late capitalism, bringing light to the inherited contradiction of the liberal democratic ideological project and without the element of the real jouissance, the Other remains ultimately a fiction, a purely symbolic subject of strategic reasoning exemplified in rational choice theory?" (1997, 27). For that reason, he maintains in a provocative fashion that one is even tempted to replace the term multiculturalism with multiracism: multiculturalism suspends the traumatic kernel of the Other, reducing it to an aseptic folklorist entity. Žižek's critique about the impossibility of a non-traumatic relationship to the other is something that must be somehow taken into account when reflecting upon the sites of knowledge production.

While these attempts may not confront the same difficulties of Jameson's proposal, they present new, and perhaps more insurmountable, problems than Jameson's effort at schematizing the totality of "third world literatures." Franco Moretti proposes a comparative global study of the form of the novel, through the systematic analysis of a phenomenal accumulation of empirical studies from all over the world. At stake is a historical account of how genres have evolved in time and space. This is an evolutionary model, in a strict Darwinian-Gouldian sense, that tries to account for the fact that certain literary forms have succeeded while other competing literary possibilities have perished. What laws govern the selection process and how these laws work when the novel-form travels and changes its morphology are questions that Moretti tries to answer through the analysis of empirical data gathered from around the globe. At stake is an empirical model for the understanding of a global literary history that examines a vast amount of material now lost to literary historians. Moretti conceptualizes his project as one that seeks to elucidate a law of literary evolution taking into consideration a vast sample of novels; central to his theoretical framework is the fate of the novel outside Europe and what it tells us about that form. In this model, all novels outside Europe result from the encounter of particular social realities that, when expressed in a Western form that doesn't quite fit that reality, end up generating variations of the European form. This is an interesting thesis based on a notion of *Weltliteratur* that avoids the allochronic deficit of other positions (like Jameson's), but the obvious question becomes, if one may be allowed to be so blunt, what else would the encounter of particular European forms with non-European realities yield? What else would all dialectical interactions between global forms and local realities produce? Moretti's conclusions ought to serve here as a premise for the study of the actual mediations between form and social reality and not as its outcome. His recourse to the language from the natural and social sciences for his theoretical construction forces him to submit his theory to a vocabulary and a set of protocols that, by definition, entangle it in the all the biases, contradictions, and consequences related to its metaphorical construction.

In his introduction to *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Moretti explains that through this trio of artificial constructs the reality of the text undergoes a process of abstraction that allows for the production of "a specific form of knowledge." The epistemic claim here is one that he attributes to his Marxist formation: "the distant reason for this choices lies in my Marxist

formation, which was profoundly influenced by Galvano Della Volpe and entailed therefore (in principle, if not always in practice) a great respect for the scientific spirit" (Moretti 2005, 2). The appeal to a positivistic Marxism, as if the relevant Marxist conversations on the critique of positivism had never happened, as if Adorno and Popper had never engaged in debate on the future of sociology (and is Moretti's project, once stripped of its Darwinian attire, not a global project in the sociology of literary forms?) brings to the fore the question of the affinities between the return to positivism and the current discourses on globalization. What is really achieved through the massive accumulation of data on a traveling form? What does this conceptual apparatus, when appealing to a conceptual unification taken from the sciences, hide? This model imposes "a regime of visibility"[5] that hides the fundamental contradiction of class conflict in a world that is not one, certainly not one that can serve as a map through which forms travel without facing the fundamental contradictions of disparaging inequalities, war and injustice; or, in Adorno's words: "an ideal conceptual unification taken from the natural sciences cannot, however indiscriminately, be applied to a society whose unity resides in not being unified" (1967, 52).

Let's take just one example from Moretti's account of the evolution of the Latin American novel. It is no surprise that his model yields eventually someone like García Márquez, who emerges in his *Modern Epic* (1996) as a kind of Colombian Fortinbras when the gloomy European novel has run itself into the ground. From that moment on, he contends, the "Macondo species" forces us to see the epic no longer from the core of the world system but from the periphery (243), but does it really? Any student of Latin American literature knows that Moretti's portrayal of García Márquez is a presentation of the Boom's self-understanding, which hides the contestation around the aesthetics of "magical realism," the international market niche in the late sixties produced and at the same time satisfied by presses like *Seix Barral* that created an editorial phenomenon that brought to international recognition a literature which at that time was not as widely consumed. All of this has little to do with understanding the refunctionalization of the novel by a generation of professional Latin American writers that were the first to be able to live from writing fiction. These novels, rather than being the naturally selected species to replace

[5] I take this concept from Jacques Rancière, who first develops it in *Le Mésentente: Politique et philosophie* (Éditions Galilée, 1995).

the decaying European novel in the evolutionary world of literary forms, were the first true literary commodities exported from Latin America to Europe. Abstracting it from the fate of the commodity form in the realm of culture at that point in capitalism, rather than enlightening, actually obscures how the homogenization of culture has generated the distinctive regimes of inequality under which culture was and is still produced today.

Pascale Casanova will stay away from the world of forms and restrict her traveling operations to the world of national literary actors, all in competition in a globalized literary institution whose center is located in Paris (and London). The mediating space between literature and the world is an autonomous international literary space that is "both a history and a geography relatively independent of the everyday world and its political divisions, and whose boundaries and operational laws are not reducible to those of ordinary political space" (Casanova 2005, 72). In these spaces struggles of all sorts—political, social, national, gender, ethnic—come to be refracted, diluted, deformed, and transformed into a literary logic that is invisible for the most part, and that reveals itself to those most distant from its great centers or deprived of its resources.

Many books now have been written engaging Casanova's proposal,[6] and there is no need for us to revisit many of those criticisms here, but it is important to continue exploring the connection and consequences of this proposal in connection with that of Moretti's, who is often pitted against Casanova as someone attentive to the questions of the multiplicity of forms around the globe. What is truly significant is the connection of the globalizing logic in both of these proposals. Casanova herself appeals to an empirical sample from different traditions, except that her data is not external to the objects but is a process of accumulation of the self-representation of the literary actors in relation to the literary time of the Greenwich Meridian. Those most distant from it, she contends, see more clearly the forms of violence and domination that operate within it. Casanova invents a safe space of world dimensions with writers as actors that engage in a differential struggle to extract capital to give rise to their own formal solutions. If in Moretti we have a form imbedded literally in the spatial relationship between center and periphery, in Casanova we

[6] See Prendergast (2004). For a Latin American perspective on the topic, see Sánchez-Prado (2006).

have the twin set of literary actor and nation imbedded in the competitive relation between center and periphery, carefully isolating the space of engagement of the autonomous realm of a global literary space. The theoretical operations of these models produce a particular regime of visibility of the center and periphery, carefully bulletproofing it from the political discussion of how that cultural production is part and parcel of a large understanding of the political economy of capitalism.

For Latin American critics, frankly used to much bolder theoretical proposals, Casanova tells us nothing new. Did we not know that Rubén Darío or César Vallejo or Julio Cortázar, for that matter, became Latin American writers in Paris, only after formulating in their own ways their peripheral relation to that specific republic of letters? How is that anything more than the history of the formation of the *letrado* class in Latin America? But does it really tell us anything about literature as a local formation that encodes much more than the travelogue and the complexes of certain writers? The history of literature in Latin America seems to contradict such a depoliticized and ideological view of it. As Graciela Montello reminds us:

> Each republic has those who have been expulsed from it, as well as those that have deserted from it and have acted accordingly against desertion and difference, through repression or capture. Like many other practices, literature has done what the institution has asked of it, but it also has done other things. Whether we use maps, diagrams, trees, or whether we design republics or fields, to forget that resistance to the order of things puts us at risk of forgetting the impulse of that which was born as a political option. (Sánchez-Prado 2006, my translation)

The displacement of the conflict from the social formation of literature in its local context to that of a separate realm headquartered in Paris obscures the contested cultural territory of those literatures where the true impact of combined and uneven development finds expression and refracts the world order and not simply that of a world republic of letters. Casanova's world republic of letters not only does not tell us something that we already knew, but now organizes it as system and underscores once again, by doing readings from the hegemonic centers to the periphery, its ethnocentric power by postulating from that fictional space that worlds the world from the Paris-London axis.

Moretti's and Casanova's models in the age of globalization force us to consider what restrictions traveling forms or actors produce and how they obfuscate the fact that literature as discourse was not primarily constituted in relation to dominant European literary centers or generic forms, but in specific historical struggles with other discourses of the nation, other emergent and residual formations such as those of oral traditions, popular culture, and more recently the cultural industry. In those complicated and contested relations, literature has given expression to the conflicted nature of hegemonic culture in places where states are weak and national culture shot through with different competing projects and temporalities that only accentuate the relative unimportance of the European literary institution that Casanova projects at the center of the world.

Briefly, and for the purposes of parallel examples, let's take the García Márquez case again in Casanova's model. "Magical realism," she contends, "was both a stroke of genius and a strike against international critical authority."[7] García Márquez emerges as this great international actor of the world republic letters, proving that even those writers situated in the farthest away corners of the republic can accumulate literary capital and rise to glory. It is as if, in the hundred years prior to a *Hundred Years of Solitude*, no literary tradition existed in Latin America to which to connect a phenomenon like Márquez. His emergence becomes something akin to a rebel victory in a colony in a galaxy far, far away…

Moving from center through periphery, be this through a literary actor or a form, whether the global space is imagined as a transversal one in Casanova or multiple but horizontal in Moretti, the combinatory strictures on the functioning of literature outside Europe are still governed by a disseminating European center. And even if they may yield a differential understanding of certain literary economies and hierarchies of exclusion, they generate a regime of visibility of those exclusions that fundamentally occlude the precise mediations of cultural objects produced in peripheral situations and the reality of capitalism.

Returning to our argument about the marshaling for empirical evidence for their global models, even if that evidence may qualify as nothing more than an extended list of examples, it is not difficult to speculate that this kind of material evidence gathered and ordered in the name of global and comprehensive models of literary accumulation

[7] Pascale Casanova. *The World Republic of Letters*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 234.

refrains from engaging a materialist tradition, be this structural or dialectical, that for most of the century had those very questions at the center of its debate. As I indicated earlier in this essay, the fundamental questioning of positivism in a society marked by contradiction, is central to of a critical theory of society, and therefore, to a critical theory of cultural production, that is forced to attend to the issues of mediation (*Vermittlung*), or those set of relations that denote that nothing can be independently constituted, and immediacy (*Unmitelbarkeit*), as the product of the identity consciousness that reifies the world (Adorno 2000). The dialectic relationship between the social and the immanent operates at the level of the specific complexion of the object, where nothing is purely internal nor susceptible to externalization. Phenomenology and empiricism fail, according to Adorno, at apprehending a world where the whole is untrue.

Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz has taken very seriously Adorno's Marxist legacy and the epistemological premises of a non-identitarian cultural logic. In his investigations on Brazilian literature and culture he has presented to us how the untruth of the world is refracted in the cultural objects in the periphery of capitalism. It is to his work that I now turn.

Elective Affinities: Aesthetics, Globality, and Critical Theory

The elective affinity between Adorno's critical theory and the cultural realities of the periphery of capitalism becomes evident if we assume that implicit in critical theory is a commitment to a global understanding of cultural production, and in so far as the background of a critical-theoretical analysis always is, or at least attempts to be, an understanding and a theorization of culture under capitalism. The fact that Adorno did not work on peripheral cultures nor make it his intention to theorize them is neither problematic nor ironic in the case in point. It is simply irrelevant. In other words, the critical-theoretical impetus of the Frankfurt School travels rather well because it attempts an understanding of culture within the global phenomenon of capitalism. What is at stake is a dialectical understanding of cultural phenomena, which by definition find their specific and particular expression in the historicity of their materials, that is, in a dialectic of the particular and the universal, or more precisely, in the dialectic of the particularities of the local and the global condition.

Roberto Schwarz's writings on the importation of the novel to Brazil present us with one of the most exemplary Adornian contributions to the study of a literary phenomenon in the periphery of capitalism today. The writings of Brazil's premier Marxist critic have appeared regularly in English translation (including several of his more recent essays that are featured in *New Left Review* on a regular basis) for some time now, making him not an unknown author in metropolitan circles. However the broader recognition of his dialectical criticism in the tradition of the Frankfurt School and the implications it has for the life of critical theory today seem yet to be fully appreciated.

The essays of Roberto Schwarz are difficult to decipher because of the astute way that the Brazilian critic has of situating himself with respect to his tradition. On one level, as the preeminent student of Antonio Candido, Schwarz always offers an up-to-date and committed reading of Candido's work, and always defends his contribution as a precursor to the social study of form. On another level, to update and revitalize his teacher's contributions, Schwarz reconceptualizes Candido's insights by drawing upon the development of Marxist aesthetics of the last third of the century, especially as it is to be found in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. Adorno's fundamental concepts enter Schwarz's critical work in an organic and natural way. As a critic on the left, Schwarz constructs strategies of writing that permit him to legitimize himself as a Brazilian who defends a socio-historical approach to literature, while at the same time offering a perspective on the social codification of literary form which permits him to outdistance the sterile debate between realism and modernism that the other great literary critic of Brazil, Luiz Costa Lima, persists in reenacting. According to Schwarz, Costa Lima classifies literary production in the following way:

> [...] on the one hand, the backward looking, mere imitation of historical reality, absence of formal anxiety, ideological redundancy, the illusion of an unbounded linguistic transparency; on the other hand, the forward looking, literary production of the new, the anti-mimetic rupture, awareness of the efficacy specific to language, the disconnecting of the antennae of reference. (Schwarz 2001, 24)

Instead of repeating the debate between Lukács and Adorno that took place in the thirties, Schwarz ingeniously proceeds to dismantle Costa Lima's premises about realism and as a consequence enters into a serious

exploration of Adorno's later elaborations on mimesis and literary forms. In reframing the debate and in offering us his careful analysis of the later fiction of Machado de Assis, Schwarz makes a unique contribution to our understanding of how the ciphering of the social referent works.

The concept of mimetic impulse in Adorno and in Schwarz recasts the problem of the tracing of reality as something *internal* to the literary object. The mimetic impulse is not the reflection of reality that Lukács talked about but is rather a rethinking of the dynamic of form that distinguishes the Marxist study of form from that of a simple literary formalism. Or, as Schwarz puts it so well, the problem with literary formalism, ironically, is to have underestimated literary form itself.

Although Schwarz had already made reference to the importance of the Frankfurt School for our times, especially in his intellectual and personal history entitled "Um Seminário de Marx" (1999), the fundamental text in which Schwarz firmly posits his position on literary forms is the essay "Critical Adequation and National Originality." Some of the basic Adornian principles in this essay include the idea that the work in its specific historical time codifies reality and returns it to us articulated in a formal language that reveals the contradictions of its production. In contrast to the theory of realism as reflection, here society appears encapsulated in a formal apparatus of autonomous unfolding, whose logic escapes external comparison. A second concept elaborated by both Benjamin and Adorno, that of constellation, appears in the essay in order to explain why there cannot be only one way of tracing reality or, to refute Lukács, why there is no prescription for writing like Balzac: one must instead find the configurations or the constellations within the text that illuminate its historical moment. As Schwarz says:

> [...] we can say that a good eye for an historical likeness *between unlike structures* is perhaps the key faculty of materialist criticism—a criticism for which literature is understood to work with materials and formations engendered (in the final analysis) outside of its own literary domain—materials and formations that give to the literary its substance and that make possible its dynamism. Let us reiterate that the goal of this type of conception is not to reduce one structure to another, but to reflect historically on their mutually-formed constellation. Here we follow in the *stereoscopic* line of Walter Benjamin, with its particular acuity for noting, e.g., the importance of market mechanisms in the overall shape of Baudelaire's poetry. (Schwarz 1999, 7)

This idea of the ciphering of social truth in a momentary, unconscious, and kaleidoscopic way distances Schwarz from Lukács as well as from the geneticism of Lucien Goldmann, and leaves Costa Lima out of the debate. It also renders mute the dead-end discussions revolving around the relationship between original and copy. The opposition between original and copy becomes a false opposition because it does not allow us to see the share of the foreign in the nationally specific, or of the imitative in the original and of the original in the imitative and what they reveal about the unequal relation of Brazilian forms and European ideas.

Form as Social Cipher: The Importing of the Novel to Brazil

The great merit of Roberto Schwarz's work results from his having dedicated his life to studying the codification of the social life of Brazil under slavery in the fiction of Machado de Assis. How do we explain these novels that are not representative of what we understand by nineteenth century realism but whose formal innovations are nevertheless directly related to the social reality of Brazil? It is here that Schwarz's exemplary way of making Adorno's premises on literary form and their historicity his own allows him to elaborate a convincing reading of how the narrative function of Machado de Assis' later novels traces rather than reflects the contradictions of the Brazilian dominant elite. In his meticulous study on the work of this author, Schwarz demonstrates how Machado de Assis' formal innovations operate on the level of a narrator whose volatile character, rather than being a narrative flaw, articulates the subject position of the Brazilian elites of the end of the nineteenth century. It is in this articulation of the narrator's point of view that, according to Schwarz, Machado de Assis achieves "a realism," not in the traditional sense of the term but in the sense of the unconscious tracing of social reality.

The clash characterized by the importation of liberal European ideas received into a slave-based economic model produced this peripheral form of the realist novel, one that redefined both realism and novel in a specifically Brazilian way. What is best exemplified in these Brazilian novels is that the subjective is not reduced to the linguistic or communicative realm but is embedded in a configurational form of the novel, one that exceeds the description of what is said. The narrator functions in his relations to other characters and to the structure of the plot as a cipher of the social articulation of subjectivity. The volatility of the narrator is not modest in

scope for "it reaches to the world at large and to the artistic medium in depth" (89). Schwarz writes:

> The outstanding feature of this and other novels by Machado de Assis is the extraordinary volatility of the narrator, who will change his mind, his subject and his mode of speech at almost every sentence, and will not hold the same course for longer than a short paragraph. There is an aspect of self-gratification to this changing disposition and to the rhetorical virtuosity that goes with it, a sort of kick to be derived from each one of these switches of level, which links up with the desire for recognition we just talked about. It will be decisive for my argument. And since this feature subordinates everything else in the book, we may call it the principle of its form. (88)

For Schwarz, the Brazilian character of Machado de Assis' novels does not reside in the extraordinary thoroughness of the local observation that he well understood, nor is it canceled out by his universal discourse, which is an important level of the work, but it lies rather in the fact that these two dimensions are present in a simultaneous, complex and negative way. It is this dissonant combination which relativizes them and which gives them an intimate historical character. What Schwarz has elucidated for us is more than just workings of the novel form in nineteenth-century Brazil (which in his typical modesty is all he would claim to have done). Rather, he has provided us with a way of understanding how by investigating the anachronistic juxtaposition of forms of modern civilization and realities originating in the colonial period we can discern the figure of the modern capitalist world. In a specific form he seeks to specify a social mechanism that is an internal and active element of Brazilian culture where European ideas were misplaced or off-center in relation to their European usage. He summarizes his intent in the following way:

> I have presented a historical explanation for this displacement, an explanation which brought in relations of production a parasitism in Brazil, our economic dependency and its counterpart, the intellectual hegemony of Europe, revolutionized by capital. In short, in order to analyze a national peculiarity, sensed in everyday life, we have been driven to reflect on the colonial process which was international. The constant interchange of liberalism and favour was the local and opaque effect of a planetary mechanism. (1992, 30)

From the vantage point of immanent critique, for Adorno and Schwarz, the antithesis of universal and particular, too, is both necessary and deceptive. Neither one exists without the other—the particular only as defined and thus universal, the universal only as the definition of something particular, and thus itself particular. The form of the novel in Brazil reveals to us the internal working of an aesthetic object inscribed historically in a place and time that does articulate through its formal workings a national reality that comprises not only the present, but the heritage of a colonial past and, therefore, the reality of Brazil in its larger insertion in the capitalist world. Faithful to a critical-theoretical epistemology, Schwarz, like Adorno, makes the primacy of the object the cornerstone of dialectical criticism.

Globalization: Complex, Modern, National, and Negative

Let me return to the apparent redundant idea of globalizing critical theory to point out that the work of Roberto Schwarz brings us to the question of how a culture, even in this period of globalization, is still imbedded in a national experience that is modern, complex, and negative, and that, whatever the effects of the process of globalization, it mediates these experiences through an idiom that is linguistically, culturally, and nationally specific, as well as in dialogue with a defined and inherited tradition.

The enthusiasm that seems to have overtaken the humanities about the possibilities of a politics that is truly global is in contrast with the economic realities of globalization and its relationship to the nation-state (Lowe and Lloyd 1997). The economic reality is that global corporations continue to rely heavily on domestic state structures that fall within the traditional bounds of individual governments, presiding over bordered territories, advancing domestic agendas, and regulating national economies. A cohesive nation-state regulating the free market seems to be essential for capitalist growth. Michael Mann (1995) has most convincingly explained this. Allow me to quote him fully:

> The theory of 'breathless transnationalism' has been challenged in recent years. The international economy system seems to be emerging as dual: transnationalism is much more pronounced in finance than it is in trade and industry.… The national bases of production and trade seem undiminished.

> Ninety per cent of global production remains for the domestic market. The shift from manufacturing toward services in the advanced economies is now reinforcing this localism. Though manufacturing imports from the "South" have increased, they still represent a tiny part of total manufactured goods. Furthermore, almost all the so called "multinational corporations" are still owned overwhelmingly by nationals in their home-base country, and their headquarters and research and development activities are still concentrated there… International patterns are still dominated by geography and tradition: most trade and cross ownership occurs between neighbors and long-standing allies, like Britain and the U.S., Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden remain the most internationalized economies, the US remains quite national, Japan remains the most nationally insulated. Domestic savings and investment rates correlates about 75 per cent among OECD countries, indicating that foreign capital is not all that internationally mobile—though this correlation is now dropping slightly. And the differences in real interest rates between countries are about the same as they were a century ago. Indeed, it is doubtful whether, in many respects capitalism is more transnational than it was before 1914, except for the special case of integration of the European Union. This is hardly an economic base on which to ground any grand generalizing theories of the end of the nation-state—or indeed of the emergence of a 'postmodern' society. (Mann 1995, 117–118)

Yet the *financial* institutions of global capitalism differ from those of the early part of the twentieth century. Finance zooms across the world with a velocity gratifying the most breathless transnationalist. The point to stress here is that while, yes, this is a new configuration of financial institutions, the pressure on states is to conform to the working of capital while still retaining some semblance of control of their states. In this context the discussions in humanities classrooms on the decline of the nation-state may be somewhat premature. Rather the contemporary, complicated intersection of national states and financial capital announces the crisis of the neo-liberal model that must confront increasing economic inequality, the incapacity of the state to consolidate itself and to act as promoter and supporter of institutions, its inefficiency in the control of corruption, the impossibility of reconciling transnational interests with domestic rights, as we all have witnessed recently in the case of Argentina. The pressures on governments are not new. But what is new is the pressure that the collapse of a "recuperative modernization" (*nachholende Modernisierung*) has put on the national bourgeoisies, according to the German political economist Robert Kurz (1991, 2000).

The cultural forms, including literature, are inscribed in this highly complex interaction between global capitalism and local responses to the discourses of globalization, mediated through specific linguistic and national formations. It is perhaps in this context that—as the work of Roberto Schwarz has shown—a return to Adorno for an illumination of the functioning of aesthetic forms may be not as anachronistic as one could have thought, but is rather quite timely, if one is willing to pay attention to the impact peripheral glances may have on the critical-theoretical tradition of Adorno himself.

Reading literature in its specific and concrete manifestation—which includes the specificity of a language, a social and cultural milieu and yes, why not, a specific relation to a national tradition in dialogue with a large Western canon—is a delimitation that ought not to escape us nor should we wish to relegate it in favor of globalist theories of literary production. To walk that line would be to embark on the globalism adventure that renders cultural specificity empty and that translates referentiality to that international space, that once again defines the rest of the world in relation to the spatiality of empire. For those on the periphery of capitalism, the vicissitudes of their own reality, social, economic, political, and aesthetic are at the center and the mediations of globalization take interesting aesthetic forms that reveal much to us about the current state of capitalism. Proceeding imminently to understand what these artifacts articulate keep at bay the danger of letting literary theory be, *pace* Hans Blumenberg, nothing but the high point in the career of a globalized metaphor.

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CHAPTER 6

Subjective Form: Registration and World Literature

Thomas Waller

In its institutional format, world literature emerged out of the discussions of multiculturalism and the critiques of Eurocentrism that took place in the Anglophone academy during the 1990s, which led to the revision and expansion of Comparative Literature as a discipline (Spivak 2005, 1–25). Ushered in by postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, this 'new reform' self-consciously revived Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* as a means of engaging with hitherto marginalised literatures, and of theorising the cultural impact of late-capitalist globalisation (Brennan 2004, 30–32). Two persistent problems within the field have been the tendency to appeal to an ahistorical idea of cultural exchange and an uncritical appraisal of the role of translation, both of which serve to flatten out the unevenness and inequality inherent in the production of world-literary texts. In response to these problems, Franco Moretti influentially argued that world literature should be understood as comprising 'a system

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that is simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*' (2000, 56). Drawing from the tradition of world-systems analysis, Moretti insisted that world literature was not 'an object' but 'a problem', one that must be thought alongside the global economy's uneven distribution of wealth. Pascale Casanova, in a similar vein, developed a theory of the 'world republic of letters' in which 'international forms of literary dependency are to some extent correlated with the structure of international political domination' (2004, 81). In contrast to approaches to the concept as either a 'mode of reading' (Damrosch 2003, 5) or in terms of multilingualism (Apter 2013), these critics argued that world literature must be understood in materialist terms as a system stratified by power and inequality.

Yet, although Moretti and Casanova both draw from world-systems analysts such as Immanuel Wallerstein to theorise the interaction between world-literary cores and peripheries, neither of them properly engaged with the co-constitutive relationship between literature and economy. Moretti's reference to world-systems analysis, for instance, is 'troubled by the lack of a real point of contact' (Brennan 2019, 26), while Casanova's fails to take up seriously 'the world-systems knowledge movement's focus on labor conditions and modes of production' (Shapiro 2022, 204). Another issue with Moretti's and Casanova's approaches is the lack of an emphasis on close reading, which is eclipsed in Moretti's work by an emphasis on 'distant reading', and in Casanova's by a focus on the sociology of literature. In one of the first references to Roberto Schwarz in world-literary studies, Moretti's field-defining essay 'Conjectures on World Literature' cited Schwarz's work on the 'importing' of the novel to Brazil as a model for the study of the unevenness of the world-literary system, referring in particular to Schwarz's argument that 'foreign debt' is 'not simply an easily dispensable part of the work in which it appears, but a complex feature of it' (Schwarz 1992, 50). However, as Ericka Beckman, Oded Nir and Emilio Sauri have pointed out, Moretti's strategy of 'distant reading' could not be more different from Schwarz's 'patient practice of close reading', which 'provides something of a constant challenge to materialist understandings of peripheral literatures' (Beckman et al. 2022, 12–13).

The problem of how to reconcile a committed and dialectical practice of close reading with an account of the uneven development of capitalism on a world scale was tackled in a new way by the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) in their 2015 monograph *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*. WReC define

world literature not in canonical terms as the best works ever written, nor in an ahistorical way as texts that circulate beyond their culture of origin through translation, and still less as a kind of summit conference of great writers. Rather, world literature for WReC denotes 'the literary registration of modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development' (2015, 17). Like Moretti, WReC explicitly borrow from Schwarz their understanding of literary form as 'the abstract of specific social relationships' (Schwarz 1992, 53; Moretti 2000, 65; WReC 2016, 544–545). But where Moretti's engagement with world-systems analysis remained stuck at the superficial level of analogy, WReC elaborate a sophisticated theory of peripheral aesthetics as determined, not by a geographical remoteness from the centres of capitalist power, but rather by incorporation into the capitalist world-system precisely as peripheral.

In this way, Schwarz emerges as a central interlocutor for WReC, who speak of 'extend[ing] Roberto Schwarz's argument about Brazilian literature to the larger context of world literature' by focusing on the various forms of disjunctive, incongruous, catachrestic or more broadly 'irrealist' aesthetic strategies that arise in peripheral societies as an artistic response to the local experience of combined and uneven development (2015, 97). This is the sense in which WReC speak of world-literature as comprising not only works 'whose narrative structure self-consciously encapsulates the structural relations of the world-system', but also 'those texts whose content, in stark contrast, is wholly rooted in a singular regional or national context, yet whose form nonetheless reflects their position within the world-system, and which might thus be productively compared to other texts from countries experiencing homologous relations' (2015, 97). This dialectic between locally specific national content and a form that is mediated by social realities at a world-systemic level is a characteristic feature of Schwarz's readings of Brazilian literature and culture.

Consciousness of Critique

A key component of WReC's theory of 'world-literature' as '*the literature of the modern capitalist world-system*' (2015, 15) is the concept of 'registration'. In WReC's words:

> We use the term 'registration' (rather than representation) to discuss the relation between literary form and social reality, and explicitly highlight its complexity and intricacy; we discuss the difficult Schwarzian understanding of literary form as 'the abstract of social relationships'; we assess the theory of mediation (into and through literary form) in Löwy, Adorno, Lukács, Marcuse, Jameson, and other theorists. […] What our account […] takes from and shares with the theories of Schwarz, Marcuse, Adorno, Jameson, and so on, is an understanding of mediation as an ever unfinished and open-ended process of disclosing and interpreting what perpetually remains 'still-to-be known' in a literary work. (2016, 544–545)

Although registration offers an alternative to more familiar concepts in Marxist criticism like 'reflection', 'mediation' or 'refraction', it is not intended to supersede or simply replace them. Rather, WReC use registration precisely so as '*not to choose*' between them (WReC, 'Registration'). Which is to say, by speaking of the literary registration of capitalist modernity, WReC seek to 'work with the concepts and metaphors activated in the history of materialist aesthetics, while simultaneously pushing beyond them' ('Registration'). The price of this dialectical attempt to retain the resonance of related categories while evincing an original aesthetic theory of their own is that registration becomes something of a ghostly presence in their writing, hovering above those terms which it is also supposed to have supplanted.

One important tradition from which registration claims a critical distance is the Marxist theory of 'reflection'. Most fully developed by Engels in *Anti-Dühring* and *Dialectics of Nature*, and by Lenin in 'Materialism and Empirio-criticism', the theory of reflection holds that our perceptions, ideas and states of consciousness are 'only the reflection of the forms of motion of the real world, both of nature and of history' (Engels 1987, 485; Lenin 1977, 110). As Terry Eagleton argued in his primer on Marxist literary criticism, reflection theory came to provide Marxists with a model for 'combating formalist theories of literature which lock the literary work within its own sealed space, marooned from history' (Eagleton 2002, 46). And yet, with its overly simplistic and mechanistic 'base-superstructure' model, reflection theory presupposes a false and deterministic correspondence between literature and society that registration contests. As Raymond Williams put it in *Marxism and Literature*, the 'simple reductionism' of reflection theory implies that '"consciousness" and "its" products can be *nothing but* "reflections" of what has already occurred in the material social process' (1977, 61).

Which is to say, for reflection theorists, literary texts serve merely to reconfirm what the reader already knows. In this way, they misprize the paradox of literary form, which, in the manner of Fredric Jameson's political horizon, 'brings into being that very situation to which it is also, at one and the same time, a reaction […] generating and producing its own context in the same moment of emergence in which it steps back from it' (2002: 67; sentence order rearranged). Against deterministic and reflectionist approaches to aesthetics, the theory of registration upholds the disjunctive, unfinished and 'open-ended' character of world literature

On the other hand, not all Marxist uses of reflection theory lapse into vulgar economism. The work of Georg Lukács, for example, offers a dynamic account of the aesthetic *Wiederspiegelung* of reality that avoids the trap of reductionism, notwithstanding his early critique of epistemological reflection theory in *History and Class Consciousness*. Jameson has argued that the figure of reflection in Lukács should be understood less in terms of reductionism than as a sort of 'conceptual shorthand' that denotes the interaction 'of two incommensurate realities, one in the superstructure and the other in the base, the one cultural and the other socio-economic' (1971, 188–189). Nevertheless, it is hard not to view the notion of a literary text 'reflecting' the social world as a misnomer that presumes a false harmony between the 'internal' and 'external' spheres of a literary text and thereby fails to grasp the autonomy of aesthetic form. When Adorno charged the later Lukács with idealistically 'extorting' a 'reconciliation' from works of literary realism, it was precisely this critique that he had in mind. The idea that capitalist society could be reflected 'without a breach between subject and object', writes Adorno, 'implies that that reconciliation has been achieved, that society has been set right, that the subject has come into its own and is at home in the world' (2019c, 236). To the extent that the theory of registration privileges the incongruous, fractured, disjointed and irreconcilable aspects of the sensorium of world capitalism, it remains committed to the political campaign to overthrow it.

There is a tension in WReC's use of the term registration, however, for while it is at times used to describe the act on the part of the individual writer to critically figure social reality into aesthetic form, the more common-sense and mundane understanding of the term as the act of faithfully inscribing or recording some fact or social datum signifies precisely the opposite. This ambiguity is elided in part by the switch to the less familiar transitive form of the verb, which emphasises the writer's

active role in aesthetic critique, as when WReC write that Dostoevsky's fiction 'registers the manifest incongruities, dislocations and forms of unevenness characteristic of the (semi-)periphery' (62). Still, if registration can come to mean both the active critique of the social world and a more unintentional response closer to 'bearing witness', this should be understood less as a terminological equivocation than as a contradiction that inheres within the concept of literature itself. In WReC's words:

> In proposing a definition of world-literature as literature that 'registers' the (modern capitalist) world-system, we […] are not suggesting that only those works that self-consciously define themselves in opposition to capitalist modernity be considered world-literary — nor even that world-literary works are those that stage a coded or formally mediated resistance to capitalist modernity. As we understand it, the literary 'registration' of the world-system does not (necessarily) involve criticality or dissent. Our assumption is rather that the effectivity of the world-system will *necessarily* be discernible in any modern literary work, since the world-system exists unforgoably as the matrix within which all modern literature takes shape and comes into being. (2015, 20)

WReC are right to avoid equating registration with criticality as such. As Nicholas Brown argues, 'the forms imposed by global capitalism frame the interpretive possibilities available for any concrete cultural contents', so that the capitalist world-system can be said to function as a 'baseline of universality' in the production of world-literary texts (2005, 7, 2). This means that literature will bear the imprint of its imbrication within capitalist social relations above and beyond the political beliefs of the individual writer. To speak in logical terms, registration is a necessary but not sufficient condition of aesthetic critique: all critical texts register the social world in some way, but not all world-literary registrations are for that reason critical. It is for this reason that WReC insist on hyphenating 'world literature' as 'world-literature', thereby underscoring the fact that the relationship between world literature and the capitalist world-system is a necessary and co-productive one, not arbitrary or discretional. This categorical imperative comes with programmatic intent: where Jameson famously emphasised the need to 'Always Historicize!' (2002, ix), WReC add the injunction 'Always Hyphenate!' (Shapiro qtd. in Lazarus 2019, 16).

Roberto Schwarz's work on Brazilian literature and culture offers a sophisticated elaboration of the theory of registration and an intricate

model of world-literary reading. Registration is itself a term that occasionally appears in Schwarz's writing (albeit in a passing and unsystematic way), as in a key passage towards the end of his essay on 'Misplaced Ideas' in which he writes that artistic production 'is historically shaped and in some way registers the social process to which it owes its existence' (1992, 31). Just as with WReC, registration does not here name a mere elective choice on the part of the individual writer, but is rather a more or less reflexive response to the social conditions of historical capitalism, which encircle us all. A staple of Schwarz's work on Brazilian realism is that Brazil's insertion into the world market after independence as a 'backward' slave-owning society condemned to pursue liberal ideals of equality and bourgeois progress that remained structurally out of reach, acted as the 'practical matrix' (2001, 20–28) within which all Brazilian culture of the period was produced. Yet, while Schwarz is emphatic in arguing that these misplaced bourgeois liberal ideas furnished the material upon which literary form was set to work, he also crucially argues that 'the writer may well not know this, nor does he need to, in order to use them' (1992, 29). In a dense passage worth quoting at length, WReC draw attention to this moment in Schwarz's work as they broach the problem of the 'consciousness of critique':

> Another question revolves around the consciousness of critique within the texts: whether we are reading for the *political unconscious*, the way in which form is unconsciously warped and fissured, or whether we are reading for […] the self-conscious transformation by authors of those very fissures into sources of innovation […]. This would be to extend Roberto Schwarz's argument about Brazilian literature to the larger context of world literature, arguing that the 'sore spots' and 'national oddities' in literatures from the peripheries that reflect the asymmetry of the world-system are first reflected as generic discontinuities or unconscious incongruities, then transformed into conscious aesthetic experimentation which embodies negative critique of the world-historical order. (2015, 97)

In what follows, I highlight three instances of world-literary registration in Schwarz's work that nuance WReC's model. While Schwarz's reading of 'volubility' in Machado de Assis's novel *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* corroborates WReC's argument about the self-conscious transformation of formal fissures into sources of innovation, Schwarz's work also contains instances of literary registration that do not involve the critical consciousness of the author. *To the Victor, the Potatoes!*,

for example, is not primarily concerned with the successful transposition of social reality into literary form, but rather with the failures of Brazilian authors to adapt the formula of European realism. However, as Schwarz points out, [i]t is precisely in those failings that social interest finds its true transcription' (2020, 68). Furthermore, in Schwarz's interpretation of Antonio Candido's reading of the 'dialectic of roguery' in Manuel Antonio Almeida's novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sargent*, it is not the author's self-conscious engagement with the most pressing issues of his time that allows him to aesthetically register the social formation of which he is a part, but rather their textual suppression and exclusion. Here we find three modalities of registration: not only registration through the successful and self-conscious transformation of existing forms, but also registration through the failure to achieve this transformation, and through the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of the social material that is to be registered. Without discounting literature's imbrication in 'the process of social reproduction', which is 'independent of individual consciousness' (Schwarz 2012, 23), this chapter asks what role (if any) the consciousness of the individual writer should play in the evaluation of aesthetic critique: not the 'objective form' of works of art, then, but the 'subjective form' of world-literary registration.

Volubility

Schwarz's reading of 'volubility' in Machado de Assis's 1881 novel *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* is the most sophisticated and complex example of the theory of registration, not only in the entire body of Schwarz's work, but perhaps in the history of Marxist literary criticism itself. In his magisterial study *A Master on the periphery of Capitalism*, Schwarz carries out a meticulous close reading of *The Posthumous Memoirs* with a key focus placed on the narrative eccentricities of the text's eponymous first-person narrator. In a comic mode that recalls eighteenth-century novelists such as Laurence Sterne, Brás Cubas's eccentric style capriciously consumes and subversively contrasts a range of contradictory attitudes and literary mannerisms in a way that consistently fails to live up to the rules and expectations that he himself has laid down. Borrowing a phrase from Antonio Candido, Schwarz argues that the narrative volubility of Brás Cubas should be read as the 'structural reduction' of a social process that had been imposed on the Brazilian ruling class by objective historical circumstances. To demonstrate this claim, Schwarz must

engage in a set of extra-literary reflections that establish the 'practical matrix' of nineteenth-century Brazil, within which Machado's fiction took shape. Yet, as Schwarz insists, one is not thereby to understand the relationship between volubility and this extra-literary sphere 'on the model of 2+2=4' (2001, 20). Rather, a successful literary form achieves some measure of autonomy that distinguishes it from the historical context out of which it has arisen, even as the text in question would be meaningless without this social horizon. As Adorno writes: 'There is no content, no formal category of the literary work that does not, however transformed and however awarely, derive from the empirical reality from which it has escaped' (2019d, 359). The relationship between literature and society theorised by Schwarz is thus grounded in an appreciation of the contradictory and undecidable nature of literary form, which is doomed to try and take up or capture that which remains forever out of reach.

After the political emancipation of Brazil from Portuguese colonial rule in 1822, the European model of capitalist development and the liberal ideas undergirding this model had to be copied by the newly independent country if it wanted to take its place alongside other, more powerful states in the world-system. However, because the function of Brazil's integration into nineteenth-century world capitalism was as a slave-producing economy supplying commodities such as coffee, sugar and rubber, the old, 'backward' model of personal domination continued to live on, and the colonial base of the plantation economy survived the transition largely untouched. As Schwarz wrote in his essay on misplaced ideas, this 'disparity between the slave society of Brazil and the principles of European liberalism' constituted 'the unavoidable frame of reference for everybody' (1992, 19–20). What had been positive before now became negative and retrograde, but due to Brazil's peripheral status within the world-system, the country's links to the new civil liberties did not change but rather *reinforced* its backwardness. 'From the practical perspective', writes Schwarz, 'slavery was a *contemporary* necessity; from the emotional perspective, a *traditional* presence; and from the ideological perspective, an *archaic* disgrace — all of them contradictory attributes, but real in the light of the historical experience of the ruling class' (1992, 21). One example of the absurdity of this situation is that the Declaration of the Rights of Man—a founding document of the French Revolution that prescribed such liberal principles as free labour and equality before the law—was transcribed in part in the Brazilian constitution of 1824, thereby throwing the persistence of slavery into even sharper relief (Schwarz 1992,

20). Similarly, the lyrics to the hymn of Brazil's Second Republic, written in 1890, read 'We cannot believe that of yore / slaves could have existed in our noble land', despite the fact that 'of yore' was only two years before, slavery having been abolished in 1888 (Schwarz 1992, 26–27). Another, yet more humorous example is taken by Schwarz from a book on nineteenth-century Brazilian architecture by Nestor Goulart Reis Filho, who describes the stylistic incongruity of a rural household in São Paulo:

> Over the earth-work walls raised by slaves European wallpaper was pasted or pictures hung to create the illusion of modern interiors, like those of houses in the countries undergoing industrialisation. In some cases the pretence reached a level of absurdity: Greco-Roman architectural motifs — pilasters, colonnades, columns, friezes and such — were painted, with perfect perspective and shading, to suggest a neoclassical ambiance that was unrealisable with the techniques and materials locally available. In other cases the walls were painted with windows showing scenes of Rio de Janeiro or of Europe, to suggest a faraway outside world and certainly one different from the actual one that featured slave quarters, slaves and work yards. (qtd. in Schwarz 2020, 9)

What better illustration of the Althusserian definition of ideology as an imaginary relationship to real social conditions than this Brazilian interior, its walls plastered with images of Europe to distract from the crack of the slave whip sounding just outside its door? But the importation of ideas and forms from Europe did not so much function as ideology *en soi* as what Schwarz calls 'ideologies of the second degree' (1992, 23), for where bourgeois principles like liberty, progress and equality corresponded to appearances in industrialising Europe, concealing what it was essential to conceal—the exploitation of wage-labour—in Brazil they did not correspond to appearances and thus did not describe reality, not even falsely. This mismatch was itself a kind of critique, as Schwarz insists: 'inasmuch as they became preposterous, these ideas also ceased to mislead' (1992, 24).

The formal principle of volubility in *The Posthumous Memoirs* reproduces this practical matrix in aesthetic form. While it is not possible to capture the full intricacy and detail of Schwarz's reading here, it should be noted that a key feature of volubility is its 'concomitant effect of superiority and belittlement' (2001, 26). On the one hand, the narrator's transgressions and his dizzying changes in attitude attain for him a

degree of supremacy at the expense of the reader; on the other, his craziness and inordinate boasting simultaneously belittle his position (2001, 24–26). Far from being a compositional defect, Schwarz argues that this narrative uncertainty is one of Machado's greatest achievements, for it 'gives the objectivity of form to the ideological ambivalence inherent to the Brazil of its time' (2001, 27). In its voracious consumption of attitudes, ideas, convictions and literary mannerisms, volubility has an air of superiority from which nothing is safe. Yet, it is at the same time a form of foolishness that produces a backward effect, for the narrator's capriciousness and his penchant for pseudo-philosophical posturing reveal a lack of proximity to those same enlightened ideas over which he asserts his superiority. Schwarz reads this formal oscillation as the literary registration of the objective historical conflict between bourgeois liberal ideas and the persistence of slavery in nineteenth-century Brazil, which *The Posthumous Memoirs* reproduces, not by dramatising the conflict, but by transposing it into the narrative form of the text without mitigating ambivalences. Machado succeeded insofar as he made the incompatibility between European liberalism and Brazil's 'backwardness' a principle of the novel's composition, recreating this social conflict within the voluble fluctuation between superiority and inferiority, capturing the historical contradiction without attempting to reconcile or resolve it. Here we touch on a key aspect of the theory of registration, one that returns to Adorno's allusion to that which remains perpetually 'still-to-be-known' in works of art. The literary form of *The Posthumous Memoirs* figures the social contradictions of its time into an aesthetic unity without thereby collapsing them into a false reconciliation, *registering* them in their incongruity rather than merely reflecting them.

