

Roberto Schwarz. Ed. with an introd. by John Gledson.

Misplaced Ideas: Literature and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil

pp. 19-32

Misplaced ideas : essays on Brazilian culture

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Misplaced Ideas: Literature and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil

Every science has principles on which its system is based. Free labour is one of the principles of Political Economy. Yet in Brazil the 'unpolitical and abominable' fact of slavery reigns.

This argument – the summary of a liberal pamphlet, by a contemporary of Machado de Assis – places Brazil outside the system of science. We fell short of the reality to which science refers; we were rather an 'unpolitical and abominable' moral fact. All this was a degradation, when we think that science was Enlightenment, Progress, Humanity, etc. As for the arts, Joaquim Nabuco expresses a comparable feeling when he protests against the subject of slavery in the plays of Alencar: 'If it is horrible to the foreigner, how much more does it humiliate the Brazilian!'³ Other authors of course came to opposite conclusions. Since the science of economy and other liberal ideologies did not concern themselves with our reality, they are what is abominable, irrelevant to political life, foreign and foolish. 'Better have good Negroes from the African coast, for our happiness and theirs, notwithstanding the Briton, with his morbid philanthropy, which makes him forget his own home and allows his poor white brother to die from hunger, a slave without a master to pity him; the hypocritical and stupid Briton, who weeps over the destiny of our happy slave and thus exposes himself to the ridicule of true philanthropy.'³

These authors, each in his own way, reflect the disparity between the slave society of Brazil and the principles of European liberalism. Shaming some, irritating others who insist on their hypocrisy, these principles – in

which neither one nor the other of the opposing parties can recognize Brazil – are the unavoidable frame of reference for everybody. In sum, an ideological comedy is set up, *different from the European*. Of course, free labour, equality before the law and, more generally, universalism were also an ideology in Europe; but there they corresponded to appearances and hid the essential – the exploitation of labour. Among us, the same ideas would be false in a different sense, so to speak, in an original way. The Declaration of the Rights of Man, for instance, transcribed in part in the Brazilian Constitution of 1824, since it did not even correspond to appearances, could not deceive, and indeed cast the institution of slavery into a sharper light.⁴ This professed universality of principles throws the same sharp light on the general practice of *favour* and transforms it into scandal. Under these conditions, what was the value of the grand bourgeois abstractions that we used so often? They didn't describe life – but ideas do not live by that alone. Thinking in a similar direction, Sérgio Buarque remarks: 'By bringing from distant lands our forms of life, our institutions, and our vision of the world and by striving to maintain all that in an environment sometimes unfavourable and hostile, we were exiles in our own land.'⁵ This inadequacy in our thinking, no accident as we shall see, was in fact continually present, impregnating and rendering awkward the ideological life of the Second Reign, even down to its smallest detail. Sometimes inflated, sometimes trivial, very seldom on the right note, the literary prose of the time is one of the many witnesses of this fact.

Although the causes of this state of affairs are commonplaces of our historiography, their cultural effects have been insufficiently studied. As is well known, we were an agrarian and independent country, divided into latifundia, whose productivity depended on the one hand on slave labour and on the other on a foreign market. The peculiarities we have already mentioned arise more or less directly from this. For instance, bourgeois economic thinking – the priority of profit with all its social implications – was inevitable for us, since it prevailed in international trade, toward which our economy was directed. The constant practice of such trade taught this way of thought to more than a few. Moreover, we had become independent not long ago in the name of French, English and American liberal ideas, which were therefore part of our national identity. On the other hand, with equal necessity, this ideological ensemble had to be at war with slavery and its defenders and yet live with them.⁶ In the realm of belief, the incompatibility between slavery and liberalism is clear, as we have seen. But at the practical level it could also be felt. Inasmuch as he was property, a

