

TIME BETWEEN SPACES:  
THE BLACK ATLANTIC AND THE RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY  
OF SLAVERY IN BRAZIL

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O iáíá, meu sinhô mandou chamá

Eu dei um nó guardei a ponta  
Você não vai desatá, ô iáíá

O iáíá, meu sinhô mandou chamá

Pois tanto faz cê dá no nego  
Como no nego não dá, ô iáíá

O iáíá, meu sinhô mandou chamá  
*Capoeira song*

## INTRODUCTION

### The content of empty time

The varieties of History<sup>1</sup> that have been trying to specify their particular *modus operandi* by using specialised qualifications such as global, transnational, transregional, translocal, cross-national, cross-border, entangled, shared, connected, etc. have been occasionally presented as the historiographical part of a larger “spatial turn”.

As these self-denominations suggest, the space taken as subject matter is here constituted by the relation of assemblages, which thus enjoy an epistemological precedence over other units of analysis that correspond to territorial frameworks—be it a city, a region, a continent or, as a master-unit, the nation-state (to which an infra-unit like a city will always belong to, or a supra-unit like a region or continent will consist of). Rather than in endogenous change, these approaches focus on the interaction, on relations and processes, in short, on what might have happened between, across and through those usual units of analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> In this work, “History” (with a capital H) refers exclusively to historiography. The word will be capitalised also in its derivations, so, expressions like “Historical writing”, “Historical event” or “Historical explanation” as well as the noun “Historian(s)” will be found too. This orthographical artifice aims at stressing the double character of the epistemologically privileged position occupied by this particular form of representation of the past. “Capitalisation” links here, first, the grammatical use of the majuscule with History’s claim of precedence in what concerns the issues of truth and truthfulness. Under certain circumstances, some Historians would not refrain from stating that there are those who write “History with a capital H”, namely they themselves, and those who just tell stories, even if they do write them. In this latter case, we had to do with “lower case”, “minuscule” representations of the past—or “minor pasts” in Chakrabarty’s formulation (Chakrabarty 2000: 100–101)—which offered either no or feeble truth warrants. The second meaning of “capitalisation” refers to its economic root and points to the problems involving scholarly research in an atmosphere saturated by the tension between the elitism of the Humboldtian ideal of university and the financial and bureaucratic pressures coming from the implementation of the so-called “Bologna Process” in Germany (Pechar 2012; Menninghaus 2009; Müller-Schöll 2009).

As a result, a new vocabulary comprised by spatial metaphors such as network, territoriality, geopolitics, fractals, flows, circulations, rhizome, etc. emerges. As Sebastian Conrad remarks, it “tend[s] to replace an older temporal vocabulary of development, time lag, and backwardness. This also implies a rejection of the teleologies of modernization theory” (Conrad 2016: 66); a rejection that is at once a critique both of methodological nationalism and of the idea that social change follows a unidirectional trajectory that conducts necessarily to Western modernity.

The following thesis is a contribution to this discussion, and one that tackles a sore point: the question of long-term Historical continuity. In fact, the very effort to avoid the almost irresistible naturalness of the idea that the History of any social phenomena can be phrased in terms that eventually amounts to the formula “from the archaic to the modern” begs the question of how to define modernity in the first place and, consequently, open up the Pandora’s box from which will fly, perhaps at first, the conceptual (d)evils of the *Entzauberung der Welt* and of the development of capitalism, but soon afterwards those of colonialism, colonial slavery, imperialism, etc. All these events reach, when seen from the viewpoint of the social sciences, the temporal range of the long-term. And the social sciences have been, in turn, a major element in the constitution and establishment of another long-term event that renders fundamentally paradoxical and implausible their own attempts at dismissing modernity’s teleology: Eurocentrism.

In some academic circles, and global History and its variants belong to them, to stress the importance of being self-reflective on the issue of Eurocentrism is meanwhile an almost mandatory concern. It would be deleterious to allow this concern to degenerate into a sort of usual commonplace remark whose effect does not go further than the performance of a renewed Eurocentric and complacent self-aggrandisement.

The problem, of course, is that the very rhetoric of “scientificity” in matters related to the analysis of social phenomena makes that pronounced Eurocentric perspectives seize hold of the position of analytical condition of possibility. Eurocentrism turns out to be thus so pervasive that the question might no longer be how *not to be* Eurocentric but rather how to conceive a critical<sup>2</sup> discursive construct that, while assumedly Eurocentric, must be

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<sup>2</sup> This “critical” attitude meaning, as Michel Foucault suggests, “die Kunst nicht *dermaßen* regiert zu werden” (Foucault 1992: 12 – emphasis added), where “*dermaßen*” refers to the degree of Eurocentrism’s epistemological power.

articulated, if not entirely outside the scholarly protocols of the social scientific institution, then at least not completely in conformity with it. This thesis is an attempt to unfold an epistemological argument in this way.

There is one<sup>3</sup> very precise reason why the ideas presented by Paul Gilroy in his *Black Atlantic – Modernity and Double Consciousness* provide adequate theoretical guidance on how to accomplish such a task in the disciplinary field of History. It is not only that in placing the issue of colonial slavery in the center of the discussion on modernity he keeps the focus on (one) of its so-called “dark-side(s)” or, as it were to say, he casts a shadow upon the brightness of the enlightened principles of modernity. This is significant because it can be used to re-periodise and re-accentuate historiographical accounts that, concerned with a re-assessment of the weight of colonialism and scientific racism in modernity’s development, would offer a stern rebuke to the alluring idea of history as progress and thus provide an opportunity

To transcend the unproductive debate between Eurocentric rationalism which banishes the slave experience from its accounts of modernity while arguing that the crises of modernity can be resolved from within, and an equally occidental anti-humanism which locates the origins of modernity’s current crises in the shortcoming of the Enlightenment project.” (Gilroy 1993: 54)

But perhaps even more important than that is the fact that Paul Gilroy performs his analysis by suggesting that substantial epistemological force might be derived from the very transnational and transcultural forms integral to the counterculture of modernity that he calls the Black Atlantic World. One could say, resorting to the conceptualisation Gilroy borrows from Seyla Benhabib, that one might engage in a “politics of [academic] fulfillment” through the deliberately more opaque means of a “politics of transfiguration”<sup>4</sup>. This is another way of asserting that a critique of “modern” historiography, likewise the critique of modernity itself,

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<sup>3</sup> An excursus on the debates that Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic – Modernity and Double Consciousness* have sparked off in variegated disciplines over the last decades would show that, in addition to the point emphasised in this thesis, there are many others that explain the diffusion and influence of Gilroy’s ideas for underpinning critical perspectives on Eurocentrism. (Costa 2007, 2008, 2011; Olmos 2009; Williams 2013)

<sup>4</sup> Seyla Benhabib uses the terms “fulfillment” and “transfiguration” to refer to two different projects of emancipation that she conceptualises as follows: “By the term “fulfillment” I mean a view of social transformation according to which emancipation carries to its conclusion, in a better and more adequate form, the already attained results of the present. Emancipation is realising the implicit but frustrated potential of the present. The term “transfiguration”, by contrast, is intended to suggest that emancipation signifies a radical and qualitative break with some aspects of the present. In certain fundamental ways, the society of the future is viewed to be, not the culmination, but the radical negation of the present.” (Benhabib 1986: 41–42)

“cannot be satisfactorily completed within its own philosophical and political norms, that is, immanently.” (Gilroy 1993: 56)<sup>5</sup>

The question of how to conceive and construct long-term continuity of social phenomena in historiographical writing is an ideal locus for such a critique, for it is the region of Historical knowledge where the hard empiricism associated with the intense work with primary sources characteristic of the Historian’s craft is softened by the ostensive necessity of emphasising abstract constructs and theoretical pre-assumptions taken from the neighbouring social scientific disciplines.

Small wonder then, that one of the most influential theoretical contributions of History to the body of the social sciences (Rojas 1999; Wallerstein 2004; Lee 2012), namely, Fernand Braudel’s concept of *longue durée*, addresses precisely this matter. Braudel does it by bringing to the fore the intractable issue of Historical time, i.e., the problem of the nature and status of temporal categories in History. This feature reinforces the traditional association of History with a deep concern with, or privileged access to, time in human affairs. Along these lines, History would then be the field of knowledge in the best position to provide an analysis that demonstrated the centrality of time as an explicit conceptual category within the social sciences.

Braudel’s works has played an important role in the firm establishment of the scholarly habitus of thinking about Historical time in terms of a multiplicity of temporalities which are based on the distinction between three main types of continuity: the short-term or episodic (*évènementielle*), the term of cyclical phases (*conjoncture*) and the long-term (*longue durée*). History, Braudel writes, is nothing other than this “dialectic of continuities” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 258). The most important of these continuities is, of course, the one that lends its name to the concept itself: the *longue durée*. This evinces how much Braudel was concerned with conceiving an analytical framework that would enable one to grasp historical continuity in a non-linear way, and especially in that dimension in which accomplishing this task seemed to be most troublesome.

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<sup>5</sup> Such a positioning challenges not only a defeatist, paralyzing or cynical acknowledgement of Eurocentrism’s inevitability, but also, firstly, the well-intentioned but often ineffective mere “recommendation” of a “critical” attitude towards it and, secondly, that complacent stance characterized by conspicuous anti-Eurocentric statements always eager to celebrate the power and greatness of its own self-reflectivity while “trivializes the potency of the negative”. (Gilroy 1993: 56)

Contemporary scholars engaged in developing a robust critique of Eurocentrism have not failed to recognise this remarkable feature of Braudel's work. Olaf Kaltmeier points out that postcolonial authors have been explicitly using Braudel's concept of *longue durée* in order to expose the resistant permanence of deeply rooted colonial structures after the formal end of colonialism (Kaltmeier 2011: 205). Mielants' words best summarize what one should expect from Braudel's concept:

"If one can traverse the micro, meso and macro levels as Braudel did, from the structures of daily life to the wheels of commerce and ultimately a perspective of the world, one is inevitably forced to rethink Eurocentric epistemological assumptions about temporal linearity. [...] One major challenge of mainstream social science is to overcome its Eurocentric limitations in an attempt to make Western models 'fit' the non-West." (Mielants 2012: 206)

Still, contrarily as one may perhaps infer from these somehow excessively flattering statements, it would be misleading to think of Braudel's *longue durée* as intrinsically non-Eurocentric. Steve Feierman<sup>6</sup> emphasizes that "Braudel selbst konnte aus einer Geschichte der Welt mit Europa in ihrem Zentrum und nur einer Entwicklungslinie nicht ausbrechen" (Feierman 2002: 55).

Such a History, as Walter Benjamin cunningly observes, "cannot be sundered from the idea of its progression through an homogenous, empty time." But History, so reads Benjamin's fabulous insight, "is the subject of a structure whose site is not a homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]"<sup>7</sup> (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 261).

The ambivalence of Braudel's concept towards Eurocentrism lies in its spatial metaphoricity. The *longue durée* provides a relatively simple model by means of which continuities in Historical time are conceived in terms of a spatialised structure<sup>8</sup> that allows for eschewing the smooth temporal linearity that evolutionarily leads from the archaic to the modern.

However, in order to look at past events *through* the lenses of the *longue durée*, one must presuppose the Braudelian Historian as a Cartesian subject (Hall [1996] 2011: 601–611), who is able to distinguish clearly between the substance of historical matter and the substance of

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<sup>6</sup> According to Weinstein, Feierman offers "through the creation of multiple macrohistorical narratives" a way out of what she calls "postcolonial dilemma". Under "postcolonial dilemma" should be understood the necessity to explain macro-historical events based on the notion of causation without coming back to the positivist master-narratives. (Weinstein 2005: 88–89)

<sup>7</sup> "Benjamin says "*Jetztzeit*" and indicates by the quotation marks that he does not simply mean an equivalent to *Gegenwart*, that is, *present*. He clearly is thinking of the mystical *nunc stans*." [translator's note]

<sup>8</sup> "Structure", Braudel says, is the most important and useful term in the discussion on *longue durée*; it is, in one word, what the concept is about at all (Braudel [1958] 2012: 248).

Historical thought, who can cut with calculated precision the homogenous mass of the past into three parallel slices and then endow them with qualities precisely defined. Such a subject is however an essential part of an empiricist-historicist view of History, a view that needs to be questioned for the sake of constructing alternative epistemological approaches.

In this sense, it is correct to say that, to the extent to which it is a seminal concept that has been making plain the potential of metaphorical spatialisation as a way of theorising Historical time so as to give rise to abstract constructs that can be turned into an analytical weapon against Eurocentric excesses, Braudel's *longue durée* constitutes a kind of prototype of the work intended to be done in this dissertation. On the other hand, the concept itself will play no significant role in the elaboration of the argument unfolded here, for substantial elements of its epistemological premises as well as typical features of the most influential historiographical current associated with its disciplinary employment are part of that which shall be laid at History's door.

Paul Gilroy also has recourse to a spatial metaphor when he delineates the long-term Historical contour of the Black Atlantic. With the purpose of creating the underlying understanding that fractal patterns of cultural and political affiliation characterise the dynamic between "the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering" which he heuristically calls the 'Black Atlantic world' (Gilroy 1993: 3), he provides a set of concrete Historical events co-related on the basis of criteria of self-similitude. Gilroy does not deny that the selected sample of Historical examples were not the only ones he could have chosen, although he hopes that the fact that they span a century will be taken as evidence for the existence of those fractal patterns (Gilroy 1993: 87–88). Then, he explains that he was "*thinking of fractal geometry as an analogy [...] because it allows for the possibility that a line of infinite length can enclose a finite area. The opposition between totality and infinity is thus recast in a striking image of the scope for agency in restricted conditions.*" (Gilroy 1993: 237 – emphasis added)

According to Braudel's terminology, something that spans over a century would fall into the category of those things of "sustained breath", its history being of a long—even a very long—duration: the *longue durée* (Braudel [1958] 2012: 244). In the spatial language that Braudel uses to illustrate this idea, such long-term events would form the depths of the "whole thick reality of history" (Braudel [1958] 2012: 246). They would be there, where things remain

almost the same in spite of the disturbances in their surface. The slow pace of their historical development would be considered the reason of their long permanence, and thus of their existence in the present.

In the understanding suggested by Gilroy, where the events are presented as fragments thought to be part of the structure of a fractal pattern, the core of the problem is displaced from the presumed inherent characteristic of the Historicised phenomenon, e.g. the slow pace of its historical development, to the forms of recognition which allow it to be regarded as being of long-term. On top of that are the relations of force—the re-presentation of agency—that give the shape to every representation of the past.

According to Benoit Mandelbrot, who coined the mathematical term “fractal”, this geometric conception of space was thought to study the patterns of the natural world whose forms are, for all practical purposes, infinite. These are forms that “Euclides leaves aside as being formless”. Fractal geometry endeavors “to investigate the morphology of the ‘amorphous’”. (Mandelbrot 1983: 13)

In this sense, fractal spatiality, if employed to conceive abstract representations of historical continuity, would require the mobilisation of a vocabulary and imagery which compels one to consider history’s infinitude and shapelessness without straightaway dismissing the possibility of recognising patterns and boundaries, which, in turn, must not be presented as if they were derived from an infallible Euclidian (or Cartesian) logic. Furthermore, in such spatiality there is no room for hidden elements. Thus, it precludes the mesmerising idea that there are forms of knowledge specialised in unveiling what happens under the visible<sup>9</sup> surface of social reality. In Gilroy’s account the “empty time” is filled up with events that are neither presented as adroitly arranged for the sake of Historical coherence nor as necessary developments derived from a clear-cut pre-established structure. Things that happened earlier do determine<sup>10</sup> the emergence of those which came later into being, but in so far as they result from the agency of a twofold overdetermined subject: those acting in the past, and those representing them historiographically in the present. In this sense, Gilroy opens the door to a prompter

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<sup>9</sup> As Dona Haraway remarks, “vision requires instruments of vision; an optics is a politics of positioning.” (Haraway 1988: 586)

<sup>10</sup> “Determination” bears here Raymond Williams’s sense, that is, it is thought not as the “laws of a whole process”, but as “the setting of limits” and “the exertion of pressures” (Williams [1977] 2009: 83–89).

comprehension of the fact that those who have been writing History are also those who are inscribed in, and ascribed through, the History that has been written.

Historical accounts guided by a fractal sense of Historical spatiality would thus represent an attempt at the fulfillment of Benjamin's messianic wish to advance an understanding of History fiercely hostile to historicism and, by extension, to the most repressive and dispossessing traits of Eurocentric representations of the past. In such Histories, time is neither empty nor homogeneous but *fulfilled* by *Jetztzeit* (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 261; 2006b: 268) or, summarized paradoxically: *Jetztzeit* is the content of History's empty time.

### **Time Between Spaces**

The Black Atlantic is the kind of social process whose existence cannot gain social scientific contour within the container model of society that reduces its analytical focus to the boundaries of the nation-state. It is thus a phenomenon that must be conceived as existing in a state of in-betweenness that negatively stresses the centrality of main unities among which the nation-state, as a dominant political-institutional actor, as well as nationalism, as a powerful ideological discourse, occupy a distinctive position (Wimmer/Glick-Schiller 2002). There are two further main lines of force that share this epistemological privilege: whiteness as Europeanness (also in its US-American derivation) and maleness. This means that to think of the Black Atlantic as an anti-Eurocentric approach entails considering a fundamentally anti-phallogocentric perspective that must also be especially attentive to anti-racist arguments, as they have been advanced in fields such as critical whiteness and critical racial studies.

In fact, it is Gilroy's ability to articulate the issues of experience, identity and corporality on the basis of concepts such as diaspora and difference (Costa 2007: 127–134; 2011: 153–163) that makes his approach attuned to the task of tackling the omnipresent risk of reproducing the master-narrative of Western modernity—with its biased blindness toward issues involving race and gender—within the possible spaces which aim at constructing its actuality “in-between” chief unities that need not to claim for existence at all.

The vocabulary required to bring about such entities is not properly a petty problem. In the case of *The Black Atlantic*, the idea of fractal spatiality is part of the rhetoric arsenal that Paul Gilroy deploys to work it out. This thesis represents an attempt to elaborate on Gilroy's insight so as to draw the sketch of a metaphorical model of Historical time especially concerned with

long-term continuity. In a (narrow) sense, this is the ideal and ultimate goal of this dissertation.

Still, it is important to underline that in *The Black Atlantic* the notion of fractal spatiality is by no means conceived of as a theoretical or methodological contribution to the conduction of historiographical research. In point of fact, whereas fractal spatiality harmonises very well with the critical undertaking represented by the type of analysis advanced by Paul Gilroy, it stands in blatant inharmonious relation to the prevailing understanding of some indispensable concepts usually employed within the historiographical milieu. For this reason, a reflection on History's disciplinary<sup>11</sup> vocabulary imposes itself as a welcome epistemological necessity that will be gladly satisfied in the course of this dissertation. Even more gladly to the extent that it will be also an extended meditation<sup>12</sup> on colonial slavery presented in the form of a circumstanced review of the recent Brazilian historiographical production about the issue. The general strategy employed for carrying out this task will be fairly simple: widespread disciplinary understandings of a selected group of concepts will be submitted to a "commentative<sup>13</sup> analysis" whose purpose is to endow them with other meanings. There is

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<sup>11</sup> "Disciplinary" bears here not only its usual academic meaning but also that sense of a power as theorised by Michel Foucault. Foucault argues that in any society "there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association." The "disciplinary power" exposes, as Foucault would say, "the *how* of power". It is not overly concerned with repression, restriction and punishment but rather with the "production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge—methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control." This type of power "never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit." It is in this sense that even though they are "extraordinarily inventive participants in the order of these knowledge-producing apparatuses [of control] [...] disciplines are the bearers of a discourse, but this cannot be the discourse of right. The disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks of a rule, but this is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not of law but that of normalisation. Their reference is to a theoretical horizon which of necessity has nothing common with the edifice of right. *It is human science which constitutes their domain [...]*" (Foucault 1980: 92–93; 102; 106–107 - emphasis added).

From the consideration that "normalisation" is what is at stake with respect to the "disciplinary power" of History, one can then easily infer the strategic importance of the concern with its semantic vocabulary.

<sup>12</sup> This "extended meditation" is conducted throughout in a state of mind that Paul Gilroy defines as "unhappy consciousness", which is one that demands a rethinking of the "meanings of rationality, autonomy, reflection, subjectivity, and power in the light of an extended meditation both on the condition of the slaves and on the suggestion that the racial terror is not merely compatible with occidental rationality but cheerfully complicit with it." (Gilroy 1993: 56)

<sup>13</sup> The "commentary" is thought here as one of those "internal rules, where discourse exercises its own control; rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution." It is, according to Foucault, a procedure involved in the mastery of a precise dimension of discourse: that of events and chance. (Foucault 1972: 220)

no ambition to create new meanings. If something at all might be considered new in this operation, this will not be the meanings themselves, but perhaps the particular way and context in which they are attributed. It is fair to characterise such an analysis as a semantic exploration theoretically oriented towards an epistemological comprehension of historiographical representation that, using Spivak's words, aims at fraying the textile of History into *frayages*<sup>14</sup> or facilitations that breach open<sup>15</sup> a way for post-colonial thinking (Spivak [1993] 2009: 202).

The concepts chosen as subject of this exploration are organised in pairs: ideology/anachronism, History/theory of History, time/event. In a manner that will grow intelligible in the course of the dissertation, anachronism constitutes the content of ideology (in the writing of History) in a way similar to that in which theory of History constitutes the content of History while, concurrently, event constitutes the content of time. This means to say that the notion of fractality was mobilised not only in the choice of the concepts but also in their pairing, which follows a parallel guided by the fractal principle of self-similitude. Further, the reader will notice that the very structure of the dissertation adheres to this latter principle: Part One is comprised of three chapters which, addressing those three pairs of concepts, are literal and respectively entitled after them. Part Two replicates this same structure. After Part One and before Part Two there is a Transition, a chapter that neither deals with those three pairs of concepts nor, accordingly, repeats the formal subtitle-structure of the two others parts. It symbolizes a temporalized boundary that stands for the indelible in-between element that through its very difference defines the mutual form of every unit in the absolute contiguity of a fractal.

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"Whatever the techniques employed, commentary's only role is to say *finally*, what has silently been articulated *deep down*. It must—and the paradox is ever-changing yet inescapable—say, for the first time, what has already been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said. The infinite rippling of commentary is agitated from within by the dream of masked repetition: in the distance there is, perhaps, nothing other than what was there at the point of departure: simple recitation. Commentary averts the chance element of discourse by giving it its due: it gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text itself which is uttered and, in some ways, finalised. The open multiplicity, the fortuitousness, is transferred, by the principle of commentary, from what is liable to be said to the number, the form, the masks and the circumstances of repetition. The novelty lies no longer in what is said, but in its reappearance." (Foucault 1972: 221)

<sup>14</sup> "Facilitation' is the English translation of the Freudian term *Bahnung* (pathing) which is translated as *frayage* in French." (Spivak [1993] 2009: 352)

<sup>15</sup> The idea of "breaching" may appear awkward when related to "facilitation". Yet, as Alan Bass, the translator of Derrida's *L'écriture et la différence*, remarks concerning Derrida's translation of Freud's *Bahnung* into *frayage*: "Breaching' is clumsy, but it is crucial to maintain the sense of the *force* that breaks open a pathway, and the *space* opened by this force." (Derrida 1978: 329)

Part One is entitled “Articulating History and Linguistic Turn”, where “articulation” bears that “nice double meaning” to which Stuart Hall draws attention:

“‘articulate’ means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an ‘articulated’ lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken.” (Hall 1996a: 141)

It articulates thus not only two contingent subject matters—a particular current of the “linguistic turn” *and* History—but also a specific stance on Historical knowledge. Taken as a whole, this part represents a strong epistemological statement. Analytical philosophy of History, particularly the works of Arthur Danto, Louis Mink and Frank Ankersmit, authors who have played a significant role in the later developments of theory of History, provides the main code used for constructing a theoretical framework within which postcolonial arguments—at this point represented chiefly by Gayatri C. Spivak and Dipesh Chakrabarty—are mobilized in order to sediment some epistemological propositions on which that sketch of a metaphorical model of Historical time based on fractal spatiality could be premised upon.

“Ideology and Anachronism”, the first chapter of this part, is divided in two sections, which respectively deal with each one of these subjects.

In “The noise of ideology or the sound of historiographical silences”, the first section, Maria Cristina C. Wissenbach’s *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinas – Escravos e forros em São Paulo (1850-1880)* provides the stage where the immanence of “narrative sentences” as well as the creation of “temporal wholes”, both features that ensue from the ontological narrativity of History as theorised by Arthur Danto (Danto [1965] 2007), are highlighted in order to show how ideological positions happen to be occupied.

Without proposing any periodisation, Wissenbach moves back and forth between the events she addresses in such a manner that creates a temporal gap which emerges as the “time of oblivion” (of the historical role of slaves and freedmen) and makes it possible to present contemporary Social History, which her own work is part of, as “rescuer” of those forsaken people. History as “rescuer”, if not “savior” or “emancipator”, of the “wretched of the earth”, who are thus seen as “survivors”, is in fact a recurring motif in the History of Slavery<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> This rhetoric is often mobilised in discussions about whether slave criminality should be regarded as a form of open resistance or whether it was rather a way of accommodation within the constraints of the

In her celebrated essay “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak chose as point of departure a “friendly exchange” between Deleuze and Foucault because the “unguarded practice of conversation” enables “one to glimpse the track of ideology” (Spivak 1988: 272).

Paraphrasing Spivak, it could here be said that the “friendly exchange” between past and present that Wissenbach carries out through her “unguarded practice of moving in time” also enables “one to glimpse the track of ideology”. If a key analytical maneuver for interpreting ideology, as Spivak explains resorting to Pierre Macherey, is to comprehend the importance of listening carefully to “what the work cannot say [...] because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence.” (Spivak 1988: 286), then the relevance of being attentive to the relation of narrativity and Historical time is that it may provide Historians with an analytical tool for “measuring the silences” spoken by the most inexorable features of their craft: the construction of Historical continuity. For the writing of History, the concluding remark of this section reads, few notions may be of greater utility than the one that teaches how to keep a watchful eye not exactly on what can be read between History’s lines, but rather on how to hear the tensed lines of Historical accounts.

The second section, “The treachery of History or History as ‘controlled anachronism’”, was entitled after Magritte’s famous painting “The Treachery of Images”. It develops the argument that in the same way as images can be particularly “treacherous” towards the sense of sight, so can History be respecting the sense of time.

The most elementary evidence that this sense can be duped by History is the fact that Historians are intensive and ostensibly trained to protect themselves against the perils of anachronism<sup>17</sup>. In fact, few attributes can disqualify a Historian’s statement as deeply as being regarded as “anachronic”. Nevertheless, on the basis of an analysis of the works by João José

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slavery system. In stressing that the crimes performed by those who had to live under the burden of slavery was much more a matter of negotiating their surviving than of rebelling against the oppression, the slaves’ everyday life functions as a “floating buffer zone” (Spivak 1988: 285), the mobilisation of which plays a crucial role in the representation of central issues such as the brutality of slavery regime and the slaves’ agency.

The implications of approaching the Brazilian slavery system from this point of view have been sharply criticised by Jacob Gorender. From a Marxist perspective, he argues that some Historians, eager to draw attention to “the world the slaves made” (Genovese 1976), thrust the systemic and economic constraints of slavery excessively into background, so that in the end what results is a kind of rehabilitation of slavery itself. “Neopatriarcalistas”, the term Gorender coins to designate these historiographical works, gives some idea of how highly ideological the atmosphere in which this debate has been conducted is (Gorender 1978).

<sup>17</sup> Evidently, among these perils is that of rough chronological inaccuracy, which is reprobable to the extent that it is more or less easily avoidable. In addition to its lack of importance from an analytical point of view, this type of anachronism is a mistake that professional Historians are rather unlikely to make.

Reis (*Death is a Festival – Funeral Rites and Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*) and Sidney Chalhoub (*Visões da Liberdade – Uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na Corte*), this section expounds the way in which Historical description operates through a studied and permanent time displacement of its agents so as to render anachronism into a sort of condition of possibility of Historical knowledge rather than a danger or an error. Therefore, and in that very sense of exploring the disciplinary semantic of History's field, it is argued that the writing of academic Historical accounts shall be seen as the true practice of a specific mode of "controlled anachronism", which, in consequence, should not be demonised but rather felt as the divine breath that brings History to life.

This whole argument about anachronism is derived from what Arthur Danto calls "the paradoxes of perceptual indiscernibility."<sup>18</sup> The most intelligible examples of such paradoxes are found in the art world, where commonplace objects such as a urinal (Marcel Duchamp) or soap cardboard boxes (Andy Warhol) were transformed into works of art. The term Danto coins to talk about this "subtle miracle" art can perform is "transfiguration of the commonplace" (Danto 1981: v-vi). Adapting the term to History, Lydia Goehr speaks of "the transformation of the chronicle" as a way of pointing to the similarity between the way in which common artifacts are transfigured into artworks and the way in which Historian's descriptions of common events are transformed into explanations as well as into theory-, interest-, and value-laden assessments (Goehr 2007: xxii).

These remarkably provocative observations also guide Part One's second chapter, which is the one that deals with the pair "History/theory of History". Altogether, this chapter is a long digression that aims basically at eroding the taken for granted disciplinary separation between an empirical-theoretical (historiography) and a meta-theoretical level (theory of History) in History. The kernel of the argument can be condensed in three main propositions. The first one, based on Danto's aesthetics, reads that History should not be thought of comprising an epistemological domain separable from theory of History, for historical accounts are substantially constituted by what they are *theoretically* believed to be. The second proposition establishes that this indivisible theoretical substance of History consists of what Chakrabarty calls "hyperreal Europe", an abstract entity that has remained the implicit but nevertheless

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<sup>18</sup> This is also, according to Danto's view, the general subject to which philosophy is devoted to: philosophy is what enables one to distinguish that which could not be told apart without the aid of some theory (Carrier 1998: 5; Carrol 1998: 19).

sovereign subject of all histories. Finally, the third one, which also draws on Chakrabarty's theorisation of History, refers to the idea that this "hyperreal Europe" should be subjected to a "politics of translation", which, oriented towards *translucence* (or opacity, in Glissant's or Gilroy's terms) instead of *transparency*, may produce Historical difference (instead of lack or incommensurability). (Chakrabarty 2000)

"Time and Event", the third and last chapter of the first half of the dissertation, focuses properly on the subject matter of long-term continuity in Historical writing. "Time" and "event" are two singularly ineffable concepts. Making a reference to Wittgenstein<sup>19</sup>, Frank Ankersmit remarks penetratingly that "in Historical writing: [...] everything is regarded from the perspective of time—but apparently it is precisely this which makes it impossible to speak about time itself." (Ankersmit 2012: 30) History appears here as a kind of Augustinian discipline, schizophrenically repeating to itself: "What is time then? If nobody asks me, I know: but if I were desirous to explain it to one that should ask me, plainly I know not." (Augustine 2014: 239)

Event is another notion whose generality is such that it makes an appropriate definition almost impossible. The makeshift solution is to accept that "an event is never explained, if at all, as an event merely, but always *under a description*" (Mink 1987: 143). In a sense, there is no such a thing as an "event itself" but only "an event under a description".

That the matter involving time and event might grow extremely intricate one can infer from these few philosophical observations. Nevertheless, there is a way of immediately relating "time" [as unspoken or non-referred] and "event" [under a description] that simply assumes that "time is event". Concerning History, a field where time only happens insofar as it results from events that must be in some way or another described, one can easily grasp how much truth is in this assumption.

When a historiographical study aims at covering a chronological time that goes beyond—or far beyond—the one from which its sources originated or to which they can be assigned, Historians have then to deal with the quite ordinary problem of how to establish temporal continuity in a manner that is fairly based on these sources, but which these same sources are

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<sup>19</sup> Wittgenstein's aphorism to which Ankersmit refers runs as follows: "Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye. And from nothing in the field of sight can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye." (Wittgenstein [1922] 2014: 87–88)

not an empirical proof of. This is the moment where some particular types of abstract constructs usually presented as methodological devices play a conspicuous role in Historical writing.

In *A Negregada Instituição*, a prominent work about capoeira in Brazil, the Historian Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares advances the explication that the *Nagoas* and the *Guaiamuns*, the main “malta de capoeiristas”<sup>20</sup> of Rio de Janeiro, had different origins. The *Nagoas*, he explains, were related to Africans and “*Baianos*”, worshipper of the Orishas, or at least close to this religion, whereas the *Guaiamuns* stemmed from a native creole tradition, in this respect being then related to the slaves born in Brazil. (Soares 1994: 39-87)

Soares’ methodological point of departure in attempting to underpin this genealogical hypothesis is Carlo Ginzburg’s “evidential paradigm”, which, as the latter writes, is concerned with the problem of finding intermediary connections between “the abstract depth of the structure and the superficial concreteness of the event” or, put differently, to open up “an intermediary path between the level of the structure and that of the event.” (Ginzburg 1991: 22)

Ginzburg finds in the theorisation on “family resemblances” as formulated in Wittgenstein’s idea of “*übersichtliche Darstellung*” as well as in the cladistics of Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism the keys for transforming a series of events into a “general image that does not have the form of a chronological development” (Ginzburg 1991: 15). Louis Mink, in turn, also influenced by Wittgenstein’s philosophy, suggests that such a form of representation might indeed be a distinctive characteristic of Historical understanding which consisted of comprehending a complex event by “seeing things together” in a total and *synoptic judgment* which cannot be replaced by any analytic technique”. One intriguing consequence which results from accepting this view is that temporal order is removed from its traditional refuge as integral to

“the essence of historical judgment. [...] That events occur sequentially in time means not that the Historian must ‘relive’ them—by reproducing a determinate serial order in his own thought—to understand them, but that *he must in an act of judgment hold together in thought events which no one could experience together.*” (Mink 1987: 84 – emphasis added)

When one comes to understand that what might be termed a long-term Historical event *happens* as this kind of unifying abstract relation among events, the consequence is that chronology, span and pace—elements central to the ordinary disciplinary understanding of

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<sup>20</sup> “Malta” was the name given to the different group of *capoeiristas* in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Rio de Janeiro.

Historical time<sup>21</sup>—become marginal. This gives a hint of where the impression that History constitutes itself not by exposing but by concealing time comes from, as well as explains, to some degree, why Historical time may also be thought of as the result of a logic of [production of] resemblances within which sameness and long duration stand always in intimate relationship.

Having articulated a stance on Historical knowledge by making all these points concerning central conceptual issues, what follows is a transitional chapter that connects Part One's overarching theoretical analysis to the more particular epistemological perspective inspired by Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, which will be advanced in Part Two.

The discussion's guideline of this Transition is that which Michel Foucault defines as "the problem of [Historical] consciousness", which, in the case of the present dissertation, following W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Gilroy, shall be more appropriately denominated "the problem of (counter-hegemonic forms) of double consciousness" in History.

The relevance of taking this step may be perfectly understood if one considers this clear-cut and penetrating thought by Foucault: "Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought" (Foucault 1972: 12). To behave towards this system of thought so as to posit the perspective of a "doubly conscious" subject is then the task set to be performed.

Not by accident, the focus lies here on works, the main claim of which is that they represent the slaves' point of view. In fact, the Brazilian historiography of slavery presents the constitution of the slave's self-consciousness as a process of developing a double consciousness repeatedly expressed in a talk about a "double life", "double role", "double learning" of lives consumed in the pursuing of a type of recognition different from the one they were supposed to deserve.

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<sup>21</sup> These three elements would then be functionally a mere artificial mnemonic by which one can maintain a minimum sense of possible relations of particular events to each other. (Mink 1987: 57)

Kátia Mattoso's *Ser Escravo no Brasil* (1982), Maria Cristina C. Wissenbach's *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas* (1989), and Sydney Chalhoub's *Visões da Liberdade* (1990) are examples of books that put forward such a viewpoint. They form the bulk of the analysis in this chapter<sup>22</sup>. All these works place great emphasises on the slaves' agency with the purpose of presenting them as self-conscious subjects of their own history rather than passive victims<sup>23</sup>. But the vocabulary deployed to carry it out sometimes manifests a patent evolutionist character, like is the case of, for example, Kátia Mattoso's qualification of slave insurrections such as the Malê Revolt as "pre-political"<sup>24</sup>. The evolutionism of Mattoso's scheme "pre-political → political" tends to reproduce itself in a more attenuated manner in the pair "slave → worker" used by Sydney Chalhoub, where the second term of the pair stands for the discipline, assiduity, punctuality and efficiency that shall guide the "modern" rationality of capitalist labour in contrast to the backwardness of slavery, as well as in Wissenbach's "slave → citizen", where "citizenship" means to be torn from the personified tyranny of slavery and enter into a broad community of people freely subjected to the impersonal power of the state.

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<sup>22</sup> The analysis also takes into account other contemporary works, such as Ciro Flamarion Cardoso's *Escravo Ou Camponês - o Protocampesinato Negro nas Américas* (1987), João José Reis' *Rebelião Escrava no Brasil* (1986) and João José Reis & Eduardo da Silva's *Negociação e Conflito: a Resistência Negra no Brasil Escravista* (1989), which held a dialogue with the three main authors chosen. In addition, classics written in the prior decades, such as *Da senzala à Colônia* (1966) by Emilia Viotti da Costa or *O Escravismo Colonial* (1978) by Jacob Gorender as well as more recent studies like Vera Malaguti Batista's *O medo na cidade do Rio de Janeiro* (2003) and Ricardo Figueiredo Pirola's *Jutiça, escravidão e pena de morte* (2012) are addressed in parallel as well.

<sup>23</sup> In a sense, these three books carry out a re-examination of the simplifying equation that presents the relation of violence to self-consciousness as always inversely proportional: the more intense the violence exercised upon a subject, the less shall be the room for the subject's self-consciousness. The thesis at stake here is not an unimportant one, it reads that the assumption of the insane brutality of slavery ought not to conduct to another one, namely, that of the slaves' "social death", which had been schlepped through the ages by anti-black racism until the present time. (Wilderson 2010)

<sup>24</sup> Since the 80s, the fairly evolutionist approach that adopts notions like "pre-political" has been criticised within Brazilian History of Slavery. In *Negociação e Conflito: a resistência negra no Brasil escravista*, Eduardo Silva remarks that: "Essa terminologia de inspiração evolucionista, elaborada com certo cuidado por Eric Hobsbawm, já foi habilmente criticada por nossos antropólogos e historiadores. Eles colocaram as peças no lugar certo: não se trata de uma questão de "pré" ou "pós", trata-se do diferente. Os 'rebeldes primitivos' faziam a política que podiam fazer face aos recursos com que contavam, a sociedade em que viviam e as limitações estruturais que enfrentavam" (Reis/Silva [1989] 2009: 99). In fact, as early as in 1975, Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz argued that Hobsbawm's use of the concepts of "political" and pre-political were "relacionados a julgamentos de valor depreciativos que persistem relativamente às sociedades consideradas pouco desenvolvidas, às camadas sociais inferiores, aos grupos que são classificados como marginais.[...] Numa sociedade e cultura como as atuais, em que a valorização recai sobre o que é moderno, o emprego de termo que encerra o sentido de "antigo" dá forçosamente um sentido negativo e desprestigiado àquilo que foi qualificado." She ends her criticism with a stern admonishment of Hobsbawm: "Assim, não é apenas pelas confusões que o emprego dos termos "pré-político" e "político" traz ao estudioso da sociologia e da ciência política, que seu emprego deve ser abandonado; é também - e principalmente - devido aos juízos de valor que ele contém, e que caracterizam, já dentro de uma certa perspectiva, os fatos por ele qualificados." (Queiroz 1979: 285)

No great amount of perspicacity is required to perceive how much such a mode of explanation brings about a discursive context within which the slaves' agency ended up engendered in a History that is corollary to a subliminal master-narrative of transition to capitalism and modernity. Shall this be unquestioningly accepted as the "point of view of the slaves"?

This is why the chapter is called "The Heart of Blackness". It performs, to speak like Spivak, an "awkward way" of invoking positionality (Spivak 1988: 271), and one which addresses the obvious question of what it means to affirm that one is able to represent the slaves' point of view when one is bounded by the protocols of "modern" historiography.

The reader will notice in this "Transition" the reappearance of a particular feature that will remain present until the conclusion of thesis: the opening of every chapter with epigraphs comprised by excerpts of capoeira, samba and rap songs. Mirroring the sorrow songs of W.E.B Du Bois' *The Souls of the Black Folk* (1903), they are a determinant epistemological source from which sprang vital ideas which, so to speak, set the tempo and the mood of the argument developed in each chapter. The quotation that opens these introductory remarks does the same with the thesis as whole.

"The Heart of Blackness" can also be seen as the textual re-enactment of an intellectual course. Du Bois' stay in Germany, his knowledge of the German language and acquaintance with German idealism, especially with Hegel's philosophy, plays a central role in the development of the ideas that led to the type of critique instantiated in *The Souls of the Black Folk* and which would later impel him to a sharp criticism of his early historiographical writings<sup>25</sup>. (Gilroy 1993: 134–136; Gregg 1998: 77–99)

So, Hegel's ideas, principally his dialectic of the master and the slave, which might be regarded as the epitomised form of his philosophical reflections on consciousness in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, as well as his *Philosophy of History*, provide the starting point for an exercise in Historical writing that, in the end, runs somehow against Du Bois' words, for it in no way aims at yielding "true self-consciousness" by "lifting the veil" of the Other's eyes that creates the "second-sight" proper of the "double consciousness" (Du Bois [1903] 1994: 1-8). This means that there is no attempt at unifying the "double consciousness" in a full and

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<sup>25</sup> It is about his doctoral thesis, *The Suppression of Slave Trade* (1890), a historiographical monograph full of the time-honoured positivism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and which, unsurprisingly, was so well received that a preliminary version was chosen to be read before the American Historical Association at its annual meeting in 1891. The final version was published as the first title in the series of Harvard Historical Studies (Gregg 1998: 77–99; Du Bois 1986: 586).

total position which would characterise “the fetishised perfect subject of oppositional history” (Haraway 1988: 586). “The Heart of Blackness” dares not enjoy the “privilege of partial perspective” but claims the shortcomings of the pretension of universality instead.

In Part Two the analysis of the Brazilian historiography of slavery is intensified to the same extent as the conceptual analysis is funnelled out towards a more precise discernment of the concerns distinctive of the particular comprehension of History, which would be susceptible of underpinning that sketch of a model of Historical time based on the notion of fractal spatiality.

As mentioned above, the three chapters of which Part Two consists were entitled exactly like Part One. Shall this procedure fail to convey the type of suggestive self-reflectivity hinted at by the principle of fractal self-similitude, it may at least grant some certainty that what comes is in fact a re-examination of the preliminary conceptual notes made in the theoretically oriented semantic explorations conducted in the first chapter.

In this sense, the issues of ideology and anachronism are resumed in Part Two’s first chapter. But whereas they had been analysed separately in Part One, they are now considered together through the discussion of a fact about which there is not much quarrel among Historians: no matter their theoretical-methodological affiliations, Historians generally agree that History springs from present concerns and that these concerns play an decisive role in shaping historiographical representations. It is as though they were stating that all History, as in Croce’s famous phrase<sup>26</sup>, is contemporary history.

A fundamental aspect of the problem of the present in History consists of the comprehensible uneasiness provoked by the suspicion that everywhere where the contemporary shines through the historiographical account, it ends up contributing to obfuscate what should be made visible, to wit the past.

Oversimplifying a quite delicate matter, the assumption is more or less that the more “contemporary” a historical account, the more anachronic it may be and, as consequence, the bigger becomes the risk of excessive ideological traces.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “The practical requirements which underlie every historical judgement give to all history the character of ‘contemporary history’ because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate.” (Croce [1938] 2000: 8)

<sup>27</sup> This formulation is drawn on Foucault, who puts the problems as follows:

How it feels it in ordinary historiographical existence is shown through a comparative analysis of the culturalist approach by Eduardo França Paiva and Douglas Cole Libby, both representatives of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, with the Marxist and anti-racist view adopted by Petrônio Domingues in *Uma História não Contada: Negro, racismo e branqueamento em São Paulo no pós-abolição* (2004).

These two positions silence themselves mutually, although not by explicit reference or open debate; rather, they silence themselves in that moment of confluence in which Historians lay bare, first, what and how their work is made of, and second, the reasons why their accounts should follow some specific theoretical-methodological guidelines that meet the demands of their own time.

This whole operation could be rightly called “synchronisation” for, in fact, Historians are here adjusting their conceptual apparatus so that it operates in two times at the same time: the past (of the referred historical facts) and the present (of the Historical representation thereof). On the other hand—and resorting to a cinematic metaphor—it would be analytically seductive instead of “synchronisation”, to translate it into “*Synchronisierung*”, for in German common parlance this word bears a meaning which is absent in English: it also stands for the process of replacing the voice of the actors shown in the screen with those of different performers speaking another language.<sup>28</sup> “*Synchronisierung*” would then *not only* be the process of making theoretical-methodological adjusts so as to correlate the subject (of the past) with the demands (of the present), *but also* the very act of silencing Others’ voice by paradoxically uttering what they had said; and uttering it in a way that ideally grants full meaningfulness: a translation.

It is by now clear that in this explanation the approach to ideology as a “measuring of silences” as well as to History as “controlled anachronism”, as they had been previously denominated, were put together: the silences produced by the refusals one states in dealing with the immanent anachronism of History is what constitutes the ideological dimension of a

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“The more History attempts to transcend its own rootedness in historicity, and the greater the efforts it makes to attain, beyond the historical relativity of its origin and its choices, the sphere of universality, the more clearly it bears the marks of its historical birth, and the more evidently there appears through it the history of which it is itself a part (and this, again, is to be found in Spengler and all the philosophers of history); inversely, the more it accepts its relativity, and the more deeply it sinks into the movement it shares with what it is recounting, then the more it tends to the slenderness of the narrative, and all the positive content it obtained for itself through the human sciences is dissipated.” (Foucault 1970: 371)

<sup>28</sup> In English, “dubbing”, a word that does not convey the idea of temporalisation.

historiographical work. Thus, ideology and controlled anachronism bear a relation of mutual conditioning. The problem is just that, at this point, every ideological position may be as good as any other, for it seems to legitimate itself entirely in its own terms.

A proper answer to the potentially harmful effects of such a relativistic view requires a careful analysis of it in the light of its relationship to the distinction between History and theory of History. So, this is, like in Part One, the subject of the next chapter.

In the chapter “History and theory of History” of Part Two it is argued that a third meaning can be attached to *Synchronisierung* if one, following Shohat/Stam’s analogy<sup>29</sup>, considers that empiricist historiographical approaches constructed in the manner of Ranke function as a kind of Greenwich Mean Time, that is, as a sort of regulating centre of epistemological measurement that establishes the yardstick against which the degree of deviation from the Eurocentric centre of History can be measured in metaphorically temporal figures.

The “measuring of silences” which enables one to discern between ideological positions would then be the “measuring of deviation” from this Eurocentric midpoint. The instrument needed to gauge it takes the form of an examination of the issue of representation in Historical writing.

With these ideas in mind, the production of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens” as well as Petrônio Domingues’ work is reassessed. They fall now into two main categories: the first is that of those who, carrying out a crude form of empiricist analysis, put into practice a naive “representationalist realism” (Kellner 1995: 9; Spivak 1988: 275), the main consequence of which is doing away with the issue of representation. They are devotees of a Rankean-style History supposed to represent the past *that “actually happened”*, rather than of a History that represents the past *as* an actual representation of what happened.<sup>30</sup> Eduardo França Paiva and Douglas Cole Libby belong to this group. In such an approach, the Historian pushes the interpretation to the point at which it becomes entirely transparent: the Historical representation *becomes* then something *through which* one sees the past without seeing that

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<sup>29</sup> “Eurocentrism, like Renaissance perspectives in painting, envisions the world from a single privileged point. It maps the world in a cartography that centralizes and augments Europe while literally “belittling” Africa. The “East” is divided into “Near”, “Middle”, and “Far”, making Europe the arbiter of spatial evaluation, just as *the establishment of Greenwich Mean Time produces England as the regulating centre of temporal measurement.*” (Stam/Shohat 2012: 2 – emphasis added)

<sup>30</sup> Frank Ankersmit recommends distinguishing between “representing *that*” and “representing *as*”. In the first case the accent lies on qualities of what is being represented and in the second case on those of the representation itself. (Ankersmit 1995: 229)

which one is seeing it through. It is, in fact, as if the Historian had arrived at the “actual content of the past”. Here lies the empiricist trap that conflates re-presentation and representation.<sup>31</sup> The second category is of those who work with a conceptual apparatus that allows one to avoid precisely this conflation. Petrônio Domingues’ Marxist point of view is what enables him to do so. Even though he also incurs a raw type of empiricism, he does it by drawing attention to—stead of diverting it from—the essential role of ideology and asymmetries of power in academic historiographical production. This feature grants the issue of representation a place of indelible importance in his account and, in the end, entirely prevents him from claiming that historicist transparency.

Coming back to that sense of *Synchronisierung* inspired by Shohat/Stam’s analogy between the Greenwich Mean Time and Eurocentrism, one may conclude that the historiographical studies by França Paiva und Douglas Cole Libby are *synchronised* with London’s time: they aim at occupying that ideal Eurocentric position. Petrônio Domingues’ work deserves to be greeted with a gesture symbolically sympathetic to its Marxism and *synchronised* perhaps with Trier’s time; that is, in temporal terms its degree of deviation amounts to one grade in time away from the line that separates the “West” from the “Rest”, namely, towards the Orient<sup>32</sup>. Thus, there is no great discrepancy between the plead for “mestiçagem” and “hibridismo” patronized by the group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens” and the cry for radical ethnic otherness raised by Petrônio Domingues: with respect to Eurocentrism as an ideal against which one can measure hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ideological deviations, both may be seen as helplessly Eurocentric attempts to defend History against Eurocentrism.

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<sup>31</sup> One of the points Spivak makes most painstakingly in her *Can the Subaltern Speak* concerns the problematic conflation of two senses of the word “representation”. Analysing Marx’s original texts, she distinguishes between “representation as ‘speaking for’ (*vertreten*), as in politics, and representation as ‘representation’ (*darstellen*), as in art or philosophy.” (Spivak 1988: 275)

<sup>32</sup> The founding legend of Trier, Karl Marx’s birthplace, reads that the city was founded by Trebeta, who is said to be son of Ninus, the legendary King of Assyria and founder of Nineveh (the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire), and stepson of Semiramis, the queen who, in the course of her long reign over Mesopotamia (after Ninus’ death), built Babylon. (Encyclopædia Britannica Online)

The fact that this legend—which connects the History of the town that claims the title of “Germany’s oldest city” with symbolic places in the “Middle West”—is historiographically regarded as a “gelehrte Sage” that has been used for political purposes (Haari-Oberg 1994: 12; 79–86; 165–169; Binsfeld 1984: 7–8) might be taken as an interesting starting point for redrawing the terms of that “political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’).” (Said [1978] 2003: 43) This “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’”, where Western means “superiority” and Oriental “inferiority”, is what Edward Said calls Orientalism. (Said [1978] 2003: 2)

The small degree of deviation attributed to Domingues' *Uma História Não Contada* is yet not at all indifferent. It is tantamount to the slight difference of angle between the fatal and clumsy backwards move that precipitates a pugilist into an even more vulnerable position, and the smart defensive manoeuvre that opens up the possibility of a prompt counterattack. Despite all similitude, the consecution of each of these two movements is distinct to the extent that they have potentially decisive effects on the course of what happens thereafter. In this sense, in order to gain some insight into the type of historiographical account that may ensue from each of those programmatic approaches, two further historiographical studies are analysed in this chapter. The approach preconized by the group "Escravidão e Mestiçagens" is represented by the article "O Braço armado do Senhor" (2008), where the author, Kelmer Mathias, outrageously speculates, for example, whether Joana, an enslaved black woman who had been giving birth to the children of her master throughout her whole life (the first one when she was just fifteen years old), had not been "unfaithful" to him, the master! While writing such asinine comments<sup>33</sup>, Kelmer Mathias argues that his text is chiefly concerned with an exposition of the "*recursos e orientações valorativas*" of the slaves! Although, judging by his account, issues such as the vulnerability to sexual harassment and rape, which were integral to women's experience in general but played an even more determinant role in the experience of black and enslaved women, must not at all be a matter of concern when he writes his HIStory about her, Joana.

Sidney Chalhoub's *A Força da Escravidão – Ilegalidade e Costume no Brasil Oitocentista* (2012) is taken here as the example of a viewpoint near to the one adopted by Petrônio Domingues. Chalhoub's book is a sensitive and in many senses brilliant analysis that shows how endangered the freedom of freeborn people as well as of manumitted blacks was, all throughout the last century of the regime of slavery in Brazil. In pushing to the fore the issue of the precariousness of black people's experience of freedom, he not only explores an avenue that has had little room in the Brazilian History of Slavery hitherto but also makes an innovative critique of what the "rule of law" means as cornerstone both of the nation state and of democracy in Brazil.

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<sup>33</sup> In a case of flagrant and distasteful abuse of [writing style] in approaching Joana's life, Kelmer Mathias does it by using the vulgar expression "pular a cerca": "Por castigo à pulada de cerca de Joana [...]" (Mathias 2008: 106)

With this review of Kelmer Mathias and Sydney Chalhoub's works a course is completed that matches this chapter with its sibling in Part One, in the sense that those three main propositions developed previously will have been addressed again, but now from an even more disciplinary point of view.

In the first moment, on the basis of a reassessment of the works by Eduardo França Paiva and Douglas Cole Libby, representatives of the research group "Escravidão e Mestiçagens", as well as of Petrônio Domingues' book *Uma História Não Contada* (2004), the notion of *Synchronisierung* was explored in order to expound the assumption that Historical accounts are substantially constituted by what they are *theoretically* believed to be. This is the most evident reason why it is not possible to write a historiographical account without writing, by the same token, the theory thereof. Next, the same works were analysed again, but this time with the purpose of seeking to measure their deviation from Eurocentrism understood as an ideal position (the second meaning of *Synchronisierung*). At this point, the manifest intention was to demonstrate how much those works are premised upon that "theoretical skeleton" which Chakrabarty calls "hyperreal Europe". Finally, the appraisal of Kelmer Mathias' "O Braço Armado do Senhor" and of Sidney Chalhoub's *A Força da Escravidão* expresses the concern with the idea of translation (the third meaning of *Synchronisierung*). Chalhoub's book is presented as an exceptional example of translational disruption capable of destabilising asymmetrical relations of power premised upon (excessively) Eurocentric theoretical categories, whereas Kelmer Mathias' article represents the opposing tendency.

In "Time and Event", the last chapter, the issue that constitutes the dissertation's core, i.e., Historical continuity of long-term, is opportunely resumed. Previously it has been argued—adopting the very Wittgensteinian vocabulary of the theoreticians analysed—that a "logic of resemblance" is operative in the construction of long-term Historical continuity. Now, this proposition is considered with respect to the idea of totality.

To address the question of Historical continuity of long-term from the point of view of the discussion about totality is a problem that has occupied Historians since the beginnings of the institutionalisation of the profession (Jay 1984: 74). Frank Ankersmit points out—on the basis of an analysis of the holism of the concept of "historical idea" as formulated by Humboldt and Ranke—the close philosophical kinship between historicism and Hegel's speculative philosophy of history and the latter's concern with totality. Both, he suggests, "seem to be

scions of the same stem and to be more intimately interrelated than is often believed to be the case” (Ankersmit 2012: 15).

It is not an exaggeration to say that a great deal of the holistic bias of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century historicism is still alive and kicking in contemporary Historical discourse. Evidence thereof is the strong and enduring influence of Fernand Braudel’s approach to long-term Historical continuity. With his *longue durée* schema Braudel was perhaps the one who at best managed to combine what Martin Jay calls “longitudinal and latitudinal totalities”<sup>34</sup> so as to put them at the service of History. Doubtless both the methodological rigour and the theoretical approaches that the Annales School adopted from the neighbouring social sciences are elements that grant credibility to Braudel’s ideas. However, it shall be added, and what follows is the thesis advanced in this last chapter, that the remarkable epistemological force of Braudel’s conceptualisation of Historical time lies yet also in the metaphoricity that lends his *longue durée* a “metaphysical pathos”.<sup>35</sup>

In a historiographical account, the metaphor shares its place with an event. How exactly this happens is shown by the example of Luiz Felipe Alencastro’s *O Trato dos Videntes* (2000), a work that has been considered an “instantaneous classic” within the Brazilian historiographical milieu (Ohata 2001: 209). Summarising in very few words a quite long analysis, one can say that in *O Trato dos Videntes*, due to a complex and creative way of dealing with long-term Historical continuity, there was plenty of room for exploring a “black diasporic

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<sup>34</sup> Discussing Hegel’s contribution to the holistic tradition of Western thinking, Martin Jay argues that he, Hegel, “made plausible the ‘longitudinal’ notion of closed yet dynamic totality that incorporated all of history into the whole. [...] Universal history included the past and the future to their farthest reaches because they were ultimately identical. Nothing exists outside the totality of history, which has no external boundary. Hegel’s totality was thus both temporally and spatially immanent.” Jay makes more precise the rather diachronic character of the “longitudinal totality” by distinguishing it from the “latitudinal totality”, which emphasises the spatial and synchronic element in Hegel: “by employing the term ‘totality’ to refer to all coherent entities within the cosmic whole, Hegel encouraged the vision that lesser or partial totalities existed on all levels of the meta-totally. This acceptance of what we have called ‘latitudinal totalities’ meant that any part of a larger whole might itself be considered an organised whole from the perspective of its internal dynamics. Thus reality for Hegel was populated by multitudes of hierarchically linked or horizontally juxtaposed totalities, which defied comprehension through reduction to their components parts. Indeed, the concreteness of the meta-totally depended on the existence of these internally related but differentiated sub-totally.” (Jay 1984: 59)

The programmatic approach Fernand Braudel advances in his “History and the Social Sciences: the *Longue Durée*” might be seen as understanding History as this type of longitudinal and latitudinal [Hegelian] meta-totally. This idea is explained at some length in the course of the chapter.

<sup>35</sup> The “metaphysical pathos” is a term coined by Arthur Lovejoy to name one of the “dynamic units” that should comprise the history of ideas (Lovejoy [1936] 1978: 7). As Martin Jay explains rephrasing Arthur Lovejoy’s own definition, the “metaphysical pathos” is characterised by “the power to arouse a positive mood on the part of its users by the congeniality of its subtle associations”. According to Jay, this pathos is a feature with which the Western discourse of totality has normally been imbued (Jay 1984: 21).

time”<sup>36</sup>, which was nevertheless decidedly swept away by the “unitary white light” emanating from Braudel’s *longue durée*, a Historical time that, as is argued in the course of the discussion, enlightens erasing differences.

Having reached this point, a whole array of issues, all of them related to time in History, will have been discussed: from the temporal wholes sprung from the ontologically narrative character of History (Arthur Danto) to the empty time of historicist History (Benjamin/Chakrabarty); from the Historical absence of time characteristic of the synoptic configurational mode of comprehension (Wittgenstein/Mink) to the different senses of *Synchronisierung* (Stam & Shohat/Spivak); from the ‘sovereign consciousness’ of the *longue durée* (Braudel) to the ‘unhappy consciousness’ of the fractal spatiality of Historical time (Gilroy). All these issues will have been considered both in broad terms and with particular respect to the Brazilian historiography of slavery. Finally the time will come to end the text, even though no reason can be given for putting a full stop in the analysis, or at least not a reason that unmistakably derives from the logic of the text itself.

In fact, the reasons why texts irrevocably loaded with an epistemological character that is also a narrowly institutional one (as is the case of those supposed to be awarded with an academic degree); the reasons why such texts in one way or another come to an end, have to do with circumstances that always extrapolate what can be written without running the risk of committing analytical suicide.

At any rate, the conclusion, “Time Between Spaces: fractal spatiality and long-term Historical time”, consists of a circumstantiated argument that, resuming once more the three pairs of concepts repeatedly analysed in the course of the dissertation, i.e, reproducing (in formal terms) the fractal pattern that constituted its very guiding idea, spells out the epistemological consequences of a metaphorical model of Historical time based on the notion of fractal spatiality. As whole, the text is just a sketch, in a pretty much<sup>37</sup> literal sense: it was “done extemporaneously”, that is, without having the necessary preparation, the needed time and, therefore, its point of departure and of saturation is, as Judith Butler remarks remembering

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<sup>36</sup> This time is one that “reinforces the obligation that space and time must be considered relationally in their articulation with racialised being.” (Gilroy 1993: 198)

<sup>37</sup> “Pretty much may be not elegant English, but it is high time it was. There is no elegant word or phrase which means just what it means.” (Twain [1880] 1997: 282)

Marx, “the historical present” (Butler [1990] 2007: 7). Therefore too, incompleteness and provisionality must be taken as its final goals, as the sign of its adequateness. This feature is inoculated in the proper metaphorical model sketched, which is thought to bring into effect an active negation of the teleological Historical time of any coming perfectibility.

As the title of the thesis already hints, the suggested “Time Between Spaces” is the result of the expansion of two subject matters: the *Black Atlantic* AND the recent Brazilian historiography of slavery. Here, as in Rosi Braidotti’s “study of women in contemporary philosophy”<sup>38</sup>, where she analyses “the new feminism AND the crisis of philosophical knowledge [...], the conjunction AND marks not only the point at which two series converge, but also the point at which they diverge, opening into an infinite series: women and philosophy and crisis and psychoanalysis, and so on.” (Braidotti 1991: 9) So, one may imagine the *Black Atlantic* AND the recent Brazilian historiography of slavery AND the crisis of Historical knowledge AND the critique of Eurocentrism, etc. This “etc.” (as well as Braidotti’s “and so on”) at the end of such an open-ended list is not an embarrassed one. It might be seen as a failure but, if so, this failure is however instructive, for it is “a sign of exhaustion as well of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the supplement, *the excess that necessarily accompanied any effort to posit identity once and for all*. This illimitable *et cetera* [...] offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorising.” (Butler [1990] 2007: 196 - emphasis added)

The “excess” committed in this dissertation comes in the very person of its conclusion, which is, in fact and unlike all other chapters including this introduction, written in the first person. This substantial stylistic change is part of a discursive strategy that is fraught with danger. A danger that literally lies in the words chosen to compose the argument.

In order to perceive it, one ought to read into the person of the text a speaker-subject who takes the floor<sup>39</sup> by carrying out an analysis that is, performatively speaking, the practice of a

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<sup>38</sup> This is the subtitle of her book, which she suggestively entitles *Patters of Dissonance*.

<sup>39</sup> Mind the two senses of the expression: 1) begin to dance on a dance floor; 2) speak in a debate or assembly (Oxford Dictionary).

theoretical-drag<sup>40</sup> which, intoned in that “nameless voice” of the “order of the discourse”<sup>41</sup>, articulates its position within the terms of the equation “*almost the same but not quite - almost the same but not white*” of a [post]colonial mimicry<sup>42</sup>.

No doubt, it is an oblique, indeed a *queer* manner of advancing an argument. It is not sanctioned by custom and somehow even interdicted by the law.<sup>43</sup> Its transparency is reifying disavow. But it is an epistemological expedient that generates the type and amount of emancipatory energy needed to envision an understanding of Historical time that—by

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<sup>40</sup> Judith Butler argues that through parodic imitation “drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity.” She also stresses that the “notion of gender parody defended here does not assume that there is an original which such parodic identities imitate; Indeed, the parody is of the very notion of the original. *To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect—that is, in its effect—postures an imitation.*” In this way, “parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalised or essentialist gender identities” (Butler [1990] 186–188 - emphasis and rearrangement of the argumentation added). In this sense, the conclusion ought to be read as a written enactment of these ideas in the form of a reflection upon Historical time.

<sup>41</sup> “I wish I could have slipped surreptitiously into this discourse which I must present today, and into ones I shall have to give here, perhaps for many years to come. I should have preferred to be enveloped by speech, and carried away well beyond all possible beginnings, rather than have to begin it myself. I should have preferred to become aware that *nameless voice* was already speaking before me, so that I should only have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it has signaled to me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense.” (Foucault 1981: 51 - emphasis added)

In the case of the discussion addressed in the conclusion, the “order of the discourse” refers the hegemonic configuration of the discourse on Historical consciousness, that is, the Eurocentric one.

<sup>42</sup> In a very insightful essay, Homi Bhabha remarks that “If colonialism takes power in the name of history, it repeatedly exercises its authority through the figures of farce”. One of these ‘farceful’ elements of colonialism is mimicry, which, still following Bhabha, “emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge: [...] the colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognised Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite*” (Bhabha 1994: 122 - italics in the original). This Other remains always a ‘partial presence’, it is an ‘incomplete’, ‘inappropriate’ subject whose strategic failure is ensured by the very mimicry, which, is, in this case, “at once resemblance and menace”. “It is as if the very emergence of the ‘colonial’ is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself.” (Bhabha 1994: 123)

But this mechanism works the other way round too. Acting as “parodist of history”, the colonial subject, the Other, can use this “authorised versions of otherness” to protect themselves against the [return of the] Same. It can, “through the repetition of *partial presence*, which is the basis of mimicry, articulate[s] those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. (...) The menace of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.” (Bhabha 1994: 126 - italics in the original)

The point in which Bhabha’s “mimic men” touches the *Black Atlantic* view comes in the form of a remark on Freud. Exploring Freud’s analogy between the “partial nature of fantasy, caught *inappropriately*, between the unconscious and the preconscious, making problematic, like mimicry, the very notion of ‘origins’” and “individuals of mixed race who taken all round to resemble white men but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other and on that account are excluded from society and enjoy no privileges”, Bhabha explains the way in which the “*almost the same but not quite*” of the colonial mimicry entails an “*almost the same but not white*” (Bhabha 1994: 126–127 - italics in the original).

<sup>43</sup> “Law” meaning also [the part of] Eurocentrism that ought to be discarded from a postcolonial vocabulary. This usage stem from feminist interpellations of psychoanalytic theories of binary sexual difference based on the so-called “Law of the Father.” (Butler [1990] 2007: 38–42)

performatively making more difficult the uncritical reproduction of what is fairly exclusionary in Eurocentrism (understood in the broad sense indicated above, which strives to put into relief phallogocentric and racist axes)—may be more suitable for the task of accomplishing the written re-presentation of the past of those who have been not, cannot (and perhaps may even want not) to be *appropriately* represented within the current Eurocentric epistemological frame of History. It is indeed a time that opens space for figuring historiographical temporalities for the future.

## PART ONE - ARTICULATING HISTORY AND LINGUISTIC TURN

### The boundaries of History's goal

For students who have been trained to become professional Historians, what could be the practical usefulness of trying to learn lessons from a work, the central aim of which is to raise philosophical objections against the very possibility of Historical knowledge<sup>44</sup>? Why should they not turn a deaf ear towards those who go as far as to assert that Historical discourse does no more than constantly repeat "it happened"<sup>45</sup>? And finally, after all the postmodern experiments and postcolonial upheavals which have shaken Western Historical thinking (Rüsen 2005: 1–11; Burke 2005: 15–30), how could one not consider the suggestion that History nowadays should be as historicist as it used to be at Ranke's and Humboldt's time, as a mere provocation devoid of any sincere intellectual interest?<sup>46</sup>

Professional Historians would perhaps argue that those who raise such questions are either acting in bad faith, or fully misunderstand the rules of the game one is supposed to be playing in writing academic History.

In fact, it seems pointless to point out, say, to football's players, that when they shoot the ball into the other team's goal they are, according to the rule of the game, simply kicking it out of the game's field. Equally not pertinent would be to explain to them that the goals actually delimitate a kind of liminal space, the function of which is to change the meaning of a certain shot's trajectory, which in itself would be indiscernible from another shot. What matters in football, they have to learn, happens in the tiny time needed by the ball to cross that liminal space demarcated by posts, crossbar and the goal line, which marks so special a boundary between inside and outside, that to trespass it without breaking any game's rule leads suddenly to a complete rearrangement of all players' positions.

It is in no way necessary to be a football connoisseur to recognize that by thinking of the game in these terms, anything in its rules and way of playing must be changed. This reasoning then

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<sup>44</sup> The third chapter of Danto's book *Analytical Philosophy of History* is indeed entitled "Three objections against the possibility of historical knowledge" (Danto [1965] 2007: 27-34).

<sup>45</sup> An often quoted passage of Barthe's famous essay *Historical Discourse* reads "(...) historical discourse does not follow reality, it only signifies it; it asserts at every moment: *this happened*, but the meaning conveyed is only that someone is making this assertion." (Barthes 1970: 154 - italics in the original)

<sup>46</sup> This is the thesis defended by Ankersmit, Frank in his most recent book: "There is one basic assumption underlying this entire book: that the historicist account of historical writing, here associated primarily with the writings of Leopold von Ranke and Wilhelm von Humboldt, is basically correct." (Ankersmit 2012: 1)

allows for the possibility of playing a game in the very same manner while conceiving it in different ways. Yet, how to make this new understanding of the game workable?

An avenue, which might be the most natural unfolding of any reconceptualising operation, would consist in thinking about a new semantic that, in this hypothetical case of football, would at least disturb, if not completely alter what the notions of 'inside', 'outside' and 'boundary' mean. In suggesting this approach, one has to assume that some essential dimensions of the game might be transfigured either by reforming the language, or by understanding more about the language presently used to address it (Rorty 1992:3).

Even if there were no mandatory bibliographic reference closing the paragraph above, everyone reasonably familiar to linguistic philosophy would not fail to recognize the last two lines as a transcription of Richard Rorty's famous definition of what constitutes the philosophical guiding principle of the so-called "linguistic turn". Furthermore, be this person equally familiar to football, he or she would equally not fail to recognize that, based on such a linguistic reasoning, in all probability no insight into a better way of playing football could ever be yielded, nor could any better training methodology be developed.

An argument similar to this has been used by professional Historians against those who attempt to approach History from the antiempiricist perspective characteristic of the "linguistic turn" (Evans 2000: 75-102; Cardoso 2005: 55-94). And the Historians' complaint seems to be entirely justified because, in fact, to what extent is it possible, based on antiempiricist linguistic reasoning, to gain insights into a better way of writing History or to develop any historiographical methodology?

Interestingly, some linguistic philosophers of History agree with Historians in this respect. For instance, Frank Ankersmit, one of the most prominent contemporary theoreticians of History, recommends that "philosophers of history should not meddle with historical methodology—for that is a different game." (Ankersmit 2012: 118)

With all due respect, Ankersmit's recommendation is going to be ignored in this work, since its aim, as already exposed in the introduction, consists in the attempt to conceive a sketch of a metaphoric model of Historical time, i.e. a methodological device for dealing with the general issue "time and temporality" in academic Historical writing.

The reason for adopting this epistemological stance results from the fact that once the inescapable narrative-like character of Historical knowledge (Rüsen 2008: 3) has been acknowledged, it follows that a plea for a strict separation between methodology and theory,

within the framework of a linguistic-based reflection on academic Historical representation, would be analogous to that distinction between Historical research (*Geschichtsforschung*) and Historical writing (*Geschichtsschreibung*) made by nineteenth-century theorist J.G. Droysen (Ankersmit 2012: 60). This distinction, as Ankersmit himself underlines, has been “rejected as a remnant of a crude nineteenth-century positivism, that still maintains the possibility of strictly separating fact from theory” (Ankersmit 2012: 61).

Being a discipline within which theoretical and “meta-theoretical” levels stand in an especially delicate relationship, it seems that History would have little—if not nothing—to gain with a work interested in reasserting a presumed incompatibility between theoretical thinking and the development of methodologies thought to be useful in the everyday life of the construction of academic Historical knowledge.

History may be, as Fernand Braudel once assessed, “perhaps the least structured of the human sciences” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 242); in spite of that, Historians can consider facts as such only in the framework of a theory, even when, as Paul Veyne ironically remarks, they often strongly believe they have none (Veyne 1983: 14). This means that also in History, as everywhere else in the landscape of human sciences, the deepest epistemological challenge consists in seeing the role of theory as empirically as the role played by empirical data.

There are three further good reasons for having chosen Historical methodology concerning time as being the core of this dissertation. Firstly, the absolutely essential character of the subject within the field of History, which, in uncountable variations of Bloch’s famous formulation, has been defined as the “science of men in time” (Bloch [1940] 1963: 27). Secondly, despite the agreement that time is History’s most basic category, the function of time in the study of history, as Frank Ankersmit argues, seems to be to make itself invisible (Ankersmit 2012: 30). François Hartog makes a similar remark, but in his formulation time is the “unthought” element of History (Hartog 2013: 19; 26). Thirdly, the centrality of the dialog between History and Linguistics in the development of the Braudelian conception of Historical time: the so-called *longue durée*, which happened to become the most celebrated and widespread analytical approach originated in the field of History.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss questions like these by exercising a kind of reflection that might be rightly denominated as the practice of a theoretically oriented semantic exploration. Three pairs of concepts were chosen as the target of the task to be here performed: ideology/anachronism; History /theory of History and, finally, time/event.

In the first section, departing from Danto's concept of "narrative sentences" and based on an analysis of two important historiographical works on slavery in Brazil, a particular interpretation of the connection between the pairs "time/ideology" and "time/anachronism" will be developed. The second section, still taking a concept by Danto as point of departure, this time yet his thesis on the end of art, will address the widespread view that in dealing with History one should always take the precaution of devising two sharply distinct kind of issues: the "theoretical" and "meta-theoretical" ones. These issues, according to this distinction, would then respectively correspond to the realm of the Historiography and that of the theory of History. In the last section, moving from Arthur Danto to Louis Mink as the provider of the central theoretical approach, namely, the notion of "configurational comprehension", the question of historical continuity of long-term will be considered in the light of an analysis whose purpose is to furnish some arguments in favor of the claim that there is a necessary relation of dependence between sameness (of events) and long duration (of time).

This analysis shall be seen as a way of developing the reflection on and of preparing the terrain for the proposition of the sketch of a temporality model based on the idea of fractal spatiality. Permeating the whole chapter will be found the criticisms offered by Historians who see political danger rather than epistemological advantages in such linguistic raids on History (Evans 2000; Cardoso 2005).

Traditionally, time delimitates the boundaries of the field within which the game of writing academic History shall be played. This is something that every freshman in History is taught quite early at college and is highlighted by the indefectible presence of an explicit time period usually presented in the very title of most historiographical theses.

Still, what particular Historical accounts do, is that they allow for the possibility of making references which go far beyond their temporally circumscribed subject, while concurrently, in order to eschew accusations of anachronism or futurology, they toil hard to keep themselves within the self-imposed chronological limits. In this sense, as in football, History's goal is also achieved by projecting the object which Historians are dealing with out of the (temporal delimited) game's field, but without ever uttering this fact. This means to say that in performing a theoretically oriented semantic exploration, whose aim is to analyze some relevant concepts of the disciplinary vocabulary of History in what concerns their relation to

the issue of time, one is more precisely engaged in unthinking the boundaries, within which the game of writing academic History has been expected to be played.

## Chapter 1 - Ideology and Anachronism

### Narrativity and Historical knowledge

“Arthur C. Danto, a philosopher of art, is dead at 89”. This was the title of Danto’s obituary, published in the New York Times on October 27, 2013. A philosopher of art, definitely, but not less a philosopher of History, since at the bottom of Danto’s view on art is a theory concerned with a definition of the Historical character of the artworld rather than with the aesthetical qualities of artworks.

In fact, one would probably understand better Danto’s aesthetical ideas by paying attention to his philosophy of History. In the end of 1964, as he publishes “The Artworld”, the essay that would become a canonical text in Philosophy of Art, he had already finished writing *Analytic Philosophy of History*, a book the reading of which allows for understanding more clearly the later development of Danto’s reflections on art, which was synthesized in the works *The Transfiguration of Commonplace* (1981), *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (1986) and *After the End of Art – Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (1997).

In “*Analytic Philosophy of History*”, philosophy of History is conceived as the “theory of narrative representation” (Danto 2007: xiii), as Danto himself explains in an introduction to the book written in 1984, twenty years after the first edition. The core of the argument, he continues, “was that narrative structures penetrates our consciousness of events in way parallel to those in which [...] theories penetrate observation in science.” (Danto 2007: xiii) This was a new idea in the mid-60s, when the fashionable topic centered on the different character of Historical explanation, basically the distinction between *Erklären* and *Verstehen* (Ankersmit 2007: 364; Goehr 2007: xlvi–xlvi).

What Danto exposes, primarily based on his conception of “narrative sentences”, is that narrative is not one among many others models of Historical explanation, but that the very logic of narrative determines both the relationship to the past and the past’s historicity. Danto’s insights provoked somewhat of an awakening to the fact that the asymmetry between the past and the present is truly unsurpassable, and furthermore, the definitive inclusion of the concepts ‘narrativity’ and ‘historicity’ in the agenda of theoretical investigations on History (Ankersmit 2007: 364–365).

In the meantime, along with the establishment of these terms in the Historians' current language, much more attention has been paid to the analytical pair 'narrativity/historicity' in the field of theory of History. However, far from having been exhausted in this process, Danto's idea remains as new as it was almost forty years ago, so argues Ankersmit, for philosophers of History still do not seem to be fully aware of the far-reaching implications of the narrative-like nature of Historical knowledge (Ankersmit 2007: 364).

Philosophers maybe not yet, but Historians did already realize the theoretical complexities involved in the assumption of the narrative-like character of their craft. They just do not see great usefulness in what theoreticians of History generally write about the construction of Historical knowledge (Evans 2000: 1–14).

Sydney Chalhoub, for example, a first-rate Brazilian Historian, openly admits that historical facts are constructions resulting from the "controlled imagination" characteristic of History as an academic discipline (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 18). He also concedes that both "historical research is indetermination" and periodizations are "works of imagination, of interpretation" (Chalhoub 2012: 27-31). Chalhoub has been regarded as a quite "traditional" Historian, who does not claim to be a representative of any "post" (post-modernist, post-structuralist, post-Marxist, post-colonial, etc.) tendency in History.

When told that it is logically impossible to know what people of other periods thought because "not knowing how it is all going to end is the mark of living through events" (Danto [1965] 2007: 294), Historians would on principle not only do not disagree but also let slip a derisive smile, since this assertion is a platitude which they are fully aware of.

This banal appearance of presumably elaborated analytical problems constitutes an essential dimension of each theoretical approach to History; its best known expression is the *ad nauseam* discussed ambivalence of the word "history", which in the vernacular use of many modern languages designates both the "facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both 'what happened' and 'that which is said to have happened'" (Trouillot 1995: 2).

In History, in fact, the endless variety of actions performed by human beings down the ages fall under descriptions covered by principles similar to those generally employed in everyday life. It is this, in turn, that prevents Historians from speaking preferentially in theoretical terms and, by the same token, supports the recurrent claim that History is not a proper social science. For this reason, coming back to Danto's thesis, the suggestion that "narration yields

certain categories of thought that might be said to compose the metaphysics of everyday life” seems to be so promising from analytical point of view (Danto 2007: xiv).

It is exactly this type of metaphysical role of Historical narratives towards everyday life’s events that Danto elaborates anew when he deals with the central theme of his theory of art, namely, the problem of visual indiscernibility of common objects and artworks (Danto 1981). Examining the affinities between Danto’s theory of History and philosophy of art, Lydia Goehr’s argues that the difference between the *transformational* character of History and the *transfigurational*<sup>47</sup> power of art is not as great as Danto thought.

Actually, according to her, the ties of kindred between both concepts were so tight, that one could speak of “The Transformation of the Chronicle”, adapting to History the title of one of Danto’s best-known titles in philosophy of art, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Goehr 2007: xxii). This amounts to say that there is a similarity between the way in which common artifacts are transfigured into artworks and the way in which Historian’s descriptions are transformed into explanations as well as into theory-, interest-, and value-laden assessments (Goehr 2007: xxii).