Importation of the Novel

Schwarz's essay 'The importation of the novel to Brazil and its contradictions in Alencar', published as chapter two of Schwarz's first book-length study of Brazilian literature, elaborates a very different model of world-literary registration, one that moves away from the focus on the intelligence and conscious success of the individual writer. In this essay, Schwarz analyses the curiously dislocated prose style of José de Alencar, a contemporary and friend of Machado de Assis and one of the first Brazilian writers to work with the formula of European realism. The subject of the essay is Alencar's novel *Senhora* (1875), the plot of which revolves

around the attempts of the heroine Aurélia, who has inherited a large sum of money, to get her revenge over a man who has rejected her for a woman with a larger dowry. Schwarz argues that *Senhora* reinscribes a central incongruity of Brazilian cultural life by faithfully representing local subject matter in a way that undermines the European model of literary realism on which its form is based. The passages dealing with the headstrong Aurélia, for example, are couched in a style that recalls the salons and intellectual torments of Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, while the novel's morally edifying climax reads as a thinly veiled reference to the novel of social reconciliation à la Octave Feuillet or Alexandre Dumas. However, the large part of the novel's characters belongs to an impoverished provincial sphere that baulks at the highfalutin manners and uninhibited ways of Aurélia, creating a discord in the very fabric of the text which is not to be found in the European novels that have served as its model. As Schwarz puts it, *Senhora* is 'more relaxed at its periphery than at its centre' (2020, 21). The result of this imbalance is that, while Alencar is able to preserve some of the tone and verbal techniques of the European realist novel, these formal elements are at the same time 'displaced by the local scene required by the need for verisimilitude' (23). Yet, more than a mere mismatch between form and content, the impasse of Alencar's fiction itself has a 'mimetic power' (43), insofar as it repeats, at the level of literature, the ideological imitation of bourgeois liberal ideas that was characteristic of the intellectual life of Brazil during the Second Empire.

We should pause here to appreciate the full complexity and sophistication of Schwarz's reading. What is being argued is not simply that Alencar has bungled his attempt at imitating the European realists, nor is Schwarz suggesting that local Brazilian subject matter is simply incompatible with imported liberal ideology, although he argues this too. Rather, what Schwarz demonstrates is that, in *Senhora*, 'the formal defect is an ingredient […] in the same way as are the ingredients that have produced that defect' (42). In other words, form has become content. One immediate consequence of this reading is the counter-intuitive conclusion that 'Alencar's biggest contribution to the formation of [the Brazilian] novel resides in the weak points of his writing' (44). That is, his failure to bring together European form and peripheral content has an objectivity in Brazilian society and is thus at the same time a mark of his success as a writer. However, Alencar is deficient in a different, strictly ideological way, for he himself perceives the compositional defect of his fiction as an imitative success in an act of *méconnaissance* that reveals his own class affinity

with the Brazilian ruling elite. In Schwarz's words, 'Alencar does not dwell upon the contradiction between European form and local societal characteristics but he persists in including them both — in which respect he is merely a member of his class, which appreciated progress and the current cultural goings-on to which he had access, and also appreciated the traditional relationships that validated his own position of eminence' (41). Alencar's acritical adoption of European realism is thus compromised by a 'simultaneous adherence to completely heterogeneous terms' (41): to the 'local colour' of Brazil, to the practice of favour, to the slaveholders and the enlightened bourgeois; in short, to the system of class domination of nineteenth-century Brazil. For this reason, Schwarz identifies Alencar as a prototype of the conservative modernisation that would later come to be associated with figures like the Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre.

The literary incoherencies of Alencar's fiction are, in this way, more of a symptom of his conformity as a writer than they are the mark of a truly great artist. True, the formal impasse of Alencar's work has a mimetic force that mediates an objective historical problem, but then all literature has a mimetic quality to it. If the inversion by which the literary material 'includes on the level of content the failure of European form' (44) is only glimpsed in Alencar, it will emerge in a most spectacular fashion in the formal pyrotechnics of Machado de Assis. Just as WReC define the capitalist world-system as that unforgoable matrix within which all of the world's literary production takes place, so do Schwarz's readings of Brazilian texts find the historical dynamic that mediates them all, whether it be in the successful fiction of Machado himself or the less critical Alencar. It is to this extent that Schwarz speaks of the process by which 'world history, structured and expressed over and over again in the form of its ever-varied local products, passes into writing, over which it now exercises an internal influence' (2020, 14). And yet, this process of world-literary encoding involves differing degrees of the writer's consciousness of critique. The formal principle of volubility in *The Posthumous Memoirs* singled Machado out as a great writer because it shows his ability to discern the causal mechanisms of society and to transpose them into aesthetic form. In this, Machado fulfilled Lukács's conception of the historical task of the realist writer, which is 'to pierce the surface to discover the underlying essence, i.e. the real factors that relate their experience to the hidden social forces that produce them' (1977, 36–36). Alencar, on the other hand, remained trapped at the

surface level of social relations: his fiction was critical of Brazil's integration into nineteenth-century world capitalism only to the extent that this process itself contained its own immanent critique. Where Machado was conscious and successful, Alencar was critical through his failure. As Adorno argues, this distinction between the success and failure of works of art involves different relationships to the concept of ideology:

> [I]deology is untruth, false consciousness, deceit. It manifests itself in the failure of works of art, in their inherent falseness, and it is countered by criticism. To repeat mechanically, however, that great works of art, whose essence consists in giving form to the crucial contradictions in real existence […], are ideology, not only does an injustice to their truth content but also misrepresents the concept of ideology. […] The greatness of works of art […] consists solely in the fact that they give voice to what ideology hides. Their very success moves beyond false consciousness, whether intentionally or not. (2019b, 61)

Machado was a great writer because he discerned the ideological core of Brazilian society (the mismatch between bourgeois liberal ideas and Brazil's slavocratic mode of production) and transposed it into aesthetic form (the narrative volubility of Brás Cubas). Alencar, by contrast persevered at the surface level of ideological untruth in his attempt to remain faithful to the formula of European literary realism, and in this way fell short of greatness. However, it is Alencar's very failure to assimilate this formula to Brazilian social conditions that are the mark of his immersion within the capitalist periphery, for this reality itself took the form of incongruity and disparity. Here is a distinction between the two modalities of world-literary registration introduced at the beginning of this essay, the one involving critical consciousness, the other involving a less intentional literary response, in which registration takes place 'whether or not the writer knows or wills it' (Schwarz 1992, 30).

Dialectic of Roguery

Another intricate example of literary registration in Schwarz's work is to be found in his brilliant essay 'Pressupostos, salvo engano, de "Dialética da malandragem"' (1987), translated as 'Objective Form: Reflections on the Dialectic of Roguery' (2012). Here, the unforgoable matrix of the

capitalist world-system is registered neither through the conscious transposition of combined and uneven development into aesthetic form, nor through the unwitting transcription of its ideological distortions and untruths, but rather through the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of the social material that is to be registered. Schwarz's essay takes as its object Antonio Candido's reading of Manuel Antonio Almeida's novel *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* [Memoirs of a militia sergeant] (1854) in his essay 'Dialética da malandragem' [Dialectic of Roguery] (1970). The parasitic character of Schwarz's essay should be made clear: as a re-reading of Candido's own reading of a literary text that is itself said to comment on a structural dynamic in nineteenth-century Brazilian society, it is at least twice removed from its object of study. As the translated title suggests, the key term here is 'objective form', which can be understood, in schematic terms, as an attempt to overcome the distinction between what is 'internal' and 'external' to a literary work by seeking out a 'real nexus' that joins the two domains together without affording primacy to either one of them in particular (2012, 24). As might be expected with a dialectical concept such as this, and much in keeping with Adorno's own aversion to clear-cut definitions of theoretical ideas,[1] Schwarz does not provide any direct explanation of objective form but rather allows the concept to emerge organically from his detailed interpretation of Candido's reading of the figure of the *malandro* (rogue or trickster) in Almeida's novel. Indeed, Schwarz mentions the term exactly once in this essay, and even then only secondarily, as he notes that, as per the Marxist understanding, 'social forms are objective; that is, created by the process of social reproduction, independent of individual consciousness' (23). In fact, it is in another of Schwarz's essays—'Adequação nacional e originalidade crítica' [National adequation and critical originality] (1999)—again on Candido, though this time on the latter's reading of Aluísio Azevedo's novel *O Cortiço* (1890), that Schwarz speaks in a more explicit and purposeful manner of '*uma* forma *objectiva*' [an objective form], which he describes there as a specific social logic that has the power to structure or guide (the verb is *pautar*) the literary work in question (1999,

[1] See, for example, Adorno's lauding characterisation of the essay-form—his favoured mode of writing—as one which 'rejects definition of its concepts' since it 'understands that the demand for strict definition has long served to eliminate — through stipulative manipulations of the meanings of concepts — the irritating and dangerous aspects of the things that live in the concepts' (2019a, 37).

30). The task for the literary critic is to isolate the mediating principle that enables the articulation between the literary work and the material social reality out of which it has emerged. That is, to name the particular formal element 'which organizes the elements of fiction and of reality at a profound level, and is part of both' (2012, 22).

In Candido's reading of Almeida's novel, and notwithstanding the former's ambivalence towards the Marxist tradition, this mediating principle is identified as a dialectic of roguery that determines both the plot and style of the *Memoirs*. The form taken by this dialectic is a ceaseless oscillation between the social spheres of order and disorder, palpable as much in the comings and goings of the novel's protagonists as in the semantic ambiguity of the structure of its sentences, 'in which there is always room for both sides of any question' (13). This alternation and indecision, however, is also (already) objective insofar as it is both the 'structural reduction' of a historical element external to literature, and the 'aesthetic formalisation' of a general rhythm of Brazilian society in the first half of the nineteenth century (13). In Schwarz's words,

> the dialectic of order and disorder is a *principle of generalization* that at a deep level organizes both the data of reality and those of the fiction (whether or not they are documentary in nature) and makes them intelligible. It is a *generality* that participates in reality and in the fiction; it is there in both, and in it they encounter their common dimension. Thus, the fictional data do not come directly from the real data, nor does the sense of reality in the fiction depend on them, even while presupposing them. It depends on mediating principles, which are generally hidden and which structure the work, and it is thanks to them that the two orders, the real and the fictional, cohere. (2012, 14–15)

The 'real nexus' joining together the internal structuring element of the work of fiction and the external social reality to which it refers is then not so much a nameable fictional unit or ideologeme, but rather a logic of organisation that remains for the most part invisible. Captured by Almeida in the cadence of his prose and in the comic vicissitudes of the plot, the dialectic of order and disorder was objectively grounded in the experiences of the group of poor, 'free' men and women that mediated between the two classes of slave owners and slaves in nineteenth-century Brazil. These intermediate and anomic class actors, typified in the novel by the figure of the *malandro*, typically vacillated between cultural values as a means of securing favours from those who possessed capital. To this

extent, the class composition of Brazilian society was 'the historical reality of which the dialectic of order and disorder was the formal correlative' (14). Yet, by restricting its sphere of action to the life of the *agregados*, Almeida's novel completely omits both slave labour and the mechanisms of control proper the slave-owning ruling classes from its thematic preoccupations. For this reason, the text's perspicuity in grasping a generalised rhythm of Brazilian society is at the same time paradoxically linked to its limitations as a work of documentary realism.

The key to the link between literature and society is thus conceived by Schwarz as neither directly social nor strictly literary. Rather, it emerges from a third term that structures both sides of the opposition without limiting itself to either one of them in particular. What is significant about Schwarz's interpretation of Candido's reading is that it locates the critical impetus of Almeida's novel—that which registers the class inequality and structural composition of nineteenth-century Brazil—in a textual element that is never named directly but which nonetheless functions as a principle of composition. This textual element is the persistence of slavery in Brazil, whose importance is underlined through its formal suppression within the work. This conception of literary form is, to borrow Nicholas Brown's phrase, a 'mimesis beyond realism' (2018): the documentary quality of the work is predicated on the exclusion of the social dynamic that is the object of its fidelity. In this way, we arrive at a third modality of world-literary registration, alongside Schwarz's reading of the conscious transformation of social forms in Machado's fiction, and Alencar's failure to adapt the formula of European realism. These three modalities of success, failure and absence correspond to three of the most eminent names in Brazilian letters: Machado, Alencar and Almeida.

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CHAPTER 7

Presuppositions—Barring Error—of Roberto Schwarz, Antonio Candido, and Georg Lukács

Nicholas Brown

Where matters of interpretation are concerned, "method" is the name of a mistake. Meaning is a game that is not governed by rules. Donald Davidson pointed out that even the interpretation of a simple metaphor, such as Thomas Mann's reference to Tolstoy as a "great moralizing infant," presents tremendous difficulties if we try to come up with a

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method that will translate the metaphor into "ordinary language," whatever we may mean by that (Davidson 2001).[1] But the flip side of the deflation of the problem of method is then, as an inevitable and salutary consequence, an emphasis on the act of interpretation. We do, in fact, grasp what Mann is trying to say, and we can ourselves say all kinds of useful things to help others understand it. "So too understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules" (245). Anyone who has conversed in a foreign language, played charades, taught a class, read a poem, or indeed been in any kind of substantive relationship with another human being can find ample experiential evidence for the basic truth that meaning is a game that is not governed by rules.

The fact that language has rules, and that all kinds of social contexts in which meaning is important—including literary genres—also have rules, distracts us from this basic truth. You need rules to write a sonnet. Knowing those same rules may, plausibly, help guide my interpretation of your sonnet. But there is no method or rule that can tell me whether or not knowing those rules will help guide my interpretation. Only the poem can tell me that. This, and nothing else—certainly not a set of shapes, patterns, or relationships—is what is meant by the concept of aesthetic autonomy or "self-legislating form," what Roberto Schwarz calls "liberated form," the singular concept that names the specificity of the work of art as opposed to other kinds of cultural production.

Let us take as an example a lovely little poem by the mid-century Brazilian poet Ferreira Gullar:

> Biography
> In those days the obscenity of your sex perfumed the whole house
> Next to me on the balcony in a porcelain crock a nature contrary to my own was emerging

[1] It might seem to complicate matters that Davidson insists that what a metaphor is meant to bring to our attention "is not meaning" (256). This seems to me a bizarre "restraint in using the word 'meaning,'" and indeed Davidson himself seems to have come to the same conclusion, later writing that "I was stupidly stubborn about the word meaning when all I cared about was the primacy of first meaning" (2005, 173 n.7). By "first meaning" Davidson means something very like literal meaning: signification that "has a systematic place in the language of the author" (173). If we are using restraint in employing the word "meaning" in the current context, it will be to the aspect of meaning that does *not* have a systematic place in the language of the author: in other words, to the aspect of artworks that calls for the discipline of interpretation.

virid
It was about two centuries after the French Revolution
And that enormous yellow flower that sprang up in the yard next to the loo
pollen body blaze (2015, 115).[2]

What is the French Revolution doing here? Will it help to know that Ferreira Gullar was himself a Marxist and a revolutionary? Will it help to know about the evacuation of the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro in the face of Napoleon's invasion of Lisbon? Will it help to know Hegel's characterization of death during the Terror as of no more significance than "cleaving a head of cabbage?" Only the poem can tell us what "the French Revolution" means *here*: the invocation of the French Revolution produces a standpoint from which human sexuality appears so atavistic and ahistorical that it is indistinguishable from the sexuality of plants—and, conversely, a standpoint from which History itself appears as distant and irrelevant to biography of the horny poet as it does to the life-cycle of the fertile plant. And from there the poem begins to unfurl its mysteries: the flower's sexuality is "contrary" to the poet's in that only the poet's understands itself, paradoxically, as identical to the plant's—and is therefore, perhaps, not as ahistorical as it seems. One could, I think, spend much longer with this poem. But the point I am trying to make is that while "contrary" has a more or less stable definition and "French Revolution" has a more or less stable referent, only the poem can tell us what, in the poem, they mean.

This emphasis on the act of interpretation, itself a theoretical claim whose consequences I will attempt to draw out in what follows, has nothing to do with such recent (but also perennial) North American "post-critical" slogans as "surface reading," "just reading," and so on,

2

Biografia
Naquela época a obscenidade de teu sexo recendia por toda a casa
A meu lado na varanda num jarro de louça uma natureza contrária à minha emergia virente
Estávamos há quase dois séculos da Revolução Francesa
E aquela enorme flor amarela que nasceu no quintal junto ao banheiro
pólen corpo incêndio.

which, when they have theoretical substance at all, attempt to deflate both method and interpretation at the same time, thereby reducing the literary work to a fetish-object whose value it proves difficult to explain. As opposed to such approaches, conservative, and anti-political in that they forestall discussion and disagreement—and therefore also consensus—the impetus behind the insistence on method is generally salutary: namely, to draw out the full implications of the "socially symbolic act" that is the literary text. Think of Fredric Jameson's insistence that any properly Marxist interpretation must move through the four medieval allegorical levels from the literal through the "allegorical" (the intervention of the intended meaning of the text into its immediate historical and political context) and the "moral" (the necessary implication, whether conscious or not, of such intervention in class conflict) to the "anagogic" (the necessary implication, whether conscious or not, of class struggle in the great dialectical succession of modes of production). But since these implications are, from a Marxist standpoint, necessary, whether conscious or not, one need not make methodological claims about interpretation, nor rely on them, to find such implications and to lead others to see them. Rather, one must only be attentive to them, which is as much as to say that one must only be a Marxist, or be willing to adopt Marxism's fundamental axes, however provisionally. One must only understand, or be willing to entertain the possibility, that class struggle is the engine of history and that history is in the last instance the history of modes of production. To think of such attention as a method introduces unnecessary problems.

Let us take as exemplary just one sentence from Jameson's major statement on literary interpretation, where he points to "nodal points implicit in the ideological system [of the literary text] which have, however, remained unrealized in the surface of the text, which have failed to become manifest in the logic of the narrative, and which we can therefore read as what the text represses" (1981, 48). Note the complexity of the rhetorical operation here. The sentence, which broadly seeks to characterize the "unsaid" of the literary text, moves through four near-synonyms—"implicit," "unrealized," latent (as opposed to "manifest"), and, finally "repressed." In this movement the central premise gains with each step in theoretical heft precisely what it loses in self-evidence. The sentence begins from the "implicit"—which makes only the minimal, barely theoretical claim that "socially symbolic acts," like all acts, have entailments and presuppositions, many which are not present to mind to the actor in the act, and which might be thought of as a purely negative,

Hegelian "unconscious." It ends with the "repressed," which invokes a positive theory of the unconscious that, like all positive theories of the subject from astrology and phrenology through Lacan and Althusser all the way to the latest popular enthusiasms about artificial intelligence and brain science, we are not obliged to take seriously. (Meanwhile, the final modal verb in "we can read as" amounts, in a Jamesonian grammar that abounds in "should's", "must's", and "will's", to a kind of equivocation: Why should the description of the inevitable partiality of literary presentation—indeed, of any presentation whatever—as necessarily "repressing" traumatic content take precedence over the description of the same as merely requiring—again, like any other action—"implicit" entailments and presuppositions?) The point here is not to resolve this question, though I have suggested elsewhere that Jameson's enormous contributions by and large do not require such a shift from a negative to a positive unconscious. Rather, I want to point out that the conundrum is produced by the insistence on a method. "Repressed" meanings call for a method to unearth them (better, the will to method requires that meanings be repressed); "implicit" meanings simply call for interpretation.

Roberto Schwarz, in his concrete practice as a literary critic, rarely fails to touch—without, however, necessarily separating them as "allegorical levels"—on all four Jamesonian analytic moments of interpretation. Take, for example, Schwarz's early essay on Kafka's "Worries of a Family Man," a brilliant close reading that occupies no more than five pages (2007a, 21–25). As is well known, Kafka's story seems to center on Odradek, a strange object that looks like a spool but isn't, since its spool-like form, covered indeed in random pieces of string, is supplemented by two crossed bars that enable it to "stand upright as though on two legs" (Kafka 1965, 171). Indeed, Odradek speaks. The immediate allegorical question would seem to be "what does Odradek stand for"? But the allegorical secret, like the secret of Kafka's "Eleven Sons," which Kafka confessed is "quite simply eleven stories that I am working on," might turn out to be entirely banal. Indeed it seems likely that if "Odradek" replaces some other substantive object or category, it is most likely the story itself or the category of the work of art, of both of which it might be said that, like Odradek, it is "useless, but in its own way complete." But Schwarz has an insight that no method, only the story itself, could prompt: Odradek is a red herring. The story is really "about"—as indeed, its title says quite plainly—its narrator and his inconsistent (but logically structured) subjective stance when confronted with the existence of

Odradek: initially amused, then condescending, dismissive, anxious, and ultimately homicidal, though this last is decorously expressed (Schwarz 2007a, 21–25). Why should little Odradek provoke any reaction at all, much less this peculiar sequence? Whatever the allegorical content of Odradek, we know that his existence is described by the family man as self-justifying: he serves no external purpose, is, again, "useless but in his own way complete." As such he is, in Schwarz's words, "the precise and logical construction of the negation of bourgeois life" (23). In a climactic moment, this logical construction, which needs no specific content, is shown to describe a "lumpenproletariat without hunger and without fear of the police" (24). And with this stroke, Schwarz touches immediately on all three of Jameson's allegorical levels. The family man's anxiety clearly has a class character: the story wouldn't work if the narrator were a deliveryman or the housekeeper. But more importantly, his very anxiety hinges on the hidden fragility of a social order that depends on its survival on the distribution of violence and hunger. Meanwhile, it is these "higher" allegorical levels that fill out the content of the story's allegory. What may, in some initial conception, have been intended as a mere allegory of the micropolitics of petty-bourgeois philistinism, turns out to require, as its structural corollary, something like the recognition that the mere existence of an alternative to the bourgeois order, even in the unemphatic form of Odradek or the work of art, immediately suggests the worrying possibility of that order's dissolution. This threatening existence, which Schwarz names as the lumpenproletariat without fear and without hunger, is not a secret referent, since the real lumpenproletariat is hungry and does fear the police; Schwarz's formulation is a kind of paraphrase—just as much an impossible schematic construction as Odradek himself—that leads us to the truth of Kafka's formulation. The question of whether Kafka was aware of the implication, consciously or unconsciously, needn't arise.

Now of course, it is clearly the case that Schwarz proceeds in his commentary by means of a kind of "method," namely an extraordinary sensitivity to shifts in narrative voice. But this alertness cannot be considered a method in the a priori sense dismissed above: to the degree that one finds Schwarz's reading compelling, one will agree that that the logic of the story, in a certain sense its plot, indeed consists in a series of infinitesimal shifts in narrative voice. An extraordinary alertness to narrative voice will be useful elsewhere—most notably for Schwarz

when reading the last great works of Machado de Assis—but not necessarily when reading Clarice Lispector. Note also that this more modest "method," namely the attempt to follow the interpretive prompts immanent to the text itself, cannot serve as even the most minimal guarantee of interpretive justice. No such guarantee is available. Interpretation is a matter of disagreement—whose ground is consensus. (One might as well say: Interpretation is a matter of consensus—whose ground is disagreement.) We will return to this.

Just because meaning is not governed by rules (and therefore interpretation is not usefully guided by method), does not mean that there is nothing further to be said about what we are doing when we interpret works of art. As a way of beginning to address the question, I will turn first to a 1970 essay by Schwarz's mentor Antonio Candido, a breakthrough essay that concerns Manuel Antônio de Almeida's 1854 novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant* (Candido 1970). The greater part of Antonio Candido's essay is devoted to drawing out formal peculiarities of Almeida's novel, whose distinctive texture derives from the figure of the *malandro* or rogue. In the novel the *malandro* is not precisely a type, though he is that too and will certainly become one over the subsequent course of Brazilian literary history. Rather he is a principle of composition, a figure that passes easily between two poles that Antonio Candido labels "order" and "disorder" respectively: something recognizable as bourgeois society, on the one hand, with its laws, marriages, professions, and all the rest, and on the other, a larger zone, difficult to qualify, that presents "twenty situations of concubinage for every marriage and a thousand chance unions to every situation of concubinage" (95). This movement, once we are attuned to it, turns out to govern the novel as a whole, such that even omnipresent Major Vidigal, the fearsome representative of order throughout the novel, turns out to obey the same logic. In a climactic scene the major, approached at home in deshabille by three women who seek to intervene on the hero's behalf, rushes inside and reemerges wearing his uniform dress coat—but without his pants. The major, complacently responsive to the blandishments of the ladies, appears "in regimentals from the belt up, homespun from the belt down — armoring reason in the norms of the law and easing the solar plexus in amiable indiscipline" (95).

At a key moment, Antonio Candido's essay discerns two conflicting literary modes in Manuel Antônio de Almeida's *Memories of a Militia Sergeant*. On the one hand, the novel presents a descriptive mode, mainly

pertaining to local color (the example is a Lenten procession sponsored by the goldsmiths' guild). On the other, it presents a narrative mode, in which local color is subsumed into a formal logic (the example is a *capoeira* fight implicated in both sides of the order–disorder dialectic that Candido discerns as essential to the novel's form). But for Candido these two modes do not simply exist side-by-side. Rather, the second mode is the "correct" one; the first is, "if not a mistake," then structurally "imperfect" (88). The judgment is evidently sound, but on what does it rest? The "traditional norms of composition" invoked by Candido are external criteria and therefore not sufficient to the case.

Only the first mode is, strictly speaking, a mimetic mode. In the descriptive mode, the text owes its authority to facts outside the text, which the text is one way or another obliged to mirror, reflect, or represent. There are at least two related problems with this mode, one theoretical and one political. The theoretical problem is that the representation can never do justice to the object being represented. Every description is unavoidably not only partial, but in the scheme of things busies itself with a laughably small selection of possible attributes. Unavoidably some check must be placed on the potentially limitless number of descriptive attributes, and this check is either arbitrary or a matter of standpoint. And with this we have already flipped over to the ideological problem. All the authority belongs to the object, which is only to be mirrored, reflected, or represented by the text. But in fact nothing of the kind is taking place; what is disavowed in the act of representation is the active role the representation plays in constructing the object itself. Presenting itself as a representation of reality, representation obscures the fact that the reality presented is its own production. The act of representation will always be characterized by an essential falsity, quite separate from whatever contingent inaccuracies might also be present. No conceivable authority could decide for us between representations without an appeal to the real that is itself no more than yet another representation, even as the force of such an appeal is to render representations irrelevant. Which is not to say that contemporary discourses will tire of presenting us with unlikely candidates. The problem is as boring as it is inescapable.

The second mode is, as odd as it might seem to say so, not mimetic, though it might involve mimesis. But here mimetic tokens are subsumed under another logic, and it is this logic, not represented reality, that carries authority. Since fidelity to a previously constituted reality is not at stake, the partiality of the description of Almeida's capoeira fight does

not present a problem. What is significant is the way the capoeira fight is subsumed under the narrative, the fact that, as a disruptive act that is previously known to the police, it slides effortlessly, like everything else in the novel, between the poles of order and disorder. Because, on Candido's reading, this is the very principle of composition that governs the construction of the plot, there is nothing hidden: the plot and its structure are, obviously, precisely what is submitted to us as subject to our judgment. Finally, as we shall see in a moment, the narrative mode introduces a criterion. If all representations are partial then there is nothing to judge them by except by comparing them to the object represented—a comparison that renders the representation irrelevant. But not all narratives are plausible.

If a work of art does not imitate reality, what is its relation to reality? We have said that authority resides not in mimetic elements but in the form, which is not, strictly speaking, mimetic. But we should not make the mistake of reproducing the problem of mimesis at the level of form: that is, of suggesting merely that relations among elements mirror or reflect or imitate relations among elements in reality. We would simply run into the same problems at a higher level of sophistication. Rather, we must understand literary form as doing something fundamentally different than more or less faithfully corresponding to forms that appear in reality. But nor is form—and while the novel under discussion is in a very casual sense a realist one, I mean this to apply equally to antimimetic modes of art — a matter of mere virtuosity. Form is, rather, an active principle, a kind of thesis, or active positing. As Schwarz puts it in a commentary on Candido's essay: "The dialectic of order and disorder is a *principle of generalization* that profoundly organizes the data of reality *as well as* those of fiction… giving *both* their intelligibility" (Schwarz 2002, 133). There is no "objective" correlation between fiction and reality; the correlation is rather a claim made by the novel itself. "In other words, before it was intuited and made objective by the novelist, the form that the critic studies was produced by the social process, even if nobody knew it" (141). But this, again, is not a fact that can be ascertained by recourse to historical data: this is, rather, the very claim the novel makes. (Truth claims are not mimetic; otherwise the first half of this sentence would have been hard to write.) Novels do not contain truth claims (or rather, what truth claims they contain are subordinated to the movement of the whole). Rather, they are truth claims: "Things stand so," where "things,"

"stand," and "so" all come to be understood in the course of interpreting the work.

What I mean by this might be clarified by returning briefly to Georg Lukács's 1936 essay "Narrate or Describe?" which, if I am not mistaken, is presupposed by both Candido's and Schwarz's contributions. There as elsewhere, Lukács uses the unfortunate word *Widerspiegelung*, reflection or mirroring, to characterize the essence of narrative art. But the first occurrence of the word in that essay modifies it to a "dynamic, artistic reflection," and a little later, in an expression so paradoxical it should stop us in our tracks, he refers to the "art of the novel" as a subset of epic art, which presents society with a "clearer, more intense mirror-image" of itself (1971, 207). This mirror-image achieves its heightened intensity, moreover, through "a proper distribution of emphasis and… a just accentuation of what is essential" (213). "Proper" and "just" are normative terms: they have not only no equivalent but also no possible equivalent in whatever aspect of reality is to be "mirrored." One might be forgiven for thinking that the normative standpoint is simply Lukács's: what is "proper" and "just" is what agrees with his conception of reality, most particularly his conception of historical change. But while his preference for epic content in all the arts inescapably colors his judgment, I do not believe that is what Lukács means here. Indeed, the criterion Lukács has in mind follows immediately: "A work becomes compelling and universal… when it appears not as an ingenious product of the artist's virtuosity, but as a natural development; as something not invented, but simply discovered" (213). In other words, narrative art is always submitted to our judgment, and the criterion by which we are to judge it is not whether it was simply discovered—an obvious impossibility—but whether its content appears as if simply discovered. As Hegel had it before him, for art we require "a kind of liveliness wherein the universal is not available as law and maxim, but rather gives the impression of being inseparable from feeling and sensuous experience" (1970, 24; 1975, 10).[3] That is to say, narrative art invites judgment by the criterion of plausibility. Plausibility is a higher criterion than mimetic justice, which is impossible to achieve and for that reason without value. The criterion of plausibility—that the meaning of a work appear as something "not invented but discovered"—requires that every aspect of the work appear to us to be, in its way,

[3] Hereafter the German text is cited as *V*, and corresponding pages in the English translation are cited as *A*.

right—even if the author does not consciously or explicitly understand its rightness.

> Art makes of each of its creations a thousand-eyed Argus; inner soul and spirit become visible at every point. Not only bodily form and mien, gesture and comportment, but equally actions and events, speech and tone of voice — art has everywhere, as such externals make their way through the varying conditions in which they appear, to allow each of them to become an eye, in which the free soul can be discerned in its inner infinity. (*V* 203–4, *A* 153–4)

By "free soul" Hegel is referring to something like character, but the words apply equally well to setting, tone, color, depth, harmonic development, whatever. This is what it means for artistic meaning to be "inseparable from feeling and sensuous experience." The moment this inseparability fails, we are left with something "invented," something available elsewhere as a law or a maxim, and worthless as art no matter how true or right the law or maxim might be. Odradek's interlocutor, the family man, presents an "impression of reality" that strikes us with "the force of conviction," even though Odradek himself is a fabulous invention. The family man's reaction is, in some way we feel with certainty but without conscious awareness of the reasons for that certainty, right. The critic's job is to bring those reasons to light.

Candido points out that Almeida's *Memoirs* achieves the standpoint of totality by means of a radical constriction of viewpoint. The book presents an "impression of reality" (89) that strikes us with the "force of conviction" (88) despite the near absence of both slaves and landholders in a depiction of early nineteenth-century Brazil, which is to say the near absence of both the labor force and the ruling class (87). "In suppressing the slave, [Almeida] suppressed labor almost totally; in suppressing the ruling classes, he suppressed the controls of power" (95). Despite ignoring the two major candidates for forces actually shaping Brazilian society of the period, namely the local forms of labor and capital, the novel "suggests the lively presence of a society that seems to us quite coherent and existent" (86). A failure by any mimetic standard appears in this case to be a precondition for the novel's ability to compel conviction. Almeida's novel, and in particular its formal principle of oscillation between order and disorder, allows us "to intuit, beyond the fragments

described, certain principles constitutive of society — a hidden element that acts as a totalizer of all these partial aspects" (89).

But this "feeling of reality" (96) is a purely subjective—though, as we will explore more thoroughly below, modally universal—judgment. What is the "reality" whose presence we feel? While social form here pertains to the real, it is not a fact. Form is rather imposed upon facts of two different orders: both the facts of lived experience and the historical record, and the fictional facts that belong only to the novel. This is what Schwarz means by the "near-total" separation of the real and fictional orders: fact does not relate to fact, but both sets of facts are subjected to the same logic, "thanks to which the two series, real and fictitious, are rendered coherent" (96). Second, while this is clearly a cognitive process, it is a cognitive process of a special kind. As we have seen, Antonio Candido's categories of judgment are expressly subjective: the "sense" (*senso*) or "feeling" (*sentimento*) or "impression" of reality, which carries a greater or lesser "force of conviction." But if plausibility is a subjective determination, its mode is nonetheless universal: if we disagree about the "feeling of reality" produced by a work of fiction, we do not simply have different opinions or different tastes: we in fact disagree about whether salient aspects of the work are, in fact, right. We should not be shocked or disappointed that this modality of judgment ultimately rests on nothing more solid than argument and consensus. (So does politics.) Since Kant, aesthetic judgment has been understood as, only apparently paradoxically, both subjective and universal. The ground of this mode of judgment, which we will return to shortly, is an inchoate set of implicit and possibly unconscious convictions without which experience would not be intelligible in the first place. Recall that for Schwarz, as we saw above, a social form can, apparently paradoxically, be recognized without having been previously known. For these reasons, realism inheres in works that, like *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant*, appear very far from the high realist tradition.

At a climactic moment in "Narrate or Describe?" Lukács insists: "Without a world-view, there is no composition" (228). Or, as he has it elsewhere in the same essay, the artistic essence of composition is a "world-view objectified as form" (227). (At another level of abstraction, Lukács is repeating a claim made by Schelling: "aesthetic intuition is just intellectual intuition become objective," 2000, 296.) What is at stake, in other words, in the claim that works of art do not mimic reality, but rather constitute claims about it, is a conception of consciousness as an active principle: what Hegel called negativity, the autonomous relation to

external conditions that are otherwise determining. Marx may have, as Engels had it, put the Hegelian tradition back on its feet. But Marxism is, nonetheless, the surviving legacy of the sequence that runs from Kant through Fichte and Schelling to Hegel. We live in a peculiar moment when anti-humanism is both, fifty years after its triumph over the dialectical tradition in France, still, astonishingly, the hallmark of advanced critical theory on the left; the avowed consequence of market ideology on the right and so-called center-left; and the unreflective presupposition of mainstream cognitive and computational science. Schelling, in 1800, decried the demand that art justify itself by utility, a demand that could only be made "in an age for whom the highest efforts of human spirit consist in discoveries with directly economic application." To this sentence he at some point scrawled in the margin of his own published copy the helpful addendum, "beets" (2000, 293–294). The demand that art express its value in the same form as agronomy would not surprise an upper-level university administrator today; today, upper-level university administrators make it themselves. I have argued elsewhere that the problem of meaning, the problem of consciousness as something that cannot be understood in computational terms, is under particular pressure in our period, a period in which various discourses from neoliberal economics to object-oriented ontology to affect theory have sought to topple the concept of consciousness as an active principle, and that the stakes of defending such an understanding of consciousness, such a robust and expansive sense of meaning and interpretation, is today of broad political significance—indeed, that defending an expansive sense of interpretation is itself a defense of politics as such. I would argue the same today. But one can imagine—I for one would like to live in—a world where consciousness, meaning, and interpretation were not under such pressure. Such a world would be more different than ours than it might initially appear, but the point for now is that it is eminently possible. And in such a world—a world where something like Hegelian negativity, something like human freedom, something like politics, something like reason, were hegemonically acknowledged as central to human affairs—the particular political valence I attribute to art in the current dispensation would wither away.

If works of art are complex truth claims, and interpretation is what we do when we attempt to understand and, inseparably from this, evaluate them, we are left with the question of art's cognitive dignity. I don't need to waste any breath dispensing with the idea, common enough in

the cultural pages, that the value of art lies not only in its equivalence to beetroots but also in the "stories we tell ourselves." If that were the case, any story would do as any other as long as it satisfied whatever credulity we were currently in the market to indulge. The question is rather: Can art say things that systematic knowledge cannot? As Hegel understood, the stakes of this question are, in our own limited domain, high. If we answer in the negative, we have cast our lots with Hegel's claim that art is "a thing of the past," a claim that, to remind ourselves, has nothing to do with the historical disappearance of art, a secular decline in its quality, or the empirical subsumption of the production and circulation of art into some other logic, but rather with a normative lack of faith that art can any longer perform for us its "highest vocation" (*V* 25, *A* 11). If some of us have not lost that faith, university presidents and boards of trustees generally have, and so Hegel's concern with the "end of art" is directly relevant to us.

Robert Pippin has recently and persuasively argued that the "end of art" for Hegel is inextricably bound up with what one might call Hegel's big mistake: namely (I am summarizing wildly here) the presumption that emergent bourgeois institutions would come to mediate social conflict so successfully and so explicitly that society would come to have a degree of transparency to itself that would render art's "highest vocation" obsolete (Pippin 2014). This is not far from Lukács's Hegel, and to fill in Pippin's sketch with a Lukácsian brush it would only remain to say (again summarizing wildly) that the reason bourgeois institutions fail to produce such transparency is that the capital-labor relation is a subject-object relationship and it is so irreducibly, not contingently. The capital-labor relation can be managed, but to transform it into a subject-subject relationship would be to supersede the labor-capital relation altogether. On Lukács's account, the betrayal of the working class by the bourgeoisie in 1848 marks both the end of illusions about the universality of bourgeois institutions and the beginning of modernism as art's abdication of its responsibility to the whole or, more sympathetically, art's acknowledgment that it can henceforth no longer understand itself as able to fulfill that responsibility except in modes that are, broadly speaking, ironic.

Pippin's understanding is, in other words, not only convincing on its own account but also broadly compatible with at least one powerful strand of Marxist historicism. However, Hegel formulates the question in terms that may not be entirely reducible to the coordinates of his big mistake. The kernel of Hegel's argument is that "If a truth is to be an

appropriate matter for art, its own specific character must allow it to be sensuously expressible, and moreover to be, in sensuous form, adequate to itself" (*V* 23, *A* 9). The second demand is more stringent than the first. Some mathematical truths can be expressed in sensuous form, but in that form they are not mathematical; they are not, in sensuous form, "adequate to themselves" as mathematical truths. For art to have a vocation at all, in other words, it must correspond to some form of knowledge that is not expressed more adequately otherwise. This is the reason that, as we have already seen, "for artistic interest as much as for artistic production itself, we generally require a kind of liveliness wherein the universal is not available as law and maxim, but rather gives the impression of being inseparable from feeling and sensuous experience" (*V* 25, *A* 10).

The sentiment is virtually the same one that Lukács expresses a century later, cited above, wherein a work "becomes compelling… when it appears… as something not invented [by the artist], but merely discovered": not, in other words, as an illustration of something existing in the mind of the artist, but as already present in sensuous experience itself. If we wanted to know exactly what Hegel meant we would want to look closely at his words. But since what we have are lecture notes we don't have his exact words, and for now you'll have to take my word that the closer we look at the words we have, the less certain we are precisely what Hegel means. For example, what I translated as "gives the impression" is the verb *wirken*, maybe more literally something like "works as," "does for," or "passes as." But is this impression merely an impression, or are certain meanings indeed inseparable from feeling and sensuous experience? Are we dealing with a rhetoric or a form of truth? The whole sense of these pages is that art remains for Hegel a mode of presentation, but does not correspond any longer to a mode of truth. The impression of being bound up with sensuous appearances is only, on one hand, an artistic effect or, on the other, a deficit in explicit knowledge. There seems to be an implicit "yet" in Hegel's criterion: art has a place where "the universal is not [yet] available as law and maxim." That is, artistic meaning only attains its highest vocation when, for whatever reason, systematic knowledge of the material has not been attained. Otherwise, the artist merely produces the impression that a certain kind of truth claim emerges from her material rather than from outside it. (Certainly artists strive for this effect, but Hegel's suggestion seems to be that in the modern period such effects are merely effects and not, as Pippin has it, "sensible-affective markers of truth" [135].) On one hand, systematic knowledge has not yet

been achieved, and the aesthetically acquired knowledge will be, eventually if not today, rendered obsolete and merely illustrative by some systematic discipline. On the other, already existing systematic knowledge will have been bypassed in favor of sensuous representation, and we are left with something like a propaedeutic. Neither of these possibilities is, from the standpoint of art's cognitive dignity, satisfactory.

The problem Hegel alerts us to, one that clearly remains germane today, is that of the normative form taken by knowledge in societies like ours. It is not that, in an age that rightly prizes systematic knowledge, the artist is thereby "tempted to bring more thoughts into her work."

> Rather, our whole spiritual formation is such that the artist herself stands within a world thus characterized by reflection, with all that entails. No artist could, merely by resoluteness and force of will, abstract herself from it. (*V* 25, *A* 11)

Art will no doubt continue as decoration, stimulant, soporific, time-waster, and so on; that was never in doubt and was never of any interest. More than this, it will continue to preserve some cognitive dignity as propaedeutic and prolegomenon to systematic knowledge. But as long as systematic knowledge remains our horizon—and let's hope it does—art's "highest vocation" would appear to be at an end.

But certain kinds of knowledge are, without being mystically untranslatable into systematic knowledge, only directly accessible to us in embodied form. Musical intervals are ratios, directly expressible as mathematical relationships. When you hear an octave, you might or might not know you are hearing the ratio 2:1, but in neither case do you hear it as the ratio 2:1. Someone who knows how to recognize an octave can train someone who doesn't in a minute or two. Neither of them needs to know that they are hearing the ratio 2:1; such knowledge is not even helpful to their project of teaching and learning what an octave sounds like.

Beethoven's violin concerto in D begins with the tympani announcing the key—five beats on D—and the next eight measures center emphatically on D major. But in the tenth measure (about twenty seconds in) the first violins, quiet but exposed, play four beats on D-sharp, echoing the rhythm of the tympani but, apparently, in a completely unrelated key (van Beethoven 1985, 1–6; 1862–1865). In short order (measure twelve), the violas join the violins in their insistence on D-sharp. The first time you hear it, the effect is astonishing; it takes nothing more

than the habitual training we all have from living in a world saturated with the Western tonal system to recognize that the D-sharp "doesn't fit," that it "comes out of nowhere," or at least from another century—that it seems very distant from the key of D major. If we know what to expect from a Beethoven concerto, we might trust that its meaning will become clear to us in time, but it is not yet. After this enigmatic presentation of D-sharp, the orchestra settles comfortably into D, passing dramatically but briefly into D minor (m. 28–42), returning to D major to repeat the theme, then subjecting the theme itself to a parallel modulation into D minor (m. 51–56), with a lovely misleading cadence that leads, twice, briefly to F (the relative major of D minor) before returning quickly both times to D minor (57–63). In other words, we are for the next stretch very much centered around D. But in measure 65 (something over two minutes in), the D-sharp pattern returns unexpectedly though not without anticipation in the violins, with the rest of the strings supplying part of a diminished chord underneath it and emerging from the D-sharp pattern to form a chord (an inverted and therefore somewhat veiled A7) that is strongly related to D major—effectively hinting at a place for D-sharp in D major. Over the next five bars, in a dramatic crescendo, Beethoven teaches us where D-sharp fits into D major, first hammering on the D-sharp—the violins literally spelling out the diminished chord it anchors—and then leading us climactically and naturally through an inverted E minor to A7 to D major.[4]

Now, one can sit down with the score and puzzle all this out to arrive at a technical understanding of how Beethoven ties D-sharp to D major. But what I want to emphasize is that this technical explanation would be true, but not convincing. "You can bring D-sharp into D major by passing through the related key of E minor" is, on the evidence, true. You can put it in a textbook and use it in other compositions. But the evidence is what you hear, and no amount of technical elaboration would render its translation into propositional language plausible (or for that matter implausible), even though this translation is faithful and in its own way complete. Even if you can hear a score in your head just by reading it, you still have precisely to hear it in your head to be convinced by it. For the rest of us, hearing is believing. By the time we hear the D-sharp pattern

[4] A brilliant performance by Hilary Hahn and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leonard Slatkin, is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Cg_0jepxow.

again, accompanying the soloist in measure 111, it sounds almost natural. But this is not because we have gotten used to it; its first appearance remains estranging on subsequent hearings. Rather, it is because we have settled into a knowledge of what it means and where it might be going, even if that knowledge and that sense are things that, in the listening, we do not pose explicitly.