slave could be sold, but not fired. In this respect, the free worker gave more freedom to his employer, and immobilized less capital. This is one reason, among others, why slavery set limits to the rationalization of production. Commenting on what he saw on a plantation, a traveller wrote: 'there is no specialization of labour because they try to make economic use of their hands.' After quoting this passage, F. H. Cardoso remarks that here 'economic' does not stand for reducing work to a minimum, but for stretching it to a maximum amount of time. Work had to be made to fill and discipline the day of the slave. In short, the opposite of what was modern. Based on violence and military discipline, slave production could not be ordered around the idea of efficiency.⁷ The rational study and continual modernization of the processes of production, with all the prestige that went with the revolution they were causing in Europe, made no sense in Brazil. To make things more complex, the slave latifundium had been an enterprise of commercial capital from the very beginning, and therefore profit had always been its pivot. However, profit as a subjective priority is common to early forms of capitalism and to more modern ones. So that, up to the time when slave labour became less profitable than wage labour, the 'uncultivated and abominable' slaveowners who sought profit were in fact more thoroughly capitalistic than our defenders of Adam Smith, as capitalism for the latter meant only freedom. In short, the lines of intellectual life were bound to be hopelessly entangled. In matters of rationality, roles were shuffled: economic science became fantasy and morality, obscurantism equalled realism and responsibility, technical considerations were not practical, and altruism sought to bring about the exploitation of labour, etc. And, more generally, in the absence of the point of view of the slaves, who were not organized, the confrontation between humanity and inhumanity, in which no doubt there was a question of justice, ended up in a more earthbound way as a conflict between two modes of investment. Of course, one of the parties found the more spiritual version of this opposition more suitable.⁸

Challenged at every turn by slavery, the liberal ideology – the ideology of the newly emancipated nations of America – was derailed. It would be easy to deduce the resulting incongruities, many of which stirred the mind and conscience of nineteenth-century Brazil. We have already seen some examples. However, they remained oddly inessential. The test of reality did not seem important. It was as if the coherence and generality of thought was of little importance, or rather as if the criteria by which culture was judged were different – but in what way? By its sheer presence, slavery

revealed the inadequacy of liberal ideas; but this does not mean to say that they affected or changed their orientation. Slavery was indeed the basic productive relationship, and yet it was not the social relation directly at work in ideological life. The key lay elsewhere. To find it, we must take up again the country as a whole. To schematize, we can say that colonization, based on the monopoly of the land, produced three classes of population: the proprietor of the latifundium, the slave and the 'free man', who was in fact dependent. Between the first two, the relation is clear. Our argument will hinge on the situation of the third. 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.⁹ The caricature of this 'free man' was the *agregado*.¹⁰ Favour was, therefore, the relationship by which the class of free men reproduced itself, a relationship in which the other member was the propertied class. The field of ideological life is formed by these two classes, and it is governed, therefore, by this relationship.¹¹ Thus, under a thousand forms and names, favour formed and flavoured the whole of the national life, excepting always the basic productive relationship which was secured by force. Favour was present everywhere, combining itself with more or less ease to administration, politics, industry, commerce, the life of the city, the court, and so on. Even professions, such as medicine, or forms of skilled labour, such as printing, which in Europe were on the whole free of favour, were among us governed by it. As the professional depended on favour to exercise his profession, so the small proprietor depended on it for the security of his property, and the public servant for his position. Favour was our quasi-universal social mediation – and being more appealing than slavery, the other relationship inherited from colonial times, it is understandable that our writers based their interpretation of Brazil upon it, thereby unwittingly disguising the violence that had always been essential to the sphere of production.