The aim of this first chapter can be described as an attempt to develop Goher’s insight by exposing how academic Historical writing is by virtue of its intrinsic relation to the issue of time (at least) twofold embroiled in what, following Danto’s vocabulary, can be called “paradox of perceptual indiscernibility”.

In the course of the analysis it will become clear why this indiscernibility has to do with the issues of anachronism and ideology.

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<sup>47</sup>The question Danto wants to address is how “the subtle miracle of transforming, into works of art, objects from the *Lebenswelt* of commonplace existence: a grooming comb, a bottle rack, a bicycle wheel, a urinal” occurs (Danto 1981: vi). First approach to be ruled out: the difference between works of art and mere real things could not rest in any presumed aesthetical difference, since both shared all sensory qualities. This feature renders suddenly inapplicable a whole tradition of philosophical definitions of art based on aesthetical examinations of artworks. (Danto 1981: v–viii; Danto [1986] 2005: 1–21)

A conventionalist or an institutional theory of art would answer that the difference between art and reality is *either* just a matter of conventions, that is, “whatever convention allow to be an artwork is an artwork”, *or* a matter of political-institutional power: “a work of art is a ‘candidate for appreciation’, a status conferred upon an artifact by [...] an institutionally enfranchised group of persons.” (Danto 1981: 28–32; 90–94)

Danto argues that there is an element of truth in these theories, but at the same time they are shallow for they do not account for the qualities that constitute an artwork once something is one. His own answer reads that what transfigures a commonplace object into an artwork are the aesthetical questions posed by propounding a “brash metaphor”: the-mere-things-as-work-of-art. The focus on the metaphoric attributes explains why the core of Danto’s argument about *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* is that “the structure of artworks is of a piece with the structure of rhetoric, and that is the office of rhetoric to modify the minds and then the actions of men and women by co-opting their feelings.” (Danto [1986] 2005: 21)

## The noise of ideology or the sound of historiographical silences

The concept of “narrative sentences” is the most basic category of *Analytical Philosophy of History*, and, as usually happens to concepts of such stock, it is expounded in primarily abstract terms.

It might appear paradoxical but it is important at this moment, when the most basic category of Danto’s philosophy of History is about to come to the fore, to give the word first to professional Historians.

In his *In Defence of History*, Richard J. Evans rightly remarks that

“the level of abstraction at which most studies of historical epistemology operate is so theoretical, so far removed from actual problems experienced by historians, that the subject in general is of little practical relevance to what historians actually do.” (Evans 2000: 10)

These words shall echo ceaselessly through this chapter, even through this whole dissertation, functioning as a warning against possible abuses of theoretical digression. Therefore, at least one “actual problem” experienced by Historians, namely, the problem of having to ascertain that they write “what actually was” will *always* be taken into account. This assertion of actuality is in general a subject of great practical relevance, for, regardless the particular circumstances under which they work, Historians are never allowed to avoid dealing with it, no matter whether *just* selecting sources or advancing some new explanation.

Once clarified this guideline, the way one must proceed in order to examine the notion of “narrative sentences” presents itself lessened of some treacherous dangers.

The most general characteristic of “narrative sentences” is, according to Danto, the fact that “they refer to at least two time-separated events though they only *describe* (are only *about*) the earliest event to which they refer ” (Danto [1965] 2007: 143 - italics in the original).

Adapting to Danto himself the kind of example that he uses in his book, Goehr contrasts the sentence “Arthur Danto was born on January 1, 1924” with “On this day, the author of *Analytical Philosophical of History* was born.” Clearly, the latter sentence could not be uttered before 1965 (the year in which the book was published), since it puts together two time-separated events so that its very content of truth depends exactly on this time asymmetry. The former sentence does not perform such an operation. It is merely or basically factual (Goehr 2007: xxvi).

By strict Rankean criterions, that means that on the basis of an image of the past—*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*—it could be said that both sentences are equally Historical. Still, Goehr

insists<sup>48</sup> that the first sentence is not, rigorously speaking, a historical one, for it does not create a temporal whole by putting events in relationship to one another, nor does it make of this time asymmetry a necessary truth condition (Goehr 2007: xxvi).

What a sentence like “Arthur Danto was born on January 1, 1924” provides is accuracy, and accuracy, as E.H. Carr remarks, is a Historian’s duty, not a virtue. It is, to sum up in more theoretical terms, a necessary condition, but not the essential function of History (Carr [1961] 2001: 6). That is the main reason why chronicles or annals fail as proper History: in organizing the order of discourse concerned essentially with the exactness of the events chronological order, such forms of Historical exposition can hardly offer the kind of meaning attainable by narratologically governed accounts (Ankersmit 2012: 29–47; White 1990: 1–25).

Danto illustrates the impossibility of being Historical without being narrative by supposing the existence of an Ideal Chronicler, who knows whatever happens the moment it happens, even in other minds. Such a creature would be then able to write a full description of all happenings. In spite of the unquestionable knowledge of this being, it would be incapable of writing one single sentence that were properly Historical, since its vocabulary would lack some referring devices used uniquely for designating “certain events, persons and places, by making use of relative pronouns—‘the place where ...’, ‘the person who ...’, —where the blank is filled with an expression which refers to an event which takes place temporally later than the earliest time at which there is such an individual to refer to”. (Danto [1965] 2007: 157–158)

In the Ideal Chronicle, there would also never be found a phrase as simple as “This man is planting roses”, even for the purpose of describing a man who has been putting seeds of roses into the soil. The reason is quite easy to understand: if for any reason the roses fail to come forth, the Ideal Chronicle will have falsified the description of the event and, consequently, will not fulfill its role as ideal! Because the use of the verb in phrases like “planting roses”, “building a ship” or perhaps “writing a dissertation” describes actions with a view to an indefinite future, Danto denominates such verbs “project verbs”<sup>49</sup> (Danto [1965] 2007: 159–181).

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<sup>48</sup> Respecting this problem, Goehr points out, she just follows Danto, who sometimes calls “narrative sentences” also “historical” or “tensed” sentences.

<sup>49</sup> Ankersmit remarks that Danto’s “project verbs” constitutes what one might describe as the “microlevel” of the dimension of unintended consequences of human action, a central topic in philosophy of history at least since Hegel’s “the cunning of the Reason” (Ankersmit 2012: 42–43). Although, it might be misleading to regard Danto’s logical explorations on Historical language as concerned with such a “microlevel”, since in History written language is the very intended human action.

If the above discussed referring pronominal constructions account for temporal wholes oriented towards the past, so do the “project verbs” respecting the future. Still, both do not enter the scene of History in the form of temporal wholes as such, but respectively as *necessary correspondence* between past and Historical account, and as *potential discrepancy* between expectations about the future and the actual course of events. (Ankersmit 2012: 42) At any rate, from what has been argued until now, one has no other choice but to conclude that ideal descriptions of events would be ideal only when totally deprived of temporal injunctions. No special philosophical training is necessary to see that neither History nor stories could ever be written in this way. Who would dream of writing such an “ideal description” of any event? Historians surely not.

Moreover, countless sorts of texts are made out of referring pronouns, project verbs, narrative sentences, in a word, of tensed language, which is also a natural part of common speech. As such, they are general aspects of language rather than a distinctive feature of Historical knowledge.

One may concede that Danto’s analysis provides clever insights into the language necessarily used to describe events in Historical perspective<sup>50</sup>, but what could be, to come back to Evan’s remark, the practical relevance of that to what Historians actually do? How far are these reflections removed from actual problems experienced by Historians?

It may be convenient to stress that, actually, it is not properly a child’s play to define what Historians *actually* do. This is, in fact, such a major question in History that the dispute over the point provides one with arguments ranging from the seminal Aristotelian distinction between history and poetry up to Hayden White’s postmodern controversies.

Clearly, it would not be especially clever try to enter this terrain right now. Thus, with the purpose of answering straight away those questions, and even running the risk of oversimplification, a quite pedestrian way of conceiving “what Historians actually do” will be here adopted. It runs as follows: on the basis of interpretation of different sorts of sources, preferentially primary ones, Historians put time-extended events in relation to each other in order to write accounts that make sense of the past.

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<sup>50</sup> In fact, Danto’s asserts that the use of narrative sentences “suggests a differentiating feature of historical knowledge” and that they “are so peculiarly related to our concept of history that analysis of them must indicate what some of the main features of that concept are.” (Danto [1965] 2007: 143)

On the basis of what has been so far explained, it is sufficiently clear that “narrative sentences” are made of quite ordinary language means. As such, the temporal wholes that they bring about may go as unnoticed as the many other language aspects that do not interfere directly in the immediate understanding of the meaning of a text<sup>51</sup>. The temporal wholes’ inconspicuousness must not be a problem. However, if Historians fail to recognize the effect of this present absence i.e. the presence of this particular mode of time in their texts, they become liable to be faced with similar problems that they are bound to deal with by ignoring, misunderstanding or underestimating the ideological dimension of their Historical accounts. A concrete example may be helpful to cast some light on this point. Based substantially on criminal suits, Maria Cristina C. Wissenbach wrote a fascinating book about the life of slaves and freedmen in the last decades of slavery in São Paulo, a “city of freemen”, where, she stresses, the historical role of slaves has been for a long time disregarded (Wissenbach 1998: 13).

In the two passages transcribed below, Wissenbach explains, respectively, the reasons why the historical role of slaves have been forgotten and to which extent the progress in Social History has helped to address crimes as a category of Historical interpretation.

*“Na cidade dos bandeirantes desbravadores e dos imigrantes pioneiros, o papel histórico do negro cativo e forro foi por muito tempo desconsiderado. Sob o regime da escravidão urbana, condição menor num sistema econômico marcado pela grande lavoura, numa cidade em que predominavam senhores remediados ou pobres, numa cidade de homens livres, a figura do negro escravo sintetizou a desclassificação social e só recentemente foi retirado do anonimato pelo olhar atento da historiografia. As raízes desse esquecimento são, em parte, históricas. Na cidade oitocentista, desprezava-se sua presença incômoda, disciplinavam-se suas andanças pelas ruas e aglomerações tidas como ameaçadoras e, no máximo, aceitavam-se os tutelados, os domésticos, os cocheiros dos barões com seus trajes de gala. Nas fontes históricas da época era referidos a partir do trato social dos dominados, impregnado pela coibição, vigilância e punição de atos transgressores. Pouco interesse houve em registrar suas vidas obscuras, seus meios de sobrevivência, seus conflitos internos, seus valores e aspirações.*

*Este estudo é uma tentativa de reconstituir as vidas escravas e forras no município paulista da segunda metade do século, por meio dos testemunhos deixados pelos processos criminais.”* (Wissenbach 1998: 13 – emphasis added).

*“Os avanços da historiografia social foram incorporados pela produção brasileira mais recente, descortinando-se, nos estudos sobre escravidão, novas tendências nas quais os crimes despontam como categoria de interpretação histórica que, revelando múltiplas tensões envoltas no regime de trabalho escravo, devem ser avaliados internamente à dinâmica das relações sociais. Contou-se, para tais abordagens, com um contexto histórico privilegiado: na*

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<sup>51</sup> Think of the fact that phonemes may constitute a system, the unawareness of which does not at all interfere in the language understanding at the level of speech. (Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1963: 1–27)

*segunda metade do século XIX*, a criminalidade transformou-se num fenômeno social marcante [...]”(Wissenbach 1998: 24 – emphasis added).

In the first passage, putting in relation to each other the social disqualification of black slaves in São Paulo, that place which would be branded as “the city of the *bandeirantes* and of the pioneer immigrants”, and the oblivion into which the historical role of the slaves sank, Wissenbach draws an unbroken line of temporal continuity that comes from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present; her very book, being an exemplar of a “mindful historiography”, stands for a moment of rupture of this oblivion. When she comes to explain the “historical roots” of this process, she performs another temporal jump of the same length, but now the other way round: from the present to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and then again, in the beginning of the next paragraph, from the São Paulo of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to that of her dissertation, defended in 1989.

The second passage presents a similar pattern. In order to expose some sociological approaches to crime, which had been fruitfully applied by English Marxist Historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson, explaining how they were also suitable for a discussion of a Brazilian History of Slavery, Wissenbach states that existed in Brazil a “privileged historical context”, namely, 19<sup>th</sup> Century’s criminality, which became a compelling problem in São Paulo. Here, once more, she departs from the present—exemplified in the figure of the current Social History—and flies non-stop to 19<sup>th</sup> Century São Paulo!

In principle, there is nothing wrong with Wissenbach’s procedure: there is no way to set any criterion for establishing which kind of relations of events should be considered illegitimate, so that the temporal wholes created by them could be invalidated. As long as Historians proceed with accuracy, that means, moving themselves within the temporal references to which every time-extended event is compulsorily bound, they can relate events in whatever way they please.

Nevertheless, this unpretentious coming and going between events is what creates the temporal gap that emerges as the “time of oblivion” (of the historical role of slaves and freedmen) and makes it possible to present somehow triumphantly the contemporary historiography as “rescuer” of these forgotten people.

History as “rescuer” is, in fact, what sets the tone of her book. The vocabulary fits perfectly when she enters into the discussion about whether slave criminality should be regarded as a

form of open resistance or whether it was rather a way of accommodation within the constraints of the slavery system. The slaves, she argues, were primarily struggling to survive: “*Sobreviver, em seus significados e dimensões multivariadas, era, por vezes, a exigência maior a eles [slaves and freedmen] imposta pelo regime da escravidão.*” (Wissenbach 1998: 32) They were survivors. The historiography rescues them.

It is important to address this point because in stressing that the crimes performed by those who had to live under the burden of slavery was much more a matter of negotiating their survival than of rebelling against the oppression, Wissenbach moves them factually to a position that no longer represents the extreme pole of the social system. They are posited in a more medial position, in a kind of deviation of the dialectical ideal formulation “master-slave”. In this position, the very concept of “slaves’ everyday life” functions as a “floating buffer zone” (Spivak 1988: 285), the mobilization of which plays a crucial ideological role in the Brazilian History of Slavery<sup>52</sup>.

Wissenbach was, of course, not obliged to say that historiography itself is to blame for the oblivion that she denounces, nor is it the case that she purposefully did not say it. She simply did her work—an outstanding piece of historiographical work by the way—and her moving in time results in a silence that also speaks for her.

In her celebrated essay “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak chose as a point of departure a “friendly exchange” between Deleuze and Foucault because the “unguarded practice of conversation” enables “one to glimpse the track of ideology” (Spivak 1988: 272).

Paraphrasing Spivak, it could here be said that the “friendly exchange” between past and present that Wissenbach carries out through her “unguarded practice of moving in time” also enables “one to glimpse the track of ideology”. And a key analytical maneuver for interpreting ideology, Spivak explains resorting to Pierre Macherey, is to comprehend the importance of listening carefully to “what the work cannot say [...], because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence” (Spivak 1988: 286).

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<sup>52</sup> See Jacob Gorender’s *A escravidão Reabilitada* for a Marxist review of the debate about the ideological implications of approaching the Brazilian slavery system from the socio-culturalist point of view adopted by some currents of Social History. The core of Gorender’s argument is basically, as the very title of the book stresses, that some Historians, eager to draw attention to “the world the slaves made” (Genovese 1976), thrust the systemic economic constraints of slavery excessively into background, so that in the end what results is a kind of rehabilitation of the slavery. Gorender coined the term “neopatriarcalistas” to designate these historiographical works.

Answering, finally, Evan's question: the relevance of being attentive to Danto's reflection on the relationship between narration and historical knowledge is that it may provide Historians with an analytical tool for "measuring the silences"<sup>53</sup> spoken by the most inexorable feature of their craft: the construction of Historical continuity.

For writing academic History, few notions may be of greater utility than the one that teaches how to keep a watchful eye not properly on what can be read between History's lines, but rather on how to hark the tensed lines of Historical accounts.

### **The treachery of History or History as "controlled anachronism"**

"This is not a pipe" wrote Magritte below a picture of a pipe. Just imagine what would be to submit to a board of examination comprised by eminent History professors a doctoral thesis on the cover of which were written, right below the title: "This is not history." There are many reasons to entertain doubts that any serious aspirant to an academic career would dare to do that. Indeed, the bold remark could be read as an underestimation of the examiners' intelligence, since it amounts to conjecture that they would be able *not* to discern, say, a representation of slavery system from the slavery system *itself*. On the other hand, for it is simply too evident that a History book is *just* a representation of what happened, it seems to be justified to ask which other intentions this hypothetical and playful apprentice of Historian may have in mind, because, what is History if not such dissertations and other academic oriented historiographical products (books, articles, expositions, etc.), that means, if not Historical representation?

Magritte calls his painting "The Treachery of Images". Be images particularly "treacherous" towards the sense of sight, so does History respecting the sense of time. This sense can be duped by History, so fully and frequently duped that History professors never neglect to warn their students against the perils of anachronism. Equally, few attributes can disqualify a Historian's statement as deeply as being regarded as "anachronic".

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<sup>53</sup> "What is important in a work is what it does not say. This is not the same as the careless notation "what it refuses to say", although that would in itself be interesting: a method might be built on it, with the task of *measuring silences*, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. But rather this, what the work cannot say is important, because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a sort of journey to silence." (Spivak 1988: 286 – italics in the original)

It may be profitable to distinguish between three different kinds of anachronism. The *first* type of it corresponds to mere chronological inaccuracy. In addition to its unimportance from an analytical point of view, is a kind of mistake that professional Historians rarely make. To take a popular example from mass culture: assuming that a Last Supper effectively took place, a historiographical depiction of the body position and spatial disposition of Jesus and his apostles would probably be considerably different from Da Vinci's famous picture, since Historical sources do not indicate that that particular kind of table was known at the time and place where the event occurred.

The *second* variant raises some more problems. When one refers to Brazil regarding an event which happened in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it is not especially difficult to see that "Brazil" stands for that place which came to be called Brazil at a future point in time. Something similar happens with historical references to events like the Thirty Years War: each reference to it supposed to have been made before 1648 must suppress its future denomination, since no one could have known that the war would last thirty years nor that it would be named exactly according to its 30-year duration.

But these are only archetypal examples that perhaps over-emphasize how this sort of anachronism works. The usual content of Historical accounts is comprised of countless, almost prosaic statements made preferentially on the basis of primary sources, or "uttered" by the "sources" themselves by means of quotations inserted in the body of the text.

By the way of exemplification, a brief review of a passage of João José Reis' book *Death is a Festival – Funeral Rites and Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* is given: in the third chapter, "Brotherhood and Baroque Catholicism", there is a subtopic entitled "Life is a Festival", an evident play on words with the title of the book. Reis begins this subtopic explaining that black confraternities were primarily, but not exclusively, the chief vehicles for a kind of popular Catholicism, which, in Reis' words, was not "the Roman version but rather one that was steeped in magic and permeated with paganism and sensuality" (Reis [1991] 2003: 53). About this brand of Catholicism, Reis writes:

"In a tradition dating from colonial times, popular religion, festivals, and sexuality were intertwined in the collective mentality of Bahia de Todos os Santos. Even under the gaze of the Senhor do Bonfim ('The Lord of the Good End', personifying the crucified Christ), its paramount 'saint', the city established a highly permeable boundary between paradise and perdition. After attending a Christmas festival on Senhor do Bomfim, Lindley commented that Bahians in general—white, black and mulatto—cleared 'their consciences of old sins [and then] commit[ed] new ones'. Wheterell described the Bonfim festival as a veritable orgy. Religious

fervor and sensuality frequently converged within the churches. In 1817 French merchant Louis François de Tollenare was amazed that paintings of 'lovely erotic subjects' were hung on the vestry wall of a parish church and observed, 'This singular mixture of the profane and the sacred was only noted by foreigners.' Another French traveler, Claude Dugrivel, noticed that in 1833 what he viewed as singularly bold flirtations between young people attending church, one of the few public places frequented by respectable girls. Their seductive gazes, seen above veils that covered most of their faces, impressed and intimidated the European visitor. Wetherell thought that churches were the main stage of Bahian voyeurism, for he had the impression that people attended mass only to 'to see and be seen'." (Reis [1991] 2003: 53)

Reis firstly remarks that the "traditional" character of the intertwinement of "popular religion, festivals, and sexuality" in the "collective mentality" of the city dates from "colonial times". He then concatenates a set of literal quotations of writings by four foreign observers, Lindley, Wheterell, Tollenare and Dugrivel, whose first-hand observations come all in support of the thesis on the sensualistic character of the Bahian popular Catholicism.

A disciplinary commonsensical belief avers that when Historians make such plunges into the past, unearthing eyewitness accounts, what they do is trying to understand the past as the people who lived it understood it. In other words: they avoid judging the past by the standard of the present, but see it in its own terms. This procedure, Evans points out, laid one of the foundations of History as an academic discipline and is considered to be one of the major contributions made by Ranke to historical scholarship (Evans 2000: 17).

Taking into consideration another theoretical approach, it is also possible to say that through the insertion of the commentaries above, delivered by contemporaries the past events described, Reis provides his readers with a Collingwoodian "re-enactment of the past"<sup>54</sup>, the function of which is to evidence that there is a distance existent between the author's standpoint and the sources' standpoint on the events.

No matter if clothed in Rankean or Collingwoodian fashion, the aim of the procedure is unambiguously to get things straight: what belongs to the past shall be assigned to the sources; what does not belong to it, shall not. It is also justifiably believed that in employing their sources in this way, Historians avert anachronism.

Yet, if one bears in mind that Danto's "paradox of indiscernibles" and takes a second look at the issue, the whole picture will grow substantially different.

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<sup>54</sup> In his celebrated book on *The Idea of History*, R. G. Collingwood put forward the argument that can be summarized as follows: "History cannot be scientifically written unless the Historian can re-enact in his own mind the experience of the people whose actions he is narrating." (Collingwood [1946] 2005: 283)

There is no doubt that the eyewitnesses were speaking of what they had experienced. Yet, once articulated simultaneously with the Historian voice, they suddenly appear on the scene in support of an idea, namely, the socio-aesthetical interpretation of the local religion as “Baroque Catholicism”, which is itself a kind of “unintended consequence” of what they wrote about their own experiences in Bahia.

Besides the circularity of the operation, which is anyway quite evident, the most important point to be here stressed is that in the moment in which one is supposed to see the past as Lindley, Wheterell, Tollenare and Dugrivel saw it, what one sees is these four people doing something they would never be able to: speaking in the name of an idea conceived more than a century after their lifetime!

By the same token, Reis, intending to make the past understandable in its own terms, presents himself performing something he also would never be able to: talking about the past as if he had never known that such an idea like Baroque Catholicism would be conceived.

Reis’ Historical description thus operated a time displacement of its agents that makes it especially difficult to discern “when”<sup>55</sup> is the order of the Historian’s interpretation and “when” is that one of what is being interpreted. In other words: it constitutes itself in the form of a permanent exercise of anachronism.

As this analysis of Reis’ passage helps to show, anachronism operates in History not simply by “misplacing things in time”, as the usual meaning of the word denotes (Davies 2003: 130), but rather by deploying them narratively in such a manner that may confuse one’s sense of time by taking over the elementary cognitive task of discerning between different temporal orders. Explaining what is meant by the expression “space-time” in Physics, Russell gives an example that may be quite helpful to “imagine”<sup>56</sup> time as it works in Reis passage and, additionally, to make sense of the *third* variant of anachronism:

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<sup>55</sup> This formulation is a reference to Stuart Hall’s article “When was the post-colonial? Thinking at the limit”. In this text, among others rejoinders, he replies to Shohat’s criticism of the “undecidability” of postcolonial theory, which, in attempting to be both epistemic and chronological, occasions a “structured ambivalence”, to which she were not very sympathetic. According to Hall, “it is possible to argue that the tension between the epistemological and the chronological is not disabling, but productive.” (Hall 1996b: 254) Hall’s words were chosen due to the fact that instead of answering “what” or “in which consist” post-colonial theory (in substantive form), he interestingly prefers to use the temporal adverb “when” and formulates the question in the past tense, making in this way a unequivocal reference to the importance of the relationship between the construction of a particular notion of time and one’s stance towards a subject-matter.

<sup>56</sup> Russell thinks that the new phrase space-time “is from a philosophical and imaginative point of view, perhaps the most important of all novelties that Einstein introduced. (Russell [1925] 2009: 37)

“Suppose, for instance, that some notable event happens on the sun: there is a period of sixteen minutes on the earth during which no event on the earth can have influenced or been influenced by the said notable event on the sun. This gives substantial ground for regarding that period of sixteen minutes on the earth as neither before nor after the event on the sun.” (Russell [1925] 2009: 40)

It is as if Historical accounts moved themselves within this sixteen minutes interval that is not definitely after nor definitely before the events that are made by the account itself. But, of course, if there is something that is not at all indifferent in reporting an event this is the fact of being posited after or before it happened. Thus, this temporarily time indiscernibility, this unnatural difficulty in ascertaining one’s time position turns out to be what endowed History with the property of casting light on an event from different, even opposed temporal standpoints, which although, being part of a sole stream, seems never to lose its unified focus. Russell’s provides that example in the framework of an explanation the purpose of which is to make intelligible Einstein’s theory of relativity. Opposed to what the theory’s name may suggest, it does not attempt to prove everything in the physical world to be relative, but “to exclude what is relative and arrive at a statement of physical laws that shall in no way depend upon the circumstances of the observer” (Russel [1925] 2009: 9). The logical side effect of having been successful in this enterprise was to lay bare that everything in Newtonian Physics is relative to an observer.

In order to rule out the observer’s standpoint, what Einstein introduces in his theory of relativity is nothing else but an epistemologically ontological time that, as surprisingly as it may appear, should puzzle everyone excepting professional Historians, for History, as surprisingly as it may appear, is equally concerned with conceiving time ontologically.

Owing to its patent immaterial character, time usually lends itself to all sorts of ontological enterprises (recall the famous words by St. Augustine of Hippo mentioned in the introduction!). History although explores this feature of time in a rather negative way: by assigning to time the concreteness of events narrated on material basis<sup>57</sup> History comes into the ontological character proper to time.

Sydney Chalhoub’s *Visões da Liberdade* provides an example that may make this point clearer.

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<sup>57</sup> Explaining why any fiction can pass for History, Trouillot writes: “the materiality of the socio-historical process (historicity 1) sets the stage for future historical narratives (historicity 2). The materiality of this first moment is so obvious that some of us take it for granted. It does not imply that facts are meaningless objects waiting to be discovered under some timeless seal but rather, more modestly, that history begins with bodies and artifacts: living brains, fossils, texts, buildings.” (Trouillot 1995: 29)

More than with an exposition of aims and objectives, motivations, circumstances of elaboration, difficulties in accomplishing the task, all that stuff that commonly surfaces in the opening pages of History books, the introductory chapter of *Visões da Liberdade* is concerned with an explanation of the Historians' *modus operandi*. This is perhaps one of the features that, together with Chalhoub's fine writing, catapulted this book to the selected list of those works of scholarship that escape from the university prison and become a kind of academic bestseller.

Chalhoub begins the book telling the story of Zadig, the Babylonian wise who is the protagonist of Voltaire's *Zadig or Destiny*. Having dedicated himself entirely to the study of the properties of animals and plants, this old wise man acquired such a shrewdness that enables him to point out thousand differences where other men would see only sameness. This ability soon puts him in great trouble, when by chance he runs into the queen's chief Eunuch who, together with several attendants, has been desperately looking for the missing queen's dog. Asked whether he had seen the pet, Zadig replied to them first with a correction: "It is a bitch, not a dog." And adds: "She is a very small spaniel. She has recently had a litter, and she limps with her left front paw, and she has very long ears." (Voltaire [1747] 2014: 13) After such an exact description, the Eunuch concludes that Zadig had seen the animal and wanted to know which direction it had taken. Still, the old wise said he had never seen it nor heard thereof! He was then arrested on the spot under suspect of having stolen the queen's bitch. The animal turned up again later, what freed Zadig from jail, but not from the payment of a fine for having lied. Paid the fine, the magistrates acquiesced in listening to Zadig's explanation:

"I have never seen the Queen's dearest bitch [...]. What happens was this: I was out walking near the little wood where I met the venerable eunuch and the most illustrious Master of the Hunt. Seeing some animal tracks in the sand, and I could easily tell they were of those of a small dog. Long, shallow grooves drawn across tiny heaps of sand between paw-marks told me that it was a bitch whose teats were hanging down, which meant that she had had a litter few days previously. Other traces going in different direction, an apparently made by something constantly over the surface of the sand beside the front paws, told me that she had very long ears. And I noticed that the sand was always less indented by one paw than by the other three, I realized that the bitch belonging to our most august Queen had, if I may dare say so, a slight limp." (Voltaire [1747] 2014: 15–16)

Zadig's method, Chalhoub states, had found adepts also among Historians. Robert Darnton of *The Great Cat Massacre* (1984) and the Carlo Ginzburg of the *The Cheese and the Worms* (1976) are two remarkable examples of them. Chalhoub intends to join this select society of

authors: in his book “a cadela da rainha é o processo histórico de abolição da escravidão na corte.” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 16–18). Based on a discussion of some theoretical contributions by Clifford Geertz, E.P. Thompson and Mintz & Price, Chalhoub explains that the subject to be elected to elucidate the logic of change proper of this historical process should be delimited in the confluence of many social struggles:

“no ‘lugar’ onde não seria possível determinar com qualquer precisão o que seriam os aspectos econômicos, sociais, políticos ou ideológicos do processo histórico em questão. A cadela da rainha precisaria estar numa encruzilhada, na confluência de muitos caminhos e na incerteza de vários futuros.” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 28)

In the case of Brazil, Chalhoub argues, this “place” [lugar] was the “significado da liberdade dos negros”. In this sense, asserting that “os rastros da cadela da rainha estão visíveis logo adiante”, he closes the introduction inviting his reader to “virar a página e começar a busca ...” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 28).

Chalhoub’s analogy is especially ill suited to grasp the Historian’s craft. It is evident that the existence of the queen’s bitch does not depend neither on the particular traces left behind by it in any particular circumstance nor on Zadig’s capacities of inference based on them. The same cannot be said about the Historical process of abolition of slavery in Rio de Janeiro in the particular form presented in *Visões da Liberdade*, whose existence completely depends on the traces left behind by it as well as on Chalhoub’s capacity of inference based on them. Interestingly, Chalhoub is aware of that. He even stresses as well as Zadig had never saw the queen’s bitch, Historians

“jamais se depararam com os fatos históricos ao dobrarem uma esquina mais ou menos deserta de arquivo. Não, os fatos nunca estiveram lá, de tocaia, prontos pra tomar de assalto as páginas dos historiadores; foi preciso investigar seus rastros – os documentos – e construí-los a partir de interesses específicos [...]” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 18)

Nonetheless, he seems not to realize that the analogy with Zadig’s story suggests exactly the opposite position, namely, that historical processes (as the queen’s bitch) are the sort of thing that stay somewhere (hidden or lost?) waiting to be found by the laborious work of Zadig-Historians who can read the traces it left behind when it had escaped (towards the past). Here, the relation between Historians and their subject matter is not intrinsically constructivist but rather of exteriority. However, if the analogy is not only inappropriate but also somehow contradictory, why it seems to be so plausible in Chalhoub’s pen?

The reason for that lies at least partially in the way in which Historical events are frequently enunciated. Danto himself, who is someone philosophically attentive to the narrative

character of them, refers to events like the “French Revolution” or “the Renaissance” as if they had the same ontological status of Napoleon and Petrarca (Danto [1965] 2007: 390; Baumgartner 1997: 284-294). So does Chalhoub when he draws the analogy between the “historical process of abolition of slavery” and the missing queen’s female dog.

The biological nature of the metaphor suggests that historical processes share the ontological unity and continuity of organisms. The notions of unity and continuity are those that bring about the very sense that something actually existed: they form the being and the time of things.

However, the way in which historical processes “exist” is far from “analogous” to that of living beings. The employment of organicist metaphors<sup>58</sup> is just one among many ways to simultaneously explain, justify and produce a type of ontologizing power proper of Historical accounts.

Coming back to the core of the issue at stake in this topic: what has all that to do with anachronism? Is there a more equivocated way of mistaking the time of something than presenting it as ontological, when it is a Historical one? Probably not. Here is, finally, a formulation of the *third* type anachronism, which consists precisely in this “ontologizing” property conceded to History by Historians.

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Anachronisms are the most distinctive feature of the, to use an expression by Michel de Certeau ([1975] 2002: 65–106), “historiographical operation”. As a mere chronological mistake, anachronism is just embarrassing when made by Historians. This is its first and rather uncommon type. As a way of covering a broad field of sight, it were to say that in the course of a Historical account there is no point at which a statement concerning the past does not

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<sup>58</sup> Maurice Mandelbaum points out that the conception of the organic nature of man’s social life, and the use of organic analogies tended to dominate all of nineteenth-century European thought. The Historicism of those days rested firmly upon such analogies. Mandelbaum mentions Troelsch’s long chapter on “Organologie” in *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* as an example of the extent to which organic analogy was used as the basis for interpreting history. (Mandelbaum 1977: 57-61; 385)

In Chalhoub’s hands the idea of the organic is still the basis, but there is no need to develop it further, because what he wants to explain is not history as “man’s social life” but History, that is, the Historian’s craft. However, the idea of “reading the traces” [left behind by a living organism], which his analogy of the queen’s bitch aims at making more easily understandable, is rooted in an epistemological change that, according to Carlos Ginzburg, emerged also as a late development of nineteenth-century European thought. Ginzburg denominates it “evidential paradigm”. (Ginzburg 1989: 96–125) This point will be resumed later (see the section ‘Historical continuity of long-term, “logic of resemblance” and empirical proof’).

necessarily cross another point situated at a later time, weaving in this way the knots of meaningfulness that constitute the fabric of History (the second type). Finally, the degree of consistency and integrity that grants History's meaningfulness would never be reached without the presupposition that whatever enters the order of the Historical time had the unity and continuity proper of what enjoys an ontological existence outside of the historiographical text (the third type).

Therefore, in that very sense of exploring the disciplinary semantic of History's field, it seems not to be far-fetched to suggest that students might be taught that the writing of historiographical accounts is the truly practice of a specific mode of "controlled anachronism", which, in consequence, should not be regarded as a danger, but rather as the divine breath that brings History to life.

## CHAPTER 2 - HISTORY AND THEORY OF HISTORY

### On the ends of History

Think of Mano Brown and of Victor Jara, think of the 1933 Nazi book burnings and of the Degenerate Art Exhibition, think of Salman Rushdie and of Ai Weiwei, think of all that and it becomes crystal clear why there exists so widely subscribed a political attitude that “art is dangerous”. And, in a political sense, it is believed that History is even more dangerous than art. It is not for nothing, as Randeria remarks, that national liberation movements maintain a close relationship with the efforts to control the interpretation of their own History (Conrad/Randeria 2002: 35), and that History has established itself as a mandatory part of every national school curriculum.

Art is politically dangerous; History even more so. Nonetheless, History of Art seems to be a quite inoffensive sort of knowledge. If it were a case of trying to judge the tenableness of this claim only on the basis of the many overtones that a phrase such as “The end of history” carries, it would be curious to note that outside of the art and academic world, little attention has been paid to Danto’s thesis on “the end of art”, which designates, in the manner of Hegel, an ontological *end of the history of art* as a developmental sequence (Danto [1986] 2005: 103). However, there has been recurring public uproar over Fukuyama’s thesis on “the end of history”, which, resting on identical Hegelian principles, makes a similar point concerning mankind's ideological evolution (Fukuyama 1989: 4; 1998: xi).

To draw any further comparison between Danto and Fukuyama would be beside the point. For the purposes of this section, this brief remark shall suffice to introduce the question of whether Danto’s thesis on the end of the history (of art) might be considered as politically dangerous as Fukuyama’s one respecting ideology.

Aware that the employment of the expression “the end of ...” to refer to social phenomena is beset with far too many theoretical difficulties than would be possible to deal with within the scope of this dissertation, for what concerns the subsequent analysis, it will aim chiefly at making some critical remarks on the general subject under scrutiny, namely, time and temporality. These remarks will function as theoretical basis for the metaphorical model intended to be sketched in the conclusion of this dissertation.

The following analysis consists of two parts. Firstly, a characterization, if only in summary fashion, of Danto’s thesis on “The End of Art” will be delivered as a preliminary discussion. Then, drawing on the way in which Danto conceives the relationship between art and

philosophy, a mirrored reflection on the relationship between History and Theory of History will be developed.

### **Arthur Danto's end of art**

In the "The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense" (1998), the article that closes an issue of *History & Theory* dedicated exclusively to his work, Danto takes great pains to reply to a series of sharp criticisms of his ideas. He admits that the kind of theses he put forward first in his famous essay "The End of Art" (1964), and subsequently refined in the books *The Disenfranchisement of Art* (1986) and *After the End of Art—contemporary art and the pale of History* (1997), were indeed extravagant. One of these theses reads that with Warhol's *Brillo Box* "we have entered a period of post-historical art, where the need for constant self-revolutionization of art is now past" (Danto [1986] 2005: xxix). Another one says that essentialism and historicism, widely regarded as antithetical notions, "are not only compatible but co-implicated with one another, at least in the case of art" (Danto 1998: 128).

These theoretical extravagancies grow less eccentric if one considers three aspects of Danto's work. Firstly, Danto's general stance on philosophy. The aim of Danto's philosophy, as he himself states, "has been essentialist—to find a definition of art everywhere and always true [...]. By essence, I mean a real definition, of the old-fashioned kind, laying out the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to fall under a concept." (Danto 1998: 128-126). Secondly, one must consider the subject, according to Danto's view, that philosophy is devoted to, i.e. the natural topics of philosophical inquiry. This would be the paradoxes of perceptual indiscernibility: philosophy is what enables one to distinguish that which could not be told apart without the aid of some theory (Carrier 1998: 5; Carrol 1998: 19). Thirdly, one considers the Hegelian premise to which Danto resorts to in the formulation of his thesis on the end of art. This premise reads that history has to come to an end and that this end has been reached when history as subject grasps its own essence as object. In Danto's words: "when subject and object become one—a gap will have been closed and a period of internal development will have run its course." (Danto [1986] 2005: xxvi).

In this sense, Danto argues, Warhol's *Brillo Box* marks the point of accomplishment of a process that Duchamp's *La Fountain* had already radicalized: art's search for self-understanding, which began in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, when the

emergence of the modernists drove the final nail in the coffin of the “paradigm of imitation” in art.

Since for every relevant purpose Warhol’s *Brillo Box* was indiscernible from the Brillo Box of warehouses, it was clear that the differences between them could not account for the difference between art and reality. Art had in this way constituted itself as a perfect “paradox of indiscernibility”; it had turned itself into the proper world that it pretended to be an imitation or expression of; it had, to sum up using Hegelian vocabulary, accomplished the unification of subject and object. At this point, the task of understanding art “has been handed over to philosophy, because it lies beyond the limits of art to carry it any further” (Danto 1998: 135). If history reaches its end with the advent of self-consciousness, so does art with the advent of its own philosophy.

But “the end of art” does not at all mean that there will no longer be art. Actually, it means the logical “end of the possibility of any particular internal direction for art to take. It is the end of the possibility of progressive development [...] it means the end of the tyranny of history—that in order to achieve success as an artist one must *drive art history forward*, colonizing the future novelty by novelty.” (Danto 1998: 140 - italics in the original).

Danto sees rather a promising future for art. As in the Hegelian and Marxist utopias, after the end of (art) history lies the realm of true (artistic) freedom: artists can do whatever they want. And the history of such artistic features will sunder into a sequence of individual acts, one after another: “there will not be a single metanarrative for the future history of art”, which will have then reached its post-historical age (Danto 1998: 139–140; [1986] 2005: 103).

Having briefly retraced Danto’s route from his stance on Philosophy over the Hegelian premises of his aesthetical reflections, and towards his conclusion heralding a new era of art history, now seems to be the right moment to say some words regarding the fact of having chosen Danto’s aesthetics as an analytical tool for thinking about History.

To borrow a famous thought by Lévi-Strauss, Danto’s aesthetics was not chosen because it satisfies any precise theoretical criteria that should necessarily be taken into account in performing a competent analysis of the issues under inquiry in this chapter, but rather because it is “good to think” with<sup>59</sup> (Lévi-Strauss [1962] 1991: 89).

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<sup>59</sup> To be sure, Danto’s ideas become “good to think” with if, and only if, one levels at Danto’s thesis on “the end of art” the weapons of his own analytical philosophy of history (about it, see the first part of this chapter): how can Danto know that anything out of the huge range of present and future artistic choices

Approaching History using aesthetics is furthermore far from being an uncommon analytical strategy. Quite the opposite: analyses of this nature are a constant in conceptual discussions on History, and have been characterized by what Hayden White once called Historians' "Fabian tactic". When criticized because of theoretical or methodological reasons, Historians reply that History has never claimed the status of pure science, remaining, due to its heuristic character, a kind of art; when fustigated by literary artists and critics because of aesthetical reasons, Historians respond that "historical data do not lend themselves to 'free' artistic manipulation, and that the form of (the Historian's) narratives is not a matter of choice, but is required by the nature of historical materials themselves" (White 1966: 111).

The kind of analysis that is about to be done here follows also a long tradition, a tradition that has taught that the best answer to the question whether History is a proto-art or a semi-science is, perhaps, "neither/nor". In any case, seeking for a hard definition of History is far from being among the aspirations of the following reflections, which consist chiefly of an analytical effort to spell out an ensemble of similarities and dissimilarities between History of Art and History of History. Rather, the aim, it is worth calling to mind once more, is to make some critical remarks on the issue of time and temporality in the writing of History.

### **Postcolonial end of History**

A justified and widespread charge made against works inspired by poststructuralist and postmodernist theories is that they often deploy a highly specialized language, borrowed largely from linguistic philosophy and literary theory, which has rendered such works obscure and hermetic. According to this charge, instead of inflating the complexity of the matter under inquiry by creating expressions such as "the ontologizing of History"<sup>60</sup>, it would be perfectly possible, if expositive transparency were desirable, simply to say that Historians claim that what they write is a probable truth, which has been established by following "the rules of evidence and the facts on which they rest" (Evans 2000: 223).

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will not give rise to an entirely new developmental kind of art history (Carrol 1998: 27)? How can he grant that the future is not going to "falsify" his prediction? Responding to these questions Danto says: "The answer is that I cannot know this." And he continues, justifying his position: "Nor can I imagine this, any more than a medieval artist could have imagined the spectacular illusions that history of painting was to provide. One has, of course, to be open – the end of art theory means to be an empirical theory. But the future is what we cannot imagine until it is present." (Danto 1998: 140)

<sup>60</sup> This term is used in the first part of this chapter (Narrativity, Ideology and Anachronism).

Which rules? Rules that “might include very basic precepts such as not altering documents, or not leaving or suppressing material damaging to one’s argument or purpose. In this sense, the documents do have an integrity of their own, they do indeed ‘speak for themselves’” (Evans 2000: 116). According to this view, sources do indeed establish historical facts, which were consequently not something that is constructed by means of interpretation and then accepted as such within the Historians’ community: “Facts thus precede interpretation conceptually, while interpretation precedes evidence.” (Evans 2000: 77). Judging by such statements, writing History seems to be a fairly simple task, everything in it being so transparent that there is practically no room for supposing that the practice entails some kind of hidden epistemological level that would require a particular theoretical effort in order to be unveiled. A symptom of this presumption, namely History’s epistemological transparency, can be found in the shelves of academic bookstores. Here, in the History area, it is almost certain that there will be no section on History Theory. Where to look for Bloch’s *The Historian’s Craft*, Carr’s *What is History?*, Droysen’s *Grundriss der Historik*, Elton’s *The Practice of History*, Mink’s *Historical Understanding*, Burckhardt’s *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* or Collingwood’s *The Idea of History*? Should they be there, they will be amongst either the thousands of thematic ordered History books (but, to which “theme” do they belong?) or more probably, in the Philosophy area. What about the writings on History by Certeau, Foucault, Barthes, Danto and Hayden White? It might be a good idea to check the section on Linguistics and Literary Theory too. Any hope to stumble across a fresh Ankersmit, Rüsen or Iggers? A very optimistic answer would read: probably not, but ...

It is not that the question about the problem of the foundations and limits of what can be “Historically” known became outmoded. A recent German book on the relation between History and theory speaks of a “torrent of literature” on the issue, and concludes: “Trotzdem bleibt bei dieser Flut der Literatur zum Thema ein Unbehagen. Nicht selten entsteht der Eindruck, dass der ‘Alltag des Historikers und die historische Theorie’ relativ unvermittelt nebeneinander stehen [...]” (Hacke/Pohlig 2008: 7). This is simply another way of phrasing what Evans calls the “dialogue of deaf”<sup>61</sup> of Historians with theoreticians and philosophers of History (Evans 2000: 11).

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<sup>61</sup> Peter Burke uses this very same expression for describing the relation of History and Social Theory (Burke 1992: 2–3). The fact that he does it by quoting Fernand Braudel betrays the affinity of thought concerning the treatment of this question on the part of professional Historians.

This state of affairs is, of course, not at all new, nor have its effects not been regularly addressed. Braudel's aforementioned remark on the "unstructured" character of History as social science, Koselleck's complaint about the "Theoriebedürftigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaft" (Koselleck 2000: 298-316) or Jenkin's emphasis on "history's epistemological fragility" (Jenkins 2003: 13) are only three of many examples that could have been chosen to illustrate this point.

The most interesting thing in this wrangle between professional Historians and theoreticians of History is that apparently there is no doubt about the separation between History and History Theory with regard to epistemological concerns: since, as is commonly argued, solely the latter is situated at "metatheoretical level" (Rüsen 1983: 13; Cardoso 2005: 152), no further discussion about the epistemological status of each field seems to be needed.

As a mere theoretical exercise, one could imagine that the relationship of History to its theory is not as plain and uncomplicated as this idea of a clear epistemological distance and relative disciplinary autonomy may suggest. Indeed, can it not be, that this relationship is as intricate as that, for example, of art with philosophy? And, "since it is far from plain that we can separate art from philosophy, inasmuch as its substance is in part constituted by what it is philosophically believed to be" (Danto [1986] 2005: 5), might it not be also far from plain that History and History Theory can be neatly disjointed, inasmuch as the substance of historical accounts is in part constituted by what they are theoretically believed to be?

Sometimes it is not only what they are "believed to be", but what they conspicuously intend to be, for there are plenty of History books in which meta-theoretical questions are discussed openly and at length. Moreover, given that every historiographical work forcefully accounts for the Historiography of its common subject, it is hard to escape meta-theoretical issues completely, for this task consist at least partially in an assessment of different epistemological approaches to the same (or similar) subject-matter.

Rather than a "dialogue of deaf", is it not possible that the relationship between History and History Theory resembles much more a dialog in which all participants have been listening so attentively to each other that many historiographical works function as direct answers to questions posed at "pure" meta-theoretical level? If yes, from where does it come then, that certainty of sharp separation, which, by the way, both sides more often than not boast about? Those bookstores' shelves, where the presumably best of the academic production ends up, provide the first clue about the reasons why History has been seen as a business that can be

alive and kicking without becoming significantly entangled in meta-theoretical matters: the absence of History Theory sections may be seen as a reflex of the fact that “History has been the most commonsensical of the human sciences, the most resistant to formalization, the most persistently committed to the simple task of telling what happened and telling it straight.” (Kellner 1995: 9) That is why “naïve realism”, in spite of the contradiction that it entails<sup>62</sup>, may be seen as an appropriate designation for the kind of necessary epistemological and moral stance on whatever event happens to be narrated as History.

Yet even here, naïveness does not imply a deliberated renunciation or rejection of any means of presentation for the sake of protecting the authenticity of whatever is supposed to be represented; quite the contrary, it opens up the possibility of exploring any means - no matter how artificial or sophisticated they may be - meaningfully justified as useful for the task of giving an even straighter account of what actually happened.

This unavoidably realistic premise of the construction of historical knowledge is what allows for the possibility of drawing a picture of History as a *Bildungsroman*, the plot of which being similar to that Hegelian story told by Danto about art.

In this story, Theory of History instead of being considered, as customarily, as a field of knowledge relatively independent from History, will be taken as History’s consciousness in its quest for self-understanding.

### *Imitation*

Leopold von Ranke, credited with making the most decisive contributions to the process of establishing History as a separate academic discipline independent from philosophy and literature, marks with his famous “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*” the starting point of this story, the point that would correspond to the mimesis paradigm in art. Underlying this conception of History is the belief that the past can be scientifically reconstructed in such a way that the

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<sup>62</sup> Kellner argues that “in historical matters, where realism is taken as the hallmark of responsible judgment, and utopianism a dangerous weakness, the expression ‘naïve realist’ seems not only patronizing, but also self-contradictory. To be a realist is not to be naïve; to be naïve is not to be a realist. And yet, when we commit ourselves to historical labour, there it is, whether we are reporting on a holiday in Egypt or describing modern historiographical thought. We are talking about *something*, and that *something* was real.” (Kellner 1995: 10 – italics in the original)

representation of it somehow matches an original: “it wants only to show what actually happened.” (Evans 2000: 17)

As well as progress in *art as mimesis* was “generally appreciated in terms of an imperative to replace inference to perceptual reality wherever possible, with something equivalent to what perceptual reality itself would present” (Danto [1986] 2005: 88), progress in *History as science* was appreciated in terms of an imperative to replace inferential factual reality whenever possible with sources which stand for facts that, consequently, must no longer be inferred. Thus, the rules of perspective are, for the artist who wants to satisfy the eye eager for mimesis, analogous to the rule of the scientific method for the Historian who wants to meet the exigencies of the mimetic historical understanding.

An early attempt to systematize the historical method that can be seen as marking the heyday of this kind of historical understanding in the French scholarship is the famous *Introduction aux études historiques (1897)* by Langlois and Seignobos, who remarked that “When all the documents are known, and have gone through the operations which fit them for use, the work of critical scholarship will be finished. In the case of some ancient periods, for which documents are rare, we can see that in a generation or two it will be time to stop.” (Evans 2000: 21)

Echoes of this understanding of History can still be heard today when the familiar idea of “filling the gap in historical knowledge” is given as a rationale for conducting a research on a small, or unexplored, subject. In spite of that, no Historian would nowadays dare to assert to have written, or to entertain the intention to write, the History that fills the final gap and, in this sense, that represents the definitive end point of any subject matter.

This is so because there is no longer any doubt that the same document can be legitimately used as evidence for a variety of different histories; also, the History of the same general subject can be written on the basis of different sets of documental evidence. Finally, there is equally no doubt about the impossibility of stopping the proliferation of new historical interpretations, for “it is obvious that our way of reading a source derives principally from our present-day concerns and from the questions that present-day theories and ideas lead us to formulate” (Evans 2000: 84).

To be sure, all that was already obvious since the very beginning of the institutionalization of Historiography as an academic discipline. Ranke and the many generations of Rankean Historians, who often used to be more Rankean than Ranke himself (Burke 1992: 5; Evans

2000: 23), simply believed it to be possible to bypass the epistemological difficulty posed by living in the present, so that their written representation of the past could be done on positivist principles similar to those of the natural sciences (Mandelbaum 1977: 47-49).

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, having already digested developments such as Windelband and Rickert's distinction between idiographic/individualizing sciences and nomothetic/generalizing ones, as well as Weber's re-conceptualization of the notion of objectivity in social sciences (Jordan 2009: 74; Weber [1904] 1988: 146-214), the historiographical milieu would begin experiencing some serious scepticism about the possibilities of transforming History into a "hard science". Symptomatically, the leading role in this new interpretation of History would be given to the present time: Marc Bloch, co-founder of the Annales School, which was a direct reply to historiography à la Langlois & Seignobos, advances his "regressive method"; Croce coins the famous phrase: "All history is contemporary history"; Walter Benjamin speaks of "Jetztzeit"; Collingwood defines History in terms of a "re-enactment of the past". In all these views, subjectivity was lurking behind the scientific objective pretensions of History.

Evans reconstructs an episode that illustrates clearly the change of attitude that culminates in this "return to the present time", characteristic of the works by Bloch, Croce, Benjamin and Collingwood.

"In 1903, in a famous inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History in Cambridge, J.B. Bury declared: 'History is a science, no less no more.'" Twenty-six-year-old George Macaulay Trevelyan, who was to be appointed to the Regius Chair when Bury died in 1927, was one member of the audience at that lecture (Evans 2000: 23-25). In an essay written as a polemical answer to Bury, Trevelyan argues that

"If History were merely a 'chronicle of bare facts arranged on scientific principles', then 'literature, emotion and speculative thought would be banished from the human's race contemplation of its own past. [...] History, said Trevelyan, was a mixture of the scientific (research), the imaginative or speculative (interpretation) and the literary (presentation)." (Evans 2000: 24; Stern 1973: 227-245)

When, more than a half century later, E. H. Carr, also an ex-student of Cambridge, declares keen and peremptorily that "History means interpretation" (Carr [1961] 2001: 18), presumably, it could be expected that there were no longer reasons for big upheavals. A happy

illusion<sup>63</sup>. However, Carr's provocative and witty play on words, according to which History is not a hard core facts surrounded by a pulp of disputable interpretations, but rather a hard core of interpretation, surrounded by a pulp of disputable facts (Carr [1961] 2001: 18), came to be taken more seriously than Carr himself perhaps desired.

### *Expression*

In much the same way in which it was possible to draw a parallel between the Rankean understanding of History as upright science and the Mimesis Theory of Art, it is now possible to compare the subsequent idea of "History as interpretation" and the Expression Theory of Art.

Danto points out that the great merit of the Expression Theory of Art was that it seemed to have maintained what has been a brooding question since Plato – namely, "What is Art?" – at the centre of attention. Every art movement raised this question afresh

"And it began to seem as though the whole main point of art in our century was to pursue the question of its own identity while rejecting all available answers as insufficiently general. It was as though, to paraphrase a famous formula of Kant, art were something conceptually without satisfying any specific concept." (Danto [1986] 2005: 109)

These two points concerning the notion of Art as Expression, namely, the potentially seminal and simultaneously non-conceptually character of artworks can be recast in the discussion on History as interpretation.

In regard to the first point, the gradual prominence of interpretation as being the core of historical knowledge enables every historical inquiry to raise afresh the question about the History of a particular subject<sup>64</sup>, no matter how many times this subject had been scholarly examined before. As a rule, the task to be performed by historiographical works that intend

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<sup>63</sup> On the debate on the status of History around the sixties see, for example, Popper's *The poverty of Historicism* (Popper [1957] 2002) and Isaiah Berlin's *The concept of scientific history* (Berlin 1966).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, how Sydney Chalhoub and Jacob Gorender, relying upon the same documental corpus (the writing of a foreign traveller), speak in diametrically opposing terms about the thesis on the thingification of slavery in Brazil. (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 32-98); Gorender (1978: 65). Another example is the quite famous book "Montaillou" by the French Historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. Evans writes: "Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie read inquisitorial reports for different evidence and in many cases different facts than those quarried from them by previous writers. While they had been interested in the inquisition itself, Le Roy Ladurie was interested in using the incidental details the heretics revealed about their everyday lives to construct an intimate portrait of human relationship and human existence in a medieval village." (Evans 2000: 84)

to play a paradigmatic role in their specific fields is to do that as deeply and extensively as possible.

Whereas the Expression Theory of Art, explaining all art in a uniform way—i.e. as the expression of feelings (Danto [1986] 2005: 108)—was appropriate to expose the potential innovative and seminal character of every artwork in terms of an uniqueness emanated from the individual subjectivity, individual subjective uniqueness as a criteria of judging historiographical works would downgrade History from the realm of the idiographic to that of the idiosyncratic. And this signals a death penalty for any form of knowledge that intends to achieve some degree of scientific validity.

Concerning the second point, the emphasis on interpretation highlights an old epistemological problem that History shares with art: while permeated by concepts, and in this sense conceptualized and conceptuable, as a whole History could badly be subsumed under a unifying analytical category.

The reason of failure of the Expression Theory of art is also akin to that of History as interpretation. Based chiefly on the psychology of emotions, the language and the analytical tools used by the Expression Theory of art seemed to be less and less adequate to account for the profusion and succession of art styles, genres and movements that pullulate frenetically along the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Danto [1986] 2005: 108-109).

By 1964, when Warhol shows his Brillo Box at the Stable Gallery, it was definitely time to replace the Expression Theory of art with a kind of theoretical understanding that explains why art happened to become such a concatenation of novelties. And the reason for this theoretical urgency was quite simple. Heretofore, philosophy had kept itself outside of the artworld, addressing it from an “alienating distance”. Or, in the words of Barnett Newman: “Aesthetics is for art what ornithology is for the birds.” (Danto [1986] 2005: xxiv). But now, when works of art had become exactly like the most ordinary objects of everyday life, sharing together all sensory qualities, so that no one could tell them apart on the basis of the senses alone, the question “What is art?” had been put in a form that necessarily requires philosophical explanation. It was as though art, being finished with its task, was desperately beckoning to philosophy to articulate its relationship to the world. As Danto concludes, rephrasing Hegel: “Philosophy makes its appearance just when it is too late for anything but understanding.” (Danto [1986] 2005: xxiv-xxv; 17)

The proper philosophical understanding required by this artworld happened to be, as Danto jocosely states, his own postmodern philosophical view on art: a celebration of the openness that comes after the end of a long history of evolution.

The conception of History as being fundamentally interpretation heralded postmodern positions, for the logical consequence of the former is to see the History of everything as an ensemble of Historical interpretations that are either mutually exclusive, due to the incommensurability of their respective approaches, or that can be neatly juxtaposed, if they cast light on different facets of a shared subject. As well as expression in art, interpretation in History left no room for a theoretical understanding that could account for such a diversity. Attempts to regain positivist terrain, as that made by the so-called “cliometricians”, were attacked immediately by their fellow-Historians for, among other reasons, “over-interpretation” of sources (Evans 2000: 41).

By the 1960s, what prevented the understanding of History as interpretation from being frankly postmodern was its way of conceiving causation. Carr, for example, who writes, also here keen and peremptorily, that “The study of history is a study of causes.” (Carr [1961] 2001: 81), declares without any reluctance that these causes must be rational ones, because only from “that part which he [the Historian] recognizes as amenable to rational explanation and interpretation” can he “draw(s) conclusions which may serve as a guide to action.” (Carr [1961] 2001: 98)

In order to illustrate how simple is to find reasons of this nature, he makes up a story:

“Jones, returning from a party at which he has consumed more than his usual ration of alcohol, in a car whose brakes turn out to be defective, at a blind corner where visibility is notoriously poor, knocks down and killed Mr. Robinson, who was crossing the road to buy cigarettes at the shop on the corner. After the mess has been cleared up, we meet—say, at local police headquarters—to enquire into the causes of the occurrence. Was it due to the driver’s semi-intoxicated condition—in which case there might be a criminal prosecution? Or was it due to the defective breaks—in which case something might be said to the garage which overhauled the car only a week before? Or was it due to the blind corner—in which case the road authorities might be invited to give the matter their attention?” (Carr [1961] 2001: 98)

Carr argues that to say that “Mr Robinson was killed because the driver was drunk, or because the brakes did not work, or because there was a blind corner on the road [...] will seem a perfectly sensible and rational explanation”. On the other hand, to say that he was killed because of his desire for cigarettes, while real, true and logical, would not be of “historical

significance”<sup>65</sup>. Why not? Because it makes no sense as a general proposition to say that “people get run over and killed on the roads because they smoke cigarettes”. That means: based on the variable “smoking cigarettes”, which is indeed an indisputable fact of the story, the relationship that can be established in order to explain the incident is so contingent that it cannot be used as a “guide to action” (Carr [1961] 2001: 81-102).

This story has been revisited by other authors.<sup>66</sup> Evans, wondering if Carr was really saying that accidental causes should be completely ruled out (or suppressed) just because they could not serve neither one’s purposes in the present nor interests of present-day ideology, answers:

“It is hard to escape the conclusion that Carr did not really think his argument through. Nor, in the end, was the example of Mr Jones and Mr Robinson particularly well chosen. For historical explanation is not just about finding causes for discrete events like car crashes and world wars. Historians are just interested in what events or processes decide, and what they mean, as in what causes them. Consequences are often more important than causes.” (Evans 2000: 135)

It is equally hard to escape the conclusion that Evans also did not really think his critic through. To begin with, to what extent “car crashes” and “world wars” can both be equalized as being “discrete events”? This approximation, as exposed by Evans, bare of any additional explanation, is disparate to a degree that dispenses further discussion. Moreover, in affirming that Historians are interested not only in causes, but also in what “events or processes decide, and what they mean”, he is only paraphrasing what Carr had previously said about the importance of History as a “guide”, as well as that historicizing “means” interpreting, i.e. to assign meanings to events. Finally, even if consequences often happen to be more important than their causes, the only way to ascertain that this is really the case is by revealing the cause(s) of whatever be under examination. For if the causes remain hidden, the consequences would logically not be seen as such. Thus, the decision to define whether the causes or the consequences are the most important element, may ultimately be, as Carr never tires of repeating, a matter of interpretation.

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<sup>65</sup> Carr draws his idea of “historical significance” from Talcott Parsons: “To borrow Talcott Parsons’ phrase once more, history is a ‘selective system ‘ not only of cognitive, but of causal orientations to reality. Just as from the infinite ocean of facts the Historian selects those which are significant for his purpose, so from the multiplicity of sequences of cause and effect he extracts those, and only those, which are historically significant; and the standard of historical significance is his ability to fit them into his pattern of rational explanation and interpretation.” (Carr [1961] 2001; 99)

<sup>66</sup> From a frankly US-American multiculturalist perspective, Appleby, Hunt and Jacob ask whether “doesn’t any analysis of this case depend on whether Mr. Robinson and Mr. Jones were white or black, homosexual or heterosexual (perhaps one of them was on his way to a gay bar and was preoccupied), or even accident-prone or rock-steady?” (Appleby et al. 1994: 304)

In the end, the affinities between Evans's *Defense of History*- a reply to postmodernist critique of academic historical knowledge-, and Carr's *What is History*- an adumbration of the kind of relativistic stance on History that postmodernism would radicalize-, are as strong as the similarity between the table of contents of both works may suggest: Evans entitles four (of eight) chapters of his book with the very same titles that Carr had already used in *What is History*.

This is, of course, not at all coincidence<sup>67</sup>, but, evidently, no more than a formal curiosity that solely says something substantial about what relates so intimately both authors. A brief analysis of two passages of Evans' book shall help to make this point clearer.

In the following two passages, Evans criticizes what he would perhaps characterize as postmodern epistemological excesses: in the first, his target is the sharp distinction between the subject of historical knowledge (the past) and the written academic representation thereof (History); in the second, the idea that time disappears in History.

Passage one:

"Some writers have claimed that it is impossible for Historians to enable the past to 'speak for itself' because if the past were to express itself it would have to re-enact itself. This assertion would seem to depend on the belief that when you or I think we are expressing ourselves in speech or writing, we are not really doing so at all, but producing an arbitrary set of words with no determinate relationship to ourselves at all. However, even if we develop, perhaps even 're-invent' our identity during our lifetime, and even if we have not an unitary self but an identity that is multifaceted [...] We do in fact invest our words with meanings which have a real relationship to our own life and our own experience. Life would be very difficult for us indeed if we did not.

Language and grammar are in fact not completely arbitrary signifiers, but have evolved through contact with the real world in an attempt to name real things. In a similar way, historical discourse or interpretation has also evolved through contact with the real world in an attempt to reconstruct it." (Evans 2000: 112)

Passage two:

"In the end, therefore, time does pass, a fact we experience only too painfully in the process of human ageing to which we all are subject ourselves, and we cannot abolish it by simply declaring, as Ankersmit does, that there is no difference between the Fourteenth Century and the Twentieth, or that time is merely a collection of unrelated presents, or that textuality of the world abolishes the principle of cause and effect." (Evans 2000: 157)

The task now is not to assess whether or to what extent Evans is right in his critique of postmodernism. These passages were transcribed with the only purpose of giving two clear

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<sup>67</sup> Evans wrote the introduction for an edition of Carr's "What is History?" released in 2001.

examples of a theoretical expedient that Evans frequently resorts to and which could be rightly denominated “anthropomorfization of History”.

There is no doubt that people invest their words with meanings which have a real relationship to their life and their own experience. Equally indisputable is the fact that people age. The unassailability of these assertions rested evidently on two general properties: unity and continuity. Indeed, before becoming properly human every human being is certainly a material being, an organic body that naturally tends to remain living as long as possible.

Among the many metaphors one can use to make sense of History, the biological ones are perhaps the most misleading. In diametrical opposition to what Evans says, the relation between “language” and “real things” and “historical discourse or interpretation” and “the real world” does not at all evolve in a “similar way”. On the contrary, they are, and have evolved, in fundamentally distinct ways because of the elementary fact that what Historians try to reconstruct is not the “real world”, but exactly the world that is, of course, no longer “real”, in the very sense that it not “actual”.

In regard to the question concerning time (second passage), conceding that the 14<sup>th</sup> Century was quite different to the present day, and taking the principle of cause and effect as axiom, it is nonetheless to ask: to what extent do these assumptions allow one to think that historical processes “age” like human beings do? Do they die too? Do they have a childhood? “Time does pass”, but the awkwardness of these questions indicates again how misleading biological metaphors might be when used to explain what History is.

Playing a little with the inappropriateness of such metaphors, one could say that to accept Evans’ approximations between History and his hypothetical “we” is the same as to believe that the relation of someone with a good old friend is “similar” to the relation of this same person with a good old *dead* friend! Life would be very difficult indeed if it were like that.

Coming back to Carr now, he admits that what Historians do when they address their subjects based on evidential inferences of cause-effect relations

“may shock philosophers, and even some Historians. But it is perfectly familiar to ordinary people going about the practical business of life. [...] We had no difficulty in recognizing that some of the causes were rational and ‘real’ and that others were irrational and accidental. But by what criterion did we make the distinction? The *faculty of reason* is normally exercised for some purpose. Intellectuals may sometimes reason, or think that they reason, for fun. But, broadly speaking, human beings reason to an end.” (Carr [1961] 2001: 100)

Continuing his criticism of Carr, Evans disagrees that Historians operate this “kind of common-sense approach to explanation”. He argues that such a claim does not really do justice to the amplitude and diversity of today’s historical scholarship, which explores many ways of accounting for their subject-matter, including those that rigorously refuse to put forward causal effects or any overarching thesis. (Evans 2000: 137) Evans surely has a point here.

However, a more careful analysis evinces that there is not even a shadow of epistemological discordance between Evans and Carr. Evan’s whole idea of History rests on the belief that if Historians are “very scrupulous, and careful and self-critical” in their observation of the “rules of evidence” they may be able to write good History, which means a reconstruction of past reality that will not be objective in an absolute sense, but will be “objective enough in most *normal* senses of the world”, since it does not wilfully distort or manipulate the evidence. In this sense, such a historical reconstruction, certainly not being objective, would be nevertheless true. (Evans 2000: 224–253 – emphasis added)

Paraphrasing Carr, this simplicity may shock philosophers or others social scientists, but is perfectly familiar to ordinary Historians going about the practical business of researching their sources. How far are Evans’ words from meaning that “true” Historical knowledge would seem to the “ordinary man” as “perfectly sensible and rational”?

In the end, by means of that anthropomorfization of historical processes added to his confidence in a fair reason guided by evidential inference, Evans himself “operates a kind of common-sense approach to explanation” about the construction of historiographical knowledge that is very similar to that produced, according to Carr, by Historical accounts themselves.

Meanwhile, the “reason” for this congruence between Evan’s and Carr’s thoughts is obvious: both author share a remarkable faith in the ultimate power of ... reason.

This faith is not undeserved. Reasoning on the basis of evidential inferences, which, generally speaking, implies to leap *from* clues that can be observed *to* a complex reality which directly can not, seems to be so quintessential that Ginzburg, underpinning what came to be known as “evidential paradigm”, puts it down as being originated by hunters in the dawn of civilization, in a process that would culminate in the very invention of writing:

“Perhaps indeed the idea of a narrative sequence, as opposed to spell or exorcism or invocation, originated in a hunting society, from the experience of interpreting tracks. [...] The hunter could have been the first ‘to tell a story’, because only hunters knew how to read a coherent sequence of events from the silent (though not imperceptible) signs left by their

prey. This 'deciphering' and 'reading' of the animals' tracks is metaphorical. But it is worth trying to understand it literally, as the verbal distillation of a historical process leading, through across a very long time-span, towards the invention of writing." (Ginzburg 1980: 13)

Ginzburg's aim in advancing this explanation was to approach the borderline between natural sciences and human sciences from a perspective that might help one to go "beyond the sterile contrast of 'rational' and 'irrational'" by postulating a kind of universal form of knowledge, which "exists everywhere in the world, without geographic, historical, ethic, gender or class exception." (Ginzburg 1980: 29)

Ginzburg's attempt to effect a friendly reconciliation between empiricism and narrative by grounding the latter in an ontological type of the former is praiseworthy and shrewd, but it cuts a poor figure next to the epistemological vigour of those approaches concerned with blurring sharp distinctions between subject and object of knowledge: in the guise of Foucault's discourse analysis, Derrida's deconstruction, Kuhn's paradigm of scientific revolutions, Austin's speech acts or Danto's concept of narration, a broad range of highly influential works attack from many different fronts what could be denominated, thinking of Quine, as the "dogmas of empiricism" (Quine 1951: 20–43).

These foundational concepts (and many others of a similar nature) have been modelling a so-called postmodernism in History. Simplifying to the extreme, the postmodern perspective in History might be defined as advocating that historical texts are something to be looked *at*, not to be looked *through*; they shall be discussed primarily not in terms of the reality that they aim at representing, but in terms of the representation that they themselves are (Kellner 1995: 1–17). This pre-eminence of the level of representation over the level of whatever might be represented entails the claim of a relatively high degree of autonomy of theory and language with regard to empirical evidence.

One of the most influential theoretical offspring of postmodern thought argues that "the postmodern condition" is characterized by the "incredulity towards metanarratives". Postmodern lenses are supposed to reveal the real face of *modern* History, to unmask it as being representations whose scientific validity has been grounded in evolutionist philosophical discourse that legitimate themselves appealing explicitly to some "grand narrative such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutic of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth." (Lyotard 1984: xxiv)

In fact, postmodernism in art, which, embodied in Warhol's Brillo Box, seemed to have marked the moment from which on there would still be histories to be told about art, yet without any single metanarrative to guide them: History of Art would then sunder into a sequence of individual acts, one after another (Danto 1998: 140; [1986] 2005: 103).

Similarly, postmodernism in History, releasing historical knowledge not only from the empiricist creed, but also from the ontologically evolutionist reason of metanarratives, would usher in an era of radical historical openness, where a boundless juxtaposition of equally legitimate historical accounts would arise, and there would be no *reason* to rule out irrevocably any of them.

A postmodern approach to art, like Danto's one, glosses upon the theoretical consequences of *considering the possibility* of identity between the subject and object of artistic representation, and this at a stage in which art had become something "which depends more and more upon theory for its existence as art, so that theory is not something external to a world it seeks to understand, so that in understanding its object it has understood itself." (Danto [1986] 2005: 111)

Thus, it may be accepted that postmodern art and its corresponding theoretical explanation means the closing chapter of art's *Bildungsroman*, a narrative that began with art's first modern inquiries into its own nature, and evolved until it ended with the achievement of a kind of Hegelian self-realization through self-knowledge, for the object in which the artwork consists turns out to be "so irradiated by theoretical consciousness that the division between object and subject is all but overcome, and it little matters whether art is philosophy in action or philosophy is art in thought." If "The End of History" coincides with the advent of Absolute Knowledge- a knowledge that admits no gap between knowledge and its object, or a knowledge as being its own object, hence subject and object at once- then art "ends with the advent of its own philosophy" (Danto [1986] 2005: 111–113).

Postmodern theory in History, in turn, may be presented in precisely opposing terms: it glosses upon the theoretical consequences of *ruling out the possibility* of identity between represented subject and object of historical representation, and this at a stage in which History had remained something which does not at all depend upon such theories in order to be understood as History! In this sense, theory only accentuates its externality with regard to what it seeks to understand to a degree that it appears to be not an exercise in Hegelian self-knowledge, but in self-alienation: the creation of a wider and wider gap between subject and

object of knowledge! If all that is true, then postmodernism cannot at all be the closing chapter of this History's Hegelian Bildungsroman.

The not especially surprising fact that the "crisis of metanarratives" turned out to be itself integral to the metanarrative it attempted to attack, was rather a consequence than a cause of the failure of postmodernism in guiding History to that Hegelian moment of self-knowledge. The most striking postmodern theoretical achievement was, in fact, to establish that concerning History there is no room for any meta-level that might escape from being promptly narrative. This means to make of narrativity some kind of transcendent condition of possibility of historical knowledge (Danto [1965] 2007: 389–392; Baumgartner 1997: 301–311).

Thus, whereas, as Danto argues, art fulfills itself by gradually *becoming* philosophy, History does the same by *remaining* always narration, no matter how thick the layer of theory one coats it with may be.

It is Hannah Arendt who remarks that "Theoria, or 'contemplation'", is the word given to the experience of the eternal, as distinguished from all other attitudes, which at most pertain to immortality." And immortality, she continues, had originally been the spring and center of the *vita activa*, which was the standard translation of the *bios politikos* and, not at all by accident, the traditional theoretical counterpart of *vita contemplativa* (or *theoria*) (Arendt [1958] 1998: 7–21).

In Arendt's sense, a Hegelian narration of any historical experience supposed to be so "irradiated by theoretical consciousness" that it could present itself as having *actually* happened *theoretically* should be considered a contradiction beyond the dialectic's power of salvation. It would indeed mean somehow "the narration of the eternal" and, consequently, would not admit anything that might be designated either as historical or as political.

It may appear implausible, but fact is that such a kind of "theoretical narration" has been practiced in History departments in most, if not all, universities around the world.

### *Reflection*

Chakrabarty formulates this problematic of the "theoretical narration" as follows:

"[I]nsofar as the academic discourse of history—that is, history as discourse produced at the institutional site of the university—is concerned, Europe remains the sovereign theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call 'Indian', 'Chinese' or 'Kenyan', and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations of a master narrative that could be called "the history of Europe". [...] Only Europe, the argument would appear to be, is *theoretically* (i.e. at the level of the fundamental categories that shape

historical thinking) knowable; all other stories are matters of empirical research that fleshes out a theoretical skeleton which is substantially Europe". (Chakrabarty 1992: 1–3)

Before continuing with this discussion, it is important to clarify in which way this postcolonial instance on History differs from the afore-discussed postmodern one.

The most manifest feature of postcolonial thinking is its concern with articulating epistemologically subaltern subject-positions (no wonder then that one of the most-celebrated postcolonial works bear the question-title "Can the Subaltern speak?").

Subalternity and power asymmetries are issues that have not been overlooked in postmodern discussions about History. In "Re-Thinking History", a well-known introduction to postmodern History, Keith Jenkins contends that a proper definition of History requires one to grasp the question "What is History?", thus entailing another unavoidable one: "Whom is history for?"(Jenkins 2003: 31). To some degree, it is essentially this last question that inspires postmodern approaches, for example, in Feminist, Black, and Queer History. What emerges as a result from such inquiries are histories of the guises of the oppression and the myriad strategies of resistance (Purkiss 1997; Love 2009; Lopes [2002] 2011).

However, the postcolonial insistence on addressing the question of power relations from the perspective of an epistemological geopolitics of knowledge, which Said's masterpiece *Orientalism* (1978) is a prototype of, means a major further development that helps to understand another key aspect of the postcolonial thought, namely, the deconstruction of essentialisms (Costa 2006: 117–118).

Deconstructionist purposes demand that also postcolonial theory looks *at* instead of *through* the historical text. Differently from postmodern approaches, the postcolonial view does not invest too much energy in discussing whether "the past and history are different things" (Jenkins 2003: 7) or what sort of relativism or pluralism should follow from the fact that they [History and Past] happen to be justly the same, since representation (in all its forms) is ultimately the only possible form of the past.

A proper understanding of the postcolonial epistemological contribution to Theory of History requires a more precise analysis of the way in which postcolonial theory "looks *at* the historical text". The concept of translation, a topic to which postcolonial thinkers have been paid critical and unrelenting attention, will play a crucial role here.

Writing may not offer room for the kind of transformation of representational possibilities that in visual art have been caused by technological advances of the media, but if there is

something capable of transforming texts without losing sight of the significance of its representational possibilities, this “something” is translation.

Paul Veyne once remarked somehow roughly that Historians would never be capable of being positivists, even if they wanted to, for they cannot even pronounce words like “war” and “city” without founding them in some theory (Veyne 1983: 3). If it is true that Historians cannot bypass the theoretical-sociological content of everyday words such as “war” and “city”, then certainly they are also not able to avoid assigning this same kind of meaning to words like “citizenship”, “the state”, “the individual” or “the society” and “the political”, which are words even more conceptually loaded.

***“It goes without saying”*** that the social world is ***“unthinkable”*** without invoking these concepts, which operate together with innumerable other conceptual categories such as civil society, social justice, democracy, national/popular sovereignty, the distinction between private and public, the idea of subject/ subjectivity, of objectivity/science and scientific rationality, etc. “[T]hese and other related concepts found a climatic form in the course of the European Enlightenment [...] and entail an unavoidable—and in a sense indispensable—universal and secular vision of the human.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 4)

The reader is presumably wondering for what reason “it goes without saying” and that “unthinkable” were written above in such a different form? “They must mean something else”, one is led to think, for the phrase is perfectly usual and would have probably gone unnoticed if it were normally written. But, what if there was no other hidden meaning thought to be hinted at by the writing difference? Further, assuming that this difference in writing does not intend to effect any change of the conventional understanding, which role may it then play?

To solve this not too innocent riddle calls for an explanation that will clarify why it is justified to assert that the postcolonial uses of the concept of translation have far-reaching epistemological consequences in History.

First, it shall be noted that, if postcolonial thinking aims at deconstructing the essentialism of the very binary opposition between, to borrow Hall’s terms, the “West” and the “Rest”, this task is supposed to be carried out not by attempting to divest the conceptual categories originally tailored in the writing of the Western History of their universal character and pretension, but quite the opposite, by taking it literally. With regard to the Marxism, Chakrabarty writes:

“Marx’s immanent critique of capital was enabled precisely by the universal characteristics he read into the category ‘capital’ itself. Without that reading, there can be only particular critiques of capital. But a particular critique cannot by definition be a critique of “capital”, for such could not take ‘capital’ as its object. Grasping the category ‘capital’ entails grasping its universal constitution.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 70)

Therefore, Chakrabarty concludes, his “reading of Marx does not in any way obviate that need for engagement with the universal.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 70)

The question brought up by these words is quite evident: How to take up such a stance without by the same token performing ‘the universality of European History’, a gesture that would contradict the very intention to deconstruct Europe as implicit “subject of all histories”? The answer is no less evident: one must decouple “Europe” from the theoretical categories stemmed from its own historical narration; “by definition” an explanation applicable only to a particular case is not at all theoretical.

Thus, the History of Europe, in what concerns its relationship to the universals, becomes simply “another particular”, as particular as the Indian or Brazilian ones. With this analytical gesture Chakrabarty paradoxically signals that the postcolonial historiographical project of “provincializing Europe” is not a “call for cultural relativism or for atavistic, nativist histories.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 45)

As a matter of fact, with the help of a “logical fable” of the History of capitalism in Europe, which is told to illustrate what Chakrabarty calls the “Two Histories of Capital”, he intends to show how one may handle universals displacing precisely European History. The “logical fable” needs not to be transcribed here. The logic thereof does.