I want to suggest that this is the order of truth that pertains to art: that there are truths that are more or less easily translatable into propositional language, but whose assertion can only be persuasive in sensuous form. Such a truth is, "in sensuous form, adequate to itself." Demonstrations of such truth call on our knowledge as embodied, worlded, self-positing, social, linguistic, temporal (and so on ad infinitum—in this case, habitually tonal) beings. It is, for example, as subjects formed in capitalist societies that we feel the rightness of Kafka's family man. Such truth claims cannot be made persuasive in propositional form, even though their translation into propositional form need not pose any tremendous problems. The statement "Philistinism is a form of appearance of the fragility of bourgeois order" may be true, but it is not convincing in that form, and it is hard to imagine any argument—survey research?—other than a commentary on Kafka that would make it so. The "poetry of sensuous representation [*Vorstellung*]" cannot in these cases be superseded by "the prose of thinking" (*V* 123, A 89).

Sensuous presentation is in such cases neither prologomenon nor propaedeutic. Hegel is simply wrong that, as a general proposition, "thought and reflection have soared beyond fine art" (*V* 24, *A* 10). This is related to his overestimation of the universality of bourgeois institutions, but it seems to me not to be reducible to it. There is nothing wrong, for example, with the discipline of musicology. It's just that in musicology (as opposed to, say, physics) the propositional translation is supplemental to the sensuous idea and not the reverse. Of course, Beethoven's violin concerto is a specialized case, pertaining in the exposition I have given it exclusively to the realm of music itself. It may be that in this passage Beethoven has more to teach us. If it is true that in his sketchbooks Beethoven initially wrote the violins' D-sharp as an E-flat, then he himself did not yet know how it related to the key of D, and what we are hearing is also a kind of narration of Beethoven's own

discovery of that relationship.[5] In that case, these passages have something to say about the structure of action itself, the subsumption of the given into an intentional structure. Meanwhile recent writing on photography has insisted that contemporary photography has a great deal to say about the structure of intentional action, and it may be that art has always been and will continue to be better than philosophy at laying bare the paradoxes, ironies, and ruses that underlie human action. Similarly, Ben Lerner's *10:04* and Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* may have more to say about the relation of art to the culture industry than a shelf of perfectly good sociological analyses.

Marxists like Lukács may be forgiven for looking to art for something more epic in significance (which is not to say that the structure of intention or the relation of art to the culture industry is irrelevant to Marxist politics). Here I want to turn once again to the work of Roberto Schwarz, in particular his magnificent reading of Bertolt Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (2007b). As is well known, Brecht set store by the didactic content of his plays, in the case of *St. Joan* certain lessons about labor organization and about the operation of monopolies and commodities markets. But these types of knowledge are readily available in reflexive, abstract, systematic form, principally though not exclusively in the Marxist classics themselves. Thought and reflection have indeed in this case "soared beyond fine art," and it is not obvious what advantage such knowledge might gain from being expressed in sensuous form. As Adorno pointed out rather damningly, it is not obvious that such lessons even remain true when expressed in sensuous form. The proscription on valorizing individual over collective action, for example, rings hollow when dramatized in a play, which necessarily develops through the actions of individuals. "Thus," says Schwarz, "against claims to the contrary, the truth of the plays would not lie in the lessons passed on, in the theorems concerning class conflict, but rather in the objective dynamic of the whole" (44).

Schwarz's reading is extraordinarily illuminating and I will concentrate here on only two aspects of it. First, which I have touched on elsewhere,

[5] E-flat and D-sharp are enharmonics of each other, which means they represent the same note in a 12-tone equal-tempered scale like a piano keyboard. E minor is written in sharps; the leading tone to the tonic would always be written as a D-sharp, never as an E-flat. If Beethoven had something in mind like the harmonic structure we have been discussing when he sketched those four beats, he would not have written them as E-flats.

is Schwarz's observation that throughout *St. Joan*, Brecht pastiches classics of German Romanticism, thereby setting up a kind of deflationary equivalence between the sublime risk of a human world without divine sanction—as found, for example, in Hölderlin's "Hyperion's Song of Destiny"—and the risk assumed by an investor or imposed on a worker. "Unheroic as bourgeois society is," writes Marx, "it nonetheless required heroism, terror, civil war, and the subjugation of nations to bring it into being" (1960, 116). Speaking of the canned-meat monopolist in *St. Joan*, Schwarz remarks that "Brecht wanted to demonstrate that something of Mauler already existed in Faust, but not that the grandeur of the Enlightenment continued to live in speculations on the stock exchange" (56). A perceptive critic can translate Brecht's "demonstration" into expository form; but it is only persuasive in expository form as a commentary—that is, it is only persuasive because the play is persuasive. It is hard to see how the assertion of the identity between Romantic existential risk and bourgeois economic risk could be made persuasive in any form other than poetic.

But this demonstration is still about poetry, even if it is about poetry's relationship to history and to class. The second aspect Schwarz highlights concerns the role of economic logic in the play. Schwarz notes that it is not exactly what one would expect from a Marxist. Marx famously remarks, in terms that are coincidentally apt, that "the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations" (2008, 100). Marx's point, surely true, is that the logic of capitalism exerts a coercive force that supervenes any merely individual motivations on the part of the capitalist. But Schwarz shows that in *St. Joan* "Brecht preferred to situate himself… a step this side of the complete delegation of social energy to the market" (56). That is, Mauler is not merely the personification of the ownership of capital; there is something excessive in his character. His desire to win, to bury the competition no matter what the cost—repeatedly risking taking down the whole system including himself—exceeds merely economic logic. "It is as if there existed an imperative, or constitutional defect, demanding that nothing be done in which cunning does not have a hand" (55–56).

This might seem to suggest a retreat from Marx's insight in favor of a Shakespearean tragic flaw, a merely ethical critique of the ruthlessness of particular capitalists. But the excess does not inhere in Mauler's character, but in capitalist economic relations themselves. Capitalism's logic

is competitive, true enough: in order to live as a capitalist, the capitalist must compete. But the immanent objective of competition is not life, but victory; Mauler competes, perfectly logically, not to survive, but to win. Within this logic, risks beckon that would otherwise seem too monstrous to contemplate. Immanent to and necessary for the reproduction of capitalism is a drive that exceeds the reproduction of capital and that is, potentially, inimical to it. But unlike capitalism's gravediggers, the tendency of this stupid, drive-like competitiveness is not to bury capitalism but to bury us all. As Schwarz puts it, "What is on the stage, under the sign of crisis, is a transformation of the cunning of capital into reflexes that are counterproductive, one would almost say antediluvian" (54). The competitive logic that capitalism presumes and encourages becomes something like a death-drive internal to capitalism itself. "The contrast between the gambling that takes place in the stock exchange and everyone's panic facing the ups and downs of the economy recalls in fact a loss of judgment on a species-wide scale" (54).

I hope you agree that there's a certain logical coherence to my gloss on Schwarz's reading. But does this logic pertain to the real? *St. Joan* makes a claim: things stand so. Capitalism is not simply "prone to crises" because of a set of immanent contradictions. That is Marx's account, and it is correct but—because contradictions are at least in the abstract always manageable—incomplete. Rather, because capitalism mobilizes a desire for crisis—the purely competitive desire to pull off the more daring coup, the riskier play, the bigger bet—it is a crisis machine that can never be fully managed. It's hard to see where one would turn for evidence for such a claim. Certainly an economist might feel that she has understood economic crises tolerably well, and that if given levers long enough she could forestall them with tolerable reliability, without recourse to such concepts as death-drive, and indeed the quasi-Freudian terms I have used metaphorically in my commentary don't make a lot of sense when applied literally to a mode of production. The questions we are left with are literary-critical. Is *St. Joan* persuasive? Does it produce a "feeling of reality" that strikes us with the "force of conviction"? On some of the most substantial uncertainties we face, questions like these are not only the only available ones, but the only possible ones.

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CHAPTER 8

Structural Reduction in the Early Work of Assaf Gavron

Oded Nir

Arguments in defense of the humanities as an academic discipline usually belong to two camps. The first argues for its immediate usefulness outside the sphere of the arts, from MFA programs and French for business to therapeutic storytelling. The weakness of this utilitarianization of the humanities and the arts is necessarily their degradation, or their subjection to procedures that altogether bypass what makes them art in the first place. Which then leads one to the opposite, second, position: to insist that art and the humanities remain useless, to stop in its tracks any attempt to see them as useful for any external purpose, and instead to revel in their uselessness.

One can dialecticize this opposition, following either Adorno (1974), or more recently, Nicholas Brown (2019), by arguing that art's usefulness can only be glimpse by taking its uselessness as a starting point. Uselessness here is strongly identified with art's autonomy, or its legislation of the

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laws of its own meaning-making. The external purpose art serves is in this case wholly different from, or antagonistic to, all those immediate goals that the first position defined. Thus, art serves a purpose, but one not available prior to engagement with the artwork itself. This third position also clearly refuses the principled purposelessness of the second position.

And so from art itself to the study of art. In the work of Anna Kornbluh (2017, 400; 2020), the two initial positions, and the third dialectical one, become politically mediated in the role of the critic or the humanities in general. In the first two positions, the critic is wholly unnecessary: to serve an immediate, predefined, external position ("Spanish for business"), one does not need an expert in aesthetics. On the other hand, if art is necessarily useless, as the second position argues, then its meaning becomes arbitrary, irreducibly multiple, or "subjective"—again making the critic and her authority unnecessary. It is in this sense that tendencies such as surface reading or any number of Latourian commitments which reject critical authority mediate a concrete political project: the complete dissolution of institutional humanities (see, e.g., Best and Marcus 2009). Only the third position, that of artistic usefulness for a yet-unknown purpose, actually preserves the role of the critic. Here, her ability to discover or give determinate conceptual language to what an artwork does is crucial, since it is only by the critic's intervention that artistic purpose can be made conceptually graspable.

Roberto Schwarz's writing, from which I borrow the term "structural reduction," (which Schwarz himself borrows from Antonio Candido's "Dialectic of Malandragem" (Candido 1965, 87), certainly belongs in this last camp, and as such can serve as a possible node in a true defense of the humanities. To argue, as Schwarz does, that "[t]he unification of the novelistic sphere with that of reality takes place through their near total separation, and the dialectic of the two passes through their precise articulation and not, as usually happens, through their confusion" (Schwarz 2013b, 23–24), is precisely the precondition for recognizing what is indispensable about literature, or art in general. I begin this article with what I see as Schwarz's theoretical intervention, based mostly on a close reading of his essay titled "Objective Form." I use the term "structural reduction" as an umbrella term for a few of Schwarz's attempts to characterize the way literature produces knowledge unavailable through other means. I then demonstrate how a Schwarzian reading of a recent Israeli novel, Assaf Gavron's *The Hilltop* (2014), is important in two ways: first, for

neutralizing political readings of Israeli literature that emphasize representational verisimilitude or moralistic prescription. Secondly, for relating literary form and social form in the manner theorized by Schwarz, which makes it possible to perceive Israeli society in a new way—one that has surprising political implications.

Central to Schwarz's programmatic writing—of which there is not much in translation—is a dialecticization of the realism/modernism opposition. One way to go about such dialecticization is to follow the example of work by Fredric Jameson (2002, 123), Joe Cleary (2012, 261), and earlier more polemically by Ernst Bloch (Bloch 1980), among others. Modernism appears here not as the negation of realism, but as realism's historical extension, in which the perceivable world is no-longer totalizable by a single viewpoint. What captures reality is precisely this necessary incompleteness, in which fragmentation is the truth of reality, because of the historical development of the capitalist system itself. Thus, this first approach is a view of modernism from the perspective of an expanded concept of realism that can accommodate the fragmentary. Schwarz's way of dialecticizing the realism/modernism opposition is perhaps less intuitive, and is the obverse of the previous one—viewing realism from a perspective of an expanded understanding of modernism. Realism appears here as a particular way, one representational strategy among many, of juxtaposing fragments, or of bringing into a single forcefield elements essentially foreign to one another. Thus, for example, the social oppositions represented in Stendhal's *Red and Black* are seen as irreducibly "modernist," so to speak. They are real not because they truthfully reflect actually existing society, but because they give form to the relationship between what are essentially incompatible, qualitatively different, elements.

This understanding of realism, I argue, is a consequence of Schwarz's most explicitly programmatic essay, "Objective Form: Reflections on the Dialectic of Roguery." Schwarz here is discussing another critic's work, Antonio Candido's reading of Manuel Antonio de Almeida's novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant*. The essay has received some critical attention lately (Brown 2018; Sauri 2015), but its argument bears repeating here, if only to emphasize the elements that are important for my argument. For Schwarz, at the center of Candido's reading of the novel is an uncompromising attention to its formal properties: the process of discovering as an originary act of the formal element that subordinates all other

formal elements to its own logic. In Candido's reading, the dominant formal property of *Memoirs* is the dialectic of order and disorder:

> At crucial moments, this dialectic of order and disorder finds its symbolic equivalents in certain images: in the Chief of Police Major Vidigal, who wears a frock coat but also his rough clogs, which he has forgotten to take off, or in the master of ceremonies, caught in his skullcap and slippers in his gypsy lady friend's bedroom. In Candido's terms, this form is at once the skeleton that supports the novel and the *structural reduction* of a social situation, external to literature, belonging to history. It is the *aesthetic formalization* of a generalized rhythm in Brazilian society in the first half of the nineteenth century. (Schwarz 2013b, 13–14)

The term I borrow from Schwarz and Candido, structural reduction, here comes up as the central theoretical concept of the procedure of reading he is putting forth (alongside "aesthetic formalization" and "principle of generalization"). The dialectic of order and disorder is dominated by a specific figure, the *malandro*, whose existence in the novel comes to stand for something much more important than its non-literary, real, equivalent.

For Schwarz, as Nicholas Brown and Emilio Sauri emphasize, verisimilitude, or some measure of the accurate literary portrayal of this or that detail, does not constitute the measure of a novel's success in capturing social reality (Brown 2018, 466; Sauri 2015, 130). Rather, this is where the preponderance of form becomes important: literature is to be related to reality first by positing the literary text as an autonomous realm, whose internal structure must be discovered and conceptualized independently by the critic before she attempts to understand how that structure is related to extra-literary reality. Thus,

> *It [is] necessary to discover (to intuit and then explain), among the innumerable formal aspects of the novel, the one that, as a transposition of a significant aspect of historical reality, colours the others with historical relevance. The search for form in this case is not governed by the repertoire of normative aesthetics, whose forms it is considered that the work should repeat. On the contrary, the literary form in this emancipated may be any and every nexus that subordinates others in the text—including the fixed forms themselves. Once the parameters of tradition have been laid to one side, the historical dynamic of meaning comes properly into play, and the real referent*

> *of the form becomes contemporary historical reality*. (Schwarz 2013b, 20, italics in original)

It is in this strong sense that one must understand what Silvia Lopez, following Adorno, calls the "primacy of the object" in Schwarz's writing (López 2011, 83). The form of the literary text is to be discovered and conceptualized by the critic in reflecting on the text in its autonomy. Considerations of the real social structure, but also of previously conceived forms (such as genres), are to be understood in relation to that independent discovery of novelistic form.

This principle of organization of the text is thus the initial kernel of what Schwarz sees as the new knowledge produced by literature. This "principle of generalization… at a deep level organizes both the data of reality and those of the fiction (whether or not they are documentary in nature) and makes them intelligible" (Schwarz 2013b, 14). Or, put differently, a good novel provides us with a theory of social reality not previously articulated: it is "a genuine event for theory," (22) as Schwarz puts it. There is something uncompromisingly speculative about the way the reader encounters this new understanding of social form. As Nicholas Brown has it, "for Schwarz… a social form can, apparently paradoxically, be recognized without having been previously known" (Brown 2018, 468), a position that could be taken as very similar to Slavoj Žižek's theorization of the symptom as that which receives its meaning-which-has-always-been-there from the future (Žižek 1989, 58). Here, then, lies the unique usefulness of useless art: to suggest a way of recognizing what is real without resorting to what we already conceptually know.

Yet, it is important to notice that the previous long quote ends with a reference, again somewhat paradoxically, to "contemporary historical reality." I would like to suggest that Schwarz's use of "historical" here is not unimportant. Rather, what the aesthetic formalization of social form allows us to intuit has to do with making it possible for us to imagine the present historically, or what Fredric Jameson calls historicity (Jameson 1991, 18–25). In Almeida's novel, for Schwarz, and Candido, the anomic sphere of the *malandro*—neither slave nor owner of the means of production—is not merely arbitrary content but the key to the novel's relationship to is contemporary historical reality: "the reproduction of the slave-owning order creates in the sphere occupied by free men, who are not property owners and have to live as parasites, the dialectic of order and disorder" (Schwarz 2013b, 22). It is not simply

that the *malandro* is related to the advent of capitalism—because almost everything in Brazilian society of the late nineteenth century is somehow related to it (that's the point of asserting capitalism's dominance as a force organizing global society). Rather, the sphere of those free men is where the historical contradictions of capitalism become symbolically visible, as the unresolvable tension between order and disorder—a sphere "in which it is impossible either to do without order or to live within it" (19). It is precisely the existence of such a sphere of contradiction—of development and change—that characterizes Brazil's particular place in the global capitalist system. Thus, the particular, national, character of the novel is its ability to distill this historical peculiarity of Brazil's place in the system: the dialectic of order and disorder becomes in this reading expressive of this system itself.

Meanwhile, non-literary history is joined by another historical dimension. The dynamic of form for Schwarz is not without its internal historical tension: the forms of the "repertoire of normative aesthetics" as he puts it in the quote above (or, to a certain extent, genre) are themselves present as subject matter for the formalizing operation of the novel, as material on which formalization operates. Thus, one can say that the dialectic of recognition and knowledge has its internal equivalent to the form of the literary text: the dominant formal principle recognized by the critic is always somehow a surprising modification, a transformative negation, of previously known forms, and this tension paradoxically and frustratingly appears as a defined "genre" or named form in its own right—recognition again strangely preceding knowledge, but telling us that the latter was there first.

It is through the critical act itself, then, that the *malandro* is finally seen as a moment of formal tension and creativity, rather than as simple novelistic content. And so my final point about Schwarz's writing has to do with the way in which the literary and the extra-literary interact in the interpretation itself, after the primacy of form as the generative locus has been established. Schwarz spends much of "Objective Form" discussing this relationship. Once one begins by establishing the dominant formal quality, verisimilitude or the documentary of every detail can no longer serve as the standard for how the literary and the social interact. Rather, "though strictly occurring on its own level, the search for form happens in the light of extra literary knowledge and reflection on that knowledge… Conversely, such knowledge is also reconsidered and reshaped in light of

the problem posed by the formal unity of the knowledge, which represents the possibility of totalization discovered by the novelist" (Schwarz 2013b, 20–21). Thus, the mind scans its concepts of society for some support for the literary text's structural reduction, knowing full well that at most they can only provide a partial and distorted account of that structural reduction. Therefore the critic must intentionally and creatively alter her conceptual account of society: "the critic has to construct the social process in theory, keeping in mind that he must create the conceptual generality capable of giving unity to the novelistic universe he is studying" (21). One must note here the absolutely uncompromising negation of any reductionism in Schwarz's Marxist interpretive program: the primacy of literary form, that literature is to be the law-giver rather than simply echo preestablished views, is expressed precisely in the demand that the social theory be reinvented or radically modified to support the literary-formal discovery. As Nicholas Brown and Emilio Sauri show, the programmatic principle of isolating the structural reduction or aesthetic formalization of a literary text is what guides the argument of other essays by Schwarz, particularly *Two Girls* and "Worries of a Family Man" (Sauri 2015, 133; Brown 2018, 470).

Of the many implications of Schwarz's conception of literary criticism, perhaps the most important is the way in which such a position intervenes in debates around the role of abstract conceptualization, or about interpretation versus surface reading, which I mentioned earlier. The latter—which has partial affinities with currents such as new materialism, affect theory, and post-theory—tends to assume that faithfulness to the primacy of the literary text is antagonistic to critical intervention, the latter's conceptualization necessarily limiting the text's potentialities. "Minimal critical agency" (Best and Marcus 2009, 17) is therefore demanded of the critic in order to be faithful to the text.[1] The strength of Schwarz's position is that it shows that the primacy of the literary *as such*—of what makes it literature rather than just an aleatory collection of word-objects—is preserved only in interpretations that conceptualize the formal totality constituted by its object, and construct a theory of society that would be able to accommodate this concept.

[1] For critiques of these interpretive currents, see, for example, Nealon (2015); Lesjak (2013); Sbriglia and Žižek (2020).

Among the defenders of critical agency, what is perhaps unique to Schwarz is what can be called the dialectic of concept and figure: the process described by Schwarz is one in which our concept of society is not simply applied to literary material, but is rather radically transformed by it. And this transformation is not just some Kantian normative revisionism of the concept. Rather, it is only through the "violence" of the literary figure that structural reduction maintains its conceptuality at all, since it now must be reconstructed to accommodate literary form's totalizing viewpoint, as Schwarz insists. This dialectic is yet another way Schwarz's approach addresses any anti-interpretive approach to abstraction in literary criticism. In Latourian surface reading, concrete details and their networks (or, the essentially figurative), is seen as always always-already overflowing the concept, being richer, fuller of potentialities, etc. (see, e.g., Harman 2011, 134). A Schwarzian response would not only be to defend concepts and abstraction for their cognitive value, but also to take the much stronger position that figure, or aesthetic form, is the necessary non-conceptual core of the concept.

In what follows, I offer brief readings of the novel *The Hilltop* by Israeli writer Assaf Gavron. As I follow what I understand to be a Schwarzian program, I attempt to demonstrate how the novel provides us with a structural reduction through which one can think Israeli society. Gavron, as I argue elsewhere (Nir 2023), is one of the representatives of a new development in Hebrew literature, which contains an understanding of social form that is rarely expressed in Israel. But as I hope to show, only by insisting—like Schwarz—on the primacy of the dominant formal property, as the point of mediation to social reality, does this newness become perceivable.

Assaf Gavron's 2013 *The Hilltop* is a novel that is a good candidate for Schwarzian analysis. Not only for the cognitive effort it demands of its readers, but also because of its unique way of appropriating hyper-politicized subject matter. *The Hilltop* focuses on life in a Jewish-Israeli settlement in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. The Occupied Territories designate land captured by Israel in the 1967 war, in a geographical area known as the West Bank. International law does not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Occupied Territories, and Israel itself does not recognize its Palestinians inhabitants—including many refugees—as its citizens. Israeli construction in the Territories has been at the center of Palestinian struggle against Israeli oppression and land annexation, and at the focus

on much international attention. Since the 1980s, Israeli politics is dominated by one's attitude to the Palestinian struggle: the left (which by now is almost nonexistent) setting itself the goal of ending the Israeli Occupation, recognizing Palestinian sovereignty on at least part of the Territories; and the right insisting on Israel's right to the land, and in some cases, to unapologetically annex all Palestinian land.

Thus, Gavron's choice of location immediately invokes Israeli political discourse, which strongly works against the production of a Schwarzian reading, since critics are tempted to contrast the representation of this or that literary detail to its real-life equivalent—precisely the sort of prioritization of verisimilitude in critical practice against which Schwarz writes. A related tendency Schwarz does not mention is the moralizing one: here, critics' top priority is to see if a literary work represents a preestablished, sanctioned, moral position. Such tendency is very close to the "empirical" or verisimilitudinal one, since it, too, judges every literary detail against a criterion that is external to the structure of the work itself. Contemporary critics of Hebrew literature usually fall on the non-Schwarzian side when discussing literature that focuses on the Israeli oppression of Palestinians (two representative examples are Gertz and Yosef 2017; Oppenheimer 1999). Literary detail is here judged according to its real counterpart, and whole narratives are morally judged according to its inclusion or exclusion of this or that subjective perspective.

This critical tendency would have to be resisted in order to produce a Schwarzian reading of *The Hilltop*. But one point should be stressed: leftist support for the Palestinian struggle against Israeli oppression is not itself questioned by this reading. To repeat an argument I have already mentioned, the just Palestinian cause does not need literature to be articulated. What is literary about art—its form—simply stands in the way of articulating it. And so, if *The Hilltop* is to be read as a work of art, the concept of social form that a critic may distill from it would not annul this political commitment, but rather would understand it within a larger social totality, one constructed to account for the structural reduction that the novel performs, if that is what it does.

Since structural reduction is a formal matter, one would have to begin a reading of *The Hilltop* by determining the novel's dominant formal property. One candidate for this property is the division of the plot into two main sections: the first recounts the events that happen in the settlement, Ma'ale Hermesh C, over a period of a few years. The second focuses on the life-trajectories of the characters of two brothers, Gabi and Roni,

presenting different moments in their lives, from their childhood to their present, in the settlement. The two lines are scrambled: chapters that narrate each brother's past are mixed together with chapters that narrate present-day events at the settlement, with no apparent chronological or thematic connection.

However, the non-chronological chapter sequence is not the overarching formal property of the novel, the one that colors all the rest with historical relevance, to use Schwarz's formulation. Rather, I argue, there is a sense of formal messiness, an out-of-placeness, a lack of social or aesthetic appropriateness that functions as the dominant formal principle of *The Hilltop*, and in light of which the disorder of the chapter sequence should be understood. The subjective height of this messiness or misplacement is, perhaps, the scene in which Neta Hirschson (a settler), Roni (one of the brothers), and a Musa Ibrahim (a Palestinian from a nearby village) find themselves resisting together the destruction of a Palestinian olive grove by Israeli bulldozers:

> The bulldozers began crawling slowly toward Musa Ibrahim's olive trees. Another wave of fury reverberated through the crowd of protestors. Dudu, the chubby operator with the wandering eye, positioned the D-9's blade slightly above the ground, in line with the trunk of a tree, and moved forward. "Noooo!" came the cries from all around. The eight soldiers and two officers attempted to halt the protestors, but three managed to break through the human barricade and ran toward the bulldozer," "wildly flaying their arms and calling out "No!" and "Stop!" and "Fool!" The soldiers gave chase, but the three outpaced them—two men and a woman, she in a long skirt and an orange head scarf, one man in baggy pants and a kaffiyeh, and the third in a Lacoste shirt and elegant trousers. The television cameramen darted among the olive trees and over heaps of rocks and dirt; Arab women shrieked; Jewish youths cursed and prayed to their Father who art in Heaven; and settlers frowned and squinted their eyes and asked, "Who the hell . . . ?"
>
> The D-9N bulldozer is equipped with a heavy cast-steel front blade. It weighs more than seven tons, stands two meters tall, and measures almost five meters across. Extending from the edge of the blade are sharp steel teeth, and over them and into the curved blade itself, one after the other, climbed Neta Hirschson, Musa Ibrahim, and Roni Kupper, who moments later found themselves lifted skyward by Dudu, the heavy-duty-machinery soldier, who was oblivious of the contents of his new load. (Gavron 2014, 182)

The three—Neta, Musa, and Roni—represent groups whom Israelis would usually see as having at least partially antagonistic interests, and so the grouping of them is surprising and disorienting. It is not completely clear who is out of place, but one is certain that the three do not belong together: not only do the Palestinian and the Israeli right-wing settler belong to different ideological camps, but Roni, the businessman, seems to imply the neutralization of both in the name of a commitment to his investment, suspending political divisions altogether. The description of their clothes again emphasizes the different symbolic worlds from which they are taken.

But what is here subjective is expressed non-subjectively, both on small textual scale, and on a larger one. For example, note in the quote above the peculiar placement of the description of the D-9N bulldozer's physical qualities—suspending the narration of fast-paced, charged action. Such out-of-placeness is reproduced in even smaller and inconsequential textual segments. Take for example the following descriptive passage, given in free indirect discourse from within the consciousness of one of the settlers:

> The delegation made its way on foot through the vineyards, past the prickly pear shrubs and flower beds, the makeshift synagogue, the goat pen, and Othniel Assis's organic fields. Junk lay strewn among the yards and residences—a bicycle missing both of its wheels, a treadmill tipped over onto its side, half of a Peugeot 104 that still boasted stickers reading BEGIN FOR PRIME MINISTER and GOD ALMIGHTY, WE LOVE YOU, sofas and refrigerators and rolled-up carpets. Above all, and omnipresent—the majestic landscape, the exalted landscape, the wild landscape that appeared to be crying out, and sometimes whispering, and also playing a melody: This is the desert. This is the Bible. This is Genesis. (Gavron 2014, 22)

The juxtaposition of trash to the ideologically charged landscape here is, of course, the same formal principle of out-of-placeness in the Hebrew original: "junk" is not a Hebrew equivalent, but the English word transcribed in Hebrew letters. The use of the English word in Hebrew, it should be said, has the specific connotation of the trash of consumer culture. The stickers on the car with old political slogans ("Begin" is the name of a past Israeli Prime Minister) are themselves a condensed version of this formal out-of-placeneness, the uselessness of trash clashing with past the symbolic usefulness of the slogans. The Freudian account of jokes—as Alenka Zupančič puts it, the co-presence of incompatible

orders of reality (Zupančič 2008, 57)—is what colors many of these cases of out-of-placeness with humor.

But what are these two incompatible realities in *The Hilltop*? One is tempted to directly adopt the dialectic of order and disorder from Schwarz and Candido to begin to answer this question. However, this would be an over-hasty importation of the term. The dialectic of order and disorder might prove to be an apt descriptor, but the very different literary, history, and social contexts in which the novel appears render its significance quite different. I here come back to the point of Schwarz's insistence on history, both that of social forms—the "contemporary historical reality" that good art must somehow mediate—and that of literature, which provides novels with its imaginary materials.

The Hilltop can be said to exist at the meeting point of two literary-historical trajectories. The first is that of Israeli postmodernism of the late 1980s and the 1990s. For one of the clear predecessors of the formal out-of-placeneness or arbitrariness is in the literature of Orly Castel-Bloom and Etgar Keret. Castel-Bloom's early novels—*Where am I?*, *Dolly City* (Castel-Bloom 1997 [1993]; 1990)—are in fact emblematic of the pairing of high-ideological motifs and forms with the mundane, the useless, and even with the gruesomely violent or abject. If, for previous generations, the literary juxtaposition of the national-ideological with personal narrative seemed to violate all ideological taboos, generating a sense of threat, this was no longer the case in the work of Castel-Bloom's works from the 1990s. Here, there is no sense of threat associated with the misplacements of the ideological, rendering the multitude of critics singing the praise of her subversiveness tone-deaf (see, e.g., Cohen 2011). The reader is left to enjoy the excesses of the heightened, concentrated pastiche of dead national forms. The grotesque and hyperbolically violent are not absent from *The Hilltop*: the segments dedicated to Gabi's outbursts of rage many times pair playfulness or with gruesome events:

> *What are you doing here, you annoying little boy? Where's your father where's your mother where are your friends? Why do you insist on running to every ride and every game that Mickey wants to play with, pushing in front of him, stamping your feet? How dare you lay your filthy hands on Peter, my boy's wolf ? Why do you insist on making my blood boil? My blood's boiling, the air's streaming from my nostrils, my child wants to climb this ladder, so I stand next to the ladder and physically block the annoying kid, once, twice, and a third time, when he tries to push forcefully with his small body and*

> *again touches Peter, I give him a little one with the tip of my shoe in the kneecap, pinching and fiercely twisting his ear at the same time, and hear the shocked, the pained cry, and clench my teeth in response to the angry look directed upward at me at foreseeable speed, in terror, to the accompaniment of undulating howls, and say to him, "Don't mess with me," and look around discreetly to ensure that no one saw.* (Gavron 2014, 325, italics in original)

The adult Gabi's physically assaulting a child (itself a past threatening literary motif in Hebrew fiction) is here narrated by invoking forms that seem out of place: the story of Peter and the Wolf, and that of the Three Little Pigs.

But the big difference between Gavron's novel and Castel-Bloom's early work is curiously the space in which it takes place. In Castel-Bloom's older postmodernism, it is Tel Aviv that is the unquestionable locus of the pastiche of national ideology, or of pastiching the older orienting function of national allegories (Jameson 1986)—the reference to which is clearly present in the title of Castel-Bloom's *Where am I*? If not Tel Aviv, then Israel's urban centers are where such formal out-of-placeness is expressed, as in Yehudit Katzir's Haifa (Katzir 1992). But one could even argue that regardless of the actual place in which a novel's events take place, there was something quintessentially Tel-Avivian about this formal feature.

In contrast, *The Hilltop* takes place at a settlement. This fact might initially seem to be a matter of accidental content, merely an inert background to the events. But it is not, as can be proven by a short foray into the way in which Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories have been represented in Israeli literature to perceive the formal importance of the choice of location. It is important that Hebrew canonical works about the settlements are always written by those who take a principled (leftist) stance against them. David Grossman's 1987 *The Yellow Wind* (Grossman 2002 [1987]) is perhaps the most well-known example. It is not a novel but a collection of chapters written in a variety of genres, all recounting the impressions, encounters, and thoughts of the author, as he traveled through the Occupied Territories. Several of the chapters are dedicated to his impressions of the settlements and debates with the settlers. *The Yellow Wind* could not be more totally different than the postmodern writing of Castel-Bloom. It is a somewhat paradoxical child of its time. On the one hand, it is the absolute antagonist of this postmodernism: it is deeply committed to a totalizing, albeit bourgeois, enterprise, showing how every facet of Israeli existence is negatively affected by the

prolonged Israeli occupation (that the Israeli occupation is immediately present in all facets of Palestinian life is much more readily apparent). On the other hand, the formal inconsistency of the book—the random tonal, generic, and perspectival diversity of its chapters—is what marks its moment and what gives the lie to the earnest totalizing attempt. It is worthwhile mentioning here that in 2014, the Israeli author Nir Baram reproduced Grossman's travel-diary experiment, published as *A Land Without Borders* (Baram 2015). Baram's book is different than Grossman's in some important ways, but what is relevant here is that the same earnest tone dominates the representation of the settlements in the occupied territories in Baram's novel as well, wholly antagonistic to the way in which it is represented in *The Hilltop*. Perhaps other recent cases, such as Liad Shoham's 2016 murder mystery *One of Ours* (Shoham 2016), in which a murder in a settlement is traced back to international real estate trade, is closer to *The Hilltop*, in that it pairs the criminal with the high-ideological.

After this detour through literary history, what seemed initially to be mere contingent content—the place represented—can be seen as part of the formal setup itself: that a formal out-of-placeness or messiness dominates the settlement is no naïve accident, but rather is *itself a case of such out-of-placeness*, since the settlement carries with it, as it were, a wholly different form of representation. Here, then, is one demonstration of the potential dangers of "distant reading," or of reading in translation and with little knowledge of literary history (as in Moretti 2000; Warwick Research Collective 2015, 26): avoiding close reading is no assurance that a work of literature be contextualized properly; rather, the minutiae of form, many times visible only in close reading, is precisely where "big" history is registered, as I hope to show.

To this, one can now add the following observation: the formal out-of-placeness or accidentality that I have identified as the dominant formal feature of *The Hilltop* is not evenly distributed in the novel. Rather, it is far less pronounced or felt in the chapters that recount the brothers' past—which mostly takes place between Tel Aviv and New York—than in those that take place in the settlement. The chapters about the brothers' past are far more elegiac in tone, even when they recount the unexpected or surprising, which would be easy to formalize as out-of-place. This difference between the settlement chapters and those dedicated to the past finds their expression in Gabi's thoughts:

> The night of the dent, he slept in the [settlement's] playground. In the middle of the night he opened his eyes suddenly and saw a shooting star and a frightening thought paralyzed him: Everything is so transient, everything can vanish in a second. Not only here. Everywhere in the world. But here especially. Everything you have can be lost. (Gavron 2014, 386)

The "but here especially" is what is important for my purpose, as it hints at the way formal out-of-placeness is distributed along the novel, it being far more pronounced at the settlement than in the Tel Aviv-New York world.

I can now finally argue that the formal out-of-placeness in the settlement is what Schwarz would call the structural reduction performed by the novel. It is as if the novelist intuits that the settlement is where a certain social logic finds its purest expression, or as if the settlement is the necessary endpoint for the "spread" of this formal out-of-placeness—since, as I have argued, this sense of reality was previously reserved for representing Israel's urban spaces.

But what is the social logic that corresponds to *The Hilltop*'s structural reduction? As Schwarz has it, to remain true to the primacy of the literary, one would have to construct one's theory of social form to account for structural reduction performed in the novel: that fusing together of the out-of-placeness (or the disordered and surprising) with the space of the settlement. As I mentioned earlier, one may be tempted to directly import some of Schwarz's own solutions: the dialectic of order and disorder from "Objective Form," or that surprising use in the Brazilian context of liberal ideology in his "Misplaced Ideas" (Schwarz 1992, 19–32)—both seem relevant to the out-of-placeness I have isolated as part of the structural reduction performed in the novel. But such importation would be wrong for two reasons. First, the social form unique to nineteenth-century Brazil—the combination of slavery, free unpropertied individuals, and the bourgeoisie—has very little to do with twenty-first-century Israel. The function of the dialectic of order and disorder would have a completely different function in the Israeli situation.

But the second reason is even more important, as it can provide a starting point for positing a social form that would account for the structural reduction of the novel. It is in Schwarz's essay "Brecht's Relevance" (Schwarz 2013a) that one can get a hint of the transformation of the meaning of disorder itself. For Schwarz, the shock Brecht's plays used

to deliver, by pairing high culture with the gruesome excesses of capitalism, no longer has the same effect today, in which capitalism itself no longer hides its excesses. Rather, "[s]ince it nurtures and deepens the crisis [in Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*], the capitalists' extraordinary cleverness changes meaning, in tum becoming obsolete and pernicious. What is on the stage, under the sign of crisis, is the transformation of the cunning of capital into reflexes that are counterproductive, almost antediluvian" (Schwarz 2013a, 259). Thus, that capitalism itself turns openly anti-reproductive, directly destructive of society as such, is what Brecht can still teach us today—a point that also appears in the writing of Slavoj Žižek (Žižek 2007, 17), for instance. Another related node is Fredric Jameson's argument (Jameson 2003, 76), according to which we today use catastrophe not to think what comes after capitalism, but to imagine capitalism itself.

All of these are related in different ways to the following observation that one can take as the mediation between literary form and social form in *The Hilltop*: that the out-of-placeness, the necessary disorder and sense of arbitrary disaster, is something like a sense of reality of capitalism. The ideologies of respectability and individual freedom, of high art and good quality, are no longer that alongside which the sense of capitalism's excesses can be juxtaposed. Rather, the opposite is true: symbolic disorder and constant undoing—which includes obscenities much worse than any that Brecht could ever imagine—is the core of bourgeois ideology today, which makes it useful for both the disruptors of high tech and the crumbling slums that dominate more and more of the globe. Here, perhaps, lies the most important difference of today's context—before I even address the Israeli situation—from that of nineteenth-century Brazil: disorder is not today that which stands in the way of a projected world of bourgeois order; rather, it is the form in which capitalism is celebrated (and see in this regard Schwarz's reading of slums in Paulo Lins's *City of God* (Schwarz 2001).

And by using this disorder or out-of-placeness to represent a settlement in The Occupied Territories, *The Hilltop* captures an important development of capitalism in Israel—and that is what makes it uniquely Israeli. Here I come to the core of the construction of social theory to accommodate the novel's formal uniqueness. I have written elsewhere, following research by Daniel Gutwein and Amtanes Shehada (Gutwein 2006; Shehada 2017), that Israeli construction in the Occupied Territories has been for decades a solution to the contradictions of capitalism

in Israel. The erosion of state social protections under Israeli neoliberalization has made this dependency on the Occupied Territories ever more necessary: as Amtanes Shehada shows, the settlements function as a kind of "welfare state" for their Jewish-Israeli inhabitants. The argument is not that the settlement project was ever done with the intention of alleviating the pressures of neoliberalization; rather, it is only that what had first been an arbitrary benefit (alleviating the social pressures of neoliberalization) became a necessary element of Israeli capitalism. It is important to realize that the settlements, in this understanding of them, are what remains for a while outside the neoliberal logic, or as a social space where the pressures of capitalism are more managed by non-capitalist forces. It is no wonder, therefore, that the representational logic today associated with capitalism—that playful out-of-placeness or disorder—did not dominate the representation of the settlements, but was rather reserved for Israeli neoliberalized urban centers.

Now one can properly say what *The Hilltop* tells us about the settlements. By extending the same capitalist sense of reality to the settlements, it brings up the possibility that these spaces are no longer so clearly antagonistic to the older neoliberalized Israeli urban centers. The settlements, too, are becoming less protected from capitalism by the Israeli state, and are slowly brought into a direct relation with capitalist contradictions, or what we would call real subsumption under capital, a process whose full implications I cannot elaborate here, but that can be glimpsed in recent scholarship (Maoz 2020; Algazi 2006). This, then, is the conceptualization of social form that can accommodate the structural reduction of the novel: the spread of capital's real subsumption into Israeli-Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories that were previously relatively protected from the demands of the market. It is this transformation that is captured by presenting the novel's settlement as where the formal out-of-placeness is most sharply felt or visible, a logical conclusion of a process first felt in Israel's urban centers.

Briefly, it should be noted how different this conceptualization of social form is absent from almost all Israeli social theories. The latter tends to present confused notions of the relationship between the oppression of Palestinians and capitalism, treating these as two forces which are independent of each other in reality (rather than as independent only as analytical abstractions), and that can be combined synchronously in all kinds of ways, as either supporting each other or working against each other. Curiously, *The Hilltop* is able to articulate in its form the opposite

perspective: namely, that the Israeli oppression of Palestinians is a response to the contradictions of capitalism's expansion; and that the latter should be seen as the historically structuring force of Israeli society, rather than as one force alongside the oppression of Palestinians. Put in Maoist terms: the principal contradiction of Israel is capitalism's class contradiction; while the principal contradiction of Palestinian society is that of colonial domination.

Finally, it is only after this reading that one can understand all kinds of events and subjective constructions in the novel as so many figures for the spread of capitalism, its complete subsumption of what used to be properly grasped with certain ideologies of the nation: the Japanese takeover of Roni's olive oil enterprise with the Palestinians; the use of cheaper Palestinian labor in the settlement whenever Jewish labor proves too expensive; the "boutique" agriculture trend (cherry tomatoes! organic olive oil! Boutique dairy!); the settler's attempt to sell for profit ancient coins found nearby; and finally, the respite from capitalism that both brothers try—and fail—to find in the settlements ramshackle trailers. *The Hilltop* helps us see all these and many more events as where capitalism's current tendency becomes visible, articulating a completely different political terrain of struggle than the one usually associated with Israel.

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CHAPTER 9

Fables of Development: Literary Form and the Dialectics of Dependency

Michael Niblett

Commenting on Roberto Schwarz's signal contribution not just to Brazilian critical theory but to critical theory as such, Neil Larsen highlights how Schwarz's work "has taken [...] 'dependency theory' and, without sacrificing any of its sociohistorical content, raised it, as a *theory* of literature and culture, to a qualitatively higher level" (1995, 214). This he has done, continues Larsen, by applying

> the core, dialectical insights of Marxism to the riddle that dependency theory consistently ran up against but could not solve: what was or should be meant by an autonomous 'national culture' in social settings such as Brazil, given that everything 'Brazilian' was in some sense the derivative product of other 'nations' – Portugal, France, England, the United States – as well as other, non- or pre-Brazilian cultures – the Guarani, the African, and so on? (1995, 214)

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Dependency theory had proposed several possible solutions to this riddle, but the state-centrism of many of its most well-known proponents meant that these solutions typically became mired in questions of imitation and of the relationship of model to copy—questions that created a "false problem", according to Schwarz (1992, 15). The "idea of the copy", he argues, "counterposes national and foreign, original and imitative. These are unreal oppositions which do not allow us to see the share of the foreign in the nationally specific, of the imitative in the original and of the original in the imitative" (1992, 16). For Schwarz, any consideration of national peculiarities must attend to the international forces and "opaque planetary mechanism[s]" that, in their locally specific articulation, produce such peculiarities in the first place (1992, 30). As Larsen puts it, dependency theory "could never, despite its formal grasp of imperialism and colonialism as global and systematic, do otherwise than think the *whole* through the *part*, the *international* through the *national*". Schwarz, by contrast, "thinks of the 'national' as a product—social, economic, historical—of the international, the global. The part is thought *through* the whole" (1995, 214–15).