Slavery gives the lie to liberal ideas; but favour, more insidiously, uses them, for its own purposes, originating a new ideological pattern. The element of arbitrariness, the fluid play of preferences to which favour subjects whatever it touches, cannot be fully rationalized. In Europe, when attacking such irrationalities, universalism had its sights on feudal privilege. In opposing this, bourgeois civilization had postulated the autonomy of the individual, universality of law, culture for its own sake, a day's pay for a day's work, the dignity of labour, etc., against the prerogatives of the *Ancien Régime*. Favour in turn implies the dependency of the individual, the exception to the rule, ornamental culture, arbitrary pay and the servility of

labour. However, Brazil was not to Europe as feudalism was to capitalism. On the contrary, we were a function of European capitalism, and moreover, had never been feudal, for our colonization was the deed of commercial capital. In face of the European achievement, no Brazilian could have had the idea nor the strength to be, let us say, the Kant of favour, giving universality to this social form.¹² In this confrontation, the two principles were not of equal strength: in the sphere of reasoning, principles the European bourgeoisie had developed against arbitrariness and slavery were eagerly adopted; while in practice, sustained by the realities of plantation life, favour continually reasserted itself, with all the feelings and notions that went with it. The same is true of institutions, bureaucracy and justice, for example, which although ruled by patronage affirmed the forms and theories of the modern bourgeois state. As well as the predictable debates, therefore, this antagonism produced a stable coexistence between the two views which is of interest to study. *Once the European ideas and motives took hold, they could serve, and very often did, as a justification, nominally 'objective', for what was unavoidably arbitrary in the practice of favour.* Real as it was, the antagonism vanished into thin air, and the opposing positions walked hand in hand. The effects of this displacement of function were many, and deeply touched our literature, as we will see. Liberalism, which had been an ideology well grounded in appearances, came to stand for the conscious desire to participate in a reality that appearances did not sustain. When he justified arbitrariness by means of some 'rational' reason, the beneficiary consciously exalted himself and his benefactor, who, in turn, had no motive to contradict him, rationality being the highest value of the modern world. Under these conditions, which side believed in the justification? To what appearance did it correspond? But this was not a problem, for what was important was the commendable intention which governed both patronage and gratitude. The symbolic compensation was perhaps a little out of tune, but not ungrateful. Or, we might say, this use of justification was out of harmony with liberalism, but quite in tune with favour, which was, of course, all important. And how better to give lustre to individuals and to the society they establish, than through the most illustrious ideas of their time, which in this case were European? In this context, ideologies do not describe reality, not even falsely, and they do not move according to a law of their own; we shall therefore call them 'ideologies of the second degree'. Their law of movement is a different one, not the one they name; it honours prestige, rather than a desire for system and objectivity. The reasons for this were no secret: the inevitable 'superiority' of Europe, and the demands of

the moment of expression, of self-esteem and fantasy, which are essential to favour. In this way, as we have said before, the test of reality and coherence did not seem to be decisive, notwithstanding its continuous presence as a requirement, recalled or forgotten according to circumstances. Thus, one could methodically call dependence independence, capriciousness utility, exceptions universality, kinship merit, privilege equality, and so on. By linking itself to the practice of what, in principle, it should criticize, liberalism caused thought to lose its footing. Let us not forget, however, the complexity of this step: inasmuch as they became preposterous, these ideas also ceased to mislead.

This was not the only way in which favour and liberalism could meet. However, it was the most complex, all-embracing, and striking of the possible combinations, and in our ideological climate, decisive. For the moment, let us consider but a few aspects of it. We have seen that in this combination, the ideas of the bourgeoisie, ideas whose sober grandeur goes back to the civic and rational spirit of the Enlightenment, take on the function of providing ... ornament and aristocratic style; they attest and celebrate participation in a majestic sphere, in this case the European world in the process of ... industrialization. There could not be a stranger relation between name and function. The historical novelty lies not in the ornamental character of knowledge and culture, part of the colonial and Iberian tradition, but in the extraordinary dissonance created when 'modern' culture is used to this purpose. Is it as impractical as a trinket? Or does it confer distinction upon those who wear it? Could it be our panacea? Should it shame us before the eyes of the world? What is for sure is that in the comings and goings of argument and interest, all these aspects would show up, so that in the minds of the more attentive they were inextricably linked and mixed. Ideological life degraded and elevated its participants all at once, and this was often well known. For this reason, it was an unstable combination which could easily degenerate into the most bitter and hostile criticism. In order to maintain itself, it needed a permanent complicity, a complicity which the practice of favour tended to guarantee. At the moment of the exchange of favours, with its aspect of mutual personal recognition, it was not in the interest of either party to denounce the other, although both had the wherewithal to do so. This ever-renewed complicity had, moreover, heavy implications of class: in the Brazilian context, favour assured both parties, especially the weaker one, that neither was a slave. Even the most miserable of those given favour saw his freedom recognized in this act. All this transformed these exchanges, even if very modest, into a