The “capital”, he asserts, has (at least) two histories. The first one, which he names History 1, is the History of “a past posited by capital itself as its precondition”: for established by capital, History 1 lends itself to the reproduction of the logic of capital. The second one consists in the History of all those things that capital encounters as antecedents, “but not as antecedents established by itself, not as form of its own life-process”. Not belonging to capital’s life process, they do not contribute to the self-reproduction of capital”. This is the capital’s History 2. (Chakrabarty 2000: 63–64)

If one conceives History 2 as constituting the “dialectical Other of the necessary logical of History 1”, one would be forced to subsume History 2 to History 1, and in doing so, would write anything but another version of the usual narratives of transition to the capitalist mode

of production. "History 2 is better thought of as a category charged with the function of constantly interrupting the totalizing thrusts of History 1." (Chakrabarty 2000: 66)

According to Chakrabarty, in order to write History by making ordinary use of the explicatory power of the universal but neutralizing its homogenizing effects, they have to be conceived as a "place holder, its places always usurped by a historical particular seeking to present itself as the universal." (Chakrabarty 2000: 70)

In principle then, every Historical account—disregarding who has the agency in it—written in compliance with the rules reigning in this institution that not fortuitously carries the name "University", is forcefully "usurping" that place. It follows that all Histories could be thought of as equal in what concerns their theoretical potentialities.

If Chakrabarty's argument restricted itself in making these claims, it would not be especially innovative. Indeed, one does not need to read postcolonial theory to learn that the internal force of every abstract category meant to bear a universal character emanates from its capacity to dissociate (not only) that which concretely cannot be dissociated, but substantiate itself from its original subject of inquiry. Due to this very property of hypostasizing itself by means of its capacity to split the wholeness of the concrete, every theory also presupposes its own degree of inadequateness, or rather, of adequateness measured according to its own criteria. Therefore, when Chakrabarty says that "European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations" (Chakrabarty 2000: 16), one may reply that European thought, when taken in the abstract sense that it arrogates to itself, intends to be anything but "indispensable and inadequate" regardless of where its subject matter happens to be found or placed.

This is one of the main reasons why "the project of provincializing Europe must realize within itself its own impossibility." (Chakrabarty 2000: 45) Another reason, which plays an even more crucial role in this failure, is what, following Walter Benjamin, Chakrabarty calls the empty time of History.

## The time of History is empty

“because it acts as a bottomless sack: any number of events can be put inside it; and it is homogeneous because it is not affected by any particular events; its existence is independent of such events and in a sense it exists prior to them. Events happen in time but time is not affected by them. The time of human history [...] merges with the time of prehistory, of evolutionary and geological change that go back to then beginning of the universe. It is part of nature. [...] The naturalism of historical time lies in the belief that everything can be historicized. So although the non-naturalness of the discipline of history is granted, the assumed universal applicability of its method entails the further assumption that it is always possible to assign people, places, and objects to naturally existing, continuous flow of historical time.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 73)

But, to be sure, what is actually the big problem with the idea that “everything can be historicized”, and consequently, find its chronological location in the flow of a basically linear time?

Evans remarks that such an understanding of time “continues to be used the world over by people both in the conduct of their everyday lives and in their preferences for, say, novels which narrate a story over novels which do not.” Historical time, he goes on, “is in essence a too powerful a principle to be dispensed with, even by those who reject it.” Evans is right. He is also right when he says that “any attempt to deny historical time necessarily presupposes the very thing it denies.” However, should all these correct observations allow him to conclude that “How we count the years—whether we use the Western calendar, or the Jewish, or the Chinese, or whatever—is completely irrelevant to this point?” Is Evans still right when he states that criticisms like Chakrabarty’s one “are confusing the Western hegemony implicit in the worldwide use of the Christian calendar with the culturally neutral, because universal, sequence of time which calendars are designed to count” (Evans 2000: 142)?

What is at stake in the postcolonial critic of History’s time is evidently something far more complicated than the simple arithmetic task of calculating chronological correspondences between the Christian calendar and the Mayan or the Chinese ones. In any case, since Evans drops the matter, it seems to be fair to use it as a point of departure in order to contemplate the amplitude of the theoretical landscape in which this question is embedded.

Calendars, Walter Benjamin stresses, “do not measure time as clocks; they are monuments of a historical consciousness” (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 262). And the very idea of historical consciousness constitutes, paraphrasing Habermas, the core of the philosophical discourse of

modernity<sup>68</sup> (Habermas [1988] 2004: 9-34). This, namely, the “philosophical discourse of modernity” is what is at stake in the postmodern and postcolonial critic of History’s time. To reduce, as Evans does it, calendars (in general) to the task of counting time is an exemplary way of practicing this discourse, for employing this modern historical consciousness one can speak only of a world that, in Weber’s famous words, is already “disenchanted”. And the time of this disenchanted world strives to be the only one able to put into perspective not only all other possible conceptions of time, but truly everything.

If it is like that, why not to say that this time is merely another one among the many universals that can be chosen from so-called Western thought? Actually, it is merely another universal. But no, it is not a simple one. It has a striking peculiarity.

To see a category as universal is to see it as if it were completely separated from the content of concrete experience it was supposed to subsume. Universals are categories whose history was provisionally drained off, or, if you prefer a Foucauldian formulation, whose history “must remain in suspense”<sup>69</sup>. In Chakrabarty’s example, some Marxist concepts play this role as “History 1”. The problem with History’s time lies exactly in the apparent meaninglessness of the act of separating it from the events that it comprises. Time is there from the beginning, a perfect exteriority.

In other words, and exploring further Chakrabarty’s exegesis of Marx’s work: whereas the evolutionism built into Marx’s analysis of capitalism can be weakened by means of the very process of taking its categories in the rigorously abstract sense Marx intended to give them, the same cannot be carried out with regard to the concept of time which these categories rested upon. Benjamin was pointing precisely at this problem when he observes that “the concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a

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<sup>68</sup> Symptomatically, Jürgen Osterhammel stresses that his “Die Verwandlung der Welt – Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts” (a book entitled in “calendric” manner) shares the same general attitude of Bayly’s “The Birth of the Modern World”. As such, it is not at all surprisingly that Osterhammel admits that this work is an experiment in writing a “master narrative” (Osterhammel 2009: 13–22).

<sup>69</sup> Foucault speaks of “suspension” as a way “to disconnect unquestioned continuities” by which discourses are organized. About that, he writes “These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively of course, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized: we must define in what conditions and in view of which analyses certain of them are legitimate; and we must indicate which of them can never be accepted in any circumstances.” (Foucault 1972: 26)

progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.” (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 261). In logical terms, the “empty time” functions here as a kind of most basic philosophical assumption, which must then be left undefined and untouched in order to hold the whole argument steady.

Summarizing this analysis of Chakrabarty’s work so far: there is, on the one hand, the unavoidable universal role to be played by theoretical-sociological categories premised upon European History, and, on the other, among these categories, the pivotal role of one, namely, historical time. Together, they explain why the (postcolonial) project of provincializing Europe is unfeasible.

One can imagine this epistemological postcolonial condition as posited on the other side of a mirror. Mirrors have that remarkable cognitive property of showing what people cannot see without them: themselves. They serve as instrument of self-revelation (Danto 1981: 9). As a mirror of the position from which universals have been constructed, postcolonial subjects of knowledge, by virtue of this mimetically mediated position, have a bit of an advantage in dealing with an age-old epistemological problem, namely: the impossibility of knowing that everything about a particular subject is known. That means, they are better equipped to bring out the existence of an unknown not amenable to be ruled out and to show that it is an important cog in the machine that starts knowledge’s moving.

On the universal side of the mirror one thinks that even though absolute knowledge is unfeasible, that should not prevent one from pursuing it. On the other, the postcolonial one, and here rephrasing Chakrabarty’s aim, one thinks: “The project of provincializing Europe, that means, to disclose the unknown, is unfeasible, but that shall not only not prevent me from pursuing it, but also makes clear that that is exactly what drives the project forward.”

The main epistemological operation one has to carry out in order to adopt this postcolonial standpoint is not as complex as the very impossibility of the “project of provincializing Europe” might suggest. It consists basically in thinking that universals exist only as such, but not at all *in re*, in particular things, for if they existed as forms inherent in things, as concrete universals, these universals must be regarded as the formal-final cause of things<sup>70</sup>.

There are however plentiful ways of circumventing the metaphysical and teleological character of universals by denying that they exist in particular things. The specific one that

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<sup>70</sup> “The formal cause consists in the essence or nature of a thing, what makes it the thing it is, and the final cause is the purpose the object attempts to realize, the goal of its development.” (Ankersmit 2012: 23)

Chakrabarty resorts to is the concept of translation as theorized by Gayatri C. Spivak ([1993] 2009) and by Vicente L. Rafael ([1988] 2005)<sup>71</sup>.

In Chakrabarty's hand this model of translation comprehends three moves: first, universals are conceived as the "third term expressing the measure of equivalence that makes generalized exchange possible" (Chakrabarty 2000: 71). "Capitalist production", for example, serves as a "third term" that can subsume both the labor in Bihar in colonial India and in the Bolivian tin mines, as historicized respectively by Gyan Prakash and Michael Taussig (Chakrabarty 2000: 77–83). Here, the "universal" language of social science is that "third term" which different historical experiences are translated into. The second move comprises an "appeal to models of cross-cultural and cross-categorical translations that do not take a universal middle term for granted". Here, the processes of translation contain a degree of opacity, for there is no overarching system of thought that neutralize and relegate differences to the margins. Thus, "the very obscurity of the translation process allows the incorporation of that which remains untranslatable" (Chakrabarty 2000: 83–86). The third move, which is the most important, depends on articulating the first and second ones. It is characterized by smuggling elements of that cross-categorical translation into a translation supposed to be made in the "universal language of social science". Here, an ambiguity must mark the translation so that it becomes enough like the secular text to make sense, yet it must also make it "enough unlike to shock". This shock is the "the shock of the uncanny, something that gives one's self-recognition a jolt". (Chakrabarty 2000: 89; 175)

The way Chakrabarty inserts the uncanny in his own book is an exercise in this third type of translation, which, in turn, shows that he indeed draws the lessons he claims to have learned from Spivak's "Politics of Translation".

In this essay, departing from the poststructuralist assumption about the staging of the agent within a three-tied notion of language (as rhetoric, logic and silence), Spivak defines the "uncanny" in terms of rhetorical silences staged by this agent in order to open the possibility that rhetoric disrupts the language's logical systematicity (Spivak [1993] 2009: 203).

The experiences of the uncanny related to the "divine sight", which Chakrabarty narrates with the purpose of discussing the self-evidentiality of the Western concept of "imagination", are indeed seen as an effect of "practices sedimented into language itself" (Chakrabarty 2000:

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<sup>71</sup> This analysis focuses yet only on Spivak's contribution.

177). This analytical procedure is exactly what enables his historical account to play that disruptive rhetorical role, for even amounting to a deliberated rejection of any sociology of religion<sup>72</sup>, it makes it nonetheless possible to speak of gods and spirits without automatically assuming a believer's point of view. Thus, theoretically, Chakrabarty can say with regard to nationalism in India that "there was the age-old practice of *darshan*" (divine sight) as *naturally* as it has been said that "there were the newspaper and the novel".

Spivaks also points out that

"The jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing, is a relationship by which a world is made for the agent, so that the agent can act in an ethical way, a political way, a day-to-day way; so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world." (Spivak [1993] 2009: 203)

Thus, to state that in History the nature of postcolonial reason is rhetorical, should not be regarded neither as exaggeration nor as insult. Or at least not if one does not equate a rhetorical nature with a lack of meaningful content, but with an operation in which gaps are deliberately left open so that the act of supplying what is missing, and drawing conclusions, involves the creation of a common procedure of reason (Danto 1981:170). And this procedure necessarily entails an intentional handling of asymmetries of knowledge. Think, for example, of the common use of rhetorical questions. Think furthermore of those three hitherto rhetorical questions posed to formulate the "not too innocent riddle" presented earlier. The time to solve it has come:

The riddle refers to the fact of having written that

**"It goes without saying** 'that the social world is *'unthinkable'* without invoking these concepts, which operate together with innumerable other conceptual categories such as civil society, social justice, democracy, national/popular sovereignty, the distinction between private and public, the idea of subject/ subjectivity, of objectivity/science and scientific rationality, etc.."

And the rhetorical questions read

"The reader is presumably wondering for what reason that 'it goes without saying' and that 'unthinkable' were written above in such a different form? 'They must mean something else', one is led to think, for the phrase is perfectly usual and would probably have gone unnoticed if it had been normally spelled. But, what if there was no another hidden meaning thought to be hinted at by the writing difference? Furthermore, assuming that this difference in writing

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<sup>72</sup> Chakrabarty gives also a philosophical reason for his refuse of sociology of religion: "I take gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human, and think from the assumption that the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits. Being human means, as Ramachandra Gandhi puts it, 'discovering the possibility of calling upon God [or gods] without being under an obligation to first establish his [or their] reality'. And this is the reason why I deliberately do not reproduce any sociology of religion in my analysis." (Chakrabarty 2000: 16)

intended to effect any change of the conventional understanding, which role may it then play?"

The riddle itself results from an overlapping of rhetorical effects: the expression "It goes without saying that ..." is rhetorical at the level of its own enunciation because it announces that it will be said exactly what it states that needs not to be said (in this case, that the social world is "unthinkable" without invoking some conceptual categories rooted in the Enlightenment). The (typographically signaled) difference in writing that bounds the introductory rhetorical expression with what is characterized as "unthinkable" arouses the suspicion of another meaning. But there was an excess of visually perceptible difference: the words are in italic and bold type, and enclosed in inverted comas. When used separately, these typographical marks are more or less easy to interpret, but superposed they do not match any academic usage. Thus, the typographical expedient duplicated the sentence's rhetorical nature by creating a difference that keeps expected particular meanings indefinable. This effect produces a disturbing intellectual uncertainty that is the very source of the riddle.

In stating that the social world is "unthinkable" without invoking some universal categories rooted in the Enlightenment and, at the same time, drawing attention to the rhetorical condition under which this statement has been given, the sentence puts into question the relation between what is 'thinkable' and what is 'say-able' or, perhaps, between "unthinkability" and "rhetoricity". One alternative configuration of this relation, achieved by a simple inversion of terms, would read that the social world be "thinkable" in a non-rhetorical situation in which what "goes without saying" remained, in fact, unsaid.

The riddle's rhetorical nature is amplified by the subsequent three interrelated questions, which have two common traits: first, they play with the writer's and reader's positions by staging a presumable asymmetry of knowledge of the subject at hand; second, they play down the meaningfulness of the (typographical) difference and, in this very act, betray that the meaningfulness of this difference does not result from any attempt to fix other meanings, but rather from a non-enunciative effect on "conventional understandings".

In the end, the whole riddle functions as a demonstration of how rhetoric may be mobilized in order to make that recognizable differences challenge acknowledged conventional understanding in writing.

In Spivak's words:

“Mere reasonableness will allow rhetoricity to be appropriated, put in its place, situated, seen as only nice. Rhetoricity is put in its place because it disrupts. [...] The relationship between logic and rhetoric, between grammar and rhetoric, is also a relationship between social logical, social reasonableness, and the disruptiveness of figuration in social practice. These are the two parts of our three-part model. But then, rhetoric points at the possibility of randomness, of contingency as such, dissemination, the failing apart of language, the possibility that things might not always be semiotically organized.” (Spivak [1993] 2009: 209)

“Randomness”, “contingency as such”, “dissemination” and “the failing apart of language” ... Spivak’s desire for politically vigilant radical openness expressed in her conceptual vocabulary makes it difficult to overlook some kindred ties between her notion of rhetoricity and Bhabha’s “third space”. Exploring this kinship, one could suggest that “rhetoricity” is how subjects introduce newness into the world, when they are in the “empowering condition of hybridity” that creates that “third space” where “incommensurable differences” are negotiated (Bhabha 1994: 312).

With regard to the writing of History, it might be more fruitful to merge Spivak’s and Bhabha’s approaches and speak about an *empowering condition of rhetoricity as a pre-requisite for performing History as the staging of translated historical difference*<sup>73</sup>.

Now, *speaking* again in Arendt’s idiom, it is to say that in restoring the rhetorical to the theoretical, one moves theory back from the realm of the eternal and re-introduces it in the realm of the immortal, i.e., the realm of the political.

In this sense, to look *at* the historical text from a postcolonial perspective means to irradiate History with a translational/rhetorical consciousness that, without refraining from theorizing historical representation, does not aim at being a “narration of the eternal” and, consequently, does not “lack the *revelatory character* of action as well as the ability to produce stories and become historical, which together form the very source from which meaningfulness springs into human existence.” (Arendt [1958] 1998: 324)

### **Postcolonial ends of History**

In exploring the disrupting capabilities of the concept of translation, postcolonial theory puts difference at the service of the construction of subaltern subject-positions in the writing of History. This theoretical event has far-reaching epistemological consequences in History, for

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<sup>73</sup> Chakrabarty writes simply: “Our historical differences actually make a difference.” (Chakrabarty 2000: xii)

it addresses historical knowledge effecting a transfiguration of that very milestone of the modern Historiography crystallized in that old Ranke's saying with which this story began. Instead of "what actually happened", a more appropriate translation of Ranke's famous phrase "*Wie es eigentlich gewesen*" might be "how it essentially was", "for Ranke meant not that he just wanted to collect facts, but that he sought to understand the inner being of the past" (Evans 2000: 17; Novick 1988: 28).

The postcolonial transfiguration admits that "essentially" means, *actually*, what happened *theoretically*, so that "the inner being of the past" conflates with that "theoretical narration" within which a "hyperreal Europe" remains the implicit but nevertheless sovereign subject of all histories, for the language of social science has been forging a hypostasized inscription of Europe's History.

Ranke's idea of an "inner being of the past" was a way to face the age-old problem of the relationship between continuity and unity in historical change. About this topic, Ankersmit writes:

"Generally speaking, objects in the world will be unproblematic subjects of change as long as we can reasonably claim them to be the same object before and after the change. But if change is radicalized in the way envisioned by historicism, what can then still count as its unchanging subject? [...] But this problem was solved with the notion of the 'historical idea', as proposed by Ranke and Humboldt: each historical 'thing' (a nation, epoch, civilization, etc) is argued to possess a historical idea, an entelechy, so to speak—wholly specific to that thing alone, which is not in turn subject to change. [Thus] The historical idea is, basically, a claim about how nation's or an epochs most important features hang together." (Ankersmit 2012: 11)

Postcolonial theory demonstrates in which way, in the contemporary writing of History, the old "historical idea" has been replaced with a "hyperreal Europe" that plays precisely the role of hanging things together. However, this Europe, differently than her oldest sister, the "historical idea", has never been regarded as what does not change, but, contrarily, as what changes essentially<sup>74</sup>.

This feature raises the evident question about how to know that something is changing essentially without already knowing from the beginning in which consists the essence, which these changes happen to be ascribed to. Here is where contemporary Historiography merges Ranke with Hegel<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> From this advantage point changes elsewhere are supposed to be better explained. The intrinsic evolutionism of Eurocentrism stems from this source.

<sup>75</sup> On this curious blend of Hegel and Ranke, Novick writes: "He [Ranke] was thoroughgoing philosophical idealist, at one with Hegel in believing the world divinely ordered, differing with him only in his insistence

If one considers that the writing of History involves a process in which thinking is “thinking-with-the-thing which is the object of thought.”(Ankersmit 2012: 19), that means, if one employs Hegelian dialectics, then there is no contradiction in the act of intending to abolish the gap between subject and object of knowledge.

Yet, probably, no contemporary Historian would be prepared to admit full accordance neither with Ranke’s and Humboldt’s “historical idea”, nor with Hegel’s dialectics. Rather, distancing themselves from such old-fashioned ideas, Historians usually agree that what they provide are plausible and verisimilar representations of the past, which could be perfectly given in a completely different way. In this sense, History, to use Foucault’s words, like every other human science “(has) been unable to find a way around the primacy of representation” (Foucault 1970: 363), and thus operates within an epistemological world/language regime that all dialectics begin by abandoning.

Reformulating in abstract terms: what postcolonial theory then demonstrates is the theoretical role of the presence of a monist element of speculative philosophy of History, contradictorily animating the dual representationalism which Historiography is supposed to rest upon. An element that is extremely powerful because it operates through the very empiricism<sup>76</sup> which should free History from speculative assumptions.

If it is no mistake to believe that the enchantment of theoretically “disenchanted” Historical accounts resides in the fact that it is as though no longer mattered neither who has the agency in nor what is the actual content of them, then it seems to be reasonable to assert that postcolonial thinking brought History to that Dantonian final moment of “self-enlightenment, where the enlightenment consists in itself”; where History’s consciousness in its search for self-understanding has found its end in the figure of a “hyperreal Europe”. (Danto [1986] 2005: 111)

Here, the end of History happens. Yet, like *Brillo Box* does not mean that “there will be no stories to tell after the end of art, only that there will be not a single metanarrative for the

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on the extent to which that order was clearly manifested in existing reality” (Novick 1988: 27). Too Ankersmit notes “how close Hegel and historicists actually were. For we cannot fail to be struck by the similarities between their respective uses of the notion of idea. In both cases the idea is a quasi-Aristotelian entelechy operative in a vague limbo between language and the world but whose nature the speculative philosopher or the Historian has to grasp in order to understand the past. (Ankersmit 2012: 23)

<sup>76</sup> The idea that “documents speak for themselves” is the best proof of this power: more than “thinking-with-the-thing” here is as if the thing thought itself! Richard Evans, for example, insists that “the documents do have an integrity of their own, they do indeed ‘speak for themselves’”. This happens, in his opinion, when Historians follow “the usual rules of evidence” (Evans 2000: 116; 219).

future of history of art”; it is not a part of a postcolonial purpose to claim that there will be no stories to tell after the end of History. What postcolonial theory envisions is the end of possibility of presenting History as a progressive development bestowed with any particular internal direction<sup>77</sup>, which also means the end of the possibility that Europe *colonizes* the future of all other presents. (Danto [1986] 2005: 139)

### **Epilog: after the end of the story**

It is worth reminding the reader that such a happy ending was achievable only because of the rhetorically Hegelian framework of the story you were reading. Paradoxically, outside, “in the teaching machine” (Spivak [1993] 2009: ix-x; 58-85)—where History has, more often than is desirable, been held captive, not only in the Hegelian variant, but also in other kindred sorts of evolutionist teleologies inherited from the European Enlightenment—that story goes on as history.

There are good reasons to believe that in spite of the dexterity of postcolonial theory in dealing with epistemological issues, the hegemony of Historical Western thinking within the academic world will not be especially shaken, for it is embedded in structures of political power, which a consistent postcolonial epistemological politics begins by trying not to replace, but rather to displace. Exactly this, nothing else, has been done here so far. It was integral to this task to spell out two aspects of academic Historical knowledge.

First, that where there was an implicit dialectical monism conflating a particular History—Europe’s one—with the essence of history, postcolonial theory reinstates a truly and explicit dualism of the language/world regime by taking universals as the “third term” of a process of translation. The aim of this analytical operation is to explore the tremendous explanatory potential of universals without hypostasizing any History, for it remains a “place holder” of those universal categories, and without losing sight that universals, due to their very constitution in the practice of language, are both subject to, and an effect of, politics.

Second, to show that where there was an implicit dualism separating Historical account from Historical time, which remained always the same, empty and homogenous, disregarding the events which it happens to be constituted of, postcolonial theory instates a dialectical monism

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<sup>77</sup> Randeria’s concept of “entangled histories” is a perfect example of such a way of thinking History (Conrad/Randeria 2002: 17–22).

(in Chakrabarty's case<sup>78</sup>, one of messianic strain, exemplified by Benjamin's *Jetztzeit*), whose aim is to abolish time as the unchanging element that grants the unintended recurrence of the Same (the hyperreal Europe) and to put in its place another time, a time that advocates a purportedly dissemination of differences.

And this is the very reason why Dantos "End of History" is politically as dangerous as Fukuyama's one: it enables one to articulate a story where that "history of the Same"<sup>79</sup>, which reproduces preconditions of subalternity, "rests in piece(s)" after having reached its final destination, and where the dissemination of differences, which widen the possibilities of resistance and social change, begins its journey.

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<sup>78</sup> In Bhabha's case there is the "temporality of Tangiers": "In Tangiers, as time goes by, it produces an iterative temporality that erases the occidental spaces of language – inside/outside, past/present, those foundationalist epistemological positions of Western empiricism and historicism. Tangiers open up disjunctive, incommensurable relations of spacing and temporality within the sign—an 'internal difference of the so-called ultimate element [...]' (Bhabha 1994: 262).

<sup>79</sup> In the topic "The analytic of finitude" (chapter 9 of "The Order of Things"), Foucault speaks at length about the fundamental change that the modern episteme introduces in what he calls "thought of the Same". Foucault's *History of the Same* is coeval with Danto's story of the end of art. Coincidentally or not, too Foucault ends his book predicting anything but the closure of the history of the Same: "In fact, among all the mutations that have affected the knowledge of things and their order, the knowledge of identities, differences, characters, equivalences, words—in short, in the midst of all the episodes of that profound *history of the Same*—only one, that which began a century and a half ago and is now perhaps drawing to a close, has made it possible for the figure of man to appear." (Foucault 1972: 387 – emphasis added)

## CHAPTER 3 - TIME AND EVENT

### The configuration of time

Imagine that the opening shot of a film is of a space where everything stands completely still. No movement, no sound, no kind of change at all, except that of the camera angle, panning around irregularly, without cuts. So it remains until the end scene, three hours later. In a satire à la Loriot<sup>80</sup> (Loriot [1992] 2010: 104–105), a refined film critic might raise this eccentric movie to the level of a cinematographic masterpiece about time by remarking: “absolutely nothing happens, time just passes!” Lesser mortals, ordinary consumers of culture industry productions, who, besides, had to pay a surcharge because of the long duration of the film, may be forgiven if they do not understand the film critic’s words properly. Guided by their own perception, they are rather more likely to complain that “because nothing happens, time simply does not pass!”

While the spectators’ reasons for being disappointed with the film seem perfectly understandable, the enthusiasm of the Loriotian critic is instead only puzzling. How can the latter know for sure that the film was about time? If asked the simple question, how long was the time span covered *in the* film, what could possibly be his answer? The exact three hours that the film ran? Maybe five minutes or one year? Does the film not rather suggest that when nothing happens, time indeed does not pass?

Nothing is more wonderful than commonsense language. Or at least that is the conclusion one might arrive at after having wondered how it is possible that an expression like “nothing happens” just so happens to be usual and usually understood without arousing any wonder. Everyone grasps, without need of great philosophical digressions, that “nothing” refers to the absence of an expected something. And something similar takes place with regard to the expression “time does not pass!” Everyone also grasps that “time does pass the whole time”, but possesses different paces, which are related to what is then happening.

Furthermore, not only commonsense, but language also generally shows plenty of manifestations of the mutual conditioning between “happening” and “time passing”.

Marx, the Groucho one, had cynically perverted the virtue of having principles by saying mirthfully: “Those are my principles, and if you don't like them...well I have others.” Following his example, there are many people who like boasting jocosely that their favorite pastime is

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<sup>80</sup> For an audiovisual version see “Loriot – Schöngestigte Literatur” (<http://youtu.be/NEZtmUxCTO4>).

doing nothing. Some of them may become filmmakers or film critics. However, the fact is that a “pastime” is always “something”, an activity, and one that, according to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, “is done for enjoyment”.

“Zeitvertreib”, the German word for “pastime”, has an enthralling characteristic: this compound noun includes the verb “vertreiben”, which has four main meanings: 1) “to drive somebody out” or “to drive an animal away”; 2) “to banish something”; 3) to fight off something or someone”; 4) to sell or distribute something. In all these senses the verb connotes, speaking again commonsensically, “to get rid of”. In order to get rid of time, one must perform some activity, must effect something, one must in fact cause something to happen.

No wonder then that in History, an activity devoted to asserting at every moment “*this happened*” (Barthes 1970: 154), time is supposed to disappear. To be sure, it is not that time happened to disappear; rather, it is simply thought as what separates the present from the past, as a “*practical barrier*, so to speak, but of no theoretical significance” (Mink 1987: 98). Paradoxically, the time as “*practical barrier*” resembles Wittgenstein’s “field of sight” as a “*metaphysical subject*”:

“Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye. And from nothing in the field of sight can it be concluded that it is seen from an eye.” (Wittgenstein [1922] 2014: 87–88)

As Ankersmit penetratingly notes, “it seems to be just like this with time in Historical writing: (...) everything is regarded from the perspective of time – but apparently it is precisely this which makes it impossible to speak about time itself.” (Ankersmit 2012: 30)

A field where revealing insights into this “question of time in History” can be gained is that of teaching History, for there time frequently shows itself insistently in the unwelcome guise of chronology. From anonymous school teachers to acclaimed scholars, those who are in charge of teaching History unanimously stress that historical events as lists of “dates, places and names” is of no great significance. Much more important than learning such lists is to grasp the “historical process”. It is as though there were a force hanging all ‘happenings’ together, and the task of the schoolchildren (or of the apprentice Historian) who wants to understand History is to look chiefly at this aforementioned force, not at “*whens*” and “*whats*”.

The problem with this way of discrediting chronology begins when it is equally taught that what one calls “historical process” shall also be seen as the way in which Historians interpret

the past. The historical force that hangs ‘happenings’ together becomes then as manifold as the different versions of History that have been written through the ages. By now at the latest, the apprentice Historian (or the schoolchildren) get the impression that the only thing one may know for certain in History are places, dates and names, all the rest being “just interpretation”!

Marx, the Karl one, not without some cynicism as well, observes in the famous opening sentence of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*: “Hegel bemerkt irgendwo, daß alle großen weltgeschichtlichen Thatsachen und Personen sich so zu sagen zweimal ereignen. Er hat vergessen hinzuzufügen: das eine Mal als große Tragödie, das andre Mal als lumpige Farce.” (Marx [1852] 2007: 9)

This passage is instigating because it compels one to wonder why the logic of historical process—which according to Marx is determined essentially by sheer economic forces—should concern itself with such theatrically oriented aesthetical caprices? Taking cue from Marx’s words on Hegel but following more closely a Wittgensteinian approach<sup>81</sup>, one could ask how Historical explanations, which are generally based on a historicist<sup>82</sup> notion of development, might also be related to a form of connecting events which could be called a “logic of resemblance”.

At this point, that satiric film critic inspired by Lorient may have the word again. His point was perhaps to convince the spectators that at every change of the camera angle not the same, but a different scene was shown. If they look exactly alike, this is because the film aims at drawing attention to the very fact that the most important thing to be noted is not “how” (as farce or as tragedy) events come into being, but “what” they are always disregarding their

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<sup>81</sup> The recognition of Historical resemblances produces what Wittgenstein calls “übersichtlichen Darstellung” [perspicuous representation]:

“Der Begriff der übersichtlichen Darstellung [...] bezeichnet unsere Darstellungsform, die Art, wie wir die Dinge sehen. (Eine Art der ‚Weltanschauung‘, wie sie scheinbar für unsere Zeit typisch ist. Spengler.)

Diese übersichtliche Darstellung vermittelt das Verständnis, welches eben darin besteht, daß wir die ‚Zusammenhänge sehen‘. Daher die Wichtigkeit des Findens von *Zwischengliedern*.

Ein hypothetisches Zwischenglied aber soll in diesem Falle nichts tun, als die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Ähnlichkeit, den Zusammenhang, der *Tatsachen* lenken. Wie man eine interne Beziehung der Kreisform zur Ellipse dadurch illustrierte, daß man eine Ellipse allmählich in einen Kreis überführt; *aber nicht um zu behaupten, daß eine gewisse Ellipse tatsächlich, historisch, aus einem Kreis entstanden wäre* (Entwicklungshypothese), sondern nur um unser Auge für einen formalen Zusammenhang zu schärfen.

Aber auch die Entwicklungshypothese kann ich als weiter nichts sehen, als eine Einkleidung eines formalen Zusammenhangs.“ (Wittgenstein 1993: 132 – emphasis in the original)

<sup>82</sup> “Historicism is the belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering it in terms of the place which it occupied and the role which it played within a process of development.” (Mandelbaum 1977: 42)

semblance. If the apparent repetition conveys a sense of a time that passes extremely slowly, almost stops, this should be taken as a signal of some intrinsic relationship between *similarity* and *long duration*. Hence the film be about time.

If there were such a film, one would hardly take seriously the masterpiece label conferred to it. Notwithstanding, the words of that hypothetical Lorientian critic are not at all senseless. In the following section, two examples will be given in support of this claim.

### **Long-term Historical continuity and the “logic of resemblance”**

Stefan Rinke begins his article “‘El velo rasgado’: revoluciones de independencia en América Latina desde una perspectiva entre-espacios” speaking about recent events that surrounded the bicentenary of the independence of some Latin American countries. Closing the introductory paragraph, he points out: “Las discusiones sobre un *nuevo posicionamiento de Latinoamérica en el contexto global*, de las cuales estamos siendo testigos en el umbral del tercer siglo postcolonial, vienen ya, sin embargo, de lejos.” (Rinke 2013: 35 – emphasis added). These words prepare the stage for the entrance of an even older past, that enters the text in the form of the Peruvian Juan Pablo Vizcardo, who played a leading role in the uprisings that had led into the revolutionary processes of independence. Rinke resorts to a letter written by Vizcardo in 1799 in order to point out one of the factors that allows for denominating the Latin American independence movements as “revolutions”. In Rinke’s words: “Este *posicionamiento renovado* [Vizcardo’s one] *del propio espacio* [Latin America], *en un mundo que se percibe como estretramente entretejido*, fue uno de los factores que nos permiten llamar revoluciones a los movimientos independentistas.” (Rinke 2013: 35 – emphasis added).

Evidently, the textual similarity of both passages is no accidental. Rather, it is what invites the reader to see not only a parallelism in the text, but also in history. It is, indeed, that which begins to put together events that are chronologically separated by more than two hundred years. It produces, in a word, continuity. Should two centuries be regarded as long enough, it might be then said: it produces long-term continuity. Still, which, exactly, is the event (or process) that is supposed to have continued over this whole time?

Although meaningful in the way in which it is here articulated, this question grows somehow suspicious and awkward if one interprets it as an attempt to unveil an apparently indistinct and undefined long-term event concealed in “El velo rasgado”. However, this is not the case. Would it not be silly if the article had addressed its subject by making no reference at all to

recent events related to the bicentenary of independences in Latin America, as though pretending its content were not rooted in the present time? On the other hand, in exposing such connections with the present-time, Historians are in no way committing themselves to writing any kind of long-term History, even though they deliberately create a sense of long-term Historical continuity.

The second example is drawn from “Atlantic Enlightenment”, the first chapter of the book *Race in Translation* by Robert Stam and Ella Shoat. Addressing the question of intellectual property rights, they write:

“The word ‘patents’ referred in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe to the official royal letters (*litterae patentes*) by which sovereigns conferred privileges, rights, and land title on various members of the nobility, for example, the *capitanias* in Brazil granted by the Portuguese king. In the ‘Age of Discoveries’, these ‘letters’ became associated with the literal conquest of territory; five hundred years later, they are associated with transnational corporations’ updated version of the conquest of economic rights in the Global South, whose biodiversity is very much linked to the cultural knowledges of indigenous people. [...] Five centuries after the Conquest, the World Trade Organization rules concerning copyrights constitute reformatted versions of the papal bulls and regal edicts that legalized the Conquest.” (Stam/Shoat 2012: 10)

“Historical morphing” is the term used by Stam/Shohat to name this process. The subject of this “morphing” is the “freedom of action”, as the authors remark, quoting Vandana Shiva: “The freedom of action which transnational corporations demand today is *the same freedom of action* that European colonies demanded, after 1492, as a natural right over the territory and riches of non-European people.” (Stam/Shoat 2012: 10) Here, the construction of long-term continuity by underlining the sameness between present and past events is openly expressed and constitutes indeed the entire substance of the argument, it is not an effect<sup>83</sup> of the “perspicuous Historical representation”, as it is in the case of “El velo rasgado”.

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<sup>83</sup> According to Barthes, “in ‘objective’ history [that is, the conception of history within which the very idea that history can have a meaning other than referential is rejected] ‘reality’ is always an unformulated meaning sheltering behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent. This situation defines what we may call the *reality effect*. Elimination of meaning from ‘objective’ discourse only produces a new meaning; confirming once again that the absence of an element in a system is just as significant as its presence.” (Barthes 1970: 154 – italics in the original)

Long-term Historical continuity is in “El velo rasgado” a “reality” analogous to Barthe’s: it is not formulated but nevertheless emerges as an *effect* of statements whose referents are those events chronologically separated from each other by some centuries.

One can explain this Barthesian “effect”, in turn, by resorting to that Wittgenstein’s idea of “perspicuous representation”: events are reported in a way that sharpens one’s eye for the connections between them without directly asserting that the later event [the discussions surrounding the bicentenary of the declaration of independence of some Latin American countries] empirically originated from the earlier [the stance re-presented by Viscardo’s letter].

A rash comparison between the ways by which both works textually produce long-term continuity would probably give the reason for their difference the fact that the first, “El velo rasgado”, is a historiographical one, whereas the second, “The Atlantic Enlightenment”, is rather sociological.

In the latter text, historiography was very much used as a source of particular illustrations to support the construction of abstract categories such as “freedom of action”. Rinke’s text, in turn, historiographically attentive to the particularity of every event, does not proceed in the same manner, neither with the introductory subject “*posicionamiento de America Latina en el context global*” nor with the core of the article, namely, the analysis of Latin American independence processes. These processes are described as “revolutionary” without this fact having been used as grounds for erecting another abstract definition of the category “revolution”.

The shortcomings of opposing History in this way as idiographic knowledge, in relation to Sociology, which in turn is classified as nomothetic, are relatively well known and have been spelled out by Paul Veyne. Basically, he suggests that instead of establishing this dichotomy between sciences of the particular and sciences of the general, one should try to replace it by a classification according to levels, since in its own domain every science holds simultaneously both principles: to explain generally and to explain every particular case of this generality. A “funny” consequence of this fact, Veyne adds, it is that is relatively easy to distinguish History and Sociology, but it is frequently impossible to distinguish a sociological book from a Historical one. (Veyne 1983: 58)

Indeed, if one reads Rinke’s and Stam/Shoat’s texts with, so to speak, “theoretically unaided eyes”, they appear to share more similarities than dissimilarities in what concerns the construction of long-term continuity.

Also Fernand Braudel emphasizes that “as far as the history of the *longue durée* is concerned, history and sociology can hardly be said to meet, even to rub shoulders. This would be saying too little. What they do is to mingle.” Both, he assumes, are essentially concerned with *structures*, and structures, he explains by using a suggestive physical metaphor, “is a body removed from gravity, removed from the acceleration of history.” (Braudel [1969] 1982: 75–76)

The purpose of revisiting these epistemological comparisons between History and Sociology is not to resuscitate a debate that, more than old-fashioned, seems to be *preHistoric* in times

in which “interdisciplinarity” and “transdisciplinarity” are watchwords. Bringing back this discussion is just a way to put into relief a quite obvious but nonetheless intriguing theoretical consequence: the conspicuous relation of dependence between long-term continuity and the attribution of sameness to particular events, that, in this way, become illustrations/expressions of abstract categories usually re-denominated as “structures”<sup>84</sup>. Yet, is the nature of “structures” identical to that of the events described as being of long-term? Or are these events themselves “structures”?

This way of phrasing the question is altogether uncommon. Traditionally, in the Brazilian historiographical milieu, not least due to the considerable influence of French scholarship, “structure” has been regarded as opposing to “event”<sup>85</sup>. Yet, reflecting on this usage, one could wonder: would it make any sense to speak about “long-term events”?

Grammatically and semantically, the expression does not seem to be problematic at all. One cannot help the impression of having already heard it somewhere before.

Possibly this impression is derived from the fact that

“Even when they avoid all reference to history, the human sciences (and history may be included among them) never do anything but relate one cultural episode to another (that to which they apply themselves as their object, and that in which their existence, their mode of being, their methods, and their concepts have their roots); and though they apply themselves to their own synchronology, they relate the cultural episode from which they emerged to itself. Man, therefore, never appears in his positivity and that positivity is not immediately limited by the limitlessness of History. “ (Foucault 1970: 371)<sup>86</sup>

History establishes this operation of relating an episode to another in such a way that the result thereof, that is, the historiographical account as whole, claims to be true in the sense

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<sup>84</sup> An illustrative example of the semantic power of the word “structure” was given by Paul Veyne, who prefers the term “constant”, but nonetheless remarks: “Chamemos essas constantes de estruturas, se não pudermos viver sem essa palavra.” (Veyne 1983: 30)

<sup>85</sup> Fernand Braudel and Lévi-Strauss are academic celebrities famous for a polarizing theorization of the notions of “event” and “structure”. Both were members of the so-called “missão francesa” which is considered the initial milestone of the foundation, in 1934, of the Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo. This very thesis can be seen as witnessing the lasting and decisive influence of the “pensamento francês” on the formation of successive generations of scholars *uspianos*.

<sup>86</sup> Foucault works with a notion of culture, whose problematic character can be somehow guessed from the passage quoted above. About this problem, he writes later in *Archaeology of Knowledge*: “ in *The Order of Things* the absence of methodological signposting may have given the impression that my analyses were being conducted in terms of cultural totality. It is mortifying that I was unable to avoid these dangers: I console myself with the thought that they were intrinsic to the enterprise itself, since, in order to carry out its task, it had first to free itself from these various methods and forms of history; moreover, without the questions that I was asked, without the difficulties that arose, without the objections that were made, I may never have gained so clear a view of the enterprise to which I am now inextricably linked)” (Foucault 1972: 16–17)

that its particular statements can be confirmed by empirical evidence (Mink 1987: 180). In doing so, History constitutes itself as such and creates time as a function of this relation of events.

Following this simplifying idea of History as “relating events”, one could say that the only difference between a historiographical biography and a historiographical account with “structural” pretensions would be of degree, not of type. On this issue, Louis Mink, analyzing Peter Munz’s distinction between “ordinary” History and speculative philosophy of History, remarks:

“What Historians ordinarily do is to assemble sub-events into events, and events into larger events. So the characteristic historiographical act is a construction, and it is brought about by introducing generalizations. [...] Now there is no reason why events cannot be assembled into larger events, and those into still larger, and so indefinitely, so long as *plausible generalizations* can be found to connect them. So for Munz, speculative philosophies of history differ from ordinary historical narratives only in scale – and, one might add, in boldness. Because they deal with very large-scale events (not perceptible as single wholes to the people living through them), they depend more on interpretation than on explanation<sup>87</sup>. Also because they deal with very large-scale events, their generalizations may be misperceived (but only misperceived) as developmental laws. (Mink 1987: 155–156)

The difficulty inherent to this idea becomes clear when one considers an observation which Mink makes thereupon: “Historians do think of events as made up out of smaller events and as parts of larger events (as in battle – campaign – war) and are as incapable of stating criteria for a largest event as they are for a smallest one” (Mink 1987: 156).

This remark is interesting for two reasons. First, it raises the question about how to know for sure where “generalizations” are supposed to be placed “between” the events in order to produce them as particular unities. The second point has to do with the example given by Mink, namely, the sequence “battle – campaign – war”. Even though one can conceive this sequence as a developmental and diachronic one, it stresses rather the formal and synchronic aspect of the relationship between its components: battle and campaigns are smaller parts of a larger whole called war, and the fact that a battle cannot be considered as having lasted “longer” than the war of which it is a part is the logical consequence of the formal relationship. Not for nothing, wars are “declared”<sup>88</sup>, but not “battles” or “campaigns”.

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<sup>87</sup> According to Munz, Historians “explain” when they use generalizations familiar to the people they are talking about. Such “explanations” would be intelligible to the latter. In contrast to it, “interpretations” are generalizations unknown to and even unintelligible to the people whom Historians are talking about. (Mink 1987: 155)

<sup>88</sup> One may dare to say that much more than a kind of event, “war” plays this generalizing role exactly because, from the outset, it must be thought as a concept. Veyne, for example, observes that Historians

Mink's example is in some sense misleading, for, when Munz speaks about assembling subevents into events, and events into larger events, drawing the attention here to the fact that this operation might be "misperceived" as a developmental law, he is clearly much more concerned with the "chronological scale" rather than with the "formal scale" of the "large events". Munz's large events are, to be precise, "long events".

It seems to be defensible to infer from Munz's theorization that the source of the "misperception" of long events as developmental laws lies on the importance that must be attached to generalizations, since these latter are exactly the elements that transforms series of events into a "long event". The very need of generalization evinces the relative impossibility of connecting all parts of the "long event" via empirical evidence. The Gordian knot is then how to decide whether a generalization is or is not "plausible" when applied to put together "small-short events" in order to make of them a single "large-long one".

### **Historical continuity of long-term, "logic of resemblance" and empirical proof**

In *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, Carlo Ginzburg delivers an analysis, whose theoretical profundity and documental richness leaves no doubt about the reasons why this book becomes a key work for Historians interested in reflecting on the thorny issue of conciliating long-term diachronic perspective and methodological rigor (Ginzburg 1991: 19).

The guiding questions of the book are presented as follows:

"How and why did the image of the Sabbath crystallize? What did it conceal? From these two questions (which, as we shall see, have taken me down totally unforeseen paths) my inquiry was born. On the one hand, I wanted to reconstruct the ideological mechanisms that facilitated persecution of witchcraft in Europe; on the other, the beliefs of the men and women accused of witchcraft. (Ginzburg 1991: 1)

Ginzburg's main difficulty in this enterprise was to elaborate "plausible generalizations" for assembling a monumental quantity of manifold empirical sources which, geographically dispersed all over the Eurasia and chronologically located in a time span that covers many centuries, constituted the "small events" which possibly might be transfigured into a "long event".

The sophisticated solution Ginzburg comes up with for this very familiar historiographical problem can be summarized in two steps. First, Ginzburg works out a way from morphology

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should not open their mouth to pronounce the word "war" without grounding it in a theory (Veyne 1983: 9). Foucault, in turn, uses "war" as a ubiquitous metaphorical model that structures his analysis of the problem of power relations (Foucault 1980: 123).

to diachrony by resorting to that already discussed Wittgensteinian idea of “*übersichtliche Darstellung*” [perspicuous representation]. According to Ginzburg, Wittgenstein was convinced that thinking of Historical representation in those terms concerned with formal connections was “not simply an alternative way of presenting the data, but, implicitly, superior to an historical exposition because a) less arbitrary and b) immune to undemonstrated developmental hypotheses.” In the end, Wittgenstein’s argument seems to Ginzburg “*too convincing*”. (Ginzburg 1991: 15–16)

Thus, he decides that the morphologic inquiry should be used in *Ecstasies* “as a probe, to explore a deep, otherwise unattainable stratum.” (Ginzburg 1991: 16) Nevertheless, that Wittgensteinian insight must be inverted<sup>89</sup> in the case of History for, as Ginzburg emphatically points out, he was not dealing with circles and ellipses, i.e., with a-temporal entities, but with human beings. Had he written his historical description in purely formal terms (as a form growing from circle to ellipsis), he might have neglected the variegated forms of violence exercised by inquisitors, which was a decisive element of the context he was analyzing. Had he done so, he concludes, “the entire story would have proved to be absolutely *transparent*, but also absolutely *incomprehensible*. If in a study of human events we bracket the temporal dimension, we obtain a datum which is inevitably distorted because it has been cleansed of all *power relationships*.” (Ginzburg 1991: 16 - emphasis added)

The second step consists of applying the cladistics of Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism to the analysis of his sources. Cladistics, explains Ginzburg, “establishes a plurality of orders (or cladograms) based on homologies that do not necessarily refer to genealogical relationship”. Ginzburg seems to be convinced that this method would enable him to avoid the danger of evolutionism and, at the same time, to open up “*an intermediary path* between the level of the structure and that of the event.” (Ginzburg 1991: 22 - emphasis added)

Both procedures show how much Ginzburg is concerned with a single problem: finding intermediary connections between, to use his own words, “the abstract depth of the structure and the superficial concreteness of the event.” (Ginzburg 1991: 22 emphasis added)

And Ginzburg’s contribution to the historiographical reflection of this question may not merely be circumscribed to having successfully demonstrated the utility of his theoretical and

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<sup>89</sup> By inverting Ginzburg means that “in the sphere of history (as opposed to geometry) the formal connection can be considered a developmental or rather genetics hypothesis, formulated in a different manner.” (Ginzburg 1991: 16)

methodological choices; additionally, he has clearly acknowledged that in doing so he was not simply operationalizing historiographical research, but that he was also reflecting on the limits of Historical knowledge concerning the possibility of experimentally demonstrating the existence of human nature.

What may be thought of as “human nature from an Historical standpoint”, a quite paradoxical statement, becomes clear in the astonishing main finding of *Ecstasies*. Underlining the indubitable existence of a deep resemblance binding the myths that later merged in the witches’ Sabbath, Ginzburg closes his book as follows:

“All of them [the myths] work a common theme: going into the beyond, returning from the beyond. This elementary narrative nucleus has accompanied humanity for thousand of years. The countless variations introduced by utterly different societies, based on hunting, on pasture or on agriculture, *have not modified its basic structure*. Why this permanence? The answer is probably very simple. To narrate means to speak here and now with an authority that derives from having been (literally or metaphorically) there and then<sup>90</sup>. In participation in the world of the living and of the dead, in the sphere of the visible and of the invisible, we have already recognized a distinctive trait of the human species. What we have tried to analyze here is not one narrative among many, but the matrix of all possible narratives.” (Ginzburg 1991: 307 – emphasis added; footnote integral to the passage)

These words have far-reaching consequences. As “the matrix of all possible narratives”, that common theme of “going into beyond and returning from the beyond” necessarily comprises History too. Ginzburg is fully aware of this fact; if he were not, he would not have stated already in the introduction of the book, that as well as the experiences expressed for millennia through myths and fables he was about to analyze, “the attempt to attain knowledge of the past is also a journey into the world of the dead.” (Ginzburg 1991: 24)

When, in the concluding passage quoted above, a Benjaminian notion of “to narrate” is combined with structuralism in order to argue that what had been hitherto analyzed was no more no less than a sort of anthropological constant of mankind, two things happen. Ginzburg not only evinces the absolutely crucial role that generalizing theoretical categories play in guaranteeing the “methodological rigor” of historiographical representations of “long events”, but he also shows that what is at stake in this procedure, indeed, *goes beyond* mere methodological choices.

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<sup>90</sup> “Cf. Benjamin, ‘The storyteller’ cit., p. 94. ‘He [the storyteller] has borrowed his authority from death” (Ginzburg 1991: 314).

Another convincing argument in favor of this assertion can be put forward on the basis of an analysis of *A Negregada Instituição*, a prominent work in the research of capoeira in Brazil. Its author, the Historian Carlos Eugênio Líbano Soares, professor of the *Universidade Federal da Bahia*, acknowledges his methodological debt to Ginzburg's "evidential paradigm" in the formulation of the hypothesis that the *Nagoas* and the *Guaiamuns*, the main "malta de capoeiristas"<sup>91</sup> of Rio de Janeiro, had different origins. The *Nagoas*, Soares explains, were related to Africans and "*Baianos*", worshipper of the Orishas, or at least close to this religion, whereas the *Guaiamuns* had stemmed from a native creole tradition, in this respect being then related to the slaves born in Brazil (Soares 1994: 39–87).

Soares thinks that the way of ascertaining whether these affiliations are right or not were to be found, as it was the case in *Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath*, "no universo da simbologia e do imaginário, onde um grupo herda os emblemas de outro, sem deixar vestígios dessa passagem. Temos assim indícios, sinais de uma transição cultural subterrânea, que se opera imperceptivelmente." (Soares 1994: 48)

One of the sources in which Soares looks for these clues is the picture entitled "A Capoeira"<sup>92</sup>, published in the magazine *Kosmos* in 1906.

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<sup>91</sup> "Malta" was the name given to the different group of *capoeiristas* in the nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>92</sup> The illustration was published accompanied by the following caption: "Tipos e uniformes dos antigos nagoas e guaiamuns, sendo os principais distintivos dos primeiros a cinta com cores brancas sobre a encarnada e chapéu de aba batida para a frente e dos segundos com cores encarnadas sobre a branca e chapéu de aba elevada na frente." (Soares 1994: 49)

# A CAPOEIRA



Revista Kosmos (1906) - Rio de Janeiro

About this image, Soares writes: “É interessante que a única gravura que encontramos, onde se coloca frente a frente um nagoa e um guaiamu mostra claramente um negro para aquele e um mulato ou mestiço para esse.” (Soares 1994: 49) The fact that the “Nagoa” was depicted as “negro” and the Guaiamu as “mulato ou mestiço” should be taken as supporting his hypothesis on the “African origin” of the former, and the “native origin” of the later.

Still, is the picture really as unequivocal as Soares suggests it to be? Looking at it, is one not tempted to ask: who is the “black man” and who is the “mulatto”? Who was the black, who was the mulatto in 1906? Who could have been the black, who could have been the mulatto in the time to which the caricature refers? Should the image be circumscribed to these two poles, black and mulatto, or might it give room for other ethnical ascriptions? To sum up, how to deal with the question of ethnical identity and time overlapping?

This matter is quite complex. Ethnicity, perhaps in a way even more accentuated than many other forms of belonging, is characterized by a dynamics of contingencies. Certain bodily characteristics may be activated or deactivated, used or ignored as elements of distinction in different situations, depending on the mutual position of the actors in a determined context. In this sense, Poutignat and Streiff-Fernart argue that it is “ingenuidade acreditar que se possa

definir uma unidade étnica (quaisquer que sejam os critérios utilizados para defini-la) por uma lista de traços” (Poutignat/Streiff-Fernart 1997: 61).

Quite intriguing is to note that Soares does not ignore this point completely. He reports the case of José Eça, who, having been arrested successive times in a short period, was always identified differently: as “branco” (white) in February 1881, as “pardo” (mulatto) in April 1881 and as “moreno” (dark-skinned) in September 1881. There was, the author remarks, some “instability in the pattern of ethnical classification” during that time (Soares 1994: 124). Only in that time, one could ask? Or still today, in the here and now?

Soares turns a blind eye to the serious consequences of this “instability” within his argument and simply goes on linking geographical data with demographic statistics, until he draws a sort of ethnical map of the capoeira in Rio de Janeiro. And he does it by indiscriminately using not only terms referring to ethnical belonging (negro, mestiço, mulato, moreno, etc.), but also sometimes to legal status (slave, freedman, non-slave), sometimes to political-geographical origin (African, Brazilian). In the end, one has a mishmash that makes his classificatory enterprising an especially pointless effort.

The question these commentaries just insinuated may be made explicit as follows: if Ginzburg and Soares employ the same methodology in order to approach a problem historiographically constructed in a very similar manner and whose primary sources in principle allow for the kind of reading proposed, why then was the former remarkably successful in his undertaking, whereas the latter fails?

By this time, the answer is probably clear: Ginzburg focuses on a non-contingent element. In his reasoning, from a defined array of morphological similitudes identified in the sources, a constant was extracted [the common narrative theme of going into the beyond and returning from the beyond] that should be valid to every group, to which those sources are related to. Soares, in turn, makes the same methodological operation, with the purpose of performing the ascription of ethnical identities, a *contingent relation* whose nature is especially ill suited to be reconstructed on the basis of fixed morphological clues.

Furthermore, Ginzburg finds in Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism and in the linguistic reflections by Wittgenstein the theoretical justification of his methodological procedure. Soares forgoes this step, perhaps imagining that what was prior theoretically elaborated in *Ecstasies* would also apply to the particular problems he has formulated with regard to the capoeira in Rio de Janeiro. However, the relation between subject, theory and method is not (always)

interchangeable. In attempting to define “ethnic identities” based chiefly on the “evidential paradigm”, Soares sets, so to speak, the method against the theory. This came about by virtue of not having grasped that he had also confined his analysis to a kind of anthropological constant of mankind<sup>93</sup> [the common act of identification], one that even if susceptible to be explored by having recourse to Ginzburg’s evidential paradigm, would require a completely different theoretical underpinning.

\* \* \*

The important thing to be noted in these two examples is the fact that in the moment in which both Historians intend to extend the scope of their historical representation to events which had presumably happened long before the chronological limits set to their studies, they resort to a morphological search of resemblances based on abstract generalizing categories that, in turn, would Historically assemble the events under inquiry as a unified subject, even though no direct empirical relation between the events could be established.

### **The time of the event**

At this point, some analytical attention must be paid to a word that has been so far treated merely as a word: “event”.

In *Event*, Slavoj Žižek, exploring his peculiar style of philosophical writing, introduces the reader into the topic by saying that “event” is “an amphibious notion with even more than fifty shades of grey” (Žižek 2014: 1).

The way Žižek solves this initial problem is trivial: he takes the risk of choosing an approximate definition, namely, the one which specifies an event as “*the effect that seems to exceed its causes* – and the *space* of an event is that which opens up by the gap that separates an effect from its causes.” (Žižek 2014: 3 – italics in the original)

Žižek soon notes that this definition based on a relation of causality brings him back to an inconsistent multiplicity of phenomena. He then realizes that “the only appropriate solution is thus to approach events in a *evental way* – to pass one to another notion of event by way of bringing out the pervading deadlocks of each [...]” (Žižek 2014: 6 – emphasis added)

Curious here is the fact that even confessing that he had no appropriate definition of event, Žižek uses the adjective “*evental*” to predicate the way he is going to proceed. This move

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<sup>93</sup> As well as Ginzburg, also Veyne stresses that “Todo historiador é implicitamente um filósofo, já que decide o que reterá como antropologicamente interessante.” (Veyne 1983: 6)

betrays that even before explaining what an event is Žižek is already operating with a notion of event, namely, one which reads that “an event is never explained, if at all, as an event merely, but always *under a description*.” (Mink 1987: 143)

If even a philosophical enterprise like Žižek’s begins by implicitly acknowledging that there is no possible explication of such a thing like “an event” in general, but only of “an event under a description”, one can easily grasp how true this philosophical proposition may be concerning History, a field where events only “happen” insofar as they are in some way or another “described”.

Reflecting on this problem, Louis Mink characterizes five particular types of descriptions that may be made about the past.

1. Contemporary descriptions of events, i.e., actual descriptions of events as recorded by observers.
2. *Possible* contemporary descriptions, i.e., those not actually formulated or reported because no one was in a position to observe or in a mood to record. It is often thought that the main task of Historians is to arrive at such descriptions by inference from extant evidence, and thus to fill the gaps in the record of *actual* descriptions.
3. Descriptions possible only after the event, because they refer to and thus depend on knowledge about later events: these are Danto’s narrative sentences.
4. Descriptions possible only after the event because they depend on subsequently developed techniques of acquiring knowledge, e.g., “Richard III died of coronary embolism.”
5. *Descriptions possible only after the event because they depend on later conceptual modes of interpretation and analysis, e.g., “The unpropertied citizens of Rome constituted the first urban proletariat.”* (Mink 1987: 140 – emphasis added)

Mink considers this last kind of description (in italics) “by far the most interesting and problematic”, for it serves “to connect analytic philosophy of history with actual questions of historical methodology.” (Mink 1987: 140)

Indeed, Mink, a professed philosopher of History, works here on exactly the same problem that Carlo Ginzburg, a professional Historian, addresses in detail in *Deciphering the Witches’ Sabbath*. This fact could be taken as a further argument in favor of what has been argued in the prior section, that is, in favor of a non-strict separation between meta-theoretical and non-meta-theoretical issues in historiographical writing.

At any rate, interesting is not only that they are working on the same problem, but also that they both arrive at similar conclusions. Ginzburg finds in Wittgenstein’s idea of “*übersichtliche Darstellung*” a key for transfiguring a series of events in a “general image that does not have the form of a chronological development.” (Ginzburg 1991: 15) Mink, in turn, suggests that “the distinctive characteristic of historical understanding consists of comprehending a

complex event by “seeing things together” in a total and *synoptic judgment* which cannot be replaced by any analytic technique”. One of the consequences which results from accepting this view that is that

“[T]emporal order is not of the essence of historical judgment. [...] That events occur sequentially in time means not that the Historian must ‘relive’ them—by reproducing a determinate serial order in his own thought—to understand them, but that *he must in an act of judgment hold together in thought events which no one could experience together.*” (Mink 1987: 84 – emphasis added)

This “historical-synoptic judgment” is the core of a mode of comprehension that Mink denominates “configurational”. Configurational comprehension, he explains, focusing on “the relations that may hold between particulars and particulars” (Mink 1987: 39)<sup>94</sup>.

Interestingly, Mink stresses that the recognition of resemblances is integral to the “synoptic judgment” characteristic of this “configurational mode of comprehension”. By way of illustration, he argues that “when one observes that two people ‘look alike’, one does not ordinarily compare a series of physiognomic details and then infer a similarity; the recognition of resemblance is immediate and total.” Mink does not refuse the possibility of carrying out an analysis of resemblances on the basis of, so to speak, objective measurements, but remarks that by looking at these physical measurements one could never predict whether the people they describe resemble each other or not. (Mink 1987: 81–82) Commenting on Mink’s work, Ankersmit summarizes the “configurational mode of comprehension” as that which “enables us to detect a certain pattern or structure in a complex and incoherent set of data.” (Danto [1965] 2007: 385)

Historiographical researches, however meticulous in what concerns methodology, would only increase the amount and precision of factual events, but never exhaust the possible descriptions which transform these events into History. No historiographical study aims indeed at demonstrating the necessity of the events that it accounts for. Rather it makes these events intelligible by unfolding them in terms of the interrelationship of their constituent parts. Generalizing from this perspective, one can say that “the events *comprehended* by a historiographical account as a whole are *connected by a network of overlapping descriptions*”,

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<sup>94</sup> Mink defines two other “modes of comprehension”: the “theoretical mode” and “the categorial mode”. “Speaking roughly, one might say that theoretical comprehension emphasizes the relations that may hold between universals and particulars, [...] and categorial comprehension the relations that may hold between universals and universals.” (Mink 1987: 39)

but the overlap of descriptions may not be a part of what has been represented, but only of the *comprehension* of it as a whole. (Mink 1987: 58)

### **Long event and long duration**

If one intends to grasp long term continuity in History by using Mink's idea of comprehension, a "long event" would not necessarily be a "structure", in the sense that it is a sort of social phenomenon that due to its extremely slow rhythm of transformation remains in the present relatively unchanged, as it had been in the distant past.

Rather, a "long event" would be the kind of historiographical description of an event that connects other events chronologically distant in time by ascribing to them resemblances identified by means of a "synoptic judgment" necessarily based on explicit abstract-conceptual categories.

A striking peculiarity of these "long events" is that they do not properly happen over time in the same way as most events whose relation can be empirically verified. On the contrary, it is out of the connection from which they stem that the very comprehension of time as an immediate long temporal whole emerges. To imagine time means, in this sense, as in an analogy Mink suggests, "to think of it in both directions at once, and then time is no longer the river which bears us along but the river in aerial view, upstream and downstream seen in a single survey." (Mink 1987: 57)

An even better (aquatic) analogy can be found in Escher's "Waterfall" (1961). In this lithography one sees - without having to look at it from afar like in an aerial view - a water stream flowing at the same time upward and downward! Although, the image itself makes evident that in reality this "river" must flow only in the latter direction. The interesting point here is that one realizes promptly *what is happening*, even if one is unable to explain the whole geometry involved in constructing the optic illusion. By the same token, one easily grasps that to inquire into the reality, i.e., gain some knowledge of how a real aqueduct works, would help little in explaining how the picture achieves its unreal effect.

In History, before a "long event", one also promptly recognizes, by virtue of the very temporal whole which is instantaneously created, that time must have been seen in both directions, even if one is unable to explain the whole role of the conceptual categories which allow for this operation. By the same token, one also easily grasps that any attempt to inquire into the

reality of which History is accepted as a representation), i.e., to touch the “real long event”, would be entirely in vain.

When one comes to understand that a “long event” *happens* as this kind of unifying abstract relation among events, the consequence is that chronology, span and pace, elements central in an ordinary understanding of time<sup>95</sup>, become marginal. This gives a hint of where the impression comes from, that History constitutes itself not by exposing, but by concealing time; it also explains, to some degree, why Historical time may also be thought of as the result of a logical production of resemblances within which sameness and long duration stand, as in the cinematographic masterpiece by that Lorientian critic, in intimate relationship.

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<sup>95</sup> These three elements would then be functionally a mere artificial mnemonic by which one can maintain a minimum sense of possible relations of particular events to each other. (Mink 1987: 57)

## TRANSITION – THE HEART OF BLACKNESS

In the first part of this dissertation, some main ideas by Arthur Danto, Louis Mink and Frank Ankersmit, authors representative of the “linguistic turn” in theory of History, were mobilized in order to, using Spivak’s words, fray the textile of History into *frayages*<sup>96</sup> or facilitations that breach open<sup>97</sup> a way for post-colonial thinking (Spivak [1993] 2009: 202). The general analytical strategy has been fairly simple: widespread disciplinary understandings of some concepts were submitted to a “commentative<sup>98</sup> analysis”, whose aim was to confer them another meaning. There was no ambition to endow them with *new* meanings. If something at all may be considered *new* in this operation, this could not be the meanings themselves, but the particular context within which they have been attributed.

Still, the three pairs of concepts, namely, ideology/anachronism, historiography/theory of History, time/event, which were subjected to what has been here called “theoretically oriented semantic exploration”, shall fulfil the function they have been designed to only after they are considered with regard to a “problem” that will lead them directly to the question of Historical time within Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*. What this “problem” consists of will be discussed in this chapter, which is a transition to the second and closing part of the thesis.

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<sup>96</sup> “Facilitation’ is the English translation of the Freudian term *Bahnung* (pathing) which is translated *frayage* in French.” (Spivak [1993] 2009: 352)

<sup>97</sup> The idea of “breaching” may appear awkward when related to “facilitation”. Yet, as Alan Bass, the translator of Derrida’s *L’écriture et la différence*, remarks concerning Derrida’s translation of Freud’s *Bahnung* into *frayage*: “Breaching’ is clumsy, but it is crucial to maintain the sense of the *force* that breaks open a pathway, and the *space* opened by this force.” (Derrida 1978: 329)

<sup>98</sup> The “commentary” is thought here as one of those “internal rules, where discourse exercises its own control; rules concerned with the principles of classification, ordering and distribution.” It is, according to Foucault, a procedure involved in the mastery of a precise dimension of discourse: that of events and chance. (Foucault 1972: 220)

“Whatever the techniques employed, commentary’s only role is to say *finally*, what has silently been articulated *deep down*. It must—and the paradox is ever-changing yet inescapable—say, for the first time, what has already been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said. The infinite rippling of commentary is agitated from within by the dream of masked repetition: in the distance there is, perhaps, nothing other than what was there at the point of departure: simple recitation. Commentary averts the chance element of discourse by giving it its due: it gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text itself which is uttered and, in some ways, finalised. The open multiplicity, the fortuitousness, is transferred, by the principle of commentary, from what is liable to be said to the number, the form, the masks and the circumstances of repetition. The novelty lies no longer in what is said, but in its reappearance.” (Foucault 1972: 221)

### **The *Aufhebung* of the subaltern's consciousness**

The three pairs of concepts spelled out throughout the adventurous theoretical exploration of the last chapter would not fulfill the function they are designed to if one remains in ignorance of the relation they bear to the problem of the consciousness. And the function they are designed for, it would do no harm to repeat, is to serve as an analytical tool by means of which the sketch of a model of temporality inspired by the idea of fractal spatiality as exposed by Paul Gilroy shall be drafted. Expectedly, this model may be of some relevance for those interested in exercising Historical writing from a postcolonial perspective.

The problem of consciousness is constitutive of this task for three inextricably intertwined reasons. *Firstly*, as Foucault explains:

“On the horizon of any human science, there is the project of bringing man’s consciousness back to its real conditions, of restoring it to the contents and forms that brought it into being, and elude us within it; this is why the problem of the unconscious—its possibility, status, mode of existence, the means of knowing it and of bringing it to light—is not simply a problem within the human sciences which they can be thought of as encountering by chance in their steps; it is a problem that is ultimately coextensive with their very existence. A transcendental raising of level that is, on the other side, an unveiling of the non-conscious is constitutive of all the sciences of man. (Foucault 1970: 364–36)

In other words: the human sciences are unable to circumvent the obstacle posed by the primacy of representation. Nonetheless, they aim at being a kind of representation distinctly conscious of the true and truthful character of their own consciousness of whatever they choose to be scientifically represented. As such, the problem of consciousness as well as, consequently, the problem of truth can only be, repeating Foucault’s words, “ultimately coextensive with” the very existence of the human sciences.

History, the “science of *man*” whose epistemological constitution has been scrutinized in this dissertation, occupies a special position within the *human* sciences due to the fact that it endows these sciences with the concreteness needed to fulfil their positivity, while, by the same token, “surrounds them with a frontier that limits them and destroys, from the outset, their claim to validity within the element of universality.” (Foucault 1970: 371)

History then constitutes itself by inwardly accomplishing a movement analogue to that of its own appearance, for the human sciences are thought to have stemmed from the emergence of a “historical consciousness” that, towards the whole of history, possessed the very same reflexive and normative character that the human science claim to have towards any object they subject to “scientific” representation. This particular kind of “historical consciousness” is

no more no less than the major characteristic of what came to be known as modernity. According to Habermas, Hegel was the first philosopher who develops a clear concept of modernity, hence the need to *go back* to his work if one wants to understand it (Habermas [1988] 2004: 13).

At this point, the *second* reason why the problem of consciousness is so crucial here can be announced: in dealing with this question one dashes straight into the heart of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, which, as its subtitle makes indelibly clear, beats in the rhythm dictated by a critical examination of the relation between "Modernity and Double Consciousness".

In fact, Gilroy goes *back* exactly to Habermas' reading of Hegel in order to counteract it with an approach that, based on Du Bois' notion of "double consciousness", takes the dialectic of master and slave, the allegory in which Hegel's relation of consciousness and freedom is rooted, as a point of departure for putting forward a view which, first, "sees the intimate association of modernity and slavery as a fundamental conceptual issue", and second, "foregrounds the issues of brutality and terror which are so frequently ignored" in discussions on Enlightenment's heritage (Gilroy 1993: 46–58). These two points constitutes the backbone of what Gilroy calls "antinomies" of modernity, to which, he then suggests, the "Black Atlantic" may be seen as a form of counterculture.

Now, those who want to understand "the problem of consciousness" in Hegel's work must be willing to deal with the concept of *Aufhebung*. On this subject:

"The negation characteristic of consciousness, which cancels in such a way that it preserves and maintains what is sublated (*Die Negation des Bewusstseins welches so aufhebt, dass es das Aufgehobene aufbewahrt und erhält*), and thereby survives its being sublated (*und hiermit seif Aufgehobenwerden überlebt*). In this experience self-consciousness becomes aware that life is essential to it as pure self-consciousness". (Derrida 1978: 254 – emphasis in the original)

This is an excerpt of Hegel's dialectic between master and slave, in which Derrida stresses doubly the importance of the concept of *Aufhebung*: first, by providing a transcription of the original passages in which the concept appears; second, by typographically drawing attention to it. And the dialectic of master and slave, Derrida states by reproducing Bataille's words, "is the center of Hegelianism" (Derrida 1978: 254).

It is not time yet to go deeply into this fairly abstruse point. For the moment, what little that has been said about the issue suffice to indicate, *thirdly*, that the "problem of

consciousness” encompasses the very way in which the concept of consciousness has been deployed in this dissertation, whence the suggestive title above<sup>99</sup>.

The “problem of consciousness” will be the guiding thread but not the proper subject of discourse in this transitional chapter. Rather, Gilroy’s use of Du Bois’ concept of “double consciousness” will be analysed with the purpose of discussing its relation with the notion of sovereignty of the subject and the question of subalternity.

To be economical with words, the relevance of taking this step right before the analysis advances towards its vital nucleus may be felt if one considers this clear-cut and penetrating thought by Foucault: “Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought” (Foucault 1972: 12). To behave towards this “system of thought” as if it could be seen from the perspective of a subaltern and “doubly conscious” subject is then the task set to be performed here.

The whole argument will be developed on the basis of a “commentative analysis” focused on three important historiographical works about colonial slavery in Brazil, namely, Kátia Mattoso’s *Ser Escravo no Brasil* (1982), Sydney Chalhou’s *Visões da Liberdade* (1990), and Maria Cristina C. Wissenbach’s *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas* (1998).

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<sup>99</sup> Actually, it would have been academically more appropriate to add this footnote on “Aufhebung” as this term appears for the first time in this text, that is, in its title. The very fact of *deferring* the explanation up until this point belongs to the way in which “consciousness” has here been *spatially* deployed in writing on the “problem of consciousness”. This very explanation expresses how much it owes to Derrida’s ideas of “spatialization” and “temporization” in *Différance*. (Derrida 1982: 1–27)

## The Heart of Blackness

Mas olhe dentro dos meus olhos  
E me diga quem eu sou  
Sou a semente plantada  
Que ainda não brotou  
*Capoeira song*

Nos braços da inspiração  
A vida transformei  
De escravo pra rei  
E o samba que criei  
Tão divino ficou  
Que agora sei quem sou  
*Candeia*

### A bondman of his time

What an irony of fate that in one of the most influential and most beautifully entitled works on modernity, namely, Marshall Berman's *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, Hegel, the philosopher regarded as the first one to develop a clear concept of nothing less than modernity itself (Habermas [1988] 2004: 13), ended up listed among those who had grasped it through an "instinctive feeling" (Berman [1982] 2010: 132). Departing from Berman, Paul Gilroy characterizes Hegel as an "intuitive modernist" (Gilroy 1993: 46).

Well, when, in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel asserts "I am pure intuition" (Hegel [1807] 2014: 246) he refers to the state of mind designated in his philosophical system as "sensuous certainty", which is the very first and the most crude stage of development of the spirit. There, he formulates meticulously, one is dealing with the "richest kind of knowledge", but the "poorest kind of truth" (Hegel [1807] 2014: 229). At this stage, the essence of consciousness, using Hegel's own terminology, is not "for itself" yet, but rather "for another".

The irony is that "the life or existence for another" is anything else than the mode of consciousness of Hegel's bondman.<sup>100</sup> In attempting to produce a systematic exposition of the master's Absolute Knowledge, Hegel made himself susceptible to be turned into the

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<sup>100</sup> Hegel synthesizes the definition of the self-consciousness of the master and of the bondman as follows: "[...] they stand as two opposed forms or modes of consciousness. The one is independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter the Bondsman." (Hegel [1807] 2014: 459)

bondsman: a bondsman of his time<sup>101</sup>... A time that showed, if one is going to give credence to one of its latest master-narratives<sup>102</sup>, an unparalleled “reflexivity” as one of its major features (Osterhammel 2009: 26).

A “more directly social reading of Hegel’s texts”, Gilroy points out, has been of great interest for those interested in evincing questions related to manifold forms of violence, with special attention to the epistemic variant, as it is the case, for example, of feminist, and postcolonial theories which draw intensively on postmodernist and poststructuralist philosophies (Spivak 1988; Harding 1987; Flax 1990; Braidotti 1991).

This kind of reading is not only legitimate, but also seems to be indispensable in face of Hegel’s *Weltanschauung*, which was unmistakably expressed in his lectures on Philosophy of History, where he conducts an exam the purpose of which is to demonstrate that the spirit, or the reason, in the history of the world, “appears as a series of external forms, each one of which manifests itself as an actually existing people.” Therefore, Hegel calls these people “world-historical people” who embody special principles that are also their natural characteristic: “Spirit, thus clothing itself in naturalness in this manner, suffers its particular phases to assume separate existence. For separateness is the form of naturalness.” (Hegel [1837] 2013: 223)

So in North America under the colonisation of the “world-historical European people”:

“Bald trat eine allgemeine Richtung auf die Arbeit ein, und die Substanz des Ganzen waren die Bedürfnisse, die Rüge, die bürgerliche Gerechtigkeit, Sicherheit und ein Gemeinwesen, das von Atomen der Individuen ausging, so dass der Staat nun ein Äußerliches zum Schutz des Eigentums war.” (Hegel [1837] 2015a: 111–112)

South America’s “world-historical native American people” are described by Hegel as follows:

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<sup>101</sup> To use this expression is obviously to mimic this famous passage of the preface of Hegel’s *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: “Was da Individuum betrifft, so ist ohnehin jedes ein *Sohn seiner Zeit*; so ist auch die Philosophie ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfaßt. Es ist ebenso töricht zu wähnen, irgendeine Philosophie gehe über ihre gegenwärtige Welt hinaus, als, eine Individuum überpringe seine Zeit, springe über Rhodus hinaus. Geht seine Theorie in der Tat drüber hinaus, baut er sich eine Welt, wie sie sein soll, so existiert sie wohl, aber nur seinem Meinen ´einen weichem Elemente, dem sich alles Beliebig einbilden läßt.” (Hegel [1832–1845] 2015b: 28 – emphasis added)

The expression “ein Sohn seiner Zeit” has been usually translated as “a child [instead of ‘a son’] of its time” (Hegel [1832–1845] 2011: 11; Ware 1999: 7–11). Of course, the prevailing English translation alters substantially the gendered character of the construction. The words “child” and “son” may also convey slightly different meanings respecting the notion of adulthood as metaphor for a certain attitude of consciousness.

<sup>102</sup> This is not an ascription. As already mentioned, Jürgen Osterhammel defines his work as a “*Meistererzählung*”: “Ich experimentiere mit einer anderen Lösung: Meistererzählungen sind legitim. Die postmoderne Kritik an ihnen hat sie nicht obsolet, sondern bewusst erzählbar gemacht.” (Osterhammel 2009: 19)

“Demut und kriechende Unterwürfigkeit gegen einen Kreolen und mehr noch gegen einen Europäer sind dort der Hauptcharakter der Amerikaner, und es wird noch lange dauern, bis die Europäer dahin kommen, einiges Selbstgefühl in sie zu bringen. Die Inferiorität dieser Individuen in jeder Rücksicht, selbst in Hinsicht der Größe, gibt sich alle zu erkennen.” (Hegel [1837] 2015a: 108)

Finally, with regard to the “world-historical black people” of Africa:

“Neger stellt [...] den natürlichen Menschen in seiner ganzen Wildheit und Unbändigkeit dar; vor aller Ehrfurcht und Sittlichkeit, von dem, was Gefühl heißt, muss man abstrahieren, wenn man ihn richtig auffassen will: es ist nichts an das Menschliche Anklingende in diesem Charakter zu finden. [...] Es ist die Unbändigkeit, welche den Charakter den Neger bezeichnet. Dieser Zustand ist keiner Entwicklung und Bildung fähig, wie wir sie heute sehen, so sind sie immer gewesen. (Hegel [1837] 2015a: 122; 128)

And since the History of Slavery is in the centre of this section, it is worth briefly exposing the view Hegel held on the topic:

“Der einzige wesentliche Zusammenhang, den die Neger mit den Europäern gehabt haben und noch haben, ist der der Sklaverei. In diesen sehen die Neger nichts ihnen Unangemessenes, und gerade die Engländer, welche das meiste zur Abschaffung des Sklavenhandels und der Sklaverei getan haben, werden von ihnen selbst als Feinde behandelt. Denn es ist ein Hauptmoment für die Könige, ihre gefangenen Feinde oder auch ihre eigenen Untertanen zu verkaufen, und die Sklaverei hat insofern mehr Menschliches unter den Negern geweckt.” (Hegel [1837] 2015a: 128–129)

All these quotations would be dispensable if there were no desire to re-write the above, and in doing so, add to adjectives that are now sufficiently justified: that kind of [more social] reading [of Hegel] is not only legitimate, but also seems to be indispensable in face of the historicizing racist *Weltanschauung*<sup>103</sup> that permeates Hegel’s oeuvre and which was unmistakably expressed in his lectures on Philosophy of History.