Nowhere are such insights better illustrated than in Schwarz's literary criticism, in particular his unrivalled analyses of how the contradictions arising from Brazil's dependent position within the capitalist world-system find expression in the narrative disjunctions and stylistic peculiarities of Machado de Assis's novels. In this chapter, I explore the critical possibilities offered by the use of dependency theory as a theory of literature and culture in the manner pioneered by Schwarz. I am especially interested in Schwarz's dialectical critique of the relationship between the national and the international, which Larsen views as his fundamental contribution to dependency theory. In fact, while it is true that many Latin American dependency theorists *were* constrained by a methodological nationalism in the way that Larsen suggests, others such as Ruy Mauro Marini, Agustín Cueva, and Enrique Dussel sought, in a manner akin to Schwarz, to think the part through the whole, grounding their analyses in international social relations and the operation of the law of value on a world scale.

Take, for example, Marini's *Dialectics of Dependency* (1973), in which the study of dependency is made to "correspond to the actual movement of the formation of dependent capitalism: from circulation to production; from the connection to the world market to the impact that this had on the internal organization of work; and then to return to reconsider the

problem of circulation" (Marini 2022, 136). Specifically, Marini shows how the orientation of Latin American economies towards commodity production for the world market—the result of the region's colonial history and of ongoing imperialist domination—has an adverse effect on internal relations of production and consumption:

> Because circulation is separated from production and takes place basically in the sphere of the external market, the worker's individual consumption does not interfere with the realization of the product, although it does determine the rate of surplus value. As a result, the system's natural tendency will be to exploit the worker's labour power to its very limit, without worrying about creating conditions for him to replenish it, provided that new hands can replace him in the productive process. (2022, 139)

The separation of circulation from production, in other words, systematically encourages the super-exploitation of labour, defined by Marini as "the greater exploitation of the worker's physical strength, as opposed to the exploitation resulting from increasing his productivity", something that "tends normally to be expressed in the fact that labour power is remunerated below its real value" (2022, 161). For profit-hungry peripheral capitalists, super-exploitation becomes necessary as a means to compensate for the surplus-value lost to the imperialist metropole through unequal exchange on the world market. However, insofar as super-exploitation involves converting part of the wage fund into a fund for capital accumulation, it limits workers' access to consumer goods and hinders the development of internal markets. Thus, the export economy of the dependent country "creates a cycle of capital that tends to reproduce the dependency in which it finds itself vis-à-vis the international economy on an expanded scale" (Marini 2022, 139).

In what follows, I ask what an analysis of literature might tell us about the dialectics of dependent capitalism. My focus is on a little-known novella, *The Adding Machine* (1954), by the Guyanese author Edgar Mittelholzer. Subtitled "A Fable for Capitalists and Commercialists", Mittelholzer's narrative is an early piece of Caribbean speculative fiction that, in one sense, functions as a fairly straightforward indictment of individual greed. But at the levels of imagery, style, and form, I will argue, it also captures the contradictory logics of dependency, super-exploitation, and underdevelopment as these evolved following the

colonial conquest of the Caribbean and its violent integration into the world market as a cash-crop exporter. Written before the boom in dependency theory in the 1960s and 1970s, *The Adding Machine* nonetheless seems to anticipate certain of its insights insofar as it conveys the weird (and I use this term advisedly for reasons that will become clear) structure of feeling of a peripheral bourgeoisie that finds itself compelled to reproduce its own subordination to metropolitan capital. The proleptic quality of Mittelholzer's tale in this regard is reminiscent of the "catastrophic consciousness of backwardness" that Antonio Candido, Schwarz's former teacher, identified in certain currents of Latin American literature in the 1930s. In his seminal essay "Literature and Underdevelopment" (1970), Candido argues that the "consciousness of underdevelopment followed the Second World War and was manifested clearly from the fifties on". However, he continues,

> there had been, since the thirties, a change in orientation, which could be taken as a thermometer, given its generality and persistence, above all in regionalist fiction. It then abandoned pleasantness and *curiosity*, anticipating or perceiving what had been disguised in the picturesque enchantment or ornamental chivalry with which rustic man had previously been approached. It is not false to say that, from this point of view, the novel acquired a demystifying force that preceded the coming-to-awareness of economists and politicians. (1995, 121)

Or, as Schwarz might put it: "A good novel is a genuine event for theory" (2012, 22). It is arguable whether *The Adding Machine* is a "good" book as such: Mittelholzer would have probably numbered it among those of his fictions he regarded as "lightweight attempt[s] at fantasy or comedy or mystery or the supernatural" (qtd. in Westermaas 2013, 34). But its pulpy aesthetics encode a theoretical insight that is far from lightweight. And insofar as it speaks to the dialectics of dependency, it would seem deserving of a Schwarzian close analysis at a moment when, as several critics have noted, "1960s dependency theory has become more relevant than ever" to understanding the contemporary forms of "brutality visited upon the former third world, in the form of super-exploitation, IMF austerity plans, and the ejection of millions into the ranks of the sub- or unemployed" (Beckman 2022, 187).

The Strange Case of the Peripheral Bourgeoisie

The author of some twenty-two novels, as well as numerous short stories, poems, plays, and essays, Edgar Mittelholzer was a pioneer in Anglophone Caribbean literary circles as "the first of his generation to emigrate to the UK to make a serious career of writing novels" (Gilkes 1995, 127). With the exception of his debut, *Corentyne Thunder* (1941), all of Mittelholzer's novels appeared between 1950 and 1965. *The Adding Machine* is a relatively early work: although published in 1954, it was written in the period 1942–1943 (Cox 2018, 8). The novella's protagonist is Mr. Hedge, the unscrupulous owner of a failing coconut plantation on an unnamed tropical island. The narrative begins with Hedge receiving a visit in a dream from a thin, grey man, Mr. Lesort, who presents him with an adding machine. The machine will, Lesort claims, improve the fortunes of Hedge's plantation, but only if he is kind to his workers, gives "liberally to deserving charities", does not encroach on his neighbours' lands, and, most importantly, does not allow his profits to exceed $25,000 (41). The next morning Hedge awakens from his dream to find that an adding machine has mysteriously appeared in his home. As a result of the machine's magical presence, his plantation flourishes and his profits soar. Ignoring Lesort's advice, however, he continues to abuse his workers, buys up his neighbours' lands, and exceeds profits of $25,000. For this the machine exacts a terrible toll. Apparently alive and possessed of a demonic spirit, it subjects Hedge to a series of uncanny, "weird happenings" (70) and horrifying afflictions—from boils and ringworms to the rotting away of his arm and the withering of his leg. But Hedge cannot help himself: he continues in his quest to accumulate more land and wealth. The novella climaxes with the machine transmogrifying into a terrifying tentacled creature, leaping onto Hedge's chest and ripping his heart out.

The moral of Mittelholzer's fable is clear: insatiable greed and lack of charity will receive its comeuppance. The politics of the narrative, however, are more complex and take us beyond such individualizing ethical judgements. In keeping with its fabular quality, the tale's setting is left deliberately vague. Nevertheless, it is hard not to detect the spectre of the Caribbean's bloody history of slavery and plantation agriculture in the account of Hedge's activities. He originally arrived on the island having stolen ten thousand dollars from the office in which he worked as a cashier, an act of primitive accumulation, as it were, that

allows for his reinvention as a coconut planter. The plantation he establishes clearly stands as an allegory for the various types of cash-crop monoculture imposed on the Caribbean following the region's forcible integration into the world market. Initially infested with caterpillars, which are denuding the coconut trees, it typifies the biophysical instability of monocultures, whereby the planting of a single crop creates conditions highly favourable to weeds, pests, and diseases (Watts 1987, 439–43). Hedge's brutal treatment of his racially mixed, overworked, and underfed labourers, meanwhile, exemplifies the super-exploitation that was integral to the profitability of the Caribbean plantation system from the outset. As Beverley Mullings observes, "to maximize the levels of surplus value extracted from the region's unfree, unwaged, and commodified Black and Indigenous labour, levels of consumption were kept to the biological minimum needed to sustain life, a practice that over time laid the foundations for the devaluation of Black and Indigenous labour as a whole" (2022, 171). When Hedge threatens to sack his foreman because he has the temerity to ask for "a little more pay" to "feed the children" (53), the ghosts of slavery's past are manifestly present.

For all that it patently indicts the legacies of plantation agriculture, however, *The Adding Machine*'s position on capitalist imperialism as such is less clear-cut. The problem with Hedge's behaviour, as the novella presents it, is that it is excessive; if he were to show compassion to his workers and not allow his profits to become too great then he could live in peace and relative prosperity. Juanita Cox has suggested that *The Adding Machine* "sets a [...] different tone" to Mittelholzer's novels (2018, 9). It is a "vehemently anti-capitalist" work, she writes, that is in keeping with the views he is known to have held in the early 1940s, when he referred to himself as a communist (9–10). As such, it "complicates latter-day views of Mittelholzer as a straightforwardly right-wing novelist" (10). While I certainly agree that broad-brush dismissals of Mittelholzer's work as simply right-wing do an injustice to the complexity of his extensive oeuvre, I do want to put pressure on Cox's characterization of *The Adding Machine* as vehemently anti-capitalist. At the level of plot, at least, the novella's critique of Hedge's behaviour is largely reformist in nature. Where, I think, Mittelholzer's narrative does have something more radical to offer is at the levels of imagery, form, and genre, where it wrestles with the contradictions of capitalist accumulation and the dynamics of dependent development in interesting ways.

The clearest sign that *The Adding Machine*'s fabular presentation of Hedge's plantocratic tyranny might also register the systemic pressures of the world market comes in the descriptions of his dreams of entrepreneurial success. Hedge has visions of becoming "a world figure in finance", a "man who would hold the markets of the world in his one right hand" (76–77). To achieve this global ambition, he first has to monopolize the coconut industry on his home island:

> He exclaimed aloud, with joy, for he read in the newspaper that one of the neighbouring plantations was up for sale. Robinson's plantation. Aha! The caterpillars had ruined Robinson. Robinson was deep in debt. Now, thought Mr. Hedge, is my chance. I'll buy out Robinson's plantation. I can get it cheap. [. . .] 'I'm going to prosper. I'm going to make big money. I'm going to gobble them all up. Robinson has gone. Smith will go next. I hear he's in bad water already. Then Brown. Then Harris. One by one I shall gobble them up. I shall control the whole industry in this island.' (50)

This evocation of the cut-throat nature of intra-capitalist competition (and behind it the presence of the world market as the ultimate horizon of possibility) is the point at which *The Adding Machine*'s explicit critique of individual capitalist excess reveals itself as an implicit meditation on the dialectics of dependency. To understand why, it is worth turning briefly to Enrique Dussel's theorization of dependency and unequal exchange in *Towards an Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861–63* (1988).

For Dussel, the essence of dependency (which is not be confused with its phenomenal manifestation in the form of the unequal relations between nation-states) is the operation of the law of value on a world scale and the distribution of the total surplus-value of society. Dependency, Dussel argues, is to be understood as "an international *social relation* and a *transfer of surplus value* between total national capitals of different organic composition, in the framework of competition in the world order" (2001, 205). Thus, the "theoretical location of dependency" is in competition (214). Dussel predicates his argument on Marx's theory of the tendency for competition among capitals to result in the equalization of profits into a general rate of profit. If we apply this at

the international level, he writes, "we will have enunciated the fundamental law of competition, of equalization, of the distribution of value, and, therefore, of dependency insofar as it is a transfer of surplus value":

> When there is an international exchange of commodities which are products of total national capitals of different levels of development (i.e. of different organic composition and with different average national wages), the commodity of the more developed capital will have a lower value. Competition, however, equalizes the price of both commodities at a single average price. In this manner, the commodity with a lower *value* (that of the more developed national capital) obtains a *price* greater than its value, which it realizes by extracting surplus value from the commodity with a higher value. Therefore, the commodity of the less developed capital, although it may realize a profit (if its price is less than the international average price), *transfers surplus value* because the average international price is less than the national value of the same commodity. (225)

For Dussel, then, the dynamics of unequal exchange and the international transfer of surplus-value are the cornerstones of dependency. In this regard, his critique bears comparison with Marini's theoretical reconstruction of the formation of dependent capitalism. Recall that Marini too begins from circulation and the dependent economy's specific connection to the world market, emphasizing the significance of the relations of unequal exchange established between imperialist metropoles and peripheralized locations structured around the export of primary commodities. What is then of decisive importance for Marini is the way that this pattern of unequal exchange and the loss of surplus-value it entails—a loss that cannot be prevented at the level of international market relations—compels peripheral bourgeoises to pursue various compensatory mechanisms at the level of domestic production. Chief among these mechanisms, of course, is the super-exploitation of labour.

With this in mind, I want to return to *The Adding Machine*'s presentation of Hedge. The latter might now be viewed not only as the epitome of the plantocratic tyrant and colonial exploiter, nor only as the embodiment of capitalism's logic of endless accumulation; he also stands for the specific experience of the peripheral capitalist class. Inexorably drawn into an expanding spiral of competition, for which (as the story repeatedly emphasizes) control over the world market is the ultimate guarantor of success, he becomes a figure in whom the contradictory dynamics of dependency coalesce and manifest. Key to this allegorical reading is

Hedge's relationship to the demonic adding machine. When the planter is first offered the machine in his dream by Lesort, the latter responds to Hedge's enquiry "Are you French?" by stating: "Yes. But sometimes I can be English, too. Even German or American. I'm not at all patriotic" (39). Lesort thus stands simultaneously for the leading imperial nations of the era, as well as for the rootless cosmopolitanism of capital as such. Crucially, he does not so much give the adding machine to Hedge, but impose it upon him. Hedge tells Lesort he does not want it, but Lesort insists that he *has* to give it to him because it is his alone to have. Lesort then proceeds to use the machine to debit Hedge twenty-five cents, the paying back of which is linked to the various horrific afflictions the planter suffers each time he contravenes Lesort's stipulations about his future conduct. As the source of Hedge's success as a planter, but also of his ultimately fatal indebtedness, the machine represents the forcible incorporation of peripheral territories into the world market, as well as the importation of forms of technological modernity that only exacerbate their dependent position. From this perspective, the $25,000 limit the machine places on Hedge's profits looks less like a curb on individual greed and more like an allegorical sign for the barrier to accumulation imposed on the peripheral bourgeoisie by unequal exchange and dependency. Hedge is "determined to get stupendously wealthy" and, with his plantations flourishing, asks himself why he should "not have piles and piles" of money (60). But the machine will not let him exceed the $25,000 limit, forcing him time and again to give away the profit he makes in excess of this—just as the bourgeoisie of the dependent nation repeatedly confronts the loss of surplus-value to the imperial core.

The peripheral bourgeoisie's typical response to this loss of surplus-value, as Marini shows, is to ratchet up the super-exploitation of labour. Here, too, Mittelholzer's narrative seems to anticipate dependency theory's crucial insight into the logical connection between unequal exchange on the world market and the deformation of domestic production. Throughout the story, Hedge is determined to put downward pressure on his labourers' wages. Buying up his neighbours' plantations grants him a monopoly over a large pool of surplus workers, facilitating his super-exploitative practices: "The labourers are in my hands now. I—and I alone—can dictate the price of wages. From now on they'll take what *I* give them—or starve" (56). Significantly, the more the adding machine punishes Hedge and limits his acquisitive zeal, the more he drives his labour force beyond its biophysical limits. After the loss of his arm to an

infection induced supernaturally by the adding machine, Hedge "became a terror to [his foreman] and the labourers. He shouted and bawled at them. Cursed and threatened them. He made a further cut in their wages and told them it was a matter of indifference whether they and their families starved" (69). The implicit connection the narrative draws between Hedge's inability to accumulate beyond a certain limit and the super-exploitation of his workforce is reinforced by a series of motifs juxtaposing the abstractions of the money form with the material reality of disfigured, dismembered, or decaying bodies. Thus, for example, we have the payment of Hedge's "debt" to Lesort through the loss of the planter's limbs, each injured or amputated body part contributing to a decrease in the ominous red numerals in the debit column of the adding machine. Or there is the way the machine itself, symbol of capitalist accounting practices, develops a series of red blotches that look like "dried blood" and, at the story's conclusion, begin to "bubble" and give off "an odour like that of all the carrion and all the filth clotted together and throwing off every conceivable kind of rotten and diseased miasma" (77).

What is most interesting, perhaps, about *The Adding Machine*'s mediation of the dialectic of unequal exchange and super-exploitation is the way that both sides of this dialectic are focalized through Hedge. The fabular nature of Mittelholzer's narrative and its surface commitment to delivering an individualizing moral message (greed is bad) mean that it is organized almost exclusively around Hedge and his experiences. We barely see, for example, the workers he exploits; the narratorial consciousness never shows us conditions on the plantation from their perspective. Indeed, insofar as those conditions are dramatized in the story, this occurs through the depiction of the bodily horrors suffered by Hedge. The injuries visited on him by the adding machine appear as a form of rebounding violence, mirroring the industrial injuries commonly suffered by plantation labourers (the loss of a finger or an arm to an errant machete, for example). When the machine causes Hedge's leg to wither until it becomes a "thin, skeleton thing, bloodless, fleshless and without any visible fibres of muscle" (73), the image of the desiccated limb turns the planter into a metonym for his own exhausted workforce, sucked dry by the combination of over-exploitation and forced underconsumption. Hedge, then, represents both the peripheral elite, desperately trying to compensate for lost surplus-value, *and* the degraded workforce: he is, in other words, the very embodiment of the dialectics of dependency. In line with Schwarz's specific use of dependency theory as a theory

of literature, the "part" that is Hedge, the symbol of the plantocratic order, demands to be read through the "whole" that is the capitalist world-system. Thus, what might be considered a formal limitation—*The Adding Machine*'s narrow, individualizing focus—emerges as a theoretical strength insofar as it emphasizes the contradictory unity of unequal exchange and super-exploitation.

A Weird World-System

Beneath the surface of its cautionary tale of acquisitive zeal, therefore, *The Adding Machine*'s narrative grapples with the paradoxes of dependency, particularly as these are experienced by peripheral elites. The novella's very strangeness, its increasingly disturbing sequence of uncanny events, speaks to the strange situation of a bourgeois fraction whose historic mission to pursue the accumulation of capital is, ironically, short-circuited by the systemic logic of capitalist competition. Indeed, the fantastical qualities of Mittelholzer's narrative represent another means by which the text re-stages the problem of dependency, this time in terms of its relationship to the international literary field and the latter's own dynamics of competition and unequal exchange.

The Adding Machine's title is possibly an allusion to the US dramatist Elmer Rice's 1923 play of the same name, an expressionist satire on the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism. More pertinent, however, are the story's strong affinities with the "weird" fiction of such US and British writers as H. P. Lovecraft, Arthur Machen, and Algernon Blackwood. Mittelholzer plainly signals his literary debt to this tradition of supernatural and horror writing. Several references are made in the text to the "weird" events that befall Hedge (at one point, the despairing planter is even moved to ask: "Why did things conspire to be so weird?" [71]). Meanwhile, Mittelholzer's descriptions of the lurking terrors, unexplained sounds, animate objects, and oppressive atmospheres Hedge confronts recall Lovecraft's characterization of weird fiction in his 1927 essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature": "The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present" (2013, 6). Finally, there is the climactic transmogrification of the adding machine. Discussing the typical features of the Lovecraftian weird, China Miéville notes that

> one of the most distinct ways in which Lovecraft moots a Weird universe is in his revolutionary teratology. The monsters that inhabit his tales are a radical break with anything from a folkloric tradition. Rather than werewolves, vampires, or ghosts, Lovecraft's monsters are agglomerations of bubbles, barrels, cones, and corpses, patchworked from cephalopods, insects, crustaceans, and other fauna notable precisely for their absence from the traditional Western monstrous. Paradigmatic is Weird Fiction's obsession with the tentacle, a limb-type absent from European folklore and the traditional Gothic. (2009, 512)

Weird fiction's "obsession with the tentacle" is exemplified by the terrifying physiognomy of Lovecraft's most famous creation, Cthulhu, a "monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long narrow wings behind" (Lovecraft 2016, 32). Now compare Mittelholzer's depiction of the adding machine's metamorphosis:

> The red spots and blotches [on the adding machine] had begun to change in colour. From red they became greenish. And then they began to bubble and give off a yellowish vapour. [. . .] Mr. Hedge leaned against the window-sill to retch, and in this moment the machine gave a rasping, fiendish howl and leapt upon his chest. [. . .] From each spot and blotch there emerged a greenish bony tentacle. A tentacle with a sharp claw. From the two large blotches came two thick, scaly, powerful tentacles. From the smaller spots came correspondingly smaller tentacles. Each tentacle burrowed, with an easy familiarity, into Mr. Hedge's chest. (77)

Mittelholzer's obvious indebtedness to the motifs and techniques of his Euro-American predecessors might be viewed as a formal analogue of Hedge's debt to Lesort. *The Adding Machine*'s generic borrowings, in other words, serve as an allegorical figure for dependency just as much as the red numerals on the machine itself.

It is worth stressing, however, that *The Adding Machine*'s use of the conventions and devices of the weird is not simply a question of literary influence or imitation, but also of a kind of elective affinity. The weird offers Mittelholzer's novella a means to negotiate the social contradictions internalized by its narrative in a quite specific way, one different to that enabled by other generic modalities. In this regard, it is useful to compare the weird tentacled monstrosity of the adding machine to the

spectres present in another of Mittelholzer's fictions, *My Bones and My Flute*. Published in 1955, *My Bones and My Flute* was conceived and first drafted by Mittelholzer in the mid-1940s, not long after he had written *The Adding Machine* (Westmaas 2013, 36). A gothic tale set in Guyana in the 1930s, the novel very deliberately draws attention to its own plot devices and stylistic choices. It is littered with remarks about how its narrative is something like one or other of its various literary predecessors, with M. R. James's *Ghost-Stories of an Antiquary* and Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* cited as especially influential. As I have argued elsewhere (drawing centrally on Schwarz's "The Importing of the Novel to Brazil"), *My Bones and My Flute* exhibits a certain performative anxiety around its use of such imported models, which are forced to confront local traditions of the supernatural to which they are ill-adapted (the novel's demonic forces recall a variety of Guyanese folkloric figures, including the bakoo, the massacouraman, and the Dutchman ghost) (see Niblett 2014). The resulting tension between imported and local tonalities registers the specificity of Guyana's position within the world-system. The novel's overt emphasis on its use of imported generic conventions is an attempt to take in, at the level of content, the unsuitability of the Euro-American form, whose awkward presence is nevertheless necessary as a figure for the country's dependency and uneven development.

By comparison, such formal tension is absent from *The Adding Machine*, in which the world of Caribbean folklore plays relatively little part. Instead, Mittelholzer's use of a weird Lovecraftian aesthetic provides a different formal mediation of—a different insight into—the problem of dependency, crucial to which is the specific nature of the weird's break with the conventions of classical Gothic. Miéville points out that one reason for the revolutionary teratology of the weird is that its concern is less with registering the return of the repressed than with "impregnat[ing] the present with a bleak, unthinkable novum" (2009, 513). "Such a literary moment", continues Miéville, "is an expression of upheaval and crisis. […] The great Weird Fiction writers are responding to capitalist modernity entering, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period of crisis in which its cruder nostrums of progressive bourgeois rationality are shattered" (513). Similarly, Stephen Shapiro argues that.

> Weird tales tend to cluster, or achieve a density of appearance at moments of the first instantiation of an incipient downward phase of economic (and social) contraction. The Weird registers initial perceptions of what ought

> not to be present – i.e. capitalism in crisis – in times otherwise dominated by wealth creation and continuing expansion [. . .]. Narratives that foreground the seepage of other, seemingly inexplicable lifeworlds and temporalities into the everyday are tremblors before the onset of larger transformations within the capitalist world-system. (2016, 241)

If such is the case, then we might see Mittelholzer's mobilization of a weird aesthetic as a response to the crises and transformations unfolding in the 1940s and 1950s: not only the Second World War, of course, but also the continued unravelling of the British colonial order in the Anglophone Caribbean, the looming threat of the United States as the emergent hegemonic power in the region, the rise of new nationalist movements, and the problem of national 'development' and dependency in this changed context. Hence, whereas *My Bones and My Flute* deploys its gothic conventions to excavate a repressed history of plantation production and colonial violence—the roots of Guyana's dependent condition—*The Adding Machine*'s weird stylings carry an anticipatory charge. The "bleak, unthinkable novum" with which they "impregnate the present" is the presentiment that the contemporary ructions in the world-system will not only transform patterns of development and accumulation (the new wealth enabled by the adding machine), but also consolidate renewed forms of dependency and underdevelopment (the bloody limits imposed on accumulation by the machine).

Thus, Miéville's reading of the weird as a response to a period in which "nostrums of progressive bourgeois rationality are shattered" not only confirms our earlier suggestion that *The Adding Machine*'s strangeness indexes the strange case of the peripheral bourgeoisie, which discovers to its confused horror that its ability to accumulate is subject to limitations imposed by the logic of capitalist competition. It also underscores the anticipatory—indeed, speculative—quality of Mittelholzer's weird narrative. The novella was published at a moment when a new ideology of 'developmentalism' was being consolidated amongst bourgeois elites globally. This was the belief that "it was possible for the countries of the South to 'develop' themselves, as opposed to 'being developed' by the North. The new assumption was that, if the countries of the South would only adopt the proper policies, they would one day, some time in the future, become as technologically modern and as wealthy as the countries of the North" (Wallerstein 2005, 1264). The horrific fate of Hedge represents *The Adding Machine*'s precocious registration of the shattering

of this developmentalist nostrum, the illusions of which, as the work of dependency theorists such as Marini so clearly illustrate, were always destined to run aground on the hard realities of capitalism's systematic production of unevenness, dependency, and underdevelopment.

Conclusion

The Adding Machine was shunned by Mittelholzer's European and US publishers, for whom it "seemingly expressed a view that was unacceptable" (Cox 2018, 10). Instead, it was published in the Caribbean by Jamaica's Pioneer Press—a further, paratextual instance of the novella's mediation of the world (literary) market's dynamics of competition and unequal exchange. If *The Adding Machine*'s explicit critique of capitalist excess was too much for Euro-American publishers in the 1950s, and its implicit critique of the dialectics of dependency was strikingly prescient, to what extent does this relatively obscure piece of Caribbean speculative fiction speak to our current moment?

Interestingly, recent years have seen a remarkable surge in sf writing from the Caribbean by the likes of Karen Lord, Rita Indiana, Nalo Hopkinson, Tobias S. Buckell, Curdella Forbes, Marlon James, Kacen Callender, and Pedro Cabiya. Much of this work deploys the conventions, tropes, and devices of sf to register and challenge the racism, classism, sexism, and ecocide on which the modern capitalist world-system is founded. It does so, moreover, at a time when the contemporary Caribbean "is in a state of tragedy and crisis, destroyed and corrupted by a postcolonial malaise wedded to neocolonialism" (Kamugisha 2019, 1). Confronted by political-economic turmoil, state violence, spiralling femicides, and ecological breakdown, many Caribbean authors have turned to sf as a way to capture the paradoxes and absurdities, the alienation and anxiety, of a situation in which, with "the effect of climate change so severe and political-economic marginality so acute, […] it is not apocalyptic to wonder if the Caribbean will survive as we know it into the second half of the current century" (Kamugisha 2021, 59). In this context, Mittelholzer's weird tale looks like an important precursor to, say, Rita Indiana's otherwise radically different reworking of Lovecraftian teratology in her post-apocalyptic novel *Tentacle* (2015).

At the same time, as noted earlier, there has been a "revival of interest in the dependency framework and its classic texts" across Latin America and the Caribbean (Latimer 2022, 22). In particular, as the limits to

the neoextractivist and neodevelopmentalist policies pursued by many states in the region following the commodities boom of the early 2000s become apparent, a "new generation of scholars and movement intellectuals is returning to Marxist dependency theory because of the suffering of everyday people under a model of development that is not delivering for the majority" (Latimer 2022, 22). Thus, the continued relevance of Mittelholzer's novella: its formal encoding of the dialectics of dependency—of the intrinsic connection between export for the world market, unequal exchange, and super-exploitation—illuminates the contradictions of neodevelopmentalism just as much as developmentalism. What we have here, in other words, is what Schwarz would call "a formally literary dynamic that produces knowledge about external reality" (2001, 33). *The Adding Machine*, tragically, remains very much a fable for our times.

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CHAPTER 10

Displaced Peripheries, Geopolitical Allegories: Roberto Schwarz, Rajinder Singh Bedi, and Colonial Legacies in India

G. S. Sahota

Part I: Southern Dialectics

Grafting Critical Theories from Peripheral Geographies

When the Brazilian sociologist and internationally celebrated public intellectual Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987) reflected on his travels to western India in 1951, he remarked that "a present-day Brazilian's first impression of setting foot in India is a strong sense of déjà vu" (1974, 236). Freyre's travels had been sponsored by the longstanding dictator of Portugal, António Salazar, who was concerned to shore up his country's colonies in an era of impending imperial crisis. Yet Freyre's Eastern sojourns took him some distance from the aims of his sponsor. Instead of firming up linkages between far-flung Portuguese colonies and Lisbon, Freyre's

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ruminations drew stronger ties between the southern spheres. "Colonial Brazil maintained numerous contacts with the Orient, particularly with India," notes Freyre, realizing that quotidian commonalities shared by India and Brazil were much more abundant than those adopted by the imperial center. "Far more than Portugal, Brazil adopted many features of Oriental culture to its style of life" (237). The commonalities that Freyre recognized extended from the exchange of tropical cash crops—cashews from Brazil to India, and palm trees from India to Brazil—to architectural styles—"techniques of decoration, if not of construction, of its houses and churches"—to everyday items—"verandas, Indian matting and Indian jalousies, palanquins, sunhats, fans, cool fabrics, prophylactic plants such as basil, concave tiles, church porches as shelters against violent rain, sun, and light, certain leaves and flowers to ward off the evil eye and the noxious vapors of 'bad air'" (237). The encounter with India reveals in uncanny ways for Freyre the lost meanings of Portuguese words: in the festive uproar with which he was received alongside the Governor General of India in Queula in northern Goa, he understood "viscerally, for the first time, why we Brazilians call a wild party a *pagodeira*. And the thousand and one courteous attentions we are shown bring home to me in the flesh the original Oriental meaning of Portuguese words like *zumbaia*, *salamaleque*, *pagode*" (238). These uncanny semblances and overlapping patterns between ex-colonial societies suggest diffuse yet real imperial intermediations, ones that in turn have implications for not only how world literature is approached, but also how an adequate critical theory might be grafted from disparate imperial geographies. Roberto Schwarz's critical oeuvre fulminates on the southern-dialectical horizon between different colonial legacies like silent lightening, illuminating not merely the ex-colonial worlds but the vast underlying interlinkages of the social system whose structure becomes, so to speak, the musical staff, or the order beneath the disparate cultural symbols of capitalism, to borrow one of Schwarz's felicitous metaphors (Schwarz 2001, 2).

This "quiet (Brazilian) revolution in critical theory," as Neil Larsen has dubbed Schwarz's interventions over the decades, has only begun to be fathomed and explored with an eye to its "implications for Latin Americanism as a whole, and perhaps no less for a theory of 'postcolonial' culture and society" (2001, 77). I will follow the lines of Schwarz's theoretical ramifications into the South Asian worlds of Urdu literature, with an eye especially to the narrative allegories of Rajinder Singh Bedi, a major innovator of the Urdu short story and novel in the era of anti-imperialist

mobilization, nationalism, and decolonization. But here at the outset it might be useful to tarry for a moment and survey the fissured and uneven critical terrain that impedes productive dialogue and sharing of theoretical models between, say, Brazil and South Asia. Larsen's reflections on these very obstacles are instructive and suggest possible ways of overcoming or circumventing them. While teaching as a visiting professor at the University of São Paulo (USP) in 1995, Larsen noticed the impediments that constrict the kinds of languages, histories, and normative sites for theoretical discourse that either make their way into or out of a place like Brazil. Whereas some bodies of criticism fly first class right into the curriculum of places like USP—Larsen mentions the fashionable nineties icons Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, for instance—others, even from neighboring Latin American locations, let alone from another continent, seem never to arrive. The reason for this, as Larsen realized, was the existence of a narrow passageway with gate and checkpoint governed by the hegemonic market of ideas in the Euro-North American metropolis. For a figure like Schwarz to make it to South Asia would, according to this cumbersome arrangement, require providing him with the correct papers for passage into the metropolis and institutional validation for reexport into India and beyond. No doubt this journey through the constrictive core of the imperial centers' institutions may mute, distort, or dull the critical edge of the theories that are permitted to pass through. The reigning slogans and catchphrases of "postcolonial" theory issuing from those of South Asian descent in North American locations may be as misplaced in the contemporary Indian context as anything imposed by colonial powers. For instance, how far does "hybridity" go vis à vis hardened caste hierarchies and religious boundaries under Hindutva? Given that, it may be worth wondering whether it might not be possible to bypass this entire arrangement and see if Schwarz could land in South Asia through some imaginary escape hatch.

My affinity for Schwarz may stem from my own wariness regarding the spiritless smorgasbords of undialectical "theory" on offer in my institutional milieu.[1] I too wince at how operations of applying pre-given paradigms to objects whose histories had been repressed (and thus resistance undone) could "reproduce cultural-political marginalization at a global level" (2007, 93). What I propose to do in what follows is escape,

[1] See, for instance, the discussion of instrumentality and interpretation in Sahota (2018, 18–19), *passim*.

if only momentarily, from this "factory of repression" and distance myself from the usual discrediting of the critical value of peripheral circumstances within hegemonic value structures (2007, 106). I wish to bring Schwarz into direct contact with the overlapping problematics of the colonial legacy in India, from one periphery to another. This mediation via the experience of the colonized in different regions under overlapping metropolitan powers has particular benefits, foremost among which is the possibility of grafting a critical theory that resonates widely within the lesser valued regions of world literature and sheds simultaneous light on the overarching structures and operations of global hegemony. This involves hearing resonances and being sensitive to common dilemmas facing those from peripheral locations; noticing the mismatch between hegemonic norms of metropolitan zones, such as those of classical liberalism, and the concrete social realities left in the wake of imperialism; measuring and accounting for the gap between the socio-historical advances in geopolitical centers and the non-normative course taken by peripheral zones; and seeing as well that these problems common to peripheral economies of the world system condition social relations (such as those of the genders) and their concomitant cultural forms. For modeling how to handle such an array of problems, one could do worse than retrace the critical steps of Schwarz, whom Perry Anderson has called "the finest dialectical critic since Adorno anywhere in the world" (2019, 82).

The task is akin to that imagined by Freyre with respect to the fruits and flora common to Luso-tropical cultures. Brazilian expertise regarding cashews, Freyre urges, should be made known in India; "conversely, Brazil would benefit from a knowledge of the modern Indian techniques... for improving mangoes through grafting" (1974, 237). Impressed by the heart-shaped Indian mangoes known as *afonsas*, *colaças* and *fernandinas*, Freyre urges their adoption in Brazil, knowing that this will require learning new techniques. By misplacing cultures of the periphery and grafting their experiences onto each other—Brazil onto South Asia, South Asia onto Brazil—it might very well become possible to gain critical perspective on the limitations of reified metropolitan views, such as those of Jürgen Habermas, who admitted that the silence of the Frankfurt School under his custodianship regarding the ex-colonial world was deliberate. Acknowledging that the Frankfurt School has generally neglected the peripheries of the capitalist system, an interviewer asks Habermas whether "conceptions of socialism developed in the course of

anti-imperial and anti-capitalist struggles in the Third World have any bearing on the tasks of a democratic socialism in the advanced capitalist world? Conversely, does your own analysis of advanced capitalism have any lessons for socialist forces in the Third World?" To this, Habermas replies: "I am tempted to say 'no' in both cases. I am aware of the fact that this is a eurocentrically limited view. I would rather pass the question" (1986, 183). By passing (and being allowed to pass on the question), Habermas does an injustice to the wider legacies of critical theory as well as to the struggles and predicaments of the ex-colonial world. The current effort of grafting a critical theory as rich and various as Indian mangoes is meant as a corrective, one that displaces a solipsistic center. Informed by Schwarz's own work, which opens novel horizons of critical and practical possibility—new locations, new panoramic vistas, new distinctions of taste even—this essay advances upon zones left overlooked, if not rendered effectively and unduly verboten, by the likes of Habermas.

Splicing Candido and Adorno: Disjunct Critical Legacies and the Dialectic of Generality

What makes Schwarz's writing so generative for other peripheral locations such as of those of mid-twentieth-century Urdu needs to be briefly expounded. This is his capacity to bring into dialectical intensity the disjunct critical legacies of his mentor Antonio Candido, on the one hand, and the potentialities latent in the works of Theodor Adorno, on the other. From Candido, Schwarz acquired a sensitivity to the predicaments of writers and critics in peripheral zones such as nineteenth-century Brazil. Here, as in India, the processes of underdevelopment necessitated by the expansionary dynamics of capital fail as a rule to reproduce the social conditions that would match the normative course of development and concomitant cultural forms of the metropolis.[2] In his seminal two-volume *Formação da literatura brasileira* (1959), Candido modeled for Schwarz how to follow the anomalous formal logics that issue from the distinct historical courses of development of peripheral zones, far from the institutions of bourgeois life prevalent in the imperial centers (Candido 1975). From an equally enduring engagement with Adorno, Schwarz became apprised of the potentialities of not enclosing oneself in metropolitan

[2] The general pattern is one in which the peripheries are subservient to the resource and fiscal needs of the commercial centers of a globalizing economy.

high culture (*a cultura canonizada*) (Schwarz 2012a, 50). (Adorno after all investigated debased popular forms more rigorously than banked on by the industrialists and marketeers of mass culture.) Instead of stuffy aloofness, Adorno urged one to be alert to the contradictory currents of culture in all its variety, especially the manner in which its formal consistencies and inconsistencies index "an unconscious historiography of our times" (Schwarz 2012a, 46). Spliced together, Candido and Adorno set Schwarz in motion toward some of his fundamental theoretical categories, most significant among which is socio-aesthetic generality. I will take each on in turn, laying out the implicit cues for reading Bedi in India, to whom I will turn in the second part of this chapter.

Schwarz's spirited engagement and defense of his mentor's critical legacy bring out the qualities that he values in not merely Candido, but in literary study more broadly. Rereading a variety of essays and interviews over his career, we can glean the key traits that Schwarz cherished and wished to propagate. Three in particular stand out, each imbued with what Schwarz recognized as Candido's guiding "hatred of oppression" acquired from an intimate knowledge of two mutually contradictory spheres from his childhood in the early twentieth century, that of ex-slaves and their ostensibly civilized bourgeois superiors (Schwarz 2017, 50). All are marked by a sensitivity to the cultural predicaments of capitalist peripheries. The first trait then is a solid foundation of *integrative criticism*, one that drew together disparate everyday experiences in Brazil and built upon the insights of predecessors. Moreover, Candido incorporated into his designs for USP's Department of Literary Theory critical developments from five major world centers—England, North America, Germany, Italy, and France—allowing him and his students to overcome a reigning provincialism and participate in international debates. This signature integrative approach culminated in Candido's sociologically grounded retracings of a large-scale historical structure that signaled the gradual formation of a national literature distinct from the colonial order from which it had evolved. The second major trait Schwarz highlights in his reflections on Candido's method is one that captures processes of *cultural accumulation*. Candido had an eye for tracing the manner in which an autonomous cultural bloc slowly evolves through forging continuities, reversals, and inversions of previous literary or cultural models, establishing a living tradition in the process. That is, Candido was able to grasp the actuality of the past in his literary subjects while exemplifying such an actuality for his present-day readership. This way of

capturing cultural specificity through a logic of accumulation opened the way toward an overcoming of reified understandings of particularity and universality stemming from metropolitan zones. This last quality can be organized under the rubric of *counter-hegemonic inversion*. Schwarz notes that in his most complex essays such as "Dialectic of Malandroism" and the still untranslated "De cortiço a cortiço" ("From slum to slum"), radical reversals are at hand. These "path-breaking texts in which forms and concepts from the Western tradition are examined in light of Brazilian reality, relativizing them and imparting to them the inflexions of a particular history" mark something radically new (Candido 1995, 79–103). As the "Western tradition measures Brazilian reality and in turn is measured by it," Schwarz notes the dialectical fallout of this back-and-forth movement: "Brazilian experience becomes universal and identifies itself in its originality, which may be positive but negative too, or even hateful" (2017, 54).

With such dialectical provocations already present in Candido's work, we approach the point at which Schwarz's oeuvre begins to seamlessly splice in Adorno. Though their critical languages and backgrounds may differ, both Candido and Adorno concur in formulating critical models governed by the specificity, indeed even at times radical singularity, of the cultural artifacts under analysis. Furthermore, both thinkers assiduously seek to delineate points of articulation between cultural form and historical material. There is much that links Schwarz's conceptual underpinnings to the extensive groundwork established by Adorno, but for present purposes I will underscore Adorno's notion of the sociality of aesthetic form and its elaboration by Schwarz. Adorno's aesthetic theory reflected down to its innermost tensions the social and political dynamics that define late capitalist times, bringing to a point of crisis the very notion and possibility of the work of art. With the thesis that "form is the locus of social content," Adorno sees form as not a universal or transhistorical constant, but rather as imbued with socio-political dynamism (Adorno 1997, 230). Having embedded within it a potentiality to separate itself off from the workaday world and imagine a different one, the work of art for Adorno is charged with negativity: art is thus "the social antithesis of society" (8). The moment when art is in crisis, the possibilities of human freedom, including those of the imagination, are also likely falling under strain. This is merely one instance in which questions of form for Adorno reveal dimensions of sociality that otherwise do not (or cannot) attain expression. A social aesthetic that overlooks formal qualities or is content

with preexisting ones may stumble past and miss the true levers of social change, for "real denunciation," as Adorno puts it, "is probably only a capacity of form" (230). Simultaneously an index of immanent potentialities for lessening social suffering and the spontaneous divulgence of a haunting *promesse de bonheur*, art for Adorno reveals itself as a ghostly artifact of social labor. Even in moments of total seclusion, the artist is not alone: "By constantly admitting into the production of his work an element of negativity toward his own immediacy, the artist unconsciously obeys a social universal: In every successfully realized correction, watching over the artist's shoulder is a collective subject that has yet to be realized" (231). Such forceful ruminations on the social dimension of art captivated Schwarz's interest from his early twenties, when he wrote to Adorno expressing interest in attending his lectures on aesthetic theory.[3] In 2003, Adorno's centenary, Schwarz expressed his indebtedness to the German critical theorist (as well as Candido) in an elucidating interview. Over the course of this conversation, Schwarz clarifies many salient points relating to Adorno's enduring actuality, foremost among which is his theory of aesthetic form as expressed most powerfully in musicological metaphors.

Schwarz takes interest in a personal note, in which Adorno "admits to holding the conceit of comprehending the language of music just as of a hero of fairy tales comprehends the language of birds" (Schwarz 2012a, 46). The intriguing analogy is of interest to Schwarz for what it seems to suggest about form: "If we place 'form' where 'music' is written, we will have something of the attitude of Adorno as a critic, who in fact seeks to know what the forms are expressing, reacting to them as expressions of contemporary society regarding what is most problematic and decisive [*crucial*]" (Schwarz 2012a, 45–46). It is in Schwarz's appreciation of "the care and analytical acuity with which [Adorno] scrutinizes the formal consistencies and inconsistencies of works of art" that we can make a connection with his notion of form as "the *structural reduction* of a social situation, external to literature, belonging to history" and what this approach has to offer the interpretation of the cultural forms emanating from the peripheral zones, where reigning metropolitan ideas are often out of place and where imitations of hegemonic forms or norms are likely to go awry (Schwarz 2012b, 13). Here attention to consistencies and inconsistencies of form may be most revealing. Indeed the

[3] These letters have been collected in *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, no. 74 Dezembro 2019, 330–344.

"principle of generalization"—the point of mediation between the wider society and aesthetic form in Schwarz's Marxist hermeneutics—helps to point out where reality and fiction both abide by a common logic, one that makes both society and art intelligible within themselves and with respect to each other (Schwarz 2012b, 14). How are the dirempted, incomplete, or inconsistent moments of cultural forms in the peripheries to be understood? What political or social meanings—or possibilities—find themselves transmuted into the particularities of peripheral forms? What are the circumferences of allusion and allegorization of these non-canonical developments in the hinterlands of capitalism? Of course, each situation will demand different kinds of investigation and suggest different answers. Yet, Schwarz's attunement to these questions in the works of Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis are suggestive of possible matrices. With respect to *Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas* (1880/1881), the central object of study in Schwarz's magnum opus *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism* (1990/2001), the novel's unusual formal qualities capture the structural implications of the historical picture: far from bringing Enlightenment notions to fulfillment, the periphery is the zone where they are purposely travestied, serving ulterior purposes. "Literary form and unjust social relations rigorously fit one another," notes Schwarz, "so that investigating one of these poles implies fixing the dimensions of the other" (2001, 58).