ceremony conferring social superiority, and therefore valued in itself. Ballasted by the infinite duress and degradation of slavery which it seeks to conjure away, this recognition sustains an extraordinary complicity, made even worse by the adoption of the bourgeois vocabulary of equality, merit, labour and reason. Machado de Assis will be the master of these complexities. Yet there is another side to it. Immersed as we are, still today, in the universe of capital, which did not take classical form in Brazil, we tend to see this combination as being only disadvantage. It may well not have had any advantage, but in order to appreciate it in its complexity, we should keep in mind that the ideas of the European bourgeoisie, initially aimed at privilege, had become apologetic from 1848 on: the wave of social struggles in Europe showed that universality hid class antagonisms.¹³ Therefore, to catch its peculiar tone, we must consider that our improper discourse was hollow even when used properly. We can note in passing, that this pattern will be repeated in the twentieth century, when we have several times sworn fealty to its most bankrupt ideologies on the world stage – in full belief that we are quite up-to-date. In literature, as we shall see, something singular results, an emptying out of what is already hollow. Here again, Machado will be the master.

In short, if we insist upon the extent to which slavery and favour twisted the ideas of the times, it is not in order to dismiss them, but to describe them *qua* twisted – not in line with their own demands. They are recognizably Brazilian in their peculiar distortion. Hence, stepping back from the search for causes, we are still left with that experience of incongruity which was our point of departure: the impression that Brazil gives of ill-assortedness – unmanageable contrasts, disproportions, non-sense, anachronisms, outrageous compromises and the like – the sort of combination which the art of Brazilian Modernism, and later on, Tropicalism, as well as political economy, have taught us to appreciate.¹⁴ Examples abound. Let us look at some, not for the purpose of analysis but to suggest the ubiquity of what we have described and the variation of which it is capable. In the magazines of the time, the statement of purpose in the first issue, whether serious or bantering, is written for bass and falsetto: first, the redeeming purpose of the press is asserted, in the combative tradition of the Enlightenment; the great sect founded by Gutenberg calls for action in the face of indifference; at the heights, youth and the condor, rejecting the past and its prejudices, look toward the future, while the purifying torch of the press banishes the darkness or corruption. Second, accommodating themselves to circumstances, the