At any rate, even if one refrains from “a more directly social reading” and interprets Hegel’s “master” and “bondsmen” neither as concrete individuals nor as social groups, but just as the abstract antithetical forms of the self-consciousness within the same person, one should not overlook, under penalty of misunderstanding the whole argument, three points of Hegel’s “Dialectic of Lordship and Bondage”: *first*, in qualifying the different states of consciousness as “a life-and-death struggle”, it makes of naked violence the metaphorical essence of what

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<sup>103</sup> Hegel’s passage translated into English as “I am pure intuition” reads in the original “Ich bin reines Anschauen” (Hegel [1807] 2010: 84). Being “anschauen” the substantive form of the verb that integrates the compound noun “Weltanschauung”, it seems fairly correct to say that Hegel held a racist intuition about the world.

mediates the relation of reason and freedom; *second*, by naming the antagonists as it does, it conspicuously emphasises the meaningfulness of seeing this relation as dramatically asymmetric in what concerns the kind of knowledge necessary in order to take and hold the power of establishing the truth<sup>104</sup>; and *finally*, by introducing a new subject, which Hegel calls “the process of recognition”, it argues that the recognition of self-consciousness of the Other is constituted in and by this violent and asymmetrical power relation<sup>105</sup>.

If one does not lose sight of any of these three interrelated dimensions, it becomes clear why any discussion about the recognition of one’s autonomy always implies a movement towards the conquest of self-consciousness, which, in turn, traverses the issues of violence and power asymmetry. Thus, it is not at all an irony of fate that this problematic becomes pungent when History of Slavery is *at stake*<sup>106</sup>.

### **The slave’s “doubleness” in the Brazilian History of slavery**

#### *Ser Escravo no Brasil*

When the words “master” and “bondman” are no longer metaphors thought to condense philosophical meanings, but have to be read in a rather literal sense, the question of self-consciousness becomes an extremely delicate matter. As delicate as imperative. The Brazilian

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<sup>104</sup> In Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” those who cannot see the truth of the world are also *captives*, in the sense that they are chained prisoners. The chains may be interpreted as standing for the deceptiveness of sensorial perception, which prevent them from coming out of the cave, where all they see are artificially created shadows, against the sun-enlightened reality of truly knowledge. Power becomes a central issue in Hegel because he somehow unchained Plato’s godforsaken prisoners, but only to then properly transform them into creatures who must then be kept subservient, doing their work, so as to grant the master’s achievement of true, that is, absolute knowledge. (Platão [380 BC?] 2000: 39–42)

<sup>105</sup> Hegel’s emphasis on the intrinsically conflicting character of human affairs brings him close to the Hobbesian side of Western philosophy. Concerning this question, Paul Ricoeur advances the hypothesis that “a *Anerkennung* hegeliana se dá a compreender como resposta a um desafio maior, o que Hobbes lançou ao pensamento do Ocidente no plano político. A reconstrução do tema da *Anerkennung*, tal como foi articulada por Hegel na época de Iena, sera guiada pela resposta ao desafio de Hobbes, resposta na qual o desejo de ser reconhecido ocupa o lugar do medo da morte violenta na concepção hobbesiana do estado de natureza.” (Ricoeur 2006: 165)

<sup>106</sup> Analyzing the difference of sense between lordship and sovereignty in Bataille’s interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy, Derrida remarks that the operation of lordship consists “in putting at stake the entirety of one’s own life. [...] Lordship has a meaning. The putting *at stake* of life is a moment in the constitution of meaning, in the presentation of essence and truth. It is an obligatory stage in the history of self-consciousness and phenomenality, that is to say, in the presentation of meaning. *For history – that is, meaning – to form a continuous chain, to be woven, the master must experience his truth.* This is possible only under two conditions which cannot be separated: the master must stay alive in order to enjoy what he has won by risking his life; and, at the end of the progression [...] the ‘truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman’”. (Derrida 1978: 254 – emphasis added).

historiography of slavery produced from the 80s on exemplifies instructively both the crucial relevance and the difficulties involved in dealing with this issue.

Katia Mattoso's 1982 *Ser Escravo no Brasil*, synthesises in its very title that which would become a major theme on the Brazilian agenda of historiographical research on slavery in the following decades. Commenting the title she gave to her book, Mattoso unabashedly writes: "Seu título, na voz passiva, não é uma figura de estilo: implica o desejo de adotar o próprio ponto de vista do escravo." (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 12)

Ciro Flamarion Cardoso, the reputed Brazilian Historian who, with his influential thesis on the "brecha camponesa"<sup>107</sup>, contributed to develop the interpretation of the "escravismo colonial" as a particular mode of production, prefaced the first edition of *Ser Escravo no Brasil* by foretelling that the book was destined to open a new era in the academic production on Brazilian slavery. In fact, Mattoso's ideas became highly influential and echo sonorously in later historiographical works, which are an indisputable part of the mainstream of the subfield History of Slavery nowadays. One of the sources of this profound and persistent influence is the emphasis she puts on the slave's "double life".

"Na realidade, parece-nos que o escravo não permanece por muito tempo como o rato que o gato se diverte, pois tem certeza da vitória final. Logo que sai do estado de prostração em que o cativo o lança, o escravo torna a ser o homem sensível e digno que não se amolda a todos os padrões de vida e a todos os princípios governadores da sociedade branca. *É preciso relegar às prateleiras do esquecimento da História a imagem ridícula do escravo passivo, indolente e sem caráter, descrito por pessoas apressadas demais em desagrar o sistema escravista: seus argumentos são mal escolhidos. Na verdade, o escravo reserva-se a liberdade de contestar ou de recusar-se às exigências do senhor que lhe pareçam ofensivas à sua dignidade; já falamos dos atos de rebelião individual e coletiva e sua importância como refúgios remotos, em geral ineficazes. [...] Pressionado pela necessidade, constrangido pela força, o escravo move-se no mundo dos brancos observando um mínimo de regras necessárias à sua sobrevivência. E são as regras de um grande jogo, que cumpre assimilar bem, mas que em nada diminuem sua personalidade profunda, que se pode desenvolver na comunidade negra, cujas estruturas – paralelas às da comunidade dos brancos, como foi dito – oferecem-lhe compensações, satisfações não encontráveis no campo, na mina, na casa do senhor ou nos serviços externos. Para o escravo, submissão e aceitação são táticas, fazem parte de toda uma dialética na qual o cativo encontra sua própria resposta aos problemas de sua vida dupla, a dupla estrutura em que se insere.*" (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 214–215 emphasis added)

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<sup>107</sup> The "brecha camponesa" is an expression attributed to the Polish Historian Tadeusz Lepkowski. It designates the economic activities that, while taken place within the colonial slavery, could not be subsumed under the plantation system. Ciro Flamarion Cardoso used Sydney Mintz's variant of the notion, which distinguishes the colonial peasantry in four categories: 1) owner peasants 2) non-owner peasants; 3) quilombolas; 4) slave proto-peasantry. The last category is the only one Cardoso tried to develop with regard to the Brazilian case. (Cardoso 1987: 55)

Among many passages in which Mattoso develops the idea of the slave's double life, this long one was chosen because here, where she stresses that the "double life" was forged by the slaves themselves as an answer to the challenges of slavery, she also points out the source of this doubleness, as well as giving a hint of her possible interlocutors.

Mattoso's view is ambiguous for, even though she admits that the slaves were "pressionados pela necessidade" and "constrangidos pela força", the act of offering resistance is paradoxically characterized as a "liberty" that the slaves could take with their masters, if they felt their dignity were wounded.

The problem with this formulation is not that it passes over the consideration that dishonour may be thought of as a constituent element of slavery in general<sup>108</sup> rather than a contingent consequence of particular arrangements within it. Much more problematic is the fact that rebellions or other forms of offering open resistance become "refúgios remotos, em geral ineficazes."

If open contestation and rebellions were ineffective, what could have been an effective way of resisting? Mattoso's answer: obedience, for, in her version of the slaves' view, submission and the acceptance of the master's "rules of the game" was no more than a "tactic" deployed by the slaves in order to widen their degree of freedom.

Mattoso underpins this thesis by appealing to a notion that has been a commonplace way of talking about the specificity of the Brazilian national formation<sup>109</sup>:

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<sup>108</sup> Arguing that "slaves were always persons who had been dishonoured in a generalized way", Orlando Patterson qualifies dishonour as the "third constituent element of slavery". The other two elements being: 1) intrinsic submission by violence, since slavery originated as a substitute for death; 2) natal alienation. Thus, on the level of personal relations, he concludes synthetically: "slavery is the permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonoured persons." (Patterson 1982; 1-14)

<sup>109</sup> Roberto DaMatta's work provides perhaps the most prominent interpretation of Brazil as a nation whose peculiarity is attributed on the basis of the notion of "jeitinho". In a nutshell, the "jeitinho" would be the defining feature of a dual model of society whose functioning evinces a decisive preponderance of the sphere of the personal and private over the rule of law and the public interest.

In a very instructive article, Jessé Souza argues that the dual character - that is, the sharp division between a personal/private and a public sphere, which in DaMatta appears in the form of the binary pairs "pessoa x indivíduo" and "casa x rua" - is not a "peculiarity" of Brazilian society, but a common feature shared by all modern(ized) societies. The "jeito" (or "jeitinho") is like a nickname for corruption which, as such, is integral to the system as a whole and in fact one of the ways of relieving the permanent tension between those two spheres, not only in Brazil but everywhere where modernity arrives. In this sense, instead of unveiling the "profound grammar" ("gramática profunda") of the Brazilian formation, DaMatta's work offers a "superficial dualism" which was a product of his very own concept of "dual sociology".

In the end, what DaMatta accomplishes is just a "sistematização da imagem do senso comum, da "ideologia" do brasileiro médio acerca de si próprio" (Souza 2001: 55). A systematization that, as Souza sharply criticizes, by systematically bypassing the issues of social stratification and power asymmetries ends up downplaying the problem of systemic oppression and subordination.

“O português possui uma palavra intraduzível, que talvez seja uma das chaves desta adaptação mais ou menos feliz do homem negro à sua condição, a seu ambiente, a seu destino: jeito – astúcia, arte, destreza. A sociedade e que vive o nosso escravo, como quer que seja, é uma sociedade em que a igualdade não existe, ou é muito pouca, mesmo para o homem livre. O escravo vai abrir nela um lugar próprio, graças ao seu ‘jeito’, ao seu dom de fazer as coisas, à conquista de um equilíbrio, habilidade para sobreviver, aceitação respeitosa de si próprio e dos outros. *Para o escravo, o jeito é a adaptação ou a inadaptação assumidas, a astúcia que o faz viver, a esperteza nascida da experiência e forjada na adversidade, que vai marcar toda a vida brasileira, a dos homens escravos como a dos homens libertados e a ainda a dos homens livres.* Graças a seu jeito de saber viver, o escravo empenha-se em apressar a passagem que leva do passado mítico, perdido, através do presente difícil, a um futuro de liberdade idealizada. No dia-a-dia, o jeito permite, pois, ligar passado e futuro, é o saber sobreviver. É ele quem libera seus tesouros imaginários, riqueza da vida escrava. Comprado, vendido, mandado, o escravo sabe preservar sua parcela de autonomia, de humor, de ternura e de sonho.” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 175) – emphasis added)

By resorting to this presumably untranslatable “jeito”, Mattoso then transforms the quotidian of the slave’s life, which, according to her, had been seen so far as the passivity that made possible the very functioning of the whole system, into small acts of resistance. Open forms of opposition to slavery such as uprisings and flights are at the same time downgraded to a marginal position, not only in terms of their relevance within the slave system<sup>110</sup>, which may be seen as a rash, but an anyway defensible thesis, but also at a conceptual level.

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Katia Mattoso transfers to the slave world/personality this ideological germ of the Brazilian nationality. Like in Damatta’s interpretation, the force of her argument lies precisely in the act of constituting the autonomy of the slaves on the basis of a positive figuration of a commonsensical self-image of Brazil. Ironically, a self-image that, as Souza stresses and is worth repeating, downplays the problem of systemic oppression and subordination. Is it not truly incredible that an idea of such a nature could have indeed been included as an essential part of an explanation of slavery?

As a last word on this topic it shall be observed that Jessé de Souza’s critique shares some fundamental shortcomings that are fundamental to the problems correctly pointed out in DaMatta’s work. The most evident one is the idea of modernity as intrinsically extraneous, as something transplanted to Brazil, namely, together with the Portugal’s royal household in 1808. With the arrival of the House of Braganza in Brazil, according to Souza, arrived also the two most important institutions of modern society: “Estado racional e mercado capitalista”. Prior to that, he, following Gilberto Freyre, remarks enigmatically, Brazil was “a espécie de ‘China tropical’”. (Souza 2001: 61)

Another point that deserves remark is that while Jessé Souza rightly accuses DaMatta of superficiality, arguing that the latter just systematizes the commonsensical self-image of Brazil in his attempt to find (or to found?) what might be “peculiar” to its social formation, Souza himself projects onto Brazil a “peculiarity” that he derives from another main source of commonsensical self-image of Brazil, namely, Gilberto Freyre’s controversial interpretation of Brazilian slavery. Highly problematic ideas such as “escravidão muçulmana” and “o mulato como tipo social” have free analytical transit in Souza’s argumentation, a procedure that makes his text almost as untenable as DaMatta’s.

<sup>110</sup> About the slaves’ form of organization that offered open resistance to slavery, Mattoso writes: “Todos esses grupos que repelem o sistema escravista brasileiro, quilombo pacífico ou associação secreta criada para fomentar uma insurreição, jamais conseguem, pois, sensibilizar todo o corpo social dos escravos. Permanecem marginais e muito frequentemente são precários. Para o escravo insatisfeito, eles são o local quase mítico de possíveis refúgios; mas este escravo é incapaz de unir-se a todos os seus irmãos para dar força e vida a seu sonho. (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 166)

The 1835 uprising in Salvador (Bahia), so-called *Malê Revolt*, for example, provoked the outbreak of a wave of panic among the Brazilian elites (Batista 2003). The slaveholding upper class saw shades of Saint-Domingue being projected over the capital of the empire, Rio de Janeiro, where slaves made up more than 50% of the population<sup>111</sup>. A new word appeared in the police jargon: *haitianismo*.<sup>112</sup> Also a new law was promulgated, the *Lei Exceptional de 1835*<sup>113</sup>, which determines the death penalty for slaves involved in rebellions or in murders of masters or overseers. Correctly, João José Reis consider the *Malê Revolt* the most significant urban slave rebellion in Brazil (Reis 1986).

Nonetheless, Mattoso qualifies this movement as “pre-political”, a category that she extends to all other prior slave insurrections: “O movimento de 1835, como de resto *todos os precedentes*, mantém-se pré-político. Somente é político na medida em que houve tentativa de tomada de poder para redistribuí-lo.” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 166 – emphasis added). First of all, it is fairly difficult to grasp what she understands under the category of “pre-political”. Even more difficult is to put aside the manifest evolutionist tone of this characterization. Still, if just momentarily and for the sake of argument, one makes the effort and, following Mattoso’s thesis, confines oneself to remark that rebellions were nothing else than a radical negation of that “double life” slaves were forced to live, one has then to conclude that outside of this “doubleness” there was no proper politics ... yet. Outside “doubleness” there was only that idealized mythic place, where the slaves could dreamily run for shelter. Now, bringing the evolutionist content of Mattoso’s statement fully into this interpretation, it was to say that this place was the “black pre-political” counterpart of the “already political” world of the white master.

In fact, the presence of a “black world” clearly separated from a “white world” is patent in Mattoso’s argumentation. In doing so, she is more or less just unfolding Roger Bastide’s old

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<sup>111</sup> “Segundo as estimativas de Mary Karasch, os escravos chegaram a constituir mais de 50% da população da cidade [do Rio de Janeiro] durante a década de 1830”. (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 233)

<sup>112</sup> Chalhoub detects the use of this word in the police correspondence of Rio de Janeiro in 1836. He explains that “a palavra haitianismo [...] é uma referência ao fantasma do Haiti, com seu exemplo assustador de uma rebelião negra que resultara na tomada do poder. Essa palavra, porém, assumiu no século XIX um sentido mais geral, significando a ameaça de movimentos populares com a participação de negros escravos e forros. (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 240)

<sup>113</sup> However, Ricardo Figueiredo Pirola remarks that this law had been the subject of parliamentary debates since 1833. The project for the promulgation of the law had been an answer to the Carranca’s insurrection occurred in that same year in Minas Gerais as well as to movements of slave rebelliousness which took place in Bahia and São Paulo at that time (Pirola 2012: 49–50).

idea about the “princípio de corte”<sup>114</sup>. There is no problem in making the point that the way in which the white slaveholder class experienced the world was substantially different from the way slaves did. So different that one can metaphorically say that they lived in distinct worlds.

The problem begins when one entirely overlooks that the conceptualization of these “worlds”—for example, in the form of the ascension from the “pre-political” to the “political”—is the core of what produces and reproduces the act of filibustering the exposition of the slave’s point of view that Mattoso, paradoxically, wants to represent.

In exploring the “doubleness” of the slaves’ lives split into those two worlds, Mattoso creates a binary construction that is the very source of the “duplicity” of her discourse: with one hand she endows the slaves with a self-conscious agency, which she, either by means of qualifying it as “pre-political” or as springing from an innate capacity of adaptation (the “jeito”), immediately takes away with the other!

The most harmful and not completely unexpected effect of this operation can be clearly seen in the way Mattoso deals with the issue of direct violence in the Brazilian slavery system:

Os castigos corporais também servem para manter a ordem através do exemplo. Mas sua aplicação não fazia absolutamente parte da vida diária do escravo. Ninguém nega que tenha havido senhores ou senhoras sádicos. Contudo, de um modo geral, nem o senhor nem o feitor passeiam entre os escravos, chicote na mão, para repreender qualquer pecadilho. Os meios utilizados para assegurar a obediência no trabalho e a humildade nas relações com os senhores são muito mais sutis. O senhores procura fazer os escravos ligarem-se a eles por laços afetivos, tenta, em primeiro lugar, inspirar-lhes consideração e quando o trabalho é bem feito termina por gerar um respeito mútuo. O chicote, o tronco, a máscara de ferro, ou o pelourinho são o último recurso dos senhores incapazes de manter a disciplina. (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 117)

The point Mattoso intends to make here is that direct violence in the form of corporal punishment was the last means Brazilian masters would resort to in order to exact obedience of their slaves. Compare this stance to the treatment of the same topic in Emilia Viotti da Costa’s 1966 *Da Colônia à Senzala*:

“No regime da escravidão, em que o trabalho desmoraliza e é resultante de uma imposição, o grupo dominante se vê frequentemente obrigado a recorrer à violência física, quando queira alcançar seus desígnios.

Para manter o ritmo de trabalho, impedir atitudes de indisciplina ou reprimir revoltas, para atemorizar os escravos, mantê-los humildes e submissos, evitar e punir fugas, os senhores recorriam aos mais variados tipos de castigo, pois os acordos e reprimendas valiam pouco.

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<sup>114</sup> Roger Bastide refers to this notion as follows: “Aquilo a que chamamos “princípio de corte” lhe [the slaves] faculta sem dúvida viverem em dois mundos diferentes, evitando tensões e choques: o choque de valores bem como as exigências, no entanto contraditórias, das duas sociedades.” (Bastide 1971: 517)

Não se concebia outra maneira de regular a prestação de serviços e a disciplina do escravo. O que se podia condenar era o excesso, os abusos cometidos por alguns senhores ou seus mandatários: feitores ou ‘cabras’. O castigo físico impunha-se, na opinião do tempo, como única medida coercitiva eficaz.” (Costa [1966] 1997: 337)

Such a diametrical opposition of views arouses the justified suspicion that Emilia Viotti da Costa is among those interlocutors, who Mattoso does not call by name, but accuses of having chosen the “wrong arguments” for attacking Brazilian slavery. Wrong because, instead of looking at the empirical reality emanated from the sources, these arguments depart from an abstract understanding that defines physical violence as foundational and constituent to the sustainment of slavery in general. As a consequence thereof, they had provided a black and white picture of the Brazilian variant, putting too much emphasis on a systemic brutality that had not been operative in practical life. The side effect of this approach had been, Mattoso sustains, the presentation of slaves as completely passive victims.

Mattoso’s slaves are in no way a victim. They are well-nourished creatures, whose alimentary regime was better than that of the poor free men<sup>115</sup> and whose love for freedom was less intense than the fear of losing the circle of protection furnished by the master<sup>116</sup> and his family, to which, by the way, the slaves partially belonged<sup>117</sup>. If Mattoso’s slaves died at an extremely high rate when compared to other social groups, this is not due to the excess of work, but just to the general local infra-structure and climatic conditions, since the masters would not deliberately devalue the capital indispensable to the prosperity of their own business<sup>118</sup>. Being a slave in Brazil was to have masters who were open to develop a

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<sup>115</sup> “Sabemos que o regime alimentar do escravo era muito mais rico em calorias, proteínas e hidratos de carbono do que o da população pobre do Brasil do século XIX: o trivial do escravo continha farinha de mandioca, milho, carne seca, caça, frutas locais (banana, laranja, limão, mamão) e melão. Próximo à costa ou aos rios os escravos pescavam peixes e crustáceos. Na cidade o escravo que tinha o direito de ganhar um pouco de dinheiro para si de abastecer-se no mercado onde outros escravos vendem muitos pratos prontos, de cheiro apetitoso e preço convidativo. (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 118)

<sup>116</sup> “O escravo maduro ou já velho, que passou a vida inteira a ver os outros decidirem por ele, agir em seu nome, que obedeceu sempre, terá muita dificuldade em obter liberdade real. Isto não quer dizer que o escravo fosse passivo, sem coragem, sem autonomia relativa no círculo de segurança criado pelo senhor.” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 209)

<sup>117</sup> “Em geral, o senhor prefere a persuasão à imposição. No Nordeste, os senhores de engenho substituem a violência e as ameaças por uma verdadeira manipulação de caráter patriarcal e paternalista. Buscam fazer do escravo um servidor, membro da grande família, num *modus vivendi* que economiza aos proprietários os custos da vigilância, os riscos de ver atacados seus bens ou suas esposas. O escravo adquire uma certa identidade social e vê que lhe são dados certos papéis sociais e até certa importância social, um peso específico face o homem livre, resultado da garantia protetora da família do senhor.” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 103)

<sup>118</sup> “[O] proprietário de escravos é um empresário que não deixará deliberadamente desvalorizar-se esse capital indispensável à prosperidade de seu empreendimento.” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 118)

relationship of mutual respect<sup>119</sup>, it was to be able to sometimes even dictate the “rules of the game”!<sup>120</sup> Being a slave in Brazil was, to sum up translating Mattoso’s unhappy words, a “more or less happy adaptation” of the black men to the condition they were destined to live under (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 175).

In the light of this picture of Brazilian slavery, it is perfectly tenable to draw the conclusion that Katia Mattoso, taken by the desire to adopt the point of view of the slave, ends up producing an interpretation that does justice to the epithet Gorender gave to it: neopatriarchalism<sup>121</sup>. In her eager anxiety to rehabilitate the slaves she paradoxically rehabilitates slavery.

### *Visões da Liberdade*

A constant revisiting of *Ser Escravo no Brasil*, which is both proof and consequence of its very influence within Brazilian historiography, has led to a redress of many issues discussed above<sup>122</sup>. Still, the question of “doubleness” has remained more or less untouched.

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<sup>119</sup> “O senhor procura fazer os escravos ligarem-se a ele por laços afetivos, tenta, em primeiro lugar, inspirar-lhes consideração e quando o trabalho é bem feito termina por gerar um respeito mútuo.” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 117)

<sup>120</sup> Concerning the slavery in the mining regions of Minas Gerais: “O escravo trabalhador, engenhoso ou abençoado dos céus, que descobria a pepita suplementar ou o diamante precioso, podia muito bem conseguir acumular pecúlio pessoal: o senhor tinha o direito de exigir-lhe um mínimo, do qual ele próprio devia prestar contas ao governo, que em troca lhe outorgara a concessão. Quanto ao excedente, *o escravo passa a ditar as regras do jogo* e encontra proteção até da organização administrativa. (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 109 – emphasis added)

<sup>121</sup> Jacob Gorender defines “neopatriarchalistas” as a set of historiographical approaches that reaffirm the two main theses that guided Gilberto Freyre’s thinking, namely: 1) on the exceptionally benign character of the Brazilian slavery system; 2) that a “racial democracy” rules the social relations in Brazil. In this sense, he writes on *Ser Escravo no Brasil*: “Com efeito, é indiscutível o conhecimento de Kátia Mattoso sobre a escravidão em Salvador, como é inegável sua contribuição inovadora ao estudo da questão da alforria [...]. O que sucede é que *Ser Escravo no Brasil* não se tornou obra de referência nas teses acadêmicas por motivo de tais méritos, porém, pela *enfática reafirmação do sistema patriarcal* na escravidão brasileira, em termos remontados a Gilberto Freyre.” (Gorender 1990: 12–18 - emphasis added)

<sup>122</sup> For instance, the characterization of the Malê Revolt as “pre-political” was critically addressed by Eduardo Silva in “O Levante dos Malês: Uma Interpretação Política”. He writes: “A política tem sido considerada o universo dos homens livres das sociedades modernas. Os rebeldes que fizeram seus movimentos em contextos pré-industriais ou pré-capitalistas ganharam a denominação de rebeldes primitivos e seus movimentos foram chamados de pré-políticos. Essa terminologia de inspiração evolucionista [...] já foi habilmente criticada por nossos antropólogos e historiadores. Eles colocaram as peças no lugar certo: não se trata de uma questão de “pré” ou “pós”, trata-se do diferente. Os “rebeldes primitivos” faziam a política que podiam fazer face aos recursos com que contavam, a sociedade em que viviam e as limitações estruturais que enfrentavam” (Reis/Silva [1989] 2009: 99).

Manolo Florentino, in turn, analysing the demographic question of slaves’ mortality rate from the perspective of Economic History, argues that for a long time the Brazilian slavery enterprise profited highly from the low prices paid for enslaved people in Africa. This allowed for centring its strategy of economic reproduction in the shortening of the interval between the outlay on purchase of slaves and the amortization. Only after 1850, due the general increase of slave prices provoked by the abolishment of the slave trade, the Brazilian slaveholding class would effectively invest in the prolongation of the slaves’ life

Following the path opened by Mattoso, Sydney Chalhoub's *Visões da Liberdade* also aims at looking at Brazilian slavery from the perspective of the slaves with the conspicuous purpose of restoring their autonomous agency. Thus, he sets up as the target of his criticisms both the "theory of the slave as thing" and its logical and compensatory counterpart, namely, the idea of the slave as inherently rebel.<sup>123</sup> (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 49)

Basically, what Chalhoub wants to demonstrate is that the slaves generally remained faithful to the master, but they did that according to their own logic or rationality, which, firmly rooted in particular and original experiences and traditions, were not a reflex or mirror of the slaveholding's *Weltanschauung* (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 38). In other words, slaves were indeed humble and obedient, although not for the reasons their master believed, but for their own interest. It sounds quite banal. It ceases perhaps to be so, if one tries to understand in which way obedience happened to be the essence of resistance against slavery.

Obviously, Chalhoub is unfolding the very same argument that Mattoso put forward earlier. He is also seeking for signals of the slaves' autonomy where they are less evident to be found. However, differently from Mattoso, he neither addresses the issue of adaptation, be it happy or unhappy, nor appeals to the rhetoric of the as untranslatable as inscrutable slaves' "jeito". Rather, one finds Chalhoub's slaves consciously engaged in attempting to widen their degree of freedom by presenting themselves not only as what they juridically were, slaves, but also as "workers" (*operários*). (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 275)

The place where this "double role" as "slave" and "worker" could be played at best was the nineteenth-century's Rio de Janeiro, which Chalhoub calls "the black city".

"A cidade negra é o engendramento de um tecido de significados e de práticas sociais que *politiza o cotidiano* dos sujeitos históricos num sentido específico – isto é no sentido da transformação de eventos aparentemente corriqueiros no cotidiano das relações sociais na escravidão em acontecimentos políticos que fazem desmoronar os pilares da instituição do trabalho forçado. Castigos, alforrias, atos de compra e venda, licenças para que negros vivam 'sobre si', e outras ações comuns na escravidão se configuram então como momentos de crise, como atos que são percebidos pelas personagens históricas como potencialmente transformadores de suas vidas e da sociedade na qual participam. Em suma, a formação da cidade negra é o processo de luta dos negros no sentido de instituir a *política* – ou seja, a busca de liberdade – onde antes havia fundamentalmente a *rotina*. (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 232 – emphasis in the original)

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(Florentino [1997] 2010: 50–60). In this respect, Florentino just corroborates the thesis Gorender had advanced in his classic *Escravidão Colonial* (Gorender 1978).

<sup>123</sup> Chalhoub focuses his critique on Jacob Gorender's *Escravidão Colonial* and Fernando Henrique Cardoso's *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional*, two major works of the Economic History of Slavery.

It is difficult to understand why the routine character of manumissions and authorizations to become an “autonomous slave” (*viver sobre si*) should give any reason for conceiving them as “non-political” issues. Such events, having been the legal and customary form of granting freedom, were essentially political at any time throughout the course of slavery, for they regulated the linchpin of the whole system. Manumissions or, for the case, also the sanction to “*viver sobre si*”, by providing a powerful incentives for slaves, functioned as the most important means of mediating the master-slave relationship, reason why it forcefully became an intrinsically political element of every slaveholding society (Patterson 1982: 341). In Chalhoub’s perspective the Brazilian case was an exception to this rule.

In order to defend his thesis that some quotidian events took on such an importance that they began to bear unexpected political meanings, Chalhoub explores, along with the example of the manumissions, three biographical accounts. The first of these biographies is about Francelina, a teenage black slave who was prosecuted for the murder of her mistress. The second one is about Margarida, a black slave beaten to death by her masters, who, with the purpose of occulting the fact, buried her as if she were another person, providing even a falsified death certificate. The third one is about the freedmen Romão, who killed the son of the ex-master of his girlfriend, the slave Maria.

Three murder cases: the “life and death struggle” involving slaves and masters. Chalhoub calls them “*histórias pífi*as”. The adjective “*pífi*o” meaning “ordinary”, in the sense of being usual, typical, expected, as well as “unimportant”.

This characterization is, on the one hand, extremely contradictory, for if the violence against slaves in the “black city” was indeed regulated by a sort of Thompsonian moral economy (Thompson 1971) that the masters did not dare ignore for fear of risking their own necks<sup>124</sup>, how then to explain the “quotidian” character attributed to such histories?

On the other hand, it is indeed coherent, for Chalhoub believes that in order to access the blacks’ feelings and thinking, one has to put aside momentarily the unease provoked by contemplating a society where the selling and buying of black people, as well as other kind of

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<sup>124</sup> Discussing the question of bodily punishment, Chalhoub says: “Não encontrei sequer vestígio de negros que colocassem em questão o castigo físico enquanto tal. Parecia ponto pacífico que o chicote e a palmatória eram instrumentos legítimos para a “correção” dos escravos recalcitrantes. Todas as lutas e contradições se davam em torno do motive e da intensidade da punição aplicada. Parafraseando um autor razoavelmente conhecido, havia uma espécie de ‘economia moral’ da escravaria que os senhores não ousavam ignorar sob penas de verem rolares as próprias tēmporas.” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 188)

violence against them, were a normal practice. Slaves, he argues, were permanently confronted with that. It was not a big deal. It was ordinary. Historians must try to see from this perspective too, if they really want to understand how slaves thought and acted (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 50).

From this vantage point Chalhoub then takes an instance that seems to be an anti-evolutionist critique of the idea of progress:

“A ideia de que ‘progredimos’ de cem anos pra cá é, no mínimo, angelical e sádica: ela supõe ingenuidade e cegueira diante de tanta injustiça social, e parte também da estranha crença de que sofrimentos humanos intensos podem ser de alguma forma pesados ou medidos.” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 48)

Still, Chalhoub’s words can well be regarded as promoting a compelling argument in favour of the banalization of contemporary “social barbarisms”. If atrocities of past times may be regarded as “pífias” when seen from the perspective of that time, on what grounds should one rebuke the present-time for insisting on its right to practise its own iniquities without great preoccupation?

As soon as this question arises, one realizes that Chalhoub’s critique is a way of driving out the menace of having his vantage point turned into a potential *ad hoc* legitimization of whatever happened in any given time (the present one included!) To be sure, he does not at all criticize the idea of progress, he just dislocates it to the future. In this sense, his critique rather amounts to a sort of accusation that some practices of the present truly belong to the past. Anyone willing to make the effort of seeing the past from his vantage point would be able to acknowledge it. The book he is then writing is supposed to enable one to perform this task. In addition to that, Chalhoub faces his critique with an atemporal moral dimension by emphasizing that intense human sufferings cannot be “measured” or “weighted”. However, the contradiction between this statement and the categorization of slave biographies—which he himself wrote—as “histórias pífias”, is blatant.

These biographies must be, on the contrary, thought of as rather “significant histories”, for if they are not, if they were conceived as just “pífias”, Chalhoub could hardly have used them to make his point. Should they even be designated as “especially significant histories”, why does Chalhoub nevertheless call them as he does? The way Chalhoub denominates those histories denotes his second stance on the idea of progress. A stance that brings his *Visões da Liberdade* dangerously near to Mattoso’s *Ser Escravo no Brasil*.

While in Mattoso's view there were slave movements that are "pre-political", in Chalhoub's there are moments and places where central questions related to the sustainment of slavery are supposed not to have been "political" ... yet. The Rio de Janeiro of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was undoubtedly "political". Was the Rio de Janeiro in periods prior to this, say, seventeenth-century Rio de Janeiro, "pre-political"? In this respect, what could be said about São Paulo, where slaves at that time<sup>125</sup> made up a minority of the population and which, consequently, is not liable to be demographically described as a "black city"? Shall one assume that there are times and places within Brazilian slavery where manumissions or murders of slaves by their masters—as well as the other way round—were just "routine"? In other words, yet preserving Chalhoub's vocabulary, would it be a coarse analytical error to consider such issues as equally "political issues", even in the absence of the urban dynamic characteristic of the so-called "black city"?

Chalhoub's *Visões da Liberdade* is an affirmative answer to all these questions. In his explanation the "black city" works at once as a condition of the possibility of the political *per se* as well as of the slave doubleness, which is the performed expression of their "double consciousness".

In this double movement, Chalhoub constructs the city as the moment of emergence of the political<sup>126</sup>, that is, as the moment in which the tireless exercise of quotidian small and big acts of violence, which the Brazilian slavery system reposed upon, ceased to be the mere and ordinary course of life and became extraordinary events potentially rich in political consequences. However, while doing that, he also discursively underplays the meaning of this very violence by qualifying those life-and-death struggles of masters and slaves as "pífios".<sup>127</sup> Once again, the effort to present slaves endowed with autonomous self-consciousness results in (or from?) a debasement of brutality within the Historical representation of slavery.

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<sup>125</sup> In 1872, for example, São Paulo had a population of about 31.385 habitants, of which just 3.828 were slaves (Wissenbach 1998: 33).

<sup>126</sup> Every similitude between this History of the "black city" of Rio de Janeiro and the master-narrative of the Greek polis as birth place of the political is not mere coincidence!

<sup>127</sup> Far from being named in this way, such events, by virtue of the legitimate and naturalized character that Chalhoub's adjective lends to them, should be regarded as truly "limit events". Dominick La Capra remarks that especially in the light of their relation to trauma, "limit events such as the Holocaust, other genocides, terrorism, slavery, aspects of colonialism, and so forth, one would think trauma and its aftermath would be of marked interest to Historians." Nevertheless, he argues further, with some exceptions (himself, for example), "the interest in trauma and, perhaps even more so, in dimensions of the posttraumatic has thus far not been pronounced in the work of Historians, and there has even been some suspicion of attempts to conceptualize trauma and its aftermath." (LaCapra 2004: 106–107)

In conclusion, it is known that along with the analysis of literary texts, a resource that Sydney Chalhoub recurrently resorts to, he has also been publicly acclaimed and awarded for his artful writing<sup>128</sup>. Perhaps by virtue of this distinguished skill, he allows himself some liberties of style - such as, it is worth repeating, to qualify murder cases involving slaves and masters as “histórias pífiás”. If it is so, such liberties, paraphrasing his own remark about the existence of a “moral economy of violence in the Brazilian slavery”, would call for an examination of the “moral economy of discursive violence within the Brazilian Historiography of Slavery.”

### *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas*

Is there a way out of this relationship of inverse proportionality between the construction of the slaves’ self-conscious agency and the underestimation of systemic violence, be it presented as an “empirical fact”, as in Mattoso’s case, or be it effected on the level of the discursive construction of meaning, as Chalhoub does it?

An alternative view can be found in *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas* by Maria Cristina C. Wissenbach. The author is also concerned with a possible slaves’ point of view. She is also clearly influenced by Katia Mattoso’s work.<sup>129</sup> But instead of daring to present herself as seeing from the slaves’ perspective, she chooses a more careful approach. She defines her work as an attempt to Historically rescue some aspects of the slave’s life, a task whose aim is to lift them from the Historical anonymity they have been relegated to by a historiography that, excessively concerned with slavery as a political and economic system, had considered the human in terms external to that which socially defined the slave (Wissenbach 1998: 68).

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<sup>128</sup> For his *Cidade febril – Cortiços e epidemias na Corte Imperial* (1997), Sidney Chalhoub was awarded the “Prêmio Jabuti”, the most important Brazilian literary prize. Interestingly, he won it not in the category “Social Sciences”, but in the category “Essay”. (Soihet 1999: 183–187)

<sup>129</sup> Wissenbach explores largely the notion of “aprendizado social adquirido” (Wissenbach 1998: 149; 162; 188). Kátia Mattoso had treated the question as follows: “[É] simples o dilema do homem preto, escravo vindo da África: ou bem não se consegue adaptar, não passa de refugio, e só lhe resta a luta sem quartel, o suicídio, a fuga, a revolta; ou então, consegue integrar-se mais ou menos bem, mais ou menos rapidamente nesta sociedade que o acolhe, e vai encontrar nova identidade, resultado de dupla adaptação: ajustamento tático ao modelo branco e ao que seus senhores exigem dele em obediência, fidelidade e adaptação sincera aos modos de vida e pensamento criados por um grupo escravo heterogêneo, numa dupla tensão que busca, ao mesmo tempo, imitar o branco e manter a tradição africana. Na verdade, a maioria dos escravos terminam por aprender a rezar, a obedecer, a trabalhar, para serem aceitos por seus senhores. Enquanto isso, conseguem a delicada adaptação à nova cultura criado pelo grupo dos antigos e dos crioulos. *Esse duplo aprendizado é condição indispensável de sobrevivência e a chave de sua identidade nova.*” (Mattoso [1982] 2003: 107 - emphasis added)

Tracing back to that which “socially defined” the slave, Wissenbach cannot help becoming entangled in the problematic of “doubleness” in direct connection both to self-conscious action and direct exercise of physical violence.

She observes that the slaves, guided by a “distorted logic” (*lógica enviesada*), premeditatedly committed homicides with the deliberate purpose of being delivered to the impersonal power of justice. In this way, they escaped the narrow limits imposed by the master’s sovereignty and, submitted now to the codes of the wider community, transforming themselves, enthrallingly, into *citizens!* (Wissenbach 1998: 128)

Still, among the murderers the slaves were the only ones who were liable to be sentenced either to death or to the “galés perpétuas” (lifelong imprisonment with forced labour in public works), the latter penalty being much more frequently imposed than the former.

Thus, even if one takes into account that for several reasons slaves might have committed crimes with the deliberate purpose of being delivered to the justice system, it is difficult to understand how, in doing so, they enabled themselves to usufruct any benefit of whatever may be conceived as being “citizenship” back then. When slaves pushed themselves into the sphere of the public administration of law, in no way did they cease being treated as slaves who would then be punished in accord with this status.

However, if, just momentarily and for the sake of argument, one makes the effort of following Wissenbach’s thinking, one would see those “slave citizens” performing their “double role” *either* as those who, kept in chains and indefinitely deprived from the very possibility of becoming legally free, work on the construction of roads, bridges and railways, *or* as dead citizens.

This latter one was indeed the “citizenship status” conceded to the slave Joaquim, executed in São Paulo in 1866 for the murder of his mistress. According to his testimony, the mistress was to blame for the fact of having had his three children sold, as well as for the excess of work to which he had been submitted (Wissenbach 1998: 249–250).

Differently from Chalhoub, Wissenbach neither characterizes such a History as “pífia”, nor forgets to reiterate that the use of physical violence directly against the masters (or their surrogates) was intrinsic to the very slave condition, being an extreme measure they might take in order to fight slavery. Intelligently, she further remarks that the small number of police and judicial processes involving violence of masters against slaves shall be taken as telling

negative evidence both of the legitimate character of this type of violence and of the probable frequency of its occurrence.

Actually, regardless of the subject Wissenbach deals with, she is steadily attentive to the immanent violence, which takes variegated forms, present in many dimensions of the slaves' life. For instance, writing about female slaves, Wissenbach does not overlook that they are subjected to a double (political/economical and gendered) regime of oppression. In the same direction, she does not fail to see that, if freedwomen happened to be a permanent target of physical aggression by their partners, this was due to the fact that they had managed to free themselves (at least officially) from only one of those types of domination (Wissenbach 1998: 145–147).

Maria Cristina Wissenbach does not convey the impression of having made a herculean effort when she, not only without underplaying the role played by different types of violence, but even carefully underscoring this aspect, presents the slaves as subjects guided by an autonomous self-consciousness. Her historiographical writing is characterized by a sensitive political correctness combined with sociological accuracy. Joined, these two characteristics make of *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas* a book that describes Brazilian slavery (in São Paulo) as irremediably and extremely violent, and, at the same time, shows how, by virtue of this very feature, slaves were forced to counteract this violence by developing ways of life that opened spaces of negotiation which, following the exigencies of the system, were not expected even to exist, let alone to play any decisive role. It is in this sense that Wissenbach's slaves did not exactly live through slavery but survived it.

Nonetheless, it shall be pointed out that her attempt to “rescue” the viewpoint of those “survivors” is jeopardized by this very redemptive rhetoric, by the whole conceptual apparatus she must use in order to carry out this task as well as by the political-institutional sphere of legitimation of the work she wrote. Not losing of sight of the articulation of these aspects, it is right to classify *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas* as a work that meets the formal and epistemological standards required by History's scholarship and, despite that, manages to display the sensitivity and moral responsibility that the issue of colonial slavery demands<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Alternatively, one might say that Maria Cristina C. Wissenbach was capable of putting into practice what Dominick LaCapra termed “empathic unsettlement”. Under this concept he understands an empathic response that “requires the recognition of others as other rather than mere objects of research unable to question one or place one in question. And it does not substitute for, but on the contrary must be articulated with, normative judgement and socio-political response.” (LaCapra 2004: 135)

### **The burden of modernity**

These three books carry out a re-examination of the simplifying equation that presents the relation of violence to self-consciousness as always inversely proportional: the more intense the violence exercised upon a subject, the less room available for the subject's self-consciousness. The clear purpose of the historiographical operation of focusing on the slaves' self-consciousness is making them self-conscious subjects of their own history rather than passive victims. An extreme case of the effect of this operation on the way of conceiving power asymmetries is inescapable and sufficiently clear if one considers Mattoso's thesis on the "happy adaptation" of the enslaved Africans to slavery.

The constitution of the slave's self-consciousness is a process of developing a double consciousness repeatedly expressed in statements about a "double life", "double role", "double learning". This results from the historiographical presentation of slaves' lives consumed in the pursuit of a type of social recognition different from the one supposedly deserved.

In the vocabulary used to mark this difference, the patent evolutionist character expressed by the prefix "pre" in the pair "pre-political → political" (Kátia Mattoso) tends to reproduce itself implicitly in "slave → worker" (Sydney Chalhoub), where the second term of the pair stands for the discipline, assiduity, punctuality and efficiency that guides the rationality of capitalism. The same happens again in regards to the pair "slave → citizen" (Maria C. Wissenbach), where "citizenship" means to enter into a broad community of persons freely subjected to the impersonal power of the state. This mode of explanation brings about a discursive context within which the slaves' identity ended up engendered in a History that is a corollary to a subliminal master-narrative of transition to capitalism and modernity.

"Double consciousness" emerges thus as an expedient sprung from dealing with the burden of having to become modern. A burden that black slaves and their descendants have carried ...but not alone.

## Blacks, those who do not (even) speak<sup>131</sup>

Ai ai ai ai  
São Bento me chama  
Capoeira song

Paul Gilroy sees *The Black Atlantic* “as complementing and extending the work of feminist philosophers who have opposed the figuration of woman as sign for the repressed or irrational other [...] of the system that reproduces the dominance of bonded whiteness, masculinity and rationality” (Gilroy 1993: 45–46).

Feminist thinkers engaged in this task do not fail to point out that the ensemble of philosophical assumptions that underlies the Eurocentrism of the dualistic system upon which the binaries of modernity are premised may be traced back, certainly not by accident, to the

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<sup>131</sup> “Socrates, he who does not write.” With this quote from Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, Derrida begins the first chapter of his *Of Grammatology* (Derrida [1967] 1997: 6). It is a gesture with which he indicates that the amplitude of what he calls the “problem of language” comes back to the traditional inaugural moment of Western philosophy as well as draws attention to three decisive moments in its development: Socrates, Nietzsche and, of course, himself.

According to Frank Ankersmit, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche deeply regretted that “rational reflection – that is, Socrates – destroyed the Greek’s previous susceptibility to the profound truths expresses by tragedy” (Ankersmit 2012: 171). Socrates had done that by insisting that life should be grounded in rational understanding and justified by “knowledge” (Cooper 2005: 980). Derrida subscribes to Nietzsche’s interpretation when he argues that “the system of “hearing (understanding)-oneself speaking through the phonic substance – which *presents itself* as the non-exterior, non-mundane, therefore, non-empirical or non-contingent signifier – has dominated the history of the world during an entire epoch, and has even produced the idea of the world, the idea of world-origin, that arises from the difference between the wordly, the outside and the inside, ideality and non-ideality, universal and non-universal, transcendental and empirical, etc.” The Socratic non-written moment of philosophical discourse is also at the bottom of the antinomies of the Western philosophical tradition, which Derrida, in turn, wants to deconstruct.

Frank Ankersmit also remarks that *The Birth of Tragedy* undoubtedly is “the *locus classicus* of the notion of representation.” (Ankersmit 2012: 165) In fact, Derrida comes back to Socrates through Nietzsche in order to point to a movement that, in his own words, “would apparently have tended, as towards its *telos*, to confine writing to a secondary and instrumental function: translator of full speech that was fully *present* (present to itself, to its signified, to the other, the very condition of the theme of presence in general), technics in the service of language, *spokesman*, interpreter of an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation.” (Derrida [1967] 1997:8) Nietzsche’s work, he emphasized, has contributed a great deal to the liberation of writing from its dependence or derivation from the logos and the related concept of truth or primary signified in whatever sense that is understood. Playing on words, Derrida then pontifically writes: “Nietzsche has written what he has written.” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 19) In this manner, and relating himself to Socrates through Nietzsche, Derrida stages a development of Western philosophy as a “metaphysics or presence” that, so to speak, comprises a lineage that comes from the full presence of the Socratic phonic substance to the full presence of his own writing.

In evoking Spivak in order to relate itself to Socrates through Derrida’s quotation from Nietzsche, the title of this section enacts the mediations and difficulties of writing about the issue of black peoples’ presence and representation in a way appropriated to the epistemological and institutional exigencies guided by the assumptions premised upon the Western philosophical discourse. This very title shall help one to understand why, as will be shown in the next pages, the concept which plays a central role in the construction of Paul Gilroy’s Black Atlantic is—not quite surprisingly—that of “structure of feelings”.

founding “fathers” of antique Greece. In the work of these theoreticians one finds references to “Aristotle’s theory of generation, in which the biological conception of a female sexed being becomes an accident of nature (since the only ‘natural’ form of human life is the male)” (Braidotti 1991: 253), or to the fact that already in Plato women has been seen as “the dionysian force outside or beyond time”, as “the Real, the disorder men have sought to both to subdue and possess in the course of constructing rationality, truth and culture.” (Flax 1990: 215).

Interestingly, a common trait shared by feminist theories concerned with the foundation of “standpoint epistemologies” has been a tenacious return to Hegel’s work, especially to the passage about the master and the slave (Harding 1987: 158). Here, hand in hand with feminist philosophical endeavours to think in term of unity—unity of hand, brain and heart in Hilary Rose’s work, and of the sensuous, the concrete and the relational in Nancy Hartsock’s writing (Harding 1987: 141–151)—a rhetoric of “doubleness” also crops up expressed in terms such as “bifurcated consciousness” or in the question about whether the feminine may be seen as a very “double” of the philosophical (Braidotti 1991: 45).

In a spatialized guise the same argument takes the form of the in-betweenness of the relation inside/outside. So De Lauretis argues that women “cannot resolve or dispel the uncomfortable condition of being at once inside and outside gender” (Braidotti 1991: 272), and, from the front of the American black feminism, Patricia Hill Collins speaks about the black women’s “outsider within status” (Collins 1986).

Feminist theoreticians are not the only ones who have been working up conceptual frameworks within which the amalgam of whiteness, masculinity and rationality become stripped of their dominant role. In *Feeling Backward – Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Heather Love stresses that

“the idea of modernity—with its suggestions of progress, rationality and technological advance—is intimately bound up with backwardness. The association of progress and regress is a function not only of the failure of so many modernity’s key projects but also of the reliance of the concept of modernity on excluded, denigrated, or superseded others. If modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century aimed at to move humanity forward, it did so in part by perfecting techniques for mapping and disciplining subjects considered to be lagging behind—and so seriously compromised the ability of these others ever to catch up. [...] Whether understood as throwbacks to an earlier stage of human development or as children who refuse to grow up, queers have been seen across the twentieth century as a backward race. Perverse, immature, sterile, and melancholic: even when they provoke fears about the future, they somehow also recall the past. [...] Narratives of gay and lesbian progress inevitably

recall the painful history of homosexual's birth as one of modernity's backward children." (Love 2009: 5–7)

Temporalisation, or rather, a temporal splitting is here the form that provides the double character of sexual and gender deviants' self-consciousness.

At this point, Love's analysis was chosen less due to the discussion about this *temporalized* mode of creating "doubles", an issue that has been extensively explored by postcolonial critiques of History<sup>132</sup>. Rather, it was chosen due to the fact that the discussion draws explicit attention to a notion that has been a recurrent theoretical point of junction in the discussion on the problem of self-consciousness with that one of long-term History: the notion of feeling. Love states that she, as many other recent critics, is deeply influenced by Raymond Williams' concept of "structure of feelings". Williams uses this concept as a way of refining what he calls "epochal analysis" of the interrelations of cultural processes, which, according to his terminology, may be designated "dominant", "residual" or "emergent". These three forms are yet more or less evident forms of cultural processes. There is yet a state of pre-emergence, when they are "active and pressing but not yet fully articulated", and the changes that take place in this moment are those that he defines as changes in the "structure of feeling": "We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: *practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity.*" (Williams [1977] 2009: 133 - emphasis added)

William's concept is a sort of conceptual tool designed to grasp culture's historical movement in the moment in which its dislocation is not a matter of consolidated and immediate practice yet, but already a matter of practiced consciousness. Thus, he points out that "structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations, which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available." Yet this specific solution, he warns, "is never mere flux", but a "structured formation, which, because it is at the very edge of semantic availability, has many of the

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<sup>132</sup> Shalini Randeria's programmatic text "Geteilte Geschichte und verworbene Moderne" offers an as clear and eloquent as biting synthesis of this problematic: "Visionen einer gemeinsamen Zukunft müssen von der Erkenntnis ausgehen, dass alle heutigen Gesellschaften und Kulturen eine gemeinsame Gegenwart miteinander teilen. Weder lässt sich die Gegenwart nichtwestlicher Gesellschaften als Vergangenheit westlicher Gesellschaften, noch die Gegenwart des Westens als Zukunft aller anderen verstehen [...]" (Randeria 1999: 87).

characteristics of a pre-formation, until specific articulations—new semantic figures—are discovered in material practice.” (Williams [1977] 2009: 134)

Methodologically, “a ‘structure of feeling’ is a cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand elements in their connection in a generation or period, and needing always to be returned, interactively, to such evidence.” (Williams [1977] 2009: 132)

William’s words speak for themselves in what concerns their appropriateness for the purpose of establishing Historical linkages. The feature within his “structure of feeling” that makes it especially suitable for the purpose of underpinning long-term Histories thought to undermine hegemonic conception of Modernity lies, on the one hand, in the suggestive empiricism one may glimpse in this remark on methodology, and on the other, in the fact that it allows for a theoretical disclosing of a specific mode of social formation that “is distinguishable from other social and semantic formations by its articulation of presence. (Williams [1977] 2009: 135)<sup>133</sup>

In fact, it is with William’s “articulation of presence” that Paul Gilroy counteracts the post-structuralist critique of the “metaphysics of presence”, which, in his view, had evacuated the problem of human agency by moving “beyond citing language as the fundamental analogy for comprehending all signifying practices to a position where textuality (especially when wrenched open through the concept of difference) expands and merges with totality” (Gilroy 1993: 77)<sup>134</sup>.

The idea of “practical consciousness” comprised in William’s concept of “structure of feeling” with its consequent emphasis on human agency functions as a way of “resuscitating the subject” assassinated by the post-structuralist critique. So, it is by “paying careful attention to the structures of feeling which underpin black expressive cultures” (Gilroy 1993: 77) that Paul Gilroy suggests the construction of a long-term Black Atlantic History as counterculture of that modernity conceived as exclusive heritage of the Enlightenment.

Ella Shohat, who is also deeply concerned with the long-term character of what she calls contemporary “culture wars”, amplifies William’s concept by talking about an “analogical

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<sup>133</sup> To articulate the presence of something is not the same as to represent something the existence of which is supposed be empirically demonstrated. Put in other words, that which becomes present by means of an articulation based empirical clues does not aim at corresponding to anything that had existed in the represented form. In this sense, William seems to have opened an analytical avenue that would allow Historians to remain “naïve realists” (see Chapter 1) who are yet deeply mistrustful of empiricism.

<sup>134</sup> Stuart Hall makes quite the same point in his assessment of the theoretical legacies of Cultural Studies. He says: “I’m trying to return the project of cultural studies from the clean air of meaning and textuality and theory to the something nasty down below. This involves the difficult exercise of examining some of the key theoretical turns or moments in cultural studies.” (Hall 1996a: 263)

structure of feelings” as a “product of the intersubjective flow of affect among the marginalized” (Shohat/Stam 1994: 351; Stam/Shohat 2012: 17).

It seems it would not be conceptual imprudence to argue that the notion of “structure of feelings” provides a fundamental theoretical bedrock upon which a subaltern consciousness has been diachronically unfolded in long-term Histories shaped by an array of different modalities of double consciousness.

In this sense, the opening sentence in Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* “Striving to be both European and black requires some *specific forms* of double consciousness” (Gilroy 1993: 1), may be seen not only as a direct tribute to W.E.B. Du Bois<sup>135</sup>, but also as a key that allows for the envisioning of other constellations of double conscious subjects: “Striving to be both feminine and philosophical requires some specific forms of double consciousness”. “Striving to be both homosexual and modern requires some specific forms of double consciousness”.

Gilroy does not ignore that in theorizing black identity in the way he does in *The Black Atlantic*, that is, by pursuing a sort of unifying dynamics that may assemble contemporary black cultures dispersed around the world, he runs the risk of having his work dismissed as another variant of essentialism or idealism or both (Gilroy 1993: 80). He explains therefore that his “unstable standpoint is to be understood in a different way from the clarion calls for epistemological narcissism and the absolute sovereignty of unmediated experience.” (Gilroy 1993: 80)

In order to clarify what he means by this statement, Gilroy added a bibliographical reference to Joan W. Scott’s famous essay “The Evidence of Experience”. In this text, Scott argues that in taking as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being historiographically documented, “the evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world” (Scott 2005: 202). According to Scott’s view, the task of History, if it really wants to overcome its usual foundationalist character, is to eschew the foundational authority of experience and, by avoiding the attribution of indisputable authenticity to any subject, put effectively into practice a way of

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<sup>135</sup> Du Bois’ *The Souls of the Black Folk* begins with a chapter called “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”. This strife, which is the history of the American Negro, is the strife “to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American [...]” This strife is also “the longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.” (Du Bois [1903] 1994: 2-3)

historicizing within which individuals become not those “who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience” (Scott 2005: 203). This anti-essentialist position defended by Scott takes in Gilroy’s hands the form of the creative exploration of the homonym “roots/routes”.<sup>136</sup>

Even though the Foucaudian category of discourse stands in the centre of Scott’s analysis, she highlights that the fact of regarding the emergence of a new identity as a discursive event does not amount to introducing a sort of linguistic determinism that would deprive subjects of agency. Rather, “it is to refuse a separation between “experience” and language<sup>137</sup> and to insist instead on the productive quality of discourse.” The modality of History that would result from following these theoretical precepts, she concludes, is what Foucault meant by genealogy. (Scott 2005: 212–213)

“One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.” (Foucault 1980: 117)

Foucault’s genealogy is taken here as a possible answer to the question that, in a broader sense, Jane Flax formulates as follows: “How to understand and constitute self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and cultural change without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being?” (Flax 1990: 15).

The difficulty with Foucault’s genealogy is that it emphatically dismisses the notion of ideology.<sup>138</sup> In doing so, it reproduces that slip that Spivak criticizes in “Can the Subaltern Speak”, i.e., it leads to an overlooking of the distinction between two senses of the term representation: representation as “re-presentation” or “presenting again” and representation

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<sup>136</sup> “Marked by its European origins, modern black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to root and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes.” (Gilroy 1993: 19)

<sup>137</sup> The same separation is avoided in Raymond Williams “structure of feelings” by conceiving language as “practical consciousness”.

<sup>138</sup> Foucault explains his reluctance towards the concept of ideology as follows: “The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make for three reasons. The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which are neither true nor false. The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers, I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic, determinant, etc. For these three reasons, I think that this is a notion that cannot be used without circumspection.” (Foucault 1980: 118)

as “speaking for” (Spivak 1988: 275–277). Concerning History, this means: 1) Historical representation in the sense related to the historiographical “re-presentation” of what shall be thought of as once having been “full presence”; 2) Historical representation in the sense of “who is ‘speaking for’ whom” or, in exactly the same manner: who is going to construct the historical self-consciousness—or double consciousness—of whom?

The act of deliberately conflating these related but irreducibly discontinuous senses of historical representation entails the danger of facilitating the production of transparent Histories, that is, Histories in which the partly opaque relationship called “difference” can hardly be mobilized (Chakrabarty 2000: 17–18). In History, in fact, each time that one thought to be transparent by refusing to consider ideology as an ineluctable problem, borrowing here a metaphor by Spivak, one is at risk of setting in motion a heliocentric discourse that fills the place of the agent with a historical sun whose rays irradiate either that dominance of bonded whiteness, masculinity and rationality or another of the kindred combinations that nourishes Eurocentrism. (Spivak 1988: 274)

This might well be the reason why Gilroy, even if drawing heavily on Foucault’s thinking<sup>139</sup>, does not commit himself to the Foucauldian genealogy. If *The Black Atlantic* is indeed an attempt of bringing about a “critical ontology” [of the black people], it is one that, in what concerns History, is much more oriented towards an understanding inspired by Walter Benjamin’s thoughts.<sup>140</sup> In this understanding of History, instead of running the risk of becoming transparent by avoiding the notion of ideology, one seeks “to appropriate the distorted and distorting power of ideological transposition to ideologically disruptive ends” (Cohen 1989: 103). And the source of *The Black Atlantic’s* disruptiveness must be what Gilroy

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<sup>139</sup> Gilroy says that his own standpoint “can be summed up in Foucault’s tentative extension of the idea of critical self-inventory into the political field. This is made significantly in a commentary upon the Enlightenment.” Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* is indeed, in many senses, a commentary upon the Enlightenment.

<sup>140</sup> In “Not a Story to Pass On – Living Memory and the Slave Sublime” (the last chapter of *The Black Atlantic*), Paul Gilroy tackles the problem of how to deal with the fact of having to pass on the experience of slavery and its aftermath, or, in Gilroy word’s, the “necessity of socialised historical memory, and with the desire to forget the terrors of slavery and the simultaneous impossibility of forgetting.” (Gilroy 1993: 222) Gilroy puts as epigraph of this chapter Benjamin’s famous sixth thesis on the Philosophy of History, namely, the thesis that begins by reproaching Ranke’s view on History and ends by warning that “*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins.” (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 255) In addition, he explains that he wants “to proceed by asking the tradition of black expressive culture a series of questions derived from the standpoint Benjamin occupied when he argued that social memory creates the chain of “ethnic” tradition.” (Gilroy 1993: 212)

calls the “slave’s standpoint—forever dissociated from the psychological and epistemic correlates of racial subordination.” (Gilroy 1993: 56)

The analysis carried out above, focused on well-known works of the Brazilian historiography of slavery, may have although evinced that the mere act of speaking from the slave’s standpoint is no guarantee that such a disruptiveness would occupy the foreground so as to provide shelter from the Eurocentric ideal of modernity by serving as the battering ram of those who do not want to enter the enemy’s fortress, but to escape from it.

Consider, for instance, appearing towards the end of this section, this astonishing comment by Sydney Chalhoub in *Visões da Liberdade*

“O fundamental, de qualquer forma, é enfatizar que, *para os negros*, a liberdade significava, entre outras coisas, o fim de uma vida constantemente sujeita às vicissitudes das transações de compra e venda. *As feridas dos açoites provavelmente cicatrizavam com o tempo; as separações afetivas, ou a constante ameaça de separação, eram as chagas eternamente abertas no cativo.*” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 307 – emphasis added)

How should Chalhoub’s comment be understood? Let it be granted that he does indeed think that physical violence against slaves must be considered abhorrent. But not so much, since there were psychic martyrdoms that hurt even more. To make this distinction, he emphasizes, is *fundamental!* Why, actually? Is this not the same kind of surreptitious understatement of naked physical violence that underlies that worn lusotropicalist image of Brazilian slavery? Should this be the case, it is notwithstanding an (almost) minor problem when one takes into account that, according to Chalhoub, this is the “slave’s point of view”!

Obviously, the major problem is how to tell apart speaking from a slave’s standpoint from the claim that one is speaking from there. Or rather, and more precisely, how to legitimate the *claim* that one is writing *historiographically* from a slave’s standpoint? A little more History may help to delve deeper into this question.

The twelve-year old slave Catarina had said, according to the testimony she gave to the police authorities after having surrendered herself:

“Respondeu que a três dias mais ou menos estando em casa de sua senhora, tendo esta mandado aquecer o café para levar a seu marido, ao mesmo tempo mandou a respondente varrer a casa e como fervesse o café e derramasse deu a senhora com um ferro de fogão até deixa-la sem sentidos e depois despejou café fervente na cara, pescoço e palitos [...] fugiu com o intento de ir morrer no mato e livrar-se de sua senhora, mas apresentou-se à autoridade por que assim lhe ensinaram. (Wissenbach 1998: 57)

The slave Joaquim, arrested for having killed his mistress, stated in his questioning that:

“[M]atou por ter raiva dela [the mistress] pois veio a desmanchar a casa de seu senhor, isto é, de Manuel Rodrigues Jordão, vendendo três seus filhos e sobrecarregando ele de trabalho. [...] Então esta mulher sendo de gênio exaltado pôs a casa de seu senhor em desarmornia que fez com que seus filhos bem como outros seus parceiros fossem vendidos. (Wissenbach 1998: 250)

On what grounds can these Histories be compared? Which scholar compendium about History, or, for the matter, about Sociology or Anthropology or whatever, could help one decide whether the suffering experienced by Catarina is more (or less) intense or longer lasting than the one experienced by Joaquim?

A pertinent, and perhaps even urgent approach to the issue of the slave’s point of view should begin by decidedly refusing to make such comparisons between corporal and psychic violence the *fundamental point of emphasis* in what concerns the brutality of colonial slavery. The very establishment of such gradations of suffering entails a perfidious degree of condescension.

If one wants to stick to the metaphor of a scar, a good alternative would consist of trying to explore its metaphorical-narrative potentialities. Scar involves a logical reference to earlier events which stand, respecting the subject described as scarred, in some obvious causal relation associated with being injured, wounded, marked, dissected. Scars<sup>141</sup> are, in fact, signs that evoke stories of being injured, wounded, marked, dissected. But, of course, they do not tell any story for themselves and therefore cannot be used to fix any meaning. What scars patently do is function as a telling trigger of different types of reference to past events, in respect of which the scars are the empirical signs of presence. Whatever may have happened, these scarred beings were a part of it and had inflicted upon their bodies a sign of this experience, now to be worn as an inseparable part of themselves.

Unfolded in this direction, the metaphor of the scar seems to be a powerful one for speaking from the slaves’ point of view. It opens indeed a field of signifiers that may bring about what Paul Gilroy calls the “unhappy consciousness”<sup>142</sup>, that is, the state of mind which demands a

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<sup>141</sup> Arthur Danto defines the predicates “is a scar” as temporally unambiguous, that is, it makes an *obvious* reference to a past event, and had there been no such past event, the description itself would be false [...].”(Danto [1965] 2007: 72–73)

<sup>142</sup> In strict Hegelian sense, the “unhappy consciousness” is the stage in which the consciousness, moving through Stoicism and Scepticism, reaches the unification of that which was previously divided between the lord and the slave. Albeit “unified”, this consciousness is not a “unity” of both yet: “Hierdurch [through the experience of Stoicism and Scepticism] ist die Verdoppelung, welche früher an zwei Einzelne, an den Herrn und den Knecht, sich verteilte, ins Eines eingekehrt; die Verdoppelung des Selbstbewusstseins in sich selbst, welche im Begriffe des Geistes wesentlich ist, ist hiermit vorhanden, aber noch nicht ihrer Einheit und das *unglückliche Bewusstsein* ist das Bewusstsein seiner als des gedoppelten nur widersprechenden Wesen.“ (Hegel [1807] 2010: 160–161).

rethinking of the “meanings of rationality, autonomy, reflection, subjectivity, and power in the light of an extended meditation both on the condition of the slaves and on the suggestion that the racial terror is not merely compatible with occidental rationality but cheerfully complicit with it” (Gilroy 1993: 56). Performing this task may help to fix some of modernity’s fixations, for example, the fixing of being black.<sup>143</sup>

It is in this sense that Chalhoub’s passage brings to mind Chinua Achebe’s analysis of Joseph Conrad’s classic book *The Heart of Darkness*. The point Achebe wants to make is that Conrad’s work “projects the image of Africa as ‘the other world’, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality” (Achebe 1988: 2). One of the main means Conrad uses to construct this image is by withholding language from the “rudimentary souls” of Africa. In place of speech they made “a violent babble of uncouth sounds. They ‘exchanged short grunting phrases’ even among themselves.” (Achebe 1988: 6)

In only two occasions Conrad confers speech, “even English speech, on the savages”. The first occurs when cannibalism gets the better of them, providing irresistible consistency to the portrayal of those who are presented as dumb brutes. The second occasion is the famous announcement: “Mistah Kurtz—he dead.” On this sentence, Achebe writes:

“What better or more appropriate *finis* could be written to the horror story of that wayward child of civilization who wilfully had given his soul to the powers of darkness and ‘taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land’ than the proclamation of his physical death by the forces he had joined?” (Achebe 1988: 6)

Obviously, Chalhoub shares neither the thoroughgoing racism nor the openly Eurocentric view that Achebe attributes to Joseph Conrad. What connects them is the way their works relate to something that may be thought as the “voice before the speech.”<sup>144</sup>

Derrida draws attention to the role of the voice in ontological arguments about the *logos* in Western philosophy. Logocentrism, he argues, “is also phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning” (Derrida [1967] 1997: 11–12). He remarks, for example, that in Hegel the sound of the voice

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<sup>143</sup> Mind Franz Fanon’s biting words: “I arrived slowly in the world; sudden emergence are no longer my habit. I crawl along. The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am *fixed*.” (Fanon [1952] 2008: 95)

<sup>144</sup> The whole argument that follows is a still raw formulation inspired by the idea of the “Writing before the Letter”, which is the first chapter of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. The two openings sections, namely, “Exergue” and “The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing”, are the point of departure of the reflections presented here.

is the way by which “the subject affects itself and is related to itself in the element of ideality”; in Heidegger the “logos of being” is “Thought obeying the Voice of Being”. But the voice, both in Hegel and in Heidegger, is taken as the *phonè*, that is, as the spoken word, which, being the producer of the first symbols, had a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind. Expressing immediately and naturally the feelings of the mind, the spoken word constituted a sort of stage of transparency, which brought about a moment of full presence. (Derrida [1967] 1997: 12; 20)

The exhalation of voice deprived of words, that is, “the voice before the speech”, as reaction to pain caused by being injured, wounded, marked, dissected may also be interpreted as the “absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being”. It is the synchronic and vocalized answer to (or the sound track of) that which will become a scar. But it also sounds like the sonorous expression of orgasmic pleasure and of the terror-struck state provoked by the danger of death. It is the way in which the instinctive as well as the intuitive makes itself humanely audible. It is, in short, the score of the counterpart of the Western *logos*.

Joseph Conrad’s Africans represent uniquely this counterpart. This is the reason why Mr. Kurz hears the black people “grunting” to each other in that *Heart of Darkness*, a place that had not yet been penetrated by the virile voice of the logocentric light. Now, one understands even better what Franz Fanon intends to point out when he speaks about the *Weltanschauung* that prohibits any ontological explanation of colonized people in general, and blacks in particular<sup>145</sup>.

Still, the articulation of the voice deprived of words may also be music. The expressive cultures of the Black Atlantic have been able to speak through the doubleness of this “voice before the speech” in order to tell their stories, especially the one of colonial black slavery. Appreciators of soul music or capoeira songs may immediately grasp what the talk is here. The cries and groans that the protagonist of James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of An Ex-Coloured Man*<sup>146</sup> (1912) shall always hear, have the same nature.

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<sup>145</sup> “Ontology does not allow us to understand the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some people would argue that this situation has a double meaning. Not at all. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. (Fanon [1952] 2008: 90)

<sup>146</sup> This is the episode in which Johnson’s white-looking black protagonist witnesses the lynching of an unknown black man somewhere in the Deep South of the United States. Burned alive, the man “squirmed, he writhed, strained at his chains, then gave out cries and groans that I shall always hear.” It is after this

Paul Gilroy argues that these expressive cultures “provocatively suggest [...] that the critique of modernity cannot be satisfactorily completed from within its own philosophical and political norms, that is, immanently.” (Gilroy 1993: 56)

Sydney Chalhoub’s *Visões da Liberdade* is an exemplary instance of such an immanent critical attitude.<sup>147</sup> The way he deals with slavery in this work—most of all when he speaks directly for the slaves, as in the latest passage quoted above—indulges in a complacent rationalism tempered with a self-conscious humanism that trivializes the potency of the negative (Gilroy 1993: 55). He can do anything with the [negativeness of the] “voice before the speech” [materialized metaphorically in the idea of the slaves’ scars] with the exception of making it speak the words of the master.

The construction of a non-immanent critical position, which would possibly represent that “slave’s standpoint—forever dissociated from the psychological and epistemic correlates of racial subordination” (Gilroy 1993: 56), begins by recognizing its both ontological and unavoidably aporetic character. In fact, the act of presenting oneself as forever dissociated from whatever may have been the conditions of one’s own existence as such presupposes the very dissociation of one’s self.

A writing of History which accomplishes itself by hearing, or rather, by articulating the presence of that “voice before the speech”, is an ontological enterprise which is fastened to the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy to the extent that this “voice before the speech” is conceived as an “absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being”. And it is critical<sup>148</sup> thereof inasmuch as this voice is no longer possessed neither by

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event that he makes up his mind and decides to become an ex-colored man (Johnson [1912] 1970: 187–188).

Paul Gilroy explores Johnson’s debts to Du Bois’ thinking in order to elaborate what he denominates “Politics of (Dis)placement” (Gilroy 1993: 130–133).

<sup>147</sup> To different degrees, the same is valid in the two other works analysed in this section, namely, Kátia Mattoso’s *Ser Escravo no Brasil* and Maria C. Wissenbach’s *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas*. The former is more complacent and less self-conscious than Sydney Chalhoub’s *Visões da Liberdade*; the latter the other way round.

<sup>148</sup> Departing from Kant’s thinking, Foucault defines the relationship between Enlightenment and critical attitude as follows: “Was Kant als Aufklärung beschrieben hat, ist eben das, was ich als Kritik charakterisiere: als die kritische Haltung, die man im Abendland als besondere Haltung neben dem historischen Prozess der Regierbarmachung der Gesellschaft auftaucht sieht. [...] Im Verhältnis zur Aufklärung ist die Kritik für Kant das, was er zum Wissen sagt: Weißt du auch, wie weit du wissen kannst? Räsioniere so viel du willst – aber weißt du denn, bis wohin du ohne Gefahr räsionieren kannst? [...] [Es] bleibt war, dass Kant dem kritischem Unternehmen der Entunterwerfung gegenüber dem Spiel der Macht und der Wahrheit als vorgängige Aufgabe – als Prolegomenon zur jeden gegenwärtigen und künftigen Aufklärung – die Erkenntnis der Erkenntnis aufbürdet“ (Foucault 1992: 17–18). In line with this view, the

the naturalness nor by the instinctiveness that it enjoys within the Western *logos*. Naturalness and instinctiveness must still be there as important issues, but *not* to have the black people “rehabilitated, ‘standing before the bar’, ruling the world with his intuition”, *not* to hold them serving as “insurance policy on humanness”, but as aspect of a “double consciousness” struggling for “ontological resistance” (Fanon [1952] 2008: 127–129).

A historiographical writing conducted in this way asserts itself precisely because its attachment to the aftermath of colonial slavery is what brings about a slave’s point of view willing to put at stake its own condition of possibility<sup>149</sup> [of articulating spoken speech], that is, the philosophically grounded phono-logocentric ideal of modernity.

Within the disciplinary boundaries of History, a social science which is a “child of the modern times” that also gave birth to colonial slavery, to deploy the articulateness of the slaves’ “voice before the speech” amounts to enact the “double consciousness” that goes through the heart of blackness.<sup>150</sup>

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articulation of the “voice before the speech” is another commentary on the Enlightenment in the sense pointed out by Gilroy (see footnote 139).

<sup>149</sup> By doing so, it makes clear as daylight the mendacious character of the Hegelian master’s speech that declares slaves all those who are incapable of putting their lives at stake: slaves never have to put at stake their lives, for they are necessarily at stake from the beginning.

<sup>150</sup> If you prefer a conceptual metaphor, instead of “the heart” please read “the structure of feelings”.

## PART TWO – HISTORICAL TIME AND FRACTAL SPATIALITY

### Chapter 1 - Ideology and Anachronism

No princípio era trevas  
Malcom foi Lampião  
Lâmpadas para os pés  
Negros do dois mil e dez  
Fãs de Mumia Abu-Jamal  
Osama, Sadam  
Iraque, Vietnam  
Contra os boy, contra o GOE  
Contra a Ku Klux Klan  
(Brown 2011)<sup>151</sup>

In the first chapter, the issues of ideology and anachronism were addressed separately. Departing from Spivak's assessment of the question discussed in "Can the Subaltern Speak?", ideology was considered as that which a work *cannot* say, as a "sort of journey to silence" (Spivak 1988: 286). Anachronism, in turn, was differentiated into three different types<sup>152</sup> ranked according to the degree of its epistemological consequences when regarded with respect to History. Then, the argument was advanced that the writing of historiographical accounts is the true practice of a specific mode of "controlled anachronism". In the following section, taking these preliminary reflections into account, ideology and anachronism will be analyzed together.

Regardless of their current of thought, Historians generally agree that History springs from present concerns and that these concerns play a decisive role in shaping historiographical representations. In this sense, as in Croce's famous phrase, all History is contemporary history<sup>153</sup>.

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<sup>151</sup> Passage of Mano Brown's song *A Mente do Vilão*, which was released in 2011 in the album "Supernova Samba Funk" by Banda Black Rio.

<sup>152</sup> The *first* and least troublesome type referred to the error or inaccuracy in determining the chronological position of events susceptible of being empirically verified. The *second* type, which already raises problems of greater complexity, consisted of the consciously anachronistic naming used with the purpose of fixing rhetorically the identity of whatever may be thought as the entity subjected to Historical transfiguration. The *third* and epistemologically most intricate type of anachronism was characterized as that one which hypostasizes Historical events by endowing them with the ontological unity and continuity proper of things whose form of existence is not necessarily related to its historiographical representation.

<sup>153</sup> "The practical requirements which underlie every historical judgement give to all history the character of 'contemporary history' because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein those events vibrate. (Croce [1938] 2000: 8).

If it were possible to free this question from its thick overlay of scholarly bibliography so that one could approach it in a prosaic manner, one would nevertheless see that the whole concern with this matter is neither odd nor disproportionate, for it is indeed extremely difficult to answer why the act of springing from the present should be especially distinctive of History. Is it not that absolutely everything is (in) the present? Does the present not exercise this power over all other human sciences as well?

The problem of the 'present' in History consists of the comprehensible uneasiness provoked by the suspicion that everywhere where the contemporary shines through the historiographical account, it ends up contributing to an obliteration of what should be made visible. On the other hand, disregarding what Historians may explicitly or implicitly assume concerning the role of the present in their work, History seems to be an essentially situated knowledge whose partiality that would here matter, i.e., the partiality that had been instilled into it by the very act of constituting itself in the present, can never be demonstrated by the Historians themselves. It is always something that will happen *a posteriori*.

Therefore, nowhere more than in the academic landscape of History the trivial compliment "This work remains actual!" is so appreciated. The older the praised work the greater the wonder of its actuality.

At the opposing extreme of the Histories that remain "actual", thus continuing to remain Histories of whatever they were supposed to be about, are posited the Histories which begin to increasingly cast more light on themselves rather than on their subjects, as though they had completely lost the capacity of representing that which they aimed to be about. When this happens, such Histories are relieved of the post "History" and are downgraded to that of "Historical source".

And so one sees clearly the point of juncture where the issue of anachronism meets the issue of ideology: when the present becomes, so to speak, too present, History runs the risk of ceasing to be taken seriously as such, of losing its legitimacy ... and is deported to the realm of ideology.

Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões* (1902) is a *perfect* example of such a process. For a long time *Os Sertões* enjoyed the status of a History of the Canudos War. Nowadays, since no Historian can afford to overlook the essential role played in it by nineteenth-century scientific racism, this work is now regarded as irremediably ideological and has hence become a source for historiographical research on Canudos instead.

The example of *Os Sertões* is *perfect* only because it is susceptible of being formulated in this overly unproblematic manner, which relieves the tension between social science and ideology, by giving the latter the form of a system of beliefs of a particular place and time that, incidentally, happens to be one in which the social sciences have not yet divorced themselves from ideology.

Things become knottier in the case of Hugh Trevor-Hoper's *The Rise of Christian Europe* (1965). In this book, the then Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford declared that Africa had no History, merely "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe" (Evans 2000: 178; Shohat/Stam 1994: 1). Still, Trevor-Hoper makes this statement a decade after Cheikh Anta Diop, his fellow Historian at the Sorbonne University, had published his influential work *Negro Nations and Cultures* (1955) and five years after the Cambridge University Press began to release the peer-reviewed academic journal *The Journal of African History* (Barbosa 2012: 8). To which extent should Trevor-Hoper's understanding of History expressed in his statement on Africa lead one to ask whether his historiographical writings on Europe should not be seen as ideological pieces of the same nature as *Os Sertões*?

In pondering this question one must first and foremost be on guard against the temptation of regarding Trevor-Hoper's view as ideological because it amounted to nothing less than a cynical commitment to the defense of the political interests of a particular group. That is, one should avoid thinking of ideology in terms of an opposition between a particularistic use of science, or even the production of a pseudo-science, as opposed to a fair and well-intentioned search for truth characteristic of a genuine scientific spirit. Trevor-Hoper's distinction between the place (Europe) where there has been History and the place (Africa) where there has been no History is faithfully made in the name of a well-established social science: History. One can barely help naming his Historical approach "scientific racism" as well.