Serving more as a model to allow for liberated forms of critique—ones that take their cues from aesthetic particularities—rather than a fully formed method to be bluntly applied to an objecthood void of distinctive qualities, we can turn now to the world of mid-twentieth-century Urdu literature to see whether a principle of generality obtains between the dirempted aesthetics of Bedi's fiction and the peculiar course of development of his home state, Punjab, under British occupation.

Part II: Generality and the Split Allegories of Rajinder Singh Bedi

Gender and the Janus-Faced Structure of Colonial Punjab

A fascinating interview with the progressive Urdu short story writer and scenarist of the Bombay film industry Rajinder Singh Bedi (1915–1984) sheds light on the predicaments facing the writer on the peripheries of the capitalist system from a variety of angles. Published in the journal

Mahfil in 1972, the conversation with Bedi traverses a range of topics (Bedi 1972). He candidly remarks in passing on the difficulties of making a living as a writer in the Urdu language, the variety of threats to artistic integrity coming from a highly politicized cultural arena, and the difficulties in the formation of the novel in Urdu, a crucial sign of reaching cultural modernity in the wider international arena. Relatedly, he comments on the tumultuous language politics in the new nation-states of India and Pakistan which have rent the once unified tradition of Urdu literature so thoroughly as to render it impossible as a medium of cohesive national expression. Added to this slew of problems is the menace of appropriation of one's work by hegemonic powers of the Cold War—whether the USSR or the USA—not to mention the distortions of one's literary voice on account of compromising translations into more dominant literary languages. Within this ambit of topics, he consistently asserts his keen interest in sharpening his capacities for an individual style and form best suited to capturing the predicaments of his own social milieu, the generally hidebound lower-middle classes of Punjab. It was this very desire for a freedom of expression that got him involved in the Progressive Writers Association, a loosely organized cultural front of the Left founded in colonial India. The incongruities of a radically modernist political aesthetics, on the one hand, and a fairly inert social habitus of the lower-middle strata of Punjabi society, on the other, make for particularly stimulating, even colliding, encounters between form and content. Bedi seemed to understand that the clash was inevitable, acute, and indeed, defining for his times. His intimate knowledge and insights into the inertia of familial structures, the habitus of patriarchy, and the apparent weight of custom would clash with the more transformative aspirations, ethos, and modes of representation espoused by himself and others in the progressive currents of the decades leading to and beyond Independence and Partition. Thus, the contrast between the inheritance of everyday domestic, especially female, misery, on the one hand, and the modernism of his voice, style, and formal experimentation could not be starker. As we will examine with reference to his story "Garhan" ("Eclipse") in the following section, embedded in his form is the potential or actual reversal of authority between men and women, which here presses up against traditional institutions and practices maintained and prolonged by the colonial power and succeeding neo-traditional authorities.

But for the moment, it may be instructive to step back and provide a small snapshot of the kinds of social contradictions that defined colonial rule in Punjab, if not India more broadly. The conflicting modalities of colonial statecraft—custom, stability, and order, on the one hand, and the potentially destabilizing imperatives of the civilizing mission, the market, social progress, and liberal freedom, on the other—impacted Indian society at a variety of levels and scales, reaching down into family structures and gender relations. The late colonial situation in which Bedi came of age can be described as diametrically opposed to that of ancient Rome. Hegel remarks in *The Philosophy of Right* that "in Roman law... there could be no definition of 'man', since 'slave' could not be brought under it – the very status of slave indeed is an outrage on the conception of man" (1952, 15). Whereas in Rome, slavery was widespread, thus negating the notion of general man, in India, the notion of equality was circulating, bringing into sharp relief the conditions of everyday life where servitude was deeply embedded. That is, in modern India, the idea of equality had currency, but only in contradistinction to the reality, both formally and substantively speaking. Once the idea of the human had attained a presence in late colonial politics, much of the immediate present could be experienced as an outrage, especially with respect to those in servitude—women especially, if not generally. To get a sense of the formal structures through which Bedi approaches the plight of women in his midst, we can briefly follow the social logic that left them entrapped within servitude in a moment of burgeoning discourses, possibilities, and indeed—with the expansion of the commodity-form—norms of equality.

Among the historians who have shed light on the Janus-faced nature of colonial rule in India, three in particular help to illustrate the fundamental concentration and its fallout: Andrew Sartori, David Gilmartin, and Neeladri Bhattacharya. Whereas Sartori's work helps ground liberalism, indeed the very presence of liberal thought in the colonial hinterland, "in one specific dimension of capitalist society, the sphere of circulation," (Sartori 2008, 73). Gilmartin's account demonstrates how imperial rule thwarts the radicalizing potential of liberal property laws for the sake of stability, leaving liberal ideals in the colony merely ideational, yet persistent presences, before the fact of colonially sanctioned custom. Bhattacharya helps delineate the consequences of colonial customary law in Punjab for women.

From Sartori's account in *Bengal in Global Concept History*, we can glean a sense of apprehension and alarm among colonial officials as colonial experiments in social transformation took root with expansion toward Punjab. For instance, Sartori cites Sir Charles Wood, secretary of state for India, who stated the problem flatly in 1866: "I am firmly convinced that our permanent hold of India would be fearfully loosened if the cultivating population felt that their customary rights were in danger" (qtd. in Smith 1885, 420).[4] The secretary's concern was shared by many colonial administrators in the wake of the implementation of the Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793 and the instability that its abstract notions of exclusive proprietary right over land had wrought for colonial rule. Sartori's work has illuminated the vernacular valences that began to absorb the new liberal dimensions of the market mediated by colonial rule. Not only did the theology of Advaita Vedanta become in Rammohun [Roy]'s hands "a doctrine of liberal egalitarianism," but the logic of commodification and legal codes of commerce penetrated deep into the fabric of Bengali cultural forms (Sartori 2008, 82). For instance, relatively autonomous groups such as the Kartabhajas and the Sahebdhanis employed "the logic of commercial society to articulate a political, social, religious, and ethical imagination" (Sartori 2008, 73). Sartori picks up on the potential for the elaboration-in-travel of key abstractions intrinsic to the nature of liberal categories and their predication on the abstraction of exchange from use value. He elaborates: "Liberalism certainly did not have to await the emergence of a full-blown market society to find its voice. After all, liberal politics advocated as its central social, economic, and political program the extension of free exchange as a model of human interrelations at the expense of other dimensions of the existing forms of social organization" (Sartori 2008, 73). Considering the revolutionary havoc that the logic of the market could bring to colonial rule, colonial administrators in Punjab devised countervailing strategies. Henry Lawrence, C.L. Tupper, and Richard Temple in Punjab sought to buttress the mitigating customs of rural life. That is, they sought to shore up customary patterns to secure imperial longevity.

This antinomian structure of British colonial power comes to a head in the thrust of Punjab's Alienation of Land Act of 1900. Though scholarship on this significant piece of legislation is now fairly extensive, David

[4] As cited in Smith (1885, 420). For broader historical context, see Sartori (2008, 97).

Gilmartin's *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* best delineates the conflicts underlying it and the consequences it foretold in terms of modalities of political mobilization in the late colonial period. He follows in the wake of observations such as those of David Washbrook: "'The Anglo-Indian legal system was distinctly Janus-faced and rested on two contradictory principles with different social implications.' Whereas the 'public' side of the law encouraged the emergence of free market relations, personal law under the British encouraged the preservation of ascribed, 'traditional' status. In this regard, the law was an indicator of the conflicting purposes of colonial rule itself" (Gilmartin 1988, 13). The direct paternalistic style of administration of the Punjab school led to the redaction of customary law by Tupper and the production of "a class of rural leaders, tied closely to the administration, exercising its authority largely in a 'tribal' [i.e. "customary"] idiom" by the end of the nineteenth century (Gilmartin 1988, 22). Yet, over the same period, colonial policy in Punjab had introduced the market conditions for an undoing of customary relations, including potentially the overturning of the widely shared custom of prohibiting inheritance of land by daughters. Gilmartin explains: "A late-nineteenth-century crisis of indebtedness among Punjabi landholders precipitated the passage of the Alienation of Land Act in 1900. To many British officials, the large-scale expropriation by moneylenders of peasants' land struck close to the heart of British rule, undermining rural stability. Widespread land alienations, many feared, would lead to rural revolt. At its core, however, the issue hinged on the conflict they perceived between a stable agrarian society on the one hand, and the free working of natural economic laws on the other" (Gilmartin 1988, 28). The colonial state's ruling in favor of custom would have repercussions at every level of Punjabi psychic life, shaping a sense of disjointed time and place in the works of modern writers such as Bedi, as we will see below.

Neeladri Bhattacharya's *The Great Agrarian Conquest* covers the complex history that culminated in the consecration of the patrilineal principle in the customary law of Punjab, and how this rule of custom systematically displaced the rights of women. "Within closed exogamous patrilocal communities, the exclusion of women's inheritance was seen as necessary to sustain the cohesion of village society and the premises of its existence. To grant inheritance rights to women who moved out of the village was to threaten the control of the brotherhood over village land; it was to allow the transmission of property to an outsider" (Bhattacharya

2018, 256). Woman had effectively been rendered an outsider when it came to property rights relating what was most crucial in an agrarian economy: land. For the implications of this Janus-faced social logic for women, we can now turn finally to Bedi's fiction.

Generality of Myth and History in "Eclipse"

Published in 1942 as the title story of his second collection, "Garhan" ("Eclipse") thematizes the plight of a pregnant housewife of a joint family in contemporary India, evoking her longing for freedom from the routine abuse she suffers at the hands of her in-laws. But, as the events of the narrative coincide with a lunar eclipse, replete with ancient Hindu rituals and mythology, the story simultaneously evokes the eternally unchanging patterns of the universe. What is the relationship between these two levels of this unique narrative, which seems to move so seamlessly from the pole of history to that of myth that it is difficult to tell whether the concrete history is the allegory of myth, or myth the allegory of history? That is to say, the story raises the following questions through its own inner workings: What does it mean for the everyday concrete world of experience—of history where it hurts—to be enclosed so completely by myth? Or, to see it from the opposite point, how is the mythic able to encompass and completely encircle and entrap the realm of human agency and historical possibility? Will the mythic always eclipse female agency, or will that last only as long as an eclipse, as it only takes minutes before the planet the demon Rahu swallows to pass through his severed throat and back to its natural state? Considering this narrative against the backdrop of the social history in which Indian women's rights were eclipsed by the colonial rule of custom, it becomes possible to index the moment of generality, or the point at which narrative form and social form align.

"Eclipse" takes us immediately into the universe of Hindu culture in which, amid a routine of everyday drudgery, the domestic dramas between wife and husband or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law unfold in the minutest of ways with the grandest of consequences. At the center of the narrative is Holi, to whom we are introduced only after we are given the names of the four sons she has already borne to the clan to which she has been married off. She has another one on the way. About this, she is constantly hounded by her mother-in-law and others of her husband's family, who only see her as a *kulavadhu*, the traditional wife whose sole role is to produce male progeny. Her mother-in-law nags her

about all the superstitious restrictions posed by the looming lunar eclipse that is occurring that day: No permission, for instance, "to tear any cloth, lest the ears of the child in her stomach be torn as well."[5] The fact that she is forbidden to write even a letter to her parents back home in a village just some twenty-five miles downstream makes her long for their care and the company of childhood friends. When not being berated by her mother-in-law, she must fend off the brute advances of her husband, Raseela. As the eclipse approaches, she ponders the ugly image of the planet-swallowing demon, and is reminded of Raseela: "And how strange is Rahu's visage! A black demon mounted on a lion, he appears so fearsome. Raseela also looks just like Rahu" (Farooqi 2008, 79). This identification makes Holi long for home all the more. That evening, amid the raucous ceremonies that accompany the eclipse along the town's river, she is able to break free of her in-laws' clutches and runs onto a small steamer set in the direction of her home village. Aboard she finds herself vulnerable among the employees manning the ship. Yet among the louts she recognizes a childhood friend, Kathoram, who promises to get her home so long as she stays with him in an inn for the night. Her spirits sagging, she acquiesces, only to have to run out into the night to escape his drunken lust. If Raseela is explicitly identified with Rahu, Kathoram is implicitly with Ketu. The story closes with Holi being pursued by two indistinct shadows, hounding her as the demons Rahu and Ketu go after the sun and moon.

If one were to trace the complex, indeed twinned, narrative structure underlying the story, in which the mythic eclipses the historical, and the historical the mythic, one would be led to the socio-historical reality underlying the impasses facing Holi. "Mysterious are the ways of the gods," thinks Holi, as conveyed by the narrator, whose deep sense of irony signifies that he or she does not share in the worldview presented in the narrative diegesis. Holi recalls the myth surrounding the eclipse inherited from ancient lore: "Disguised, Rahu was blissfully savouring the divine nectar. The sun and the moon informed Lord Vishnu of this sacrilege and God Vishnu with his divine discus sliced Rahu into two pieces. The head and torso flew up into the sky and became Rahu and Ketu. Now twice every year, they wreak vengeance on the sun and the moon" (Farooqi 2008, 78–79). While the perspective on the pregnant wife's quandaries and desires for escape establishes a liberal, even radical,

[5] For the original, see Mahmud (2015, 164–173); for the purposes of the essay, I have made use of the excellent translation in Farooqi (2008, 77).

sensibility, the substance of the reality depicted, bound to myth and ritual, speaks of the customary structure maintained by the colonial order. The diegetical and extra-diegetical gap of the narrative—with its competing temporal planes in which human agency and mythical metaphysics remain in perpetual antinomy—begins to resemble if not encode the very real social logic that had begun to doubly bind the prospects of womanhood in colonial India: Holi cannot escape either way she turns: twin demons eclipse her freedom in both directions, whether the oppressive customary structure or the Illusory realm of liberal freedom.

Coda: Critical Inversions for Shipwrecked Humanity

In grafting critical theory from peripheral locations—like Freyre's much savored Indian mangoes—it becomes possible to imagine a process of cultural accumulation beyond the borders of a nation. If, as Schwarz believes, "the possibility of being shipwrecked" appears "to be the destiny of the greater part of contemporary humanity," making it no longer "a second-order of experience," then the task of cultural criticism is to think about inversions of already existing nation-based and regionally tied accumulations for the sake of those widely dispersed *naufrágios* of the world (Schwarz 2015, 9). A critical theory that neglects to orient itself to those for whom previous accumulations have produced little fails to live up to its name. Perhaps the most appropriate way to read Schwarz then for world literature is as one who offers a methodology for deriving possible alternatives from within existing worlds—in other words, as one whose own accumulation leads, like that of Machado's, "to a critical inversion" (Schwarz 2015, 9).

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CHAPTER 11

Reading Modern Chinese Political Economy with Roberto Schwarz

Rebecca Karl

Let me begin with a disavowal. I do not read Portuguese and thus cannot read Schwarz's untranslated works. This essay does not endeavor to explicate Schwarz per se nor does it "apply" him to China; rather, it presents an attempt to think *with* Schwarz (or those parts of his work I have read) to investigate some questions in China's modern political economic thinking. I consider Schwarz's theorizing as opening a mode of reading texts and histories that productively links to issues outside his direct geographical purview. In this sense, what Schwarz identified in 2020 as Jair Bolsonaro's mobilization of the "regressive depths of Brazilian society"—anti-modern in cultural terms and rapaciously capitalist in socio-economic terms (Schwarz 2020)—resonates with Xi Jinping's culturalist socio-economic policies of brutal capital extraction and accumulation in a regressively neo-Confucian cultural-ideological

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mode. Yet, the admixture of regressive culturalism with capitalist brutality is not just a problem of the current moment; it also names a persistently latent possibility of and in modernity, in China as elsewhere. Its current mobilization in China is starkly observable now that the past years of lockdown and dynamic-COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted in pursuit of what activist Promise Li calls the "continuation of a logic of governance that prioritizes the preservation of profits for the ruling class over people's livelihoods," a logic, he notes, shared by China and the United States, among many others (Li 2023). How can we think historically about global logics of capitalist governance wedded to the regressive depths of socio-economic and cultural formations, and in this case, as those are shaped through the firm extirpation of the thirty-year history and practice of socialism in China? Of course, the extirpation of the possibility of socialism had already occurred in Brazil with the 1964 coup, as even leftist anti-coup positions nevertheless got wrapped up in the identification of left-bourgeois class politics with the right-wing turn. Posing the matter in this manner is not to claim or assert that contemporary or historical China should be compared to Brazil. It should not. It is to claim that thinking about global logics and class politics is necessary in a world saturated by and contingently sutured through such logics and politics and shaped by and through the now-vanquished specter of the socialisms of the twentieth-century world.

Immediately, then, a second disavowal: Roberto Schwarz as a theorist does not circulate in China. To my knowledge, he is basically unknown among Chinese intellectuals or among purveyors in China of the latest and trendiest in social or economic theory. So this essay is not an exploration of the "influence" or "impact" of Schwarz in China; there is no possible constitution of such a topic. The following attempt to think *with* Schwarz about China arises from two sentences expressing an incomplete thought in my 2017 book entitled *The Magic of Concepts*, which was sympathetically read by the editor of the present anthology, Thomas Waller, who then reached out to invite me to extend that particular thought. The relevant sentences in the book's introduction deal with the problem of theory in translation and social mediation through Schwarz's concept of "misplacement" as a process "rooted in modern imperialist-colonialist encounters: those encounters that produced global unevenness as a necessary premise of all social relations, meanwhile producing abstraction as a necessary mode of social reproduction." This process, I go on to note, produces a condition of "historically forced mediation" that

can be thought in Schwarz's terms of "cultural alienation that goes with economic and political subordination" (Karl 2017a, 11, 13).

The present effort, then, aims to pursue some possible lines of inquiry into the pre-history and history of socialist economics in China, by following some relevant aspects of the thought of Wang Yanan [王亚南], a Marxist philosopher of social scientific concepts, of whom I wrote extensively in my aforementioned 2017 book.[1] This pursuit proceeds by thinking with the concepts of misplacement, volubility, and subordination developed by Schwarz as polemics and analytics engaged with how to re-center the materiality of narrated peripheral life within the modern global logics of capitalist imperialist-colonialism and associated regressive cultural ideologies.

Compradors and Unevenness

In my reading of Schwarz—which I began two decades ago when I was looking for theoretical inspiration for my work on Wang Yanan—I was initially struck by his account of how he and his cohort in the mid-1960s came to terms with Marx in/and Brazil. In the preface to his book *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, Schwarz writes about how he and his reading group, "reached the daring conclusion that the classic marks of Brazilian backwardness should be studied not as an archaic leftover but as an integral part of the way modern society reproduces itself…" (2001, 3). This mode of analysis was not in the leftist, Marxist, or any mainstream of that time, in Brazil or elsewhere. Yet, it articulates what, several decades earlier, had been an outlier position in Marxist thought in China. To wit: In the 1930s and 1940s in China, Wang Yanan alternately used the terms "semi-colonialism" (originally a Leninist term of colonial-state incompletion) or "compradorized feudalism" (what also came to be known in China as "semi-feudalism," albeit with a different emphasis) to analyze the particular uneven nature of the prolonged modern encounter between global capitalism and the materiality of life in China. In the latter vein, for example, Wang wrote that it was necessary to recognize that "feudal relations have been compradorized [买办化了 *maibanhuale*]

[1] For biographical and other information about Wang, please refer to Karl (2017a).

and that the activities of comprador capital also exhibit the special characteristics of feudal exploitation" (Wang Yanan 1947, 48).[2] That is, in Wang's view, the social formation in China of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had to be investigated through an analysis of the particular integration of locally lived forms with new globally structured demands. For me, the advantage of Wang calling this "compradorized feudalism" over calling it "semi-feudalism" is that the former emphasizes the dominant global class formation characteristic of the new social form, where the latter just points to a distortion or teleological expectation of overcoming and completion.

At the same time as designating China's social formation a "compradorized feudalism," Wang saw semi-colonialism as the mode of primitive capital accumulation on a global and local scale simultaneously integrating economic sectors and geographic parts of China differentially into the global capitalist system. Semi-colonialism for him (unlike for many others of the time or subsequently) named the socio-economic form of the emergent social relations in China since the Opium Wars (1840s), that articulated the excess of feudal exploitation (its extra-economic dimension) to the surplus value demanded by capitalism. In Wang's understanding, therefore, the so-called feudal elements that many Marxists and non-Marxists of his time called "residues" or "fetters" could not be relegated to a past temporality slated to be overcome by more modern forms; nor were they uniquely a Chinese form of national incompletion slated to be eliminated by a unified national state. Rather, such extant local (usually agrarian) social relations were the very forms of lived unevenness rendered visible by and upon which capitalist relations reproduced a global regime of formal subsumption (Karl 2017a, 121–123).

Reading with Schwarz's argument about Machado de Assis and literary form, these social formations—whether they are characterized as "neo-backward" (Schwarz 2003) or "semi-colonial" or "compradorized feudalism"—cannot be narrated as abstractly "transitional" in that vulgar stagist version of historical teleology, unless one wants to obscure the ways in which an emergent new class and class ideology is attempting, through those very historical movements and narratives, to consolidate itself into a new socio-political hegemony. In other words, the insight afforded (to

[2] For more on Wang's theory of compradorism, see Karl (2017b).

me, at least) by Schwarz's theorizing alongside Wang Yanan's is that unevenness as a simultaneously produced global and local phenomenon that often appears in national form presents the opportunity for the tortured self-narration of an emergent new global-national class and its ideology, whose brutal exploitation of local labor—whether in feminized domestic or in industrial/agrarian forms—is in part masked by its appeals to cultural indigeneity and colonial subordination. According to Schwarz's explication of Machado's humor and nihilism, such a class consolidation in Brazil marks the move from "a society ruled by an aristocratic social stratum to a class society, from a dispensation in which solidarity rules to a contractual one" (Schwarz 2001, 85, 173 n.8). And *that* resulting configuration is characterized by what Schwarz calls "volubility," or social contradictions as they are embedded in and partially concealed by a narrator's tone. Schwarz's voluble narrator loudly and insistently presents an elite class in formation in a racialized and colonized society that is replete with the deprovincializing ambiguity of "vertiginous instability." From these fragile heights, volubility "undoes the rule of the clock, of conventionally sequential chains of events … but it does so in vain, for time reemerges inside the movements of volubility itself, which are impregnated with a complex, differentiated temporality…" (Schwarz 2001, 129, 131, 135).

The narrative class voice that both submerges and surfaces temporality, that contests and consolidates at the same time, is the particular voice of the non-European/quasi-Europeanized class formation, for whom "progress is a disaster and backwardness a shame," in Schwarz's memorable phrase (Schwarz 1992, 29). This syncopated temporality of a peripheral formation is what Harry Harootunian has called the forced double life of all colonials, as that life is lived through the untimeliness that explodes "dematerialized singular time aimed at removing both the scandal of coexisting and multiple temporalities grounded in different experiences and places." As Harootunian adds, the subsequent scholarly analytic erasure of these co-existent temporalities was aimed "to eliminate the possibility of unscheduled and untimely appearances in the present—what historians have dismissed as anachronisms" (2010). Indeed, retrieving the untimely in the form of the anachronistic—*guguai/* 古怪—is precisely how Wang Yanan opens up his analysis of the global regime of primitive accumulation that works to ensure a field of continuous surplus exploitation and appropriation through the production of unevenness via the formation of the global comprador class, otherwise known as the bourgeoisie.

As Wang writes, in a place such as China, subordinated to dominant imperialist powers, it is precisely the anachronistic detail that renders a historical moment and a social form visible and distinguishable from its past; without anachronism, an untroubled surface can masquerade as continuous historical reality itself. Thus, without it, there is just a compensatory "distorting mirror" of manufactured historical teleology.[3]

The point here is not that the emergent Chinese hegemonic class of urban, cultural, and financial elites in the 1920s–1940s is exactly analogous to the Brazilian elite of the mid-nineteenth century and beyond. Rather, the point, as Wang Yanan saw long ago (and as is rendered even more visible by considering him under Schwarz's withering gaze), is that the arrival of global capitalist demands in the form of imperialism enables the reconfiguration of indigenous class formation that is not merely local ("Brazilian," "Chinese"). This class is the comprador class (the bourgeoisie), who are the necessary global-national-local mediators of socio-economic and cultural-political relations from this time forward. Echoing Marx's remark that "the characters who appear on the economic stage are merely personifications of economic relations" (Marx 1990). The comprador, for Wang, is the name of the bourgeois class—no matter from which nationality or which position of power or subordination—under conditions of imperialist-colonial capitalism. That is, compradors are personifications of global capital on the world and local stage; they do different things in different places and are more or less powerful, but their primary loyalty is to capital accumulation and the extraction of value, not to nation, law, or ethnos. This theorization—anathema to those who would theorize the "national bourgeoisie" as potentially revolutionary, for example—allows Wang to argue for a particular historically-inflected and culturally-specific version of comprador class formation in China that neither exceptionalizes China as uniquely different from all others, nor erases China's specificity under capital's supposed homogenizing machinations. In this way, the "semi" of "semi-colonialism" is hitched to "compradorized feudalism" to become the historical moment and socio-political space of the formation of the comprador capitalist class in China.

[3] Wang Yanan writes of this in many places, e.g., "Economics in China," 143. Laikwan Pang has written of "distorting mirrors" as a modernist trope that force the capacity to "see…not simply a new self or a new world, but a new self placed within this new world" (2007, 5–6).

The "semi" here does not hark to residues of the past (as in most theorizations) but rather looks at the present and to the future of China's particular relations in the bourgeois mode to and with the capitalist and colonial worlds. Subordinated this class in China may have been globally and even within imperialized national space at that time, but ideologically hegemonic they aspired to become in China at that time. With the repudiation of Maoist socialism and the consolidation of Chinese capital and its associated class formations again in the 1990s and beyond, the hegemonic aspirations of this class have gained renewed local and global footing.

As with Schwarz, Wang Yanan was particularly interested in the problems of narrative. Unlike Schwarz, Wang was not a literary scholar, but rather, as a philosopher of the political economic, he was attentive to how ideologues of capitalist relations narrated capitalism as normative "common sense" by erasing the traces of origin and constructed storytelling in a naturalized linear account of inevitable becoming and heroic overcoming. His 1940s critiques of extant political economic narrative form allowed him to open space to think about how to reconnect philosophy to the economic as lived materialities in ways that were neither reified nor mystifying. For him in this regard, the question of "the economic" in its abstract and concrete social relation to "personhood" was thus a philosophical and hence a historical, narrative, and practical question. In other words, for Wang, following Marx, the separation of philosophy from history and practice was itself one of the biggest problems in capitalist political economy and its historically-developed division of disciplinary and epistemological knowledges. It was, in part, this separation that needed to be addressed if a proper practice of the economic under a prospective socialism were to be constituted as an actual historical or futural potential. Thus, if a socialist "new person" were to be rendered possible, the historical conditionalities of such a possibility would need to be narrated anew.

Wang wrote many times in the 1930s–1940s on "economic personhood" [*jingji ren* 经纪人] in both its concrete and abstract guises. His target in these critiques was often Werner Sombart, the early twentieth-century socialist turned anti-Semite Nazi capitalist, who had become quite the darling of a good number of academic and journalistic social scientists in China in the 1930s and 1940s. Sombart's theories about entrepreneurs as social actors held particular appeal (This theory and ideology reemerged with a vengeance in China in the 1990s with the

return of capitalist relations and attendant hegemonic social ideologies, or what contemporary Shanghai critic Wang Xiaoming has called "the successful man" ideology [成功人士/*chengqong renshi*) (Wang 2000). Sombart, prominently in his 1911 book about Jews and capitalism and then often thereafter, asserted that capitalists are the masterful creators of social life, and thus the ideal representatives of "personhood" in general. Although he was later to become a leading anti-Semite, his theory of Jews as the historical bearers of capitalist values was intended at the time to pose a challenge to Weber's theory of Protestantism and the United States. A representative chunk of Sombart's sociological theories was translated and published in 1943 in the *Journal of China and German Studies* after he had become a Nazi, although Sombart was already saturating right-wing Nationalist Chinese economic thought well prior to that (Sombart 1943).[4]

In his February 1942 essay entitled "The Human in Political Economics" [政治经济上的人*zhengzhi jingjishang de ren*], Wang Yanan noted that the question of personhood cannot be posed in the German Romanticist vein—following Sombart—as a heroic narrative embedding of a sanguinary story of individual triumph, but rather, it must be posed as the historical condition enabling the "core of the capitalist" to become the "core of capitalism" (Wang 1987, 18, 19). The reification that conflates individual pursuit with a systemic logic becomes entirely ideological and thus historically philosophical, Wang writes, when "economic value" [经济价值/*jingji jiazhi*] and "historical values" [历史价值/*lishi jiazhi*] become one and the same in the transformation of the law of the jungle (natural world) into the survival of the fittest (human world). As Wang wrote critically of this ideological transformation, "…in the conditions under which the capitalist comes to personify capital, the capitalist's financial demand for surplus value manifests historically as the stimulus for the development of the productive forces, as the true foundation that

[4] The journal was published from 1939 through 1945 by the Deutschland Institute of Peiping, editor in chief Fang Zhitong [方志澎], aka Achilles Chih-t'ong Fang, a Harvard educated scholar of comparative literature and Sinology. (There is an Achilles Fang award at Harvard to this day.) This journal was a premier site for the translation and introduction of those German thinkers most loved by the Nazis: in law, Karl Larenz; in neo-Kantian philosophy, Friedrich Paulsen; in phenomenology, Edmund Husserl; in Kantian and Fichtian transcendentalism, August Faust; in personality typologies, Eduard Spranger; in mathematics and philosophy, Gerhard Stammler; and in state theory, Karl Durkheim; among many others.

facilitates the material conditions for a more advanced social formation" (Wang 1987, 19).

Wang continued his critique of the conflation of individual and systemic logics of progress through the enhanced exploitation that proceeded under the mystificatory ideology of development into his exposition about the personification of labor through the commodification of labor power. Drawing critically on Spencer, Sombart, Mill, Bastiat, and Thunen among others—some of whom Wang had translated into Chinese in previous years—Wang exposes how the narrative of humanity's becoming human through economic consumption is the ideological sleight of hand accomplished by the concept of the "basic wage" [工资基本说/*gongzi jibenshuo*] which, he says, "intends to present that which has been expropriated in the course of production as the return to personhood through consumption." Entirely inadequate to the task of rethinking and reposing personhood, this consumer theory of economics (Austrian School) is not only the result of personhood being reduced to a mechanical factor of production and the consequent neglect of how commodification of labor power is a crucial precondition to labor-as-factor-of-production, but, just as important, it is the consequence of the robbing of humanity of the capacity to live and have pleasure from consuming the products of their own labor (Wang 1987, 21). That is, it is a product of ignoring how the extraction of surplus value from the labor process is part of a modern re-articulation of personhood as systemic necessity.

The "thingification" of human relations under capitalism enters the narrative sphere in a number of ways and many problems ensue. For my purposes here, it is the conflation of economic with historical value/values, as Wang sees it, that becomes the key narrative mechanism through which capitalist systemic logics are ideologically instantiated and materially substantiated through the imputed individual hero of history—whether in writings about political economy or in realist novels, stories, plays, movies, and dramas. Sombart, Hegel, and Weber are not the only theorists to promote this political economic narrative logic, but they loom large for Wang. Narrative, here, is no mere superstructural element or representational form reflecting a pre-existing content or an independently acting material base; rather, the narrative helps create the significance of what we see about the materiality itself. And if that narrative reality is constituted through the study of the economic, then one major way of potentially transforming the historical material conditions

under capitalism is, Wang asserts, by "correcting the irrational economic relations among humans." Wang here uses the term 正误 (*zhengwu*)—to correct errors in a written document—thus indicating that what he is calling for is a re-writing and hence re-conceptualization of narratives that naturalize some relations while denaturalizing or entirely occluding others (Wang 1987, 25). The Romantic heroic narrative—in political economy or in fiction—would never be adequate to the task of re-orienting personhood, as, in such a form, the collective cannot come into view, while new historicities—or possible futural temporalities—can only ever be preemptively defeated in the emphasis on the individuated realization of a lost past. One is left, as Schwarz comments about Machado, only with "a modern and regressive barbarism," whose comprador-bourgeois claims are the mangled product of a colonial periphery, but whose latent claimed indigenous-universalist content can always be resurrected for a new right-wing populist day, as with Bolsonaro, Netanyahu, Xi Jinping or Putin, among others in our contemporary world.

Misplaced Ideas and the Economic as Practice

How, then, can narratives conflating value/values in capitalist and historical-cultural relations that produce only mystification and alienation be re-oriented toward an exposition that provides a historical-narrative basis for a different kind of economic practice and a different kind of personhood? Addressing this question has always been an uphill battle, enmeshed as it is in many double binds. The arguments offered in the context of the 1920s Socialist Calculation Debate in Europe by Ludwig von Mises, for example, declared that no alternative to capitalist consumer economic man could rationally be thought or sanely rendered possible. As von Mises (and later Friedrich von Hayek, among others) declared, socialism (pointing to the then-nascent Soviet Union) was an irrational rendering of social life attempting to escape the unwavering laws of human nature (Wang Yanan was in fact a lifelong critic of the Austrian School of Economics that consolidated around von Mises and, later, Hayek).[5] Yet, by ignoring the human as a commodified laborer under capitalism in their promotion of the human as a maximizing consumer, these theorists, in Schwarz's memorable phrase, "do not describe reality,

[5] See Karl (2017a, Chapter 3), for more on this issue.

not even falsely" (Schwarz 1992, 23). Wang, for his part, named this the incommensurability of liberal capitalist theory to lived reality (1947, 1–22, 21). Indeed, for Wang, the "reality" that was incommensurable and thus not described—not even falsely—either by the proponents of capitalist liberalism (in its consumerist and/or fascist form) or by the proponents of market traditionalism (in its neo-Confucian aspect) was the way in which agrarian labor power in China—that which appeared feudal and thus as a remnant of the past—had been broadly albeit unevenly incorporated into the global capitalist system. Incommensurability thus was not a cultural issue—that is, the mismatch was not because China was uniquely outside the purview of liberal theory; rather, this was a misplaced idea, a problem of the way in which liberal theorization remained ever-blind to the realities it supposedly abstractly encapsulated. Imbued with what Nicholas Brown has called Schwarz's "realist imperative" (Brown in Schwarz 2019, 2), Wang, too, wanted to think about "reality" in its complex practiced and lived concreteness, so as to produce new kinds of social and historical truths.

As Wang remarked on this topic in one representative essay, most economists in China did not differentiate between "labor" and "labor power." This allowed them to eternalize the relation between labor and wages as if these were historically immutable and as if they signified similarly over the course of millennia. This conflation, no mere problem of vocabulary, is a conceptual sleight of hand that allows economists to claim that "waged labor and labor wages are features of all societies for all time, and that past society and capitalist society merely present two types of this universal form and thus that the current formation is continuous with traditional Chinese social life" (Wang 1981, 82). Thus, when wages and labor became relevant categories for describing China's socio-economic reality—as they did with the advent of China's incorporation into the global capitalist world system through the adoption of a classical economics where the wage-labor relation is one of the trinity of core relational principles—these categories immediately came to be narrated to describe the Chinese past since the dawn of time, in an a priori insistence that contemporary China is just a continuation of its self-same always-already national historical essence. Not merely anti-revolutionary, this misplacement through narrative is profoundly reactionary.

It is against this kind of immutability, reactionary continuity, and incommensurability that Wang posed conceptual problems in the study of

the agrarian sector, which was a ground zero for many economic discussions from the 1930s onward (joined by, e.g., Ma Yinchu, Wang Yichang, Sun Yefang, Xue Muqiao, Chi Haoting, Chen Hansheng, and the vast number of well-known and now-obscure participants in the 1930s/40s social history and rural crisis debates of the time).[6] The analytics, causes, and solutions to the multiple crises in the rural economy beginning in the early 1930s subtended every subsequent discussion of socio-economics in China, during the anti-Japanese war into the civil war and the end of the Nationalist period on the mainland and on into the transition to socialism in the 1950s and beyond. (These issues have remained at the forefront of economic theorizing in the move from the 1980s onward away from socialist collectivism into the contemporary state-economic formation of individuation and/or agri-business.)

In the context of the land reform and then the transformation of rural social life into successively more collective forms after the establishment of the PRC socialist state in 1949/50, Wang Yanan remained consistently wary of the academic and state economists who were skeptical of socialism and who would repeatedly attempt to impose their normative capitalist views on the newly-articulated social economic priorities, as if their theories were objectively "true" and China's emerging or aspirational socialist forms were, as a consequence, objectively irrational. This stratum of professional social scientists and economists was comprised of what Wang called "those trained under the comprador bureaucratic system," who would need to be re-educated through and by the "new production of knowledges and new worlds of expertise" derived, as Lenin earlier had advocated, from the proletariat and the direct producers themselves.[7] The class of obsolescent "comprador bureaucrat" economists—many in the "disciple" grip of either German New Historicist or, more likely, Austrian School Economic thinking—would undoubtedly obstruct "the new tasks of political economy" under socialism, which should *not* be about the integration of China's economy with the profit-driven global capitalist economy, but rather would have to be bent toward the transformation of the Chinese socio-cultural environment into one that brings "the law of

[6] The social history debates of the early 1930s have been thoroughly explored by Arif Dirlik (1978); and the stakes in the agrarian economic debates have been explored by Robert Cole (2017).

[7] See Wang Yanan, "The new tasks of political economics" [政治经济学的新任务], in *Essays of Wang Yanan* [王亚南文集], Vol 1: 159. (Originally published in October 1950).

productive development" into line with the "law of social development."[8] This practiced transformation was to be theorized by new thinkers of the socialist era, because "every dominating political class has its own worlds of knowledge," and thus China's socialism would necessarily have its own "world of economic thinking." As Wang announced in October 1950—hugely inaccurately, as it turns out, since these nemeses continually staged come-backs every time the socialist economy ran into trouble: "Today, the rule of comprador bureaucrats has come to an end, and buried along with it as a funerary object is the bureaucrat comprador world of economic thought, which can be declared dead of natural causes."[9] In fact, from the 1980s into the 1990s, zombie-like, this undead bureaucratic comprador class rose again in the guise of managerial-state-industrial technocrats and their academic intellectual partners to dance on the grave of a socialist experiment now thoroughly defeated not only in China, but globally.

Yet, before the zombies reemerged in full undead form, socialist economics had to be constituted as an object of knowledge/study/practice, in the manner, let's say, in which Schwarz himself insisted that the literary subject had to come into being. I have written elsewhere about this problem for socialist economics. Here, suffice it to note that, among the many issues discussed in the transition to socialism in the 1950s, a debate over whether productive forces are stimulated through internal contradictions or through momentum obtained by the transformation in social relations was raging in China. This was based in the collectivization process of the rural areas. The debate appeared in the pages of the *Fujian Daily* [福建日报/*Fujian ribao*] among many other places as part of the "hundred flowers" campaign encouraging intellectuals to express their analyses of issues of the day. Wang Yanan, then-President of Xiamen University in Fujian, wrote about this question in a December 1956 essay, in which he dismisses singular explanations (such as those advanced by Sun Yefang or Xue Muqiao or Gu Zhun) that focus exclusively on developing productive forces and instead insists that it is only the dialectical interaction of relations and forces that could provide the momentum for transformation and accelerated economic progress.[10]

[8] Ibid., p. 160.

[9] Wang Yanan, "Research Methods for the New World of Economics" [新经济学界的研究方法], in *Essays of Wang Yanan* [王亚南文集], Vol 1: 161 (October 1950).

[10] "Wang Yanan, 促进生产力发展的动力究竟是生产力内部存在的矛盾，是生产力，还是其他?" ["Is it internal contractions within the productive forces, social relations, or

In the specific context of socialist China, he writes, there are still huge gaps [悬殊/*xuanshu*] and thus enormous unevenness in the overlapping modes of production still extant in social life. But, whereas in capitalism unevenness is an obstacle to transformation—or, put differently, whereas capitalism's purpose is to continuously reproduce unevenness so as to lock into place unequal relations of the temporal, spatial, place, and mode that facilitate extraction and accumulation—by contrast, in socialism, this unevenness is the very condition for the enabling and promotion of progressive social transformation.[11] Thus, in the rural areas, the co-existence of lower-level cooperatives with higher-level cooperatives will promote the transformation of all into the more socialist forms, as their non-antagonistic contradictions [非对抗性的矛盾/*fei duikangxing de maodun*] will lead to the process of "quantity change turning into a change in quality."[12] In other words, the way in which unevenness operates in socialism is *progressive* not *regressive* and it serves to stimulate transformations in social relations, rather than simply contribute to capitalist accumulation. While Wang was not a Maoist, nevertheless he was quite clear in his theorizing about socialist transition that the transformation of social relations under socialism could and would pull the forces of production along, could and would provide the transformative capacity to undo the various forms of social inequality left over from the past. This remaking of social forms—which was, after all, the key claim of socialism's superiority to capitalism—hinged largely on the elimination of labor as a commodified form. While the complexity of the issues therein raised falls outside the purview of this essay—the question of the law of value under socialism, economism, compensation and work points, gendered reproduction, and so on were all part of the late 1950s/early 1960s debates—the crucial point here is that the theorization and narrativization of labor under socialism never was a completed task. While such a narrative could not be based on commodified "free" labor characteristic of capitalist and bourgeois forms, yet socialist labor's specific characteristics were never quite worked out. By the early 1990s, the problem of labor as commodified labor power reemerged in the context of a roaring market

something else that accelerates the development momentum of the productive forces?"], orig. published *Fujian Ribao* 14 December 1956; reprinted in 王亚南文集, Vol 1: 241–249.

[11] Ibid., 248–249.

[12] Ibid., 249.

for feminized sweatshop workers newly "freed" from their communal agrarian brigades and families to be redeployed in China's burgeoning Special Economic Zones and private industrial economies (Pun 2005; Lee 1998). The newness of this situation—what was often called *dagong* [打工/ individualized or neoliberal working for the boss]—was contrasted to the status of labor in the immediately preceding moment—as *laodong* [劳动/labor as part of the proletarian class]. With the full marketization of labor power in the 1990s, all futural vestiges of the socialist transformation of Chinese society were effectively eliminated.

Conclusion

Was socialism a misplaced idea in China? Or, that is, is a socialist economics even possible? Was the attempt to establish a new form of personhood characteristic of a prospective social formation that needed to be imagined and narrated before it had actually emerged in the global context of a capitalist order of things such an impossibility that it had to be discarded and repudiated as soon as an old-new class alliance was forged and consolidated? Certainly, with the turn away from socialism in the 1990s, not only in China but also in Russia and Eastern Europe, many leading intellectuals and technocrat-scholars/state-bureaucrats in China got busy bidding "farewell" to revolutions, specifically to the experiments in socialist economics attempted in Marx's or Mao's name (Liu and Li 1997). Indeed, in China, the debates that had originated in the 1930s as critiques of imperialist-colonial capitalism in its precipitation of agrarian crisis, and then that had been re-posed in the 1950s in the context of the transition to socialism, came back yet once more in the 1980s/1990s to guide the transition *out* of socialism and back into a market-based capitalist social formation re-joined to the global system, now from the position of full state sovereignty. This historical movement—from subordinated capitalism to sovereign capitalism—makes it appear as if socialism was an aberrantly misplaced historical error: a blip between the subjugated 1930s/1940s and the autonomous 1980s/1990s. This version of historical narrative—ever more popular in China, the United States, and other zones of regressive Sinology—erases the seriousness surrounding the debates on socialism as a possibility for an alternative to capitalist relations in the 1950s/1960s/1970s.

By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the ideological, narrative, and political point of social life became economic growth at all costs—no

matter the environmental devastations; gendered depredations; political suppressions; racialized subordinations; and social inequalities thereby spawned and legitimated. This meant leaving behind the rural communes and the haltingly incomplete attempts to think through and actualize forms of social life in which persons could dominate economics, rather than the reverse. Thereafter, the whole question of "socialist personhood" was thoroughly reduced to and mutated into the demand that everyone perfectly embody "economic personhood," thus short-circuiting alternatives to economistic social logics and social processes. COVID-19 disrupted some of this in some of its forms, but now it, too, has been cast aside so that unfettered extractive and exploitative systems of capitalist accumulation can proceed apace.[13] So saying is not meant as a nostalgic reach for a lost past; it is merely to indicate that, far from a misplaced idea, the possibility of socialism in China was a debate that began in the concrete conditions of the imperialized-colonized 1930s and proceeded through the 1950s into the 1970s in theoretical and practical terms that, however imperfectly, attempted to move beyond the constraints of known social forms awkwardly derived from Euro-American-Japanese hegemonic narratives so as to imagine the generative capacities of new social processes. Philosophers, political economists, historians, novelists, poets, cineastes, and many others attempted, unsuccessfully it transpires, across a number of decades to shape these emergent new processes into futures not yet foretold.