magazines declare their goodnaturedness, their eagerness to 'provide all classes, and particularly honest families, a means of delightful instruction and agreeable recreation.' The redeeming intention joins with puzzles, calls for the unity of all Brazilians, dress patterns, practical hints and serial novels.¹⁵ The light verse that serves as the epigraph to *The Marmot in the Court* [During the Empire, the city of Rio was known as the 'Court'] is an unintended caricature of this sequence: 'Here is the marmot/In his variety/He is ever-liked/And by all/He speaks the truth/Says what he feels/Loves and respects/Everyone.' If, in another realm, we scrape our walls a little, we find the same conjunction: 'The change in architecture was superficial. European wallpaper was pasted or hung on slave-built walls of earth, or paintings were hung, in order to create the illusion of modern interiors, like those of industrial Europe. In some cases, the pretence reached the absurd: The painting of Greco-Roman architectural motifs – pilasters, architraves, colonnades, friezes, etc., often done to deceive, suggested a neoclassic setting that could never have been built with the techniques and materials available in Brazil. In other cases, windows were painted on the walls with views of Rio de Janeiro or Europe, suggesting an exterior world quite distant from the real one of slave quarters and slave labor.'¹⁶ This text describes rural homes in the Province of São Paulo in the second half of the nineteenth century. As for the Court: 'Here changes responded to new habits, which included the use of objects of greater refinement – crystal, china and porcelain – and in the adoption of more formal behavior, as in the serving of meals. At the same time these architectural changes gave an appearance of veracity to the whole, which tried to reproduce the life of European homes. The social strata that benefited the most from a slave-system exclusively based on agricultural production, attempted to create an illusion for their own use of an ambience with urban and European characteristics ... thus everything or almost everything had to be imported.'¹⁷ This comedy lives in the remarkable opening chapters of *Quincas Borba*. Under the pressure of opinion, Rubião, a recent heir, must exchange his black slave for a French cook and a Spanish servant, with whom he is not at ease. Besides gold and silver, the metals that speak to his heart, he now buys statuettes of bronze as well – a Faust and a Mephistopheles. A graver matter, but equally under the imprint of the times, is the wording of our hymn to the Republic, written in 1890 by Medeiros e Albuquerque, a self-proclaimed 'decadent' poet. It was progressive and altogether unconvincing. 'We cannot believe that of yore/slaves could have existed in our noble land.' ('Of yore' was but two years

before, abolition having occurred in 1888.) A declaration of the revolutionary government of Pernambuco made many years earlier (1817), sounds just as off, but for opposite reasons: 'Patriots, your properties, even those most repugnant to the ideals of justice, will be held sacred.'¹⁸ It refers to rumours of emancipation, which had to be denied to reassure the owners. The life of Machado de Assis is an example as well; in it, the militant journalist (enthusiastic about 'the workingman's intelligence'), the author of a humorous column and of serious quatrains (the latter commemorating the wedding of the imperial princesses), and the Chevalier of the Order of the Rose follow one another in rapid succession.¹⁹ Against all this Silvio Romero will take the field. 'It is necessary to lay the foundations of a national spirit, conscious of its merits and defects, of its strength and its infirmities, and not concoct a pastiche, a kind of stuffed puppet, which only serves to shame us in the eyes of the foreigner. There is but one way to achieve this desideratum, we must immerse ourselves in the life-giving current of naturalistic and monistic ideas which are transforming the old world.'²⁰ From afar, this substitution of one pastiche for another is so obvious it makes us smile. But it is also dramatic, since it points out to what extent our desire for authenticity had to express itself in an alien language. The romantic pastiche was only superseded by another, this time Naturalism. In sum, in the magazines, in behaviour, in the setting of the home, in national symbols, in revolutionary proclamations, in theory and in everything else, always the same 'harlequin' composition, to use Mário de Andrade's word: the dissonance between representations, and what, upon consideration, we know to be their context.

The combination of latifundia and unfree labour, given durability by its important role in the international market, and later, by internal politics, stood firm through Colony, Emperors and Regencies, through Abolition, the First Republic, and even now is a matter of debate and bullets.²¹ Our ideological life, no less determined by national dependency, did vary: at a distance, it followed in the steps of Europe. (Let us point out that it is only the ideology of independence which turns this into a problem; foolishly when it insists on an impossible cultural autonomy; profoundly, when it reflects upon what was truly possible.) The tenacity of the basic social relationships and the ideological volatility of the 'elite' were both a part of the dynamics of capitalism as an international system, the part that it was ours to live out. The latifundia, little changed, saw the baroque, neoclassic, romantic, naturalist and modernist cultures pass by, cultures which in Europe reflected immense transformations in its social order. We could

well suppose that here they would lose their point, which in part did occur. But this loss, to which we were condemned by the working of the international system of colonialism, condemned the working of that very system itself. We say this to indicate its more-than-national significance.