## **The demands of our time – two approaches to History of slavery**

### **The research group "Escravidão e Mestiçagens"**

*Culturalizing colonial slavery: Eduardo França Paiva*

The ideological character of Trevor-Hoper's position can also, but of course not exclusively, be understood in terms of a too close relation to the moment of its emergence:

“Foi-se o tempo em que as histórias nacionais pautavam, necessariamente, o pensar e o fazer dos historiadores, e que os resultados daí surgidos deviam buscar estabelecer as peculiaridades, os ineditismos, as exclusividades de cada região, construindo identidades herméticas, singulares e, ao mesmo tempo, simplistas. Isso, que foi tão importante em época não muito distante, não o é mais no início do século XXI, ou, pelo menos, em nossa perspectiva, não o deveria ser.” (Paiva/Ivo 2008: 10)

When Historians say that, they are distancing themselves from a point of view of the type that entails the risk of ending up sustaining a position that, ultimately, would amount to the venomous essentialism of Trevor-Hoper.

These lines quoted above were written by Eduardo França Paiva and Isnara Ivo Pereira as a programmatic introduction of *Escavidão, mestiçagem e histórias comparadas* (2008), a collective volume edited by them. In “Histórias Comparadas, Histórias Conectadas: Escavidão e Mestiçagem no Mundo Ibérico”, the article of his own authorship published in the volume, França Paiva deepens the criticism outlined in the introduction by arguing that, even though the focus of his analysis is considerably wide ranging, as the title well indicates, he intends to conduct it:

“sem correr o risco de grandes generalizações e de invenção de contextos históricos inexistentes, práticas que uma antiga história comparativa acabou executando, instituindo-se, inclusive, como modelo científico absolutamente confiável. Nesse caso, e em última instância, uma linha evolutiva da História, lastreada em crenças civilizacionais e em rígidas hierarquias sociais e culturais, que estabelecia modelos históricos ideais a serem perseguidos pela humanidade, condicionava toda a trajetória histórica e, portanto, permitia as grandes comparações entre o que não era comparável, pelo menos não o era dessa forma.” (Paiva 2008: 13)

Coherently and correctly, he then remarks that this “old comparative History” were fraught with “armadilhas intelectuais, culturais e ideológicas que marcaram o pensamento historiográfico (e das ciências humanas, de um modo geral).” (Paiva 2008: 13) Not to be caught in such “traps”, he writes, depends very much on the method of research and on the key-concepts one chooses. To begin with, he stresses, the concept of culture:

“A começar, o próprio conceito e cultura aqui empregado, por mais difícil e arriscado que isso seja, [...] parte de um pressuposto histórico antropológico que relativiza as experiências históricas dos povos, comparando-as ou não, e que desacredita procedimentos que, de alguma forma, hierarquizam as práticas culturais de diferentes sociedades, partindo de modelos ideais.” (Paiva 2008: 14)

Two further key-concepts complete the backbone of Paiva’s theoretical apparatus: a “revised” concept of comparison and the concept of connection of contexts. This triad formed by culture, comparison and connection are joined by two others concepts: permanence and

transit, which were also key-concepts, for they explain about the way of comparing and connecting histories (Paiva 2008: 14). He closes his theoretical observations with a remark on the notions of “mestiçagem” and “hibridismo”:

“Desde já, creio, se faz importante esclarecer que mestiçagem e hibridação não têm aqui, um contrário que seria o natural, isto é, não tem a correspondência de culturas puras, íntegras e estanques no tempo, a não ser no domínio das representações e dos discursos, onde, historicamente eles existem e persistem. Entretanto, o pressuposto adotado é o de que, a não ser nessas duas dimensões da realidade histórica, elas não existem. Não estou, portanto, de acordo em atribuir-lhes uma existência natural.” (Paiva 2008: 15)

Oddly, Paiva does not include “mestiçagem” and “hibridismo” in his class of “key-concepts”. Nonetheless, these two notions are of utmost importance for his intellectual enterprise. In order to understand why it is so, one has to take one step back and have a brief look at the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, that published the volume which Paiva’s contribution is part of.

The research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens” originated from the symposium “Escravidão: sociedades, culturas, economia e trabalho”, which took place as part of the 23<sup>o</sup> ANPUH National Meeting in 2005. Eduardo França Paiva and Douglas Cole Libby, both professors at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), were in charge of the this symposium and they are presently coordinators of the group, which, working together with other academic institutions, has been organizing several meetings on its subject matter and already published three books: *Escravidão, Mestiçagem e Histórias Comparadas* (2008), *Escravidão, Mestiçagens, Populações e Identidades Culturais* (2010) and *Escravidão, Mestiçagens, Ambientes, Paisagens e Espaços* (2011).

Evidently, the very name of the group hints at the centrality of the notion “mestiçagem”. All the more so, when one considers that the term functions as a way of compressing into one word those four broad fields of research (societies, cultures, economy and labour) comprised by the original symposium. The three collective volumes so far published represent an effort to draw attention to the importance of the notion of “mestiçagem” for thinking about the History of Slavery.

Coming back now to Paiva’s article, the role played by “mestiçagem” in it is not less noticeable. He presents his subject as follows:

“A vida de negros e mestiços – escravos, libertos e nascidos livres – na América portuguesa, na América espanhola, bem como em áreas francesas e holandesas do continente, em cidades europeias e em regiões africanas, é o foco central desse texto. O período a ser examinado estende-se o século XVI ao XVIII e, às vezes, entra pelo século XIX.” (Paiva 2008: 13)

It is salient that Paiva conceives his long-term History of slavery in the Iberian world as imbedded in an even longer History of what has been broadly called the Black Atlantic World. Although, he excludes from it the whole Anglophone area, which comprises important slave systems such as that of Jamaica and the United States South.

This exclusion involuntarily reinforces the widespread historiographical image of the segregationist Deep South of the United States as a place where “mestiçagem” had played an insignificant role. Moreover, it leaves untouched one of the most important elements used by an “old comparative History” to draw that widely known distinction between slavery in the Iberian world, especially in Brazil, and in the United States. In addition to that, it contributes to keep the Anglophone Caribbean a void in the Brazilian historiography of slavery.

These deficiencies, if one may name them in this way, are yet in a certain sense secondary, for no one can give a single reason why Paiva should forcefully include the Anglophone Black Atlantic in his comparative analysis. Or, thinking the other way round, his argument cannot be fairly criticized only for that which he left out of his analysis. It is then time to take a closer look at Paiva’s own picture of the “mestiçagem” in the Iberian Black Atlantic.

Paiva’s article is richly illustrated with sixteen pictures (15 paintings and one photograph). Crossing them with primary written sources and a mass of historiographical works, he manages to provide an array of similitudes between variegated slave societies in different places and times within the Black Atlantic. After having done that, towards the end of his text, he states that:

“Nesse universo a ser comparativamente desvelado, negros e mestiços – tanto os escravos, quanto os libertos e os nascidos livres -, evidentemente, não são interlocutores exclusivos, mas, aqui, são *interlocutores privilegiados*. Por meio deles é que se pretende compreender *como* hibridismos e impermeabilidades se processaram intensamente [...]” (Paiva 2008: 24 – emphasis added)

“Negros e mestiços” are then the “privileged interlocutors” in Paiva’s historiographical account. Well, all the fifteen paintings that richly illustrated his paper stem either from official institutions or were painted by white foreign travellers such as François Desiré Roulin, Jean-Baptiste Debret or Johan Moritz Rugendas. Most of these paintings (twelve) depict either non-white or black people. Further, the sole primary source Paiva transcribes, which is about architectural similitudes between Rio de Janeiro and Africa, was written by John Mawe, the British mineralogist author of *Travels in the Interior of Brazil* (1812). There is nothing wrong

with this documental corpus. Its composition is, in fact, very expected. But, to use Paiva's own metaphor of the dialogue between Historian and eyewitnesses: Whom is he here speaking to or, rather, who is talking to him about the "mestiçagem" he wants to unveil?

These questions are not insinuations that were untenable to constitute historiographically "negros e mestiços" as *privileged interlocutors*. Rather, they are an attempt to make two points plain: first, that the very act of being historicized on the basis of such sources puts these "negros e mestiços" in the particular position of those who only speak inasmuch as they have been spoken about by someone else. The second point is that if one loses sight that these "negros e mestiços" occupy said position, the penalty is a misrepresentation whose counterpart is not what actually happened to them, that is, the actual possible content of the past, but what is happening in the very act of re-presenting them in History: the actual content of the present. One question is still open: what is, *actually*, the "privilege" of "negros e mestiços" as interlocutors?

Paiva's words are precise in this respect: "por meio deles" [negros e mestiços], that is, "by means of them" he intends to enter into the dialog with other social groups so as to comprehend the "mestiçagens coloniais". His conclusion is then fairly cogent then, where, along the lines of Historians concerned with overcoming both methodological nationalism and ethnical essentialisms, amongst whom he naturally includes himself, "negros e mestiços" become "cultural mediators":

"Por isso mesmo [because of the effort to overcome methodological nationalism and ethnical essentialisms] é que muitos negros se transformam, sob a pluma de historiadores mais preocupados em entender esses movimentos plantários, nesses mediadores culturais, uma categoria conceitual que facilita a compreensão deles a partir do que sempre foram historicamente: homens e mulheres que transitaram entre mundos, do *locus* ao *orbis* poder-se-ia dizer, aproximando-os, fomentando-os e, também, distanciando-os, mesmo que artificialmente, ao fortalecerem impermeabilidades." (Paiva 2008: 25)

Articulating then the conceptual category of a cultural mediation, which had been carried out by "negros e mestiços", Paiva speaks indistinctly of Mexico City, Salvador, Venice or Bordeaux in terms of a process of "mestiçagem" that had taken place in these cities from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on. Equally, he does not make any effort to define more accurately what he calls "africanização", "europeização", "americanização". These processes seem to have a prima facie value expressed by their own suffix "ção", which would then refer to a self-evident action indicated by the name attached to it. Thus, "mestiçagem" in Bordeaux and in Salvador, as well as (using now the verbs) "africanizar" and "europeizar" happen to be presented in such a

horizontal way that one may wonder whether slavery (and colonialism) had played any role in the development of these processes and in the historiographical representation of them. Put as a normative question: should “mestiçagem”, as the fruit of slavery and colonialism, be regarded just as any other phenomena of cultural hybridization? This is a question that, as surprisingly as it may be, Paiva simply bypasses!

The main thing to be stressed, according to him, is that in carrying out historiographical analyses that avoid the nation state as unity of analysis by the same token in which they adopt a relativistic view on culture, Historians may arrive at a deeper understanding of their subjects. And, by the way of conclusion, he makes a symptomatic call:

“Já que essas comparações urgem e tardam, fica então, para todos nós, o convite e o desafio de não mais postergá-las, sob o risco de perdermos a grande oportunidade de realizá-las em consonância com as demandas de nosso tempo.” (Paiva 2008: 25)

### *Patriarchalizing colonial slavery*

A similar self-positioning towards the “demandas de nosso tempo” is also crucial in the thesis advanced by Douglas Cole Libby, who, as mentioned before, is also coordinator of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”.

His article “Repensando o Conceito do Paternalismo Escravista nas Américas” focuses on slavery systems in Brazil and in the Southern United States in order to make some remarks on the relation master/slave, and especially on the concept of paternalism. The main thesis he advances is that the concept of paternalism most widespread in the Brazilian historiography of slavery, namely, that based on Gilberto Freyre’s as well as on Eugene Genoveses’ works, must be revised.

Such a revision is needed because the domain of slaveholder idealized in these works is that of the *plantation*. Huge plantations, Libby asserts, were the exception rather than the rule in Brazil. The majority of the slaves lived either in small or middle rural properties or in the cities, where every master rarely possessed more than a dozen slaves. A consequence of the inappropriateness of this conceptualization for the Brazilian case is the lack of systematic analysis on paternalism from the perspective of the ownership of slaves by persons of African descent (Libby 2008: 37–39).

In carrying out his analysis, Libby provides an exceptional review of the American literature on this topic. However, he disregards the increasing US-American historiographical production that he calls “neo-revisionista”. Libby’s fully explanation for this exclusion runs as follows:

“Resolvi deixar de fora tais interpretações neo-revisionistas por várias razões. Elas têm tido quase nenhuma ressonância entre os estudiosos do escravismo brasileiro, talvez porque estes não se disponham a renunciar tão facilmente às conquistas teórico-metodológicas que deram vida e agência aos milhões de cativos que, no passado, representavam a própria força vital da Colônia e do Império brasileiros. E, de fato, é preciso dizer que o neo-revisionismo da academia ianque anda no fio da navalha, pois, ao insistir enfaticamente nos aspectos negativos da vida escrava impostos por uma sociedade dominada por senhores brancos, corre o risco de obviar a participação do escravo na sua própria história. Em outras palavras, parece-me que, ao buscar explicações para um racismo doentio, virulento e persistente – objetivo este, sem dúvida algum, assaz laudatório – os revisionistas, às vezes, podem estar jogando o bebê junto com a água do banho. Trata-se de um processo perfeitamente compreensível: as preocupações da sociedade norte-americana da virada do milênio se voltam para um recorrente problema social que exige um constante repensar da história nacional. Cá, *nos trópicos brasílicos, as preocupações do momento são outras*, donde a relevância da produção historiográfica lá de cima vai se tornando cada vez menos clara. Finalmente, como considero que, em última análise, o paternalismo escravista acaba se revelando um jogo no qual o senhor nunca sairá vitorioso, não vejo por que me deter nos aspectos negativos da vida cativa, o que, nem de longe, equivale a negar a existência deles.” (Libby 2008: 31 – emphasis added)

This whole passage is so puzzling that one hardly knows where to begin. Since Libby chooses to work with the evaluative vocabulary of “positive-negative” and “loser-winner”, one could well start by asking him two questions: 1) Mr. Libby, which were, in your opinion, the “positive” or at least “neutral” aspects of a life in bondage? 2) Mr. Libby, you assert that the slave paternalism is a game that the master will *never* win. Does that mean that the slave ended up *always* winning it?

Should these questions sound somehow ironic, one could wonder whether they are formulated in this manner with the express purpose of making plain that even more ironic (as well as callous) is the suggestion of considering paternalism without paying too much attention to “negative aspects” of the slave lives.

Libby correctly remarks that the neo-revisionist approach has had little acceptance within the Brazilian Historiography of Slavery. But, of course, this is not automatically a reason for ignoring it. Quite the opposite: it might be exactly the reason for supporting a more careful appreciation of the potential of this approach for thinking about slavery in Brazil.

Moreover, if only for the sake of argument one accepted without further questioning Libby’s warning that an emphatic insistence on “negative aspects” of slavery may jeopardize theoretical-methodological achievements that have been raising the agency of slaves, it would suffice to point to a work such as Wissenbach’s *Sonhos Africanos, Vivências Ladinhas*, which shows that it is perfectly possible to emphasize the slaves’ agency without pushing a ‘negative aspect’ like the ubiquitous violence of the slavery system to the background.

However, what shall be strongly stressed is the fact that Libby refuses to consider US-American neo-revisionism because its relevance were not quite clear to “present concerns” in the “trópicos brasílicos”. Whence one must infer that he surely thinks that his own “anti-neo-revisionist” way of re-thinking the concept of paternalism is clearly relevant to these “present concerns” whatever they might be, since Libby does not take pains to enumerate them even succinctly.

An interesting picture can be drawn from a brief comparison of Paiva’s with Libby’s article. While doing so, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that these contributions have a manifest programmatic character, not only opening the very first book published by the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, but also having been written by its two coordinators.

Eduardo França Paiva left, without further explanation, the United States out of his comparative analysis, whose aim is to unveil the “mestiçagens” originated at the time of colonial slavery. Furthermore, he hardly addresses the issues surrounding slavery’s role in bringing about these “mestiçagens”. Douglas Cole Libby, in turn, focuses precisely on the United States and deliberately excludes the whole continental Hispanic America, for there, he says, “o escravismo não emergiu, a não ser temporariamente ou em regiões territorialmente muito reduzidas” (Libby 2008: 28). So, neither moves Paiva an inch from the common view, according to which, when one is interested in talking about “mestiçagem”, this implies an unhesitating exclusion the United States; nor Libby from the one that, focusing on “slavery” itself, contrasts Brazilian and American slave systems in that familiar way that excludes all countries surrounding Brazil.

Another point, perhaps more important: departing from a strongly culturalist perspective, Paiva criticizes sharply so-called methodological nationalism, whereas Libby puts it fully into practice by grounding his exclusion of “American neo-revisionism” on the basis that this approach met present concerns relevant to the national History of the United States, but not to the Brazilian one.

There is no need to decide here whether these substantial disagreements shall be seen as plurality or as contradiction. What must be stressed is that both Historians highlight that in writing History as they do, they are struggling to confront the problems posed by their own time. In this respect, they agree fully.

## Critical racial studies and History of slavery

In 2004, the year after the symposium that originated the research group “Escravidão e mestiçagens” took place, *Uma História não Contada: Negro, racismo e branqueamento em São Paulo no pós-abolição* was published. Its author, the Historian Petrônio Domingues, advances a relatively audacious thesis. He contends that the racism in São Paulo, which he somehow ironically calls “racismo à paulista”, was essentially different from the “racismo cordial”, which has been conventionally considered the characteristic Brazilian variant of putting racial discrimination into practice. The “racismo à paulista” was “segregacionista e costumeiro” and carried out a process that

“primeiro, privou o negro de direitos fundamentais no exercício da cidadania no campo da educação, saúde, política, lazer; segundo, eliminou as chances do trabalhador negro de concorrer em condições de igualdade com o branco nas velhas e novas oportunidades de emprego. Uma política de preferência racial e favorecimento do trabalhador branco no pós-abolição causou danos ainda hoje irreparáveis aos descendentes de escravos. Um regime de segregação racial, alternadamente de fato e de direito, cindiu, em linhas gerais, a cidade de São Paulo em dois pólos: o “mundo branco” e o “mundo negro”. (Domingues 2004: 382)

In fact, Domingues investigates the worlds of labour, leisure, education, he scrutinizes police reports, and asylum’s records, he provides insides into the public health system, the family’s organization, the demographical and geographical distribution of the population as well as into practices of social appropriation of public spaces, both in the capital and in the interior of São Paulo. In a word: throughout his book Domingues gathers evidence from everywhere in support of that main thesis. The primary sources on which he draws on most painstakingly in the performing of this task are the newspapers of the “imprensa negra”<sup>154</sup> and the testimonies of first- and second-generation descendants of slaves. The findings presented in *Uma História Não Contada* are, to be sure, not properly unheard of, but unusually stressed in historiographical analyses on slavery in Brazil.

For instance, against the prevailing idea that there has never been any kind of segregationist laws in Brazil, he offers the case of the “Guarda Civil Metropolitana de São Paulo”, where until 1928 the admission of black people was statutorily forbidden. The reluctant racism of this corporation, Domingues argues, “provavelmente estava ligado ao fato de o branco não aceitar

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<sup>154</sup> Petrônio Domingues explains that “‘imprensa negra’ é o nome dado ao conjunto de jornais produzidos por negros e para negros, publicados no início do século XX em São Paulo. [...] Muitas vezes, utilizamos o termo ‘imprensa branca’ em oposição à imprensa negra. Trata-se de uma referencia aos jornais regulares da grande imprensa, de ampla circulação, produzidos por brancos e voltados, via de regra, para o público não-negro.” (Domingues 2004: 25)

que negros assumissem cargos com poder de mando – era inimaginável obedecer publicamente à autoridade de um policial negro” (Domingues 2004: 136). In non-state institutions of public interest, such as private schools, religious orders or recreational clubs, the official existence of segregationism was, according to Domingues, fairly more common. A document of the catholic order Pia União das Filhas de Maria São reads that “muitas moças desejam ingressar na Pia União e [...] algumas devem ser rejeitadas; especialmente, conforme o costume dos jesuítas, as negras devem ser afastadas.” Institutional racism pervaded also the educational branch of the Catholic orders: based on their statutes, the Our Lady of Sion School as well as the *College Sacre Coeur* did not allow black students (Domingues 2004: 148). Among the clubs that adopted segregationist ethnic criteria in the admission of their members Domingues lists the Espéria, Germania, Tietê, Homes e Paulistano (Domingues 2004: 173). The existence of “black territories” in Brazilian cities, be they neighbourhoods, streets or bars, has been discussed for some decades already<sup>155</sup>. Still, rarely has it been argued that there were also spatial barriers used with the purpose of separating a “white area” from a “black area” within the same public space. Against this established view, Domingues reports on a public place in Tietê, where a grid demarcated the side of the place destined for white people: there, where there was a garden. Blacks should keep themselves outside of this garden area. Domingues does not brush aside the fact that there were no signs indicating it. Though, how to treat it as a mere unwritten social convention when black people who did not behave in conformity with it were sometimes even arrested (Domingues 2004: 159)?

Sometimes black men were also lynched. Lynchings had occurred, for example, in Campinas during the conjuncture immediately subsequent to the Abolition of Slavery, when there emerged a climate of persecution towards blacks. In Rio Claro, another city of São Paulo’s countryside, “a violência contra libertos era coisa diária, e, quando suspeitos de estupro de mulher branca, eram linchados.” These are statements that Domingues extracted from the works by Florestan Fernandes, regarding Campinas, and Warren Dean, respecting Rio Claro (Domingues 2004: 158; 186).

Still, he does not limit himself to making these bibliographical remarks, but adds to them related findings from his own archival researches. In February 1888, he narrates, members of an ultra-racist organization assassinated Joaquim Firmino de Araújo Cunha, the head of São

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<sup>155</sup> See, for example, Raquel Rolnik’s “Territórios Negros nas Cidades Brasileiras - Etnicidade e Cidade em São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro” (1989).

Paulos' police department, who was supposedly sympathetic to the abolitionist cause. The same group ransacked the houses of two others abolitionists, the businessmen Bento Cláudio de Almeida e Pedro da Rocha Campos. These men, according to an excerpt of a primary source transcribed by Domingues, only escaped death because they had been warned early enough (Domingues 2004: 74). So, against the common belief that such excesses of violence had never been committed in Brazil, Domingues went back to earlier academic work, bringing back issues that had been hitherto dormant as well as contributing to amplifying the discussion by coming up with new evidence based on primary sources.

*Uma História não Contada* leaves no doubt about who its interlocutors are, namely, the so-called "escola sociológica paulista", in particular Florestan Fernandes and Octavio Ianni. The charge Domingues levels against them is that they had, so to speak, mistaken the consequence for the cause of the marginal integration of blacks into capitalist class society. In São Paulo, at least, he argues, the exclusion of blacks from the labor market, also a central argument in Florestan Fernandes' famous thesis, was not due to any kind of incapacity resulting from the condition of having lived for more than three centuries under a regime of slavery. Rather, the implacable racism that reigned in social relations had been that which not only produced the image of the descendants of slaves as ignorant, unskilled and generally incapable of performing any task that required even a minimal degree of intellectual ability, but also used this same image as justification for their very exclusion.

Florestan Fernandes and Octavio Ianni's explanation about the transition to the free labor market in São Paulo were feeble for having premised upon *three* fallacies.

The first fallacy assumed the general lack of human resources in São Paulo after the Abolition of slavery. Resorting to recent demographical studies, Domingues argues that the thesis on the deficit of workers in São Paulo is highly disputable. There were also opinions expressed by contemporaries that support this thesis. The councilor Paula Sousa, for instance, points out in 1888, just about once month before the Abolition of Slavery, that "Trabalhadores não faltam a quem os sabe procurar. Primeiramente temos os próprios escravos, que não derretem nem mesmo desaparecem e que precisam de viver e alimentar-se, e, portanto, de trabalhar, coisa que compreendem em breve prazo." (Domingues 2004: 89)

The second fallacy concerned the idea of the cultural superiority of white Europeans immigrants. Domingues' thesis is that the image of white European immigrant as educated, skilled, experienced in several types of planting and cultivation as well as able to work in

complex factory machines, was nothing but a product of the very “ideologia do branqueamento”, which played an ineludible role in the political decision of promoting the mass immigration of white Europeans to Brazil. That the majority of the Italian immigrants who came to São Paulo were poor peasants, whose life conditions in no way correspond to that idealized picture is only one among many arguments that he enrolls in support of his thesis (Domingues 2004: 60–66; 89–92).

The third and final fallacy regarded the idea of the general unwillingness of ex-slaves to work in their former roles, as well as their presumable incapacity to take over new productive activities. This is another set of ideas that, Domingues stressed, has been repeatedly refuted by a large amount of historiographical studies. As early as the 1970s Warren Dean had already demonstrated that, at least in Rio Claro (SP), farms with productivity above average employed more Brazilian than immigrant workers (Domingues 2004: 92–102; Dean 1971).

Thus, when Florestan Fernandes affirms that “o ex-escravo não estava em condições de competir com os imigrantes sequer na lavoura” or when Octavio Ianni remarks that “o horizonte mental do negro recém-egresso na senzala não era suficientemente amplo para possibilitar um rápido e eficiente aprendizado na lida com instrumentos e máquinas cujo funcionamento lhe era estranho”, they are not properly explaining the marginal integration of black people into class society in São Paulo, but explaining it by reproducing racism sociologically<sup>156</sup>. (Domingues 2004: 93; 100)

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<sup>156</sup> The same critique is valid to Fernando Henrique Cardoso and all the more to Celso Furtado, whose economicist approach to the problem of colonial slavery is so glaringly blind to the presence of racism that it deserves—together with Furtado’s sociological presentation of the ex-slaves themselves—to be quoted at some length.

The difficulty begins already with the comparison he makes in order to explain the matter:

“A abolição da escravatura, à semelhança de uma “reforma agrária”, não constitui *per se* nem destruição nem criação de riqueza. Constitui simplesmente uma redistribuição da propriedade dentro de uma coletividade. *A aparente complexidade desse problema* deriva de que a propriedade da força de trabalho, ao passar do senhor de escravos para o indivíduo, deixa de ser um *ativo* que figura numa contabilidade para constituir-se em simples virtualidade.” (Furtado [1959] 2003: 143 – emphasis added)

Once stated that the complexity of the “problem of slavery” is just “apparent”, Furtado then speaks - with the same nonchalant social-scientific self-confidence - about the ex-slaves as follows:

“As vantagens que apresentava o trabalhador europeu com respeito ao ex-escravo são demasiado óbvias para insistir sobre elas.

O homem formado dentro desse sistema social está totalmente desaparelhado para responder aos estímulos econômicos. Quase não possuindo hábitos de vida familiar, a ideia de acumulação de riqueza é praticamente estranha. Demais, *seu rudimentar desenvolvimento mental* limita extremamente suas “necessidades”. Sendo o trabalho para o escravo uma maldição e o ócio o bem inalcançável, a elevação de seu salário acima de suas necessidades - que estão definidas pelo nível de subsistência de um escravo - determina de imediato uma forte preferência pelo ócio.

Podendo satisfazer seus gastos de subsistência com dois ou três dias de trabalho por semana, ao antigo escravo parecia muito mais atrativo “comprar” o ócio que seguir trabalhando quando já tinha o suficiente

Careful attention to the many possible guises of racism is undoubtedly the most distinctive feature of *Uma História não Contada*. In fact, Domingues explains that the concept of racism constitutes the very methodological axis of his work (Domingues 2004: 22). This feature bears a special relation to the fact that even though *Uma História não Contada* goes back to the decades prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1888, the book focuses clearly on the post-Abolition years, the so-called “Primeira República” (1889–1930). Therefore, it is not what one would promptly name “History of Slavery”.

The question of naming is far from being a minor one in what concerns the interrelation between periodization and the designation of History’s subjects. This problem will nonetheless be momentarily put aside, so that attention can be fully drawn to an aspect which Historians have to deal with when they get down to work on the post-Abolition period in Brazil: a considerable corpus of written primary sources in which blacks, presenting themselves as such, address the issue of slavery. The newspapers of the “*imprensa negra*” made up the bulk of this documentation.

To have such sources does not imply that the identity of these subjects would no longer be a Historian’s construction. Rather, by making statements grounded on what blacks directly wrote or told about slavery, the Historian effects the constitution of a point of view that displays the distinctive quality of introducing the possibility of constructing the speech of those who have so far been always only spoken about.

In this sense, when Domingues elects the newspapers of the “*imprensa negra*” as well as the interviews with first- and second-generation descendent of slaves as his main sources, he does that with the conspicuous purpose of *privileging*

“[O] ‘gritar’ do negro neste movimento de produção do conhecimento histórico. Nessa tarefa, modificando-se a ordem do ‘olhar racial’, altera-se o produto. As explicações centradas no

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“para viver”. Dessa forma, uma das consequências diretas da abolição, nas regiões em mais rápido desenvolvimento, foi reduzir-se o grau de utilização da força de trabalho. Esse problema terá repercussões sociais amplas que não compete aqui refletir.

*Cabe tão-somente lembrar que o reduzido desenvolvimento mental da população submetida à escravidão provocará a segregação parcial desta após a abolição, retardando sua assimilação e entorpecendo o desenvolvimento econômico do país.* Por toda a primeira metade do século XX, a grande massa dos descendentes da antiga população escrava continuará vivendo dentro de seu limitado sistema de “necessidades”, cabendo-lhe um papel puramente passivo nas transformações econômicas do país.” (Furtado [1959] 2003: 146–147 – emphasis added).

Indeed, the problem of slavery is (still) “apparent”, but in the sense of being clearly visible or understood, of being, in fact, “obvious”. The great influence that ideas widespread by books like Celso Furtado’s *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (still) exerts on the Brazilian academic production is a substantial part of the problem.

branco – que sempre cumpriu o papel de dominação e vem legitimando o *status quo* da desigualdade racial no país – foram questionadas. Afinal, essas explicações não dão conta do ‘outro’; não aceitam a diversidade; e, geralmente, não realizam a travessia à outra margem da história. Por isso enfatizamos: à luz de um pensamento crítico, este livro tenta restituir ao *vencido* o direito inalienável de (re)construção do seu passado.” (Domingues 2004: 382)

Like Eduardo França and Douglas Cole Libby, Petrônio Domigues also stresses that, by writing *Uma História Não Contada*, he meets particular demands of his own time. The most important one was to challenge the commonsense idea that conflates the historical trajectory of blacks in Brazil with the History of Slavery.

“Com o fim da escravidão, fecham-se as cortinas do cenário historiográfico para os escravos. Neste instante, suas experiências e vivências ficam diluídas na categoria povo ou classe social, chegando ao ponto de alguns desavisados pensarem que os negros abandonaram a condição de produtores de uma história específica.

Abolindo-se a escravidão, o foco das atenções desloca-se diametralmente. Em vez do negro, os novos personagens *privilegiados* pela historiografia paulista são imigrantes, operários, anarquistas, ou temas como industrialização, urbanização, modernização, oligarquia cafeeira. [...]

A eliminação, no pós-13 de Maio de 1888, da “mancha negra” das áreas de pesquisa provavelmente esteja no bojo de uma linha ideológica de construção do conhecimento histórico eurocentrista, paulista e por que não dizer movida por um certo preconceito racial, ainda que silenciado.” (Domingues 2004: 21).

On the occasion of the publication of the book, Domingues added another point that, while circumstantial, is presented as being of paramount importance:

“[E]ste livro é o registro de uma importante fase de minha vida intelectual, sendo publicado em momento oportuno. Quando a sociedade civil brasileira se debruça para discutir reparações para a população negra – pelas ações afirmativas e pelas cotas -, *é de fundamental importância voltar no tempo para entender como, afinal, foi produzido (e reproduzido) o atual sistema promotor de desigualdades raciais*, pelo menos em São Paulo.” (Domingues 2004: 18 – emphasis added)

He is thus, like his contemporary fellows-Historians França Paiva and Cole Libby, explicitly concerned with meeting the demands of his time.

### **Unthinking ideology and anachronism**

Eduardo França, Douglas Cole Libby, Petrônio Domigues, the three authors analyzed in this section, expectedly admit, and in a much similar fashion, that present issues play a crucial role in their works. At the same time, they struggle to ascertain that what they are historiographically presenting is true to the actual past. This effort to keep the presence of the present within a certain degree, so that it does not immediately jeopardize the truthfulness of the Historical account, is what has been here called the “controlled anachronism”, which

the practice of History necessarily entails. Presumably, the more successfully one did that, the longer would one's work remain actual.

Ideology has been hitherto defined as that which a work cannot say. And what a work cannot say is important "because there the elaboration of the utterance is acted out, in a sort of journey to silence." When Spivak resorts to this idea by Macherey, she is particularly interested in the silence produced by "what a work cannot say" because it refuses to say it (Spivak 1988: 286).

In the case of Foucault & Deleuze, the "two activist *philosophers of history*" whose "friendly exchange" Spivak analyzes in *Can the Subaltern Speak*, what they refuse to say is that they enjoy properly *imperial*<sup>157</sup> privileges of power (Spivak 1988: 272 – emphasis added). Nevertheless, it is exactly this refusal that enables them to conflate "desire" and "interest" so as to make themselves transparent, while, by leveling a "radical criticism" premised upon the critique of the sovereign subject, they produce a monolithic and essentialized "subaltern subject" by the same token as they restore the epistemological sovereignty of "the subject of the West, or the West as Subject" (Spivak 1988: 271).

If encouraged by Spivak's reflections, the matter concerning the works of Paiva, Libby and Domingues, can be systematized by asking three questions. First: Which could their refusals possible consist of? Second: Do they also produce "silences" that utter something particularly important? Third: in which way were this acting out of silent utterances related to that "controlled anachronism"?

Concerning the *first* question, Eduardo França Paiva refuses the "old comparative History" in historiographical approaches to the issue of "Escravidão e Mestiçagens"; Douglas Cole Libby refuses to consider the "American neo-revisionism" in re-thinking the concept of slave paternalism with respect to the Brazilian and the American slave systems; and, finally, Petrônio Domingues refuses the "olhar branco" on the History of Brazil.

There is no need of especially designed glasses to create a three-dimensional effect of theoretical depth to see that such acts of refusing are performed at that point in which an explanation about "how the work is made" coincides with another about "why the work is made". But, if one insisted in wearing such glasses, one would see that these two concomitant explanations, instead of putting themselves mutually in perspective so as to form a unitary

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<sup>157</sup> From Spivak's viewpoint the social sciences have been an integral part of the "social text of imperialism" or, in a more pregnant formulation, of the "codifying legal practice of imperialism." (Spivak 1988: 286)

image endowed with lulling Historical profundity, would instead be seen as separate and blurred.

This means that the theoretical analysis you are reading right now, regardless of wearing special glasses or without them, shall be regarded as incapable of disclosing a more truthful image of what has been seen in those historiographical texts. Rather, such an analysis is supposed *not* to restore a presumed true appearance hidden somehow behind what comes into sight, but to present the same image disruptively, so as to cast doubt on the eye's particular ability to recognize a specific measurement of the distance between the elements of a picture as the perfect perspective which accounted for the true disposition of things in reality.

The act of confluence by means of which Historians lay bare what their work is made of and how their work is made, as well as the reasons why a historiographical text should follow some specific guidelines at a particular time, could also be rightly called "synchronization" for, in fact, Historians are here adjusting their conceptual apparatus so that it operates in two times periods at the same time: the past and the present.

Using another cinematic metaphor, it would be analytically seductive instead of "synchronization", to translate it into "*Synchronisierung*", for in German common parlance this word bears a meaning which is absent in English: it also stands for the process of replacing the voice of the actors shown on the screen with those of different performers speaking another language<sup>158</sup>.

"*Synchronisierung*" would then not only be the process of making theoretical-methodological adjustments so as to correlate the subject (of the past) with the demands (of the present). It would also be the very act of silencing the other's voice by paradoxically uttering what it had said in a way that ideally granted its full meaningfulness: the translation.

The silence [of an other] is here, as it generally is, the very condition of possibility of [one's] speech at all (Macherey [1966] 2006: 97). But who were the [silenced] Other(s) in the texts of Paiva, of Libby and of Domingues? The answer to that also answers that *second* question.

Paiva justifies his refusal of "the old comparative History" by stating that it does not allow for privileging "negros e mestiços" as interlocutors. He claims to engage his elected "privileged interlocutors" (negros e mestiços) and the other social groups in a "dialogue' whose aim is to

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<sup>158</sup> In English, "dubbing", a word that does not convey the idea of temporalisation.

understand the very “mestiçagem”. Assuming that he is right in presenting his work in this fashion, one must also immediately notice something truly strange: since all voices taking part in this “dialogue” come from sources produced by “the other social groups”, with special prominence to that of European travellers, and none from the “negros e mestiços” themselves, when they speak, even if as “privileged interlocutors”, they must speak as a third person, as if seeing themselves from a synchronic outside. However, this relation is presented completely invertedly when Paiva states that it is “by means of” the “negros e mestiços” that he is attempting to comprehend “mestiçagem” (Paiva 2008: 24). At every point of Paiva’s historiographical account “negros e mestiços” are just those who have been talked about, who have been represented and re-presented, but not those who speak for themselves as autonomous interlocutor in a fair dialogue.

Given that Paiva does not problematize the act of silencing entailed in his careless election of “negros e mestiços” as “privileged interlocutors”, he sets himself on a collision course *not with the “old comparative History”*, which, indeed, he criticizes for having done the very same, that is, for having silenced “negros e mestiços”. Rather, he collides violently with the perspective provided by Petrônio Domingues! So does Libby, for while he refuses the “American ne-revisionism” due to its emphasis on the “negative aspects” of slavery, Domingues puts racism, (which is surely not a “positive aspect” of slavery) into the center of attention.

In this sense, it is evident that those “losers of history” (vencidos), to whom Petrônio Domingues refers to (Domingues 2004: 382), are not those masters, who, according to Douglas Cole Libby, never won the game of slave paternalism<sup>159</sup>. Neither are they the descendant and heirs of these masters. Equally evident is that when Petrônio Domingues speaks conspicuously just of “negros” and “brancos” he intends to marginalize the notion of “mestiçagem”, a concept that, seen from the point of view defended by Eduardo França Paiva, is indispensable in approaching slavery and, consequently, its aftermaths, in the Black Atlantic World.

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<sup>159</sup> The passage quoted above is not the only one in which Libby uses the “loser-winner-metaphor” for explaining that the paternalism is a game that the “pater” actually *always* loses. At another moment of the text, after having listed some strategies of slave resistance in every-day life, he insists on the point: “É neste sentido que sugeri antes que o paternalismo foi um jogo nunca vencido pelos senhores, pela simples razão de que os cativos nunca cessaram na sua luta pela conquista de espaços adicionais. Apenas lembraria que nenhum senhor jamais admitia reconhecer publicamente que, no fundo, era ele o vencido.” (Libby 2008: 34)

The picture that slowly gains contour here is, so to speak, a return of the same: on the one hand, those who brandishing the (theoretical) force of (the concept) of “mestiçagem” articulates a discourse that ends up downplaying power asymmetries by, for example, talking about slavery and colonialism in terms of a horizontal process of “africanização-europeização-americanização” (Eduardo França Paiva) or by outrageously suggesting that slave paternalism may be divested of its “negative side” (Douglas Cole Libby). These are untimely followers of Gilberto Frey.

On the other hand, there are those who, like Petrônio Domingues, calling for a deeper appreciation of the theoretical-methodological power of a conceptualization of racism, construct a clear distinction between “white” and “blacks” with the purpose of making plain that the very talk about “mestiçagem” may camouflage what should be at stake in addressing the issue of slavery nowadays, that is, racism itself and many other forms of oppression related to it.

In arranging these works in such an opposing ideological disposition one attends a kind of interplay of refusals by means of which the task of tracing ideology becomes indeed the “measuring of distances” created by that “hollow speech”<sup>160</sup> which separates and fixes the meaning of what historiographical works utter (Macherey [1966] 2006: 88).

Such an analysis, while cogent in some sense, does not leave sufficient room for properly developing that idea of *Synchronisierung*, which, as asserted before, in considering the act of silent eloquence occurring as a result from the adjustment of theoretical tools to the concreteness emanated both from the Historical sources and from the demands of the present, characterized a more appropriate account of the conjoint interaction of ideology and anachronism. A further step must be then taken.

Eduardo França Paiva resorts to Serge Gruzinski’s concept of cultural mediation in order to present “negros e mestiços” as “mediadores culturais”. In doing that, he is trying to break the habit of assuming that everything had an exclusive origin. This habit, he remarks, had been a

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<sup>160</sup> For Macherey, a proper investigation of the meaning of literary works “takes as its subject that *hollow speech* that the works utters so discreetly; it measures the *distance* which separates the various *meanings*. The literary work gives the measure of a difference, reveals a determinate absence, resorts to an eloquent silence [...] it reveals the inscription of an otherness in the work, through which it maintains a relationship with that which it is not, that which happens at its margins.” (Macherey [1966] 2006 – emphasis in the original). Spivak resorts to these ideas to measure ideological meanings of the “social text of imperialism” in the guise of Foucault’s and Deleuze philosophical discourse about history.

“marca importante de uma cultura ocidental e ocidentalizante, que parece ter triunfado, sobretudo a partir do século XV.” (Paiva 2008: 14). The approach he puts forward, guided by a relativistic concept of culture as well as by the notion of “conexão of contextos”, meant to opt for the “história da diversidade e da alteridade; a releitura de nossas certezas historiográficas e, ainda, o emprego de um novo aparato metodológico-conceitual”, which would allow for bringing about the changes required by the present time. (Paiva 2008: 25).

Douglas Cole Libby confesses that he belongs to the class of radical empiricists who stick to the concreteness of the particular, being therefore not at all fond of generalizing theoretical-methodological thinking (Libby 2008: 27). When he leaves his comfort zone in order to comparatively theorize slave paternalism, he is also trying to break the habit of assuming that the “masters” were always the “winners of history” as well as the idea that they had invariably been white people. Like Paiva, he is suggesting a re-reading of some historiographical certainties, which have been playing a key role in fixing historical identities within the Black Atlantic.

The research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens” is thus, judging from this viewpoint, deeply committed to a critical attitude towards Eurocentric, evolutionist and reductive views within the Brazilian History of Slavery.

Nothing could be more kindred to the project of *Uma História Não Contada*, which fiercely criticizes a “linha ideológica de construção conhecimento histórico eurocentrista” (Domingues 2004: 21) that, according to Petrônio Domingues, creates a persistent absence of black people’s History in Brazilian academia.

The picture was now turned upside-down: instead of being “antagonists”, Paiva and Libby and Domingues are now comrade-in-arms! The target of their common refusal is Eurocentrism. In unison, they claim to have written works that, premised upon ideas of diversity and otherness, brought into question historiographical certainties constructed eurocentrically.

If one takes into account that Eurocentrism consists of a grey zone endowed with (at least) fifteen shades<sup>161</sup>, and that History may be about as many things as there are supposed to have existed on Earth, one easily arrives at the conclusion that the silences produced by

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<sup>161</sup> Expanding on their analysis in *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam subdivided their presentation of the patterns in fifteen topics that an “ideal portrait” of Eurocentrism might posit. (Stam/Shohat 2012: 65–68)

historiographical refusals of Eurocentrism must be incommensurable, for irreducibly differential.

From this conclusion, one could equally easily infer that in order to address colonial slavery in an anti-Eurocentric way, an approach conceptually based on “mestiçagem” (Paiva and Libby) may be as good as one based on racism (Domingues). As a matter of fact, it could be further argued, that there is no conceptual impasse between either approaches. Neither Domingues’ focus on racism negates that it might have been “mestiçagem” à la Paiva or slave paternalism à la Libby, nor do Paiva’s “mestiçagem” and Libby’s paternalism negate that there might have been segregationist racism in Brazil, as pointed out by Domingues. A step forward in this direction and instead of silencing each other, it could be said that both perspectives could be combined in such a manner that one might extract the best from both of them.

It is not only that the opposition between the two positions effaces in this light but also that their effectiveness in underpinning a critical attitude towards Eurocentrism must be seen as ultimately contingent.

Such a relativistic conclusion is not wrong. Rather, it is an indispensable step towards recognizing that the ubiquity of Eurocentrism is not what precludes the possibility of regarding ideology as the task of measuring the silences of what a historiographical work “refuses to say” in order to fight it; rather, the Eurocentric is what allows for performing such a task, for “the Eurocentric” always appears as providing the ideal from which the critical work wants to constitute a deviation (Spivak 1988: 285–286).

It is a truly strange situation. Here, the ideal is not what one strives for, but what becomes everyone’s starting point. Exactly for this reason the idea of translation as *Synchronisierung* makes sense. The deviation from the ubiquitous ideal is made up by that which happened to be successfully translated by the process of *Synchronisierung*, that is, by the act of adjusting one’s conceptual apparatus so that it captures the subject under inquiry and, at the same time, meets whatever one considers to be the particular demands of the present.

Yet, how to know whether, what and how the (Eurocentric) ideal was “successfully” translated in a historiographical work? Put concretely: is it possible to take the step that leads *from* that initial relativistic acknowledgement of an anti-Eurocentric potential and apply it to both Paiva’s and Libby’s approach, as well as Domingues’, to reach a more qualified stance? So that by “investigating, identifying, and measuring ... the deviation’ from an ideal that is irreducibly differential” (Spivak 1988: 286–287), might one be able to decide which of them translates

Eurocentrism more successfully? Which of them is ideologically less inclined to a Eurocentric view?

A proper answer to these questions presupposes a careful analysis of the relationship between History and Theory of History, which is the focus of the next section. From what has been so far discussed, the following should be kept in mind: the silences produced by the refusals one states in attempting to control the immanent anachronism of History is what constitutes the ideological dimension of a historiographical work. Thus, ideology and controlled anachronism bear a relation of mutual conditioning. However, at this point, every ideological position may be as good as any other, for it legitimates itself in its own terms.

The paralyzing effect of such a relativistic view may be avoided by having recourse to the idea of *Synchronisierung*. This is the name given to the specific translational process of deviation (from an ubiquitous and mutant Eurocentric ideal) which produces eloquent silences by adjusting conceptual tools so that they meet the demands of the present without pushing the truthfulness of the historiographical subject to the background. In doing that, a historiographical work, so to speak, sets the stage of its representation so as to delimitate the particular positions from which the work might be legitimately seen as ideological. But ideological in such a way that, presently, the measure of their deviations would not allow to lump them together with Euclides da Cunha or Trevor-Hoper, that is, they would not cease to be “actual”...yet.

## CHAPTER 2 - HISTORY AND THEORY OF HISTORY

Oooô negra mina, Anastácia não se deixou escravizar  
Oooô Clementina, o pagode é o partido popular  
O sacerdote ergue a taça  
Convocando toda a massa  
Neste evento que congraça  
Gente de todas as raças  
Numa mesma emoção  
*Essa kizomba é nossa constituição*  
[...]  
Vem a lua de Luanda  
Para iluminar a rua  
Nossa sede é nossa sede  
De que o apartheid se destrua  
(Vila 1988 – emphasis added)<sup>162</sup>

The whole discussion about the relationship between History and Theory of History conducted in the section entitled “On the Ends of History” can be summarized in three main propositions. The first one, based on Danto’s aesthetics, reads that History should not be thought to comprise an epistemological domain separable from Theory of History, for historical accounts are substantially constituted by what they are *theoretically* believed to be. The second proposition establishes that this indivisible theoretical substance of History consists of what Chakrabarty calls the “hyperreal Europe”, an abstract entity that has remained the implicit but nevertheless sovereign subject of all histories. Finally, the third one, which also draws on Chakrabarty’s theorization of History, refers to the idea that this “hyperreal Europe” should be subjected to a “politics of translation”, which, oriented towards *translucence* instead of *transparency*, may produce historical difference (instead of lack of incommensurability). What Chakrabarty calls “translucence” corresponds to Spivak’s “measuring the deviation” (from an irreducibly differential Eurocentric ideal), which the discussion in the last chapter was about. In fact, the way Spivak relates the Western intellectual to the representation of third-world subjects is very much like the way in which Historians in general have been related towards their subject of knowledge.

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<sup>162</sup> A passage from “*Kizomba, a festa da raça*,” *samba-enredo* with which the samba school Unidos de Vila Isabel won Rio de Janeiro’s Carnival Parade in 1988, the year of the centenary of the Abolition of Slavery and of the promulgation of the Constitution that marked the definitive end of the military dictatorship in Brazil.

The sharpest criticism Spivak levels at Foucault & Deleuze's critique of the sovereign subject concerns the fact that they render the "Third World" (or the Others) "transparent" in what they make themselves "transparent". She provides several examples of the rhetorical blows that these two intellectuals deliver against ideology, thereby producing their own "transparency". The point she makes most painstakingly concerns Deleuze's argument that "There is no more representation; there's nothing but action." Deleuze's articulation of this argument was problematic because it conflates two senses of the word "representation": "representation as 'speaking for' (*Vertreten*), as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation' (*Darstellung*), as in art or philosophy." (Spivak 1988: 275)

So, when Deleuze says that "Reality is *what actually happens* in a factory, in a school, in barracks, in a prison, in a police station" he argues for a self-affirmation of representation in the first sense (*vertreten*) by means of a negation of representation in the second sense (*darstellen*).

The first act, the self-affirmative one, represented, in Deleuze's own terms, that type of "theoretical action" whose aim is "to create conditions where the prisoners [or any others oppressed subject] themselves would be able to speak" (Foucault 1980: 206–207). However, there follows a second act, the negative one, which represents Deleuze's accomplishment of what Spivak qualifies as the limits of a "representationalist realism" that "has helped positivist empiricism—the justifying foundation of advanced capitalist neo-colonialism—to define its own arena as 'concrete experience', 'what actually happens.'" (Spivak 1988: 275)

It is constitutive of the Historian's craft to deal with this precise set of questions, namely, to establish the conditions where one may speak of "what actually happened". This means to say that Historians are steadily confronted with the possibility of conflating 'representing' and 're-presenting', or, they are susceptible of rendering themselves transparent as part of the effort to make their subject matter perfectly visible. Further still, they might play the role of *Synchrosprecher* who were simply repeating what had supposedly been told by an original voice.

In the next few pages, the "deviations" detected in the texts by Paiva, Libby and Petrônio Domigues will be "measured", where they each, respectively, deal with the issue of Historical "representation/re-presentation".

Then, after having performed this task, which shall result in a distinction between two epistemological approaches endowed with an uneven capacity of refraining themselves from

Historicism, another two historiographical works will be analysed so as to spell out their ideological consequences: firstly, *A Força da Escravidão* by Sydney Chalhoub's; secondly, Kelmer Mathias' article "O Braço armado do Senhor", each one exemplifying one of those epistemological approaches.

### **On the issue of representation: synchronizing History and theory of History**

#### **The "unadventurous many"**

Eduardo França Paiva and Douglas Cole Libby practice a sort of historiographical writing that effects a "representationalist realism", elsewhere here called "naïve realism", corollary of a positivist empiricism of the most crude stock. What differs Paiva from Libby is merely the fact that the latter openly admits the structuring force of his empiricist belief, while the former exposes it in the form of eluding theoretical remarks.

So, Libby simply says that

"Adentrar o terreno da História Comparativa provavelmente representa o mais perigoso de todos os exercícios aos quais o historiador pode dedicar-se. Tal afirmativa é ainda mais verdadeira quando o historiador em questão pertence à classe dos empiricistas radicais: daqueles que preferem pacientemente esperar longos meses e anos para ver o que as fontes têm a dizer às reflexões teórico-metodológicas – acerca daquilo que as fontes deveriam dizer. O problema, é claro, é que a comparação forçosamente conduz a generalizações, as quais, por sua vez, quase sempre podem ser questionadas por pesquisas que enfocam o específico. Por mais que eu me agarre ao específico, reconheço que, de vez em quando, é preciso refletir sobre o quadro geral." (Libby 2008: 27)

Had Libby stringently followed what he preconized in this passage, he probably would not have written a single historiographical book in his entire life. Even stubborn empiricists would agree that if History entails a dialogue, this conversation is pretty much like an interview: sources "say" what is substantial and in this sense they somehow speak for themselves, but they do not speak alone. Rather, they follow a conversational flow which is guided by the Historians; sources may answer a multitude of questions themselves, but, as Marc Bloch would say, nothing which they have not been asked about (Bloch [1940] 1963: 64).

And the selection of "who" is going to be interviewed, the questions that are posed to them, the editing of which "answers" can be discarded and the choice of what and how the general content will be directly or indirectly used in the confection of a particular historiographical account, each one of these steps presupposes theoretical-methodological decisions. During such an elaborative process, when Historians keep listen patiently to whatever the sources "have to say", this by no means implies that they are not incessantly engaged in theoretical-

methodological reflections<sup>163</sup>, for if they were, they would make themselves unable, firstly, to assess, secondly, to express the meaningfulness of what the sources have been saying.

Libby's words sound almost like an accusation that Historians who have a propensity for theoretical elaboration are at best impatient and at worst underhanded.

In the first case, they are precipitate and infer theoretically what the sources would probably say one day, if they managed to wait until then. Of course, there is in this remark a veiled insinuation of disciplinary laziness, for those Historians who spend months and years "listen(ing) to the sources" are not just "waiting", but working hard on their research, obstinately seeking to find something; meanwhile, the ones who prefer to theorize the matter, can spare themselves such trouble by taking time-saving theoretical detours.

In the second case, which, by the way, denotes more accurately what Libby says, Historians infer theoretically that which they think the sources should say. Of course, there is in this remark an unvarnished insinuation of intellectual dishonesty, for it is as though such Historians had no concerns about that which the sources "have to say" and would effectively do if no "theoretical detour" had taken their place.

The reification of the sources entailed by Libby's radical empiricism makes what Historians say congruent with what the sources have to say. Theoretical and methodological concerns just jeopardize this harmony that the Historians enjoy together with their cherished sources in the historiographically protected "realm of the idiographic". Comparison, Libby goes on arguing, is a problem because it is a type of theoretical-methodological procedure that forcefully leads to generalizations. Comparative History is, therefore, the most dangerous terrain a Historian could ever enter into.

It is as though Libby ignored not only that every History is in some sense comparative History<sup>164</sup>, but also that not every theoretical generalization results primarily from a comparison between particular Historical contexts. But he does not ignore it. In another work of his authorship (together with Zephyr Frank), namely, the article "Voltando aos registros

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<sup>163</sup> The word has here the double meaning both of "thinking about" and of "representing a way of thinking about".

<sup>164</sup> As Paul Veyne notes, historicizing presupposes a search for the "originality of things". A Historian can decide to take a legal system as subject. Still, nothing is more similar to a "legal system" than another "legal system". To speak, for example, about the Roman Law System, Historians must individualize it, must circumscribe some particularities that will make of it a proper Historical subject. Therefore, every History, even if not deliberately, turns out to be comparative History. (Veyne 1983: 44–46)

coloniais de Minas colonial: etnicidade em São José do Rio das Morte, 1780-1810”, after having presenting his findings about slave-marriage, they conclude:

“Esses achados contrastam, de maneira bem distinta, com aqueles que se referem ao Recôncavo Baiano no final do século XVIII, pois lá, casais formados por africanos e nativos representavam pouco mais que 15% de todos os casamentos. Também contrastam com a situação no interior do Rio de Janeiro, onde a frequência dos casamentos ‘mistos’ decaiu de 23% em 1790 para 11% em 1830, e com as práticas encontradas para o município cafeeiro paulista de Bananal na virada do século, quando as uniões formais entre africanos e nativos perfaziam meros 14,6% de todos os casamentos escravos. O comportamento exógeno dos mancípios de São José, *sem dúvida, coloca em xeque as interpretações historiográficas* que insistem não apenas em que os africanos se dividiam, de maneira irreparável, entre seus agrupamentos ‘tribais’, mas também que não se davam bem com os escravos nativos do Brasil.” (Libby/Frank 2009: 400 – emphasis added)

Even though Libby/Frank’s account focuses exclusively on Rio das Mortes between 1780-1810, comparison plays a central role here, to wit the role of calling other historiographical interpretations into question.

In the same article, they add a footnote to explain that their use the terms “*etnicidade, etnia e étnico(a)*” is not fortuitous, but

“se referem, *da maneira mais abrangente possível* dentro das discussões do momento atual, à noção de uma grande diversidade de rótulos ou de representações identitárias utilizados no passado escravista para designar africanos e seus descendentes. Embora os termos empregados para rotular tais descendentes não constituam etnias propriamente ditas, não encontramos outro termo de abrangência satisfatória.” (Libby/2009: 408 – emphasis added)

Libby is aware that he cannot make his point without resorting to some general category referring to the process of identity’s constitution that he is interested in presenting historiographically. He opts for “ethnicity”, which then refers to the abstract way in which past identity representations will be re-presented in the analysis. Evidently, a “generalization” of this nature does not precipitate him into the type of comparative History he is afraid of.

In defense of Libby one could say, first, that when he compares different “historical interpretations”, he does it on the basis of statistical relationships, that is, on the basis of supposedly “hard empirical data”, not on a “theoretical basis”; second, that when he generalizes by using a conceptual term like “ethnicity”, he confines it to a referential role, that is, he does not draw from it any conclusion that could give the general physiognomy of his Historical representation. Thus, although he compares and generalizes, he remains a coherent “radical empiricist”. As such, Libby’s History was already “somewhere”, explicit in whatever happens to become a historiographical source, just waiting to be discovered by Historians who are meticulous and patient enough to do that. His understanding of History suggests that

sources are as transparent as the viewpoint of the Historian who do not cover them with a coat of theoretical dye in order to make them say anything other than what they “have to say”.

The issue Libby must ignore entirely, and which ultimately accounts for his epistemological stance, is that of representation. Indeed, he shows himself to be aware that what Historians primarily do is to analyse “representations of the past” (sources) in order to produce other representations that by virtue of their own nature must be called, as he so does, “historical interpretations”. Even though he shows himself to be aware of all that, the general problem of representation, or, applying Spivak’s distinction, the problem of “re-presentation” in History as well as of “Historical representation”, are non-issues in his programmatic review of slave paternalism.

The consequences of Libby’s supreme indifference towards this problem will be assessed after an analysis of the treatment that Eduardo França Paiva, his fellow in the head of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, gives to the question.

Eduardo França Paiva, unlike Douglas Cole Libby, expressly addresses the issue of representation, namely, when he explains *how* the concept of “mestiçagem e hibridação” should be understood in his work:

“Desde já, creio, se faz importante esclarecer que *mestiçagem e hibridação não têm, aqui, um contrário que seria o natural, isto é, não tem correspondência de culturas puras, íntegras e estanques no tempo, a não ser no domínio das representações e dos discursos, onde, historicamente, elas existem e persistem*. Entretanto, o pressuposto adotado é o de que, a não ser nestas duas últimas dimensões da realidade histórica, elas não existem. Não estou portanto de acordo em atribuir-lhes uma existência ‘natural’”. (Paiva 2008: 15 – emphasis added)

Some pages later, he practically paraphrases himself:

“Por meio deles [negros e mestiços] é que se pretende dialogar com outros grupos sociais, buscando-se compreender como hibridismos e impermeabilidades se processaram intensamente, demonstrando como culturas e histórias nunca são estáticas no tempo e no espaço, não obstante se processarem e ritmos marcados pelas descontinuidades, mas, também, pelas permanências, bem como por via de representações e de discursos que, por vezes, inventaram purezas e imutabilidades. Entretanto, *o conceito de hibridismo não encontra, aqui, quero insistir, um pressuposto conceitual fundando nas ideias de pureza e de genuinidade étnicas e culturais, a não ser, exatamente, na dimensão do imaginário*.” (Paiva 2008: 25 – emphasis added)

When within a few pages a Historian emphatically repeats twice that a certain social phenomenon is not static in time and space, but has a changing character, one has the right

to suppose that something is rotten in the state of Denmark. In which other social science might the assumption that human affairs change over time be regarded as a matter of course rather than in History? Which kind of Historian must be reminded that cultural and identity formations are not “natural phenomena”?

Had those remarks not been published in a programmatic article that opens an academic book supposed to make a specialized public acquainted with the production of a scholarly research group, they could perhaps be regarded as bordering on the asininity and, therefore, lightly discarded. Given that this is not the case, one has then better take them seriously into account, for they must be there for a very good reason.

Indeed, reconstructing Paiva’s argument one sees that the idea of “the natural” plays a decisive role in his treatment of the question of representation. His concept of “mestiçagem/hibridismo” does not have a counterpart in what was “the natural”, that is, cultures that were “puras, íntegras e estanke no tempo.” Cultures of this nature, he warns, *did not exist anywhere apart from two dimensions of historical reality: in the domain of representations and of discourse.*

The trouble with Paiva’s argument is that it negatively suggests the existence of cultures in a “dimension of historical reality” located ‘*somewhere else*’, rather than in the “domain of representations and discourse”. Not by accident, this ‘*somewhere*’ is not only *the dimension* that his historiographical representation accounts for, but also *the domain* within which cultures are not pure, full and static in time, but rather, mixed, fragmentary and changing over time instead.

There is a moment in Paiva’s text in which he shows exemplarily how one may arrive at this quite mysterious “dimension of reality”. Discoursing on his sources, in the case, paintings executed by foreign travellers, he says:

“Um outro aspecto a ser destacado é o relativo aos modelos usados por viajantes, artistas e cientistas para elaboração das imagens desse universo [da escravidão no período colonial], muitas vezes realizadas sem que os autores conhecessem pessoalmente as áreas, os costumes e a população retratada. Se, por um lado, isso poderia comprometer o resultado e, ainda mais, o uso desses registros hoje, sem o devido cuidado, por outro, *vários elementos que se repetem existiam concretamente, não sendo, portanto, uma invenção improcedente.* Isso fez com que muitas imagens produzidas por agentes que não se conheceram, sobre realidades muito distintas e, até mesmo, em períodos diferentes, resultassem em formas muito parecidas e retratassem expressões, hábitos, costumes e agentes em atitudes bem semelhantes. Esse aspecto, claro, acaba por fomentar comparações e conexões possíveis, que, longe de serem *fruto artificial* de modelos artísticos acadêmicos empregados ou de cópias realizadas umas sobre as outras, resultam também do *registro de elementos similares que realmente*

*constituíam as sociedades escravistas e as mestiçagens coloniais, tanto no período de produção das imagens, quanto em tempos anteriores a elas.”* (Paiva 2008: 23 – emphasis added)

Central to this passage is the acknowledgement that painters and drawers used “artistic-academic models” in the execution of their works. About this issue, Rodrigo Naves, in a brilliant analysis of Debret’s work, discusses the difficulty encountered by the painter to apply a pre-established formal system, the French neoclassicism, to the representation of Brazilian reality:

“Decididamente, a existência da escravidão impedia de vez qualquer tentativa de transpor com verdade a forma neoclássica para o Brasil. [...] Nem reis nem ricos, pobres, pretos ou brancos ofereciam uma base em que apoiar o formalismo moralizador do movimento neoclássico. Onde encontrar virtudes exemplares numa sociedade toda assentada no trabalho escravo, a não ser por um inaceitável falseamento?” (Naves 1996: 71)

Nave’s analysis evinces how much the colonial iconography produced by foreign artists came about as a fruit of a relationship comprised of the reproduction of a “model” of re-presenting (*darstellen*) that derives inextricably from an act of representing (*vertreten*) a particular aesthetic and moral view on subjects that, in turn, offer resistance to such a representation. If one takes this tension into consideration, it makes not much sense to say, as Paiva does, that the “model” could “endanger” the “result” of the work. Rather, the aesthetical model plays the role of that which enables one to achieve at least partially the expected result of the representation.

From such a point of view, the use Historians could make of whatever may have resulted of those paintings would be much more complex than Paiva’s one, which, as the passage above shows, is quite simple: based on similitudes of “forms” and “attitudes” he separates the “actual content”<sup>165</sup> of the paintings from what could possibly be an “invention” or the “artificial fruit” of the “artistic-academic model”. The “actual content” he elects then as the elements that, of course, *actually* constituted the slave societies and the “mestiçagens coloniais”. You might be wondering: What about “the rest”, the, so to speak, “non-actual

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<sup>165</sup> Rodrigo Naves observes that one of the reasons obstructing a more effective understanding of Debret’s work is the fact that he as well as virtually all others foreign artists who depicted colonial Brazil have been regarded as documentarians. So “a análise do aspecto propriamente estético de suas obras acabou ficando à margem, e a ênfase nas cenas e objetos representados colocou-os num pé de igualdade pouco esclarecedor. Serviram de material para etnólogos, historiadores e antropólogos, sem que seus próprios trabalhos merecesse uma análise adequada.” (Naves 1996: 44–45)

A complement to Nave’s correct remark would read that what has been obstructed by the reduction of colonial iconography to their “documental” character is *not only* a more effective understanding of Debret’s work *but also* of the very History written on the base of these sources.

content”? Paiva does not report on the destiny he gives it. But he does underline that many times nineteenth-century images, when compared to each other and combined with written sources, become “faithful and revealing” portraits of the “universo *mestiço*”<sup>166</sup>.

The problem here is not exactly the circularity of the argument, that is, the fact that the “universo *mestiço*” which happens to be “revealed” by the “faithful portrait” is already implied in the very conceptual premise that guides the historiographical inquiry from the outset. Neither would it make sense to question the validity of ascribing empirical similitudes on the basis of inferences made by comparing and crossing different types of sources; from a historiographical viewpoint, this procedure is both perfectly feasible and legitimate.

What is troublesome in Paiva’s approach is that it aims at getting the iconographic sources purified from the “deceptive effects” of the “aesthetical models” either until these images no longer show “non-actual content” or until whatever may be “non-actual” within them becomes strictly irrelevant. Ultimately, what *is* assumedly a (visual) representation becomes even liable to be paradoxically presented as possessing only “actual content”! Through such an approach, the Historian pushes the interpretation to the point at which it becomes entirely transparent: the historical representation then *becomes* something *through which* one sees the past without seeing that which one is seeing through. It is, in fact, as if the Historian had arrived at the “actual content of the past”. Here lies the empiricist trap that conflates representation and representation.<sup>167</sup>

At this point, Eduardo França Paiva meets Douglas Cole Libby in the practice of a “representationalist realism”, the main consequence of which is doing away with the issue of representation in History. Interestingly enough, both authors do that in programmatic texts concerned with theoretical questions. This ought to put those on their guard who believe that theorization is a waterproof that can perfectly protect History against positivist-empiricist

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<sup>166</sup> “As imagens do século XIX, saliente-se novamente, trazem muitas informações sobre as permanências, antigos gostos, costumes, práticas e formas de viver, o que as transformam em fontes imprescindíveis para trabalhos comparativos. *Muitas vezes, aliadas à documentação ou a relatos de viajantes do período, elas se transformam em retratos fidedignos e reveladores daquele universo mestiço.*” (Paiva 2008: 21 – emphasis added)

<sup>167</sup> Borrowing Frank Ankersmit’s formulation, one could rephrase this same idea by saying that Paiva’s approach amounts to represent *that* the colonial slave societies were “*mestiçagens coloniais*”, rather than to re-present the colonial slave society *as* “*mestiçagens coloniais*”. Ankersmit recommends distinguishing between “representing *that*” and “representing *as*”. In the first case the accent lies on qualities of what is represented and in the second case on those of the representation itself. (Ankersmit 1995: 229)

storms that lend validity to it [History] on grounds that are beyond its own power of legitimatising itself as representation.

Frank Ankersmit comments with a mixture of satisfaction and grief:

“Generally speaking, the writing of history has no avant-garde. On the contrary, *the fate of historical writing is decided by the unadventurous many*. Its disciplinary boundaries were drawn quite clearly by Leopold von Ranke—and have remained fundamentally the same since then. Contemporary Historians reading Ranke will have their legitimate doubts about several aspects of his texts and may dispute many of his claims about the past, but they will be ready to grant that he presented the results of his research in much the same way as they do themselves. [...] One can be a Historian of genius without redrawing the disciplinary boundaries of historical writing by an inch.” (Ankersmit 2012: 178–179 – emphasis added)

Eduardo França Paiva and Douglas Cole Libby are two of these Ankersmit’s “unadventurous many” who, keeping in mind their institutional duties, decide the fate of Historical writing. They are devotees of a Rankean-style History supposed to represent the past *that “actually happened”*, rather than of a History that represents the past *as* an actual representation of what happened.

In this sense, accepting that, in analogy to the Eurocentrism that establishes England as the regulating centre of temporal measurement<sup>168</sup>, the Rankean Historicism functions as a kind of Greenwich Mean Time yardstick against which the degree of deviation from History’s regulating epistemological centre might be measured in temporal terms, one could then conclude that both Paiva’s and Libby’s historiographical accounts are *synchronized* with London’s time.

### **The “adventurous few”**

Much more than keeping a safe distance from the “fetishism of the documents” which characterizes Paiva’s and Libby’s approach, Petrônio Domingues sets the stage for telling his *Uma História Não Contada* so as to prevent this topic from occupying the centre of the discussion on what the Historian’s business primarily consist of.

Departing from a Marxist point of view, Domingues draws attention, first and foremost, to the essential role of ideology in academic historiographical production. By quoting Adam Schaff,

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<sup>168</sup> “Eurocentrism, like Renaissance, perspectives in painting, envisions the world from a single privileged point. It maps the world in a cartography that centralizes and augments Europe while literally “belittling” Africa. The “East” is divided into “Near”, “Middle”, and “Far”, making Europe the arbiter of spatial evaluation, just as *the establishment of Greenwich Mean Time produces England as the regulating centre of temporal measurement.*” (Shohat/Stam 1994: 2 – emphasis added)

he argues that, in so far as Historians, as everyone else, are the product of social relations under which they live, they are also prone to reproduce the hegemonic set of ideological beliefs that meet both the structural social determinations of their own time and society, as well as the specific conditionings of their particular social position.

Judging from Domingues' words, Schaff's view follows a variant of Marxism that reduces all that, which may comprise a "social position", to the category of "social class". Domingues then remarks that "A questão é mais ampla e complexa. Além do recorte de classe, a atividade de pesquisa é influenciada, de forma combinada, pelos interesses de gênero, raça, orientação sexual." (Domingues 2004: 22).

At first sight, it seems as if Domingues is going to amend the fatal deterministic shortcomings that may stem from the economic determinism of the Marxist approach he chooses. This impression becomes even stronger when he puts across his point by articulating a discourse of equal rights of Historical representation:

"Um país multirracial e poliétnico não pode aceitar que se escreva apenas a história dos vencedores, ou seja, dos considerados brancos. Embora negada, a história do negro não é irrelevante. Pelo contrário, é tão importante quanto a de qualquer outro segmento da população. Uma história plural pressupõe o registro da diferença, o acolhimento da diversidade e o reconhecimento do 'outro'." (Domingues 2004: 22)

Nevertheless, the more he develops his analysis, the more he gets caught up in another variant of determinism, namely, one of cultural nature, in which the category "race" takes the place of "social class" and, consequently, "racism" plays the role of that which determines social relations in the last instance. "Racism" becomes, in Domingue's favourite formulation, the hidden "essence" which explains why the History he tells had been so far untold.

This assumption is, for instance, at the bottom of one of the main achievements of *Uma História Não Contada*: the historiographically founded critique of the theses put forward by the "escola sociológica paulista" on the marginal integration of black people into capitalist class society. Florestan Fernandes, Octavio Ianni and their followers, Domingues pontificates, "trocam a essência pela aparência do processo" (Domingues 2004: 84).

These two categories, "essence" and "appearance", are even more operative when Domingues deals with primary sources. Discussing São Paulo's state program of immigration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a program that Domingues ironically and provocatively calls "políticas públicas de 'ação afirmativa' a favor dos trabalhadores imigrantes europeus", he says:

*“Aparentemente, esta política era desprovida de qualquer orientação racial, mas, na essência, quando os representantes da elite agrária e a máquina estatal – que eles controlavam – optaram por investir milhões na atração de trabalhadores brancos e se recusaram a empregar recursos públicos comparáveis no aproveitamento dos negros, tornaram explícito seu verdadeiro desígnio racial.”* (Domingues 2004: 68 – emphasis added)

Domingues is right when he points to the ethnocentric blind spot of the “*escola sociológica paulista*”. He argues that it presents, firstly, an idealized image of the European immigrants as high-skilled workers as well as, secondly, an idealized image of the members of Paulista agrarian elite as forerunners of capitalism. While both these groups are endowed with a progressive entrepreneurial mentality, by the same token, it obnubilates the force of racism both in the discrimination against black people and in the shaping of social scientific explanations. He is equally right in emphasizing the pivotal role that racism played in the nineteenth century’s policy of immigration in São Paulo.

However, in dressing up central statements of his analysis in a Marxist language that somehow presumptuously claims to be able to separate sharply what belonged to the “realm of appearances” from what belonged to the “essence” of historical processes, he opens a window through which a crude form of positivist-empiricism, in whose face he had shut the front door by foregrounding the question of ideology in Historical representation, not only enters into but also makes itself comfortable within his representation of black people’s history in the nineteenth-century’s São Paulo.

So, in order to refute the stigma of alcoholism associated with black people, a topic that has been explored by Pierre Denis in his *O Brasil no Século XX*, Domingues provides a table with statistic data about the numbers of inmates (classified according to ethnic criteria), who had been interned because of alcoholism in the asylum Juqueri. The statistic covers just six years (1894-1900) and comprises 96 patients altogether, of which 68 were white people. Domingues then correlates these numbers with general demographic data about the population, and concludes:

*“Embora o percentual de brancos fosse de 63%, o percentual de internados por alcoolismo no hospício de São Paulo entre 1894 e 1900 era de 70,83%. Portanto, proporcionalmente, um número maior de brancos era alcoólatra ante os negros.*

*Obliterando dados da realidade, Pierre Denis podia sentenciar que o consumo de álcool era mais um vício inveterado da raça negra. Resultado: o estado de ‘anomia’ dessa população era convenientemente subordinado a sua virtual deficiência congênita.”* (Domingues 2004: 55–56)

The feebleness of this way of adducing statistical evidence is more or less obvious and ranges from the relevance of the statistic survey, through the way of ascribing ethnic belonging in both sources, to the proper mathematical problems related to the form of the correlation. But that is not really the point. Much more important is the way Domingues discursively uses the precision emanating from statistical numbers to attest the racism of Pierre Denis' work: "Obliterating data of the reality" Pierre Denis had become able to echo the racist idea that black people had an inborn susceptibility to alcoholism. Instead of casting this ill-grounded shadow of intellectual dishonesty directly on Pierre Denis, it would have been perhaps wiser to treat him as an exemplar case of the casuist nature that characterizes the search for empirical evidence of black people's inferiority in racist discourses in general. Since Domingues is the one who comes up with statistical data supposed to be an empirical refutation of racist ascriptions, he runs the risk of having this casuistic character imputed to his own argument.

Unfortunately, Pierre Denis is not the only one who awakes in Petrônio Domingues the positivist-empiricist Mr. Hyde asleep within the astute Dr. Jekyll, who is always attentive to the ubiquity of representation in History. The same kind of reasoning used in the analysis of Pierre Denis' work is applied to several other questions in *Uma História Não Contada*. Therefore, the book abounds with sentences such as:

"Reiteramos: a assertiva de uma abissal superioridade cultural do imigrante europeu não tem *respaldo empírico na realidade histórica*. Supomos que esta foi uma *visão fabricada artificialmente*, a qual serviu para justificar a substituição racial na força de trabalho do estado de São Paulo." (Domingues 2004: 91)

"O discurso patronal da época, acusando os negros de vagabundos e despreocupados em procurar emprego, era um sofisma, já que não correspondia aos fatos." (Domingues 2004: 114)

"Esse artigo é interessante [...] porque mostra, de forma cabal, a segregação a que ficava sujeito o negro na vida pública da cidade de São Paulo." (Domingues 2004: 161)

The first passage is particularly elucidative. It shows how in using the pair essence/appearance Domingues reproduces almost literally the same opposition between actual content/artificial content or invention that was present in Paiva's analysis of the iconography of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Brazilian slavery.

But given that, differently from Paiva, Domingues does not assume that Historians can provide a “faithful portrait of reality”, but rather a portrait faithful to their own ideological beliefs about what reality is, such an opposition produces a vigorous tension in the heart of his work. A tension that Domingues eases against the grain of his own argument by premising many central statements he makes on the racist essence of historical processes on hard empirical data, which he then presents as nude “historical reality”.

Had Domingues formulated the “determinant” character of his concept of racism not as the “essence” [of the historical process] opposed to the “appearance” [of its representation], but in terms of “the setting of limits” [of his own Historical account], then his “cultural determinism” could no longer have been historiographically re-presented as a kind of hidden power that controls or decides the outcome of an action or process irrespective of its historical representation. When conceived in the fashion here suggested, determination comprises “a complex and interrelated process of limits and pressures” that “is in the whole social process itself and nowhere else: not in an abstract mode of production nor in an abstract ‘psychology’”. (Williams [1977] 2009: 83–89)

In other words, that commonplace remark on the many different types of “determination” (gender, race, social class, etc.), that is, the “overdetermination” of historical processes, rather than being merely saluted and put methodically aside, had to be put on the methodological center of Historical representations. This procedure ought not yet to imply one must give up to accentuate particular types of social constraint. Quite the opposite:

“The concept of ‘overdetermination’ is an attempt to avoid the isolation of autonomous categories but at the same time to emphasize relatively autonomous yet of course interactive practices. In its most positive forms [...] the concept of ‘overdetermination’ is more useful than any other as a way of understanding historically lived situations and the authentic complexity of practice.” (Williams [1977] 2009: 88)

An untold History of racism in Brazil, if it were to be written by taking these Marxist theoretical remarks fully into account, would certainly be a book in which “empirical research [still] fleshes out a theoretical skeleton which is substantially Europe” (Chakrabarty 1992: 1–3). However, it would also be a book in which the historiographical embodiment of Chakrabarty’s “hyperreal Europe” could not materialize itself as follows:

“Como assevera Karl Marx em *A Ideologia Alemã*, ‘toda classe que aspira à dominação [...] deve conquistar primeiro o poder político para apresentar por sua vez seu interesse próprio como sendo o interesse geral.’ Baseado neste mecanismo de dominação descrito por Marx, é plausível afirmar que os cafeicultores do Oeste paulista colocaram o Estado a serviço de seus interesses privados, ou melhor, de classe, implementando um programa discriminatório. O

governo, como resultado deste processo, assumiu em forma de política pública o que os apologistas do branqueamento apregoavam em teoria.” (Domingues 2004: 64)

This passage shows the extent to which Domingues does not “attempt to dethrone Marxism from its guarantees” (Hall 1988: 72). Instead he uses it for grounding another guarantee that thrives off the Marxist meta-narrative of history, replacing economy with culture as the driving force endowed with substantial degree of autonomy. Marxism functions in a highly ideologically manner in Domingues’ work because, as Stuart Hall would say, it “is not a framework for scientific analysis only but also a way of helping [Domingues] sleep well at night” (Hall 1988: 72). Furthermore, it offers him *not only* the guarantee that History has an essence that can be revealed *but also* the field of discursive authority to claim that, with respect to his particular subject matter, this essence is racism. Thus, Domingues’ work is incredibly coherent: it ends up corroborating its theoretical point of departure, which reads that Historical representation is *essentially* ideological.

In spite of his effort to criticize Eurocentric ethnocentrism, the way in which Petrônio Domingues employs Marxism makes of his *Uma História Não Contada* an astounding example of the kind of History that reassures “the dominance of Europe as the subject of all histories” (Chakrabarty 2000: 27). However, one should not forget that in making plain that the dispute over “what actually happened” is waged in a field where what opposes History’s complete fulfilment is the “ideological” rather than the “natural” or “non-actual”, he concedes to the issue of representation a place of indelible importance that entirely prevents him from becoming transparent.