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[13] For the latest kinds of critical analysis of China today, see https://chuangcn.org/2023/01/three-autumn-revolts/.

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CHAPTER 12

The Position of the Narrator in the Peripheral Novel: Roberto Schwarz, Machado de Assis, and the Problem of Realism

Bruna Della Torre

The critic is one who glimpses destiny in forms.
Georg Lukács, *Soul and Form*

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When the Enlightenment is approached as a set of ideas that originated in Europe—in the manner of the contemporary vogue for decolonial studies—the periphery of capitalism becomes an exotic place that is foreign to modernity, a 'Brás Cubas plaster' for all the tribulations of Western civilization. The arrangement pleases both the centre, which finds an 'outside' from which it can think critically or reaffirm itself as a civilization, and the periphery, which finally seems to have something authentic to export to the centre. In the case of literary studies, this dualism often comes in handy. If the periphery of capitalism houses another 'ontology,' the classic problems of the novel, such as realism, simply cease to make sense, and peripheral literature becomes instead an article of curiosity for those looking for anthropological adventure. As Oswald de Andrade once wrote, with humour and irony, we continue providing a 'pre-logical mentality for Mr. Lévy-Bruhl to study' (de Andrade 1991, 39). When a writer breaks the bubble that separates autochthonous literature from the 'universality' of the centre, they do so on condition of leaving behind the context that produced them—which is not a peripheral specificity, but which always has implications for interpretation. The same paradox applies to literary criticism.

The duality between centre and periphery, between what is considered universal or particular literature, is also an appearance. However, it is a socially necessary appearance which clouds the recognition that, more than a set of ideas, the Enlightenment is a social process, albeit one that is uneven and combined. Understanding this fact over-complicates life for literary critics, who find themselves (or should find themselves) faced with the challenge of grasping the movement of forms in a 'systemic' way, taking into account the nexus between Global North and Global South. Roberto Schwarz's contribution to the dialectical critique of social and literary forms is concurrent with this systemic movement insofar as it adheres to a principle of immanent criticism which avoids the pitfalls of merely theoretical or methodological discussions, following instead the determinations proper to his object of study (see de Almeida 2007). At the same time, his studies of Machado de Assis' novels have broader consequences for the debate on realism *versus* modernism, as these concepts are defined in the work of Georg Lukács and Theodor W. Adorno. As Schwarz demonstrates, through mobilizing aesthetic techniques that will come to be recognized as modernist (in Adorno's terms), Machado de Assis successfully produces a realist novel without sharing the sociological presuppositions of European realism (as described by

Lukács). This chapter explores the implications of Machado's modernist realism (or realist modernism) for the theory of the peripheral novel. I aim to demonstrate that Schwarz combines the insights of Lukács and Adorno as a way of understanding Machado, and that these dialectical critics are necessary to grasp the transition that takes place in Machado's career from the novels of his first phase to later works like *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*. If Lukács and Adorno are thus essential to the interpretation of Machado, they are thus no less important for appreciating Schwarz's own critical project.

Roberto Schwarz belonged to a generation of Brazilian Marxists who, in order to remain faithful to Marx, had to revise many of his categories (see Arantes 1992). How could one explain that a social formation like Brazil was capitalist in Marx's terms when the nation's economic foundations were rooted in the latifundium and slavery? The literary outcome of this problem is almost self-evident—*almost*, that is, because before Schwarz no one had thought of bringing Lukács and European realism into dialogue with the Brazilian re-reading of Marx. Rethinking the terms of literary criticism in an analogous way to the revision of Marx's categories of political economy, Schwarz expanded the concept of realism in order to accommodate the peripheral novel of Machado de Assis, above all through his reading of *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (1880). Yet, how can one present a novel as realist in Lukács' terms when it does not presuppose the well-defined class antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and when its deceased narrator sabotages all attempts at definition?

In a 1994 interview later published as 'Braço de ferro com Lukács', a title which suggests a balancing of forces between the critic from the centre and the critic from the periphery, Schwarz states that Lukács' essays on realism were fundamental to his studies on Machado, but only in a negative way. '[T]he classic and tense path of the European realistic novel,' says Schwarz, 'can be more or less summed up as a gradual process of disillusionment' (Schwarz 2019, 99). But what can be said about the form of the novel in a country where bourgeois illusions had arrived already discredited? Or rather, how is one to conceive the function of ideas that had lost their illusionary status the very moment they landed in the periphery and confronted the reality of colonial slavery, and yet still, somehow, continue to deceive? In this way, Schwarz noticed a disagreement between Lukács' conception of the realist novel and the

novel as it was imported to Brazil, a dissonance that would fuel Machado's experiments:

> If you look at the work of lesser writers, the destructive effects of an uncritical relation to modern European forms is easy to notice. It was only natural that Brazilians in the second half of the nineteenth century would try to write novels on the French model, say, of Balzac. What was the result? As we all know, at the centre of the Balzacian novel, you have an energetic figure who takes the ideals of bourgeois society at face value and wants to make them real, also as a form of self-realization. In the process, these figures must face the realities of money and discover that the hoped-for self-realization is not possible, which is the lesson to be grasped: bourgeois society does not keep its most cherished promises. This narrative model requires characters of superior strength, but who go through a process which is at work in the lives of the secondary figures as well. The central contradictions reverberate on the periphery of the plot, making for a consistent whole, with an immense critical scope. Now when a Brazilian writer, eager to bring modernity to his country, tried to apply this model to local realities, the outcome was bound to be different. Like his master, he would invent a central character that takes up a grand question of bourgeois society in a consistent and energetic manner. Yet, out of faithfulness to the local context, to local colour, the secondary figures would be "Brazilian," which means that their drive and their problems would be of a different kind. These characters belong to the world of slavery and paternalism, where personal favour—with its peculiar meanders of submission, flattery, and negotiation—is the universal thoroughfare. Now, if there are no individual or universal rights, if there is nothing but personal dependence, who would be so foolish as to behave in the absolute manner of a Balzacian hero? (Schwarz 2019, 127)

With the inspiration of Lukács, Schwarz follows the problems of the realist novel as it began to take shape in the late work of José de Alencar,

which is characterized by 'the conciliation of clientelism and liberal ideology' (Schwarz 2000, 71). In *Senhora*,[1] these two spheres—the narrow-mindedness of Rio de Janeiro society and the question of marriage as a mere economic transaction (Alencar's realistic protest against romantic naivety)—are deduced from the opposition between Aurélia (who buys her husband) and Seixas (who accepts being purchased without shame or embarrassment). There is a mismatch here between the banality of social life and the movement of the plot, neither of which 'talk about the same thing' (Schwarz 2000, 65). In Schwarz's words, 'while in Balzac, the mediocre characters stare blankly at the radicals, which are their concentrated truth – the typical, for Lukács (1965a) –, in Alencar's novels some look astonished to Aurélia, whose vehemence seems pointless to some, salon's tricks to others and imported literature to both' (Schwarz 2000, 71). The broken form of Alencar's novel, which Schwarz infers from the dissonance between the first and second planes of the narrative—that is, from the contradiction between the great problem of the bourgeois novel of reducing affective relationships to commercial transactions, and from 'the size of the *Fluminense* society'[2]—results in both 'formal bankruptcy' and 'mimetic force.' 'Formal bankruptcy' because the combination of European form and local matter produces a deficiency in the novel's architecture, an unevenness, and an incongruity. 'Mimetic force' because, in an original way, the two 'incongruent' planes appear to be superimposed upon one another—an 'involuntary reflection' of Brazilian reality, which would later acquire formal self-awareness.

Lukács' scheme provides Schwarz with a counterpoint. The great theorist of the novel had shown, following Hegel, that form in Europe was

[1] The plot of this novel runs as follows: Aurélia Camargo, daughter of a poor seamstress and fatherless (and after losing her brother), falls in love with Fernando Seixas. The latter, however, because he was ambitious, ended the relationship, driven by the desire to marry a rich girl, Adelaide Amaral, and to obtain the dowry to which he would be entitled. After some time, Aurélia receives a large inheritance from her grandfather and rises socially, becoming a prominent figure in society events at the time. In love, but wanting to humiliate Seixas, she asks her tutor and uncle, Lemos, to negotiate her marriage with him for a bigger dowry. The agreement includes, as one of its clauses, the lack of knowledge of the bride's identity by the contracted party until the evening of the wedding. Upon discovering that his fiancée is Aurélia, Fernando is very happy, because he never stopped loving her. The young woman, however, on her wedding night, makes it clear: she "bought him" to play the role of husband that a woman in her social position should have (see Alencar 2011).

[2] From the city of Rio de Janeiro.

based on the principles of equality and competition that underpin the sphere of the market, and that were responsible for category of the individual. The promise of social advancement through labour is fundamental in this context (see Lukács 1965b). The search for self-fulfilment and meaning in the novel was anchored in bourgeois individualism and, like it, was bound to end in disillusionment.[3] Bearing in mind, therefore, that individualism is the aesthetic presupposition of European realism, Schwarz returns to the early novels of Machado de Assis to investigate how a form like this can acclimatize to a country where there is neither bourgeois individualism nor the promise of social ascent through free labour and the market, but only enslaved people and free men who depend on the favour of the landholders to survive. This class structure is introduced by Schwarz in the 'Misplaced Ideas' essay, published as Chapter One of *Ao vencedor as batatas* (2000): on the one hand, the landholders [*o mando*], and on the other there were the enslaved. In the middle of these two classes there were the free men and women [*os agregados*], who were nonetheless dependent on the class above them. This arrangement is the sociological presupposition of Machado's literary form in *The Posthumous Memoirs*, which derives its strength from the complex relation of favour, which combines paternalism and liberalism in strange and original ways. That which in the centre provides movement to the novel is truncated in the periphery, turning realism into a 'difficult form' in Brazil.

In the final chapter of *Ao vencedor as batatas*, Schwarz focuses on Machado's early novels: *A Mão e a Luva* (1874), *Helena* (1876), and *Iaiá Garcia* (1878). These texts deal with social inequality, marriages, and passions between a dominant figure and a dependent girl, whose 'social' weakness may or may not become an obstacle to the consummation of the relationship. The fact that, in the three cases, the relationship of dependency is structured around the trajectory of women—Guiomar, in *A Mão e a Luva*; Helena, in *Helena*; and *Estela*, in Iaiá Garcia—is not explored by Schwarz. Nevertheless, the gendered aspect of social dependence is not a peripheral specificity but a rather problem that pertains

[3] Here it is interesting to notice a difference between Lukacs' characterization of Balzac in *The Theory of the Novel* and in *The Historical Novel*. In the latter, Balzac is the great writer of the novel about the life that collapses with the clash with capitalist society and, therefore, the great novelist of disillusionment. In the first, Balzac was framed within Lukács' typology (built from the relationship between soul and world) in "abstract idealism" (marked by the narrowing of the soul) (see Lukács 1965b, 1984).

to the realist novel also at the centre of capitalism. Even in Europe, for example, the illusions of self-determination and fulfilment apply only to male characters. Bourgeois women, on the other hand, who were largely expelled from the market, had to rely on personal and family relationships for the arrangement of good marriages. As a result, the illusions which the great characters of realism lose as they pass through training and self-determination (essential bourgeois values) are excluded from the aspirations of women characters. The only means of social advancement open to women in the bourgeois novel is usually an unequal marriage, which can establish an independence permeated by a lifelong dependence (on the husband). To this extent, one can compare Machado de Assis with an author such as Jane Austen, whose use of irony was, as Sandra Vasconcelos puts it, a 'weapon' that allowed her to comment on her condition of dependence and on the patriarchal customs of her time (Vasconcelos 2014, 147).

While I will not comment at length on Machado's early work here, it is worth pointing out that these novels, according to Schwarz, consist of a series of studies on paternalism, which is understood not as a pre-bourgeois form but as a complex and flexible product of colonial capitalist society. In the novels of the first phase, Machado recalibrates the impasse of Alencar's fiction 'by giving voice to Brazil's historical backwardness' (Schwarz 2000, 86). In doing so, the early Machado distances himself from Alencar (a reader of Balzac and Scott) and, therefore, from the tradition of European realism: 'Where Alencar aligned with realism, with issues of individualism and money, still alive and critical in our days, Machado adhered to the apologetic narrowness of the European Reaction, of Catholic background, and insisted on the sanctity of families and the dignity of the person (as opposed to their rights)' (Schwarz 2000, 83). What Machado lacked was, as Schwarz puts it, 'the disillusionment of disillusionment: to become disillusioned also with paternalistic conservatism' (Schwarz 2000, 87). Schwarz goes on to note that the family is a key formal principle in these novels:

> The family, preferably affluent, is the untouchable custodian of order and the meaning of life. […] Family life is the restorative sphere in which social and natural disparities must find consolation and sublimation. A civilizing agent, or a refuge for the civilized, it is the criterion of morality and rationality of human actions, and its misalignments – which are difficulties but

> not problems – form the reflective centre of these books, confined almost entirely to its circle. (Schwarz 2000, 89)

However, where the villains of this restorative sphere are marginal in Machado's early work, in Alencar's fiction they are kept in the foreground. Like Balzac, Machado's early novels are nourished by the ideology of anti-liberalism, which is at the same time anti-realist. After all, if liberal ideas were misplaced in Brazil, the transposition of these ideas into the aesthetic form of literary realism was no less out of place. The ideological effect of Machado's early work was a social conformism that sought to adapt its characters to the destiny reserved for them in the restricted and dependent environment of the family.

Yet, Machado's anti-realist impulse is also a kind of realism, since, as Schwarz notes, 'the selection of decorous subjects - paternalism rather than money - brought him closer to popular life than the dialectic of the so-called Capital' (Schwarz 2000, 87). Furthermore, by focusing on family life and investigating its intricacies, Machado 'was reconnoitring the territory - pleasing to conservative taste - of personal domination and submission, whose economy he would value [from a literary perspective]' (Schwarz 2000, 92). In this sense, these novels are less driven by the logic of commodity exchange than are French realist novels, since paternalism is one of the foundations of Brazil's social organization. Therefore, on the one hand, there is a loss of 'critical resourcefulness', for 'family inspiration does not yield the same result as individualistic inspiration' (Schwarz 2000, 92). In Schwarz's words: 'There is a gain in Brazilian verisimilitude on the most intimate level, that of the movement of analysis and construction' (Schwarz 2000, 92). Conformism and sense of reality converge here precisely because 'the generalization of commercial exchange, which is the foundation of the critical radicalism of the French novel, did not occur among us' (Schwarz 2000, 93). By moving away from realism and relying on second-rate French novels,[4] Machado was searching for a literary device that could adequately account for Brazilian material. In other words, his rejection of realism was at the same time an approximation to it, a necessary step in the process of achieving a new form, which would definitively change the history and theory of the novel in Brazil.

[4] Following the interpretation of Alfredo Pujol, Schwarz suggests that *Helena* and *Iaiá Garcia* were inspired by George Sand's novel *Marquis de Villemer* (Schwarz 2000, 157).

The point of arrival is *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (1880), which Schwarz describes as:

> a biographical novel that traces the stages of the life of a rich and idle Brazilian [...]. Absent from the journey are work and any form of consistent project. The transition from one stage to another is through world-weariness [*fastio*], which stamps the mark of class privilege on this movement. The relationships are uncivil in the proper sense; that is, they are not guided by modern equality, which is nonetheless postulated. Brás's volubility appears, in other words, as the reverse side of the exclusion of any kind of labour or real perseverance, and as the extension of social injustice. (Schwarz 2001, 63)

The complex interweaving of paternalism and liberalism ceases to be a subject, as it was in the novels of the first phase, to become instead a formal principle of the composition, which portrays the life of a ruling-class character who speaks from beyond the grave. The figure of the owner [*proprietário/latifundiário*] is not a mere theme or protagonist but rather narrates his own life. The formal procedure is more central for the apprehension of the novel and of Brazilian reality than is the plot itself. In Schwarz's words, the problem moves 'from the plane of architecture to the chemistry of form' (Schwarz 2000, 73). In this way, the key to analysing the novel also changes focus from Lukács to Adorno. To use Adorno's phrase (1958), Schwarz analyses the 'position of the narrator' in Machado de Assis, which consists simultaneously of a 'rule of narrative composition' and 'the stylization of a behavior typical of the Brazilian dominant class' (Schwarz 2001, 18). These two elements are brought together in the category of volubility.

As for narrative composition, Machado's technique distances him from the realist tradition. We are told in the first lines that the narrator is dead: 'I am not exactly a deceased author, but an author who is deceased (Assis 1960, 11). Machado borrows the form of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, especially concerning the 'emphatic presence of the narrator', who is hostile to the reader (Rouanet 2006, 320), and the numerous, complex, and fragmentary digressions. What Machado borrows is, in other words, pre-realist techniques that somehow converge with modernism. As Schwarz points out, the novel form is composed by 'a voluntarily troublesome and unreliable narrator' who breaks with 'the

objectivism and illusionism of the realist novel' through his own arbitrariness (Schwarz 2001, 19). Although the reference is the eighteenth-century British novel, the effect is achieved for the nineteenth century and brings Machado closer to Henry James, Marcel Proust, and Thomas Mann. Furthermore, as Schwarz has argued elsewhere, by unobstructing unknown realities under bourgeois reality, Machado's fiction is also similar to the projects of Borges and Kafka (Schwarz 2012, 278).

The modernist or, as Schwarz says, 'post-naturalist' quality of *The Posthumous Memoirs* derives from 'the manifestation of divergence between form and common meanings', so that 'the most important information is always to be found in the deviation or the negation placed by the literary method on its materials' (Schwarz 2001, 103). The novel distances itself from the characteristics of realism, which encompasses praxis and history (see Lukács 1965c). It is marked by an alternation between: (1) 'an episode of proper action, which is taken from the life of Brás Cubas or his sphere, in a realist vein […] a world of neighbors, compadres, relatives and adherents, as well as slaves' (Schwarz 2001, 81); and (2) 'an intercalated episode, which differs in subject and genre, whose movement interrupts […] and lowers the realist ingredient to the condition of a picturesque detail' (Schwarz 2001, 81). There is also novelty at the level of subjectivity, insofar as:

> The victory of caprice means the defeat of subjectivity in its demanding bourgeois meaning, which weighs on that subjectivity like remorse: in search of immediate satisfaction for the imagination, the narrator, the character, or the reader gives up on the external or internal relationship that at any given moment they really are in. As we see, when it is transformed into a rule, volubility makes any consistency in ideas or in actions impossible, and without this, the power of the subject-narrator, which lies in the effort to transform reality and himself, does not exist: nor does the dialectic between individual and society, since the individual consciousness does not reach the point of giving shape to itself as an effective force. Right in the middle of the era of individualism, that is an important kind of abdication, ideologically crucial. The series of effects it brings about, in literary terms—it is no exaggeration to say that they are powerful and profound—gives some idea of the sheer extent of its implications. (Schwarz 2001, 81)

In principle, volubility, which subverts individuality, consists of the very abdication of the novel form, which depends on the effort of the individual to transform themselves and the world, as argued by Lukács in *Theory of the Novel*. Thus, volubility anticipates the crisis of the novel that takes shape in modernism. In Adorno's words,

> before any message of ideological content, the very pretension of the narrator is already ideological, as if the course of the world were still essentially a process of individuation, as if the individual, with his emotions and feelings, were still capable of approaching fate as if in his innermost being he could still achieve something on his own. (Adorno 1958, 63)

Adorno's description relates the crisis of narrative to the annihilation of subjectivity, a connection that is not present in the same way in *The Posthumous Memoirs*. The annihilation of subjectivity is not associated with the decay of a form that never took place in Brazil but with a class position. Schwarz suggests that the narrator's position is paradoxical. On the one hand, the narrator is stripped of authority because he is dead and full of caprice, which results in a crisis of representation in the novel. On the other hand, the reader 'has no way to hold him and is left with their hands tied', making the narrative relationship unequal since 'the last word […] always belongs to the narrator' (Schwarz 2001, 24). Then Schwarz moves from the position of the narrator as a 'rule of composition' to the position of the narrator as a 'stylization of a conduct typical of the Brazilian dominant class,' which will confer realism on Machado's 'post-naturalist' form. Hence the change in the narrative position achieves a realist result through modernist technique.

Despite the crisis of representation and the openness provided by anti-illusionist resources, the novel of Machado's second phase is realist because the narrator's futility, which constitutes the form of *Memórias*, is actually a 'denunciation of a prototype of the dominant classes […] undertaken in the perverse form of "involuntary" self-exposure, that is, in the first-person singular used with a distanced and hostile intention (commonly reserved for the third)' (Schwarz 2001, 82). More than manifesting the crisis of bourgeois individuality (as in modernism), the subjectivity that emerges from these post-naturalist instruments allows Machado to carve out a dialectical passage between interiority and exteriority. Brás Cubas's caprice and volubility, his way of using liberal ideology to justify his privileges and position of command, do not point to a

crisis of realism (and the disappearance of social conflict) but should rather 'be read as ways of deepening and radicalizing the exposition of a defined practical framework' (Schwarz 2001, 24). In the Machadian novel, the apparent absence of conflict between the sorts of antagonistic forces that characterize Balzacian realism formalizes the kind of conflict that takes place in peripheral reality. This takes place through the identification of the narrator with a specific class physiognomy, with the result that what appeared as a 'latent' form, a mere literary device, becomes an 'ostensible' form (Schwarz 2001, 172). The class-based arrogance of the narrator is communicated to the reader through his disrespect for realist narrative conventions, thereby sabotaging the book's verisimilitude. While the narrative form emulates a specific class relationship, the imbalance between narrator and reader is a metaphor for another kind of imbalance:

> The conversion of lucidity into disrespect for the norm and encouragement to the bare and raw exercise of arbitrariness is constant in *Memórias*. The evident object of this arbitrariness is the literary convention, which nevertheless functions [...] as a substitute for the real victims, who are the underprivileged. (Schwarz 2001, 72)

By distancing himself from realism, Machado definitively captures the social dynamics of Brazilian class structure and, therefore, finds a prominent place in the tradition of great realist novels.[5]

Fredric Jameson has argued that the problem of realism is never at the centre of literary analyses because the form of the novel is always either in formation or in decomposition (Jameson 2015, 1). In other words, one either studies the novel's birth, its crisis, or its decay. According to Jameson, this has to do with the fact that the novel does not constitute a genre in itself but rather occupies the place of what can no longer be said, told, or represented through traditional genres and forms of expression. In this sense, the novel disguises an impossibility, and its ruin is inscribed in its own DNA. Lukács's theory of realism was elaborated in

[5] In Schwarz's interpretation of Machado de Assis, the works of Lukács and Adorno are starting points not points of arrival, so we find ourselves wondering if, after all, the unusual combination of pre-realism, realism, and modernism might in fact be prototypically post-modern. This is a temptation, but does not capture Schwarz's argument, who, despite everything, firmly maintains his commitment to realism, albeit with the caveat that Machado was more 'modern than the modernists'; and that, like Stendhal, 'he wrote for a still non-existent audience' (Schwarz 2001, 190).

1930, after the publication of the great modernist and avant-garde novels, and so one can say that the crisis and dissolution of realism contributed to Lukács's theory of it. What Roberto Schwarz demonstrates when dealing with Machado's mature novels is that these two moments, which were theoretically and temporally distinct in Europe, were already present in Machado: realism is achieved through procedures that highlight its crisis, the novel is built from the dissolution of its form. The self-referential and self-conscious character of the *Posthumous Memoirs* singles out the novel as an example of realism on the way to becoming modernism.[6] Yet, a few decades after the publication of his three studies on Machado, Schwarz would come to refer to the *Posthumous Memoirs* neither as realist nor modernist but as 'post-realist', suggesting a reconsideration of the two categories themselves.

Commenting on the relationship between Lukács' theory and the history of the Latin American novel, Schwarz says that:

> To a certain extent, it can be said that Lukács' analysis presupposes, especially in the essays of the 1930s, a kind of national unity. He talks, for example, about the German people, the French people, and national developments. […] In countries like ours in Latin America, the significant unity is not national. As they come from a colonial matrix, they belong to a transnational unity from the beginning, and to understand them correctly, it is also necessary to understand that other pole; a significant pole for all Latin American countries is external. Cultural forms come from outside, at least partly, and economic dependence has an external pole by definition. The national contour has not been completed and probably never will be. To a certain extent, these experiences are truer than those of the European ones because European nations are also not closed units, although they may seem so. That kind of internal, organic necessity that Lukács explains so well for European nations, their class struggle, and their culture was an active and inevitable model for the construction of Latin American nations. However, as these nations are disintegrating before completing the process, they force us to recognize what was illusory in the model. If we take just one more step forward, as national autonomy is also losing strength in advanced countries, Latin American perplexities about it begin to sound

[6] The argument regarding the internal antinomy of realism is there in Adorno (2020), too, who sees in the reproduction of Lucien Chardon's feuilleton in Balzac's *Illusions perdue* a self-referential element of the novel, which breaks with realistic illusions.

> more truthful than the confidence that may still exist in the First World. (Schwarz 2019, 132)

Schwarz reveals the particularism of Lukács, who ultimately identified great realism with the historical novel of national construction (see Anderson 2011). In Machado, however, realism is achieved by another route, one which recognizes that national independence does not turn dependents into citizens, but instead produces precarious forms of salaried employment that only articulate the old relations of property and command. As Schwarz says, "the universalization of caprice [also as a formal principle] in this case meant the incorporation of the results of the Enlightenment, but without the corresponding process, and under a directive […] opposed to it" (Schwarz 2001, 33). In this way, Schwarz exposes a blind spot in Lukács' theory of realism, one that is not only a blind spot for thinking about the novel in the periphery of capitalism, but also in the centre. The dialectic between openness and closure of the literary work of *The Posthumous Memoirs*—that is, regarding open pre-realist/modernist procedures that converge in realist closure—suggests that the opposition between modernism and realism, which in Europe was an external tension, is an internal tension within realism itself.

In this sense, what Jameson said about modernism can be applied to Machado's realism. For Jameson, the crisis of modernism in Central Europe was associated with the difficulty of apprehending a historical process whose axis had shifted from the metropolises to the colony. The best products in the novel, such as *Ulysses* by James Joyce, thus emerged from the clash between backwardness and modernity. With modernism, says Jameson, the novel would gain a 'geographic dimension' (Jameson 2016, 166) that appeared at the level of formal structure, built upon the cultural, social, and economic dissonance between centre and periphery. The use of humour and irony, so prevalent in these novels, was an attempt at exposing this imbalance. Reading Schwarz's studies on the Brazilian novel, one gets the sense that this 'geographic dimension' is already present in the second phase of Machado's career. In it, realism is obtained through the awareness of its impossibility as a form in Brazil. In this sense, his realism would be even more 'systemic,' profound, and critical of the Enlightenment than European realism itself. From this perspective, Machado is a national writer without the identity-content 'Brazilianness'. Or, rather, he is a Brazilian realist writer distanced from nationalism, but

who makes the peripheral condition and its disillusionments a structuring principle of his literature.

One of the great merits of European realism, especially of Balzac—if we follow the argument of Lukács—had to do precisely with the heroic character of the bourgeoisie, which was reproduced in the narrators who belonged to a social class capable of 'seeing' the new capitalist order that was being born. If we follow Lukács' perspective on 'points of view,' it is possible to affirm—following Schwarz—that, in this sense, Machado grounded his narrator within the Brazilian dominant class as a way of betraying it. With this, the dominant class' point of view is inverted: Machado's novel has a negative function, exposed by Schwarz's analysis, which ultimately leads to the standpoint of the lower classes, both regarding the class structure in Brazil and the country's peripheral and subordinate position. The result is another kind of comedy. The 'viravolta Machadiana' [Machadian about-face] concerns a game of points of view. In the novels of his first phase, Machado had systematized 'the point of view of those below' by exposing paternalism through dependent protagonists. Yet, in his mature output, the disillusionment of disillusionment—reinforced by the fact that end of slavery did not bring emancipation to the base of social pyramid and equally for its intermediaries—compelled Machado to change the form of his novels and ground his narrative in a figure from the ruling class, by exposing the landholder's point of view. In Schwarz's words, 'through a negative procedure, the narrator placed at the top of the social system of inequalities, in its conditions and consequences, as well as in the new and old theories that could help, is a comprehensive consciousness that incites reading against the grain and the formation of a counter-consciousness, if it can be put that way' (Schwarz 2012, 250).

Schwarz's studies of Machado show that his realism is as strong if not stronger than Balzac's, and that his modernism is comparable to the great names of European literature. However, especially in Brazil, the significance of Schwarz's work is often referred to in terms of 'Brazilian particularity' or with reference to the problem of national formation. While these are indeed themes of his work, the implications are greater. More than the specificity of Brazilian society, which is already known to be specific, Schwarz exposes the particularity of theories from the centre of capitalism that claim to be universal. Schwarz achieves this through his readings the peripheral novel, but his work is ultimately also a lesson in dialectics.

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CHAPTER 13

Schwarz's Modernism: Between Artistic Affinity and Intellectual Distance

Leandro Pasini

Since the publication of "The Cart, the Tram and the Modernist Poet" in *Que horas são?* [What time is it?] (1987), the relationship between Roberto Schwarz and Brazilian modernism seems to have been completely resolved. According to Schwarz's argument, modernism in Brazil combined the archaic (pre-bourgeois) with the modern (bourgeois), thus creating a positive allegory of the country. This operation is understood as naive and denounces the class blindness of the coffee oligarchy that, in the 1920s, provided the material basis for this literary movement. While such a conclusion is the result of Schwarz's tense and angular relationship with Brazilian modernism, since the 1990s it has become an undeniable truth for most literary critics associated with Schwarz's work. The tacit way in which Paulo Eduardo Arantes, today the most authoritative spokesperson of Schwarz's project, sums up the issue is an indication of the petrification of the argument of "The Cart, the Tram

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and the Modernist Poet." In Arantes's words, "it is to modernism that we owe the transformation of the coexistence between primitivism and modernity into a class alibi" (1992, 101). The purpose of this chapter is to dissolve the crystallization present in this statement and show the contradictory relationship between Roberto Schwarz and Brazilian modernism. In order to do so, I will resort not only to his critical conclusions but also to his use of the essay form, as well as to his creative works such as the book of poems *Corações Veteranos* [Veteran Hearts] (1974) and the play *A Lata de Lixo da História* [The Trash Can of History] (1977). Next, I attempt to show that his reading of modernism depends on the consolidation of his research on Machado de Assis and on an interpretation of Brazil that is centered on the formation of the nation during the nineteenth century. Finally, I argue that the characteristics which Schwarz sees as national anomalies in Brazilian modernism can, without losing their local specificity, be recognized in various global modernisms throughout the twentieth century.

Modernism and the Form of the Essay

Roberto Schwarz's essay "The Cart, the Tram and the Modernist Poet" is proof that the originality of a critical position is often based on an equally original form of writing. In this case, in addition to international critical theory,[1] Schwarz mobilized a series of literary and critical works on Brazilian literature, among which authors linked to modernism stand out. The relationship between Schwarz's essay and modernism is highlighted by José Antônio Pasta Jr. in a debate on the publication of *Um Mestre na Periferia do Capitalismo* [A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism] (1990): "There is a more pronounced modernist affiliation there, a cultivation of Mário [de Andrade]'s prose that goes far, it goes to a use of language that amazes. (…) You go from extremely complicated developments to very sudden particularizations" (*apud* Schwarz et al. 1991, 79). Schwarz's response reiterates this point in the following terms: "For my part, for example, *by the way unintentionally*, the adherence to the colloquial I tinged with modernism, which is the local school for doing

[1] "My work would also be unthinkable without the — contradictory — tradition of Lukacs, Benjamin, Brecht, and Adorno, and without the inspiration of Marx" (Schwarz 2001, 4). This text partially translates and reworks two previously published articles: Pasini (2021) and Pasini (2024).

that sort of thing" [emphasis added]. However, he also seeks to distance himself from the modernism of the 1920s, for in it "there is no such concern with the logic of the social," with the exception, Schwarz notes, of Oswald de Andrade's prose, which approaches the revolutionary stance of Marxism in the following terms: "He seeks to radicalize the issues to the utmost in every sentence, to scandalize to the utmost. One could, of course, produce an analysis of the political discipline of Oswald's prose of the most anarchic kind" (1991, 81–82).

Thus, Schwarz's dialectical form of writing recovers the modernist legacy not only in its use of the colloquial, but also in its exploration of multiple linguistic registers, creating a localist framework capable of giving concreteness to the movement of ideas. To this proper hermeneutic function, in which the knowledge of language is part of the knowledge of the country, he adds the element of dehierarchization—anarchic and provocative—present especially in Oswald, but diffused throughout the modernist movement as a whole.

In order to evaluate the specificity of Schwarz's use of the essay form, it is helpful to place it in the context of his artistic output. From this perspective, it is noteworthy that, until 1978, Schwarz's bibliography contained the same number of books of literary criticism (*A Sereia e o Desconfiado* [The Mermaid and the Distrustful One], 1965; *Ao Vencedor as Batatas* [To the Victor, the Potatoes], 1977; *O Pai da Família* [The Father of the Family and Other Essays], 1978) as creative works, two of which are poetry (*Pássaros na Gaveta* [Birds in the Drawer], 1959; *Corções Veteranos*, 1974) and one is drama (*A Lata de Lixo da História*, 1977). An essay like "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964–1969" synthesizes these two strands, using specific literary techniques to reinforce his critical position. One of its most incisive features is the strategic use of the aphorism. It appears in formulations such as: "History is not a benevolent old lady" (1992, 157) and "It was a Marxism which specialized in discussing the invalidity of capitalism, but which took no steps towards revolution" (132). The aphoristic conclusion, on the one hand, has the force of being the culmination of the analysis and, on the other, folds in on itself as a separable expression of the text, with a force of its own.

Another component that stands out in the text is the irony present in passages such as: "Once this union was consummated [between the Brazilian Communist Party and populism], the division of the spoils immediately became problematic" (129), which brings a proverbiality to matters of great public or spiritual relevance. On this topic, Schwarz writes

of the Communist Party's setback in 1964: "every day before the last one had proved them right" (1978, 65),[2] in which the illusion is taken seriously (every day proved them right) and viewed with disenchantment (except for the last one), without prejudice to the resulting humor. In these sentences, one perceives not only the reader of Machado de Assis, but also the gesture of the essayist who seeks to create a distance from his subject in order to better elaborate a critical perspective.

More common is the technique of the contradictory sentence, like where he describes the leftist theater after the 1964 coup: "the defeated left triumphed on the stage with no criticism, and in front of a full house, as if the defeat had not been a fault" (148), which joins by syntax terms that negate each other; or else the sentence is twisted by incompatible ideas that coexist: "The results are sometimes disastrous and sometimes extremely funny, but always there is the desire to consider particular questions in the light of their historical consequence, or a caricature of the same" (130). These are modes of construction that maintain the contradiction in tension in the same sentence, bringing the nerve of dialectical thought to the very axis of syntax.

The most recurrent procedure, on the other hand, is a kind of precipitation of the contradictory sentence, in which the terms skip their own nexuses and juxtapose themselves in what might be called a "synthetic sentence." "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964–1969" indeed begins with a synthetic sentence: "In 1964 the military seized power in Brazil in order to protect capital and the continent of Latin America from the threat of socialism" (126). Schwarz here irreverently combines an economic and a geographical dimension with a geopolitical connotation, as well as a metonymic one (taking the part for the whole), as a way of suggesting that the continent needed a few more coups to defend itself from socialism. The irreverent juxtaposition gives speed to the reasoning, unsettling the reader and forcing them to think for themselves. The procedure, in turn, combines irony and the systematized use of juxtaposition of contradictory elements that modernism introduced with its aesthetics of montage. Another configuration is the synthetic syntagma that functions within the sentence, as in this description of the pre-coup left associated with the Brazilian Communist Party: "a toothless,

[2] The English translation of the passage lacks this procedure: "since the past appeared to speak in its favour" (1992, 130). The Portuguese original reads: "todos os dias anteriores ao último lhe davam razão" (1978, 65).

parliamentary version of patriotic Marxism" (128), in which the adjectives range from the demeaning "toothless" to the usual "parliamentary," with a poisoned connotation—a parliamentary revolutionary—complemented by the uneasy expression "patriotic Marxism," formed by terms that negate each other.

Although the tropicalist image based on montage is one of the main targets of "The Cart, The Tram and the Modernist Poet," from whose argumentative core Schwarz derives, in general terms, his criticism of the work of Oswald de Andrade and of Brazilian modernism of the 1920s as a whole, it is precisely the transposition of this procedure into an analytical key and into the form of the essay that makes Schwarz's writing original. Indeed, there is a passage in "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964–1969" that comes close both to Schwarz's own artistic work of the 1970s and to the modernism of Oswald de Andrade. Addressing the cultural effects of the coup and describing the advance of narrow-minded right-wing ideas, Schwarz writes, in quotation marks: "'Ancient hearts, hidden corners in the hinterland, who would have thought…?'" (135). Is this not similar to the title of Schwarz's 1974 book of poems, *Corações Veteranos*? Let us also remember that the image of the ancient/veteran heart reappears in the poem "Macunaíma help us," where Schwarz writes: "My merry heart / where are you? / in the gorilla's belly" (*apud* de Hollanda 2007, 89). On the one hand, the social, affective and psychological atmosphere of the post-1964 period is the central theme of *Corações Veteranos* and other poems from the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand, the deepening of studies on Marxism and on Brazil (fostered by the Marx Seminar and by the journal *Teoria e Prática*) coexisted with a creative disposition that absorbed modernism in its own way, while at the same time developing a strategy to reject it critically (the tropicalist image as an allegory of Brazil).

A particularly interesting moment of this conjunction is in the passage where, immediately after the quote beginning with "Ancient hearts …," Schwarz describes the ideological advance of the counterrevolution—the "Beautiful examples of rural and urban stupidity [*tesouros de bestice rural e urbana*]" (136). The here essayist abandons description and opens up a series of questions in direct speech: "The investigations made by the police and the army into subversive activities prompted the reemergence of old curiosities [*curiosidades antigas*]. — Does the philosophy teacher believe in God? — Do you know all the words to the national anthem? — How can we be sure our University girls are all virgins? [*Mas as meninas, na Faculdade, são virgens?*] — What if they are practicing free

love? — What if my name is on the list of those who are going to be next against the wall?" (136, adapted translation). One might wonder to what extent this passage serves as a recovery of Oswald's poem "Berlitz School" [Escola Berlites], in which the lack of charm of foreign-language books and teachers is revealed through the use of the same resource of stupid questions of socio-aesthetic connotation

> All pupils have an eager face
> But the teacher-suffragette
> Mistreats the poor pretty typists
> And hates
> *The spring*[3]
> *Der Frühling*
> *La primavera scapigliata*
> There's a bunch of books to be bought
> We're left sort of waiting
> The bells alert us
> The doors close
> Is the peacock beautiful?
> What color is Senhor Seixas?
> Senhor Lazaro, bring me some ink
> What's the first letter of the alphabet?
> Ah! (*apud* de Campos 2007, 260)

The possibility of letting stupidity speak for itself, through direct speech, in a context of irreverence and critique, unites Oswald's poem and the excerpt from Schwarz's essay, though in a vitalist way in the former (the spring in several languages) and in a political-cultural orientation in the latter. One can see how much the versatility and critical sharpness of Schwarz's essay absorb modernist procedures in order to approach its objects with the necessary agility. At this point, his creative work has an undeniable role as an antechamber and laboratory for Marxist criticism, which will deny critical value to the very procedures he rehearses and uses. Let us briefly consider the role of montage in *The Trash Can of History*. The play is inspired by Machado de Assis's famous short-story called "O Alienista" (The Alienist). It tells the story of an "alienist" (a psychiatrist) called Simão Bacamarte, who is so strict in his commitment to science that he ends up locking almost everyone in the city in an asylum. Thereafter,

[3] In English in the original poem.

he concludes that his well-balanced mind is the true illness and that the only madman is himself. The description of Simão Bacamarte's gesture at the end of the first scene is very characteristic of the general tone of the play:

> Fanfare. Out comes the king in desperation, his hand on his forehead. When he comes out, Simão runs to the mirror and rehearses various poses. Drumming is heard, and a samba begins. Simão tries the step in front of the mirror, then steps out among the puppets, which he hits as he passes. He hits them harder and harder until he loses the rhythm and it becomes a beating. He yells, screams, scrambles over the puppets, and ends up sitting on the ground, exhausted from the beating. The samba stops. There is a pause. Simão gets up and goes to the mirror to rearrange his costume. The samba begins again. Simão sets off in step, respectfully. (1977, 9)

Although the excerpt is aligned with the humor of the *chanchada*, and perhaps for that very reason, Schwarz juxtaposes it with a series of questions of the upmost importance. Bacamarte traverses different registers: scientist, narcissist, *sambista*, aggressor of the black puppets, narcissist again—a whole semi-comical picture of "misplaced ideas." They are already here: Machado de Assis, class denunciation, humor and modernist popular culture. And it is precisely the farcical tone of the *chanchada* or montage in which Schwarz places an imaginary class reaction in the final scene. A distinguished man is about to slap a puppet:

> the puppet, who is a man, wards off with his left and with his right hand gives him a colossal slap, throwing him twenty meters into a hole, on which is written in large letters: THE TRASH CAN OF HISTORY; the puppet rubs his hands together and goes home. (86)

One conclusion to be drawn from these scenes is that Schwarz allows himself artistic forms and even political conclusions in the creative process that are denied in the sphere of critical formulation, where they nonetheless enter as fundamental components of his essayistics. The finale of *The Trash Can of History*, for example, is not the result of historical mimesis, but of the saturation of absurd juxtapositions throughout the play, which, more than an allegorical image of the country, represents the utopian demand (and even configuration) of its overcoming. A libidinal component that is not exactly mimetic is present there. In *Veteran Hearts*, the few poems that stray from the political theme are organized around erotic

desire. One of them, "Springtime," concludes with the line, "The poet laughs because his dick is hard" (n/p). Considering the constant presence of eroticism in Schwarz's poetic work in the 1960s and 1970s, one can postulate a process in which the eroticism thematized in the poetry would replenish itself in the form of the essay as a kind of irreverent libido of language, critical and leftist. From a formal point of view, this would require a kind of poetry of intelligence, active and vigilant, from which would come the synthetic sentences, the tensed phrases, the Machadian irony and the aphorisms that give his essay both charm and critical power.

It is precisely because of the versatility of these procedures that Schwarz's essay form manages to stand up to the narrator of the *Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas*. In the first chapter of *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, we find the first open-field confrontation between narrator and critic. The characterization of Bras Cubas's procedures gives us an idea of the narrator we are dealing with, for he uses affront, intrusion, disrespect, coyness, profanity, affectations of superiority, and breaks in style and register, leading the critic to conclude that caprice and arbitrariness act as rules of narrative composition.

The procedures of creation and criticism that we have pointed out so far once again have a decisive function. In the poem "Like a caged animal" [*Como bicho enjaulado*] in *Veteran Hearts*, for example, we see the transcription of psychological movements resulting from the anxiety of writing in a way that recovers something previously rejected: "psychologism." This was strongly criticized in "The Psychologism in the Poetics of Mário de Andrade" (1965), but returns, albeit in a lateral way, in *Veteran Hearts*. In another configuration, psychologism is a point of poetic dialogue between Mário de Andrade and Augusto Meyer. Meyer, in addition to the poetic psychology in *Poemas de Bilu* (1929) and *Literatura e Poesia* (1931), reintroduces the same concerns into the space of criticism, traversing Rimbaud, through Dostoyevsky's "subterranean man," until he notices and names the "volubility" of the narrator in *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*. One notes here again a loose thread in the relationship between Roberto Schwarz and modernism, in which an element rejected in critical formulation is absorbed and incorporated with originality in his essayistic writing and, in this case, in literary criticism itself, which transposes Meyer's "psychological" volubility into the position of class mimesis.

Another resource is narrative intrusion. In a similar way to Machado, Schwarz also marks the reader's position by explicitly placing himself

in the path of the critical exegesis, without hiding his embarrassment, resentment and, without expressing it, a certain bored irritation with the narrator in front of him: "It is true that its manipulative, exhibitionist dimension makes for unease, and leads to a reading enlivened by reservations and mistrust" (2001, 11) or "These are shifting sands, and the reader has to find his way as he can, without the guidance of agreed reference points" (11). More decisive for the development of the text is the systematization of the contradictory sentence which, in its syntactic union of incompatible elements, is the ideal stylistic tool for rationalizing Brás Cubas's strategy, avoiding the danger of both becoming entangled in it and of falling short of Brás's expressive resources, of which we will give just one example: "It is not a question, then, of believing them, or of looking for their truth or logical coherence, but of admiring their cheek and the virtuosity with which they are handled" (9).