All this was no secret, although not worked out theoretically. For the arts, as opposed to theory, making something of it was easier since there was always a way to adore, quote, ape, sack, adapt or devour these manners and fashions, so that they would reflect, in their defectiveness, a cultural embarrassment in which we would recognize ourselves. Let us go back for a moment. Liberal ideas could not be put into practice, and yet they could not be discarded. They became a part of a special practical situation, which would reproduce itself and not leave them unchanged. Therefore, it does not help to insist on their obvious falsehood. We should rather observe their dynamics, of which this falsehood was a true component. Faced with these ideas, Brazil, the outpost of slavery, was ashamed – for these were taken to be ideas of the time – and resentful, for they served no purpose. But they were also adopted with pride, in an ornamental vein, as a proof of modernity and distinction. And, of course, they were revolutionary when put in the service of Abolitionism. Subordinate to the demands of place, and not losing their original claims, they circled, governed by a peculiar rule whose merits and faults, ambiguities and deceptions were peculiar as well. To know Brazil was to know these displacements, experienced and practised by everyone as a sort of fate, for which, however, there was no proper name, since the improper use of names was part of its nature. Widely felt to be a defect, well-known but little reflected upon, 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, and compatible, besides, with a good deal of talk. Pushed a bit further, it will produce the astonishing force of Machado de Assis' vision. Now, the ground of this scepticism surely lies not in the reflective exploration of the limits of liberal thought. It rather lies in an intuitive starting point, which spared us this effort. Embedded in a system they did not describe, even in appearance, the ideas of the bourgeoisie saw everyday life invalidate their pretension to universality from the very beginning. If they were accepted, they were so for reasons they themselves could not accept. Instead of functioning as the horizon of thought, they appeared on a vaster background which rendered them relative: the back-and-forth of arbitrariness and favour. The ground of its claims to universality was shaken. Thus, what in Europe was a great

critical feat, could among us be ordinary incredulity. Utilitarianism, egoism, formalism, and the like, were clothes to be worn on occasion, perhaps fashionable, but uncomfortably tight. Thus we see that this world is of consequence 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. In such wise, our national oddities became world-historical. Perhaps this is comparable to what happened in Russian literature. Faced with the latter, even the greatest novels of the French realism seem naïve. And why? In spite of their claims to universality, the psychology of rational egoism and the ethics of Enlightenment appeared in the Russian Empire as a 'foreign' ideology, and therefore, a localized and relative one. Sustained by its historical backwardness, Russia forced the bourgeois novel to face a more complex reality. The comic figure of the Westernizer, Francophile or Germanophile (frequently under an allegorical or ridiculous name), the ideologies of progress, of liberalism, of reason, all these were ways of bringing into the foreground the modernization that came with Capital. These enlightened men proved themselves to be lunatics, thieves, opportunists, cruel, vain and parasitical. The system of ambiguities growing out of the local use of bourgeois ideas – one of the keys to the Russian novel – is not unlike the one we described for Brazil. The social reasons for this similarity are clear. In Russia, too, modernization would lose itself in the infinite extent of territory and of social inertia, and would clash with serfdom or its vestiges – a clash many felt 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. The extreme form of this confrontation, in which progress is a disaster and backwardness a shame, is one of the springs of Russian literature. Whatever the difference in stature, there is in Machado – for the reasons that I have pointed out – something similar, something of Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Goncharov and Chekhov.²² Let us say, then, that the very debasement of thought among us, of which we were so bitterly aware, and which today stifles the student of our nineteenth century, was a sore spot of the world-historical process and for this reason a valuable clue to it.²³