In this sense, coming back to Shohat/Stam’s analogy between Greenwich Mean Time and Eurocentrism, one can conclude that even though Domingues’ work is profoundly Eurocentric, one can judiciously greet it with a gesture symbolically sympathetic to its Marxist inclination and say that *Uma História Não Contada* is *synchronized* with Trier’s (see footnote 32) time. That is, in temporal terms its degree of deviation amounts to one grade in time away from the line that separates the “West” from the “Rest”, sitting a mark closer to the Orient.

#### *The issue of “representation” in Kelmer Mathias and Sydney Chalhoub*

The ideas advanced by Douglas Cole Libby and Eduardo França, with their emphasis on the importance of concepts such as “mestiçagem/hibridismo” in approaching colonial slavery, conflicts directly with the perspective offered by Petrônio Domingues, who stresses the

necessity of exploring the methodological power of the concept of racism in order to demonstrate that what colonial slavery had primarily produced, far from being cultural “mestiçagens coloniais”, were cultural mechanisms of exclusion, discrimination and segregation.

On the other hand, despite this diametrical opposition, both approaches share a positivist-empiricist belief which, however, enables the members of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens” to unearth the past as it “actually happened” by burying the issue of representation, while, at the same time, makes *Uma História Não Contada* to disinter this latter issue in unearthing the past as it “actually happened”. Putting it in Spivak’s idiom: Libby and Paiva seek fundamentally for the correspondence between Historical representation and what it re-presents (*darstellen*), while Domingues pursues the same aim concerning the correspondence between Historical representation and whom it represents (*vertreten*).

With respect to the differential ideal against which they measure themselves, as argued above, there is not a great discrepancy between the plead for “mestiçagem” and “hibridismo” patronized by Libby and Paiva and the cry for radical ethnic otherness raised by Petrônio Domingues: both may be seen as a deeply Eurocentric attempt to defend History against Eurocentrism. Yet that small degree of deviation attributed to *Uma História Não Contada* is not at all indifferent. It is tantamount to the slight difference of angle between the fatal and clumsy backwards move, that precipitates one into an even more vulnerable position, and the smart defensive manoeuvre, that opens up the possibility of a prompt counterattack. What follows from the consecution of each of these two movements is not only absolutely distinct, but also potentially decisive in the course of what happens thereafter.

The two texts that are going to be analysed in this section are like “case studies” of what kind of History may result from the programmatic approach preconized by the group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, in the case of Kelmer Mathias’ article “O Braço armado do Senhor”, as well as from the one adopted by Petrônio Domingues, in the case Sydney Chalhoub’s book *A Força da Escravidão*.

### **The master’s armed arm**

“O Braço Armado do Senhor: Recursos e Orientações Valorativas nas Relações Sociais Escravistas em Minas Gerais na Primeira Metade do Século XVIII” (2008): a long and detailed title, academic in style, that would sound as appropriate as monotonous if it had not smartly

announced almost everything that follows, apart from who “the master’s armed arm” (*o braço armado do senhor*) is. And so, by keeping in the dark the presumed protagonists of his account, Carlos Leonardo Kelmer Mathias manages to arouse some curiosity about it.

Kelmer Mathias’ article is an inebriant blend of the horizontality proper culturalist approaches (such as that deployed by Eduardo França Paiva when developing his idea of “mestiçagens coloniais”) and the deceptiveness that characterizes Douglas Cole Libby’s recommendation to think about paternalism without paying too much attention to “negative aspects” of the slaves’ lives, since, please note again Libby’s words, paternalism is a game that the masters never win anyway.

Kelmer Mathias’ culturalist horizontality draws on a concept of society borrowed from João Fragoso’s use of Fredrik Barth’s ideas: “Conforme apontado por João Fragoso, em Barth a sociedade é considerada ao mesmo tempo aberta e fragmentada” (Mathias 2008: 90). ‘Fragmented’ because the actors involved in social interaction were different people, who acted in conformity with their own means and value orientations; ‘open’ because peoples’ actions were guided by values of distinct worlds. The central concept for understanding such a society is that of “strategy”:

“De tais considerações, a noção de estratégia, tal qual trabalhada por Barth, invoca uma série de incoerências. Logo, o comportamento deixa de ser visto como uma ‘consequência mecânica’, passando a fazer parte de um processo dinâmico de transformações sociais. [...] Desse modo, Fredrik Barth ‘faz do indivíduo um ator’, capaz de realizar escolhas e de tomar decisões segundo seus recursos. Essas escolhas dependem, dentre outras coisas, das previsões das ações e reações de outros atores sociais dentro de uma ‘margem de manobra’ que delimita um ‘universo de possíveis’.” (Mathias 2008: 90–91)

To complement this exposition, that he calls his “proposta teórico-metodológica”, Kelmer Mathias then adds two points: First, that Barth’s idea of strategy “está profundamente relacionada à ideia de racionalidade”. Second, that the groups identified by João Fragoso, with the help of Barth’s ideas, as comprising the society of the sixteenth-century’s Rio de Janeiro are pretty much the same ones which form the colonial society of Vila Rica (in the state Minas Gerais), the city he analyses. These groups were: “1) a nobreza da terra – influenciada pelo antigo Regime e sua concepção corporativa de sociedade; 2) os negros, pardos e forros – “segmentos sociais portadores de visões sobre parentesco e religiosidade, vindos dos reinos do Golfo da Guiné e da África Centro-Occidental”; 3) demais grupos (Fragoso, 2005: 25).” (Mathias 2008: 91)

So far is everything fine. All the more when one finds out that those who form the “master’s armed arm”, whom the title kept deliberately incognito, are the slaves. They are going to be the “individuals” regarded as “actors” who act “strategically”. The question Kelmer Mathias wants to address by using this conceptual apparatus is quite an interesting one. Even more interesting is the way he formulates it.

First he argues that masters had been unable to exercise their power without the “support” of their slaves. From this assumption, he then infers, speaking about the *Vila Rica Revolt*, that when a master revolts against the authorities, so do his slaves. Consequently, were a master defeated, so were his slaves. For this reason, he continues, he understands that in fighting the royal government together with their masters, the slaves were somehow struggling for their own lives. Nonetheless, since the slaves’ lives were not *quite* in danger *before* the master’s disparate decision to become an insurgent, the author then deduces that the slaves must have obtained something else, they must have received some kind of benefit that had ultimately moved them to risk their lives for the sake of the master. The point Kelmer Mathias wants to make concerns especially this last question. By analysing it, he aims at expounding the “recursos e orientações valorativas” of the slaves. So, he preliminarily explains:

“Parte-se do pressuposto de que por detrás de relações sociais como a acima relatada havia, na grande maioria das vezes, uma sutil e refinada negociação entre senhor e escravo – negociação essa que, por via de regra, regia os rumos dessas mesmas relações. Aqui, *percebo* os cativos como sujeitos dotados de um conjunto de valores e orientações ao qual se voltavam quando por tomar esta ou aquela decisão.” (Mathias 2008: 90 – emphasis added)

The formulation of the whole problem is extremely awkward. Actually, to qualify it as awkward is to say too little: it is outrageous. Step by step, it will become clear why.

To begin with, is a theory of how individuals and societies work really needed in order simply to state that the slaves will be perceived as subjects endowed with an assemble of values and norms which they resort to in order to take decisions?

Such a preliminary theoretical clarification might be needed if one supposes that, *theoretically*, slaves could have been *perceived* as a bizarre kind of human being who did not possess such attributes. There is no pedantry in this accusation, for such a supposition is precisely what Kelmer Mathias negatively states when he “forgets” to remark that he *perceives* the other “group” as well, that is, the slaveholders, as subjects of the same nature. The reader is here silently told that it is not necessary to make such an obvious statement about the “masters”.

Such a slippage that consists of forgetting to qualify how the master is approached, one may think, is perfectly excusable in a text chiefly concerned with an exposition of the “*recursos e orientações valorativas*” of the slaves. Less excusable surely is to forget the slaves themselves in claiming to talk about them! Yet this is exactly what Kelmer Mathias does in the section entitled “*A percepção prática*”, which immediately follows the theoretical-methodological exposition that opens his article.

He begins this section by remarking that “Na busca pela obtenção e manutenção de sua posição de mando dentro da sociedade, a elite, inevitavelmente, deveria adquirir legitimidade social. Nesse ponto, as *negociações com a escravaria* exerciam uma função primeira. (Mathias 2008: 91 – emphasis added).

The slaves, the author emphasises strongly, were “agentes essenciais nos jogos políticos.” The next few pages are then devoted to providing a considerable number of examples in which the slaves, as “*braço armado do senhor*”, played an essential role in the political game of the slaveholder class.

The examples Kelmer Mathias gives are extremely convincing. He speaks at length about nine slaveholders, *namely*, Pascoal da Silva Guimarães, D. Antônio de Albuquerque, Pedro da Rocha Gandavo, Rafael da Silva Souza, José Luís Borges Pinto, Antônio Correa Sardinha, Domingues Nunes Neto, Luiz Tenório Molina and Manuel da Costa Pinheiro, who employed their slaves as an “armed force” in many different situations between 1711 and 1722. There is no lack of details in the account. Apart from where, when and how exactly the “master’s armed arm” is involved, one is informed of the noble or military title borne by every one of these slaveholders, how many “armed slaves” they had mobilised as well as the kind of political and/or pecuniary recompense they had received. Everything perfectly evidenced by primary sources and detailed footnotes. A great archival job, indeed.

Such meticulous work enables him to write a Historical reconstruction that allows one to gain significant insights into the relationship both among the local elites and between them and the royal authorities. In the end, it is pretty clear the way in which these “individuals” may be regarded as “actors” who acted “strategically”. The author forgets just a little detail: it was the slaves who were announced as the subject matter of the analysis.

In what concern the slaves, they appear *literally* just as a quantified “master’s armed arm”, as in the examples that follow:

“Dois meses depois de ter recebido a patente de mestre-de-campo, Pascoal da Silva mandou *trinta escravos armados* à sua custa em companhia de D. Antônio de Albuquerque quando esse marchou para o Rio de Janeiro pela feita da invasão francesa de 1711, remetendo, em seguida outros tantos cativos seus.” (Mathias 2008: 93 – emphasis added)

“Rafael da Silva Souza [...] apresentou-se ao governador com *duzentos escravos armados* e pagos às suas custas.” (Mathias 2008: 93–94 – emphasis added)

“Tenório de Molina enviou *dezoito escravos seus armados* e mais o alferes de ordenança Francisco Ferreira Izidro à residência de Ferreira de Queirós para cobrar uma dívida.” (Mathias 2008: 96 – emphasis added)

What about that question respecting the “recursos e orientações valorativas” of the slaves? Kelmer Mathias’ answer to this can be seen in the description of the affair involving the slaveholder José Luís Borges Pinto.

Voluntarily, José Luís Borges Pinto puts himself and his “armed arm” at the government’s disposal for carrying out the confiscation of a certain amount of gold that belonged to the royal exchequer. He had then set off a campaign that lasted eighteen days and went through many adversities and logistic difficulties. Borges Pinto had borne all expenses of the small military enterprise. Kelmer Mathias analyses the case as follows:

“Parece-me bastante descabida a ideia de que José Luís [Borges Pinto] e seus escravos sujeitarem-se-iam a passar dezoito dias de perrengue – às custas de sua fazenda e vida – somente para servir aos interesses de El-Rei sem, mesmo que extra-oficialmente, nada obter em troca. Ao se oferecer voluntariamente para o confisco dos comboios e fazendas que passavam pela estrada da Bahia, *José Luís estabelecia uma estratégia de ação esperando que o valor a ser ganho fosse superior ao a ser perdido*. Malgrado o fato de não me ter sido possível encontrar nenhum documento que tratasse abertamente de tal diligência – que me permitisse, portanto, obter algum vestígio de um possível ganho material aferido por José Luís, ou por seus escravos -, José Luís obteve a patente de coronel das tropas da cavalaria de ordenança, posto que lhe conferia, literalmente, prerrogativas de mando e, consecutivamente, contribuía para reforçar seu estatuto de nobreza.

Contudo, a questão torna-se mais sofisticada se nos perguntarmos o porquê dos escravos de José Luís não terem se rebelado e fugido com as “trinta mil oitavas de ouro” volvidas à Fazenda Real, uma vez que, oficialmente, somente José Luís foi recompensado [...]. Tal problema matiza, acredito, dois pontos complementares, quais sejam: 1) não foi apreendida somente a quantia de trinta mil oitavas de ouro; antes, esse montante foi apenas a parte que coube à Real Fazenda; 2) os escravos de José Luís tiveram ou alguma participação no restante do valor apreendido, ou algum outro tipo de ganho, o qual, quando medido a um possível ação contra José Luís, fosse por ele tido como mais vantajoso. Não cabe aqui ficar especulando sobre o que se passou nos dezoito dias de diligência, *apenas ressaltar o refinado grau de negociação* que envolvia não apenas as relações entre as autoridades régias e a elite local, mas também entre a elite e aqueles que contribuía para que a mesma fosse reconhecida como tal. Para além disso, *sugere recursos e orientações valorativas de tais cativos no tomar desta ou aquela decisão*.” (Mathias 2008: 95 – emphasis added)

Indeed, the passage is rather long. But it was nonetheless quoted integrally so as to serve as an example that leaves no doubt about the overwhelming flaws which inform Kelmer Mathias' historiographical account as a whole. The cleverest way of dealing with such a bewildering piece of Historical writing is perhaps to agree fully with whatever it claims.

So, let it be unconditionally accepted that, first, the slaves had either received their share of the confiscated gold or at least obtained another kind of benefit from taking part in the campaign; second, that they made a calculation which showed that it would be more advantageous to take whatever this "benefit" may have been than to rebel against their master. From this supposition, Kelmer Mathias then infers that this process involved a "refinado grau de negociação" between Borges Pinto and his "armed arm". And he gives emphasis exactly to this feature.

Well, what would have been the general terms of this negotiation? What would have been the specific demands of the slaves? What did they perhaps refuse (or concede) in this process? To sum up by borrowing Kelmer Mathias' own words, what would have been the leeway that delimitates the slave's universe of possibilities?<sup>169</sup> The author does not address these questions in any respect. Without having done that, what does it mean then to "emphasize" that subtle degrees of negotiation mediates the relationship between masters and slaves?

The fact is that while a lot of ink and paper is used for writing about the masters' deeds, the author seems not to find room for a single line about the slaves.

What Kelmer Mathias takes from João Fragoso is not a big deal<sup>170</sup>, but if he had paid some attention at least to it, his analysis would probably have been less disastrous. Fragoso

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<sup>169</sup> "Frederick Barth 'faz do indivíduo um ator', capaz de realizar escolhas e de tomar decisões segundo seus recursos. Essas escolhas dependem, dentre outras coisas, das previsões das ações e reações de outros atores sociais dentro de uma 'margem de manobra' que delimita um 'universo de possíveis'". (Mathias 2008: 91 – emphasis added)

<sup>170</sup> By quoting João Fragoso, Kelmer Mathias divides the colonial society in two main social groups. The first group is the "nobreza da terra", which were influenced by the Portuguese Ancient Regime and its corporative conception of society; the second one is that formed by the "negros, pardos e forros", who held views on kinship and religiosity which came from Guinea Gulf and Central and Oriental Africa (Mathias 2008: 91).

Note, yet, that even though Fragoso characterizes each group distinctly, this characterization does not allow for drawing any distinction between them. This happens because the characterization of the former group (a nobreza da terra) is just a particular case of the general characterization provided for the latter one (negros, pardos e forros). In fact, if it is right to characterize the Portuguese Ancient Regime as a Catholic (and hereditary) Monarchy on the head of a rigidly stratified society ("sociedade estamental"), whose system of power was guided by moral and religious values, then it is correct to conclude that this regime was anything other than one of the particular European arrangements of a view on kinship and religiosity (Monarchy, Catholicism and pious family values).

comments on the importance of religiosity and kinship, as well as of the geographical origin of the slaves. Kelmer Mathias, in turn, refers to the “armed slaves” generally as an indistinct mass: no word about where they came from, how old they were on average, whether they shared ties of kinship or not, which of them had possibly been “malungos”, under which conditions they lived, etc. Nor does he mention anything else that may give them any form of identity. No names are revealed either, obviously. Not even to the division of labour among slaves, a topic relatively well explored in the discipline of the History of Slavery, is there a single reference.

In the end, Kelmer Mathias’ text does not care for the slaves in any respect, they are represented only as a mere co-extension of their masters. Any similarity with a paternalist slaveholder’s viewpoint is not mere coincidence. The consequence of that can be (again) *literally* read in (at least) two moments in the quoted passage.

First, given that Kelmer Mathias does not deal with the slaves lives at all, he is consequently unable to present any kind of evidence of what could possibly be the norms and values that guide those enslaved “individuals” who should have been regarded as “actors” who acted “strategically”. For this reason, he must then conclude that what he calls “*a refinada negociação*” just “*sugere recursos e orientações valorativas de tais cativos no tomar esta ou aquela decisão.*”

Here, what had been so far a theoretical presupposition that allowed the author to perceive the slaves as “sujeitos dotados de valores e de orientações” becomes suddenly a “suggestion”. When confronted with the empirical, again the Historian begins negatively raising the suspicion that slaves might have been bizarre creatures who did not possess elementary Human attributes. The empiric, so to speak, *practically* denies what has been *theoretically* taken for granted. Remembering the titles he gives to both sections, one may say that Kelmer Mathias’ “*percepção prática*” works against his “*proposta teórico-metodológica.*”

The second point has to do with another “slippage” that consists of a missing plural possessive pronoun with its fitting substantive. Please, read again these lines: “Parece-me bastante descabida a ideia de que José Luís [Borges Pinto] e seus escravos sujeitar-se-iam a passar dezoito dias de perrengue – **às custas de sua fazenda e vida** – somete para servir aos interesses de El-Rei [...].” (Mathias 2008:95 – emphasis added)

This passage must necessarily have been written as follows: “às custas de **sua** fazenda e **de suas vidas**”. According to Kelmer Mathias’ own argument, while the master might have been

the only one who had financial expenditures, he was not the only one who was risking his neck in that campaign: his “armed slaves” too. This time, in writing about who had suffered particularly hard in such a dire situation, the author symptomatically forgets the slaves! A “language slippage” of this nature is not only inexcusable. It is outrageous. Moreover, it denounces the general point of view that such a Historical account ends up shaping.

Kelmer Mathias seems to be quite aware that his account of the “*braço armado do senhor*” was leading him to a cul-de-sac. Thus, he suddenly drops the matter and moves on to the “(...) *percepção das alforrias, quer como elemento de negociação entre senhor e escravo, quer enquanto parte integrante do conjunto valorativo dos cativos*” (Mathias 2008: 98). Actually, he writes proportionally more about this issue than about that interesting question involving those presumably empowered slaves who bore firearms and fought shoulder to shoulder with their masters.

In dealing with this new subject, Kelmer Mathias exhibits again his tremendous capacity to conduct a meticulous archival survey. An archival survey that again enables him to write a Historical reconstruction that allows for gaining significant insights into what he calls, by quoting Lígia Bellini, “*micropolítica da vida diária*”. The master-slave relationship within the micro-politics of everyday-life, he remarks, “*se davam em proporções desiguais, sendo que, evidentemente, o escravo estava em condições menos favoráveis do que seu senhor.*” (Mathias 2008: 102 – emphasis added)

Addressing now the issue of manumissions, Kelmer Mathias must necessarily deal with the question of women in slavery, for, as Maria Odila L. S. Dias envisioned decades ago in her “*Quotidiano e Poder*”, a path-breaking historiographical work on Women’s History in Brazil, the majority of the manumitted slaves were women who were either master’s concubines and/or worked principally as housekeepers, street vendors or in prostitution<sup>171</sup>.

Differently from what had been his treatment of the “armed male slaves”, Kelmer Mathias does report on the names and life stories of these women and even chooses one of them, Joana, to occupy a prominent position. His analysis of Joana’s case as well as his view on the question of women in slavery runs as follows:

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<sup>171</sup> “Resta ainda por fazer uma história mais sistemática dos processos de alforria na cidade de São Paulo: os vislumbres de documentação acessíveis parecem confirmar outros levantamentos, que vêm sendo levados a cabo em Salvador, na Bahia, em Campos, no Rio de Janeiro e nas *idades mineiras*: em São Paulo também predominavam as alforrias de mulheres, principalmente de vendedoras, mas também do serviço doméstico, concubinas e prostitutas.” (Dias [1984] 2001: 167)

“Paulatinamente, descortina-se o cotidiano daqueles inseridos nas relações de manumissão. *Em um contexto no qual homens e mulheres mandavam em outros homens e mulheres, o sexo feminino levava vantagem (1)*. Não propositadamente todos os exemplos acima alçaram o fêmeo no rol dos libertos. *Que se confira o devido valor à importância do homem na produção do ouro e dos gêneros de abastecimento, assim como ao seu valor enquanto braço armado senhoril, as mulheres parecem ter sido mais versadas nos trâmites da liberdade (2)*. Conforme se verá, na lida com seu senhor, seus filhos eram os mais beneficiados.

Para que não restem dúvidas sobre a versatilidade da mulher no trato com seu senhor em prol da liberdade própria ou de seus filhos, cito o caso passado com Joana. Em 28 de maio de 1719, João de Brito alforriou, de uma tacada só, Joana e seus cinco filhos. *Moça iniciada cedo na vida sexual, Joana – agraciada com a manumissão em função de seus serviços prestados (3) – deu a luz ao menino crioulo Caetano com 15 anos*. Cerca de dois anos depois, nasceu Roberto. Decorridos mais dois anos, veio Gertrudes. Félix esperou um pouco mais, três anos. Voltando à média, Maria, a caçula, deu suas caras ao mundo decorridos outros dois anos. Não obstante Joana ter obtido sua liberdade por serviço, Caetano, Roberto e Gertrudes foram alforriados gratuitamente. Segundo João de Brito, além dele os haver criado “como se fossem seus filhos” e ter por eles “muito amor”, os alforriava por “desencargo de consciência”. Quem sabia o que se dava na consciência de João de Brito já passou dessa pra melhor – ou pior! Vai ver bateu o arrependimento de alguma ação desferida por João aos três guris, ou talvez se tratasse de uma expressão da época com significado específico. *O que realmente importa é o meio pelo qual Félix e Maria alçaram à liberdade (4)*. Suas alforrias foram concedidas mediante pagamento. A coisa fica ainda mais interessante quando se observa não ter sido Joana a responsável pelo pagamento. Para a liberdade de Félix concorreu seu padrinho, José Pereira de Almeida, com os 88\$800 réis necessários. O benfeitor de Maria, novamente um padrinho, foi Jacinto Sanches, figura que desembolsou 60\$000 mil-réis.

Pode-se argumentar o fato de terem sido Caetano, Roberto e Gertrudes filhos de João com Joana, caso não válido para Félix e Maria. *Em função de seus serviços prestados, Joana obteve sua liberdade sem pagar por ela no momento da manumissão. Por amor a seus filhos ilegítimos, João os alforriou também gratuitamente. Por castigo à pulada de cerca de Joana, João somente conferiu a manumissão a Félix e Maria mediante pagamento, cena da qual participam os respectivos padrinhos – talvez os verdadeiros pais (5)*. Especulações à parte, incontestável foi a capacidade de Joana de negociar com seu senhor e com os padrinhos de seus rebentos, além da própria alforria, a liberdade de seus cinco filhos, três gratuitas e duas pagas. Ou seja, de uma única vez, a mulher cativa passou pelas três mais difundidas formas de se obter manumissão. **Notam-se as várias estratégias empreendidas por Joana, assim como seu universo de orientações valorativas (Barth, 1981).**” (6) (Mathias 2008: 104–105 –bold and italics added)

Again a very long passage entirely transcribed. Again with the express purpose of showing conspicuously the sort of dreadful shortcomings, which historiographically nourish “O Braço Armado do Senhor”.

Although, in the case of this excerpt, the nonsense reaches such a degree of thoughtlessness that anybody possessing even a small amount of intellectual decency would feel ashamed even to pretend—even just for the sake of argument—to agree with it. Therefore, instead of exploring the rhetorical strategy presented before, the analysis that follows will consist of brief comments on the most problematic sentences, which are highlighted and numbered in

the transcription. This is a time-saving way of analysing a text comprised of so many serious faults that it is practically impossible to account for all of them without having to write pages and pages.

1) *Em um contexto no qual homens e mulheres mandavam em outros homens e mulheres, o sexo feminino levava vantagem.*

A perfect way of entirely losing sight of the specificity of slavery in general and of colonial slavery in particular! How can he claim in all seriousness that female slaves had an advantage over male ones when one considers that these women were, for example, in the weakest position in what concerns vulnerability to sexual abuse and rape, which was anyway an integral threat in women's lives in general? In addition to that, it was broadly widespread to force enslaved black women to serve as wet-nurse, to breastfeed master's children while their own children suffered from hunger (Machado 2010).

2) *Que se confira o devido valor à importância do homem na produção do ouro e dos gêneros de abastecimento, assim como ao seu valor enquanto braço armado senhoril, as mulheres parecem ter sido mais versadas nos trâmites da liberdade.*

Who, if not the master himself, would so pompously praise the "value" of those [enslaved] men, not intrinsically, but specifically "as" his own "working arm" (on the one hand) and "armed arm" (on the one other)? Reading such solemn words, if one forgets that the speech is about colonial slavery, one may feel almost proud of those "men" who worked so hard and had been so brave in protecting the lives of others!

3) *Moça iniciada cedo na vida sexual, Joana – agraciada com a manumissão em função de seus serviços prestados - deu à luz ao menino crioulo Caetano com 15 anos.*

How wonderful it would be, if Kelmer Mathias had had the intention of being ironic here. If he had put together these three elements, namely, to be "initiated" into sexual life, to be at the master's "service" and to give birth to other "slaves", just in order to stress the inappropriateness of the verb "agraciar"<sup>172</sup>. Unfortunately, this is not at all the case. The next two passages, which will be commented together, make this point clear.

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<sup>172</sup> Agraciar means: 1) to grace; 2) to reward; recompense; honour; 3) to bestow with a title, insignia, etc. (Michaelis Dictionary 2009)

4) O que realmente importa é o meio pelo qual Félix e Maria alçaram à liberdade; 5) Pode-se argumentar o fato de terem sido Caetano, Roberto e Getrudes filhos de João com Joana, caso não válido para Félix e Maria. Em função de seus serviços prestados, Joana obteve sua liberdade sem pagar por ela no momento da manumissão. Por amor a seus filhos ilegítimos, João os alforriou também gratuitamente. **Por castigo à pulada de cerca de Joana**, João somente conferiu a manumissão a Félix e Maria mediante pagamento, cena da qual participam os respectivos padrinhos – talvez os verdadeiros pais.

Correctly (and expectedly), Kelmer Mathias works on the supposition that João de Brito, the master, fathered (at least) the first three children of Joana, the black woman he enslaved. But not even for a second did he ask about the conditions under which the then fourteen or fifteen-year-old Joana became pregnant. Definitely, sexual harassment and rape of slave women are issues with which Kelmer Mathias is not really concerned. If he were, this would be the perfect occasion to discuss, or at least briefly mention them. In failing to do that, his article becomes guilty of a kind of negligence that contributes to leave unquestioned a nefarious set of ideas about slave women. Such ideas, when not openly confronted, may do their evil deeds as implicit assumptions, for they have been academically widespread for too long a time. One of these ideas reads, cynically, that black women cannot be held responsible for the depravity in the patriarchal times, for “all that they [black women] did was to facilitate the [master’s] depravation by her *docility as a slave, by opening her legs at the first manifestation of desire on the part of the young [and/or old] master*. It was not a request but a command to which she had to accede.” (Freyre [1933] 1946: 396 – emphasis added)

Providing then the ultimate proof of the position from which he speaks, Kelmer Mathias symptomatically leaves out the quotation marks he had used before to refer to João de Brito’s statements and reproduces literally the master’s words, now as part of his own argument.

From this point of view, that is, speaking as the master, the author unfolds then an argument which is even more outrageous than that which he had written before, for here it is not about a “language slippage”, here it is not about “forgetting” pronouns and substantives: he unabashedly “argues” that Joana, the slave women who had throughout her whole life been giving birth to children of her master, must have been “unfaithful” to him!<sup>173</sup> Further, he adds that the master “chastised” Joana by demanding a pecuniary payment for the manumission

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<sup>173</sup> In a case of flagrant and distasteful abuse of [writing style] when approaching Joana’s life, Kelmer Mathias uses here the vulgar expression “pular a cerca”: “*Por castigo à pulada de cerca de Joana [...]*.”

of her two last children. Finally, he decides that the freedom of precisely these two last children, the fruit of Joana's "unfaithfulness", is "what really matters". Why? Because "other men" were involved. They had paid for the manumissions. Who may these men have been? Guess what Kelmer Mathias guesses: "Maybe the true fathers". And so he closes his argument.

*(6) Notam-se as várias estratégias empreendidas por Joana, assim como seu universo de orientações valorativas (Barth, 1981).*

What exactly are the "many strategies employed by Joana"? Kelmer Mathias talks about only one: to have children who, she knew, were fated to be enslaved too. In his Historical representation, Joana's agency is entirely limited to her sexual and reproductive capacities, which are then directly related with the obtainment of financial benefits from men, who happened to be her master and/or the fathers of her children. This is how HISTory represents *her*. From what other point of view if not from one deeply androcentric and paternalist can such a representation of enslaved black women be legitimated?<sup>174</sup>

Latest at this point, after having heard the master's voice so loudly and constantly, one may think that the sentence with which the author tied up his reasoning is surely ironic. It is a just a joke. Kelmer Mathias is kidding his readers. Unfortunately, there is no indication that he does *not* mean what he writes. As a matter of fact, he argues that on the basis of what he has been so far discoursing on, one can effectively see **Joana's** "*universo de orientações valorativas*"! The loose bibliographical reference "(Barth, 1981)", which, added at the end, is supposed to lend to this statement some more credibility, appears then just as melancholic as despairing.

The way Kelmer Mathias develops his argument may be labelled as "hypnotic": it fundamentally consists in uttering repeatedly, mostly at the end of every topic he discusses (as in both passages analysed), that his Historical account enables one to see the "*recursos e orientações valorativas*" of the slaves notwithstanding the fact that he badly addresses the slaves themselves and unabashedly adopts a master's point of view.

Had he been more skilled in dealing with Barth's ideas, had he used them not to test out a hypothesis, namely, the hypothesis *that* slaves might have been able to understand the slave

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<sup>174</sup> The paternalist and androcentric feature of Kelmer Mathias' account is accentuated by the fact that although the author underlines that the strong presence of women among the manumitted slaves had been intimately related to the role they played in the mercantile activities (Mathias 2008: 102), he chooses to give Joana's case as an example supposed to leave no doubts about the "versatilidade da mulher no trato com seu senhor em prol da liberdade própria ou de seus filhos [...]" (Mathias 2008: 104)

system and to act “strategically” guided by their own values and ideas<sup>175</sup>, had he done *not* that but, instead, tried to show *which* might have been these values and ideas, had he, in short, been successful in constructing a persuasive representation of the slaves’ *Weltanschauung*, his article would be even more dangerous.

In this sense, what a boon that “O Braço Armado do Senhor” fails miserably to fulfil its aim! Otherwise, it would give potential to the kind of equivocation resulting from a perspective that combines that emphasis on a horizontal axis in the representation of dramatically asymmetrical power relations (Paiva’s approach) with that paternalistic view concerned with overlooking the “negative aspects” of slavery (Libby’s approach). In such a case, so to speak, the “master’s [historiographically] armed arm” would be sure-fire aimed at the slaves’ representation, which would not be safe from the master’s will [of truth and power] if he wins. And this master, Walter Benjamin rebukes Douglas C. Libby, “has not ceased to be victorious” (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 255).

### **An anti-Brás Cubas**

Sidney Chalhoub’s *A Força da Escravidão – Ilegalidade e Costume no Brasil Oitocentista* (2012) is a book very dissimilar from Petrônio Domingues’ *Uma História Não Contada*. Inspired by a short-sighted variant of Marxism, the latter is deterministic in its approach, academic in style and militant in tone. The former, on the other hand, carefully avoiding conceptual digressions, is narrative in its approach, literary in style and politically engaged in a level-headed tone. Nonetheless, these two works have a great deal in common. Firstly, both set the problem of the clash between custom and law as the frame of reference within which slavery shall be addressed. Domingues, as discussed above, advances the thesis that, in the decades immediately posterior to the Abolition, a “segregacionista e costumeiro” type of racism had played a central role in the social marginalization of blacks in São Paulo. Sidney Chalhoub, in

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<sup>175</sup> Speaking about the fact that slaves used to try to notarize manumission letters as a way of obtaining some further juridical guarantee, Kelmer Mathias comments: “A meu ver, isso *insinua* que no complexo jogo do sistema escravista colonial na América lusa os escravos não apenas eram capazes de identificar e compreender suas regras como, por vezes, agiam com base nelas.” (Mathias 2008: 101 – emphasis added) One may wonder: what had been the Historian’s assumption before he happened to be confronted with these sources in which he sees “insinuations” that the slaves had been able not only to identify and understand the rules of the slave system, but also that they sometimes even acted on the basis of such rules? It seems he had assumed that slaves could have been perfect imbeciles incapable neither to identify nor to understand the rules they have been forced to follow. Fortunately, there were these precious sources which at least “insinuate” that the slaves were not so!

turn, shows how “a força do costume [of slavery social practices]” endangered the freedom of freeborn as well as of manumitted blacks all throughout the last century of the regime of slavery in Brazil. In both cases the authors address colonial slavery by pushing to the fore the issue of the precariousness of black people’s experience of freedom, a perspective that has been so far little explored in the Brazilian History of Slavery.

Domingues gives his own disciplinary voice to the discourse articulated by the “*imprensa negra*” and deploys Marxism’s authoritative theoretical aura as a way of making of his Historical account a true content of a History which has not been told yet: Black History. In doing so, he effects what has been called “identity politics” with its usual “strategic essentialism.” Although Domingues’ essentialism is perhaps not as strategically well positioned as the author might have wished, his analysis has the great merit of keeping steadily in sight that the Historian’s craft is less about “what actually happened” than about what happened to be historiographically represented as the actual past.

As Joan Scott points out, the trouble with essentialism is that “whether it’s strategic or not, essentialism appeals to the idea that there are fixed identities, visible to us as social or natural facts.” It works well because it makes of History a “foundationalist discourse” within which “explanations seem to be unthinkable if they do not take for granted some premises, categories or presumptions [...] [that] are unquestioned and unquestionable.” (Scott 2005: 211; 204) It is this a-historical element imbedded in the heart of History that grants the unity and identity of whatever may be historiographically represented.

*A Força da Escravidão* is also strategically essentialist (or foundationalist). It also fixes a particular entity that guides the whole Historical representation somehow from the outside. Its particular form of essentialism may be called “strategical legalism”. In order to understand what that means, a few words about the specific problem Sidney Chalhoub deals with in discussing the precariousness of black people’s experience of freedom is needed:

“o tema da precariedade da liberdade só adquiriu maior profundidade quando comecei a reparar melhor na questão da lei de 7 de novembro de 1831, de proibição do tráfico Africano de escravos, e as controvérsias e problemas que ela suscitou. Afina, nas duas décadas seguintes à promulgação da lei, mais de 750 mil negros foram introduzidos no território nacional por contrabando, permanecendo ilegalmente escravizados, assim como seus descendentes. Nas fontes que compulsava, esses negros estavam por toda parte, mas custei a entender os sentidos e as consequências da intrincada engenharia institucional e política necessária para permitir que as autoridades e os cidadãos ditos de bem fingissem não ver o que se apresentava a seus olhos. A expansão da cultura cafeeira na atual região Sudeste e a riqueza daí advinda tiveram origem nesse rime contra as leis do país e contra a humanidade. Por isso esse meu livrinho se tornou também a história desse processo, busca entender como

tal coisa pode acontecer. *Manter tanta gente escravizada ao arrepio da lei [...]*” (Chalhoub 2012: 30–31 – emphasis added)

“*Ao arrepio da lei!*” This set phrase is usually found both in the unintelligible intricacies of the juridical jargon and in the pompous artificiality of political speech. For this reason, it produces an almost caricatural effect when employed in other contexts. Sidney Chalhoub repeats it umpteen times in his book. But he is also a fine writer. This is just the stylistic device he uses to draw attention to a question that has been frequently treated in a rather casual way: the inefficacy of the *Lei Feijó*.

Presumably, the plain and open inobservance to this law, which was enacted in 1831 to forbid slave trade, is at the bottom of the popular expression “*lei para inglês ver*”. In some sense, the empirical force of this expression had lead Historians to deal with the disobedience towards the *Lei Feijó* as a kind of non-problem. There is no controversy over the fact that the law remained practically unobserved for almost twenty years, that is, until 1850, when the Lei Eusébio de Queirós was promulgated to put another official (and this time effective) end to the slave trade. Still, does that means that the law had been passed just to obtain the United Kingdom’s diplomatic recognition of Brazil as a new independent country as well as to die down English pressure on the slavery system as whole? In a word: was there from the beginning no intention to obey that law?

Instead of capitulating to the empirical force of that usual expression and say again and again that the *Lei Feijó* was just something “*pra inglês ver*”, Sidney Chalhoub insists that it was a law that should have been obeyed. It is an original viewpoint and a strong attitude that evinces a sensible change in his treatment of colonial slavery, at least if compared to his most famous book, *Visões da Liberdade*.

In the 1990 *Visões da Liberdade* Chalhoub wrote: “Deixemos de lado, por alguns momentos, nosso desconforto diante de uma sociedade onde eram comuns as compras e vendas de homens e mulheres, e tentemos penetrar mais fundo nas racionalidades e sentimentos de pessoas de um outro tempo.” (Chalhoub [1990] 2011: 50)

Twenty two years later, in 2012, as *A Força da Escravidão* was released, it was perhaps even easier to ask his readers to put aside a possible uncomfortable feeling provoked by the awareness that the *Lei Feijó* had been systematically disobeyed, for, as everyone still knows very well in Brazil, this was not the sole law that existed only on paper without any form of

practical effect. Sidney Chalhoub does however the opposite: he reminds the reader all along his book that for over twenty years Africans had been enslaved not only against what came to be later called “human rights”, but also against the very law that ruled the matter back then. Thus, all descendants of the 750-thousand illegally enslaved people forcefully brought to Brazil over this time were, legally, free people! The greatest merit of *A Força da Escravidão* is to evince why this question must cease to be treated somehow dismissively as a kind of natural result of historical circumstances.

In performing this task, Sidney Chalhoub writes a Historical account whose general countenance makes of *A Força da Escravidão* a book that in many respects is also *Uma História Não Contada*. In fact, he puts some more pressure on the same sensitive points that Petrônio Domingues had also touched on.

For instance, against the widespread idea that in Brazil politics has never been openly based on criteria of racial exclusion, he offers the case of the sailor Brown, who was a “homem de cor e súdito inglês”, and of an unnamed free-born black woman, who was a housemaid of J. A. Cole, an American farmer who wanted to emigrate. Both the “colored” sailor and the black maidservant were refused entry into Brazil. The reasons the “Ministério de Estrangeiros” alleged for refusing them is an instructive example of the extent to which “scientific racism” went hand in hand with political calculation. In the case of the black woman:

“Alegaram três motivos para a proibição: queriam ‘obstar ao crescimento e preponderância da raça africana’; desejavam favorecer a ‘colonização Europeia’; por fim, urgia evitar a fraude da introdução de escravos sobre o pretexto de libertos. Como o assunto em pauta concernia uma negra norte-americana, aduziram que não convinha admitir ‘a imigração de homens [e mulheres] de cor provenientes dos Estados Unidos’, pois ‘o contato dessa gente recentemente emancipada’ em virtude de uma guerra poderia instilar rebeldia entre os escravos brasileiros. Três luminares da política imperial assinaram o parecer: Nabuco de Araújo, Eusébio de Queirós e o visconde de Jequitinhonha.” (Chalhoub 2012: 222 – emphasis added)

The case of the sailor was a great deal more difficult: there was no indication that he had ever been a slave and, in addition to that, he was an English man. During the decades of 1850 and 1860 the British consular office in Rio de Janeiro had even “invited” Africans suspected of having been illegally enslaved to come to the embassy to report their stories. Chalhoub remarks that not only did these Africans become better informed about the usurpation of their rights, but also that these experiences spread among those Africans who had arrived in Brazil after 1831 and remained illegally enslaved. At any rate, the Brazilian minister found quite an original way of justifying the decision to refuse Brown’s entry into the country: he invented a new definition to the word “liberto”:

“Segundo ele [the minister], apoiado na consulta [...] dos conselheiros de Estado, “a expressão - libertos – de que usa a citada lei é a antítese de escravos”. Nessa acepção, portanto, o vocábulo “liberto” incluía os libertos propriamente ditos, ou ex-escravos, e os nascidos de ventre-livre, ou ingênuos. Todos os que não continuavam a ser escravos passaram a ser libertos, pois um vocábulo virava a antítese do outro. No entanto, subentende-se que os nascidos de ventre-livre ou ingênuos incluídos no âmbito reinventado da palavra “liberto” eram apenas os ingênuos negros, não os nascidos de ventre-livre em geral, pois nesses estariam incluídos os supostamente brancos. Por conseguinte, chegamos à conclusão de que todo negro que não permanecia escravo doravante ficava liberto. *Como resultado, não entrariam mais negros no Brasil de jeito nenhum, uns por serem escravos, outros por terem virado libertos.*” (Chalhoub 2012: 223 – emphasis added)

Having examined the matter by providing this evidence, Chalhoub concludes ironically: “Neste país, ao que parece, nunca se fez mesmo política adotando critérios de exclusão racial.” (Chalhoub 2012: 223).

Irony is also the weapon Chalhoub uses to attack that which in Petrônio Domingues’ stiff language is said to be in the “bojo de uma linha ideológica de construção de conhecimento histórica eurocentrista” (Domingues 2004: 21), namely, the many guises of Eurocentrism.

The targets of Chalhoub’s irony are sometimes the Historical actors, as when he mockingly refers to Nabuco de Araújo, Eusébio de Queirós and the viscount of Jequitinhonha as “luminares da política imperial” (this sentence is underlined in the passage quoted above). In another passage, in which his irony gains a touch of the comical, he writes that the ministers of the Brazilian Imperial Monarchy thought of themselves as being “o tipo de alimária humana supimpa em luzes e civilização.” (Chalhoub 2012: 19) In the context in which they emerge, both passages function as critical allusions to the intimate relationship between Enlightenment, racism and slavery.

Sometime however, Chalhoub levels his irony at the empiricist-positivism belief underlying the Historicism that has been granting History a special position in what concerns the true representation of the past. Pretending to put his own credentials as Historian at stake, he affirms:

“Se meus leitores são como os historiadores de outros tempos, que só se referiam a fatos quando tinham certeza deles, não de me atormentar se eu afirmar, como afirmo, que o assunto de quantas sessões secretas houve sobre o tráfico, no Senado e na Câmara dos Deputados, em 1837, 1848, 1850, foi como lidar com as consequências do descumprimento da lei de 7 de novembro de 1831.” (Chalhoub 2012: 122)

Chalhoub admits that there are no records of the parliamentary secret sessions about the slave trade. He does not provide any other consistent evidence, which could allow him to affirm so positively that the matter discussed in *all of those sessions* had been *precisely* the

ineffectiveness of the *Lei Feijó*. Nevertheless, he does it. Of course, he does it because he guesses that on the basis of what he has been arguing, his supposition makes a lot of sense so that his readers will believe him. But he does it mainly because he knows that even if the readers *did not* believe him, his Historical account as a whole would not be jeopardised.

As a matter of fact, one may argue that perhaps not all, but just half of those secret sessions were about the problems involving the disobedience to the *Lei Feijó*. It might have been the case, indeed. The main thing is that this fact would neither compel Chalhoub to change nor even amend anything of what he generally claims about the “*force of slavery*.”

What Chalhoub is saying to his readers in a particularly charming and clear way is that History is not too much about “what actually happened” but rather about what can be held as having actually happened, that is, what can re-presented as a Historical event. And what can be Historically represented as having actually happened had, actually, not necessarily happened. In this example, the matter at stake is something marginal. It is understandable that it does not play a significant role in the developments of Chalhoub’s account, when one looks at it as a whole. But the main finding of *A Força da Escravidão* is also brought about in the very same manner in which the issue of those parliamentary “secret” sessions happened to be “uncovered”.

The guiding question of Chalhoub’s book is derived from a narration of the event he calls “O Grande Medo de 1852”. “O Grande Medo de 1852” was a series of popular rebellions triggered by two imperial decrees. The first decree establishes a general register of births and deaths in the whole country; the second one determines that a national population census would be carried out as soon as possible. By trying to enforce these two decrees the public authorities had met with fierce popular resistance. Chalhoub traces it in the governmental correspondence:

“Ao examinar os ofícios que chegavam naquele fatídico mês de janeiro de 1852, o ministro soube que “a causa” dos motins residia “não na dificuldade de executar-se o Regulamento, mas *sim no boato artemadamente espalhado, e loucamente acreditado pelo povo rude, de que o registro só tinha por fim escravizar gente de cor.* [...] Na realidade, chegavam a apelida-lo “Lei do Cativo”, pois o “povo rude” estaria “seduzido pela falsa ideia de que o quererem cativar.” (Chalhoub 2012; 18 – emphasis in the original)

*A Força da Escravidão* is essentially an attempt to explain, first, that the “gente de cor” had very good reasons for being afraid that the new decrees effectively aimed at reducing them

to slavery; second, that these reasons were in no way a kind of by-product of a process of ideological manipulation guided by the interests of the political elites.

In general terms, black people's precarious experience of freedom rests upon three main factors. First and foremost, the presumption of slave status: unless they could prove they were not, both black people and "gente de cor" were considered to be slaves. Second, the laxity of the legal control on the property of slaves. Third, the officially revocatory character of manumissions.

The two first factors, inasmuch as they are primarily about ascertaining the slave's identity, are intimately related to the 1831 prohibition of the slave trade. In order to register slave properties, slaveholders must ensure that these slaves had not entered into Brazil after November 1831. Chalhoub reports on countless ways of falsifying documents so as to give the appearance of legality to the illegal acquisition of slaves. Numerous were also the ways of reducing (of course, illegally) freeborn blacks to slavery. Due to that general "presumption of slave status" that weighted on black people's shoulders, it was not especially difficult to enslave and to keep them enslaved illegally.

By making this point, Chalhoub narrates Histories that share a "nexo estrutural comum, qual seja, a existência de zonas amplas de incerteza social sobre as fronteiras entre escravidão e liberdade na sociedade brasileira oitocentista." He comments that the reading of the primary sources gives one the strong impression that there was a "constrangimento sistemático à liberdade dos negros." (Chalhoub 2012: 232–233; 251).

On the other hand, theoretically, every slave who could "prove" to have been bought or to be a descendant of an enslaved woman brought to Brazil after the promulgation of the 1831 *Lei Feijó* must be considered legally free. Expectedly, this way round things used to be much more difficult. However, since a zone of social uncertainty lay between freedom and slavery, the slaves learned how to explore it. Chalhoub reports also on countless cases of slaves who, depending on the situation, identified themselves as freeborn or manumitted, as well as several cases of freed blacks who presented themselves as slaves (for example, with the purpose of escaping forced recruitment). According to Chalhoub, the general developments showed that towards the end of the 1870s the "presumption of slave status" began to be replaced by the "presumption of freedom". This was a clear sign that the social machinery that had been working in favour of the slave system was about to face the crisis that would lead to its definitive legal dismantlement.

Still, back in 1852, the year of the “Grande Medo”, the scenario was not so promising yet. In Chalhoub’s own words:

“Durante o “grande medo” de 1852, pretos e pardos livres atribuíam ao governo a intenção de reduzir à escravidão a gente de cor. Pode ser que temor tão generalizado seja indício de que os revoltosos soubessem bem que a escravidão vinha se reproduzindo pela prática maciça da escravização ilegal desde a década de 1830, por conseguinte supusessem que a cessação do contrabando de africanos os colocaria na alça de mira de traficantes e fazendeiros.” (Chalhoub 2012: 262–263)

None of the sources analysed by Chalhoub reads that the resistance against those two decrees, the implementation of which had rendered the task of identifying people much more precise and efficient, stemmed directly or indirectly from the fact that the blacks and the “gente de cor” were aware of the relationship between such mechanisms of social control, the illegal enslavement of thousands and thousands of them (after 1831), and the possible consequences of the definitive abolition of slave trade that occurred in 1850. The subaltern’s awareness of this fact is the kind of Historical event that cannot be found anywhere except in Historical representation itself. It is a “fact” that results from historiographical labour as whole.

Put differently, *A Força da Escravidão* itself is empirical evidence of the force of slavery: it is a re-presentation by means of which one may experience empirically what might have been the precariousness of black people’s experience of freedom in colonial slave system so as to become able to believe in it.

But, of course, readers may not quite believe in Chalhoub’s main claim. Such disbelief, even without casting any doubt on the accuracy of the description of all other particular events comprised by the book, would imply to question *A Força da Escravidão* as a whole. It is with respect to this point that the rhetorical force of Chalhoub’s “strategic legalism” plays its central role, which is effected on two levels.

Firstly, the author’s intransigent defence of the view that the 1831 law forbidding slave trade should have been unconditionally obeyed is coextensive to the Historical awareness attributed to black people and “gente de cor”. It is coextensive in the sense that it is Chalhoub’s translation of that awareness into a contemporary language fitting to Historiography. Exactly this feature shows, secondly, that what is at stake in History—accepting the more or less compulsory assumption that to give a full description of

“what(ever) actually happened” is a chimera—is to transform that which *can* be represented as having actually happened into that which *shall* be represented in this way<sup>176</sup>.

It is as though, twenty-three years after having written *Visões da Liberdade*, Sidney Chalhoub had found the type of “moral economy of historiographically exercised discursive violence” needed to perform the task of envisioning what had been the meanings of freedom within that Thompsonian “moral economy of violence” reigning in Brazilian colonial slavery. The precise type of discursive violence that *A Força da Escravidão* historiographically exerts is that one which keeps the tension uniting re-presentation (*darstellen*) and representation (*vertreten*) by ever attempting to conflate both entirely.

Chalhoub is very dexterous in exploring his literary skills in order to produce fine narrative effects. That “Grande Medo de 1852”, with recourse to which the book’s guiding question is formulated in the fashion of introduction, happened to be resumed only in the penultimate chapter, where it finds its final answer in the presentation of the main finding of the work. This it, however, not the work’s climax yet.

The last chapter consists of a brilliant analysis of Machado de Assis’ *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*. The hypothesis Sidney Chalhoub advances and convincingly underpins is that a reflection on both the illegal slave trade and the property of enslaved people constitutes the very organizing principle of the fictional content of that masterpiece by Machado de Assis. (Chalhoub 2012: 278)

Towards the end of this last chapter, by fashion of general conclusion, Chalhoub begins commenting on the legacy left by the way in which the smuggling of Africans and their illegal enslavement has been dealt with both in the public and in the domestic life of that Brazil of imperial times. To be sure, he resumes the topic, for he had already acidly remarked, in a chapter wittingly called “Em 1850, a precisão de calar sobre 1831”, that the habit of sidestepping the questions about the racial problem is still parte of the sap that nourishes the

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<sup>176</sup> The “can” refers to two elements of History: first, to the “empirical core” of it, that is, to evidence that meet its disciplinary standards; second, it refers also to the fact of occupying a particular power position, that is, to the properly institutional character which makes of the historiographical discourse an exceptionally privileged sphere for the legitimate establishment of the truth about the past. The “shall” refers to the rhetoric movement that acts limiting both raw realist empiricism and boundless relativism by putting in evidence the value judgment that necessarily involves the deployment of that mixture of empirical and institutional power. The general terms of this explanation were drawn from Carlo Ginzburg’s “History, Rhetoric and Proof” (Ginzburg 1999).

so-called “Brazilian national character”. One hundred and thirty six pages later, when he was closing a discussion especially devoted to the issue of the precariousness of black people’s freedom, Chalhoub returns to the issue. He writes that the legacy of the social machinery that had made possible to hold millions of people captive against the law goes beyond the scope of his book, it is, in fact, another History, but it is still Brazil’s History (Chalhoub 2012: 276). It is still *Uma História Não Contada*, Petrônio Domingues would probably add.

Petrônio Domingues does not finish his book with his own words, but with the ones of the old black politic activist Aristides Barbosa. Sidney Chalhoub does something similar. The final lines of *A Força da Escravidão* is a passage by Machado de Assis<sup>177</sup>, who, in turn, hands the responsibility over to his character, Brás Cubas:

“Outrossim, afeiçoei-me à contemplação da injustiça humana, inclinei-me a atenuá-la, a explicá-la, a classificá-la por partes, a entendê-la, não segundo um padrão rígido, mas ao sabor das circunstâncias e lugares.” (Chalhoub 2012: 296)

The polivocality in the identity of the voice that ends Chalhoub’s book does not produce any heteroglossia. There is no ambiguity. Quite the opposite, it makes perfectly clear to which extent Chalhoub’s stance on slavery is the historiographical embodiment of an anti-Brás Cubas view: the former’s “strategic legalism” is a counterpart of the latter’s cynical casuistry. Thus, Sidney Chalhoub not only presents his own writing as a historiographical version of the same criticism that Machado de Assis had voiced literarily, but also reinforces how much re-presentation and representation happen to be mobilized in the effort of writing the last words of [and about] *A Força da Escravidão*.

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<sup>177</sup> For Sidney Chalhoub, Machado de Assis was also a political activist. In regards to the question whether the critique that Machado de Assis omitted to engage against slavery is correct, he answers:

“De modo nenhum. Ele atua em relação ao problema de duas maneiras: primeira, quando é funcionário público e faz cumprir a Lei do Ventre Livre. Naquela época, fazer aplicar esta lei era uma batalha política cotidiana. Outra forma de engajamento se dá por meio da crítica às ideologias que balizavam a escravidão e que depois vão sustentar a reprodução das desigualdades por meio do racismo. Machado era muito cético e criou várias alegorias e histórias satirizando as pretensões da ciência do século XIX.” (Revista Brasileira de História - 2008) In his *Machado de Assis, historiador* (2003), Chalhoub analyses this matter at length.

### **Rhetoricizing theory**

The programmatic texts by Libby and Paiva, the heads of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, put forward a theoretical approach that, resorting to different fashions of empiricist reasoning, bypasses the issue of re-presentation/representation. The “theoretical” is here conceived as tools designed with the purpose of increasing the cognitive power of establishing “what actually happened”. Little energy is spent in reflecting on the problem of what Historical representations, when written by deploying theory in this way, may possibly represent in political terms. The historiographical result of such an approach takes, for instance, the form of “O Braço Armado do Senhor” by Mathias Kelmer.

Petrônio Domingues’ book is also openly programmatic. It equally puts forwards a theoretical approach that relies strongly on empiricist reasoning. However, unlike the intellectual production of the research group “Escravidão e Mestiçagens”, the very center of gravity of *Uma História Não Contada* is constituted by the problems posed by the tension between re-presentation and representation. The “theoretical” is here thus conceived as a tool designed with the conspicuous purpose of increasing cognitively the political power of establishing “what actually happened”. Therefore, a lot of energy is spent in reflecting on the problem of what Historical representation politically represents. The historiographical result of such a viewpoint demonstrates, for instance, the “Força da Escravidão” [by Sidney Chalhou].

A theoretical approach such as that one underlying “O Braço Armado do Senhor” is unable to account for the political consequences represented by the *Força da Escravidão* because the former produces a History that, as Carlo Ginzburg puts it, “is absolutely transparent, but also absolutely incomprehensible [...] because it has been cleansed of all power relationships” (Ginzburg 1991: 16). These power relationships are not only those involving the Historical actors themselves, but also those, as Ginzburg remarks in a later work, “that condition, through the possibility of access to the documentation, the general image that a society leaves of itself” (Ginzburg 1999: 24).

That power relationships condition the Historian’s work from the very beginning, and not only in a general or abstract manner, but also in that they are directly related to the production of

the raw material Historians deal with<sup>178</sup>; that, to use the famous Foucault's expression, Historians move themselves on the minefield of "power/knowledge". All that shall not lead one to think that History amounts either to merely an ideological instrument used to satisfy the desires of whoever may be in the position of exercising the power of legitimately establishing "what actually happened" or to an open game where "what actually happened" is nowhere to be found. In other words: the power relations that make of the narrative and rhetoric a constitutive element of History shall not be extrapolated to a reduction of historiography to its narrative or rhetorical dimension.

Nevertheless, theoretical approaches that put forward such skeptical theses have been in vogue for a few decades. But "the theoreticians of historiography who propose them", Ginzburg complains, "care little for the concrete work of Historians." (Ginzburg 1999: 1) Ginzburg cares about it. Therefore, he intervened in this debate advancing a thesis according to which rhetoric and proof do not exclude one another. Quite the contrary: proof constitutes the "rational core within rhetoric". (Ginzburg 1999: 34)

Ginzburg's attempt to rehabilitate empiricism so that it does not enter into a collision course with rhetoric and narrative is sagacious on a twofold level. First, he promptly recognizes how deceptive the notion is that the discussion on history, rhetoric and proof concerns only a small circle of adepts actually involved in these labors: Historians, philosophers, students of the methodology of history. This discussion, he stresses, "touches on a question that concern us all: the coexistence and clash between cultures." (Ginzburg 1999: 2) Second, he notes that some poststructuralist approaches<sup>179</sup> projected on to rhetoric a relativist power to liquidate truth that was strong enough to "fascinate at the same time both the heirs of the colonizers and the heirs of the colonized." (Ginzburg 1999: 19)

The strong empiricism integral to all five historiographical works scrutinized in this section may be offered as evidence of the importance of taking into consideration the point Ginzburg makes about proof (if one indeed cares for the concrete work of Historians). The abundant empirical proof found in those Histories do not yet prove that they are not constructions. No

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<sup>178</sup> In Trouillot's strong words: "In history, power begins at the source. [...] This is one of the many reasons why not any fiction can pass for history: the materiality of the socio-historical process sets the stage for future historical narratives." (Trouillot 1995: 29)

<sup>179</sup> The target of Ginzburg's criticism here is principally Derrida (Ginzburg 1999: 18; 36).

matter how much empirical proof may be adduced, the content properly Historical produced by Historiography is primarily a non-referential one.

At any rate, Ginzburg's fear is not ill-founded. An excessive emphasis on this non-referential element may just hone instruments likely to be used to bring about a process within which the West, which has been being incriminated as logocentric, ends up "being absolved in the name of the innocence of becoming proclaimed by Nietzsche." (Ginzburg 1999: 19)

The step Ginzburg takes in establishing the epistemological role as well as the relations of force entailed in the "materiality of the socio-historical process" (Trouillot 1995: 29) is crucial. There shall be no controversy over the importance of keeping in mind that the rhetorical compels History to move in the sphere of probable truth, "which coincides neither with sapiential truth, guaranteed by the persons who proposes it and as such beyond proof, nor with the impersonal truth of geometry, entirely demonstrable and accessible to anyone" (Ginzburg 1999: 24). On the other hand, it must also be clear that these ideas privilege an angle of attack that treats History-writing as something practiced in a positivist and objectifying way. Thus, while they cover very well the relationship between rhetoric and proof in History, they leave almost undefended the flank where rhetoric meets (or mingles with?) theory. To advance in this terrain without weakening the position Ginzburg had fought to secure is the central effort of the work by thinkers like Chakrabarty, Spivak and Trouillot.

Their point is, so to speak, to demonstrate that the [rhetorical] power of [historiographically] questioning the truth differently affects Western Historical Thinking depending on the position of those who are performing this task- as either "the heirs of the colonizers or the heirs of the colonized".

The "heirs of the colonized" may be here seen as one of the many subject-positions from which the act of re-presenting the past as History may claim to produce a kind of Historical representation saturated by relations of power. Bringing about this saturation requires necessarily the articulation of three points: 1) How much "Histories" about how Human beings live and develop (in all imaginable respects) are the main product of the rhetorically constructed non-referential structuring elements generally called "theories"; 2) That these "theories" refer to something empirically verifiable inasmuch as they represent Western positionings in and on History; 3) That the latent non-referentiality of such theories allows one to explore them rhetorically so as to disrupt the relations of power they play a central role in shaping.

These three points correspond to those three main propositions developed in this same section of the first chapter, as it was argued that History and Theory of History cannot be thought of as two different epistemological domains. The first point matches the idea that historical accounts are substantially constituted by what they are *theoretically* believed to be. The second one relates to the continuous establishment of a theoretical substance of History, which Chakrabarty calls the “hyperreal Europe”. Concerning the third and last point, the “politics of translation” to which Chakrabarty subjects his “hyperreal Europe” is an example of a rhetorical disruption of theory that aims at (producing epistemological interventions) that may destabilize asymmetrical relations of power premised upon Eurocentrism.

Amanhã é dia santo  
Um e dois, três

Dia de corpo de deus  
Três e três, seis

Quem tem roupa vai na missa  
Seis e três, nove

Quem não tem faz como eu  
Nove e três, doze

Um e dois, três  
Três e três, seis  
Seis e três, nove  
Nove e três, doze  
*Capoeira song*

Denn es gibt zwei Labyrinth für  
den menschlichen Geist: das eine  
betrifft die Zusammensetzung  
des Kontinuums, das andre  
das Wesen der Freiheit.  
*G. W. Leibniz*

### Running away from the sea

#### Depths and breaths of History: the idea of totality and the Annales School

Heraclitus' river<sup>180</sup> is water under the bridges of History. Contemplated from the heights of Louis Mink's standpoint, as exposed in the first chapter<sup>181</sup>, this river is no longer that one in which one steps into, taking the risk of being swept along, but the river "in aerial view, upstream and downstream seen in a single survey." (Mink 1987: 57)

Louis Mink uses this image to illustrate the "synoptic judgment" integral to what he terms "configurational mode of comprehension", a mode of comprehension that, in the words of Frank Ankersmit, "enables us to detect a certain pattern or structure in a complex and

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<sup>180</sup> Heraclitus' philosophical view rests on a twofold philosophical assumption that sounds quite trivial: first, there is nothing that could be adequately called permanence, except change itself; second, that everything that be this universal changing flux, in an everlasting process of coming-to-be and passing-away, does obviously not mean that everything does so at the same rate or with the same degree of outward appearance. This self-evident truth on which Heraclitus' philosophy of change hinges is concretely represented in his work by the flowing river (Wheelwright 1959: 1-36; Long 2005: 366-367). One of the most famous fragments with this river image reads that: "We both step and do not step in the same rivers. We are and are not." (Harris 1994) Since it synthesizes the elementary historiographical problem involving the notions of change, permanency and identity, Heraclitus' river can be taken as an ontological metaphor for History.

<sup>181</sup> See the section "Long event and long duration".

incoherent set of data” (Danto [1965] 2007: 385). The skill necessarily needed to perform this task is the recognition of resemblances. Mink goes as far as to affirm: “There is reason to believe that the recognition of resemblances is a kind of *terminal* judgement, which is not replaceable by an analysis of factors, as an explicit methodology would require.” (Mink 1987 81)

The discussion conducted in the first chapter—departing from the basic idea that there is an elementary relationship between sameness and duration in the sense that every phenomenon subject to change must nonetheless be represented as remaining either the same or identic to itself, so as to allow an ascription of having become something else—attempted to unravel the ways in which a kind of “logic of resemblances” turns out to be operative in the construction of the sense of Historical continuity of long-term.

Historiographical representations of this type at once rely on, and produce, what Martin Jay calls “longitudinal totality”. This concept refers to a “notion of closed yet dynamic totality that incorporated all history into the whole” and entails a circular image of time, which meant that the difficult problem of origin and end need not to be raised. Such histories, Jay synthesizes, possess “coherence and structure as a whole” (Jay 1984: 59; 47). They are also examples of a “genetic” or “expressive totality”, which means that they support an identification of their particular totality with their authors, not yet as Hegel thought it, but in line with Foucault’s definition, that is, “not the author in the sense of the individual who delivered the speech or wrote the text in question, but the author as the unifying principle in a particular group of writings or statements, lying at the origins of their significance, as the seat of their coherence.” (Foucault 1972: 222)

To address the question of Historical continuity of long-term from the point of view of the discussion about totality is a problem that has haunted Historians since the beginnings of the institutionalization of the profession. As Martin Jay remarks,

“the historiographical tradition known as historicism saw history in holistic terms, either as a universal process with a coherent meaning or as a series of discrete totalities that were the separate nation states of world history. [...] Holism was so much a part of the historicist worldview that when its exponents talked of the individuals of history, they generally meant those collective entities known as nations or states, a bias that emerges in their well-known insistence on the primacy of foreign policy. Although the historicist tradition underwent a severe crisis in the 1890s, when its underlying religious assumptions were called into question, its holistic bias was rarely challenged.” (Jay 1984: 74)

To be sure, the “holistic bias” of Historicism has not only rarely been challenged, but even intensely further developed ... as a critic of Historicism itself!

Perhaps the most prominent example of such a criticism was delivered by the first generation of the Annales School, by its two co-founders, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre.

Marc Bloch’s famous remark that “even those texts or archaeological documents which seem the clearest and the most accommodating will speak only when they are properly questioned” (Bloch [1940] 1963: 64) was not only a critique of what Jacques Le-Goff would later label—in the preface of a new edition of Bloch’s book—“the imperialism of the sources” typical of the historiographical Rankean tradition (Bloch [1940] 2002: 8), but also a plea for that form of historiographical thinking that came to be known, in Febvre’s formulation, as “history-problem”. To think of History in these terms begins with the recognition that historical facts, regardless how well empirically grounded they may be, are never properly “positive facts”. They are rather the product of a construction in which the Historian plays not just an active, but a decisive role. It is the Historian who transforms sources into documents, documents into historical facts and, finally, these historical facts into an intellectual problem that can be rooted anywhere but in the present (Bloch [1940] 2002: 19).

At this point the thesis can be advanced that, in its kern, the “regressive method” proposed by Bloch for writing this type of “history-problem” was less concerned with, as Peter Burke argues, the “need to ‘read history backwards’ on the grounds that we know more about the later periods and that it is only prudent to proceed from the known to the unknown” (Burke 1990: 23); rather the thesis proposes that the “solidarity of the ages [of past and present] is so effective that the lines of connection work both ways” (Bloch [1940] 1963: 43). Thus, the essential aspect of the “regressive method” is not about the ages “we know more”; rather, it is about the understanding that what might be called “historical time” arises from this reciprocal interaction between past and present, which is at once both condition of possibility and inescapable subject of every historiographical inquiry.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Peter Burke belittles the importance of Bloch’s “regressive method” by virtue of its presumed lack of originality. Having mentioned other authors who had already used similar methods, he points out that Bloch himself does not claim to have invented it, and finishes his appreciation of the matter by stating that “what he [Bloch] did was to employ it in a more self-conscious and systematic manner than his predecessors.” (Burke 1990: 24). Not very surprisingly, Jacques Le Goff is much more thoughtful to his fellow countryman. He argues that the elaboration and practicing of a method prudently regressive was one of the most essential of the Bloch’s legacies, and it is one that has been quite insufficiently greeted and explored (Bloch [1940] 2002: 25).

With this critique Bloch prepared the terrain for a deeper critique of positivist tendencies to all-encompassing and reductive mono-causal explanations in History. He is aware that “in history, the fetish of single causes is all too often only the insidious form of search for the responsible person—hence a value of judgment”, and therefore he warns that “the monism of cause can be, for history, only an impediment” (Bloch [1940] 1963: 193–194). An impediment that was preventing Historians from asking not only about the particular causes of the events they intended to explain, but also about their own particular explicatory choices. Bloch argues that a historiographical explanation shall seek for “causal wave-trains and is not afraid, since life shows them to be so, to find them multiple”. Among this multiplicity, he draws special attention to the psychological dimension: “Historical facts are, *in essence*, psychological facts” (Bloch [1940] 1963: 194 – emphasis added)<sup>183</sup>.

Lucien Febvre’s epistemological position does not differ essentially from Bloch’s. He was a fierce advocate of the “history-problem” (with all its consequences in what concerns the conception of Historical time) as well as a precursor of the “History of Mentalities”. What Febvre showed in a measure far more extensive than Bloch was a profound interest in Human Geography, a discipline that, in the names of Vidal de La Blache and Friedrich Ratzel, exercised a profound influence upon the Annales School (Burke 1990; Le Goff [1978] 1990a: 25–64). Lucien Febvre made even the effort of writing a general study<sup>184</sup> about the relationship between these two broad fields of knowledge.

Deeply influenced by Émile Durkheim, the expression Bloch more than once used for describing his concerns with the psychological in History was “collective representations” (Burke 1990: 18; Reis 2008: 57). Bloch’s psychology was thus rather a sociology inwardly

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In favor of Le Goff it might be said that, in fact, in Bloch’s hands the “regressive method” can be understood as the methodological surrogate of a way of conceiving History, within which an inexorably structuring role is played by the displacement—from the past to the present—of the main problem which Historians necessarily deal with. In this sense, it is ultimately secondary whether the “regressive method” had already been used before, if in these earlier usages neither the terminus nor the procedure was charged with an epistemic function of such a caliber. On the other hand, the adjective “regressive” still suggests a notion of “chronological order”, even if in an anticlockwise direction. This feature may lead to overlooking that the Historian’s craft indeed demands a stance on the issue of historical time that chronology, while indispensable, helped to make invisible.

<sup>183</sup> The History of Mentalities, a historiographical domain of pronounced importance in the later developments of the Annales School, is deeply indebted to this idea, which Bloch had given consistence in the form of the *Les Rois Thaumatourges* (1924), a work that Peter Burke describes as “one of the masterpiece of the genre ” and as having “a strong claim to be regarded as one of the great historical works of our century” (Burke 1990: 17; 1992: 93). For an overview of the History of Mentalities that goes beyond the French context, see Burke 1997: 162–182.

<sup>184</sup> *La Terre et l'évolution humaine: introduction géographique à l'histoire* (1922).

oriented<sup>185</sup> in the sense that it pointed to the History's possibility of exploring the incommensurable landscape of human affairs related to phenomena situated in the "world of ideas". Febvre's geographical opening, in turn, incited the Historian to look at the outside world, at the concreteness of the geo-physical environment within which human affairs necessarily take place. Sociology and Geography (together with Economics) back then constituted the domains of knowledge through which Historians should transit in order to write the "*histoire tout court*", that Febvre liked to speak of (Burke 1990: 114).

Fundamentally, the work of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, the two Annales School's founders, makes the point that the achievement of History's desired "longitudinal totality" might require some considerable investments in a "latitudinal one", where it meant that "any part in a larger whole might be itself an organized whole from the perspective of its internal dynamics." Historical reality should, in this sense,

"be populated by multitudes of hierarchically linked or horizontally juxtaposed totalities, which defied comprehension through the reduction to their components' parts. Indeed, the concreteness of the meta-totality depended on the existence of these internally related but differentiated sub-totalities." (Jay 1984: 59)

To sprawl itself across the domains of other disciplines through the assimilation of their theoretical and methodological procedures might be here presented as a way of exponentially enlarging History's own epistemological power so as transform it into a paradoxical social-scientific meta-totality.

### **Braudel's *longue durée* or the "unitary white light" of History**

Fernand Braudel happened to be the Historian who most successfully explored the potential of the "latitudinal totalities" for the sake of an even more powerful "longitudinal totality". Accordingly, he went a step further than Lucien Febvre, his mentor, in the conspicuous exposition of his holistic penchants, and instead of "*histoire tout court*", preferred to qualify his *magnus opus The Mediterranean* (1949) explicitly as "total history" (Burke 1990: 114; Braudel [1949] 1973b: 1238).

The talk about the historiographical need of an organizing principle premised upon some idea of totality was a very old one within the Annales School. The overriding target of the critique

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<sup>185</sup> In the opinion of Peter Burke, in one aspect at least Bloch might be criticized with hindsight: he had been at times somewhat too Durkheimian. (Burke 1990: 19)

of the first generation had already been the type of History labelled as *événementielle*. This was a depreciative term used to refer to the way in which academic History had been generally written back then in France: a mere description of isolated events, mainly political ones, enumerated chronologically and detached from any conceivable structure. Such a History, as Jacques Le Goff would restate as late as in the 80s, “was superficial in all senses of the word”; it was in fact just a “teatro de aparências que mascara o verdadeiro jogo da história, que se desenrola nos bastidores e nas *estruturas* ocultas em que é preciso ir detectá-lo, analisá-lo, explicá-lo.” (Le Goff [1978] 1990a: 31 - emphasis added).

“Structure” was thus the catchword. It is still Le Goff who, harking the concern with “structural History” back to Voltaire, over Chateaubriand, Guizot and Michelet, up to François Simiand, provides the Annales School with a genealogy comprised just by “fathers” who form a pure lineage of male French intellectuals (Le Goff [1978] 1990a: 37–42).

Still, since History’s most important contribution to the discussion about whatever might be generally conceived as a “structure” entered definitely into social science’s vocabulary in the form of the “longue durée” by Fernand Braudel, who, in turn, does not fail to recognize that none of those presumed “fathers” but Karl Marx had been the “first to invent real social models based on the historical ‘longue durée’” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 275), Le Goff must grant some honorific title to Marx as well. So he says that Marx, “sob vários aspectos, é um dos mestres de uma história nova”, but not quite the one whom Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre were descended in direct line from.

Peter Burke emphasizes as well that neither Febvre nor Bloch entertained great interest in Marx’s work. Furthermore, he observes that in France “the sympathy with Marxism generally went with a certain detachment from *Annales*”<sup>186</sup> (Burke 1990: 54; 97). Fernand Braudel is a case apart. His *longue durée*-approach unfolds an analytical framework for doing what Marx dreamed of, that is, a way of accounting of history as a whole, but without having to deal with the political-epistemological inconveniences of proceeding so ... as Marx did<sup>187</sup>.

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<sup>186</sup> There are, although, dual loyalties like that of Michel Vovelle, Pierre Vilar and Guy Bois, Marxist Historians who are prominent names of the Annales School (Burke 1990: 54; 97; Le Goff [1978] 1990a: 51–52; Bois [1978] 1990: 241–260).

<sup>187</sup> This point will be resumed later. For the time being it suffices to bear in mind that Braudel’s most ambitious historiographical project, the three-volume *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*, is devoted to give account of the history of the world as the History of the emergence of capitalism between 1400 and 1800. It is worthy to note that, as in Marx, under the word “world” one should understand Europa “alargada à dimensão do mundo”, and under “history” essentially (but not only) economic history. (Rocha 1995: 239–249)

It is well known that all elements that came to comprise Braudel's concept of "longue durée" were already developed in his first and seminal work, *The Mediterranean (1949)*<sup>188</sup>. Nevertheless, "History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*", the famous article that would popularize the idea, was published in 1958, almost a decade later... but shortly after the release of Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology*.

The approach adopted by Lévi-Strauss in *Structural Anthropology* is in fact the one that Braudel takes as the structuring axis of his analysis of how all social sciences "impose themselves on each other" in their attempts to "grasp the social in its 'totality'", which is, at the end of the day, the main topic of "The *Longue Durée*" (Braudel [1958] 2012: 242).

In *Structural Anthropology* Lévi-Strauss stresses - suggestively in a postscript to the chapter "*La notion de structure en ethnologie*"<sup>189</sup> - some similarities between his own and Marx's thinking<sup>190</sup>. Later, in *The Savage Mind* (1962), he would affirm that his ambition was to make, at the level of the superstructure, a contribution similar to the one Marx had done concerning the level of the infrastructure (Burke 1992: 6; Lévi-Strauss [1962] 2000: 130).<sup>191</sup>

If the common ground between Marx and Lévi-Strauss is as complete as the latter claims it to be, Braudel does no injustice when he lumps structuralism *à la* Lévi-Strauss together with Marxism. While being especially concerned with a diachronic apprehension of social totality,

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<sup>188</sup> Actually, as Braudel says in the preface of the second edition of *The Mediterranean* (1963), "the main outline of the book was already determined if not entirely written by 1939". So the programmatic form of the *longue durée* came some twenty years after it had been conceived.

<sup>189</sup> The title of this chapter was translated into English simply as "Social Structure". The original French title was used here to make clear that Lévi-Strauss is not addressing "social structure itself" but expressly the epistemological uses of the "concept of structure" in different disciplinary contexts.

<sup>190</sup> Lévi-Strauss mentions two co-related features his work shared with Marx's. Departing from Marx's assumption that "primitive societies" were governed rather by "blood ties" than by "economic relationships", he points out, first, that he was, in effect, trying empirically to demonstrate that this insight was correct. In his own words: "According to their view [of Marx & Engels] in the non- or pre-capitalistic societies kinship played a more important role than class relations. I do not believe that I am being unfaithful to their teachings by trying [...] to work out a typology of kinship systems in the light of knowledge acquired in the field since then, by myself and by others" (Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1963: 374). Second, he remarks that the temporal category applicable to "primitive or allegedly primitive, societies [...] has nothing to do with the one we employ to understand the development of our own [economic industrial] society". The distinctions drawn in *Race and History* between "stationary history", "fluctuating history" and "cumulative history" were premised upon this idea. (Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1963: 336)

<sup>191</sup> While he was attempting to accomplish that, he adds, "the development of the study of infrastructures proper is a task which must be left to history—with the aid of demography, technology, historical geography and ethnography." (Lévi-Strauss [1962] 2000: 130) Here he is restating the distinction between Anthropology and History that he had established years earlier in *Structural Anthropology*. According to this distinction, "the anthropologist goes forward, seeking to attain, [...] through the conscious, more and more of the unconscious; whereas the Historian advances, so to speak, backward, keeping his eyes fixed on concrete and specific activities [...]" (Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1963: 24)

each model is also promptly responsive to the temptation of becoming frozen in its simple form by being treated as “immutable laws, as *a priori* automatic explanations, universally applicable to all situations in all societies” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 274). Therefore, for Braudel, both Marxism and Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism represent perfect portraits of the dangers of anti-historical totalities.

The *longue durée*-approach, on the contrary, should provide an analytical framework for achieving a sort of proper Historical totality, which would consist in preventing whatever may be thought as permanent (the so-called “structures”, for example) from being interpreted as immutable laws of social change. But at the same time, this permanent element shall be presented as being experienced as immobile at a societal level. Doing so required a procedure easier said than done: to immerse the structures in the element of time.

At any rate, posing the problem in this way, Braudel shows himself faithful to the “founding father” Marc Bloch, who had written that History’s subject is neither “the past” nor the “human in the abstract”, but “men in time” (Bloch [1940] 1963: 27), as well as faithful to an age-old idea according to which History is primarily concerned with the “element of time” (as Geography with the “element of space”).

Thus, giving continuation to the prestigious intellectual tradition of the *Annales* and backed by a kind of epistemological slogan, Braudel puts the concept of time in the center of his analytical construct, namely, in the form of a “dialectic of continuities” constituted by a “multiplicity of temporalities”. Among these continuities, the long-term one was “of exceptional importance”. “More than history itself”, Braudel trumpets, the *longue durée* was sure to be of interest to all neighbor disciplines (Braudel [1958] 2012: 243–244).

The concept of *longue durée* can be roughly defined as a combination of two Enlightenment ideals: it makes viable the penetrating of “longitudinal totality” characteristic of Marx’s thinking by means of the dense “latitudinal totality” of Diderot’s encyclopedia. Remarkably, Diderot and Marx are eminent examples of radically egalitarian thinkers. Although, the Diderot and the Marx found in Braudel are carefully cleansed of the critical components that would bring the political implications of their ideas to the fore: the problem of (class) consciousness that makes difficult to equalize the economic forces with sovereign “laws of

History” whose directive power escapes entirely the human political agency, in the case of Marxism; the anti-imperialist critic, with respect to Diderot.<sup>192</sup>

Marx and Diderot were also archetypical “men of ideas” or “intellectuals”. The term “totality” has had a special place in the lexicon of the representatives of this particular social type. They are indeed those who have “combined the time (and the economic support) to reflect on matters beyond their immediate material concerns with the hubris to believe they might know the whole reality. [...] In Nietzsche’s pungent phrase, they have been the “knights of totality”, arrogating to themselves a teleological mission to speak for the whole.” (Jay 1984: 12–13) Intellectuals have also been members of what has been generally called “avant-gardes”, groups that share a distaste for the “vulgar”, “traditional” or old-fashioned expressions of whatever they are supposed to provide a better representation of.