Given the manipulative dimension of the narrator and the well-armed posture of the essayist, it is as if to every movement of the narrator should correspond to a movement of the critic that would prevent and sustain the irresponsible freedom of volubility. In this sense, it is Brás Cubas who initially takes the initiative and dictates the rhythm of the essay's prose, but it is Schwarz who absorbs this rhythm in order to infuse it with analytical and critical elements, ranging from clarification to denunciation, from description to irreverence and from understanding to rebuttal. In this way, the critic gives weight to the butterfly movement of the narrator, whose logic is unraveled and scrutinized. What Schwarz achieves, then, is a form in which the subjective and narrative movement of class aplomb is absorbed and returned in a methodical organization. By giving historical, social, aesthetic and critical weight to the rhythm of volubility, Schwarz returns this rhythm in the versatility of the analytical essay, whose freedom operates in a dynamic of its own. In this way, Schwarz develops a prose that is at once agile and energetic, flexible and incisive, so that, through a tour de force of the dialectical essay, the volubility of Brás Cubas provides the rhythm of the originality of the essayistic prose that denounces and confronts him. Consequently, Schwarz performs the dialectical procedure not only at the level of the content, but also at the level of language itself, that is, in the form of his essay. Thus, it is possible to posit the formation of the critical essay as a necessary complement to the formation of Brazilian literature, the decisive point in which is precisely *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*.

The absorption of modernist aesthetics in the form of the essay was fundamental to Schwarz's ability to reverse the rhythm of Brás Cubas's prose in his favor. A synthesis is hereby achieved in which the procedural freedom, the irreverence and the hermeneutic capacity of modernism are combined with a deep involvement with Machado's prose. However, this synthesis between modernism and Machado de Assis has no counterpart in the sphere of critical elaboration, where Machado and modernism are usually placed as competitors for the best interpretation of Brazil. This reveals a certain imbalance in Schwarz's theoretical perspective on Brazilian literature. His form assumes that the essayistic tradition of international critical theory is locally refracted through specific issues and also through his own language. This is where the aesthetic sobriety of Antonio Candido, the psychologism of Augusto Meyer, the disturbing and provocative movements of Oswald, and the clear and complex reasoning supported by the different registers of language, especially the colloquial element, present in the critical prose of Manuel Bandeira and Mário de Andrade, come into play. However, seen through the filter of Tropicalism, whose allegorical image eternalized the country after the military coup of 1964, the modernists figure ambivalently in Schwarz's work and, when looked at from the front, they are usually noted for their class commitments, their naive artistic vision of the country and their blurring of aesthetics and conservative ideology. The essayistic and critical accumulation that Schwarz's work presupposes, however, points to the other side, in which artistic invention can be absorbed by the essay, and modernist language is capable of mapping and bringing to consciousness a social hermeneutic (expressions, behaviors, class markers, humor), besides having a vision that is not only committed to, but also disabused of, both the country and the twentieth-century global modernity of which Brazil is a part.

Modernism and Machado de Assis

The hypothesis here is that the interpretation of Brazil, centered on the work of Machado de Assis, was the determining factor in Schwarz's reading of Brazilian modernism. He often compares the modernism of the 1920s with the work of Machado de Assis, with a clear advantage for the latter. One of his most eloquent moments is in the text "The Cart, the Tram and the Modernist Poet," in which he comments on the sociocultural unevenness of the Brazilian environment with which Oswald was

confronted: "Machado de Assis had already overcome this disadvantage with paramount skill in the previous century" (123). Both in *To the Victor, the Potatoes!* and in *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism*, Machado de Assis is the axis of a complex dialectic that is broader than his work, but that is revealed by it. There, we go between an interpretation of Machado de Assis's work in the Brazilian nineteenth century and an interpretation of the country as a whole. In this sense, the nineteenth century is not only a moment in Brazilian history, but its founding scenario, so to speak. It was at that moment that the coexistence of the modern (bourgeois) and the archaic (pre-bourgeois) was instituted as a project of a national elite, as Schwarz says: "This complementarity between Bourgeois and colonial institutions was present at the nation's origins and still has not completely disappeared" (2001, 22). The permanence of this contrast between different times makes its inaugural moment a kind of transhistorical effigy, capable of revealing the discrepancies of the two centuries that followed. It is precisely this scenario that stands out in the analysis of Tropicalism: "In the insoluble but functional combination of these two terms [new and backwardness], then, the plan of a national destiny is laid out, there from the beginning" (1992, 143).

This dynamic of archaism and modernity as a sign of backwardness, however, is even more evident on a world scale in which European empires combined the promotion of their cultural norms in communion with colonial domination. By placing Brazil at this global level, Schwarz sets up the following circuit:

> Because of its key position, and also because it has its picturesque side, when one considers its *deviation* with respect to the Anglo-French canonic norm, this articulation — disjointed by its very nature — has been at the center of theoretical and literary reflection about Brazil, and indeed has become almost its distinctive mark. (2001, 22, emphasis as in the original)

At first, we are confronted with stable terms—deviation, the Anglo-French model, something disjointed—in a kind of theoretical world map composed of norms and exceptions. Then, these terms are set in motion: "the modern development of backwardness was only in the first instance a Brazilian (or Latin American) aberration. Its real basis lay in what Marxist tradition identifies as the 'unequal and combined development of capitalism'" (22). Wouldn't the next step be to undo the notions of aberration, deviation and even backwardness? After all, one of the sources

of the sense of anomaly is the direct opposition of the Brazilian social and cultural process to the center of the capitalist system, where the desired ideal of civilization would be located. However, when the world map is enlarged, even a little, the situation begins to reconfigure itself. In "Misplaced Ideas" there is a comparison with Russia:

> The system of ambiguities thus linked to the local use of the terms of Western thought – one of the keys to the Russian novel – can profitably be compared to what we have described for Brazil. The social reasons for the similarity are obvious. (...). Without forcing unduly a comparison between unequals, we can say that there is in Machado – for the reasons that I have sought to point out – a similar vein, something akin to Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Goncharov, Chekhov and perhaps others of whose work I am unaware. In short, the very debasement of thought among us, which we have felt so bitterly and still today stifles the student of our nineteenth century, was a knot, a key nerve centre through which world history passes and, in passing, is revealed. (2020, 12–13)

Unfolding on the literary world map, what appears is less the Brazilian "deviation" than a system of deviations or rather a network of local configurations of some internationally shared literary paradigms. In other words, the more Brazil is confronted with its "double from overseas,"[4] which is ultimately more of a civilizational ideal than a historical reality per se, the more it is fixed in the position of aberration. However, the more it is reflected in the international divisions multiplied by the capitalist-imperialist unification of the world, the more its socio-cultural singularity becomes less an anomaly than a prism for reading world literature, in which artistic solutions are intimately linked to the historical constraints they absorb and the possible overcoming they project.

At the height of the European empires, the connection of the Brazilian novel with the Russian novel based on common problems reveals a more heterogeneous world map, that is to say, one composed largely of fractured socio-cultural processes, not of a single aberration (Brazil) and a single norm (the canonical Anglo-French view). What about the literary map of the twentieth century, in which a process of decolonization took place on a global scale, with its corresponding literary

[4] The expression is from Arantes (1992, 100).

expressions? It is precisely the most common aesthetic of decolonization processes[5]—modernism—and its most fundamental procedure—montage—that Schwarz confronts in "The Cart, the Tram and the Modernist Poet." In addressing the procedure in Oswald de Andrade's poetry, the juxtaposition of Brazil-Colony and bourgeois Brazil, Schwarz will say that it is an approximation "disjointed by *definition*" (1992, 110, emphasis as in the original). The question here is what constitutes this "definition." If we take as a basis the studies on the nineteenth-century founding scenario, we may have as an answer that it is about the duality "of origin," when the country becomes formally liberal (bourgeois Brazil), but slave-based (Brazil-Colony)—by definition of the Brazilian position itself in relation to the "civilized" world. However, would "the general crisis of the bourgeois order" (109), where the First World War and, precisely, avant-garde art come in, have not radically relativized the idea that the bourgeois norm is civilized? Thus, "exposing the structure of the historical out-of-phaseness" (111) is not only an allegory of Brazil, but also a perception of the bourgeois world when its norm is in ruins. If the European norm did not survive in the mentality of the protagonists of modern art after the First World War, literary and artistic modernism is to a large extent the global ":derepression" of the cultural and historical differences that the bourgeois norm concealed. With this in mind, then, the conjuncture of *pau-brasil* poetry is not exceptionally Brazilian, but rather the Brazilian inflection of the artistic expression of modernity in what is heterogeneous about it. In affirming this duality, whose "dilemmas go back to Independence, and since that moment they have inexorably imposed themselves on cultivated Brazilians" (110), and not on twentieth-century modernity as a whole, Schwarz shows that when he suggests reading Oswald "in a more specific historical light" (111), he is actually exposing him intensely to the specific historical light of the Brazilian nineteenth century.

We then observe a force field in Schwarz's work in which modernism is at once incorporated into the form of the essay and denounced as a conservative ideology in his reading of the poetry of Oswald de Andrade. Instead of trying to resolve the question, we will now try to circumscribe some elements that would be part of an interpretation of Brazil

[5] "[I]t was primarily — I am tempted to say solely — in the language and structure of modernism that a postcolonial experience came to be articulated and imagined in literary form" (Gikandi 2006, 420).

and unfold them on the modernist world map of the twentieth century. In this way, we can demonstrate the pertinence of Schwarz's observations, on the one hand, and highlight the global reach of these questions, on the other.

Interpretation of Brazil and Global Modernisms

By noting the connection between the Russian novel and the work of Machado de Assis, Schwarz complexifies the nineteenth century, which went beyond the closed circuit of the Anglo-French norm and the Brazilian exception, opening itself up to the heterogeneity of analogous experiences. In view of this configuration, Paulo Arantes concludes: "If we think about its practical matrix, we will have the historical-structural ground of a vast system of comparisons which will then be able to travel about the world organized by capital, through a general history of literary experience" (1992, 105).[6] If the Brazil-Russia analogy of the nineteenth-century novel is transposed to the avant-garde of the first decades of the twentieth century, the connection remains, at least as far as primitivism is concerned. Velimir Khlebnikov, in his slavophilia, sought to integrate folklore and the entire "pre-bourgeois" universe of Russia into the modern techniques of fragmentation, neologism and phonetic poetry (Markov 2006, 31). The result would point to an original overcoming of Russian backwardness through immersion in local chtonic forces. The core group of the Russian avant-garde, before calling itself "cubofuturist," adopted the name "Gileia" [Hileia], the name by which the territory of the future Russia was known to the Greeks, alluding to an archaic Russia full of telluric energy.

[6] The following brief mapping is part of a debate about world literature that includes: the perspective of a world constituted in a "combined and uneven" way, in line with the Warwick Research Collective, without, however, agreeing with their aesthetically unspecific notion of modernism, which includes both Machado de Assis and the historical avant-garde (2015, 17–18); the relative autonomy of Pascale Casanova's "literature as a world" (2005), but without the assumption that competition is the only way to understand this field; and Moretti's procedure of relying on expert conclusions to create aesthetic connections across the world map. Unlike the latter, however, the comparisons here are not made based on a comprehensive "law of literary evolution" (2005, 58), but rather on a historically specified prism that necessarily presupposes the existence of other prisms, thus imagining a more horizontal and dynamic literary-theoretical configuration.

This junction of "archaic" and modern, with a positive horizon, was thus not a Brazilian exception and could be allied to unforeseen historical movements. Still in the Russian connection, Mayakovsky was the model for the Jewish poet Avraham Shlonsky, leader of the modernist group in Tel Aviv in the 1920s and 1930s, who chose Biblical Hebrew (an archaism?) and preferred it to Yiddish as the basis for the modern literature of the future State of Israel (Segall 2010, 100–138). Through the question of language, we turn to Indonesian modernism of the 1940s, which also created a new literary language for a new country, since the Indonesian language was a minority language of Malay origin in the archipelago, and circulated in the then Dutch colony as the vernacular of the native colonial bureaucracy (Lindsay and Liem 2012, 2). Going a step further, it is the colonial language itself that is claimed by Nigerian modernism as a kind of spoils of the anticolonial struggle, but in poetry this language would be meant to absorb the "archaism" of the Ijaw, Igbo and Yoruba rites, modeled on the hermeticism of the poetry of Ezra Pound and especially T. S. Eliot (Suhr-Sytsma 2013, 47–53). Eliot, in turn, looked to the Arcana of the Upanishads (in Sanskrit) for the words to rejuvenate the wasteland. The Eliot-inspired Arab modernist poets reactivated the myth of Tammuz, the Mesopotamian fertility god, to poetically articulate the social, political and cultural resurgence of the Middle East (Kheir-Beik 1978, 27). The examples are legion. To contemplate other aspects, such as colloquial language and "the myth of the unofficial country" (Schwarz 1992, 122), it would be interesting to recall that colloquial language was one of the pillars of Chinese modernism of the 1920s (the other being cultural nationalism), opening up to the popular field while opposing the rigidity of Confucianism (Denton 1996, 115). The recourse to spoken language is also an index of poetic radicalism in the Iranian context of the 1950s and 1960s, as a path away from the Ghazal tradition and access to subjective introspection and self-assertion.[7] As we can see, what on the one hand would be historically limited in Brazil to the aesthetic expression of "the conservative progressivism of the cosmopolitan coffee bourgeoisie" (Schwarz 1992, 123), on the other hand can also be a prism for traveling around the world

[7] This is how Hillman describes Forugh Farrokhzad's poetic radicalism: "The language in these poems [1960s], e.g. colloquial Tehran Persian and the Persian of a young, lower-class Tehran girl, likewise effects a sense that something more than individual experience is being represented" (1987, 100).

of twentieth-century literary modernisms, based on a system of comparisons of local singularities unified by the dilemmas of modernization on a global scale, which structurally includes the processes of colonization and decolonization.

The postcolonial world allows for a retrospective view that, despite the canonical Anglo-French self-image, restores the modernity/colonialism pair (Mignolo 2000) that has always underpinned the notions of norm, progress and the civilized world. A first axial shift goes from the idea of nation to that of empire. In "Jane Austen and Empire," Edward Said (1993) emphasizes the colonial basis of the English "norm"—"no matter how isolated and insulated the English place (e.g., Mansfield Park), it requires overseas sustenance" (89). It is also Said who conveniently recalls this passage from John Stuart Mill: "The trade with the West Indies is hardly to be considered an external trade, but more resembles the traffic between town and country" (90). In a kind of imperial continuum, the space of modern art reconfigures itself and offers a different view of its productions. Modernism itself, in its places of prestige (Paris above all, but also Berlin and London), presupposes colonial domination, that is, empire. If, on a national scale, some European countries could project a self-image of organic culture, "well formed" and normative, spreading exceptions around the world, what modern art reveals, with its non-normative dimension, is precisely the culture that transcends the idea of nation, that is, the culture of empire. In this sense, the presence of African art in Cubism, of the art of Oceania in Surrealism and of China in Imagist poetry constitute an aesthetic whose socio-historical point of departure is not the nation, but the continuum that links the national territory to the overseas domains. Cubism's absorption of African masks is shocking in the context of French culture, but from another point of view, it is also the aesthetic naturalization of the colonial order, in which the self-image of the French cultural tradition and the artistic traditions that were heterogeneous to it were juxtaposed. Thus, the self-image of organic culture, which created the norm from which the exceptions flowed, collapsed in the realm of art and culture, due to modern art's ability to compress the imperial continuum into the prestigious core of the metropolis itself. The result revealed to artists and intellectuals situated in cultural contexts hitherto considered "backward," "anomalous," or "malformed" is that: (1) the notion of norm is not even guaranteed as an ideology in its place of origin; and (2) the supposed exceptions are in fact the most visible, most obvious points of tension of a modernity that is only affirmed as such by

the juxtaposition of heterogeneous matter, of which colonial domination is the practical matrix.

If in metropolises the artistic juxtaposition of different socio-cultural spaces presupposes long distances and imperial divisions, in places like Brazil this juxtaposition is everyday. In this sense, the Brazilian example, considered globally, opens a prism through which to understand the European imperial continuum. Finally, it is not a question of ignoring the contradictions that Schwarz points out in the work of Oswald de Andrade and in Brazilian modernism as a whole, but of extending them from a critical and theoretical point of view. Compared to the "complex, modern, national and negative" Machado de Assis, Brazilian modernism would be naive and deluded, something that the very form of Schwarz's essay and artistic production belies to a large extent. Nevertheless, the utopian components of Brazilian modernism are part of a system of illusions that make up global modernisms, whose historical effects, read together, form a constellation that is only beginning to be explored.

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CHAPTER 14

Dual but Combined: Roberto Schwarz and the Sense of the Dialectic

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Two Orders

When Antonio Candido published his interpretation of Manuel Antonio Almeida's novel *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant* in 1970 (Candido 1995), Roberto Schwarz recognized in it the realization of a program for which he had been preparing for some time. As he would go on to explain a few years later, Candido's essay was the first properly dialectical Brazilian literary study (Schwarz 2012). Here the term 'dialectical' appears in its classical sense. Even so, we need to take stock of the changes that Antonio Candido gave to it. For the first time, Roberto[1] noted, the word 'order'

[1] As per the conventions of academic writing in Brazil, Arantes occasionally refers to authors with whom he is personally familiar by their first name [*Trans.*].

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was used to articulate literary form and social process in a non-formulaic way, with critical results that were truly remarkable. It so happened that, in order to interpret local literature, a Brazilian critic did not take their system of historical mediations from the work of their European confreres. At the end of the day, the answer to the following question is not an obvious one: 'To what country does the form of a Brazilian novel refer?' (Anticipating: we will see that it alludes first and foremost to a country that is basically dual and that this duality is above all a form of social experience.) Candido showed that one must construct this referent on a case-by-case basis, just as one must discover in the work the form that provides it with unity and that organizes the aesthetic transposition of the referent. We find here *two orders*. In the circulation of characters between the social spheres of order (bourgeois Brazil) and disorder (the negative pole of pre-bourgeois Brazil), Candido identified the skeleton of Almeida's novel, demonstrating that this formula stylizes a general rhythm of Brazilian society in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is a double operation whose complexity Roberto uncovered in the following way.

The cornerstone of reason is the notion of form, the mediating principle responsible for the junction of novel and society. Understood in this way, form belongs to two planes, organizing in depth the data of both fiction and reality. This is the mimetic level of the composition, which only exists because the novel is the imitation of something already organized, rather than the documentary reproduction of everyday events. Thus, what the literary structure 'imitates' is in itself another structure. In other words, 'before it is intuited and made objective by the novelist, the form the critic studies has been produced by the social process, even if no one is aware of its existence' (Schwarz 2012, 22). This is the objective social form to which the novel refers and which the critic needs to reconstruct if they want to understand the law of the plot. The specific burden of the Brazilian critic has to do with this point. Since the literary form that synthesizes the social form is not available on the plane of reality but is rather literarily intuited, 'the critic has to construct the social process in theory, keeping in mind that he must create the conceptual generality capable of giving unity to the novelistic universe he is studying, a generality that the novelist has already understood and transformed into a principle of artistic construction' (Schwarz 2012, 21). This is the new knowledge that depends exclusively on the critic, and in a much more dramatic way when that critic is Brazilian. Here lies the weight of Candido's extra-literary knowledge. However, such knowledge must be:

> reconsidered and reshaped in the light of the problem posed by the formal unity of the novel, which represents the possibility of a totality discovered by the novelist […]. Thus, in the case of *Memoirs*, it is necessary to locate the element of the social whole whose movement is synthesized by the book's form. However, this element had never been identified in theory or in general awareness as possessing its own set of problems. In reading "Dialectic of Roguery," then, we are present at the first conceptual crystallization and historical foregrounding of a socially distinctive point of view: we witness the passage of a varied body of knowledge about the lives of free, poor men in Brazil toward a concept which unites them under a certain aspect, formalized in *Memoirs*, that Candido calls a dialectic of order and disorder. (Schwarz 2012, 20–21)

This work of localization, structuration and denomination is precisely what we will find in the dialectical writing of Schwarz's interpretation of Machado de Assis.

Let us reiterate the fundamental step made by the two critics, who, by recovering the literary essay in order to probe Brazilian experience, reactivate the materialist program as well. There is a distinction to be made here, for Candido uses the term 'dialectic' in at least two senses. On the side of critical reflection, he moves from the structural reduction of a social form to an aesthetic form, in function of which he shows at the same time an artistic intuition and a principle of knowledge. But the formal law of the novel thus discovered also reveals another dialectic that Antonio Candido calls the dialectic of order and disorder. The first meaning descends directly from the materialist tradition and brings with it the nexus between form and praxis. The second, which refers to a significant sector of Brazilian society, expresses a diverse connection between the terms of the question, or, more exactly, it expresses the rule of life for those 'free men, neither slaves nor owners, who live in an intermediate, anomic social space, in which it is impossible either to do without order or to live within it' (Schwarz 2012, 19). Dialectic here designates the law of this movement, which Candido evokes through expressions like alternation, seesaw [*gangorra*], swinging, etc. Only now we know that it is not a matter of simple structural symmetry, but rather of a mediation anchored in a social dynamism. Comings and goings even command the oscillation of the sentences of the novel, which impartially show the other side of every question. An inconclusive dialectic, then, one that does not seem to come to an end, accommodating opposing camps in a system of equivalences and reciprocal contamination. How can one not see that

this dialectic leads us straight to the heart of the duality of Brazil? Or, at least, to one of its figures. There are plenty of exemplary images of this dual composition, such as Major Vidigal caught by surprise 'in his uniform dress coat, properly buttoned up and shining in his gold braid, but with his everyday trousers and the same clogs pounding on the floor' (Candido 1995, 94); or that of the Master of Ceremonies 'appearing contradictorily' in skullcap and underpants in an equivocatory situation (Candido 1995, 95). These and other burlesque combinations, composed of terms that both repel and coexist with one another, configure the binary articulation of the anomic social space created by slavery.

Assembling the concepts, Candido calls dialectic this 'capricious balancing between order and disorder' (1995, 95), an alternation between two antinomic but indisposable poles that define the physiognomy of the country and the content of its experience. One may therefore assume that this dual pairing rebounds among others of the same kind. It is the case with the 'dialética do espontâneo e do dirigido' [dialectic of the spontaneous and the directed] in Aluísio Azevedo's novel *O Cortiço*, for example (Candido 1993, 135). Only here the dialectic does not take the form of an alternation but rather of a convergence whereby the rhythm of disorder is framed through a process that synthesizes antithetical elements. A slow domination of one hemisphere over another, evolving under the horizon of a country allegorized but equally dual; on the one side bourgeois calculation, on the other a sociability steeped in nature. Closer to the dilemmas of dual allegiance would be the 'paradas no movimento tumultuoso' [stoppages in tumultuous movement] in José de Santa Rita Durão's *Caramuru*. In this other game of stoppage and movement (the backwaters of order in the dangerous universe of disorder), one finds again the 'ambígua dialética dentro da mentalidade colonizadora' [ambiguous dialectic within the colonizer's mentality], divided between two cultural orders in conflict, the civilizing and the primitive (Candido 1985, 18). Dialectic and duality, refound at the center of Brazilian experience, in this way appear interlaced in a mediating form in which aesthetic unity and social totalization converge. This conjunction is revealed in all its instructive force in an essay that, by realizing the dialectical program for the first time in our literary environment, found the adequate form for the sense of opposites.

I

In 1973, Roberto Schwarz published the first chapter of his series of studies on Machado de Assis (Schwarz 1973).[2] In it, he declared, among other things, that the compositional method of our greatest writer stylized particularities of nineteenth-century Brazilian society, which was *both a slavocratic and a bourgeois society*. In response, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, author of a classic work of Brazilian sociology (1969), offered the following criticism: it is, purely and simply, a skillful restoration of the old *dualist* description of Brazil (1976). Given the bad reputation of the term 'dualist' in progressive circles, this was an unappealable condemnation, and one which seemed all the more urgent since a recent study by the unsuspecting Francisco de Oliveira had just shown that the old dualist temptation was still alive and well and animated by the same reformist intentions (1972). These inspired misunderstandings open the door onto dialectics. Here, it is a matter of demonstrating the articulation and intersection of literary experience, social perception and the meaning of the dialectic.

* * *

That said, let us move on to the details of the objection. As Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco also recognized—*et pour cause*—dualism came to be the greatest commonplace of at least two centuries of our intellectual history, centered without exception, from Romanticism to the realism of Dependency Theory, on the idea that the productive core of socioeconomic relations resides in the metropole, whose fundamental determinations the colony only reflects. From this follows the well-known procession of binary oppositions: metropole and colony, backwardness and progress, development and underdevelopment, traditionalism and modernization, hegemony and dependency, etc. Only now, dualism's modern script would not allow for a reversal of its presuppositions. In this way, like all of his predecessors, Roberto insisted on the originality of the Brazilian combination of capitalism and slavery, colonial country and bourgeois country. But in this way he would become be the victim of the same mirage by imagining that an '*essential* difference' distinguishes metropolitan nations, the seat of capitalism, hegemonic core of

[2] Later, the opening chapter of *Ao Vencedor as Batatas* (1977).

the system, from colonial peoples, underdeveloped and peripheral. See the case of nineteenth-century Brazil. To consider the eccentricity of its formation and the idiosyncratic ideological life that corresponds to it is to take it as a result of the 'combination' of different modes of production: a slave economy articulated with the capitalist world market is a mixed constellation of 'heterogenous parts of a whole that transcends them'. Going through economic and social history, one sees that the objection extends from epistemology to politics, including further consequences in terms of the interpretation of ideologies. We will deal with the latter in due course. As for political interpellation, its target is the same as ever: dualist theories invariably inspire a conservative politics of modernization. Where the objection innovates, so to speak, (too much even) is in terms of the theory of knowledge. At the root of the dualist model is a way of thinking contaminated by spatializing schemas: metropolitan capitalism and colonial slavery are conceived 'side by side', juxtaposed by a 'relation of exteriority' that understands them as discrete terms linked by a linear causality. Because space and reification tend to go hand in hand in the modern tradition, it is not difficult to imagine that the internal relations which express the nature of the process are, on the contrary, grasped in their truth when the form of time comes to the foreground. This is certainly not just any temporality, for then there would be no way of distinguishing Bergson from Lukács, but rather a temporality that opens the way for internal negation and contradiction. It will not be necessary to go so far down the path of speculation. I note in passing that, without taking the trouble to fine-tune the conceptualization too much, the *uspiano*[3] revision of duality will hit precisely on the key of the contradiction—we are, therefore, at home. Until we get there, it is worth noting the formula that summarizes the point of view from which the objection is made: "colony and metropole do not comprise essentially different modes of production, but are particular situations that are determined by the capitalist world system's internal process of differentiation". No one will object, as long as one explains what exactly the particularity

[3] '*Uspiano*' refers to the intellectual culture at the University of São Paulo (USP). For more information on this culture and its importance to Schwarz's formation, see Schwarz (1999) [*Trans.*].

of this internal difference consists of—a difference through which, as we will see later on, the whole problem of our colonial singularity returns.

This isn't all. The proposition just mentioned, in its generality, could be endorsed by the Dependency Theorists, for whom, in fact, the internal dynamic of peripheral countries is a particular aspect of the more general dynamic of the capitalist world. Leaving behind the opposition between external and internal, this dynamic is the result 'both of the unique modes of its expression on the periphery of the system, and of the way in which international capitalism is articulated' (Cardoso 1972, 126). One of Roberto Schwarz's achievements consists in drawing aesthetic consequences from a conclusion like this. If there is one thing that even the critics of Dependency Theory can agree upon, it is that this, along with the myth of the national bourgeoisie, would have buried the old dualist models once and for all. Still, Maria Sylvia is not of the same opinion. In her view, Dependency Theory is responsible for a new dualism, a result of the old *cepalista*[4] dichotomy between hegemonic and peripheral societies, suffering from the same political and practical prejudices of the previous model (e.g., a tacit approbation of capitalist industrialization and its supposedly civilizing contents). Because the thesis is merely stated without further details, we are obliged to speculate a bit about its possible motives. Who knows why dependency theorists also insisted on the historical originality of peripheral economies? Undoubtedly, they showed that Latin American development was not just any kind of development, but rather specifically capitalist development, though they also showed that it was a specific kind of capitalism, one formed in a national peripheral situation. *A certain capitalism*, therefore. In brief, we once again find ourselves to be different from the original course of capitalism in the core. This singularity would certainly stand out much more strikingly if we went back to the slave order, which was undoubtedly formed as a result of the expansion of merchant capitalism. Yet, while it is true that we were never pre-capitalists, that old order never presented itself as a 'complete' capitalist system.[5] In Maria Sylvia Carvalho Franco's terms, an ubiquitous

[4] '*Cepalista*' refers to the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), or CEPAL by its initials in Spanish and Portuguese [*Trans.*].

[5] As Fernando Henrique Cardoso observed in 1977, in the preface to the second edition of his *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional* (1977, 16).

dualism is hereby rediscovered thanks to a drastic and unappealable review of the grand explanatory schemas of Brazil. On the other hand, there is the unidimensional expansion of capitalism. Roberto Schwarz knew how to extract from the *uspiano* bifurcation the elements for constructing his own historical schema, which includes the very author of the objection with which we began.

2

With the publication of *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism: Machado de Assis*, the old accusation of dualism was spontaneously reborn. Only that this time the misunderstanding does not appear to have a future. According to his most recent critic, Roberto would be a victim of 'the binary schema of the national and the imported' (Rouanet 1991, 183). Rouanet acknowledges, however, that Roberto does not completely adopt such a compromising schema, because his analyses have nothing to do with the false counterpoint between the authentic and the imitated. Rouanet even concedes that Roberto's problems are new, but claims that they are disfigured by the mistaken language in which he formulates them—and this language is precisely that of dualism, already present from the get-go in the title of the book, which is, according to Rouanet, a clear *cepalista* and dependency inheritance. Under these conditions, despite the caveats, dualism in Roberto would be a fact: 'Brazil and the world, us and others, our reality (of peripheral country) and the reality of others (of core countries); behind the title, exists the assumption that the countries of peripheral capitalism see the world in a radically different way, because their "reality" is different' (Rouanet 1991, 183). Without exactly making him into an ideologue of the *advantages of backwardness*—in the manner of Russian populists of the previous century or of our modernists from the 1920s—the argument tries to pull Roberto into the camp of the old nationalist myth of the cognitive privilege of peripheral nations (a kind of sixth sense for the unreality of metropolitan ideas), to say nothing of the insinuation that he would line up with the conservative version of the contrast between the real country and the official country. Except now the key to the denunciation of the dualist sin is no longer the seamless homogeneity of capitalist expansion (although it is presupposed), but another version of the same universalist premise. If Brazil's notorious reality undermines the universalism of modern culture, so much the worse for this reality, since the universality of the civilizing

process does not tolerate deviations: what is true in the metropole must also be true on the periphery. Elevating the illusory local idiosyncrasy to the condition of explanation, this point of view belongs to the 'phobia of the universal' that has always characterized historicism. Which is to say that Roberto's critical reasoning, which insists on robbing us of the right to deal with the great subjects of universal literature, is dualist because it is soaked in historicism. The reproach will seem humorous if we note that the enlightened cosmopolitanism behind it is a more ethereal variant of the old functionalist sociology of development. Dualism here ends up returning to its place of origin. Although it is revealing, this is not what matters: what stands out yet again is the somewhat resentful registering of the discomfort provoked by the memory of the recalcitrant modernity that distinguishes us.

* * *

There is something in Roberto Schwarz's literary thinking that attracts this accusation of persistent dualism. We already know what it is: the convergence of the sensation of duality in Brazil, which has been ceaselessly renewed since Brazil became a sovereign nation with a colonial past, and the sui generis dialectic that gives conceptual and aesthetic form to the singular movement induced by that same dual-spring dynamism. That's why I repeat that I don't know of a divergence more calibrated to what is actually at stake in the aforementioned literary thought, whose unprecedented formation in our literary panorama is not by chance responsible for the very lively sense of dialectic that it provokes. We are also aware of the paradox under which that convergence can appear: on the one hand, the dualist phraseology finally rejected by the new social science; on the other, the continued experience of our basic duality thanks to the mediation of artistic form, rightly identified by the best of our dialectical criticism. Among Roberto's countless and decisive contributions is the reciprocal adjustment of these two perspectives, the sociological and the aesthetic. Candido gives him the theme: what in the end is the referent of a literary form, and even more challengingly, of a Brazilian novel? Seeking to provide a specific answer for his case—Machado's narrative—Roberto mobilizes the knowledge about Brazil that he collected thanks to the renewed Marxism of the *uspiana* social science of his time. Roberto knew how to find the elements that revealed to him

the 'practical matrix' of the Brazilian experience, transposed into literature as a stylized duality. In the first part of this study,[6] we mentioned two steps in this direction: the critique of Tropicalismo and the interpretation of *pau-brasil* poetry, two formalizations of our duality that would be ineffective if they were not anchored in a consistent phenomenon. We refer below to others more oriented toward the historical schema that it lacked, as mandated by the dialectical program that Antonio Candido finally put into practice in 1970. It so happens that once this schema is located and exposed, the dialectic reappears in its second sense—*negative dialectic*, to speak like the classics—again linked to the intellectual experience of Brazil's ambivalent duality.

3

What governs Roberto Schwarz's critical thinking in his first collection of essays (1965) is the far from simple idea that literary interpretation demands the elaboration of a system of historically specified mediations. In these mediations is distilled the core of the materialist program. It is one thing, however, to fix this idea as a vanishing point, it is another to change it into small numbers. Not that there was a lack of critical results corresponding to the demands of the aforementioned program. On the contrary, it was the first Brazilian book of Marxist literary criticism to take a step beyond the mere assertion of principles. This caveat moves in another direction and should be restated in the following terms: it is one thing to put this program into practice in the study of European authors, and it is by far another when the focus of attention is Brazilian authors. In this case, the book had failed to treat both equally. The general line was undoubtedly the same: on the one hand, the problems of Realism and its contemporary alternatives, examined in terms of the constructive coherence of the works; on the other, the whole, in the light of the great explanatory categories of modern alienation and its remedies. But not the historical significance of the works. Thus, as regards the great European literature, one can say that the critic's task was largely facilitated by the solid social and intellectual tradition of accumulated knowledge that guided the historical terrain on which the literary experience to be interpreted was erected. A novel by Balzac, although wholly constructed and

[6] Arantes is referring to chapter 1 of *Sentimento da dialética*, entitled 'Sentimento dos contrários' [Sense of opposites] [*Trans.*].

lacking an equivalent analytical effort, already presents itself, so to speak, with the social matter that structures its conflicts in advance. This was not the case for Brazilian writers, where nearly everything remained to be done, starting with the basics: the recognition of the unique historical rhythm of a social formation according to which the system of works was organized. Alongside this substantive obstacle, an awareness of which it will be difficult to break through, it is possible that an intention of a preventative nature also weighed on Roberto's debut book: to first renew the repertoire of conceptualizations before addressing and redefining the saturation of works by local color, a commonplace of our criticism. Furthermore, it was not just a question of the critic's indispensable accumulation of resources; it was necessary that the country's experience advance even further, until the implications of underdevelopment were unfolded in full.

I do not believe—to give a first example—that Roberto would repudiate what he said thirty years ago about Raul Pompeia's *O Ateneu*, but we can imagine what he would today make of the confluence in the book between 'inflated emotions' and naturalistic ferocity, or of the exclamatory contamination that unites the narrator and his victim in the same universe of rhetorical swelling—to say nothing of the investigation that he might now undertake into the mimetic effects of the composition, aligned in historical perspective with the other modalities of the representation of reality as practiced by our first 'realist' novels (Schwarz 1965, 25–30). Nevertheless, see the case of João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (Schwarz 1965, 37–52). Comparing it with *Doctor Faustus*—where the *Bildungsroman*'s realism is taken up again in an ironic key—Roberto observed that in Guimarães Rosa's novel the passage from the particular to a more general consideration is direct, unlike the former, whose path toward the universal cannot dispense with the interposition of an historical layer. Considering, however, that the original intention of the Brazilian work is not realist, the immediate path from regionalism to human destiny is not a defect, but a virtue. That was in 1960. Today, he would probably see that short-circuit as problematic, in the way of a *janguço* or 'speculative idea', juxtaposing Heidegger and *buriti*. That is, he would now perhaps tamper with one of our points of pride of national literary thought, our share of direct universality. As for the narration, whose segmented flow tinges the articulation of the epic story and the dialogic situation with lyricism, Roberto would undoubtedly insist on its status as a concerted aesthetic experimentation,

distinguishing it from the subconscious linguistic choreography practiced by his contemporaries. Only that now[7] he would explore the affinity between Guimarães Rosa's linguistic constructivism and the traditional speech of an illiterate population, tempering the avant-garde affinity for transgressing the limits of language. But at that point (1977) the great equation of 'backwardness' and the self-criticism of bourgeois culture was already fundamentally in place.

4

Brazil's original image only appeared in a 1964 study on Cyro dos Anjos's *O Amanuense Belmiro* [Diary of a Civil Servant]. Although it neither forms a system nor constitutes the linchpin of his interpretative method, we can identify in this essay the first demonstration of what would become Roberto Schwarz's Brazilian critical reasoning. Twenty years earlier, Antonio Candido analyzed the very Brazilian mixture of civil service and poetic art in Cyro dos Anjos's novel, a unique combination of routine and chimera that Carlos Drummond de Andrade addressed in his *crônicas*. After noting the association of jaunty blague with shy resignation in the 'sentimental and constricted' figure of the narrator, Candido came to identify a social mechanism for producing men of letters frazzled by the quotidian practice of introspection, what he called *Belmirização* [Belmirozation] (Candido 1971). This is the 'fazendeiro do ar' [farmer of the air], as Drummond himself called a character typical of a considerable portion of our literary tradition. Roberto described this character type when he returned to the issue a few years later: 'the man who comes from rural propertied classes to the city, where, in prose and verse, he remembers, analyzes and criticizes the contact with the earth, with the family, with tradition and with the people, which the plantation had allowed him to have' (Schwarz 1978, 92; 1992, 157). Except now it is less a matter of highlighting its rural lineage, which after all is part of every novel and poem that portrays the decline of our patriarchal order, than it is the logic of the aforementioned 'Belmiro mixture'. To begin with, the ever-recurrent counterpoint between the countryside and the city is resolved in a direction that had been little studied. Because there is no radical transformation between the rural past and the urban present, where conflict

[7] As suggested in a footnote in *Ao Vencedor as Batatas* (1977, 166–167).

and disintegration were expected, there is promiscuity between the traditional and the modern that sustains it. Roberto observed that, as an extension of rural privilege, the sinecure that the lyrical bureaucrat secured with the help of the deputy is the city's least urban post. The obverse of this continuity is expressed in the *irreconcilables* that coexist in the give-and-take of the amanuensis: 'democratism and privilege, rationalism and attachment to tradition, the confessional impulse, which demands truthfulness, and the fear of bright light' (Schwarz 1978, 20). One does not see in these antithetical pairs the wellspring of a dramatic development, which will any case not take place, barred as it is by the conformist perspective of the functionary from the Department of Animal Husbandry. Rather, one finds instead the elements of the mixture that concern us here: the *doubleness* that must be held on to, emphasized by the narrator's second-degree irony, which fixes his profile as well as the movement of the other characters. This is the inventory of incongruities established by Roberto: a democratic and rationalist man of letters, Belmiro laughs at the grandfather patriarch, whose lost rural splendor, however, crushes him; a politicized and liberated girl who dreams of brothers who defend her honor; a young upstart drunk on Nietzschean tirades; the family man, who is first and foremost a philosopher, but a philosopher whose speculative elan is mild (or outrageous) enough to recommend him to the right person and advance his career. Identified in this way, the *Belmiro mixture is a portrait of Brazil, in which a dual constellation emerges whose components reciprocally disavow each other*. Although fundamental and destined for a great explanatory future, this vision does not yet constitute the central nerve of the account. Its recently discovered power of revelation serves for the time being only to reinforce the polemical horizon outlined in the earlier set of essays. The doubleness in question is responsible for the humor that finally comes to enliven the swamp of souls, though on the other hand it impedes the realist unfolding of the opposites that it combines, while the modernist agility of the prose maneuvers between the irreconcilables who leads nowhere, immobility being its final figure. What in Machado de Assis was put in service of the clarifying exploration of the Brazilian experience over time became an instrument of an 'aesthetic of conformism'. In this dampened form, Roberto lighted upon his schema for the first time.

Three years later, we find our author investigating a contemporary piece from this same ideological theater. It is directed at a form of political reasoning that, in this instance, gives comfort to nationalists, landowners

and the military. There is nothing new in this. What distinguishes it, beyond the long-winded repurposing of the classic leftwing repertoire for an abstruse rightwing program, is the very emphatic commitment to the heteroclite composition of the argument, as if nothing from the broadly global or the minutely local deserved to be left out. Thus, the political writings Roberto comments on 'frequently draw on the lessons of Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg; however, they are prominently published in *Estado de São Paulo*, which is not a leftwing newspaper. They ostensibly embrace the Marxist tradition — the subtitle of one is *What Is to Be Done?* — though they put their hope in the Armed Forces, renaming them proletarians of the system. They argue for the independence of nations, and for the imperialist expansion of Brazil. They are conspiratorial, but are intended for the general public. They are based on a project of class struggle, and propose national unity' (Schwarz 1978, 35). What are we to make of this imbroglio? It is not just a matter of being illogical. Although Roberto does not take this path, for which he nevertheless provides the main coordinates, it is not difficult to see in this an edifying and official subversion of the Belmiro mixture of irreconcilables that was mentioned above. More specifically, recall the opening of *Diary*, whose highly elevated style is paraphrased by Roberto twice: 'in the span of a few lines we see a bar in the park, soldiers and mulattas coming and going, iron tables, the German brewer, music from a victrola, people dancing, a beer circle' (Schwarz 1978, 9). In short, an excerpt from a modernist carnival is condensed by the critic, who merely quotes: 'beefed up blacks, fat goats, with hair, urgent waiters, black proletariat, philosophy and theology, record player, bashful mulatto women, Catholic conduct, Cavalry Regiment, German in the bar' (Schwarz 1978, 12). Democratic confusion? Sentimental fraternalism? *Pau-brasil* promiscuity? In any case, the social conflict just outlined is muffled by a prose that celebrates everyone cordially and equally, but in such terms that it calls attention to the double track along which runs the 'momentary flash' of political reasoning that we are taking as a symptom of the Brazilian dissonance rediscovered by the critic (Schwarz 1978, 45). Consider, then, Roberto's precious observation, as he recognizes in the 'discordant enumeration' of the amanuensis an 'ancestral kin of revolutionary discourse', which is nonetheless Brazilianized: 'Workers, Sergeants, Peasants, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen' (Schwarz 1978, 12). This is no different from the founding salutations of the 'unanimist club' sought by the political schema in question, whose old-Brazil atmosphere everyone

figures out, along with the fascist finish where distinct geological layers, coup d'état and *pau-brasil* infantilism all fit together. Once again, Roberto's clinical eye for the sharp contrasts of Brazil: they are members of the aforementioned Belmiro club, 'the Revolutionary, Professor D. Nicota, Olavo Bilac, the Armed Forces, the official orators of Agriculture, of Industry and Business'. We are waiting for the double-faced characters of Machado de Assis.

* * *

These initial steps toward the fundamental referent of our literature only began to add up between the 1960s and 1970s. Two moments weighed heavily here: the political-cultural experience after 1964, and the publication of 'Dialectic of Malandroism'. The first is the mere registering of revelatory nonsense, since in 1964 it was simply the Belmiro mixture of irreconcilables that took to the streets. The discordant accommodation between old and modern that the crisis had precipitated and monumentalized was in fact a constant feature of our formation, as the whole of our literary history, looked at in a different light, confirmed. On the other hand, the new wave of conservative modernization, while inscribing the backwardness of the country in the international context, presented an unprecedented link between duality and dependency, the latter understood as the development of the structural divergence expressed by the former. The point of view through which the critic would reveal to us his strength was to consist in rediscovering the first point of this constellation in the framework of Machado's narrative, while following the common thread of the Brazilian cultural system's binary syntax, on whose genesis the outcome of 1964 shed new light. It was up to Antonio Candido's essay to indicate the place of form in the establishment of this constellation—a lesson that Roberto was now ready to learn.

5

Something of the capricious balance between two antithetical but intertwined poles—a balance which Antonio Candido was not afraid to call dialectical, in the sense we are trying to elaborate here—is present in the formal principle of the novels from Machado's second phase. As Roberto himself pointed out on more than one occasion, it was thanks to Augusto

Meyer that he came up with the true name of that principle: it systematizes the speech of a 'voluble man'. This is a characteristic finding of the writer's criticism, a way of tacitly acknowledging the 'cognitive power of the cultured reader's sensitivity and expressive capacity'. 'Almost all of Machado de Assis's work', Augusto Meyer wrote, 'is a pretext for the improvisation of malicious ramblings, happy digressions, and parentheses. He made his whim into a rule of composition' (1935, 9). Even where there is a method, Augusto Meyer only felt 'a certain impotence for the realist novel' (Schwarz 1987, 115). Moving in the opposite direction, Roberto will see in the novelist's narrative wiliness not only a form in the materialist sense just mentioned, but a principle of construction of the book and a stylization of social dynamics.