In the process of reproducing its social order, Brazil unceasingly affirms and reaffirms European ideas, always improperly. In their quality of being improper, they will be material and a problem for literature. The writer may well not know this, nor does he need to, in order to use them. But he will be off-key unless he feels, notes, and develops – or wholly avoids – this

aspect. And although there is an indefinite number of solutions to the problem, violations are palpable and definite. Their non-artistic names are ingenuousness, loquacity, narrow-mindedness, aping, provinciality, etc., the specific and local effects of an alienation with long arms – the consequences of the lack of social transparency, imposed, first, by our colonial situation and later on by our dependency. For all that, the reader has learned very little about Brazilian history, literary or general, and we have not placed Machado de Assis. What is then the use of what has been said so far? Instead of a literary history set within a social ‘panorama’, a construction always suggestive and true to a certain extent, but necessarily vague, I have tried a different solution. I have sought to specify a social mechanism in the form in which it became an internal and active element of our culture: the inescapable difficulty which Brazil forced upon its cultivated men in the very process of its social reproduction. In other words, an analysis of the ground of intellectual experience. I have tried to see in the movement of our ideas something that made us singular, starting from the common observation, almost a feeling, that in Brazil ideas were off-centre in relation to European usage. And I have presented a historical explanation for this displacement, an explanation which brought in relations of production and parasitism in Brazil, our economic dependency and its counterpart, the intellectual hegemony of Europe, revolutionized by capital. In short, in order to analyse 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. Now, the everyday movement of ideas and practical perspectives was the obvious and natural material for literature, once the fixed forms had lost their validity in the arts. It was, therefore, the point of departure for the novel, even more so, the realistic novel. Thus, what we have described is the manner in which the movement of world history, in its cryptic and local results, repeated again and again, passes into writing, which it now determines from the inside – whether or not the writer knows or wills it. In other words, we have defined a vast and heterogeneous, but structured, field, which is a historical *consequence*, and can be an artistic *origin*. While studying it, we saw that it differs from the European field, although using the same vocabulary. Therefore, difference, comparison and distance are part of its very definition: sometimes reason is on our side, sometimes it belongs to others, but it always appears in an ambiguous light. The result is an equally singular chemistry the affinities and antipathies of which we have described to some extent. It is only natural that such

material should propose original problems to the literature that depends on it. As a final observation, let us only say that, contrary to what is generally thought, the material of the artist turns out not to be shapeless: it is historically shaped and in some way registers the social process to which it owes its existence. In shaping it, in turn, the writer superimposes form upon form, and the depth, force, and complexity of the artistic results will depend upon the success of this operation, of this relation to the pre-formed material in which the energies of history lie. The match of forms is not obvious. And, one more variation of the same theme, let us conclude by saying that even when dealing with the most modest matters of everyday life, the subject matter of our novelists has always been world-historical. This they shaped as well as they could, but it would not have been their subject, had they dealt with it directly.

Notes

1. A. R. de Torres Bandeira, 'A liberdade do trabalho e a concorrência, seu efeito, so prejudiciais à classe operária?', in *O Futuro*, No. IX, 1-15-1863. Machado was a frequent contributor to this magazine.

2. *A Polêmica Alencar-Nabuco*, organization and introduction by Afrânio Coutinho, Tempo Brasileiro, ed., Rio de Janeiro, 1965, p. 106.

3. Deposition of a commercial firm, M. Wright & Cia., regarding the financial crisis of the 1850s. Cited by Joaquim Nabuco, *Um Estadista do Império*, São Paulo, 1936, Vol. I, p. 188, and again by S. B. de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, J. Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1956, p. 96.

4. E. Viotti da Costa, 'Introdução ao estudo da Emancipação política,' in C. G. Mota ed., *Brasil em Perspectiva*, Difusão Européia do Livro, São Paulo, 1968.

5. Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, p. 15.

6. E. Viotti da Costa, 'Introdução'.

7. F. H. Cardoso, *Capitalismo e Escravidão*, Difusão Européia do Livro, São Paulo, 1962, pp. 189-91 and 198.

8. As Felipe de Alencastro remarks in an as yet unpublished work, the true national question of our nineteenth century was the defence of the slave traffic in the face of English pressure. A question that could not be less attractive to intellectual enthusiasm.

9. For a more complete discussion of the subject, see Maria Sylvania de Carvalho Franco, *Homens Livres na Ordem Escravocrata*, Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros, S. P., 1969.