In the field of History, Fernand Braudel was both an avant-gardist and a “knight of totality”.<sup>193</sup> As such, he propagates the idea of History as the discipline capable of bringing totality to its highest degree, namely, to that chimerical conceptual dimension of meta-totally. Fittingly, he sells his *longue durée* as a kind of point of convergence, even if just an initial one, of all social sciences. Full of conviction, he asks: “the *longue durée* seems to us the one among them [the temporalities/continuities] that is most useful for common observation and reflection by all the social sciences. Is it too much of our neighbors that, when they think about how to proceed, they relate their assessments and their findings to this axis?” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 273)

Braudel opens the “The *Longue Durée*” diagnosing a “general crisis in the human sciences” and closes it by saying that those pages were “a call for discussion”. The proposal was pretty clear: in that moment of crisis, all social sciences had been invited to take shelter under a conceptual category that was at once broad and neutral enough to prune away the epistemological protuberances and the correlated political implications that produced a

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<sup>192</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam point to some salient features of Diderot’s work that, in their opinion, make him a forerunner of anticolonial theory, critical race theory, and even critical white studies. (Stam/Shohat 2012: 22–25).

<sup>193</sup> Symptomatic of this wannabe avant-gardist is the self-flattering epithet that the historiographical current of which Braudel was a prominent leader gave to itself: *Nouvelle Histoire*. Jacques Le Goff makes the point of emphasizing that the term has been used as early as in the 1930s, around the very foundation of the Annales School (Le Goff [1988] 1990b: 5–7).

useless friction among the human sciences, and, not unimportantly, was institutionally settled into and disciplinarily associated with History.<sup>194</sup>

It is again Peter Burke who provides an example that illustrates the degree of generality of Braudel's usage of his own idea of *longue durée*. Burke assesses *The Wheels of Commerce*, the second volume of *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*, a later work that has the same tripartite structure of *The Mediterranean*, as follows:

“In this account about the mechanisms of distribution and change, Braudel characteristically offered explanations that were at once structural and multilateral [...]. He had no time for explanations in terms of individuals. On the other hand, Braudel remained opposed to explanations in terms of a single factor. ‘Capitalism cannot have emerged from a single confined source’, he remarked, sweeping away Marx and Weber with a single flick of the wrist. “Economics played a part, politics played a part, society played a part, and culture and civilization played a part. So too did history, which often decides in the last analysis who will win a trial of strength.” *This is a characteristic passage of Braudel, combining open-mindedness with a lack of analytical rigor*, and giving weight to factors that receive little serious attention elsewhere in the book.” (Burke 1990: 50 – emphasis added)

A lack of analytical rigor is also what characterizes Braudel's 1958 famous article, at least with respect to its central argument, the notion of *longue durée*. It would be a vain attempt to look for a definition of it there. The problem, however, is not that there is none. Quite the opposite, there are too many. The *longue durée* is presented as a history of “sustained breadth” (according to its rhythm) or “of secular length” (according to its chronological time), as “a troublesome, complicated, often surprising figure” (as if it were a character), and even as a simple “sense”: “each of us has the sense that, beyond his own life, there lies a massive historical past whose power and thrusts he recognizes better, it must be said, than its laws and direction” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 244; 252; 260).

Most times, however, the *longue durée* is normatively and in a remarkably corporate spirit regarded as the Historian's time, which is, in turn, converted simply to “the time of the world, the time of history, imperious because irreversible and because it flows at the very rhythm of the rotation of earth” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 271). An impression of naturalness is almost

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<sup>194</sup> Peter Burke observes that “for some thirty years, from Lucien Febvre's death in 1956 to his own death in 1985, Braudel was not only the leading French Historian but also the most powerful”. Having being director of the *Annales*, of the *Centre des Recherches Historiques* at the *Ecole de Hautes Etudes* and of the *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme*, Braudel had, even after his retirement in 1972, “control over funds for research, publication and appointments [that] gave him considerable power, which he used to promote the ideal of a ‘common market’ of the social sciences, with history as the dominant partner. The scholarships awarded to young Historians from other countries, such as Poland, to study in Paris helped to spread the French style of history abroad. Braudel also made sure that Historians working on the early modern period, 1500-1800, were given at least their fair share of resources. If his empire was not as vast as Philip II's, it had a considerably more decisive ruler.” (Burke 1990: 43–44 – emphasis added)

irresistible here. But Braudel's *longue durée* is not natural at all. It is rather the moment of synthesis of the Historian's "dialectic of duration" that, differently, for example, from the sociologist's one, must not stop at the stage in which a multiplicity of temporalities reign. If it is true that social phenomena have multiple temporalities, the *longue durée* is "the general measure of all these phenomena". As a measure, Braudel says patronizingly, "our time is like the economist's time". For this reason also "the philosopher, who pays attention to the subjective element internal to the concept of time, never feels the weight of historical time, a concrete, universal time [...]." (Braudel [1958] 2012: 270–271)

In favour of Braudel's claim that the *longue durée* is the Historian's time *par excellence*, is the fact that the notion effectively gains some concreteness when presented as "structure", a term that, according to Braudel himself, "for good or ill pervades the discussion of the *longue durée*":

"For us Historians, a structure is certainly an assemblage, an architecture, but even more it is a reality that time can only slowly erode, one that goes on for a long time. Certain structures, in their long life, become stable elements of an infinity of generations. They encumber history and restrict it, and hence control its flow. Other structures crumble more quickly. But all structures are simultaneously pillars and obstacles. As obstacles they provide limitations (what mathematicians call envelopes) from which man and his experiences cannot liberate themselves. Think of how difficult it is to break through certain geographical frameworks, certain biological realities, certain limits to productivity, even one or another spiritual constraint. Mental frameworks are also prisons of the *longue durée*." (Braudel [1958] 2012: 249)

At this degree of generality, who would dare to contend that Braudel might be wrong? Who would possibly argue that a *longue durée* so conceived were implausible? The problem, obviously, is not to assume that there might be "stable elements" that last long, covering infinity of generations, but rather how to establish them, a task that entails the assessment of the role played by the very idea of permanence. Braudel regards such a notion of "structure" as a very useful "key" to the "story<sup>195</sup> of the *longue durée*", but he is careful enough not to dissolve his own concept in it. Therefore it is prudent not to press this point further.

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<sup>195</sup> In this important passage, in which Fernand Braudel discusses the "keys" to the *longue durée* History, Immanuel Wallerstein translates the words "utile introduction à l'histoire de longue durée" into "useful introduction to the story of the *longue durée*". Sarah Matthews, who had made an earlier English translation, uses the word "history" (Braudel [1958] 1982: 31). So do also J. Guinsburg together with Tereza Cristina Silveira da Mota as well as B. Classen and Gerhard Schwenke, who are, respectively, the translators of the Brazilian and German editions, in which one finds the words "história" and "Geschichte" instead of "estória" and "Erzählung" Braudel [1969] 2013: 49; Braudel [1958] 1977b: 55)

Was it a slip of the pen that Wallerstein, someone who draws so much on the non-narrative aspect of Braudel's work, had used a term that accentuated exactly the narrative dimension of the idea of *longue durée*? Slip or not, it is ironic that that had happened in this major paradigmatic text of the *Nouvelle Histoire*,

Where else should one then press in order to obtain some substance out of Braudel's celebrated essay?

After having read the "The *Longue Durée*", the impression might well be overwhelming that one knows perhaps even less than before what it is. One could even say—inverting here the judgment that the article lacks of analytical rigor—that Braudel errs on the side of overly analytical rigor: at every point of the text, he comes back to his *longue durée*, examining it again and again, trying to specify the "Historian's time" in its relation to the time of the anthropologist, of the philosopher, of the sociologist, etc. In the end, the concept was loosely analysed from several perspectives, always without achieving a more or less precise formulation. There are nevertheless two passages that bring the concept of *longue durée* to its point of saturation. Here is the first one:

"For the Historian, everything begins and ends in time, a mathematical time, a demiurge, easy to mock, time that is external to men, "exogenous" as the economists would say, a time that pushes us forward, constrains us, sweeps away our individual times of many varieties—yes, *the world's imperious time.*" (Braudel [1958] 2012: 271 – emphasis added)

There is no need to strain one's eyes to descry in these words a metaphysical undertone. Arthur Lovejoy speaks about the "metaphysical pathos" as the power to arouse a positive mood on the part of its users by the congeniality of its subtle associations. According to Martin Jay, this pathos is a feature with which the Western discourse of totality has normally been imbued (Jay 1984: 21).

Similarly, much more than in a finely elaborated analytical scaffold, the totalizing force of the Braudelian model of historical time lies in its way of making congenial associations, in its broad metaphoric allusiveness.<sup>196</sup> In fact, in the Brazilian historiographical context the threefold time of Braudel's *longue durée* has usually been explained not only by describing nominally its different planes, but also by expounding the relation between them having recourse to one of the most notable metaphors Braudel uses, namely, the metaphor of the sea (Rocha 1995; Rodrigues 2009).

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a historiographical current whose program included a violent denouncement of the harmful effects of narrativity in History. Le Goff fiercely remarks that narrative history is a cadaver that should not be resuscitated, for it would be necessary to kill it again. Narrative history, he goes on claiming, dissimulated - even from itself - ideological choices and methodological procedures that should be clearly stated (Le Goff [1988] 1990b: 7).

<sup>196</sup> This feature explains at least partially the reason why Braudel's *longue durée*—a term that enjoys a widespread and recurring presence in the social sciences—even being seldom applied methodologically, has been used quite indiscriminately (and circularly) to designate every sort of social phenomena supposed to last or have lasted long or very long.

History of events, or history “not on the scale of man, but of individual men”, Braudel writes, are “the surface disturbances, crests of foam that tides of history carry on their strong backs”. A level deeper flows what he would later call “recitative of conjuncture”, a history of “slow but perceptible rhythms”. About this history, he asks: “How did these swelling currents affect Mediterranean life in general”? Even deeper than that lies the “almost timeless history” of *longue durée*, a “history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles”. Historians who get carried away by that “history of events” would find themselves transported into a state of blindness and unconsciousness “of the deeper realities of history, of the running waters on which our frail barks are tossed like cockleshells.” (Braudel [1949] 1973b: 20–21)

This seaman-like description of Historical time was originally delivered in the last two pages of *The Mediterranean's* preface. Around 1966/67, these two pages were translated - first in Polish and Spanish - and published together with other articles “on the nature of history”, which Braudel had written in the course of his academic career (Braudel [1969] 1982: 7). Uncommonly, the French edition, entitled *Écrits sur l'Histoire*, came later, in 1969. In Brazil, the book was released in the 1970s.

Braudel's metaphor of the sea suits well the conception of Historical time as formed by structures that are “simultaneously pillars and obstacles”. The immenseness of the sea, whose surface can be tamed to much the same extent as its vast profundities can be perfectly known, is an image that conveys vividly the individual's insignificance before a concrete infinitude, which stands for the huge challenge represented by the writing of the “total history” Braudel yearns for. Despite the fact of being the most intelligible facet of his notion of *longue durée*, Fernand Braudel, as mentioned before, regards this way of conceiving structures as just an introductory first key to the problem.

No wonder Braudel had entirely changed his metaphorical language, leaving *The Mediterranean's* sea-metaphor (1949) completely out of 1958's “History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*”, the programmatic article that would establish the lasting influence of his ideas about Historical time. The exploratory and tentative intonation of the *The Mediterranean's* preface transmits a humbleness that seems to be out of tune with the “The *Longue Durée*”, a text which, in its fever of totality, is rather humbly pretentious.

The intensity of this fever or rather the extent of these pretensions can be measured by condensing the meaning of the *second* metaphor chosen here as expressing at best the *longue*

durée's desideratum. It is a metaphor that Braudel uses to criticize Georges Gurvitch's temporalities, which, Braudel himself concedes, are as multiple as are his own. The problem with the temporalities of the sociologist Gurvitch is that they open "such a wide range of colors [that] it becomes impossible to reconstitute the *unitary white light*, which is indispensable to him", Fernand Braudel, the Historian. (Braudel [1958] 2012: 273 – emphasis added)

A totalitarian white light that enlightens erasing differences: this is History, in its *longue durée* form, by Fernand Braudel.

## **Crossing the sea**

### **The idea of totality and the paradigm of Brazil's formation**

There have been plenty of "knights of totality" parading through the Brazilian intellectual landscape. Not infrequently, professional Historians have occupied a prominent place there. Historiography, the fruit of the work of such intellectual laborers, is a term whose crystallized usage in Brazil occurred side by side with the development of History as a university course, a process which began in the 1930s, with the foundation of the University of São Paulo (1934) and of the Universidade do Distrito Federal (1935). (Pereira et al. 2015: 84–104)

The foundation of these universities was an essential part of a broad project of development, the general aim of which was to impel Brazil towards "modernity". Resulting from a broad consensus among the political and economic elites, this project has been conventionally called "nacional-desenvolvimentismo" (Nobre 2012: 15). With the emergence of "nacional-desenvolvimentismo", about one century after Brazil's Declaration of Independence (1822) and just four decades after the promulgation of the *Lei Áurea* (1888), which had officially abolished slavery in the whole country<sup>197</sup>, it was as if an "ideal of nation", an ideal that, to be sure, had been pursued for a long time, had finally been found.

In this context, the human sciences were essentially regarded as an academic activity supposed to take part in the efforts of producing an understanding of Brazil that, premised on the opposition between the "archaic" and the "modern", happened to play the role of social scientific expression of "nacional-desenvolvimentismo".

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<sup>197</sup> It has been accepted that in Ceará the Abolition was officially proclaimed some four years earlier, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1884. Although, Paulo Henrique de S. Martins demonstrates that as late as in 1889 there were still people "officially" enslaved in that state, in the city of Milagres. In this way, he re-opens a discussion, which harks back to the 60s, about the precursor character of the "aboliconismo cearense" (Martins 2012: 27–48).

“Nesse projeto [nacional-desenvolvimentista], ‘modernização’ significava, de um lado, o combate às diferentes formas de arcaísmo e, de outro, a criação de condições para a emergência da nação em sentido autêntico. Foi longa a hegemonia da oposição entre ‘arcaico’ e ‘moderno’, e ela moldou como nenhuma outra a autocompreensão do país.” (Nobre 2012: 16)

In the early 1940s, when the “nacional-desenvolvimentista” model was already well established, but not yet hegemonic, Caio Prado Junior’s *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (1942) was published, a book that came to be the first “classic” of Brazilian “professional historiography” and which still belongs to the canon of the so-called “pensamento social brasileiro”. The work bears in its very title a word that epitomizes that which would be a paradigmatic and perennial subject of reflection within the human sciences in Brazil: “formação”. (Nobre 2012: 17)

According to Marcos Nobre, the “paradigma da formação”, as he names it, consolidated its academic position in the short interstice between two dictatorial regimes, namely, the one spearheaded by Getúlio Vargas (1937-1945) and the military dictatorship (1964-1985). Indeed, this break from dictatorship would witness different academic disciplines within the human sciences giving birth to their respective versions of the Brazilian formation: from Literary Theory came *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1957) by Antonio Candido, from Political Science *Os Donos do Poder – Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro* (1958) by Raymundo Faoro, and from Economics *Formação Econômica do Brasil* (1959) by Celso Furtado.

These works are among the most important and ambitious attempts to offer an encompassing explanation of Brazil as a nation. And to put the “nation” at the center of attention entailed the claim of thinking essentially in terms of totality<sup>198</sup>. In this sense, it would be no exaggeration to say that, together with their ancestors<sup>199</sup>, these intellectual offspring of the

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<sup>198</sup> To a greater or lesser degree, all these works are paradigmatic examples of methodological nationalism, that is, they consist of exercises in that triad formed, first, by ignorance of the epistemic and epistemological role of the national framing as constitutive element of the idea of modernity; second (and consequently), by the naturalization of the nation-state as self-evident and absolutely unavoidable subject-matter; third, by the reduction of the analytical focus to the territorial boundaries of the nation-state (Wimmer/Glick Schiller: 2002). It is precisely by virtue of these three “vices” that such works can be described as having been holistic. In fact, they adopted the largest framework epistemologically allowed to them, which was, if one takes into account the very critique of the methodological nationalism, in no way necessarily smaller than that adopted by the producers of ‘grand theory’.

<sup>199</sup> Oliveira Vianna’s *Evolução do Povo Brasileiro* (1923), Gilberto Freyre’s *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933) and Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda’s *Raízes do Brasil* (1936) have been considered the three forerunners of the “paradigma da formação”.

“paradigma da formação” brought about the most prominent form of holistic thought stemming from the Humanities in Brazil.

The contribution of History to the “paradigma da formação” did not remain limited to Caio Prado Júnior’s work. Rather, seminal as it turned out to be, the Marxism of *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* strongly influenced later developments in the historiographical field, showing once more its usual theoretical power for holistic thinking. The core of Caio Prado Júnior’s thesis was pointedly formulated in the following passage:

“Se vamos à essência de nossa formação, veremos que na realidade nos constituímos para fornecer açúcar, tabaco, alguns outros gêneros; mais tarde ouro e diamantes; depois, algodão, e em seguida café, para o comércio europeu. Nada mais do que isto. É com tal objetivo, objetivo exterior, voltado para fora do país e sem atenção a considerações que não fossem o interesse daquele comércio, que se organizarão a sociedade e a economia brasileiras.” (Prado Júnior [1942] 2001: 32)

The colonization of Brazil was thus just an element of the broad context of the development of capitalism, a process whose indisputable taproot was Europe. Therefore, to use Prado Júnior’s consecrated term, the “sentido” of the Brazil’s formation was, so to speak, exogenous to itself. Having its own formation being determined from the outside was the trait that allows for the distinction between what he defines as “colônia de exploração” (Brasil) and “colônia de povoamento” (USA).

These two interdependent ideas, that is, the type of colonial exploration and the “sentido” of the formation of the nation would enjoy a long life in Brazilian historiography, History of Slavery included. They are in some sense reinforced, for instance, in Emilia Viotti da Costa’s *Da Senzala à Colônia* (1966), a monumental study that focuses on the abolition of slavery and subsequent transition to a free labor market as a key moment for understanding the emergence of capitalism in Brazil, or later criticized in Jacob Gorender’s *O escravismo Colonial* (1978) as well as in Ciro Flamarion Cardoso’s *Agricultura, Escravidão e Capitalismo* (1979). These are works that try to demonstrate that the formation of Brazil was fundamentally determined by the particular development of its slavery system, that means, endogenously, rather than by the dynamics of the European capitalism.

It shall be noted that all these remarkable works were written during the military dictatorship (1964–1984), a period in which the “nacional-desenvolvimentista” paradigm became hegemonic (Nobre 2012:17). There was no change in that frame of reference within which the “archaic” and the “modern” stand in evolutionary tension: those Histories of Slavery in Brazil

were, summing it up (again) with Chakrabarty's formula, versions of the master-history of transition to capitalism and modernity (Chakrabarty: 2000).

The 80s, nicknamed in Brazil (actually, not only in Brazil but in Latin America) as "a década perdida" due to the profound economic crisis that the country went through at that time, foreshadowed the closure of the project "nacional-desenvolvimentista" and, as a consequence thereof, the closure of the *aggiornamento* of Brazil to the neoliberal agenda, a process that has been carried out since the 90s (Nobre 2012: 29–33). In this context:

"Os Estados Nacionais são 'atores' decisivos certamente; mas o mero fato de passarem a ser designados como 'atores' (entre outros, portanto) já mostra muito da mudança estrutural ocorrida, dificilmente pensável até a década de 1980, por exemplo. Se a conversa de que 'não há mais centro nem periferia' desempenha um papel ideológico nada desprezível, também ela, como todo dispositivo ideológico, tem seu momento de verdade: a subordinação já não se organiza mais primordialmente em termos de nações, países ou Estados." (Nobre 2012: 30)

According to Marcos Nobre, this is the moment of the obsolescence<sup>200</sup> of the "paradigma da formação" and of the emergence of the "lógica das redes". As it had happened with *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* in the dawn of "nacional-desenvolvimentismo", History pushed itself to the fore with a work that has been regarded as the latest classic of Brazilian Historiography: *O Trato dos Viventes – A Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul* (2000) by Luiz Felipe Alencastro. If the word "formação" is still in the title, Nobre remarks, Alencastro shows however that "o Brasil se formou fora do Brasil", em um espaço transcontinental, sul-atlântico" (Nobre 2012: 31).

Alencastro's argument can be seen as a kind of radicalization of Caio Prado's. It is no longer the idea that Brazil's formation had been determined from the outside. Rather, that Brazil was formed over there, outside itself. Formulated negatively, the great novelty of *O Trato dos Viventes* lies simply in the fact that Brazil's "outside" is not that Europe with which Brazilian historiography is familiarized; it is not that Historical actor who, as a dynamic centre of capitalism, is used to play the role of the omnipresent protagonist that pushes history (even if not always in the best way) forward.

Brazil's outside by Alencastro is the "South Atlantic" (mainly Angola and the Rio da Prata Basin), parts of the world which have been historiographically presented as discrete elements within the two extra-peripheral vertices of the Atlantic colonial triangle. Against this backdrop,

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<sup>200</sup> If Marcos Nobre is right, Darcy Ribeiro's *O Povo Brasileiro* (1995) can then be regarded as the final milestone of this type of interpretation.

the old question about the “sentido da evolução/colonização do Brasil”, put by Caio Prado in the 40s, must gain a different colour.

In the following few pages, Luiz Felipe Alencastro’s *O Trato dos Viventes* will serve as a base for an examination of the problem involving the idea of totality (as the nation) on the one hand and the construction of Historical continuity of long-term on the other, in a series of important historiographical approaches to the “formação do Brasil”.

### **The formation of Brazil and History of slavery: *O Trato dos Viventes***

By reading the very two first paragraphs of *O Trato dos Viventes*, readers skeptical of the totalizing approach characteristic of the “paradigma da formação”, or rather, *especially* such readers, might perhaps be tempted to consider that the effort of carefully following the next four hundred sixty pages comprised by Alencastro’s work could be extremely worthwhile.

“Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul”: o leitor que bateu o olho na capa do livro estará intrigado com o subtítulo. Quer dizer então que o Brasil se formou fora do Brasil? É exatamente isso: tal é o paradoxo histórico que pretendo demonstrar nas páginas seguintes.

Nossa história colonial não se confunde com a continuidade de nosso território colonial. Sempre se pensou o Brasil fora do Brasil, mas de maneira incompleta: o país aparece no prolongamento da Europa. Ora, a ideia exposta neste livro é diferente e relativamente simples: colonização portuguesa, fundada no escravismo, deu lugar a um espaço econômico e social bipolar, englobando uma zona de produção escravista situada no litoral da América do Sul e uma zona de reprodução de escravos situada em Angola. Desde o século XVI, surge um espaço aterritorial, um arquipélago lusófono composto dos enclaves da América portuguesa e da feitorias de Angola. É daí que emerge o Brasil do século XVIII. [...] essas duas partes unidas pelo oceano se completam num só sistema de exploração colonial cuja singularidade ainda marca profundamente o Brasil contemporâneo.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 9)

To be sure, what is paradoxical in the subtitle is not the announcement that Brazil formed itself outside Brazil. As Alencastro himself hastens to stress: “Sempre se pensou o Brasil fora do Brasil [...]”. He is rigorously right. In this sense, to demonstrate the “paradoxo histórico” of the “exteriority” of Brazil’s formation is a feature that his study shares with some others majors “interpretações do Brasil”. It is, putting it rudely, the commonplace aspect of his, in many senses, original book.

Paradoxical would be then, consequently, the fact that Alencastro draws the attention of the readers first to this point, as imagining them as “intrigued” by this overused approach.

Anyway, this interesting slip - or was it perhaps a deftly employed rhetorical artifice?—enables the readers to realize that the “paradox” might not exactly be the idea that Brazil formed itself outside Brazil; rather, that this formation, even if denominated as “aterritorial”, can be

situated in a geographically marked “where”: the South Atlantic. What seems to be paradoxical then, is this precise geographical place where Brazil’s formation took place. But...wait! Brazil *is* a part of the South Atlantic! Would it sound really paradoxical to speak about “the formation of Germany in Europe” or “the formation of South Africa in the South of Africa”? At first glance, it is more likely to sound redundant. So, if Brazil is part of a whole called the South Atlantic, what does it mean to regard this part as “external” to the whole? Is this the paradox? Or is there ultimately no paradox at all in Alencastro’s formulation? Should the reader be “intrigued” rather by the fact that his book aims at demonstrating an either inexistent or at least apparently half-baked paradox?

These questions, which might appear somehow provocative, are perhaps just the wrong initial ones. To approach Alencastro’s general argument so as to expound the importance of his original contribution to the discussion on the formation of Brazil, it is better to ask why his “paradoxo histórico”, even dressed in a feeble and dubious way, seems not to have caused any estrangement.

An answer to this question will require, first, a glance at another prominent “interpretation of Brasil” in which the historical paradox of the “exteriority” of Brazil’s formation plays a decisive role, and second, a brief analysis of the construction of long-term continuity in *O Trato dos Viventes*.

### **Historical continuity of long-term in *O Trato dos Viventes***

*A preliminary comparison: Fernando Novais’ Portugal e Brasil na Crise do Antigo Sistema Colonial*

Reviewers have not failed to note that even more than with Caio Prado’s *Formação Econômica do Brasil*, Alencastro’s version of the formation of Brazil is engaged in a dialogue with *Portugal e Brasil na Crise do Antigo Sistema Colonial* (1979), Fernando Novais’ acclaimed book that refines and improves Caio Prados’ seminal ideas about the “sentido da colonização/evolução do Brasil” (Ohata 2001; Bicalho 2001).

It is not just because Novais’ work had been considered the last great historiographical “interpretação do Brasil”- until the publication of *O Trato dos Viventes*, of course – that makes it almost irresistible to compare them. The main reason of this comparison lies primarily in the fact that *Portugal e Brasil na Crise do Antigo Sistema Colonial* became the prototype of a

painstakingly developed Marxist historiographical approach through which “o Brasil aparece como prolongamento da Europa”:

“As economias coloniais, em que resulta afinal a expansão ultramarina, acabam por configurar, encaradas globalmente no contexto da economia mundial, setores produtivos especializados, enquadrados nas grandes rotas comerciais, e pois mercados consumidores em expansão. Neste sentido, significa ampliação da economia de mercado, respondendo assim às necessidades do capitalismo em formação.

Mais ainda, toda a estruturação das atividades econômicas coloniais, bem como a formação social a que servem de base, definem-se nas linhas de força do sistema colonial mercantilista, isto é, nas suas conexões com o capitalismo comercial. E de fato, não só a concentração dos fatores produtivos no fabrico de mercadorias-chave, nem apenas o volume e o ritmo em que eram produzidas, mas também o próprio *modo de sua produção* define-se nos mecanismos do sistema colonial. E aqui tocamos num ponto nevrálgico; a colonização, segundo a análise que estamos tentando, organiza-se no sentido de promover a primitiva acumulação capitalista nos quadros da economia europeia, ou noutros termos, estimular o progresso burguês nos quadros da sociedade ocidental. É esse o sentido profundo que articula todas as peças do sistema [...].

Ora, *bem encaradas as economias coloniais periféricas em conjunto e as suas relações com a economia europeia, como apêndice dela*, a expansão colonial apresentava-se como expansão da economia de mercado.” (Novais 1979: 97; 110 – bold and italics added)

Within this Marxist theoretical framework, slavery was, as Eric Williams says (and Novais resorts to him in order to make his point), a historical necessity: “in the early stages of colonial development, ([...] when slavery is adopted, it is not adopted as the choice over free labour; there is no choice at all.” (Williams [1944] 1994: 6; Novais 1979: 102). Initially an imposition of the historical-economic conditions, slavery would develop itself in a central historical contradiction that Fernando Novais, in fluent Marxist language, explains as follows:

“A colonização foi de fato um desdobramento da expansão comercial. *Examinadas internamente*, entretanto, na sua estrutura, as economias coloniais configuram um modo de produção escravista-mercantil, o que limita a constituição de seu mercado interno; há toda uma substancial camada da população (os produtores diretos) cujo consumo em grande parte se desenvolve à margem das transações mercantis [...] e isso trava a constituição de um mercado interno. No conjunto, tal configuração do mundo colonial responde ao funcionamento do sistema, enquanto as economias centrais se desenvolvem apenas no nível da acumulação primitiva de capitais, e a produção se expande no nível artesanal, ou mesmo manufatureiro. Quando porém essa etapa é ultrapassada, e a mecanização da produção com a Revolução Industrial, potenciando a produtividade de uma forma rápida e intensa, leva a um crescimento da produção capitalista num volume e ritmo que *passam a exigir no ultramar mais amplas faixas de consumo, consumo não só das camadas superiores, mas agora da sociedade como um todo, o que se torna imprescindível é a generalização das relações mercantis*. Então o sistema se compromete, e entra em crise. [...] Assim, pois, chegamos ao núcleo da *dinâmica do sistema: ao funcionar plenamente, vai criando ao mesmo tempo as condições de sua crise e superação.*” (Novais 1979: 110–111; 114 – emphasis added)

At first glance, something seems to be contradictory in the very formulation of the historical contradiction of the colonial society as presented by Novais. Oversimplified, if the whole

circuit of colonial slavery was a “historical necessity” of the commercial stage in the general development of capitalism, how could then “the formation of Brazil”, one of the biggest slavery-based colonial economies at that time, have possibly been just an “apêndice” thereof? Clearly, the “exteriority” of Brazil in relation to the process supposed to have shaped Brazil itself is a sort of logical consequence of the theoretical assumption that pontificates capitalism as emerging in its original form in Europe, nowhere else. Always emanating from Europe, this process seems to command everything in the colonial world, including the rise and fall of the slave system.

It is worth noting that although Fernando Novais’ analysis focuses strongly on the “economic dimension”, in his schema the different parts of the “*Antigo Sistema Colonial*” were also treated as “civilizational unities”.

“A Europa, ou antes, a economia capitalista mercantil europeia, é o centro dinâmico de todo o sistema, gerador da ação colonizadora e naturalmente beneficiário dela. A Europa, porém, não é uma unidade política, é uma unidade civilizacional.” (Novais 1979: 33)

Orbiting around the centre constituted by this indisputably hegemonic “civilizational unity” personified in Europe, Novais discerns in the *Antigo Sistema Colonial* another *three* “elementos básicos”:

“[1] áreas já densamente povoadas quando do início da exploração marítima europeia, *portadora de civilizações tradicionais*, onde a dominação política permitia o comércio vantajoso de alguns produtos de alto valor unitário no mercado europeu como as famosas especiarias do mundo indiano; [2] *zonas de povoamento e colonização europeia*, onde se estruturam economias complementares ao capitalismo europeu, fornecedora sobretudo de produtos tropicais e metais nobres (a América é por excelência o teatro da ação colonizadora europeia durante o primeiro sistema colonial); [3] e, finalmente, a África fornecedora de mão de obra de trabalho escravizada que permite pôr em funcionamento a produção colonial do segundo setor.” (Novais 1979: 33 – emphasis added)

The first element, Novais explains, configures what the theoreticians of colonialism had called “commercial colonies”; the second one, following Caio Prado’s typology, he classifies as “colônias de exploração” and “colônias de povoamento”; the third element, namely, Africa, ...well ...apparently Novais forgot he had mentioned *three* not *two* basic elements, for he does not mention Africa when it comes to the task of giving theoretical definitions: Africa enters in Novais’ analysis descriptively characterized as a “supplier of enslaved labor force”, and it ends up being just that, nothing else.

Novais’ reasoning leads one almost to conclude that not (yet) being a prolongation or appendage of Europe (as America already was) neither supposed to house any “traditional

civilization” (as was the case of India and other “areas densely populated”), Africa remains *untheorized* and, consequently, having no right to be invested with a higher defining abstract category. This is although not the case at all. It is very much the opposite: Africa is from the outset just a synthetic theoretical definition: “supplier of enslaved labor force”. And it remains so, so to speak, just *theorized*.

The effect of this procedure is striking: while Africa is *theoretically* presented as important to the development of capitalism—due to the fact of having been supplier of the main labor force responsible for the primitive accumulation—,whatever might have happened there, in Africa, seems to play no significant role neither in the periphery of the system (in Brazil) and certainly not in the center (Europe).

This happens because in Novais’ hands the development of capitalism takes the form of an evolutionist epiphany that has in Europe its manifestation and in Marx its prophet<sup>201</sup>. The formation of Brazil is a more or less accidental side effect of this process, in which Africa takes part as a necessary evil.

From such a perspective, long-term continuity is obviously a non-problem, for the “longest” structure, set from the beginning, seems to be immanent, playing (somewhere, but always behind the scenes<sup>202</sup>) the demiurgic role of an organising principle.

#### *Alencastro’s constructions of Historical continuity of long term*

Alencastro argues that views such as this one held by Fernando Novais, which present Brazil as a prolongation or appendix of Europe, are incomplete. Thus, his purpose is, it seemed, to complement it. He does although something more (or other?) than that. One sees it perfectly by examining the issue of long-term continuity in *O Trato dos Viventes*.

Alencastro resorts to three main strategies in order to construct long-term continuity in this work: first, by talking about *longue durée* structures in that geo-economic sense defined by Braudel as “pillars and obstacles” of social life; second, through his writing style, which is purposely marked by the effort of making patent the presence of the past by bringing into relief the permanency of some particular words; third, by means of anachronistic comments

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<sup>201</sup> In Novais’ eyes, Marx succeeds in bringing his analysis to a point that goes “[...] além de todas as mistificações da realidade” (Novais 1979: 101).

<sup>202</sup> Think of Walter Benjamin’s hunchback who, hidden inside the table on which the chess game of History is played, guided the hand of a puppet thought to be an automaton constructed to win all the time. “The puppet is called historical materialism”, Benjamin says. (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 253)

that create temporal wholes which produce a non-stop connection between a distant past and the burning present.

### *Long-term Historical continuity and the *longue durée* as structure*

The distinct presence of Braudel's *longue durée* in *O Trato dos Viventes* is anything other than unexpected. Living in Paris since the 60s, Luiz Felipe Alencastro received, in the shadow of the *Annales* under the baton of Fernand Braudel, his scholarly education. However, Alencastro's academic kinship to Fernand Braudel is neither indirect, nor a coincidence of the institutional environment: he was a postgraduate student of Frederic Mauro, pupil of Fernand Braudel. So, it is not exaggeration to say that Luiz Felipe Alencastro is, in historiographical sense, a lineal descendant of Fernand Braudel.

The way the subject matter is presented at the beginning of *O Trato dos Viventes* shows indeed some typical features of the Braudelian scheme. After a summary exposition of the general problematic, which is provided in the initial chapter (*O Aprendizado da Colonização*), the first step of Alencastro's "aterritorial interpretação da formação do Brasil" (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 42) is to draw attention, firstly, to geographical, then to economical main factors that condition, simultaneously, as "pillars and obstacles", Brazil's formation.

Concerning the geographical dimension, the sea currents assume outstanding importance in Alencastro's argument. An analysis of the regime of winds and tides helps him make especially significant the 1621 official separation between the "Estado do Brasil" and the "Estado do Maranhão", a fact customarily belittled in Histories about the formation of Brazil, as well as to put more emphasis on the role of the relatively favourable conditions of navigation between Brazil and Angola as an element of political and economical integration.

"Com efeito, a separação entre o Estado do Brasil e o Estado do Maranhão [...] responde aos quadros de ventos e marés predominantes na costa sul-americana: facilidade de comunicação com a Corte e transtorno da navegação litorânea sul-americana levam à criação de duas colônias distintas no espaço da América portuguesa." (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 59)

"Ao contrário, as travessias Brasil-Angola afiguravam-se 'quase sempre acompanhadas de bonanças ou de mui pequenos incômodos do mar e ventos', conforme observa um governador daquela conquista africana. Um dos eixos da bipolaridade escravista unindo a África à América portuguesa gira, justamente, na rota aberta entre as duas margens do mar por correntezas e ventos complementares." (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 61)

The complementary effect of the two remarks on the construction of Alencastro's main argument is manifest: the political event of the official separation is used to displace the

unifying character of the spatial contiguity of that which came to be the future Brazil's territory as a "sovereign nation", while the economic integration blown by the trade winds function as a way of demonstrating how strong the connection of this future nation to the geographically distant Angola was.

"Trade winds" says too little. Alencastro introduces then a significant amendment: those winds had been first and foremost *African Slave Trade Winds*<sup>203</sup>. In this way, pointing to the inextricable interaction between the geographical and the economical, he easily makes clear which economical factor play the role of *longue durée* as structure in his account.

Something quite obvious but easy to downgrade or even to forget, if not looking at it from a Social Science perspective, is that colonial slave trade was not just the trade of enslaved people, but also the trade of an immense variety of things. From the fabrication of ships, an activity that Alencastro addresses at some length, to the production and distribution of foodstuff, the slave trade involves a huge complex of activities.

"Men and things make up material life", Braudel states opening the first volume of his *Civilization and Capitalism*. Where to start? His answer is categorical: "Clearly, our starting point must be the people of the world." (Braudel 1973a: 1) But "people", for historiographical purposes, are worth their weight in numbers<sup>204</sup>, whence his emphatic words stressing the supreme importance of demography in History.

It is in this sense that Alencastro as well takes "people" as his point of departure: graphics and tables detailing the trade of enslaved Africans are not missed in the beginning of *O Trato dos Videntes*. Still, even though people are there as numbers, the numbers themselves do not gain special prominence in the History he tells. On the contrary, as soon as he warns the readers that "os números do tráfico negreiro são problemáticos para os séculos XVI e XVII", he practically drops the matter, weakening in this way a pretension of transparent objectivity that has led some critics to consider the meticulousness of quantitative methods characteristic of the Braudelian phase of the *Annales* as "a newer, more technologically-advanced form of positivism." (Hunt 1986: 214)

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<sup>203</sup> "Na medida em que se zarpava com facilidade de Pernambuco, da Bahia e do Rio de Janeiro até Luanda ou a Costa da Mina, e vice-versa, a navegação luso-brasileira será transatlântica e negreira. [...] Na contramão dos ventos alísios. Depois chamados "ventos de comércio", Trade Winds, pelos anglo-saxões, mas que foram primeiro e sobretudo, ventos de comércio negreiro, *African Slave Trade Winds*." (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 63).

<sup>204</sup> In fact, this chapter is entitled "Weight of Numbers".

One soon realizes—in a particular sense—that the slave trade is very much like the winds that blew it: it functions, so to speak, as a non-interpretive constant of Alencastro’s interpretation of Brazil’s formation. Therefore, it can be addressed as remaining identical to itself, notwithstanding the transformations it suffers in the course of the two centuries covered by the book.

That the numbers of the slave trade were not reliable enough to provide statistical warrant for assumptions Alencastro might make or conclusions he might draw, is not so bad. The slave trade expresses here “concreteness” rather than “objectivity”. It is an example of the materiality of those socio-historical process, which, as Trouillot says,

“seem to speak of an immensity of which we know little except that we are part of it. To solid to be unmarked, too conspicuous to be candid, they embody the ambiguities of history. They give us the power to touch it, but not to hold it firmly in our hands (...). We suspect that their concreteness hides secrets so deep that no revelation may fully dissipate their silences”. (Trouillot 1995: 30)

#### *Long-term Historical continuity and Alencastro’s writing style*

Alencastro’s *second way of constructing long-term continuity* takes the form of what he names his “estilo” or “modo de escrever” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 9–10). He makes no secret that:

“numa cultura tradicionalmente oral como a nossa, um meio privilegiado de patentear a presença do passado consiste em dar relevo à perenidade das palavras. Das palavras, dos coloquialismos – ainda vivos agora – grafados nos textos, na linguagem das estradas, das ruelas e das praias brasileiras. Por isso, da leitura dos documentos e do textos seiscentistas, retomei expressões que encadeiam a narrativa das oito partes do livro.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 10)

*Mukambo, kilombo, libambo, libombo e kitanda*, these and many others - such as *banzo, quimbembe* and *banguela* - are words that Alencastro subjected to a treatment that aims at making the past patently writable:

##### . Mukambo/Kilombo

“*Mukambo*, palavra do quimbundo que significa cumeeira e, mais precisamente, “a forquilha do encaixe do teto da casa” – caracterizando a morada fixa da família ou da comunidade -, passa a designar o refúgio dos rebeldes de São Tomé. No Brasil, o termo vira sinônimo de povoado de negros insurrectos. Mais tarde, será substituído por *kilombo* – nome original do campo de guerreiros jaga dos reinos da Matmaba e Caçanje. Abolida a escravidão, *mucambo* ou *mocambo* passa a indicar lugares onde vivem negros, palhoças, habitações populares e se generaliza como sinônimo de “favela nordestina”. (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 66)

##### . Libambo/Libombo

“De janeiro a abril a chuva atrasava a marcha dos *libambos* - colunas de cativos amarrados – para as feiras e os portos ( numa variante reveladora da truculência do quadro social brasileiro, *libombo* designa ainda hoje no Nordeste a levas de sertanejos que migram para o Sul em busca de trabalho).” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 83)

. Kitanda

“Deve ser notado que o escambo de escravos encadeia a oferta de uma série de outros produtos africanos. Mesmo com o transporte de camelos no Sahel, de canoas nas redes fluviais da Alta Guiné e da Costa da Mina, e de barçaças nos rios de Angola, o cativo apresentava-se como uma mercadoria capaz de carregar outras mercadorias. Assim, circuitos terrestres de tráficos de escravos formavam outras tantas vias de transporte de commodities entre o sertão e a costa africana. Era intensa a atividade das feiras sertanejas angolanas, designadas em *quimbundo* pelo substantivo que passou a definir no Brasil todo e qualquer pequeno comércio: *kitanda*.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 114)

All these words are still used, frequently with different orthography, in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese. As the quotation expounds, Alencastro’s close attention to the spelling and the denotative meanings such words acquired in two different times, as well to the transposition of the nomenclature taken from the primary sources into historiographical account, is thought to play a double role: first, to create the sense of a temporal whole linking the colonial past to the reader’s present; second, to concatenate the narrative of events scattered over more than two centuries of chronological time. This rather rhetorical procedure contributes immensely to give coherence to the book: coherence at the level of the content, related to the way of unifying the myriad of issues he deals with, on the one hand, and coherence at the level of meaning, related to the claim of having written a book that explains the formation of Brazil accounting for its “exteriority”.

Small wonder then that Alencastro is so ostensive concerning his “writing style”. Without going into a surely fruitful, but at this point inopportune discussion on the complexities of the concept of style, one can say that style refers both to “what remains of a representation when we subtract its content” and to “the relationship between representation and the one who makes the representation.” (Danto 1981: 197–198)

In fact, Alencastro explores his “writing style” to bring about that “turning towards the South Atlantic/Africa” as that which remains (or emerges?) from his book when subtracted from the content of every concrete event; or, as that which remains when the book is not seen as a mere superposition of the events it presents in historiographical fashion.

This “turning” effected by *O Trato dos Videntes* is also fleshed out in what Alencastro asserts himself by taking distance from the position of other authors. Symptomatically, Fernand Braudel is among them. Justifying why he refuses to name the Congo as “Kongo”, he writes:

“O reino do Congo cobria o Norte do território atual de Angola e parte da República Democrática do Congo e da República Popular do Congo. Os historiadores da África, e muitos

outros, como Fernand Braudel, adotam a grafia Kongo, para diferenciar esse antigo Estado banto das colônias havidas posteriormente na área pela Bélgica e pela França. Não vejo fundamento nisso: o território da Dinamarca setecentista não corresponde à atual Dinamarca e nem por isso seu nome é alterado pelos historiadores.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 66)

This is not the sole moment in which Alencastro criticizes Braudel. In the chapter “Angola brasílica”, reputed by a commentator as the most original and the highlight of the book (Ohata 2001: 214), he remarks:

“Braudel, ao estudar as plantas alimentares americanas, faz um largo elogio ao milho e à batata, mas desconsidera a mandioca. Esta, argumenta ele, só serviu de base a ‘culturas primitivas e regularmente medíocres’. Ao contrário do que escrevia o mestre, a mandioca constituiu uma das peças de encaixe da economia-mundo no Atlântico Sul.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 256)

A sensitive reader will not have failed to notice that a certain irony may arise from the patronizing way Alencastro calls Braudel “mestre”. Ironic is also Alencastro’s description of some Historical personages, for instances, Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos:

“Autor dos *Dialógos do sítio de Lisboa* (1608) – livro-chave do iberismo setecentista – e de outras obras militares, políticas e literárias, Vasconcelos filia-se à raça de escritores-mata-mouros, *fidalgos práticos em prosa, verso e decapitação*. [...] Refinado escritor e pensador na Europa, Luís Mendes de Vasconcelos virou um grande predador na África. *Barbarizou* em Angola junto com seus dois filhos, Francisco e Joane Mendes de Vasconcelos, pilhando aldeias aliadas, exigindo parte dos cativos escambados nas feiras, em prejuízo dos mercadores luandenses.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 96; 97 – emphasis added)

Maurício de Nassau, who Alencastro gives the noble epithet of “príncipe humanista e negreiro”, received identical treatment:

“No ar livre da sociedade holandesa Spinoza (1632-77) concebeu teses do humanismo ateu que teriam sido esmagadas no ovo pela Inquisição em Portugal, terra de seus pais. Saído da Holanda, Nassau, o príncipe humanista, se assenhoreia de uma base colonial portuguesa cujo modo de exploração o induz a varrer o ‘escrúpulo inútil’ de seus patrícios e incorporar o escravismo no cálculo econômico dos burgueses de Amsterdam. [...] No livro editado em Haia no tricentenário da morte de Nassau (1979), os ilustres autores da obra não analisam nem sequer mencionam essa militância negreira, componente essencial da modernidade nassoviana. Aqui, como alhures, a segmentação dos eventos sul-atlânticos deixa o tráfico negreiro à deriva, pouca a complexidade da expansão europeia e facilita a biografia dos grandes homens.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 211–212)

From the intention of animating meaning that might still be present in the “perenidade” of words stemming from African languages, through the critique of Braudel’s unequal epistemological treatment of Africa, up until the mockery of 17<sup>th</sup> Century European Humanism, the features of that which Alencastro defines as his writing style bring about a Historical painting executed with glaring anti-Eurocentric strokes.

A concept such as “civilization” or “civilizational unity”, which, as seen above with respect to Fernando Novais’ work, plays a key, but nevertheless undiscussed role in structuring a fairly Eurocentric-evolutionist view on the *Antigo Sistema Colonial* (and, consequently, on Novais’ version of the “*formação do Brasil*”), has no room in Alencastro’s argumentation. This avoidance of “civilization”, however, by no means leads him to a misrepresentation of the issue of power asymmetries involving the Historical actors of the “*formação do Brasil*”. On the contrary, always practicing his style, finely attentive to “words”, he uses an example of an African language to denounce such a problem directly at the level of the contemporary production of intellectual knowledge:

“Kicongo: língua do povo bacongo, falada no antigo reino do Congo e, atualmente, na República Democrática do Congo (ex-Zaire) e na República Popular do Congo. Uma das línguas formadoras do português falado no Brasil, o kicongo, já estudado e dicionarizado, não consta nem como verbete no dicionário Aurélio<sup>205</sup>.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 94)

As were expected, he is no less attentive to this question within his Historical narrative. Alencastro recognizes from the outset that in many colonial contexts “a relação de forças se afigurava favorável aos invasores europeus” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 11). And he develops this assertion in great detail when he writes, for example, about the participation of the Catholic Church, especially of the Jesuits, in the colonialist undertaking (topically, in chapter five, but this is a subject more or less present in the whole book).

Basically, Alencastro approaches the problematic of colonialism in terms of contextual and asymmetrical relations of force that answer to impulses of different orders. He never reduces the problem to a unitary dynamic liable to be presented as the result of “essentializable” degrees of [civilizational or economic] development of one single actor; certainly not that of Europe. From his perspective, Europe is definitely not the sole vanishing point.

#### *Long-term Historical continuity and controlled anachronism*

Finally, the third way Alencastro develops long-term continuity takes the form of a two-faced handling of the issue of anachronism.

In talking about the slave trade between Brazil and Angola in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, for example, which is one of the main subjects of Alencastro’s analysis, terms like “brasileiro” and “angolano” are highly amenable to anachronistic understanding. Alencastro addresses the

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<sup>205</sup> The *Aurélio* is the most popular and one of the most recognized dictionaries of Brazilian Portuguese.

problems involving anachronism in the act of naming - an issue as ordinary as rich in consequences for the writing of History - when he chooses the 17<sup>th</sup> Century word “brasílico” over “brasileiro”. He explains why:

“farei uso do substantivo seiscentista *brasílico* para designar a sociedade colonial da América portuguesa dos séculos XVI, XVII e da primeira metade do século XVIII, quando a palavra *brasiliense* se referia sobretudo aos índios, e *brasileiro* principalmente aos cortadores de pau-brasil [...]. Àquela altura, o colonato dos enclaves da América portuguesa afirmava interesses distintos dos interesses dos reinóis, mas não tinha ainda a percepção de pertencimento a uma só comunidade. Os ‘brasílicos’ tornam-se ‘brasileiros’, no sentido atual da palavra, ao longo do século XVIII, depois que a economia do ouro engendra uma divisão inter-regional do trabalho e um mercado interno na Colônia, fazendo assim emergir a ideia de filiação a uma comunidade suprarregional dotada de uma mesma língua e vivendo num mesmo território.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 28 – emphasis in the original)

This concern with anachronism also appears respecting analytical concepts. Making a reference to an article of his authorship published two years prior to *O Trato dos Viventes*, Alencastro explains that the distinction between “colônia de exploração” and “colônia de povoamento”, elaborated by Leroy-Beaulieu in 1874, had been originally applied for characterising the “Segunda Expansão Europeia” (1870-1954), but not the “Primeira Expansão Europeia” (1450-1825). Caio Prado Junior, Alencastro then points out, had made anachronistic use of Leroy-Beaulieu’s idea, a use that is nowadays widespread in Brazilian historiography (Alencastro 1998: 195; Alencastro [2000] 2014: 335).

On the one hand then, there is this accuracy, this strictness in relating words and ideas to the right chronological time they belong to. On the other hand, passages like these:

“Por causa da lenta rotatividade do capital investido, dos azares da cultura da cana, do vaivém dos preços, o endividamento dos proprietários se apresentava como uma das constantes do escravismo [...]. Porém desde o governo-geral de Telles Barreto (1583-87) se impediam as execuções hipotecárias nos engenhos, porque os mercadores ‘vinham destruir a terra, levando dela em três ou quatro anos que cá estavam quanto podiam’, explicava frei Vicente de Salvador. O estabelecimento da Relação na Bahia (1609) e a lei de 1612 efetivam esse privilégio, o ‘*privilégio do senhor de engenho*’, o qual, sob roupagens diversas, perdura até nossos dias em benefício dos usineiros”. (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 215 – emphasis added)

“Notem-se ainda as nomeações do ex-capitão da guerra de Pernambuco, Cristovão de Barros Rego (1656-61), para o governo de São Tomé, e de seu parente, Roque de Barros Rego (1648-50) para Cabo Verde (em atenção aos muitos serviços prestados na guerra do Brasil), onde também será governador Francisco de Figueroa (1658-63), um dos comandantes da segunda Batalha de Guararapes. Quase todos foram postos concedidos entre 1654 e 1655. *Porque motivo d. João IV, qual um governador fisiológico do Brasil de hoje em final de mandato, procedeu de um só golpe a essas nomeações?*” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 273 – emphasis added)

“Desembarcado nos portos da América portuguesa, mais uma vez submetido à venda, o escravo costumava ser surrado ao chegar à fazenda. [...] Tal é o testemunho do Padre e jurista Ribeiro Rocha, morador da Bahia, no seu tratado sobre a escravatura no Brasil. Cem anos mais tarde o viajante francês Adolphe d’Assier confirmava a prática de espancar os escravos logo de entrada, para ressocializá-lo no contexto da opressão nas fazendas e engenhos do Império. Método de terror luso-brasílico, e mais tarde autenticamente nacional, brasileiro, o choque do bárbaro arbítrio do senhor – visando demonstrar ao recém-chegado seu novo estatuto subumano – voltou a ser praticado durante a ditadura de 1964-85. *Instruídos pela longa experiência escravocrata, os torturadores do DOI-CODI e da Operação Bandeirantes também faziam uso repentino da surra, à entrada da delegacia e das casernas, para desumanizar e aterrorizar os suspeitos de ‘subversão’.*” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 148 – emphasis added)

The excerpts are sufficiently eloquent of the most common type of anachronism: sometimes Alencastro presents a contemporary event as the past, just garbed in a different way (the “usineiro” as the “senhor de engenho”); sometimes, inverting the direction, he asks the reader to see a 17<sup>th</sup> Century absolutist monarch as today’s “fisiológico” Brazilian governor. Finally, the past reappeared in a later moment of the past itself, when the military dictatorship reinstated “o choque bárbaro do arbítrio do senhor”.

The effect of this procedure is manifestly very similar to that adopted for unveiling the “perenidade das palavras”: it creates the same temporal wholes, non-stop connections between present and past. But the procedure itself is completely different. In the first case, the word itself, say, *mukambo/mocambo*, functions as the stable element that carries the [meanings of the] past into the present. Meanings that, explored at their denotative level, lend a non-interpretive physiognomy to the Historical permanence that the words end up meaning. In the second case—consider please the excerpt about João IV—there is no initial stable element; the very comparison between the political behaviour of both rulers is constructed on the basis of a logic of resemblance that brings about the Historical permanence (the “fisiologismo”) as an anachronistic attribution of meaning.

#### *Alencastro and his critics: missing Eurocentrism*

The articulation of these three ways of constructing long-term continuity produce something whose centrality can be gauged by the recurrence of a particular criticism on *O Trato dos Viventes*. Milton Ohata poses it as follows:

“podem ser feitas ao livro de Luiz Felipe as críticas que um suposto marxista faria a um braudeliano. Sem esquecer os muitos pontos de contato, o marxismo cobraria dos esquemas braudelianos mais mediações entre os diferentes níveis de temporalidade histórica, que muitas vezes são apenas organizados em camadas sobrepostas sem contato entre si. *Assim, por exemplo, ocorre com a noção de pacto colonial, inexistente no livro.* Ou com o peso da

tributação direta ao comércio de escravos, em favor da Coroa, que mereceria um capítulo à parte. Em ambos os casos, mediações propriamente ditas, que fazem a colônia ser uma colônia, são apagadas por um recorte que privilegia tão-só a 'autonomia' do comércio bilateral e do colonato brasileiro. Com esta escolha, Luiz Felipe responde a muitíssimas questões exceto a uma (talvez o x do problema): *sendo a Colônia 'autônoma' naquilo que lhe era imprescindível, por que continuou durante tanto tempo ligada à Metrópole?* (Ohata 2001: 215 – emphasis added)

Ohata then argues that Alencastro could have answered this question satisfactorily had he incorporated in his work “a produção do marxismo uspiano, que se empenhou em identificar mediações entre a história do país e a história do capitalismo”, especially Fernando Novais' concept of “pacto colonial”. Another reviewer, addressing the same question, disagrees with Ohata and, less diplomatically, hits the raw nerve by concluding that *O Trato dos Viventes* simply

“contradiz [...] o que há de mais vigoroso nas análises de Caio Prado Júnior e Fernando Antonio Novais, a capacidade de explicar a mudança. Pois se aceitarmos, com Alencastro, que a vinda da Corte não representou uma grande ruptura, como poderemos entender a mudança de estatuto político da colônia e mesmo o processo de Independência?” (Teodoro 2005: 192).

As discussed above, both Caio Prado and Fernando Novais explain the formation of Brazil basically as a prolongation or appendix of the European commercial expansion. If one wants to be more precise: many of Brazil's defining features were a result of Portugal's incapacity to answer the challenges posed by the development of capitalism in Europe from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on.

This point is particularly salient in Fernando Novais work. According to him, what makes the analysis of the relations between Portugal and Brazil in the context of what he calls “the crisis of the ancient colonial system” especially difficult is exactly the fact that Portugal, which had played a leading role in the beginnings of European expansion in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, occupied an increasingly marginal position respecting the big changes that brought about modern industrial capitalism, two and half centuries later. It is in the center of the system that the relevant changes occur, and, he explains, “situado Portugal fora dos centros propulsores dessas grandes transformações, a maior dificuldade estará sem dúvida na apresentação das metamorfoses que inevitavelmente sofrem esses processos ao atingir estas áreas limites [Portugal/Brazil] do sistema” (Novais 1979: 15).

The idea of “pacto colonial”, based on the most fundamental mechanism of the Mercantilist economy, that is, the “exclusivo metropolitano”, which consisted primarily of the “reserva do mercado das colônias para a metrópole, isto é, para a burguesia comercial metropolitana”

(Novais 1979: 88), functions as an empirical warrant for the centripetal character of Fernando Novais' theoretical approach and leads him to the conclusion that

“a acumulação gerada no comercio de africanos [...] fluía para a metrópole, realizavam-na o mercados metropolitanos, engajados no abastecimento dessa mercadoria. Esse talvez seja o segredo da melhor adaptação do negro à lavoura...escravista. Paradoxalmente, é a partir do *tráfico negreiro* que se pode entender a *escravidão africana colonial*, e não o contrário.” (Novais 1979: 105 – italics in the original)

Alencastro agrees without reservation with this “paradox”, but he does not conceive Portugal as a reverse mechanical belt that transmitted force, that is, capital, to the propulsive centre of the system. The reason for this, a particularly relevant point he makes in his book, is because a substantial part of the capital resulting from the slave trade did not indeed flow neither to Portugal nor England, but remained in the hand of “brasílicos” traders.<sup>206</sup>

Another critic, Maria Fernanda B. Bicalho, even considers this finding a “grande viragem interpretativa” of *O Trato dos Viventes*:

“A grande viragem interpretativa da análise de Alencastro consiste no argumento de que o tráfico atlântico de africanos ‘modifica de maneira contraditória o sistema colonial’, pois, ‘desde o século XVII interesses luso-brasileiros ou, melhor dizendo, brasílicos, se cristalizam nas áreas escravistas sul-americanas e nos portos africanos de trato [...] carreiras bilaterais vinculam diretamente o Brasil e a África Ocidental.” (Bicalho 2001: 269).

Nevertheless, demonstrating once more how important it is to ensure the primacy of the ties that linked Brazil to Portugal/Europe against Alencastro's “turning to the South”, she somehow downgrades this “grande viragem interpretativa” by attempting to reinsert a “political version” of Novais' “pacto colonial” in Alencastro's argument. In order to do that, she comes back to the question Ohata raised:

“Ohata estranha a inexistência de pacto colonial no livro de Alencastro, que, a seu ver, ‘privilegia tão só a ‘autonomia’ do comércio bilateral e o colonato brasílico’. E se pergunta: sendo a colônia ‘autônoma’ naquilo que era imprescindível, porque motivo continuou durante tanto tempo ligada à metrópole?”

O que talvez pudesse responder a esta questão fosse *uma re-leitura do pacto, não propriamente em sua vertente econômica, como a tecida por Novais, mas em sua configuração política*, mais afeita à interpretação de Evaldo Cabral de Mello. (Bicalho 2001: 272 – emphasis added)<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> This is also the main argument of an important work published in 1997: Manolo Florentino's *Em Costas Negras – Uma história do tráfico de escravos entre a África e o Rio de Janeiro (séculos XVIII e XIX)*. In this book, Florentino demonstrates consistently that at least since the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century traders from Rio de Janeiro had controlled the slave trade between Brazil and Africa.

<sup>207</sup> Evaldo Cabral de Mello keeps his analysis focused on the “nativismo nobiliárquico pernambucano”, which evoked the Restoration War against the Dutch (1645-1654) as the foundational event of a local identity: “O imaginário político da restauração comportou também o aparecimento de uma relação

For different reasons, what all these critics are unwilling to fully accept is that a proper understanding of Brazil's formation could possibly be achieved by an analysis focused on the economic and political<sup>208</sup> relations that connected Brazil to Africa/South Atlantic rather than to Europe. This common yearning for the central elements in the interpretation by Caio Prado Júnior and by Fernando A. Novais points to an impotence regarding an understanding of how the formation of Brazil could be conceived, respecting its essential elements, as something other than an offspring of Portugal/Europe and, consequently, how the separation from the metropole, literally, "the parent state of a colony", could not be the central event in such a History. In relegating Europe to the background, Alencastro had orphaned Brazil in the sense that he partially deprives it from the comforting explanatory power<sup>209</sup> that emanates from a long-term History, which its motherland is a closer relative of.

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contractual das relações entre Pernambuco e a Coroa. [...] Na idéia deste pacto entre Pernambuco e a Coroa, ressoava a justificação jurídica da própria restauração portuguesa." (Mello 1986: 125–126).

It is in the hands of two other Historians, namely, João Fragoso e Manoel Florentino, that the attempt to re-enact in the colony the aristocratic relations proper to the motherland becomes a defining feature of Brazil. In *O Arcaísmo como Projeto*, they argue that in Portugal:

"Havia uma aliança tácita entre os fidalgos e o pequeno comércio, no sentido de prevenir o crescimento dos grandes mercadores e, pois, contrário à modernização que eles porventura pudessem implementar. [...] Enfim prevaleciam valores não-capitalistas, para os quais, ascender na hierarquia social necessariamente implicava tornar-se membro da aristocracia. Daí a grande propensão dos meios mercantis à aristocratização, e a canalização e esterilização de vultosos recursos adquiridos na esfera mercantil para atividades de cunho senhorial. Daí poder-se assumir que o "atraso" português, em pleno século XVII, não se constituísse em mero anacronismo, fruto de uma putativa incapacidade de acompanhar o destino manifesto capitalista europeu; ao contrário, *o arcaísmo era, isto sim, um verdadeiro projeto social*, cuja viabilização dependia, no fundamental, da apropriação das rendas coloniais." (Fragoso/Florentino 2001: 51-52 – emphasis added)

According to the authors, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Brazilian urban mercantile elites, which had accumulated great capital running the slave trade, denoted "a presença de um forte ideal aristocratizante" of Portuguese background, which led them to close down their trade business and to invest heavily in realty instead. This created a small "grupo de rentistas" that nonetheless provoked "um grande desvio de investimentos da produção para um setor que não multiplicava a riqueza – pelo contrário, esterilizava-a." (Fragoso/Florentino 2001: 229–231) Thus, a Portuguese "aristocratic ideal" had induced in Brazil the same "arcaizantes", that is, "non-capitalist" and "non-modernizing" effects it had brought about earlier in Portugal.

Fragoso & Florentino mention two deep features these developments had impressed on Brazil: the first one is a type of persistent social inequality "em que a riqueza se concentra de tal modo a não ensejar sequer a existência de grupos intermediários"; the second one "refere-se ao comprometimento de toda sociedade com a exclusão." (Fragoso/Florentino 2001: 235–237)

The conclusion Fragoso & Florentino come to with regard to the contemporaneous Brazilian elites is so strikingly formulated that it is worth transcribing here so as to conclude the quotation: "A cultura política das elites brasileiras as tem permitido transformar o sono sobre um barril de pólvora em repouso em berço esplêndido." (Fragoso/Florentino 2001: 235)

<sup>208</sup> It is not irrelevant to note that these criticisms concern the economic and political dimension. No problem arises with regard to other cultural aspects Alencastro touches on by means of his recurring remarks related to the "perenidade das palavras" stemming from African languages.

<sup>209</sup> In fact, when Historians have recourse to the Marxist theorization of the emergence of industrial capitalism or to the social values and political practices of the Ancient Regime, they resort to broad social,

This is by no means the same as saying that the “master narrative of the development of European capitalism” or that the “social and political structures of the Ancient Regime” are completely absent from Alencastro’s account. They are there<sup>210</sup>, but their characteristic totalizing power concerning long-term continuity was weakened. In other words: the more Alencastro pushes Africa/South Atlantic to the fore of his narrative the more he undermines the “monumental time” that supports the heroic narrative of Western civilization extending its power, for better or for worse, over the world (Gilroy 1993: 197).

The recurring criticism centered on the lack of concepts such as “sentido da colonização” or “pacto colonial”, no matter if preferentially concerned with the London of future capitalism or with the Lisbon of the Ancient Regime’s backwardness, is the cry for a particular type of historiographical reification that conflates the formation of Brazil with the History of the “forces propelling Europe into commercial expansion and industrial capitalism” and has *therefore* little to say about the History of “the people without history” (Wolf [1982] 2010: xxv-xxvi).

How then to be surprised with “mestre Novais”, as Milton Ohata addresses him (without any irony!), when he, having “forgotten” to include any African societies among his “civilizations”, seems satisfied with regarding Africa as just a “supplier of slaves”? Caio Prado, who in the genealogy of Brazilian historiography would be the “mestre de mestre Novais”, goes so far as to subtly question whether the African slaves had a “culture” at all!<sup>211</sup>

The master’s time of such a History as written by Caio Prado or Fernando Novais - and ardently desired by the critics of Alencastro - is, parodying Braudel, a demiurge time that is external to man. Exogenous, as the economists would say, this time pushes forward, constrains, sweeps

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economic and political long-term developments which, had taken place first in Europe, have been already analyzed, dissected, categorized, historicized, theorized, etc. ... and can now serve as useful models for explaining what happens elsewhere. They are, as a rule, surreptitious ways of centering Europe (Chakrabarty 2000).

<sup>210</sup> See, for example, how Alencastro explains the social forces that set the colonial system in movement: “Se é certo que os colonos se queixam de “falta de braços” desde o século XVII, também é verdadeiro que eles protestam já na mesma época – coisa bem mais surpreendente – contra a ‘falta de terras’. Terra e trabalho não se apresentam aqui como dados independentes, mas como variáveis que são resultantes das forças motrizes do capitalismo comercial. O esquecimento ou a insuficiente avaliação desse traço essencial da colonização deu azo a confusões que parte da historiografia custa a se desembaraçar. Intencionais ou não intencionais, os efeitos produzidos pelo tráfico negreiro geram a acumulação específica ao capitalismo comercial e à ‘Pax Lusitana’ no Atlântico.” (Alencastro [2000] [2014: 41])

<sup>211</sup> “O trabalho escravo nunca irá além de seu ponto de partida: o esforço físico constrangido; não educará o indivíduo, não o preparará para um plano de vida mais elevado. Não lhes acrescentará elementos morais; e pelo contrário, degradá-lo-á, eliminando mesmo nele o conteúdo cultural que *porventura tivesse trazido do seu estado primitivo*.” (Prado Júnior [1942] 2001: 342-343 – emphasis added)

away individual times of many varieties – yes, it is the *world's imperial time!* And this type of time, as the Braudelian one, forms a trinity in unity as well: it is the time of capitalism (firstly commercial, then industrial), the time of modernity, and the time of the nation. To neatly distinguish these three entities—in historiographical fashion—is a task almost metaphysical. To deny them might mean a historiographical damnation; or rather, not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge they offer entails the banishment from the disciplinary Garden of History. However, when one deals with a subject denominated “a formação do Brasil”, by virtue of the very nature of the enterprising, the redemption is warranted: the “time of the nation” is inexorable. It is precisely this time that, ultimately, saves *O Trato dos Videntes*. This last statement calls for explanation.

#### *The longue durée variable of Brazil's formation*

In constructing the long-term continuity of Brazil's formation by means of that threefold strategy, Luiz Felipe Alencastro manages to begin neutralizing the most harmful effects of that imperial time of History, among them that opposition between the “archaic” and the “modern” which, as mentioned above, has shaped the understanding of Brazil's self-image. It was out of the articulation of those three ways of constructing long-term continuity that he produces something unheard of in classic historiographical “interpretações do Brasil”: a slight displacement of Europe as the template for conceiving historical continuity of long-term.

“Slight” because at the very end, as crying out for salvation as the book exhales' its last breath, Alencastro writes:

“Fica patente que o sistema colonial é atravessado por uma crise refundadora no Seiscentos: na saída da guerra holandesa se estabelece uma cogestão portuguesa e brasílica no espaço econômico do Atlântico Sul. Por isso, a ruptura de 1808 não será tão radical como se tem dito e escrito: ainda se movia no oceano o braço brasilanizado do sistema colonial: a rede de importação de mão de obra cativa, o tráfico negreiro. Depois de 1850, o mercado de trabalho nacional continua dependente, nos seus setores dinâmicos, do trato de imigrantes europeus, levantinos e asiáticos. Só nos anos 1930-40 a reprodução ampliada de força de trabalho passa ocorrer inteiramente no interior do território nacional.

*Essa é a variável de longue durée que apreende a formação do Brasil nos seus prolongamentos internos e externos: de 1550 a 1930 o mercado de trabalho está desterritorializado: o contingente principal da mão de obra nasce e cresce fora do território colonial e nacional.*

A história do mercado brasileiro, amanhado pela pilhagem e pelo comércio, é longa, mas a história da nação brasileira, fundada na violência e no consentimento, é curta.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 354–355 – emphasis added)

These are the last three paragraphs of *O Trato dos Viventes*. And they are so bewildering that they deserve a kind of exegesis, even if just a very brief one.

Alencastro begins by stating that his analysis refutes “the time of the nation” as conceived by Caio Prado and Fernando Novais, for both parties identify 1808 as the year of the decisive rupture that would found Brazil as a “nation”. The slave trade, Alencastro insists, not the “pacto colonial” had been the essential element of Brazil’s formation. After having established that, he makes the first redemptive move: to equate colonial slave trade with later immigration so that both become defined as the “importation of workforce”. Thus he can easily conclude that even after 1850, that is, after the official definitive cessation of the slave trade, the national labour market *continued* dependent of “workforce” coming from abroad. This dependence was yet not *general*, it affected just the “dynamic sectors” of the national economy.

At this point, considering this argument about the dependence on foreign immigrant workers for Brazil’s economic development in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some obvious questions arise: what about the whole local population? Were there perhaps other “solutions” for the problem<sup>212</sup>? Summarizing a long academic discussion, one can say that in arguing that the end of the slave trade provoked a shortage of workforce, firstly Alencastro adopts, without further questioning, the position taken by the hegemonic fraction of the agrarian elites at that time; secondly, he makes generalizations from a São Paulo case-study, a state in which an immigration policy was implemented that had no parallel in other parts of the country; third, by leaving completely unexplained why just the “dynamic sectors” had been “dependent of importation of foreign workforce”, he comes close to unwillingly supporting the widespread claim about the ineptness of the “old slave workforce” as well of freedmen and freedwomen to keep pace with the new developments of the free labour market; fourth, by speaking indistinctly of immigration of “*européus, asiáticos e levantinos*”, without making not even a

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<sup>212</sup> Discussing this point, Petrônio Domingues points out that “No Congresso Agrícola do Recife [in 1879], a classe dominante agrária nordestina entendia que a solução para o problema da mão-de-obra residia no aproveitamento do trabalhador nacional, em geral, e dos agregados e ingênuos, em particular.” Also from Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais came alternatives suggestions to foreign immigration: “Já a fração carioca e mineira da classe dominante avaliava que o principal problema da lavoura era a escassez de crédito. No que concerne ao debate sobre a crise de mão-de-obra, ela defendia, basicamente, duas propostas: o aproveitamento dos ingênuos e libertos, após uma fase de habilitação desses segmentos em escolas agrícolas; e o emprego do trabalhador nacional, mediante uma série de recursos (incentivos positivos, escolas agrícolas, lei de locação, leis que criminalizassem a ociosidade e obrigassem ao exercício do trabalho).” (Domingues 2004: 61; 63)

brief remark about the open eugenicist preference for white West Europeans workers, Alencastro entirely overlooks an issue that helps a great deal to understand some other fundamental reasons for that “dependence”.

It is no exaggeration to say that Alencastro imports into the heart of his analysis a series of shortcomings arising from a baffling inattention to a wide spectrum of questions related to the role of scientific racism in the “*formação do Brasil*”.

Alencastro’s negligence with respect to that becomes even more patent if one considers the amplitude and importance of the Brazilian intellectual contribution towards this issue, which is part of a wide research field that, as Sérgio Costa ponders, “talvez seja a área de estudos mais consistente e consolidada de todas as ciências sociais brasileiras.” (Costa 2008: 152)

There could have been reasons for regretting that such a clumsy move - in a book written in a manner especially shrewd - came in the form of conclusive remarks not accompanied by more substantiated explanations. In fact, this would just be a pity, if it were not also the very preparation for the grand finale, that is, for the announcement of the totalizing element that should allow one to apprehend four centuries of Brazil’s history in its internal and external prolongations: the de-territorialisation of the labour market or, as Alencastro puts it, the “*longue durée*” variable of Brazil’s formation.

Always attentive to words, Alencastro carefully named his analytical construct in French, the language of the master Fernand Braudel, as mending fences with him and, simultaneously, endowing his own statement with all the epistemological-institutional force that the expression conveys. These two discursively strategic steps enable him finally to draw the ultimate line that gives unity to the “(short) time of the [Brazilian] nation”: its separation from the “(long) time of the [Brazilian] market”.

*Voilà!* There it is again<sup>213</sup>, brought to the forefront, that kind of economically demiurgic and exogenous time that constrains and pushes forward until the many varieties of other possible times are swept away!

“What’s the Time? Nation Time!” This is the provocative title Paul Gilroy gives to one sub-chapter of his *Black Atlantic – Modernity and Double Consciousness*. In this text, Gilroy argues that the “time of the nation” entails a specific time-consciousness that usually reifies a

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<sup>213</sup> As it is the case in the works by Fernando Novais and by Caio Prado Júnior.

Eurocentric master narrative of modernity which leaves no epistemological room for a Historical repositioning of colonial slavery.

Gilroy suggests then a counter-concept of time based on the idea of diaspora, which, in his definition, can be understood “as an utopian eruption of time into the linear temporal order of modern black politics which *reinforces the obligation that space and time must be considered relationally in their articulation with racialised being.*” (Gilroy 1993: 198 – emphasis added).

Taking this diasporic concept of time into account could possibly prevent one from, for example, hastily subsuming both the enslavement (of black Africans) followed by forced transport that characterized the colonial slave trade *and* the later not-compulsory immigration (preferentially of white Europeans, when financed by public funds!) under the same Historical category of “importation of foreign workforce”. But, evidently, if such a distinction is made, unless one feels at ease speaking about slavery as a “labour market”, then the related idea of “deterritorialisation of the labour market” can hardly serve as the lynchpin of long-term Historical continuity respecting the formation of Brazil.

In point of fact, such a concern with the Historical specificity of “modern” slavery must rather be thought of as a move “charged with the function of constantly interrupting the totalizing thrusts<sup>214</sup>” of that *longue durée* variable of Braudelian extraction.

Still, like Braudel, Alencastro is an old style “knight of totality”. He speaks, even more than *about* the wholeness, *for* the whole. This is why that paradox about the externality of Brazil’s formation relative to the part to which it itself belongs goes unnoticed.

After all, it is true that *O Trato dos Videntes* can be regarded as the first ambitious historiographical attempt to interpret Brazil no longer, as Marcos Nobre puts it, from the senile point of view of the “paradigma da formação” but from that of the blossomy “lógica das redes”. Nevertheless, as Nobre also notes, in Alencastro view the moment in which the determining variable, that is, the *longue durée one*, of Brazil’s formation, came to be entirely internal to the national territory coincides exactly with the emergence of the “nacional-desenvolvimentismo” and, within it, of the very “paradigma da formação”.

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<sup>214</sup> This is what Chakrabarty’s labor History intends to do with the Marxist narrative of capital (Chakrabarty 2000: 66). This point is more extensively discussed in the first chapter’s section “Postcolonial Ends of History”.

This seems to suggest that, differently from what Marcos Nobre thinks, Alencastro does not quite manage to decouple his own idea of formation from the “ideia-força da ‘nacionalidade’, com seu vínculo pretensamente intrínseco a um determinado território, a uma determinada população e a uma forma específica e exclusiva de soberania” (Nobre 2012: 31). What Alencastro creates is very much just another time for them to converge. And when they converge, giving rise to the nation, *the longue durée* immediately appears, masterly performing its Braudelian role of world’s imperial time that “sweeps away” all other times. As consequence thereof, the “trato dos viventes”, that is, the slave trade itself - which has been the constant, the non-interpretive permanent element that answers for the heavy concreteness of Alencastro’s book - suddenly disappears ... carrying along with itself all other concerns that a black diasporic understanding of time would project over the nation time. In the end, in *O Trato dos Viventes*, the highly praised historiographical work where—due to a complex and innovative way of dealing with long-term Historical continuity—there was plenty of room for the opening of a “black diasporical time”, this is decidedly swept away! Premonitorily, Braudel had described his *longue durée* as History’s “unitary white light” ... that, it shall again be added here, enlightens erasing differences.

### **Flowing into the depths of the sea**

#### **Fernand Braudel’s *longue durée* and Eurocentrism**

In *O Trato dos Viventes*, Braudel’s *longue durée* functions as a double agent. When endowing an event with a structural character by exploring its concreteness in the sense of a “setting of limits”<sup>215</sup>, as it is the case both of the trade winds as environmental and of the slave trade as economic conditionings, the *longue durée* plays an outstanding but nevertheless steady supporting role in Alencastro’s effort to turn southwards. Consequently, this has the effect of creating a partial de-centring of Europe within his historiographical construction of Brazil’s formation. However, when naming the Historical category that comprehended this formation in its totality, the *longue durée*, at the very end and with no more than a short and discrete

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<sup>215</sup> Ulysses Santamaria & Anne M. Bailey maintain that “In this definition of structure, Braudel seemingly raised structure to the level of determinants, if only in a negative way – as limits to human action.” This interpretation approximates Braudel’s way of dealing with determination to that by Raymond Williams, who reconciles agency and determination in Marxism by treating the latter as “the setting of limits” instead of “the ‘laws’ of a whole process, subject to inherent and predictable development.” Interestingly, Williams calls his view on determination “historical objectivity”. (Williams [1977] 2009: 85)

apparition<sup>216</sup>, spectacularly takes the leading role by—all of a sudden—fully re-centring Europe.

Now, please disregard momentarily this latter role and try to suspend the effect of the final conclusion of *O Trato dos Viventes*, or, more complexly yet, try to imagine it without those three last sentences. What would you have? Yes, there you have a work where Braudel's *longue durée* is just a part of a broad discursive strategy quite successful in partially divesting Europe of its Historical prominence.

Postcolonial approaches, guided by the main concern of underpinning radical critiques of Eurocentric modernity, have not failed to recognize that:

“Postkoloniale Ansätze haben die auf den Leitkonzepten von Entwicklung und Fortschritt basierenden Geschichtsmodellen der Moderne grundsätzlich in Frage gestellt und in Hinblick auf die machtpolitischen Implikationen dekonstruiert (vgl. Escobar 1995). An die Stelle universaler Modelle temporaler Abfolge, die den vermeintlich unterentwickelten Gesellschaften den *Anspruch auf Gleichzeitigkeit* verweigern (vgl. Fabian 1983), treten relationalen Ansätze, die gerade *das Ineinandergreifen unterschiedlicher Temporalitäten und Zeitschichten* fokussieren. [...] Dabei ergibt sich- zum Teil explizite – Anschlüsse an die geschichtstheoretische Konzepte des *longue durée* von Fernand Braudel oder der Zeitschichten von Reinhard Koselleck.“ (Kaltmeier 2011: 204–205)

The applicability of Braudel's concept for a post-colonial critique of modernity requires yet also the explicit recognition that the *longue durée* is by no means inherently critical to Historical models of modernity based on the idea of progress and development. The best proof of that is Braudel's own use of the concept.