First, let's look at the characterization of the composition that will later guide his synthesis of the knowledge necessary to identify the related social form. Augusto Meyer's exact designation gave him the clue he needed: the narrative voice that governs the composition is a *voluble speech*. But we still don't know what exactly this volubility of the narrator consists of. The narrator 'changes his mind, his subject and his mode of speech at almost every sentence, and will not hold to the same course for longer than a short paragraph' (Schwarz 1992, 87). They are convolutions upon convolutions that drive everything else, plot, characters, mix of styles, etc. What is the law of this capricious motion? According to Roberto, it is governed by the constant disrespect for some norm, starting with the literary conventions on which the realist sense of verisimilitude depends—and yet, the mimetic value of this mercurial construction could not be greater. Thus, in a few lines, Brás Cubas 'pretends to be dead, methodical, paradoxical and elegant'; then it will be cynical, indiscrete, charlatan, followed by denials, insults and appeals to the reader's snobbery. Consider the deceased author's rhetorical skills: 'prestige and lack of prestige come together in the imposition of language, a coexistence present at every moment, and behind which the narrator triumphs, always shining twice, once when he points out his own rhetorical merits, again when he laughs at his own ridiculous character'. The same comings and goings mark the judgments about conduct: 'Brás continuously wears the costume of the modern gentleman, to then discredit it, and to adopt it again, configuring an inconsistency that the course of the novel will normalize'. As a result, this same costume is sometimes submitted respectfully, it is sometimes the target of mockery, and it sometimes functions as an indispensable norm, sometimes as a hindrance. This alternation

between valorization and contempt, a goal evoked only to be abandoned, crystallizes what Antonio Candido might have called the *dialectic of norm and transgression*, also defined here by a peculiar combination of antagonism and accommodation. Alternately, a norm is the judge and the object of whim, the criterion of reality and the victim of every kind of contempt. It is not by chance that the narrator always shines twice, as his supremacy is rigorously calculated according to two weights and two measurements. In a word, 'the duality of criteria is constitutive of the form and restlessness of Machado's novel; it is the motor that propels it'—to where, we still do not know. This is Roberto's other finding, the binary movement of volubility, marked by 'alternatives, parallelisms, antitheses, symmetries, disparities'. Even adjectives and apparently isolated terms are given in pairs, and there is no point of view that is not doubled by its antithesis. In sum, the system of volubility is dual. Duality and dialectic thus converge in the same formal principle. An original dialectic, with no contradiction in sight. A dialectic of binary rhythm, without synthesis, a kind of *renversement du pour au contre*, and vice versa. All that is left is to determine the referent that gives this dialectic its meaning.

6

In order to take the next step, Roberto needed to review some chapters of his own formation, which offered knowledge about Brazil that needed to be unified in the light of Machado's compositional models. Roberto became a literary critic in the shadow of a very un-literary undertaking. Or rather, he simply had an intuition (rare among his peers) about the literary implications of the ongoing interpretive revision of the origins of modern Brazil, a task laid out by a group of young professors at the University of São Paulo at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Because a literary critic cannot live off literature alone, especially in Brazil, Roberto preferred the company of sociologists, historians, economists and even a few philosophers: he read *Capital* with them, in a seminar that became famous for its successful reformulation of the country's image. Nothing about our recalcitrant march toward the modern would be understood until the Brazilian combination of capitalism and slavery was fully clarified.

When, at the beginning of the 1960s, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (the first to draw conclusions from the seminar) addressed the thorny nexus of capitalism-slavery, he looked at it from a classic angle. There was,

on the one hand, the teaching of Florestan Fernandes, but on the other, there was a renewed Marxism that had emerged out of the heterodox reading of *Capital*, and through the recent translation of Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*, in which the point of view of totality and the fluidity of processes driven by contradiction prevailed against the objectivist façade of reification. Insofar as Fernando Henrique does not go back to the colonial period, stopping instead at the moment of crisis of the nineteenth-century slave trade, his subject is the moment of truth of the 'structural duality' detected by Florestan Fernandes in post-Independence Brazil. As might be expected of a new reader of the 1920s Lukács (to say nothing of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*), the non-linear relationship between capitalism and slavery is seen at first through the limits of the social consciousness of our dominant classes. At that point, as the slave economy was an economy of waste, and in this sense anti-capitalist, the imperative to keep the slave occupied generated the illusion of rationally productive work, withdrawing from the consciousness of the masters the disadvantages of a regime of production to which they nevertheless owed power and fortune. From this knot, in which each social system of production concealed the reality of the other, Fernando Henrique did not, however, draw any consequences for our ideological life. Or rather, he still thought in terms of ideological obstacles, as dictated by the model inherited from Florestan: 'the slave system, in a profit-oriented mercantile economy, hides the real meaning of capitalist production from the slave owner and impedes the full flourishing of capitalism'. In a word, questions of consciousness aside, capitalism and slavery make each other unfeasible. Where the accommodationist framework of duality hinted at an enigmatic coexistence, there is now *contradiction* pure and simple. And yet, it moves. It is not enough, however, to rediscover in the facts that contradiction and movement implicate one another. It is one thing to prove, by reiterating the labor theory of value (as it was unlocked in the Marx Seminar), that the slave-capitalist system of production is a contradiction in terms, and that therefore a slave enterprise seeking profits realized on the market is by definition doomed. It is another thing to recognize that, in practice, this was not always the case: for some centuries the slave regime functioned adequately in service of mercantile production within a framework of a fully developed commercial capitalism. Holding on only to the logical contradiction, even though studied in the historical form of its true limit, Fernando Henrique limited himself to verifying the facts,

thus failing to explain the global movement that brought the two periods together.

7

When studying the nineteenth-century coffee economy, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco's ambition, which gave rise to the objection that served us as a foothold, had been to extirpate the very root of these ambiguities, this dualist thought, of which the *uspiano* chapter would be only the latest and best-camouflaged chapter. To begin with, the simple presence of the slave on the coffee plantation is not enough to define a mode of production that is congruent with it. Linked to the all-encompassing concept of capital, slavery is not only far from the unifying principle of the colonial system, but reappears as a purely economic category. All things considered, it underscores its unique coherence with capitalist production. Regarding this last point, Maria Sylvia does not only refer to the subordination of colonial expansion to commercial capitalism, as it had been emphasized since the times of Caio Prado Jr., but she emphasizes our complete assimilation to the European core. Colony and metropole are developments particular to capitalism, profit and accumulation are in effect in both hemispheres. In this way, the modernity of Portuguese colonization is established, and with it, the unacceptability of applying the characteristic typology of dualist division to the Brazilian case. Reconsider the colonial latifundium through this prism. The two principles that govern its economic activity—direct production of the means of subsistence and the production of commodities—do not exist without each other, or rather, direct production and consumption only find their raison d'être in mercantile activity. They do not, therefore, constitute a duality, not even an integrated or intrinsic one. Nor can we say, in the manner of functionalist sociology, that two types of society are opposed in Brazil, one old, slave-owning and traditional, the other capitalist and modern. We are decidedly not a collection of survivals, archaisms, residues, etc. That being so, the only category that suits us is that of unity: 'the resurgence of slavery, the development of free labor, the formation of the bourgeoisie, the formation of the colonial entrepreneur are unitarily determined categories: in modern times, one does not exist without the other'. *Uspiano* social science would not disagree. On the contrary, it would see its original mark in this systematic

arrangement, except evidently with regard to the univocal determination of the colonial entrepreneur, who is bourgeois by birth. For this same reason, Maria Sylvia will be inspired by the Weberian portrait of our coffee potentates, a tough, industrious and frugal race, taken by the compulsion to profit, alien to superfluous consumption and the free time of noble leisure. Under the classic type of the slave-owning landholder, she will find the head of impersonal business and his unbending will for economic accumulation. In these terms, one can no longer present our dominant classes as a formation of estates, as Florestan and his disciples wanted to do. The rehabilitation of labor proceeds from this line of reasoning, directly contradicting one of the great commonplaces of our historiography, which supposed it to be disqualified by definition in a slave-owning order. Far from it, since the lives of masters and slaves were linked to a unity of production: where significant economic accumulation was systematically pursued, neither labor nor profitable behavior presented themselves as a disgraceful business.

In this way, we return to the language of obstacle, so characteristic of the kind of dualism one would like to avoid. And so to the balancing act of our identity: because the mercantile component was central, we were never properly an estate society, but nor was the formation of a class society completed. Rather, it was kept in check precisely by the presence of slavery, as Maria Sylvia concluded at the end of her book. If we now move on to the broadest of inclusive categories, we will see that the unity that took the place of the old duality is not just any unity. We will verify (not surprisingly) that it expresses a 'difficult synthesis', an 'intimate nexus' between patterns and practices that are at the very least dissimilar. Consider the fate of the functionalist division between (traditional) production for subsistence and (modern) production for the market: since in Brazil so-called backward areas had their structure and character determined at the same time as capitalist practices, they form a 'unified group'. Brazilian society was created through the unification of these two principles. That is, where there was talk of a basic duality, there is now talk of a 'basic contradiction'—in short, the discourse of 'contradiction'. I don't mean to say that talking about 'duality' comes to the same thing, whether integrated, intrinsic, structural or whatever. It's just that a 'unity of opposites' cannot exist and function without a binary structure that sets it in motion. That being the case, it cannot be said that the new discourse of contradiction is a mere figure of speech and thus a way of avoiding the

antinomy. It would be good to explain in detail this 'contradictory unity', *where there is and there isn't duality*.

8

This, in general terms, is the historical knowledge accumulated in the *uspiana* revision of dualism, from which the appropriate aesthetic consequences should then be drawn. Yet, it was one thing to orient the binary rhythm of Machado's composition toward the basic contradiction that unified Brazilian society; it was another to come to terms with the specific mechanism that, in principle, should support the narrator's mercurial volubility. Against a background of antagonisms, the latter presupposes coexistence and constant reversibility, while pure and simple contradiction demands crisis and overcoming. So that, at first glance, we could endlessly sort through the capitalism-slavery nexus without coming to the objective movement required by the form identified above.

Then the unexpected happened. From the perspective of the misunderstanding with which we began, Roberto Schwarz found the key in a discovery made by Maria Sylvia, as he himself has acknowledged on more than one occasion (1977, 109, n. 3; 1991, 83). It is a kind of compendium of all the ambiguities arising from the simultaneous validity of the two 'essentially opposite' principles that, at the same time, regulate economic activity: the bipolar system around which revolved the *favors* practiced by the landowning classes in our system of slavery. Although Maria Sylvia insists on renouncing her discovery, refuting the bonds of personal domination over the impersonal behavior of bourgeois profitable practices, and thereby flattening the possible salience of our ideological life, let us stick with the reasons that drove her to the original version, which I will summarize here. Just as the presence of slavery blocked the formation of a class society, it also prevented the relationship between property owners and free, poor men (who were not forced to sell their labor power) from generally assuming a mercantile character. Partially expropriated, the *agregado* could live on someone else's floor (or roof), but only until the unpredictable moment when the economic pressure of profit returned to exercise its power. This was one's experience with a landowner who was at the same time a slave owner, the experience of a *double yoke*. The fate of a poor and dependent man was thus a testing ground out of which emerged the infamous contradictory unity that defines us. He was, therefore, a victim of a world

governed by '*two different principles* (my emphasis) ordering social relations, which fit together and had reciprocally harmful effects'. Through these moral associations, an authoritarian system of bonding free men, and the profit-oriented activity that cemented relationships of interest, imposed themselves. But wasn't this the antithetical synthesis that unified home and business, domestic nucleus and mercantile enterprise, in the colonial latifundium? Maria Sylvia adds that slavery made the existence of those who lived on favor unnecessary, so that the domination that was expressed through moral obligation was at the same time a grace that could be withdrawn at any time. The master not only defined the nature of the ties that united him to his dependents, but he could also transgress them with impunity according to his convenience, acting sometimes as a patriarch, sometimes as a businessman—exactly according to the two antagonistic components that marked his property, subsistence and mercantile production. Let's say, then, that by alternately appealing to each of these two 'essentially opposed' principles, the owner scrutinized in his unstable two-faced behavior the contradiction to which the inclusive categories of unity refer, the unity of two practices that reciprocally negate and determine each other. We can also say that the referent for this contradictory unity in which we recognize ourselves is this endless seesawing between opposites that alternate without ever annulling each other in a higher synthesis. Or, to put it another way: if we want to call this a coherence with the capitalist world system, we will have to break it down into its two basic components. In these terms, there will be no inconvenience in talking about 'duality' again, except for the evident terminological confusion with the older dualisms, the inadequacy of which *uspiano* social science was one of the first to point out. Anyone who talks about two Brazils again after going through this reassessment of the issue is certainly assuming a contradictory nexus that synthesizes them into a larger unity, without, however, erasing the system of ambiguities that such a unity feeds upon.

At one and the same time, the source of the duality of voluble speech and of the corresponding dialectic of norm and transgression was identified—according to which, transgression, in addition to being a transgression, is a norm, and the norm, in addition to being a norm, is a transgression, as one would expect from a systematic contravention. Thus, the back-and-forth between arbitrary decision and enlightened discourse, methodically practiced by the narrator, stylized both the unpredictable and capricious will of a property owner and the calm impudence of the wealthy. More

precisely: 'the narrative volubility confers the generality of the form, and all the foreground, on the most intolerable aspect of relationships of favor, in which, according to the convenience or whim of the moment, respectable folks either do or do not let themselves be ruled by the civilized norm and decide the fate of a dependent "between two cups of coffee"' (Schwarz 2001, 153). A mechanism whose dual functioning depends on the ambiguous link with slavery in a capitalist economy. Thanks to a first-rate sociological finding, Roberto locates the social structure selected by the artistic configuration and qualifies, in historical terms, the norm and the transgression combined by the twists of Machado's late prose: 'the narrative volubility joins and alternates with the outbursts of patriarchal domineering and the I'm-all-right-Jack of the modern owner class, the whims of the old slave-owning oligarchy, and the irresponsibility of the new forms of wealth' (Schwarz 2001, 157). Which is to say, when it suited them, our nineteenth-century potentates aligned themselves with European modernity in the phraseology of civil equality, but when they wanted to tighten the moral ties of favor, it was the colonial dimension that took precedence. Thus, two social spheres, one selfsame historical dimension: on the one hand, paternalist obligation, on the other, bourgeois norm. But let us note that, before condemning this revived old dualism, it was the daily comings and goings of our ruling classes that were tasked with combining the two angles, the one traditional and local, the other modern and global. Where the one was not residual, nor was the other a mere virtual horizon.

9

Before we proceed, a terminological variation that has to do with what happens when dualism comes to express a deficit. The reader of *Ao Vencedor as Batatas* should remember that Roberto begins the chapter on Alencar by extending to *Senhora* an observation made by Antonio Candido about a characteristic inconsistency in Joaquim Manuel Macedo's novels. On the one hand, a minor realism, faithful to a display of appearances, the Carioca gallery of 'everyday types', on the other, the extraordinary plot of the romantic storyline. An implausible combination of two incompatible sets of literary conventions: the first required adherence to our unextraordinary everyday life, with an eye to giving it the aesthetic polish that it sorely lacked, the second demanded the high poetic standard of romantic adventure. The result was evidently not

convincing: such modest people could not get involved in the romantic intrigues that Macedo prepared for them. Just like Augusto Meyer's *mot juste*, it is quite possible that this analysis put Roberto on the trail of our central incongruity. Freshly instructed by the discovery of the duality of criteria that governed the conduct of our dominant classes, he must have recognized in those two conventional pillars of Macedo's work the very loose literary marks of our double fidelity to European standards of behavior (required by the civilization of capital, to which we never cease to belong) and its local complement, the suffocating day-to-day life of patriarchy (regulated by the presence of slave labor). This is the enormous step forward taken by Roberto: pointing to the presence of the same disparity between plot and realistic notation in Alencar's work, he recognized its structural character, not just as a compositional trait common to several authors, but as an expression (still inadequate) of an elemental form of Brazilian life. Thus, innocently combining local material and European model, Alencar similarly composes a fractured literary world: herein lies the deficit we were talking about, a congenital defect of composition that, according to Roberto, ends up configuring a duality, though now with the negative sign of a formal impasse that undermines the value of the work (Schwarz 1977, 48, 54). A network of minor characters, however credible in their national narrowness, ends up discrediting the central conflict: this is the formal duality that makes *Senhora* unviable. Yet, there is nothing more Brazilian than this defect in composition, and to better highlight its mimetic value, Roberto purposefully analyzes the novel's variation of tone, progressing from the book's 'periphery' (simple and familiar) to its 'center' (mundane and highly morally charged), as if the dual form of the poorly resolved composition mirrored the double focus of the global gravitation of which we were a part and which unbalanced our lives, in practice and in thought. On the periphery (in both senses) life runs smoothly, 'vices, virtues and ills are easily admitted', the prose that describes it is balanced and free like that of *Memoirs of a Militia Sergeant*. In the center, language is saturated with normative reflections and well-grounded in the European costume of complex life. The compatibility with the Brazilian norm could not be greater, if only completely blind for uncritically incorporating a maladjustment that in fact supported the ideological day-to-day of our elites. We can see, then, that Alencar's bad duality is not guilty of being dual, but rather of juxtaposing that which reality articulates, of conjugating, without malice, the practices of the wealthy. His characters—Roberto continues—oscillate

between the titanic and the familiar (the first being fake, the second autocratic), though Alencar ignores the law of this inconstancy, a movement whose binary progress, as we have seen, would not be too much to call dialectical, and is itself a transcription of a logic specific to Brazil.

II

Once the social origins of narrative volubility had been exposed—the practical alternation between oligarchic patronage and bourgeois business—the critic was in possession of his historical framework, the objective form demanded by the dialectical program outlined by Antonio Candido and interpreted by Roberto Schwarz. In terms of the first meaning of dialectic, enshrined by the materialist tradition, this program demands that the sedimented social structure be sought in the artistic configuration. As for the second meaning—the capricious reversibility of norm and transgression—it does justice to the feeling of duality in Brazil. Furthermore, it seems that the two cannot be separated: dialectics not only specifies the link between literary figuration and social process, which would not exist without structural homology, but it is equally present on both sides, since the same principle sets in motion the aesthetic form and the social form, the narrator's abysmal inconstancy and the practical ambivalence of our property-owning elites. This edifice of correspondences rests on the historical grounds that Roberto discovered with the help of *uspiano* social sciences. Earlier, we reviewed the fate of ancient and modern dualist typologies, an appearance that was resolved in the contradictory articulation of slavery and capitalism, to which we owe our national formation: not a logical dissonance framed by the labor theory of value, but a historical result. *This is the practical matrix of the dialectic, this is the origin of the feeling of the dialectic in Brazilian intellectual experience.* It so happens that this form of forms that constitutes the dialectic in the second sense that we are giving it is not available to the simple consideration of the aforementioned contradiction.

At this point, Roberto took other decisive steps. We have already mentioned the first of these, identifying the raw material of literature beyond the failure of fixed forms, the practical materiality of ideological everyday life. Then, there was the recognition of the effective nexus of this everyday gravitation of ideas. But here it would be necessary to contradict a dogma of the left and of all *uspiano* sociology. Despite our differences, we never doubted (especially after this point of view was corrected) that

false consciousness and everything that follows from it worked as well here as in the core. At least in terms of inclusive ideologies, so to speak, we are as bourgeois (or modern) as our confreres overseas. On both sides of the ocean the cogitations of our men of ideas (or simple individuals) must and can be submitted, with a similar unmasking effect, to the same test of reality. In brief, political thought, aesthetic feelings, moral judgments, etc., spring from our social ground with the same naturalness as similar ones in hegemonic countries. The *uspiano* left was convinced that materialist criticism could not be effectively practiced among us if the ideological representations in circulation did not have an evident social continuity. Moreover, to question the classic version of this bond was like water to the Right's mill, not just because it undermines the good theory of the social production of ideas, but because it dangerously reinforces the favorite commonplace of our authoritarians, that the defense of the 'real country' is to be preserved against adventitious ideological lucubrations, with the consequent obfuscation of modern class domination, which is indeed real. Roberto found that this same materialist program, given the nature of the case, required moving in a third alternative direction, which would finally explain our manifestly anomalous workings of ideology. Thus, he reopened the dossier on liberalism, taken in its broadest sense of bourgeois modernity, encompassing institutions, ideas and practical perspectives from cabinet politics to the great romantic literary machines, from so-called free labor to an appreciation for the Enlightenment, from a career open to talent to realistic aesthetics, etc.

As is known and stated above, although not central to the argument, since it came from the last century, it was up to the authoritarian 'thought' of the 1920s to systematize this, seeing the authentic Brazil in the personalist tradition of clan politics, and the fake in the facade of Anglo-Saxonism. (Conversely, some more inflexible Marxists will insist on the opposite alignment: the presence of liberalism in the country would be a very well-adjusted result of a bourgeois hegemony exercised without opposition since the times of slavery.) Even in the 1930s, Sérgio Buarque would continue to emphasize the liberal graft, but with the democratic intention of liquidating our Iberian roots. Florestan Fernandes's aim will not be very different when he returns to the subject later on. Since it was a question, in theory and in practice, of supporting the establishment of a 'competitive social order', Florestan split the paradox of Brazilian liberalism into two dimensions that correspond to the division of the country after the collapse of the local ancien régime. On the side of

seigneurial patrimonial interests, liberalism was presented as an 'ideology' but it also had the strength of a 'utopia' directed toward the formation of a modern nation-state, innocuous and marginal in one respect, dynamic and active in another. A two-faced existence shaped by a progressive conflict, an imbalance evidently explainable by the 'structural duality' that has defined us at least since Independence. In the *uspiano* sociology of the 1960s, liberalism would come back to the fore due to the generalized critiques of the sociology of development, centered on the notion of traditional society. So, what could be more characteristic than the unthinkable amalgamation of oligarchy and liberal political institutions, a paradoxical link that, originating from the Empire, would become stable during the Old Republic and that the Revolution of 1930 would fail to completely dismantle? The new argument was that the apparent false place of liberalism, far from denouncing the phraseology hanging in the air, was in reality an adequate expression of the relations of production in the country. Duplicity and contradiction, no doubt, but completely functional. An export-oriented economy is, so to speak, doomed to combine institutions with a liberal overlay and with oligarchic power relations. Involvement with imperialism educated and modernized large portions of our elites while at the same time limiting the liberal franchise to the restricted circle of the dominant. The contradictory coexistence of liberalism and oligarchy thus responded to the external and internal exigencies: curtailing full social and political participation, it ensured the form of domination required by the economic exploitation commanded by the external market. Under these conditions, our liberalism was at once contradictory, natural and original. Historians moved in more or less the same direction: liberalism played a role in Independence and would play a role in Abolition, as well. In this interval, however, it was purged of its original assumptions and implications by the presence of slavery and its extensions. Once its ultraconservative and anti-democratic metamorphosis had been explained, its highly functional acclimation was thrown into relief.

Recapitulating the argument developed by colleagues, Roberto will not disagree, but even so, he thought that the contradiction was no less real and needed to be explored. What to think of the inadvertent humor of the Pernambuco revolutionaries of 1817, when they proclaimed without blinking: 'patriots, your property, even those most abhorrent to the ideal of justice, will be sacred'? Due to these and other very characteristic enormities, our critic took up a different angle and went to another

dimension, that of living incongruity, but now in terms of ideologico-moral considerations, where, providing the raw material for literary prose, the 'contradictory unity' of capitalism and slavery unfolded. Here is the crux of the argument's turning point, the discovery that the duality of opposing principles manifests itself as the form of a friendly compromise in the heads of our forebearers: 'Real as it was, the antagonism vanished into thin air, and the opposing positions walked hand in hand' (Schwarz 1992, 23). Antagonism between *Aufklärung* and favor: the first posits 'the autonomy of the individual, universality of law, disinterested culture, a day's pay for a day's work, the dignity of labour, etc., against the prerogatives of the Ancien Régime. Favour in tum implies the dependency of the individual, the exception to the rule, instrumental culture, arbitrary pay and the servility of labour' (Schwarz 1992, 22), hence reciprocal disavowal. Even so, coherence will count for less than the recomposition of antithetical terms, a coexistence fostered by the daily practice of favor, fueled nevertheless by reasons that contradict it: 'Thus, one could methodically call dependence independence, capriciousness utility, exceptions universality, kinship merit, privilege equality, and so on' (Schwarz 1992, 24). Or again: since the slaveholding estate revolved around profit, and until a certain date it had been a profitable enterprise, the slave owner became a consistent capitalist, contrary to the followers of Adam Smith, who sought in capitalist exploitation the realization of freedom. Once again, 'economic science became fantasy and morality, obscurantism equaled realism and responsibility, technical considerations were not practical, and altruism sought to bring about the exploitation of labour, etc.' (Schwarz 1992, 21). It would not be too difficult to recognize the logic that governs this generalized reversal, the linchpin of the ideologico-moral ambivalence of the Brazilian elite. *What is an historical contradiction at the base, unfolds at the top in the form of a permanent reversibility*. As in Machado's prose, there is no doubt a method in this outrageous seesaw of opposites, and we know what it is: the *dual dialectic* of norm and transgression that defines the features of whim. In the most incisive words of our author, Brazilian elites:

> wanted to be part of the progressive and cultured West, at that time already openly bourgeois (the norm), without that affecting their being, in practice, and with equal authenticity, members and beneficiaries of the last large slave-owning system in that same West (the transgression). Now, was there a problem in imagining oneself simultaneously as a slave owner and an

> enlightened individual? For anyone concerned about moral coherence, the contradiction could be embarrassing. However, since reality didn't force one to choose, why forgo the obvious advantages? Might not moral coherence be another name for a failure to understand the way life really works? Giving credit to the norm and despising it at the same time were in the nature of the case. (Schwarz 2001, 24; translation modified)

Consider how the regime of contradiction varies: in Europe, a conflict demanding resolution or else collapse; on the slave-owning periphery of capital, sustained by a well-established class situation in the practical sphere, a never-ending oscillation between opposite extremes that no one was interested in abandoning.

13

Let us take stock of the figures of the dialectic inferred by Machado in his survey of Brazilian experience, the same that Roberto Schwarz discerned in his corresponding cycle of essays. It goes without saying that, rather than a simple methodological illustration, this is the real imposition of determinate historical content, the upshot of the only approach suited to the discovery of that same content of experience. The result would be different if the inspiration were another. The same social form revealed by Machado's composition ends up suggesting the critical method adequate to its essayistic re-explanation.

So far, we have seen two basic meanings. The first of these clearly takes its inspiration from materialism and refers to the relationships between form and content. Of the two moments that can be distinguished within the scope of these reciprocal determinations, we underline the first and allude to the second in passing. Let me recap before moving on. Informed by the same materialist tradition according to which literature is, above all, a double-sided process of configuration, one turned to the internal structuring of the work, the other to real historical processes, Roberto's first step—once the formal principle of Machado's prose, and the organization of immediate data of social perception guided by it, had been identified—culminated in the reconstruction of the objective form to which it corresponds. Let us point out the knowledge and procedures that have been synthesized with an eye to that composition. To do so—duly supported by Antonio Candido's lesson in dialectics, whose true scope,

not by chance, he was the first to perceive—Roberto needed to contradict a commonplace of our progressive criticism that orders us to study Brazilian literature in terms of its local environment. He then showed that the writer's concern was not formless but an objectively structured, global historical result whose sociological localization demanded the reconstitution of the international course of colonization that changed the country's physiognomy. In sum: on the one hand, the voluble prose of an ambivalent narrator, on the other, the reactivation of the colonial universe in the world transformed by capital, both commanded by the same logic of binary progress. In other words, already at the level on which the junction of romance and society operates, the mediating principle is derived from a two-sided form in which the basic perception of duality is encoded, both a structure and a practical and historical foundation.

The second moment of this dialectic of form and content concerns the transition from the first Machado, conformist for the sake of convenience, to the modern novelist of the second phase. In this crossing of levels, an objective problem of artistic accumulation is resolved. Roberto gave it a first formulation when he addressed the shortcomings of the European-style realism adopted by Alencar: a set of misalignments between liberal-Romantic intrigue and paternalistic local relations. This resulted in a literary universe that was poorly resolved in a 'formal duality', a compositional impasse in which an imitated subject matter is mirrored without the mediation of form, a duality that reproduced a misunderstood appearance. The modification introduced by Machado, Roberto declared, will return density to our subject matter by including the failure of European form on the level of content: being characteristic of national life, that fracture will be deliberately sought out, enriching the subject matter to be produced with the degradation of a formal universe. This dialectic of form and content will provide the key to the passage from the first to the second Machado. What was subject matter in the first becomes form in the second: this was one of the great discoveries of the last of Roberto's books on Machado,[8] which even made advances in aesthetic theory. Thus, the 'harm caused by the unpredictable and capricious will of a member of the owner class' (Schwarz 2001, 150), will constitute the central nerve of the first novels, which were about trying to put the brakes on the irresponsibility of the rich. The country's retrograde march will take care to

[8] Arantes was writing before Schwarz's book *Duas Meninas* was published, which is in fact the last instalment in his 'Machado cycle' [*Trans.*].

shelve this civilizing project of polishing paternalistic relations of favor. A datum of social observation plus accumulated experience thus comes to articulate the step from content to form that we are summarizing here. Psychological explanations or those of doctrinal evolution are discarded in favor of the literary labor of reckoning with previous impasses:

> The social type of the owner, treated before as one topic among others, and as the origin of varied kinds of affronts, could now move into the (trustworthy?) position of narrator. Or, to put it another way, the censurable (but uncensured) behavior of the owner class reappeared, transformed into a narrative method in which the to-and-fro between willfulness and enlightened discourse, itself the cause of the poor's practical and moral discomfort, was universalized and affected the whole of the novel's subject matter. …the point of view changes places and leaves the inferior, respectful position for the superior, lordly one, though only to prepare the case for the indictment of the latter. (Schwarz 2001, 150–151)

In this way, not only was a problem as old as the criticism on Machado finally resolved, but Brazilian literary aesthetics now entered a space that it was not used to occupying. I don't want to draw any kind of theory from this truly remarkable result, but the sense that it goes beyond the matter at hand is strong. It will not be difficult to find situations in the artistic field in which the methodical consideration of accumulated difficulties generates a new form, precisely at the point where the obstacle that has been overcome becomes a foothold for the further development of the aesthetic material. The social totality immanent to the process indicates which path is unobstructed and which form is unfeasible.

Let us then move on to the dialectic in its second meaning—since, after all, we decided to explore the link between the term consecrated by the double-edged feeling of capitalist modernization and Brazilian experience. For better or worse, this is a meaning that unifies two orders of facts. We saw that the permanent reversibility of norm and transgression that defines the capricious seesaw on which Machado's narrator balances himself stylizes the divergent coexistence of the old colonial order and the bourgeois country. We also confirmed that the same dual logic governs the pace of the prose and the social rhythm. And finally, we called this pulsation dialectical, extending Antonio Candido's formula, while noting that the extension was due to an equally practical foundation in the 'duality' (redefined) of national formation. This way, a dialectic without synthesis linked the 'two Brazils' together. If we can call it a *negative*

dialectic, as we already have, we could also give it a name that appears in the classical repertoire, one that translates the specific timbre of the later Machado in the chapter of negatives [in *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*]. It so happens that this name—slightly complicating the task of commentary—contradicts another classical meaning of the term, which associates dialectics with the realist prose of the great nineteenth-century novel.

At this point, I turn the floor over to Roberto, who showed how Machado wrote realistic novels using anti-realist literary devices. To begin with, take the question of realism. Roberto's notes are abundant, and I will limit myself only to a few. Undermining stable bourgeois subjectivity, whim discards the individualist frame presupposed by the prose of realism. As a result, a 'vague plot' is set up, without tension, where the drama is not structured by any conflict or any central thread. Consequently, time is unproductive and does not press forward in the direction of any kind of progress: it does not frame any confrontation between positions. Hence the absence of Napoleonic, energetic and defining characters, which are rendered impractical by patronage and cooptation. Here is another one of Roberto's findings: sometime between the first and the second phase, Machado perceived that Brazil's recalcitrant march toward the modern world got rid of the dialectic of individual and society, which is the matrix of the realist aesthetic. That is: 'The civilized reorganization of the relationships between the owner class and the poor, which had been the focus of literary attention in the first phase, was put off indefinitely. From now on Machado would insist on the regressive potentialities of modernization as the dominant, grotesque trait of progress in its Brazilian form. Going back to *Iaiá Garcia*, the European pattern embedded in its plot, linked to the moralizing dynamics of free labor, was out of the reckoning' (Schwarz 2001, 153). *Because Brazil did not become bourgeois along European lines, the classical dialectic was out of the question*. In its place, another, negative one would govern an enormous and false back-and-forth between animation and boredom, agitation and melancholy, eagerness and inappetence—another *duality* of alternating poles without a reversal of fortunes. Taking up Roberto's image and conclusion, let us add that this negative dialectic is the propeller that pushes Machado's narrative toward nothingness.

Here is a new chapter, precisely the one on negatives, which features Machado's specialties: melancholia, fatigue, desolation, tedium, wearing down, drift, repetition, lack of exit, breakdown and nothingness, in short,

all sorts of frustrated dynamisms. Evidently, there is no trace of metaphysical complacency. On the contrary, it leaves the scene cheapened by the mockery of whim. Next, a qualification of *nihilism* in which this negative dialectic is resolved. As always, the transatlantic comparison is logical. European realism makes alienation intelligible by registering the lost illusion, while Machado's plot narrates an existence devoid of meaning but full of satisfactions—the excellent life lived by our rulers, even as it ran along a non-existent track, as Roberto says elsewhere. How do we assess the peripeteia? Brás Cubas, the critic recalls, was nothing: he was 'nothing *presentable*, in the bourgeois order of individual achievements' (Schwarz 2001, 137), but certainly he would have been something at the level of local relations which, however, do not have the normative force to impose their own relevance, hence Brás's null yet full existence. That is to say, opposite Europe, volubility is nothing. When it is confronted with the system of Brazilian relations, however, it is everything. One moment one thing, the next moment another: the swing of the pendulum, as was also to be expected. However, there is something more serious in this nihilism that speaks to the pressure, at once real and innocuous, of the bourgeois model of civilization, even though 'the injustices of Brazilian society may lead nowhere their end is not in sight' (Schwarz 2001, 139; translation modified). This is the somber conclusion of an inconclusive dialectic, an endpoint without a crisis on the horizon. In Europe, the negative dialectic signaled the opposite, the modern birth of the autonomous subject, the almost liberatory moment of vagueness between the dying Ancien Régime and the not-yet-established bourgeois order. This was the case with French Enlightenment discourse—just think of the masterpieces of a nascent sense of the dialectic like *Le Neveu de Rameau* and *Jacques le Fataliste*. Later on, toward the end of this first period, it would still appear in the ironic existence of the German avant-garde intellectual, embodied by the Romantics of Jena: *Witz*'s tendency toward nihilism was at once an expression of a subjectivity reinforced in its sovereignty by an ironic disidentification with positive contents, and a harbinger of an aestheticizing emptying-out that had yet to come. Machado's infallible insight led him to revive this skeleton of dialectics in its raw state and in its degraded dimension, after the blowback of 1848 and the fiasco of bourgeois phraseology, discerning the mimetic value and critical reach of the operation. This is what Roberto suggests in various terms and references in another of his discoveries. See the answer he found for Machado's appropriation of eighteen-century English humor, in which he showed how the novelist,

using narrative techniques from the 1750s in the spirit of *fin de siècle* aestheticism, achieves modern effects with archaic resources, once again imitating the dynamics of the Brazilian combinatory. More specifically, a form that was linked to the Enlightenment's emancipatory impulse, when its self-complacent nature was brought to the forefront, would serve to portray the cheapened Enlightenment of our elites.

16

If Brazil were not two, we would have no voice in world literature. This is where Machado's effective universalism comes from, which has nothing to do with the apparent universalism of the themes—themes which, incidentally, he took it upon himself to discredit. And he could do so precisely because the coherence with capitalism was not complete. If bourgeois hegemony were total, then we would slide into the irrelevance of a mere province of capital. Without exactly being an advantage, the backwardness reproduced by modernization (which is not, therefore, just any backwardness), gives Brazilian experience the differential feeling of a society in permanent conflict with its overseas double, converging with the kinds of effects that in core countries resulted from the collapse of bourgeois tradition. In a word, the dissolving action of whim deprovincializes Brazil, largely because of what in it contradicted the purposes of that tradition. Or, in the more specific terms in which Roberto presents the problem: by detailing and refining the non-bourgeois dimension of bourgeois existence in Brazil—and thus exploring our constitutive duality—the list of violations committed by the voluble speech of Machado's narrator approximates the aforementioned collective experience of the ideological evolution of the European *fin de siècle*, all of it saturated with antiliberal impulses, from aestheticism to the emergent vanguards. This revealed one of the corners of the worldwide reach that the local persistence of the Ancien Régime could cover. 'As a result, slavery and clientelism are not shown just in their obvious aspect, that of backwardness, but also from a disturbing, more substantial side: their affinity with these new tendencies' (Schwarz 2001, 123). There is no intention here to fit in with the constraints of the periphery. On the contrary, we saw Machado and his greatest critic establish an exchange between backwardness and progress that exonerates neither side. As a matter of fact, Roberto himself will show that it is Modernism to which we owe the transformation of the collusion between primitivism and modernity into a class alibi. The reciprocity that,

conversely, is bound to Machado's reconstitution of Brazilian experience is of another order. They are critical correspondences (between center and periphery) in tune with the planetary emptying-out of bourgeois civilization: in core countries, from the upheavals of 1848 onward, when the owner classes went on the defensive and the *Aufklärung* changes signs; in peripheral countries, when imperialism draws conclusions from this same metamorphosis of capital. Here is another highlight of our author's studies on Machado: as far as I can tell, something unprecedented within the context of our literary criticism. Roberto starts to frame the maturation represented by Machado from the extra-national angle of a general history of the novel, which is a systematic perspective rather than some set of vague comparisons based on affinities of disposition or style. A *démarche* comparable to the already mentioned initiative of the Dependency Theorists of whom he is a contemporary. A set of equivalences within the literary field that also decompartmentalizes Brazilian intellectual experience, until then confined to the routine of minor comparisons. In other words, for the first time, cultural criticism, informed, as we saw, by reviewing the implications of a dual society, examined the artistic-ideological effects of capitalism's uneven and combined development as a whole, among which we can rightly include the bourgeois reproduction of our Ancien Régime. These are convergences in two directions: on the one hand, an unexpected affinity with the center, whose literature (the best) had come to live in a 'state of siege' after a class war was declared in June of 1848; on the other, the same familial air circulating on the fringes of the system among works that measured metropolitan formalism by the cheap yardstick of peripheral letters.

Concerning the first arc of confluences, Roberto manages to show that the narrative honesty called into question by the new European stage of class struggle (bourgeois normality can no longer be the same after the massacre of the popular camp), one which demands groundbreaking formal techniques in the realist tradition (impersonality, scientific standard, changing perspectives, a demonstrative use of the first-person singular, all dislocated effects destined to firm up the primacy of social formation over subjective intentions and other ideological falsifications), defines the exact territory in which we rediscover the volubility of Machado's protagonist, who is also distanced exclusively by the composition of the situation. It should be noted in passing that Roberto allows himself the luxury of correcting Lukács, the first, in fact, to take the backlash of 1848 as a watershed in the history of modern culture. The

artistic measures listed above are precisely resources that Lukács would disqualify because they served the aesthetic-epistemological capitulation that he called 'description', as opposed to the apprehension of totality which narration would preserve even in conditions of adversity. It so happens that this objective apprehension is not lost with the antibourgeois aesthetic put into practice by writers like Flaubert, to mention one of Lukacs's targets. Quite simply, as Roberto observes, the primacy of social unintelligence and the crisis of shared meanings make the old narrative resourcefulness unfeasible. Here lie the historical origins of the unreliable or malicious narrator. Here, too, thanks to Machado's artistic work (among other effects, the principle of disqualification through form), lies the point of contact between the European reversal detonated by the secession of 1848 and the transposition of the moral impasse of the Brazilian dominant classes. One can see that on the European side we find an objective ambivalence similar to that of our elites: the impassivity that characterizes the new objectivity—such as the about-faces of Machado's narrator—is also fed by a change of criteria that belongs to a two-dimensional society like ours—'hatred of the bourgeois and, in an equal dose, contempt for the impotence of that same hatred' (Schwarz 2001, 120; translation modified).

As for the second range of convergences, encompassing literary experience within the scope of delayed capitalism, Roberto focused on the Russian case as an exemplary point of comparison. In nineteenth-century patriarchal-bourgeois Russia, the hegemonic ideology of the West was also running down a false path, which was one of the keys to the Russian novel of the time of Machado. In both situations, historical backwardness imposed a similar system of ambiguities on the local use of bourgeois ideas. In this regard, it is curious to remember the first mention of Russian literature in Roberto Schwarz's critical trajectory, the analysis of Dostoyevsky's *Demons*, published in the 1965 collection of essays. If one needed proof to counter the idea that, at that time, Roberto had not yet discovered the features proper to the Brazilian experience that is the referent of our literary forms (another demonstration of the difficulty in coming to terms with it), this study offers the best illustration. In it, the critic hits on a model of mental life analogous to our own, though without recognizing it and, perhaps for this same reason, giving it only a partial formulation, along the lines of the progressive critique of false consciousness. He paid no attention, for example, although he has reconstructed it to perfection, to the Brazilian coloring of the poisoned

portrait of Stepan Trofimovitch, which we are only now deciphering after the critic has disassembled similar mechanisms in Machado. Curiously, he also left aside the characteristic link (especially for a Brazilian with a materialist imagination) between, on the one hand, the conservative utopia of Christian patriarchy which inspires Dostoyevsky's purge and which drags with it, in the form of grotesque doctrinal fantasies, the ideological subject matter of the literary West, and on the other, the problems of uneven development—incidentally, it was precisely in thinking about the Russian case that Trotsky formulated the concept. In the text from 1961, Roberto retained and studied in detail the Dostoevskian stratagem for the disqualification of the thought in order. However, he did so in order to better highlight the threat it could contain, more or less in the way Lukács had judged the disastrous evolution of the whole of German ideology, from Schelling to Heidegger, in which the apologia of national idiosyncrasy and the ruin of reason went hand in hand. Yet, Roberto added a supplementary dimension to the explanation, the materialist assumption of the union between knowledge and interest, between the cognitive value of thought and the practical sphere of its socially interested 'application'. There is in Dostoyevsky's novel a kind of derisive dialectic of Enlightenment: the pseudo-liberalism of the father who is guilelessly Westernized but dependent on local patronage becomes the doctrinal madness of the Machiavellian son. Roberto then recalls that the destiny of ideas is not, in principle, to deceive those who use them. Rather, it is simply that the demoralization of ideas (especially progressive ones) dramatized by Dostoyevsky is a consequence of the absence (in the novel and in the country) of their true addressees: those who need them to see clearly their position in an antagonistic society. Without this objective horizon, they become, in fact, the phantasmagoria of wishful thinking.

When he takes up the Russian example again a decade later, our critic does so properly instructed by the interpretation of the Brazilian variant of ideological life on the periphery. But now the cultural hegemony of the core countries is also shaken, revealing in full the formalism of bourgeois civilization, the favorite target of Russian rumination—a result of the constellation comprised of backwardness and recalcitrant modernization. The same set of ambivalences thus presides over the life of ideas and the practical perspectives on the fringe of the global bourgeois order, the real key to the comparison. Similarly, in nineteenth-century Russia, where capitalism and serfdom existed symbiotically, the clash between modernization and patriarchal inertia was 'experienced as a national shame,

although it gave others the standard by which to measure the madness of the individualism and progressomania that the West imposed and imposes on the world' (Schwarz 1992, 29). What stands out within this framework, for example, are the affinities between Brás and Dostoyevsky's underground man, 'who, despising Western rationalism, won't go to the doctor for his diseased liver, yet nevertheless despises himself for failing to take care of his health' (Schwarz 1992, 91). We thus return once again to the oscillation characteristic of duality. If we consider its practical matrix, we will have landed on the historical-structural cause for a vast system of comparisons capable of going around the world organized by capital, through a general history of literary experience. This is the standpoint that Roberto Schwarz assumed, as the dialectical feeling of all things Brazilian demanded.

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CHAPTER 15

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Thomas Waller

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