10. *Agregado* roughly means a man of no property, totally dependent upon a family with property, but still not a slave.

11. On the ideological effects of latifundia, see Chapter III of *Raízes do Brasil*, 'A herança rural'.

12. As Machado de Assis remarks in 1879, 'the external impact determines the direction of our movement; for the time being in our environment, the force necessary for the creation of new doctrines is lacking.' Cf. 'A nova geração', *Obra Completa*, Aguilar, Rio de Janeiro, 1959, Vol. III, pp. 826-7.

13. G. Lukács, 'Marx und das Problem des Ideologischen Verfalls', in *Probleme des*

Realismus; Werke, Vol. 4, Luchterhand, Neuwied.

14. Dealt with in a different manner, the same observation can be found in Sérgio Buarque: 'We may construct excellent works, enrich our humanity with new and unforeseen aspects, bring to perfection the type of civilization we represent: still, what is certain is that the consequences of both our efforts and of our laziness seems to take part in a system proper to another climate and a different landscape' (*op. cit.*, p. 15).

15. See the 'prospecto' in *O Espelho*, a weekly magazine of literature, fashion, crafts and the arts, Typographia de F. de Paula Brito, R. J., 1859, No. 1, p. 1; 'Introdução' in *Revista Fluminense*, a weekly for news, literature, science, pastimes, etc., Year 1, No. 1, November 1868, pp. 1 and 2; *A Marmota na Corte*, Typographia de Paula Brito, No. 1, 7 September, 1840, p. 1; *Revista Ilustrada*, published by Angelo Agostini, Rio de Janeiro, 1 January, 1876, No. 1, 'Apresentação' in *O Bezouro*, a humorous and satiric periodical, Year 1, No. 1, 6 April, 1878: 'Cavaco', in *O Cabrião*, No. 1, Typ. Imperial, São Paulo, 1866, p. 2.

16. Nestor Goulart Reis Filho, *Arquitetura Residencial Brasileira no Século XIX*, manuscript, pp. 14-15.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

18. Viotti da Costa, 'Introdução'.

19. Jean-Michel Massa, *A juventude de Machado de Assis*, Civilização Brasileira ed., Rio de Janeiro, 1971, pp. 265, 435, 568.

20. S. Romero, *Ensaio de Crítica Parlamentar*, Moreira, Maximino & Cia., Rio de Janeiro, 1883, p. 15.

21. For the reasons for this inertia, see Celso Furtado, *Formação econômica do Brasil*, Companhia Editora Nacional, São Paulo, 1971.

22. For an exacting analysis of our ideological problems, in a manner somewhat different from my own, see Paula Beiguelman, *Teoria e Ação no Pensamento Abolicionista*, Vol. 1, in *Formação Política do Brasil*, Livraria Pioneira ed., S. Paulo, 1967. In her book there are several quotations which seem to come from Russian novels. For example, the following from Pereira Barreto: 'On one side are the abolitionists, riding upon a sentimental rhetoric and armed with a revolutionary metaphysics, pursuing abstract types in order to turn them into social formulas; on the other side are the land-owners, silent and humiliated, in the attitude of those who recognize their guilt or meditate an impossible revenge.' P. Barreto was the proponent of a scientific agriculture - in the avant-garde of coffee cultivation - and he believed that abolition should be an automatic consequence of agricultural progress. Besides, he considered negroes to be an inferior race; it was a disgrace to depend upon them, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

23. Antonio Candido offers suggestive ideas on this matter. He tries to identify a tradition rooted in the social type we call 'Malandro' (rogue) in our literature. See his 'Dialética da Malandragem,' in *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, São Paulo, 1970, No. 8, and the paragraphs on 'anthropophagy,' an ironic theory of the 1920s concerning Brazil's incorporation of foreign cultures, in 'Digressão sentimental sobre Oswald de Andrade,' in *Vários Escritos*, Livraria Duas Cidades, São Paulo, 1970, p. 84 et seq.