Such a reservation has been nevertheless absent in the words of some authors who have recommended the *longue durée* as an antidote to Eurocentrism. In this sense, Eric Mielants argues:

“If one can traverse the micro, meso and macro levels, as Braudel did, from the structures of daily life to the wheels of commerce and ultimately a perspective of the world, one is *inevitably forced to rethink Eurocentric epistemological assumptions about temporal linearity.*” (Mielants 2012: 207 – emphasis added)

Assuming Mielants' view is tenable, how then to interpret these passages, mostly excerpted from the very work he refers to, namely, the three-volume *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries* (1979):

“These immature civilizations [Black Africa, Mexico and Peru], which were really cultures, collapsed in the face of a small number of men. Today these countries are once more Indian

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<sup>216</sup> This is comparable to Brad Pitt's short but providential apparition in the end of *12 Years a Slave*. He is the one who finally makes possible the release of Samuel Northup, the “illegally” enslaved protagonist played by Chiwetel Ejiofor.

or African. A culture is a civilization that has not yet achieved maturity, its greatest potential, nor consolidated its growth. [...] But it has been proved that the cultures, the semi-civilizations (the term is even applicable to the Tartars in the Crimea) were no mean adversaries. They were pushed back but they reappeared; they were wrong enough to survive. They could not be permanently deprived of their future.” (Braudel 1973a: 63–64)

“As a general rule, the civilizations played and won. They won struggles against ‘cultures’ and primitive people. Even better, they also won their war against empty space<sup>217</sup>.” (Braudel 1973a: 60)

“De ces différences entre ‘cultures’ et ‘civilisations’ le signe extérieur le plus fort est sans doute la présence ou l’absence de villes.” (Braudel 1989: 48)

“It must also be noted that the ‘barbarians’ who were a real danger to civilisation belonged almost entirely to one category of men: the nomads—the nomads of the deserts and steppes in the heart of the Old World—and it was *only* the Old World that experienced this extraordinary breed of humanity. [...] The nomads strength lay also in the carelessness and relative weakness of the men who held the approaches to the civilisations.” (Braudel 1973a: 56 – emphasis in the original)

“Civilizations against Civilizations—When civilizations clash the consequences are dramatic.” (Braudel 1973a: 64)

The saga of the childish cultures towards the maturity of civilization, trying to catch up with the civilized future; the city as the strongest exterior sign of civilization and, correspondingly, the nomads as the true danger for civilizations; the autonomous development of writing as the threshold of the emergence of a civilization<sup>218</sup>, and, finally, the clash of civilizations!<sup>219</sup>

Is this all really a way of writing History that “*inevitably forces to rethink Eurocentric epistemological assumptions about temporal linearity?*”, as Mielant suggests? Is that not

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<sup>217</sup> Braudel gives here an example draws from Brazil: “In Brazil, the primitive Indian slipped away when the Portuguese appeared. The Paulist *bandeiras* scattered over more or less empty land. In less than a century the adventurers from São Paulo had overrun, although not colonised, had the South America continent, from the Rio de la Plata to the Amazon and Andes, in their pursuit of slaves, precious stones and gold. They met no resistance until the Jesuits formed the Indians reserves, which the *paulistas* shameless pillaged.” (Braudel 1973a: 60).

<sup>218</sup> Concerning this point, it is Pierre Chaunu who refers to Braudel: “Avec Fernand Braudel, nous réservons l’expression de civilisation pour les ensembles culturels qui ont franchi d’une manière autonome, doc, d’eux-mêmes, le seuil de l’acquisition d’une écriture. (Bennassar/Chaunu 1977: 48)

In his “Grammatology”, Jacques Derrida unfolds a deep reflection about the concept of writing. Derrida’s philosophical argument gives ground for assessing the essential role that the concept of writing has been playing within the humanities in the raise of an ethnocentric, violent and fairly evolutionist view on the development of human collectivities. (Derrida [1967] 1997: 1-18; 95-140)

<sup>219</sup> Even when Braudel concedes that there are non-European “civilizations”, as in the case of the Chinese, he remarks, that China has remained “uninventive and backward at the capitalist level, despite its intellectual power and its discoveries” (Braudel 1973a: 64). In the original French text this passage bears another adjective that is suppressed in the English version: “peu moderne”: “la Chine est restée, malgré son intelligence et ses trouvailles (le papier-monnaie, par exemple), si peu inventive, si *peu moderne* sur le plan capitaliste.” (Braudel 1979: 79) The Brazilian translation follows the French text literally. (Braudel 1997: 86)

instead a kind of History that exemplarily applies *Eurocentric epistemological assumptions about temporal linearity*, allocating its actors in the past, in the present or in the future of an one-dimensional view of historical development that, based on a nakedly evolutionist concept of civilization, has a vague West European one as summit?

Steve Feierman answers this question making a point about Africa's History:

“Fernand Braudel, the great leader of second-generation *Annales* Historians, opened up the boundaries of historical space in a way that made it easier for us to understand Africa in world history. [...] Braudel, along with other *Annales* Historians, insisted on asking how representative our historical knowledge is in relation to the totality of the universe that might be described, if only we knew the full story. [...] Yet Braudel himself could not break out of a unidirectional history of the world with Europe at its center. *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme*, his three-volume history of the world between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, is driven by a tension between Braudel's disciplined attempt to find the correct spatial frame for each phenomenon [...] and his definition of modern world history as the rise of a dominant Europe.” (Feierman 1993: 171–172)

Further, Feierman stresses that “Braudel describes African developments in terms of racial essences. In his view all civilizations originated from the north, radiating southwards.” (Feierman 1993: 174)

Richard Evans made a similar but much more biting criticism in his review of that which would be Braudel's last work. This work is, he says:

“in some ways a profoundly conservative, nationalist text. It argued France and its borders had not changed in essence since the thirteenth century, and declared that French blood had not been diluted since prehistory. This claim went together with Braudel's racist belief that between the French and the other nations, including by implication all kinds of immigrants [were they contemporary nomads?], ‘there may be some intermingling but there is no fusion.’” (Evans 2000: 192 – rhetorical question in brackets added)

Symptomatically (and unfortunately), Braudel calls this book *The Identity of France* (1988)! It follows the same schema based on the time trinity that he had used in his two others main historiographical works (*The Mediterranean* and *Civilization and Capitalism*) as well as the same aim: the kind of History this book proposes to bring to light, Braudel repeats once more at the end of his life, is “an obscure history, running along under the surface, refusing to die.” (Braudel 1988: 20).

Such a treatment of the issue of civilization<sup>220</sup>, along with all its mournful consequences for the writing of History, gives Fernand Braudel a background that justifies putting him together

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<sup>220</sup> It is interesting to note that Braudel himself remarks, without explaining why, that “civilization” is a “convenient word” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 248).

with Oswald Spengler<sup>221</sup>, Gilberto Freyre<sup>222</sup>, Arnold Toynbee<sup>223</sup> or Samuel P. Huntington<sup>224</sup>, thinkers whose works have not earned any recognition for conceiving Historical time in an especially innovative manner.

Notwithstanding, a recurring remark about Braudel's *longue durée* is that it was, as an original synthesis of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre's prior contributions, the conceptual embodiment

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<sup>221</sup> Peter Burke holds the view that Oswald Spengler is a Historian with whom Braudel has more in common than is generally admitted. As evidence thereof, Burke points to the positive remarks about Spengler in Braudel's *Ecrits sur l'histoire* (1969) as well as in the last two volumes of *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800*. (Burke 1990: 47; 123) As is well-known, Braudel wrote his *The Mediterranean* in a German prisoner-of-war camp. His interest in the deep structures of history, according to his own confession, was a way of not capitulating to the present (Braudel [1958] 2012: 270). In this sense, Kinser points out that "Braudel's spatial concept of fast and slow times, times that entrap men either in the eventful surface or in the structural depths of historical processes, reflects the experiences of a certain man living in a certain configuration, the highly disjunctive configuration of a Europe convulsed by the monumental events of the Great Depression and World War II and by conjuncture like totalitarianism and the 'decline of the West' [...]. With the latter, Spenglerian phrase, I refer to the psychological impact upon several European generations of the destructiveness of the world wars and of the emergence of non-European political powers." (Kinser 1981: 99)

<sup>222</sup> While the experience as war-prisoner in the Second World War is usually remembered by virtually every reviewer as having played a role in shaping Braudel's thinking, the biographic episodes of his stays in Algeria and then in Brazil have received less attention in what concerns their possible epistemological consequences. Susanne Klengel and Peter Burke are exceptions that help fill the gap concerning Brazil.

Susanne Klengel speaks of a "Wissentheoretische und ästhetische Dialoge" between Fernand Braudel and Gilberto Freyre, and argues, with respect to *The Mediterranean*, that if on the one hand:

"Man kann [...] festhalten, dass die erste Fassung von *La Méditerranée* mit ihrem gleichsam geschlossenen mediterranen Raum in der historischen Situation der Nachkriegsjahren tatsächlich den Effekt eines Identitätsdiskurs hatte. Sie ist als Appell und Erinnerung an eine Geschichte der Alten Welt lesbar – zu einem Zeitpunkt großer geopolitischer Veränderungen." (Klengel 2011: 229)

On the other hand:

"Festzuhalten ist aber gleichzeitig, dass Braudel in seinem Mittelmeerbuch des Jahres 1949 mehrfach auf das Werk Gilberto Freyre anspielt, und dass damit sowohl inhaltlich als auch methodisch Spuren eines nicht-europäischen Wissens bei Braudel eingeflossen sind, die auf die neuen interkulturellen Verflechtungen in der Scientific Community der Nachkriegsjahre hindeuten." (Klengel 2011: 229)

In 2008 Peter Burke actually published a proper intellectual biography of Gilberto Freyre (*Gilberto Freyre – Social Theory in the Tropics*). The influence of Freyre on Fernand Braudel is of course among the issues the book addresses. Burke had already observed in his 1990 book on the Annales School that

"The famous trilogy on the social history of Brazil by the Historian-sociologist Gilberto Freyre [...] deals with topics such as the family, sexuality, childhood, and material culture, anticipating the new history of the 1970s and 1980s. Freyre's image of the great house (*casa grande*) as microcosm and as metaphor of plantation society impressed Braudel and is quoted in his work." (Burke 1990: 101)

<sup>223</sup> It suffices to remark that in the programmatic *Histoire Nouvelle* (1978), Jacques Le Goff's feels the need to expressly define the meaning of "civilization", a concept that according to him has been playing an important role within the *Annales School* since its foundation. The section devoted to this discussion bears the remarkable title "A Escola dos Annales e a concepção de Toynbee"! Evidently, the whole argument consists of denying any proximity between the Annales School's understanding of the concept and Toynbee's one. (Le Goff [1978] 1990a: 33)

<sup>224</sup> According to Andreas Leutzsch, "Er [Braudel] klärt den Begriff des Kapitalismus und baut sukzessive eine Weber-Kritik auf, um schließlich den westlichen Kapitalismus als einzigen Weg in die (zukünftige) Moderne zu verwerfen. Braudel hat auch in diesem Werk die Gegenwart im Blick, und es spricht einiges dafür, dass Huntington diesen Ansatz *metonymisch* in seiner räumlichen Konfliktlinienbeschreibung weiterentwickelt hat. [...] Auf Seite 55 stellt er (Huntington) er sich selbst in die universalhistorische Tradition unter anderem Braudels, den er für sein Unternehmen als Gewährsmann zitiert." (Leutzsch 2009: 224–225)

of a kind of “epistemological revolution”<sup>225</sup> in the theoretical understanding of historical time brought about by the French *Nouvelle Histoire* (Reis 2008: 19; 65–79).

According to José Carlos Reis, the great novelty of the Braudelian viewpoint, as well as, for that matter, of the *Nouvelle Histoire* in general, lay in the replacement of the metaphysical and teleological time of Enlightenment philosophies of History by the “neutral time” of the social sciences (Reis 2008: 30; 71). The time of all of them at once! Yes, for, as another commentator, namely, Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas points out, instead of the primacy of the economic, the political or the cultural, Braudel “vertrat die Vorherrschaft der Strukturen länger Dauern – die zugleich ökonomische, politische, geographische, soziale, kulturelle, psychologische oder anthropologische Strukturen sind“. These structures, Rojas goes on in his exposition of Braudel’s ideas, “Da sie die Grenzen des Möglichen und des Unmöglichen festlegen, erweisen sie sich als die wahren bestimmenden Protagonisten des spezifischen Werdens der Gesellschaften“. The *longue durée* was therefore the fulfilment of an epistemological undertaking that, respecting historical time, had dropped the not quite fruitful distinction between „present“ and „past“ and seriously begun “mit der Ausarbeitung von Theorien, Kategorien and Modellen, dies es erlauben, die “Gesamtheit der Gesamtheiten“ der “globalen Gesellschaft“ wissenschaftlich und konkret zu durchzudenken.” (Rojas 1999: 43; 37; 110)

Quite in the same direction, Dale Tomich argues that

“the *longue durée* implies a distinctive methodological approach and logic of explanation that redefines the intellectual heritage handed down from the nineteenth century. In contrast to more conventional social science logics based on formal comparison of commensurate units with common properties or the infinite repetition of individual actions, the assumption here is that *analysis is grounded in a single spatially-temporally differentiated and complex unit subject to multiple determinations.*” (Tomich 2012: 16; 30–31)

Pondering, first, on Roja’s comments, one may wonder what it means to suppose that something, say, an idea or a concept “sets the limits of the possible and of the impossible” or allows encompassing the “totality of totalities”? Concerning Tomich, one could simply ask: what matches the description of “*a single spatially-temporally differentiated and complex unit subject to multiple determinations*” if not ... everything! Such a “unit” could be a tree or a

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<sup>225</sup> Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas goes even further in his book *Fernand Braudel und die moderne Sozialwissenschaften*. He sees Braudel’s work as a prophetic epistemological break in the social sciences as a whole: “Mit radikaler Kritik drängte er [Braudel] auf einen Bruch in den Sozialwissenschaften. Damit tat Braudel nicht anders, als der offenen endgültigen epistemologischen Krise, die 1968 einsetzte, um zwei Jahrzehnte zuvorkommen.” (Rojas 1999: 94–95)

person, a social or a meteorological phenomenon. But, of course, it could also be a city, a country, a continent, or the whole world ... together with the stars and the other planets, even the Milk Way, if you so want it! So, if Braudel “methodological approach and logic of explanation” is grounded *in* such a “unit”, then it lies in immediate relation to whatever may be taken as its subject matter. Such an idea assumes that there is nothing between the grounds of knowledge and the grounds of what is (thought) to be(come) known. In some sense, such an idea takes the epistemological relation not as “elaboration *of*” but as “participation *in*” the subject matter, so that knowledge turns out to be not a particular form of representation but rather a kind of revelation!

If the appraisal of these reviewers of Braudel’s oeuvre<sup>226</sup> is right, and there is no reason to think it is not, the very terms they develop demonstrate how much closer the *longue durée* is to the metaphysics of the (old?) philosophies of history rather than to the “concrete” character of the (new?) social sciences, mainly Geography and Economy, which Fernand Braudel was so fond of. If the Braudelian approach allowed everything that these interpreters claim, then the writing of *longue durée*-History amounted to playing God... successfully!

In a remarkably lucid passage that exposes the main flaw in his argument<sup>227</sup>, José Carlos Reis affirms that: “Percebe-se em Braudel uma concepção da história que não há muito se definiria como ‘filosofia da história’ e ainda hegeliana” (Reis 2008: 116).

In fact, the totalizing drive of Braudel’s *longue durée* towards history is perfectly comparable to that of Hegel’s towards reason. But this is not something that deviates it from the right historiographical course. On the contrary: Braudel’s notion of an almost motionless *longue durée* element underlying all other possible and noticeable changes in a determined historical development approximates him to the historicist ideal of an immanent “historical idea”, as proposed by Humboldt and Ranke at a time in which the Historian’s craft began taking the professional form of its contemporary academic institutionalization. And the “historicist

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<sup>226</sup> This kind of intellectual hagiography of Fernand Braudel corroborates the thesis advanced in the last section about the “metaphysical pathos” of Braudel’s ideas.

<sup>227</sup> Unfortunately, Reis does not explain why Braudel’s conception of History should *no longer* be defined in this way. Would there be a distinction between Braudel’s conception of History in general, which could be *still* Hegelian, and Braudel’s conception of Historical time, which would be *already* “scientifically neutral”?

historical ideal”, in turn, as Frank Ankersmit argues, bears striking similarities with the Hegelian “idea”<sup>228</sup>:

“In both cases the idea is a quasi-Aristotelian entelechy operative in a vague limbo between language and the world but whose nature the speculative philosopher or the Historian has to grasp in order to understand the past. *Historical knowledge is the knowledge of the idea.*” (Ankersmit 2012: 23 - emphasis added)

In Braudelian idiom this would simply mean: “Historical knowledge is the knowledge of the *longue durée*.”

The totalizing effect aimed at by the *longue durée* perspective accounts not only for the theoretical and methodological coherency of Braudel’s oeuvre but above all for an epistemological solidarity: from the beginnings of his search for a proper historiographical organizing principle of totality in *The Mediterranean*, with its empirical-objectivist emphasis on the geographically perceptible and/or economically and demographically measurable, over the “civilizational” ravings of *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*, up to the “lamentations”<sup>229</sup> of *Identity of France*, what Fernand Braudel shows in each one of his works is something that Olivia Harris appropriately denominates as Braudel’s “horror of discontinuity” (Harris 2004). The methodological objectivity advocated in the first (and repeated in the other two books) bears a relationship of mutualism both with the pronounced Eurocentric bias of the second and the almost xenophobic features<sup>230</sup> of the third.

A great deal of the good reputation that the *longue durée* enjoys among Historians comes however from the fact that it is thought to be not *just* a theoretical construct, not that sort of so-called meta-theoretical concept conjured up from some abstract ruminations written down by beings who had never ever set foot in an archive. Rather, the *longue durée* was deeply rooted in a historiographical praxis that, as Foucault argues in *Archeology of*

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<sup>228</sup> The common philosophical ground that Ranke’s and Humboldt’s “historical idea” shares with Hegel’s view on history was already discussed in the section ‘The Postcolonial Ends of History’.

<sup>229</sup> In “Long Run Lamentations: Braudel on France”, Steve Lawrence Kaplan points out that: “Of all the qualities that constitute Frenchness for Braudel across the long run, the most striking are a genius for missed opportunities and a gift for (relative) failure. France experienced missed opportunities and failures in virtually every domain, but they were especially telling in the economic sphere. Economic growth is the overarching preoccupation of Braudel’s lifetime of research. Predictably, it is at the very core of his quest for the identity of France—the scholar’s fascination reinforced and quickened by the citizen’s bedevilment.” (Kaplan 1991: 344)

<sup>230</sup> As well as the above quoted Richard Evans, Steve Kaplan also highlights the conservative nationalism of the *Identity of France*. According to Kaplan, Braudel’s view on the question of immigration runs as follows: “Immigrants today have no choice: ‘they must choose’—to be French, or to be an enduring source of trouble for themselves and for others, a peril for the economy and the society.” (Kaplan 1991: 353)

*Knowledge*, had altered the position of the “new history”. In relation to its sources, this History had

“taken as its primary task, not the interpretation of the document, nor the attempt to decide whether it is telling the truth or what is its expressive value, but to work on it from within and to develop it: history now organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations. [Therefore] *The appearance of long periods in the history of today is not a return to the philosophers of history, to the great ages of the world, or to the periodization dictated by the rise and fall of civilizations; it is the effect of the methodologically concerted development of series.*” (Foucault 1972: 8 – emphasis added)

By virtue of this way of bringing about Historical continuity of long-term, the role of discontinuity had changed radically in History.

“Discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the Historian's task to remove from history. It has now become one of the basic elements of historical analysis. [...] *One of the most essential features of the new history is probably this displacement of the discontinuous: its transference from the obstacle to the work itself; its integration into the discourse of the Historian, where it no longer plays the role of an external condition that must be reduced, but that of a working concept; and therefore the inversion of signs by which it is no longer the negative of the historical reading (its underside, its failure, the limit of its power), but the positive element that determines its object and validates its analysis.*” (Foucault 1972: emphasis added)

Foucault’s Archaeology was precisely the attempt of formulating a “general theory of the discontinuities” that, if he was right, had already found a historiographical form in the France of the 60s.

Introducing the reader to the final three-volume edition of his *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries (1979)*, Fernand Braudel states the threefold schema of this monumental work:

“peu a peu esquisse devant moi au fur et a mesure que les éléments de l’observation se classaient presque d’eux-mêmes [...] *C’est ainsi qu’un schéma tripartite est devenu la table de référence d’un ouvrage que j’avais délibérément conçu en marge de la théorie, de toutes les théories, sous le signe de la seule observation concrète et de la seule histoire comparée.*” (Braudel 1979: 9 - emphasis added)

Here, Braudel echoes the archaeological Foucault. He is the embodiment of the Historian who pulls off long-term continuity by a certain way of disposing the discontinuous instead of by some theoretical overarching interpretation that would rather remove discontinuity.

And Foucault, criticizing the structuralism, does in terms strikingly similar to those used by Fernand Braudel, but focusing on the opposing extremity: the event.

"I don't see who could be more of an anti-structuralist than myself. But the important thing is to avoid trying to do for the event what was previously done with the concept of structure. It's not a matter of locating everything on one level, that of the event, but of realizing that there are actually a whole order of levels of different types of events differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity of producing effects." (Foucault [1972] 1980: 114)

Fernand Braudel, the "structuralist by temperament"<sup>231</sup> with his "horror of discontinuity" meets Foucault, the resolute "anti-structuralist" with his "obsession with discontinuity", there where both, reinforcing each other's position, profess together their eloquent animosity towards the type of historical continuity based on anything that could resemble the old "philosophies of history".

Foucault's and Braudel's unisonous praise of the historiographical method which goes hand in hand with a segmentation of time falls nevertheless apart as soon as their respective concepts of time are taken into consideration.

This point shall be explained by having recourse to Foucault's distinction between the systems of thought that frame the "old" and the "new" History.

Within the system of thought of the "old history", Foucault argues, "time is conceived in terms of totalization" and history, consequently, pursues the project of achieving a "total history" that "seeks to reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle, material or spiritual, of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion—what is called metaphorically the 'face' of a period." (Foucault 1972: 9)

The system of thought that frames the "new history", in turn, was concerned not with homogeneity and cohesion, but with discontinuity. Although, in having difficulties constructing a theory, in drawing general conclusions and in deriving all the possible implications of the discontinuities unveiled by this History, Foucault confesses, is "as if we were afraid to conceive of the *Other* in the time of our own thought", "as if we felt a particular repugnance to conceiving of difference." (Foucault 1972: 12)

The crucial problem Foucault's reasoning poses, if formulated in proper Foucauldian terms, runs as follows: given that the system of thought that frames the "new history", within which long-term Historical continuity appears as "the effect of that methodologically concerted development of series", given that this system of thought has been unwilling to think

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<sup>231</sup> "I am by temperament a 'structuralist', little tempted by the event, or even by the short-term conjuncture which is after all merely a group of events of the same area. But the Historian's structuralism has nothing to do with the approach which under the same name is at present caused some confusion in the other human sciences." (Braudel [1949] 1973b: 1244)

difference, is it then not perfectly legitimate to raise the question whether the History framed by it might also produce a totalizing “effect” similar to that of the (old?) philosophies of history, even without being a “return” to them?

Braudel’s work is a paradigmatic example<sup>232</sup> that the “displacement of the discontinuous” to the center of History, proper to the methods of the “new history”, is perfectly compatible with the “time conceived in terms of totalization” proper of the “old history”.

Moreover, Foucault’s somehow complacent words would be ill suited to portrait Braudel’s work because Braudel’s attempts of a “total History” displays no signs of such a fear or repugnance.<sup>233</sup> Rather, Fernand Braudel does enjoy conceiving the Other in his own incorrigible Eurocentric time, and in so doing he conceives difference in terms of fixed, asymmetrical, and binary categories.

It is Braudel himself who casts some light on the reason why it occurs:

“I confess that, not being a philosopher, I am reluctant to dwell for long on questions concerning the importance of events and of individual freedom, which have been put to me so many times in the past and no doubt will be in the future. ~~How are we to interpret the very word freedom, which has meant so many different things, never signifying the same from one century to another?~~<sup>234</sup> So when I think of the individual, I am always inclined to see him

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<sup>232</sup> Foucault’s historiographical attempts are, in turn, paradigmatic examples of the opposing position. Whereas Braudel seeks for a permanent underlying element, Foucault advocates a form of History, which he prefers to call “genealogy”, that can be written “without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history”. (Foucault [1972] 1980: 117)

However, in a brilliant analysis of the genealogical *History of Sexuality*, Ann Laura Stoler lays bare that Foucault’s emphasis on discontinuity by no means entails an automatic critique of Eurocentrism. Making the crucial point that one should refrain from neatly separating historiography from theory, Stoler poses a question that points directly to Foucault’s Eurocentric view. First she explains that, according to Foucault, there are four privileged subjects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century power/knowledge-discourse on sexuality: “das masturbierende Kind der bürgerlicher Familie, die „hysterische Frau“, das Maltusische Paar und der perversen Erwachsene.” Then, she asks penetratingly: “Konnte auch nur eine diese Figuren im 19. Jahrhundert als Wissens- und Diskursgegenstand ohne ihre rassistisch-erotische Kontrapunkt existieren, ohne dass auf die libidinösen Energie des Wildes, des Primitiven, des Kolonisierten Bezug genommen worden wäre – also Bezugspunkte der Differenz, der Kritik und des Begehrens?” (Stoler 2002: 319) Foucault’s flagrant blind spot where the issues of colonialism and sexuality are concerned lead Stoler to the following conclusion: “Foucaults Genealogien der bürgerlichen Identität in 19. Jahrhundert bleiben nicht nur selbstbezogenen westlichen Kultur zutiefst verhaftet, sondern sind auch durch die geographische Parameter Europas begrenzt.” In adopting this view, Stoler stresses, she is following and complementing the criticisms made both by Spivak, who had correctly described Foucault’s historiography as “eine selbstgenügsame und westlich beschränkte Geschichtsschreibung”, and by James Clifford, for whom “Foucault sei auf umsichtige Weise ethnozentrisch”. (Stoler 2002: 328)

<sup>233</sup> Remarkably, Braudel evokes the motif of love to open two of his three main works. The first sentence of *The Mediterranean* reads: “I have loved the Mediterranean with passion [...]”, an emotional statement that is resumed at the very beginning of *The Identity of France*: “Let me start by saying once and for all that I love France [...]” (Braudel [1949] 1973b: 17; 1988: 15) If fear and repugnance may grow out of love, then maybe Foucault is right.

<sup>234</sup> To abbreviate what could become a dull discussion about a nonsensical sentence (therefore it is strikethrough), one could argue in the same manner, namely, nonsensically, that if the word “freedom” had

imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distance both behind him and before. In historical analysis, as I see it, rightly or wrongly, the long runs always wins in the end. Annihilating innumerable events—all those which cannot be accommodated in the main going current and which are therefore ruthlessly swept to one side—it indubitably limits both the freedom of the individual and even the role of chance.” (Braudel 1973b: 1243-1244)

What Braudel refuses here is to concede—no matter if he is a philosopher or not—is that in claiming the totalizing status of his work, he had already entered into those two “labyrinths” that Leibniz defined as the “composition of the continuum” and “the nature of freedom” (see epigraph). But precisely because Braudel is unwilling “to dwell for long” on such a problem, his *longue durée* functions as a tool for playing the role of a Leibnizian god<sup>235</sup>: letting contingency and individual freedom dwindle to the point of insignificance, all that which remains are necessary truths!

In order to convey even more faithfully Braudel’s creed, it is worthwhile rephrasing this point by borrowing some manly words he wrote to further underpin his stance on the matter. The god-like Braudelian truth is paradoxically brought about by “men”, namely by the

“true man of action [...] who can measure most nearly the constraints upon him, who chooses to remain within them and even to take advantage of the weight of the inevitable, exerting his own pressure in the same direction. [Since] [a]ll efforts against the prevailing tide of history—which is not always obvious—are doomed to failure...” (Braudel [1949] 1973b: 1243-1244)

... then History must happen to be written by the winners!

The others, those who despite all efforts are not going to see their actions come true, who, so to speak, do not live in the “imperious time of the world” and thus are not allowed to commune with the world’s necessary truths, these others are, within Braudel’s framework, doomed to Historical inactivity.

Having reached this point, how to censure Olivia Harris when she plainly asserts that “arguments in favor of deep continuity such as those of Braudel work best for the victors, for the centers of civilization.”(Harris 2004: 168).

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kept (thanks some miracle!) the same and unmistakable meaning everywhere for centuries and centuries, say, from 1400 to 1800 (the time-span covert by Braudel *Civilization and Capitalism*), this everlasting character would *not* reveal *per se* “how we are to interpret” it. Anyway, such unwise statements end up saying a lot about one’s general understanding of History.

<sup>235</sup> “[D]ass es Wahrheiten geben kann, ja muß, welche sich durch keine Analysis auf die identischen Wahrheiten oder das Prinzips des Widerspruches zuruckzuführen lassen, die vielmehr eine unendliche Reihe von Gründen als Stütze brauchen: eine Reihe, die allein von Gott durchsichtig ist. Und dies ist eben das Wesen alles dessen, was man als frei und zufällig bezeichnet.” (Leibniz 1966: 503)

Such a harsh criticism may entail the fatal risk of reinforcing the Eurocentric bias it wants to denounce. Nevertheless, it also has the great advantage of putting the finger on the sore spot, for, as a matter of fact, the term “*longue durée*” should not be conceived of as a general name for the process of assuring that a certain subject matter remains identic to itself despite the changes unveiled by the historiographical inquiry. Rather, it should be conceived as just a particular way of performing that function by meeting the exigencies of self-fulfilling prophecy of whatever be defined as the “center of civilization”.

Might that be not as obvious as it seems it should, this is due to the fact that the *longue durée* has been usually mobilized in a *sui generis* manner. Take, for instance, “*Gestalt*” and “*différance*”, two other concepts whose translation is commonly avoided. How to use them without pretending to consider the particular epistemological viewpoints they represent? Difficult. More than that, such a procedure would convey a good deal of inconsistency. If such concepts happen to be found written in German and French, their respective original languages, it is exactly to stress that one is evoking a very specific perspective here.

It would be expected that a comparable attitude towards the “*longue durée*” took place. Still, in the case of Braudel’s concept, things happen quite differently. The following passage, an excerpt of the introduction of the book *Coloniality at Large – Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, provides an instructive example thereof:

“In the particular case of Latin American, a discussion of post- neo- colonialism – or that of *coloniality*, a term that encompasses the transhistoric expansion of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times – is necessarily intertwined with the critique of Occidentalism and modernity, a critique that requires a profound but detached understanding of imperial rationality.<sup>236</sup> Concurrently, our goal has also been to register, analyse, and interpret the political, social, and cultural practices that reveal the resistance against imperial powers exercised by individuals and communities in a variety of contexts, throughout the *longue durée* of Latin America’s colonial and neo-colonial history.<sup>237</sup>” (Moraña et al. 2008: 2 – italics and footnotes in the original)

The two footnotes (number 236 and 237) transcribed below are integral to this passage. If you checked them, you will have noted that they are there to make conceptual explanations,

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<sup>236</sup> “The concept of ‘coloniality’ coined by Aníbal Quijano has been pivotal to the understanding and critique of early and late stages of colonialism in Latin America, as well as of its long-lasting social and cultural effects.” (Moraña et al. 2008: 17)

<sup>237</sup> “We are aware of the wide application of the term *colonialismo* throughout the book, as well as of the use of *postcolonialism* and *neocolonialism* by different authors. Since each contributor makes a specific case for the interpretation of the concept and the term of preference, we have respected this terminological plurality and welcomed the different critical and theoretical avenues they open to the reader.” (Moraña et al. 2008: 17)

namely, about the notions of “coloniality” and “colonialism”. Not a single word about the term “*longue durée*”. To all appearances, it is a concept that requires no further clarification.

But, if Braudel’s “imperial time” goes unnoticed in such a work explicitly concerned with “a profound but detached understanding of imperial rationality”, what may be expected from works not particularly interested in epistemological “practices that reveals the resistance against imperial powers”?

The “*longue durée*” seems to be so “clear” that it becomes indeed “transparent”. Read please the following sentence again, as if the Braudelian reference were not there: “throughout ~~the *longue durée*~~ of Latin America’s colonial and neo-colonial history.” Since the word “throughout” literally means “from beginning to end of (an event or period of time)”, the sentence seems to undergo any substantial change if one crosses the “*longue durée*” out. The concept is there but one can read through it as if it weren’t.

Though tempting, it might be misleading to suppose that when employed in this manner, concepts are just redundant in the sense of being repetitive, tiresome or useless. Exactly the fact that they are not noticeably redundant is what matters most. This conclusion begs the question: if the presence of the *longue durée*-concept indeed makes *différence*, how could it be felt?

Its own epistemological pretensions forbid regarding the *longue durée* as just a loanword instead of a whole and programmatic concept. Nevertheless, the fact that it has generally functioned as a synonym for expressions like “long term”, “long time span”, “long time scale”, “long run”, “long-lasting”, that is, as a way of making reference to an unspecified assumption of Historical continuity does indeed pose a risk. Namely, this fact may denote that if the *longue durée* still contains conceptual substance, this manifests itself as a sort of “emptiness” that no longer conveys anything related to Braudel’s view on History<sup>238</sup> and all the more not his obdurate Eurocentrism.

The widespread presence of the *longue durée* in that transparently unqualified form within academic vocabulary (also in the spoken) can therefore be described as a particular mode of fulfilment of its ambitions. As argued above, the totalizing drive of the *longue durée* feeds on the metaphoric allusiveness arisen out of its “metaphysical pathos”. The allusion—in the metaphors Braudel uses for constructing the concept, wherefore in the concept itself when

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<sup>238</sup> In fact, Fernand Braudel’s name is not reported not even in the general index of the Coloniality at Large.

evoked solely, without any further qualification—is to the desire that continuous History remains

“the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness—will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode.” (Foucault 1972: 12)

All that has been said about the *longue durée* hitherto gives some good reasons to regard it with a healthy wariness. Braudel’s conceptualization of Historical time may show some potential to question “the master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe’” (Chakrabarty 2000: 27), but only if deployed with supreme analytical caution and great rhetorical skillfulness. Without any form of qualification<sup>239</sup>, as it frequently appears in current scholarly discourse, it represents a rather invisible danger to those who—opposing an epistemological insouciance that leads to a sometimes unwilling, sometimes treacherous Historical “fixation of essences”—struggle to hold the state of permanent tension that shall characterize a writing of History within which the concern with the “dissemination of differences” is driven by the desire of freedom and social justice. (Chakrabarty 2000: 237–255)

In this sense, still taking cue from Chakrabarty’s idea of provincializing Europe, one should not shun Braudel’s thinking, but, in order to have the better of its metaphoric allusiveness, to put metaphoricity itself at the service of the *longue durée*. Thus, returning to the aquatic metaphor with which this text started, one could see—by exploring further an image already analyzed in this thesis<sup>240</sup>—the *longue durée* as a “river” like the one depicted in Escher’s “Waterfall” (1961).

The striking particularity of this famous lithography is that it shows the impossible perpetual motion of a watercourse flowing upwards and downwards at the same time. There are however other significant features that deserve to be highlighted, the waterwheel, for example. As known, Escher’s visual paradoxes in this drawing, as well as in many others, result from their complex mathematical, or rather, geometrical composition (Schattschneider 2010;

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<sup>239</sup> Without specifying, for example, if the *longue durée* shall be understood in that structural sense of a “setting of limits”.

<sup>240</sup> The reader may probably recall that this image was already explored in the discussion about the relationship between time, event and long-term Historical continuity in first chapter’s section ‘Long event and long duration’.

Ernst 1986). Still, mathematically, there is no need of the waterwheel localized on the base of the hill. If the waterwheel<sup>241</sup> is there, this is just to give the impression that it contributes to keeping the water stream moving. In fact, it attenuates the absurd self-sufficiency of the waterfall and, in doing that, it makes the scene more real. Adjacent to a big construction where one sees a chimney, the waterwheel can be imagined as used for generating power to supply the provincial small village depicted in the image. A woman looks down, hanging clothes on a line to dry; a man looks up, admiring the ingenious construction: the order of everyday life goes in its own time. Above them, much larger, the *longue durée* time of the “river” of History.

The great advantage of Escher’s “river” as metaphor for the *longue durée* History is that it precludes any supposition of naturalness. It is undoubtedly a construction: the river is an aqueduct. There is no way to conflate “history as the past” or, metaphorically, the natural river of life flowing steadily into the present, with its historiographically represented form: History.

The sole reason one can concede that History might be “total”, that is, why History can be presented as flowing in different and even contradictory rhythms and directions that, nonetheless, can be grasped as a whole without having to take distance from it, the whole reason why all that is possible, is because one is dealing with a construction. A construction thought to generate power and that produces in its own movement the preconditions of its reproduction. Although, the energy provided by this cunning Historical construction is not enough to supply much more than that provincial village. Think of this provincial place as Europe, if you want. Bearing that in mind, consider that the “necessary truth” of Escher’s *longue durée* river is conspicuously deceptive, but constructed rigorously premised on objective and measurable standards: the geometrical principles of perspectival

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<sup>241</sup> Mind *The Wheels of Commerce*, the second volume of *Civilization and Capitalism*! Braudel’s focus on commerce is absolutely fundamental in the unfolding of its Eurocentric argument about the emergence of capitalism. As Antonio Penalves Rocha observes, “Para Braudel, a gênese do capitalismo ocorreu bem antes do período em que Marx a localizou, mesmo porque não é na produção que ele reside: ‘é na circulação, por excelência, que o capitalismo está à vontade.’ For this reason, Braudel “recusa não só a cronologia do capitalismo tal como fora feita por Marx, como também o reconhecimento da sua existência como um sistema de produção baseado na exploração do trabalho assalariado.” (Rocha 1995: 248; Braudel 1977a) It is particularly noteworthy that Braudel’s version of the development of capitalism, which was supposed to have been “*délibérément conçu en marge de la théorie, de toutes les théories*”, is embroiled in a dispute precisely with Marxism, an approach that prescribes the absolute necessity of theory for the understanding of the very same process. Could it be that both views are closer than appears at first glance?!

comprehension of the reality by Escher correspond to the objectifying emphasis on statistics, series and whatever could be quantified by Braudel.

Still, “the past is never completely amenable to the objectifying protocols of historiography” (Chabrabarty 2000: 251). So, the deceptiveness of the historiographical representation itself evinces that the “necessary truth” represented by the course of the *longue durée* river rest upon the logic of its construction. Manifestly, this “truth” does not stem from an ontological “cunning of reason” of history, but rather from the self-referential cunning of the Historical reason. The reason that accounts for their congruence lies in the way in which the river of *longue durée* History is “*geteilt*”<sup>242</sup>. Indeed, if one knows how Escher geometrically “divides” his drawing, one may understand that everything is about how to dispose the fragments of the picture so as to create a perspective that presents an impossible continuity which nevertheless coincides with a “shared” (traditional and conventional) representation of reality.

Therefore, if for some reason, you are not allowed to participate in that “necessary truth”, be sure that to know the source of the Historical power which supplies that provincial village, you will have to delve into the logic, into the whole mathematics involved in the construction of that wondrous river (see the first epigraphy).<sup>243</sup> As soon as you do that, the wheel (of capitalism) moved by the water of history will become more significant as its role becomes less of a determining factor within the representation.

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<sup>242</sup> The reference here is to Shalini Randeria’s concept of “Geteilten Geschichten”: „der Begriff oszilliert zwischen den Konnotationen, die im Englischen als *shared* und *divided* wiedergegeben werden, und so bringt die Ambivalenzen einer Geschichte des Austausches und Interaktionen zum Ausdruck.“ (Conrad/Randeria 2002: 17). The problem of *longue durée* in Historical pictures is that the Histories they may comprise, while “geteilt” are not necessarily “verflocht/verwoben” (*entangled*), whence its potential to reproduce the asymmetrical duality focused on a modernity eurocentrically imagined. (Randeria 1999; Costa 2007: 100–102)

<sup>243</sup> Antiphony (call and response) is the principal formal feature of black musical tradition (Gilroy 1993: 115). In this capoeira song, the first line of every verse is the call, the second, the response. The last whole verse is the refrain, where all sing together again and again. The issues addressed do not seem to fit together: religion and mathematics. In response to the call, which makes reference to the mass (the sacred moment of public performance of God’s necessary truths), come mathematical equations (the human being’s mean of creating axioms, self-evident necessary truths).

However, the call states that having access to the official space of sacred necessary truths is not a matter of faith, but of having the required material means. It expresses an asymmetry that may be compensated if those, who are not allowed to enter in the “City of God”, follow the alternative way that is repeatedly sung in the refrain: learning how to state and to reiterate non-excluding self-evident truths:  $1+2=3$ ;  $3+3=6$ ;  $6+3=9$ ;  $9+3=12$  ...and so on and so on ...infinitely. Also here, “the composition of the continuum” and “the nature of freedom” are inextricable (see the second epigraphy).

Finally, notice the coral-like vegetation on the left side of the image, observe that they seem to fluctuate in water, as if the whole scene took place far within the depths of the sea ... precisely where Braudel's *longue durée*, in its most meaningful and admirable metaphorical formulation, claims to have arrived at!

Yaô ê,  
Ererê ai ogum bê  
Com licença do curiamdamba  
Com licença do curaiacuca  
Com licença do sinhô moço  
Com licença do dono de terra  
*O Canto dos escravos – Canto I*

Ai ai ai tâmo na escola  
Ai prendeno a lê  
*Capoeira Song*

A lagartixa, a lagartixa, a lagartixa na parede  
E everybody  
Todo mundo dançando  
Na melô da lagartixa  
A massa swingando  
A massa sabe disso  
O quanto eu sei  
Que a melô da lagartixa  
É inovação do meu DJ  
*Ndee Naldinho<sup>244</sup>*

O poeta é um fingidor  
Finge tão completamente  
Que chega a fingir que é dor  
A dor que deveras sente.  
*Fernando Pessoa<sup>245</sup>*

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<sup>244</sup> Naldinho's rap song "Melô da Lagartixa" is a parody of Chubb Rock's "DJ Innovator". It is a track of *O Som das Ruas*, one of the first Brazilian hip hop albums, which was released in 1988, the year of the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil.

In its beginnings in the 80s, the cultural industry of hip hop in Brazil was centred around the "bailes black" organized by independent groups—the so-called "equipes de som" such as Kaskatas, Zimbabwe and Chic Show—in the peripheries of São Paulo. These groups became the indie record labels that produced the pioneer compilations which launched the first generation of Brazilian hip hop artists. Two others important collective records of this period are *Hip Hop*, *Cultura de Rua* and *Consciência Black Vol. 1*. The very title of the albums already articulates the rhetoric of political resistance that has been marking the "roots and the routes" of the cultural forms of the Black Atlantic world. (Félix 2000; Gilroy 1993)

With this context in mind, it is worth to listen to both versions of the song quoted as epigraphy in order to think about the importance of cross-cultural translation and mimetic appropriation as an aesthetic means of political-cultural and, why not, epistemological resistance.

<sup>245</sup> The Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa belongs to the Western canon (Bloom 1995: 451–458). One of precursors of modernism in Portugal, Pessoa's work has been translated into many languages, always having "genial" and "universal" as two common adjectives associated with his name. And he has, as it is well known, many other names, his heteronyms, which became the most distinctive feature of his literary production: Fernando Pessoa is the poet of the impossible otherness. Ironically or not, as you please to see it, the only book for which he gained recognition during his lifetime was *Mensagem*, an epic poem exalting the deeds of the Portuguese nation as the pioneering spearhead of the European colonial project.

I wonder to what extent it matters whether he signed the following lines with the name that was given to him or with any other that he gave to himself:

"A velha afirmação de Aristóteles - aliás tão pouco propenso a soluções tirânicas - de que a escravatura é um dos fundamentos da vida social, pode-se dizer que ainda está de pé. Porque não há com o que deitá-la abaixo." "A escravatura é lógica e legítima; um zulu negro [negro da África austral, que falava a língua banto] ou um landim [indígena de Moçambique, que falava o português] não representa coisa alguma de útil neste

## CONCLUSION

### TIME BETWEEN SPACES: FRACTAL SPATIALITY AND LONG-TERM HISTORICAL TIME

There was never a general crisis in History. Some remarkable achievements such as making thinkable the Haitian Revolution (Trouillot 1995: 70–107) or putting African Histories on the historiographical agenda have not rendered it impossible<sup>246</sup> to sustain the claims of the inherited framework of History as positive knowledge. Having been integrated into the field as “minority histories” (Chakrabarty 2000: 97–113), the epistemological pressure exerted by such critical developments has not been as overwhelming as expected.

However, what they have brought about is the understanding that there are “pasts that resist historicisation, just as there may be moments in ethnographic research that resist the doing of ethnography” (Chakrabarty 2000: 101). Such an understanding does not allow the enlargement or enrichment of History to be regarded as a bottomless “inventory of differences” (Veyne 1983) that, comprised by a horizontal accumulation of new knowledge, would appeal to a sort of democratic or deconstructive sense that impelled the discipline to renew while maintaining itself.

Whether it wishes or not, History has been transmuted by these developments. They have had an impact on the shaping of the Historical imagination because they are the most quick-witted ones in coping with historicism, or rather, in coping with what within it is insidious and misleading<sup>247</sup>. And History remains in the grip of historicism (Ankersmit 2012: 1–28; Chakrabarty 2000: 3–46). All types of History, with varying degrees of transparency, are in fact generally guided by the idea that “an adequate understanding of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering them in terms of the

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mundo. Civilizá-lo, quer religiosamente, quer de outra forma qualquer, é querer dar-lhe aquilo que ele não pode ter. O legítimo é obriga-lo, visto que não é gente, a servir aos fins da civilização. Escravizá-lo é que é lógico. O degenerado conceito igualitário, com que o cristianismo envenenou os nossos conceitos sociais, prejudicou, porém, esta lógica atitude.” “A escravidão é lei da vida, e não há outra lei, porque esta tem que cumprir-se, sem revolta possível. Uns nascem escravos, e a outros a escravidão é dada. O amor covarde que todos temos à liberdade é o verdadeiro sinal do peso de nossa escravidão.” (Cavalcanti Filho 2011: 58)

<sup>246</sup> This was nevertheless Steve Feierman’s expectation: “Da die Afrikanische Geschichte die Grenzen der historischen Sprache durchbricht, unterhöhlt sie das allgemeine historische Denken und untergräbt schließlich sogar ihre eigenen Fundamente.” (Feierman 2002: 50)

<sup>247</sup> The historicist assumption that a thing’s nature and identity lies in its past is one Historians cannot do without. This is not a problem. But the idea that Historical truth results from a correspondence between the account and a whole and unified subject amenable to be in one way or another empirically “found” in the world must be revised (Ankersmit 2012: 1–28; 102–125). Ankersmit’s translation of historicist ideas from the idealist and romanticist idioms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the contemporary philosophical vocabulary characteristic of the “linguistic turn” as well as Foucault’s genealogy are attempts of such a revision. (Ankersmit 2012: Foucault 1977: 139–164; 1980: 109–133)

place which it occupied and the role which it played within a process of development” (Mandelbaum 1977: 42)<sup>248</sup>, a task whose accomplishment necessarily arises the epistemological-political problem of how to come to terms with the(ir) present and the idea of modernity in its hegemonic, that is, Western fashion.

Those varieties of History that deal more openly with the problematic of modernity—such as world History, Atlantic History, global History, transnational History—have been trying to address it by making an extra effort to define themselves (Conrad 2016; Hausberger 2013; Greene 2009; Saunier 2013). They have shown themselves preoccupied in defining their particular goals, methods and merits, even if recognising that there are many common features and areas of overlap.

One salient trait shared by all these approaches is the attempt of putting into practice a critique of methodological nationalism, an issue that necessarily leads to another problem, broader and much more difficult to address, namely, that of Eurocentrism in the social sciences. In the case of global History, for example, the effort of being “self-reflective on the issue of Eurocentrism” is thought to be “one of the defining features that set this approach apart from most older variants of world history writing” (Conrad 2016: 67)<sup>249</sup>. The dream of going beyond Eurocentrism by having recourse to self-reflectivity can nonetheless take the form of an openly self-conscious—and somehow cynical—Eurocentric view (Osterhammel 2009).

A particular approach, the postcolonial one, has tried however to suggest that “beyond Eurocentrism” lies a realm that is no longer that of academic History. Postcolonial theory pushes History in the direction of a “politics of translation”, of the horizons of Historical “incommensurabilities” whose adequate comprehension produces neither a negation or gradation of the asymmetrical relationship of universalist political-theoretical Eurocentric categories to other forms of knowledge nor a successful set of equivalents, as “rough” as they might be (Chakrabarty 2000: 27). Postcolonial intellectuals are trying to establish an epistemological approach that counteracts Eurocentrism’s desire of universality not by self-

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<sup>248</sup> This is Maurice Mandelbaum’s definition of historicism. It is the one that both Dipesh Chakrabarty and Frank Ankersmit, two authors I strongly draw on, take as point of departure of their reflections on History.

<sup>249</sup> Assessing “World History”, Barbara Weinstein makes a similar remark: “World History, in its current paradigmatic form, is not conceived as a mere amplification of the ‘Western Civ’ course. Rather, one of its principal purposes is precisely to rethink the place of the West in the macro-historical narrative.” (Weinstein 2005: 80)

condescendingly evoking one's self-flattering self-reflectivity, but by arguing that this very exercise, rather than performed on the basis of a conceptual frame of reference within which the major aim is the production of fully transparent relations, should be open to the possibility of extending one's right to opacity (Glissant 2004: 251-255). But is there anyone else ready to cross such an epistemological border and to realign things in this way? Who is prepared to waive the privilege History enjoys in what concerns the power of establishing representations that more legitimately than any other corresponded to the objective truth of the past? Confronted with a half danger of losing this prerogative, even perspectives that are at first sight dauntlessly nominalist turn out to be inclined to convert to a kind of "naïve realism"<sup>250</sup> which is on the verge of divorcing even constructivism!<sup>251</sup>

But we must not be unfair. There are also other interests at stake here. The wish to speak primarily the Eurocentric language of universals is intrinsic to the fact that "there is no easy way of dispensing with these universals in the condition of political modernity. Without them there would be no social science that addresses the issue of modern social justice" (Chakrabarty 2000: 5). In addition to that, there are also academic-institutional pressures whose answer depends on one's capacity of articulating this language. The wish to speak the Eurocentric language of universals is bound to result in widening one's power. Even more, it is the language in which to deny the other is already to know the other. And not accidentally, it

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<sup>250</sup> See discussion about this in the section 'Postcolonial End of History'.

<sup>251</sup> This is the case of Conrad's interpretation of global History. He begins by courageously assuming that in principle any subject will do for a global History, for "once it is established that global history is everything, everything can become global history. This is less absurd than it seems. The situation was not so different when national history reigned supreme." (Conrad 2016: 8) This statement is perfectly coherent with global Histories' methodological concern of experimenting with alternative notions of space by not taking "political or cultural units—nation-states, empires, civilisations—as their points of departure. Instead, they pose analytical questions and go wherever their questioning leads them." (Conrad 2016: 65)

In such a fashion, however, the defining characteristic of being "global" is entirely an ascription of the Historian's intellectual labor. Might there be then that the subject historiographically represented had not been as "global" as it appears in its very Historical representation? Faced with this question, Conrad pulls out the joker called the heuristic necessity of keeping perspective and subject apart and, by resorting to one of those three old "idols of the tribe of Historians"(François Simiand quoted by Burke 1992: 24), the chronology, explains: "After all, the approach is much newer than the process; global history as a paradigm is of fairly recent origin, while the processes it studies reach far back into the past. As the two chronologies do not neatly correspond, it is useful to separate them analytically." Concluding his discussion on the issue, he yields to a realist position by suggesting that: "Even if we assume that there is a process somewhere 'out there', it is crucial to ponder the methodological challenges of uncovering it, and the implications of our choices" (Conrad 2016: 13-14). In the end, Conrad does not manage to circumvent the specter of that past that lies somewhere, independent of the Historian's craft, just waiting not to be "constructed", but rather to be "uncovered" by those ones equipped with the proper methodological tools.

is also the language of strongest currency when one tries to offer a social scientific representation of any phenomenon in its “totality”.

In History as well as, for that matter, in all other social scientific disciplines, the totalising desire leads to that particular state of affairs in which the familiar vocabulary of the Eurocentric universals is most conspicuously deployed. It is in this frame of mind that the social sciences’ impose themselves on one’s comprehension of world, all the while believing (or at least stating) that they are just staying in their corner.

Postcolonial approaches, perhaps the most critical<sup>252</sup> ones among those at disposal nowadays in the “common market” of academic History, accept the lessons from the predominant Eurocentric view and are then at pains to reflect them back again. Instead of a radiating point that animates a heliocentric discourse, in whose center “the sun of theory, the Subject of Europe” (Spivak 1988: 274) stands, postcolonial approaches resemble rather the moon enlightening a public space of theoretical practice whose purpose is to playfully displace the dualist categories (Vila 1988; Costa 2006), through which the Eurocentric language of universals dissects and divides whatever happens to be subjected to its gaze<sup>253</sup>. So, despite the reticence, the oppositions, even the pretension of quiet ignorance, the outline of a position that amounts to a vindication of the [epistemological] rights of the subaltern [pasts] is beginning to come into existence: a vindication written in Wollstonecraft’s spirit.

It is worth pursuing this path, even if, eventually, a more strictly Eurocentric view turns out to be the only one supposed to thrive in the academic soil; furthermore, due to the very battles

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<sup>252</sup> This critical stance, which is also the stance I take in my own writing, is the consecution of a philosophical ethos that Foucault, contrasting the Enlightenment project with the critical one, characterises as

“[A] limit-attitude. We are not talking about a gesture of rejection. We have to move beyond the outside-alternative; we have to at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analysing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question [or the Enlightenment’s question] was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of possible transgression.

This entails an obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying.” (Foucault [1984] 2010: 45–46)

<sup>253</sup> Consider the meaning of the word “gaze” in this sentence as a shadow of Franz Fanon’s famous passage: “The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am fixed.” (Fanon [1952] 2008: 95)

for social justice, one might find it preferable to resume this path in order to be on the safe side.

Until this day arrives, something that we need to do is to go on *gingando* within a historiographical world that, however molecular, however fragmentary and flexible, is still a world in which the main lines of force bear the combined marks of maleness, whiteness and Europeaness. This *gingar* can be enacted, for instance, by (mis)taking the potential both of the critique of methodological nationalism and of the change of metaphorical language brought about by the *spatial turn*<sup>254</sup> for forces of breaching<sup>255</sup> that can be mobilised to beguile Eurocentrism.

It must not always be the case, but the search for alternative spatial configurations that circumvent container-based paradigms might give rise to the problem of how to deal with time in spaces conceived in this way.

History is a discipline that does not arrive at this discussion empty-handed. In the course of its development as an area of social scientific knowledge, it has gained great expertise in this matter. Historians are used to dealing with the multiple temporalities of social life and to creating ingenious periodisations to give an adequate account of it; they are habituated to unfold both synchrony within a diachronic vector and, in turn, to make diachrony emanate from synchronic interactions. Historians are, in short, as Fernand Braudel once put it, “the faithful servants, if not always skilled advocates” of the “social continuities [...] which constitute not only the substance of the past but the stuff of present-day social life” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 243).

This is surely one of the reasons why they know so well the Eurocentric time ontology within which the present is imagined as a living anachronism comprised by (displaced) pasts personified in particular bodies, places, patterns of behavior, types of social relations, etc., which represented the backwardness whose correlate were the modernity hypostatized in

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<sup>254</sup> For reflections on the *spatial turn* and the idea of time in History see Döring/Thielmann 2008: 7–47; Schlögel 2003: 9–15. Concerning specifically Global History, Sebastian Conrad is emphatic in saying that “as a discipline within the humanities, global history forms part of the larger ‘spatial turn’. [...] On its surface, global history does not speak the language of time. Its immediate association is instead with space. The privileged vocabulary of global Historians—mapping, circulation, flows, networks, deterritorialisation—is almost exclusively concerned with a new understanding of the role of space in history.” (Conrad 2016: 66; 141)

<sup>255</sup> Here, I am thinking of “breaching” with the meaning given to it by Derrida in the “Différance”. It shall convey, as Alan Bass, the translator of the text, explains, “the sense of breaking open (as in the German *Bahnung* and the French *frayages*).” (Derrida 1982: 18)

the Historical path followed by a handful of Western European countries, accompanied by some other few cases of exceptionalism (that of Japan and USA, for example).

Integral to this temporalised *Weltanschauung* is still another issue, which Historians are also fairly acquainted with, namely, the fact that the bigger the time scale one chooses the more conspicuous is the role played by abstract linkages that happen to be those conceptual categories called Eurocentric universals<sup>256</sup>. This last aspect of Historical time, more than the general question of time in History—time with a hundred faces, with all its subtle concavities and saliences—is sure to be of interest to approaches concerned with developing an ostensive anti-Eurocentric view by experimenting with alternative spatial units, such as our “Between Spaces”.

I have been discussing this particular aspect of History all the way hitherto. And I shall dwell on it for a while. I do this less for the sake of the scientific health of History than for staging an epistemological uprising whose aim is to find an escape route that leads to a position from which one becomes able to deploy Historical knowledge tactically as a way of opposing “primarily not the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse” such as the Historical one (Foucault 1980: 84).

### **Historical continuity and fractality**

All Historical writing periodises the past, and Historians have generally no trouble in conceding, as Sydney Chalhoub does, that to periodise is an act of imagination, of interpretation (Chalhoub 2012: 30).

History has long accustomed us to a more or less intuitive, commonsensical threefold classification of the size of the (imaginary) periods covered by particular historiographical interpretations: short, medium and long term.

The new fields of deep History and big History, which have made the past prior to the existence of human beings central to its analysis and have even extended their “telescopic view”<sup>257</sup> back to the time before the advent of life on the planet, have been called,

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<sup>256</sup> Michel Rolph-Trouillot denominates it “The North Atlantic universals” (Trouillot 2004: 229–237), which, in turn, can be said to basically correspond to the traits of Chakrabarty’s “hyperreal Europe”. I am going to use both formulations interchangeably.

<sup>257</sup> “Across the historical profession, the telescope rather than the microscope is increasingly the preferred instrument of examination; the long-shot not the close-up is becoming an ever-more prevalent picture of

accordingly, Histories of “very long term”. On the other extreme, a moment, one day, or perhaps some months constitute the “very short term” (Conrad 2016: 147), a label that no variety of History has claimed so far.<sup>258</sup>

These denominations do not seem to be quite reliable. At any rate, that tripartite formula, for good or ill, has become a disciplinary standard for naming broad types of History on the basis of chronological duration. The designations themselves matter little; what matters is the fact that they function as a criterion for assessing whether a historiographical account delivers what it promises. In this respect, what they promise can also be exemplarily seen in the limit cases of deep/big Histories: they are supposed to extend their temporal frame to the extent to which the empirical proofs they provide stem from the chosen time. Thus, big and deep Histories resort to the expertise of astronomy, cosmology, evolutionary biology, genetics, archaeology, paleontology, etc. in order to address the human. They also make lasting permanence of climatic, geographic and geological conditions determining Historical actors. These approaches give such a preponderance to the domain of the natural and to what existed prior to and/or independently of mankind’s action that they end up making of History a determinist search for universal laws that makes of human agency just an epiphenomenon of “ultimate causes and primal driving forces in history” (Conrad 2012: 142–146; Armitage 2012: 493–496).

It seems that the trouble with such Histories is that they are too empiricist. They are empiricist to the point of bypassing History itself, of emptying it of its very content. But it is also perfectly tenable to affirm the opposite: the problem with such Histories is that their main findings result rather from sidelining what might have been empirically proven in favor of an argumentation whose main axis consist of hackneyed generalising formulae, if not fairly speculative assumptions, which bridge gaps that cannot be filled with any empirical data.<sup>259</sup>

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the past.” (Armitage 2012: 493)

<sup>258</sup> There are however “history of the present” and “immediate history”, terms that suggest that the main problem is not the length of the time span, but its proximity to the Historian’s present time. It shall not go unremarked that these two varieties of History, the first commonly associated with the name of Michel Foucault and the latter with Benoît Verhaegen, bear close connections with post-colonial thinking. (Foucault 1979; Conrad/Randeria 2002; Vansina 2000; Fraiture 2013)

<sup>259</sup> This is, for instance, the case of Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel*. He deliberately let the environmental determinism (Blaut 1999) of his argument lead him to the following blind alley: if 15<sup>th</sup>-Century China had basically the same favorable environmental conditions as Europe at that time and, in addition, was technologically much more developed, why, he asks, “didn’t Chinese ships proceed around Africa’s southern cape westward and colonize Europe, before Vasco da Gama’s own three puny ships rounded the Cape of Good Hope eastward and launched Europe’s colonization of East Asia? Why didn’t Chinese ships cross the Pacific to colonize the America’s west coast?” (Diamond 1998: 412)

The example of big and deep Histories helps us to understand that that threefold order of Historical time had an ontology according to which the explanatory power entailed in each of its time scales held a relation of correspondence to the capacity of enabling one to establish connections between events on the basis of a more or less ostensive recourse to notions that are not amenable to be satisfactorily derived from the facts proved to be empirical in historiographical fashion.

Let us try to put things more clearly. For the sake of argument, take the short term as the time of a safe and conscious deceptiveness. It would arise in its plenitude only if Historians were capable of making the main findings of their works coincide entirely with the empirical description of the so-called “discrete events” which Historical accounts as a whole are comprised of. “Empirical” means here the establishment of relations between events only on the basis of pieces of information directly derived from and referred to whatever might have been chosen as source.

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Diamond’s answer reads that “the real problem in understanding China’s loss of political and technological prominence to Europe is to understand China’s chronic unity and Europe chronic disunity.” (Diamond 1998: 413–414)

To explain this thesis, Diamond resorts to geographic factors that had facilitated connectedness (the spread of technology and ideas) and political unification in China while making it difficult in Europe. We need not even check if it is good or bad geography. It suffices to read the conclusion of the argument to identify some of its many flaws:

“But China’s connectedness eventually became a disadvantage, because a decision by one despot could and repeatedly did halt innovation. In contrast, Europe’s geographic Balkanisation resulted in dozens or hundreds of independent, competing statelets and centers of innovation. If one state did not pursue some particular innovation, another did, forcing neighboring states to do likewise or else be conquered or left economically behind. Europe’s barriers were sufficient to prevent political unification, but insufficient to halt spread of technology and ideas. There has never been one despot who could turn off the tap of all of Europe, as of China.” (Diamond 1998: 416)

I would like to single out just two interrelated “gaps” that I will formulate in the form of a preparatory assertion accompanied by a subsequent question. First, the boundaries of most European countries do not match to topographic barriers. So, how to correlate geographical factors and the processes of political unification that gave rise to the particular formation we call “nation-state”? Second, political unification does not amount in any necessary sense to despotism. Where do the “Chinese despots” in Diamond’s “explanation” come from?

The “gap” left by the first question is sealed with a sort of liberal tale of human progress based on freedom and competition whose outcome was innovation and economic growth, something that had happened in the necessary grade *only* in Europe.

The second “gap” is filled with the reverse of this idea, namely, with “the theory of Oriental despotism [...] the belief that so-called Oriental civilisations—essentially China, India, and the Islamic Middle East—have always been despotic.” (Blaut 1999: 401) China, as all other members of this unfortunate group, stagnated more or less in the (European) Middle Ages.

So, *Guns, Germs and Steel* answers the crucial questions it poses by filling the “gaps” of its argumentation with elementary Eurocentric constructs that circularly explain European hegemony. I am not especially fond of “top ten” lists, but I cannot help being in pleasant agreement with James M. Blaut when he includes Jared Diamond in his selected group of *Eight Eurocentric Historians*. (Blaut 2000: 149–172)

A chimerical historiographical account whose content was made only out of such types of connections of events were supposed to be safe in the sense that virtually all its statements would be “factual” ones or, at least, plausibly so. It would have a sort of strong warrant against that sort of skepticism or incommensurate relativism that accuses History of being rather or just interpretation. It would also tell us something about History’s fragmentariness, making us maybe realise that if History, willingly or unwillingly, must be episodic, these episodes are nonetheless always liable to be reunited in a bigger and bigger chain, once one allows oneself to be carried along by the richness of the documents. But it would also be deceptive for, in order to do so, one must get oneself trapped within the time scale of these events. One must advance in time, passing from one event to another by making as few “leaps” (temporal, cognitive, conjectural, etc.) as possible. Where similar events due, for example, to their disposition in time or space, could not be directly related on the basis of documental empirical evidence, they must then remain unrelated completely.

Such an account is a chimera if thought of as a pure form, but it is undeniable that it constitutes an aspect<sup>260</sup> of Historical writing. An aspect that might be easily moved to the forefront, where it is more likely to cause a suppression of one’s capability of giving a *configurational*<sup>261</sup> account of a context wider than that immediately (in a temporal sense) linked to the described events. Here, the past would happen to be represented just as a

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<sup>260</sup> My use of the term “aspect” is analytically designed to avoid a formulation that might suggest that there are in historiographical writing moments in which representation can be reduced to description. That is, that there are statements that might be purely descriptive, in the sense that they would exclusively *refer* to facts empirically verified, while other statements could be interpretive, for they would then *attribute* certain properties to what they refer to. Description and representation are inseparable in History. The consequences of this assumption are not of little importance. From a logical point of view, it goes straight to the heart of the notion of truth: the impossibility to distinguish between what is reference and what is attribution is also the impossibility of discerning what would be a true statement about the particular subject described/represented. The notion of “aspect” introduces a third operator, whose effect is to break both the one-to-one relationship usually associated with the notion of representation and, consequently, the whole relation between reference, truth and representation. (Ankersmit 2012: 64–86; 103–108)

A basic understanding of what “aspect” is can be gained by an imagetic metaphor provided by Frank Ankermit:

“Aspects sometimes have a more pronounced individuality than what they are aspect of—a fact that is exploited to the full in caricatures. The big nose of a politician is enlarged beyond proportion—and you recognise the politician more easily than from a photo. Often we move so easily from aspects to what they are aspects of that we completely forget that we are dealing with the former rather than with the latter. In this way we live in a world of specters to a much greater extent than we realise; mistaking aspects for the things that they are aspect of is something that we are literally doing all the time. In this way (the logic of) representation reaches far deeper into our interaction with the world than we ordinarily notice.” (Ankersmit 2012: 70–71)

<sup>261</sup> The configurational mode of comprehension is the one that “enables us to detect a certain pattern or structure in a complex and incoherent set of data” (Ankersmit 2007: 385). See discussion about it in the chapter Time and Event of Part Two.

massive array of discrete facts interconnected via empirical proof. But such a mass has never been regarded as making up all the stuff Historians may subject to careful scientific reflection. This is one of the reasons why apprentice Historians are as a rule advised to avoid time spans that might appear rather short (or too short). Such a time scale, so to speak, might not be significant enough if one attempts to place and to assess the role of determined events within a proper process of development. As it is commonly said, it makes it much more difficult to achieve a reasonable “Historical depth”.

Those who have been generally regarded as early great masters of our craft such as Jules Michelet, Leopold von Ranke, Jacob Burckhardt or Fustel de Coulanges, wrote works whose Historical profundity has been also regarded as inseparable from a lively distrust of the short term. A distrust expressed in the form of a feverish devotion to long-term History. These names have been a living presence<sup>262</sup> in the process of education and training of countless generations of Historians, at least in the Brazilian academic milieu. Fernand Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, Carlo Ginzburg, Quentin Skinner, Charles R. Boxer, Eric Hobsbawm or E.H. Gombrich, to mention just a few contemporary Historians who are extremely influential in Brazil, share pretty much the same concerns of the “old great masters”.

In the small corner of the recent Brazilian History of Slavery, the work that happened to become a masterpiece of the field, an “instantaneous classic”, as a critic describes it (Ohata 2001), is also one focused on long-term Historical continuity: *O Trato dos Videntes* by Luiz Felipe Alencastro. But to go to that amplitude is not everyone’s cup of tea.

As the reader had the opportunity to see, the absolute majority of the works about slavery analyzed in the course of this study focus on swaths of time whose duration range from three to six or seven decades approximately. The role given to sources liable to provide substantially quantitative data is here salient: first and foremost, numbers referring to demographic

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<sup>262</sup> Following Chakrabarty, I want to emphasise here the fact that the “so-called European intellectual tradition is the only one alive in the social sciences departments of most, if not all, modern universities. I use the word “alive” in a particular sense. It is only within some very particular traditions of thinking that we treat fundamental thinkers who are long dead and gone not only as people belonging to their own times but also as though they were our own contemporaries.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 5)

I would just add a comment about the fascination with the image of that guild of hoary white men, with their (probable) sideburns and beards, their (even more probable) suits, spectacles and grave countenance, who were introduced to us as no less than the sheer embodiment of intelligence and who lose a part of their phantasmagoric character by being seemingly so well represented in appearance, manners and language by most of our faculty’s chairmen. The idea of being trained to be accepted into such a brotherhood entails somehow to have the knowledge of, as well to acknowledge, that one of its secrets is a diffuse but manifest white maleness, which happens to be surreptitiously put across as an indefectible trace of intellectual power in its full maturity.

developments of all possible types (from the common birth and death rates up to statistics related to the prison population); then measurements of productivity and of money supply, variations of price curves, analysis of trade and of distribution of wealthy among the white elite, etc.

With the help of such data Historians give contour to what they customarily call Historical conjunctures or even, as in the case of economic History, attempt to define social structures. In this way, on the basis of an analysis of sources related to financial transactions of the wealthiest slave trader settled in Rio de Janeiro, Manolo Florentino detects a strong tendency to entrenchment evinced in patterns of long-term investments in real estate. This fact, combined with the verification of a remarkable fragility of the circulation of goods in specie, allows for describing Rio de Janeiro's domestic economy as one within which the mercantile capital was preponderant, but contrasted with a constant transference to sectors where they rendered immobilised or, put it differently, serve primarily to rentier purposes. According to the author, the reiteration of this cycle over the time scrutinised (1790- 1840) endowed it with a *structural character* (Florentino [1997] 2010: 186).

No doubt the chronological periods measured with the barometer of the quantitative methods, as every other one, have no absolute value. Using different kinds of measures, one could come up with distinct time markers, which might perhaps be even more cogent. We should therefore not allow ourselves to get bogged down in what is pointless in this discussion. What matters in the delineation of particular Historical conjunctures is the fact that it is supposed to share the hard empiricist aspect of the short-term descriptiveness, but also that it should allow Historians to escape its presumed deceptiveness.

Moving themselves in the time span of conjunctures, Historians would then achieve some more "Historical depth" by becoming able, for instance, to define social structures, as the case of Manolo Florentino exemplifies. They came thus closer to the achievements generally associated to long-term perspectives. But they would do that on a fairly empirical basis, that is, without having neither to generalise from the short-term's "discrete events" nor to cover the monumental frontispiece of the Historical account with a theoretical scaffold.

In this way, a controversial question like that one about whether there are such things that deserve to be designated as constituting the "structure" of a social formation, and, if yes, what they are and how one might address them, all these questions can be kept far from the endless quarrels about the matter by turning "structure" into just empirically verifiable facts that

happen repeatedly over a certain amount of time considered long enough to begin bearing the weight of the very word “structure”, a term whose presence, for good or ill, has been a constant in the discussion on Historical continuity of long-term.

And so, coming to the logical next step, the same rationale that makes possible to delineate conjunctures should lead, by the simple process of going beyond its temporal limits, to long-term events that carry structuralising property in all their extension.

Here, it is appropriate to look again at Manolo Florentino’s work, in order to see what he presents as example (of such a structure):

“a ideia mais geral é a de que o comércio atlântico de almas exercia uma dupla função estrutural (isto é, recorrente no tempo). No Brasil era o principal instrumento viabilizador da reprodução física dos escravos [...]. Por outro lado, perspectiva quase não abordada pelos historiadores nacionais, tal viabilização era necessariamente precedida pela produção social do cativo na África [...]” (Florentino [1997] 2010: 9)

Surely, no one would be surprised in attesting that the very slave trade and, for that matter, colonial slavery in general, is here taken as the element endowed with structural character. But Florentino does not have to spill too much ink over the issue. Rather than something that needs to be systematically established in historiographical fashion, the element “slave trade as structure” is the most general idea, a more or less primary empirical point of departure. This suffices to evince that the structural elements Historians are interested in are of another nature, namely, they are those which have been generally presented as supposed to mask regularities and continuities, those which are said to repose under the surface of the events and, therefore, cannot be seen with unaided eyes, that is, without History’s labour of uncovering them.

Still, History is indetermination, as Sydney Chalhoub says, voicing a conviction generally shared among us, his fellow Historians (2012: 27). “Indetermination” means here simply that we shall assume that we cannot know in advance what we are going to find ahead or whether and how our initial assumptions might be changed by it. We must be open and willing to return to them with new eyes, with new uncertainties, with new questions.

Historians concerned with Historical continuity of long-term are allowed to suppose that something might have happened hidden away, secretly structuring the visible, but they are, evidently, not supposed to know it from the outset. Pursuing long-term Historical continuity has therefore been presented as a march towards the “unknown” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 249).

The unknown element underlying the financial behavior of those wealthy slave traders from Rio de Janeiro was, according to Florentino, the aristocratic ideal typical of Portugal's ancient regime, a regime within which the preponderance of non-capitalist values entailed an active resistance against modernisation. Thus, Portugal's backwardness in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century did not constitute something like an anachronism stemmed from a putative incapacity to follow Europa's manifest capitalist destiny. On the contrary, Portugal's archaism was a truly social project. (Florentino [1997] 2010: 117)

The "instantaneous classic" by Luiz Felipe Alencastro also has an "unknown element" that, as in detective stories, is strategically revealed only on the last page of the book. Speaking in fluent Braudelian idiom, Alencastro finds the *longue durée* variable of Brazil's formation in the de-territorialisation of the labor market. He comes to the unfortunate conclusion that the History of the Brazilian nation is a rather short one: it began just after the nationalisation of the reproduction of the workforce, a process that only began between 1930 to 1940, the decade which is the initial milestone of the modernization project called "nacional-desevolvimentismo" (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 354-355; Nobre 2012).

These examples could be multiplied *ad nauseam*. A generous amount of prominent Marxist studies of different stocks, for instance, the works by Caio Prado Jr., Fernando Novais, Emilia Viotti da Costa, Jacob Gorender and Ciro F. Cardoso, as well as its Weberian "counterpart", such as Maria Silvia C. Franco's *Homens Livres na Ordem Escravocrata* (1969), will gravitate around the process of transition to capitalism as the problem of becoming modern, where modernity bears the features of what Chakrabarty calls the "hyperreal Europe".

I do not think I am misrepresenting the intention of all these authors if I say that it is not even necessary to make the point that perhaps there is nothing hidden under the surface of the reality we can see, that there is nothing to be "uncovered" by proceeding forward into the "unknown" that showed itself only when seen from the advantage point of the long time span. This is not needed because long-term Historical continuity has been very much about to replicate, to reiterate and to make widespread what is at best known from the outset: the traces of Eurocentric modernity as fundamental Historical structures. It is somehow, as Foucault says evoking Nietzsche, a "series of episodes of that profound history of the Same" (Foucault 1970: 387).

But more than “known”, these structures have to bear the proper form that knowledge must assume in order to be articulated as Historical discourse<sup>263</sup>. When one wants to go deeper in time, to follow the example of the “great masters”, speaking in a totalizing manner about developments presented as having taken place over centuries and centuries, one cannot do it without resorting to comprehensive abstract constructions. The problem is that any other sets of ideas have been systematically served for this purpose but only those which, signifying Europe’s historical experience, hold, so to speak, the “theoretical office”. This is why accounts focused on Historical continuities of long-term have been a privileged stage of Eurocentrism<sup>264</sup>. A stage that Historians, who are frequently too willing to act as theatrical directors, can set without ever giving up the episodic, even dramatic scenes stemmed from the short-term,<sup>265</sup> which keeps in History the multidimensional vivacity of lived experience.

Latest one sees here that the question of Eurocentrism in conceiving the idea of long-term Historical continuity is not a matter of “to be or not to be”. The constant use of catchphrases, works, formulas, quotations, models, concepts, thoughts, etc. by means of which, in one way or another, European thinking and History end up being referred or invoked so as to play the role of master key to the legitimation of a particular argument, such a procedure rather amounts to a necessity and a habit of asking whether one is allowed to share the property of speaking in non-particularistic terms. It is an act of asking that is always expressed, even if not stated, and whose answer, depending on which past makes the request, might be a permission given as self-evident authorisation or as authoritative condescendence.

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<sup>263</sup> Still, this “revealing of the already known” does make that a work necessarily loses the originality and intellectual vigor it possibly possesses. In principle, whatever findings a work has to offer, they may remain “unknown” in the sense that they were not known yet in the precise constellation, grounded on the sources, in a word, comprehending the particular Historical contexts chosen to be specifically addressed.

<sup>264</sup> The field of “historical sociology” is one of these privileged stages of Eurocentrism. See, for example, McLennan’s analysis of the works of the “historical sociologists” John Hall and Ernst Gellner. (McLennan 2000)

<sup>265</sup> So, even a Historian like Jacob Gorender—whose concern is with a Historical interpretation of Brazil from the prism of sociological categories that account for long-term continuity, in his case, the Marxist category of mode of production (Gorender 1978: 15–44)—enters into debates over particular events, for example, the revolt of slaves of the Engenho de Santana, in Ilhéus (Bahia). This insurrection left a document that, according to Stuart B. Schwartz, the Historian who found it, “é o único texto escrito em que os próprios escravos brasileiros registravam o que pensavam e queriam” (Gorender 1990: 234; Schwartz 1977). Apart from Gorender and Schwartz, many other renowned Historians have written about this topic, for instance, Ciro Flamarion Cardoso, Clóvis Moura, João José Reis and Eduardo Silva. (Gorender 1990: 233–245)

If I am allowed, I would like to base my argument concerning long-term Historical continuity on an example, one which may not be promptly recognised. Close at hand—but occupying a space that is neither congruent with the political-geographical containers of any nation nor corresponds to any particular array of traces supposed to be capable of strictly defining the genuineness or authenticity of a particular ethnic identity—there is transcultural and transnational formation<sup>266</sup> whose fractal structure makes it unsuitable to be presented as inscribed within a clear set of rules. Fully operative nowadays, this formation can be traced back to the 15<sup>th</sup>-Century or, to be quite sure of our ground, to the 16<sup>th</sup>-Century, as the Europeans' colonial project gained consistency through the invasion of the lands they narcissistically called America, through the conquering of the people they arbitrarily called "Indians" and the subsequent increment of the trade of enslaved Africans to that part of the world.

Throughout whole centuries, the movement of things and human beings within this colonial project required primarily water and ships. Slave ships too, of course. An untold number of them. As well as the European cities, the slave ship—"a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion" (Gilroy 1993: 4)—needs also, as Paul Gilroy argues, to be thought of as a major cultural and political unity for thinking about the issues involved in the process we call modernisation: the clear rationality of the commerce cheerfully harmonised with the racial terror, the circulation of commodities, persons and ideas traversed by the necessity of exchange and translation into different languages, the potential possibilities of conducting self-reflexive political dissention and even of creating a distinct mode of cultural production, etc. [Slave] "ships were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected." (Gilroy 1993: 16–17)

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<sup>266</sup> A formation in Raymond Williams's sense: "These [formations] are most recognisable as conscious movements and tendencies [...] which can usually be readily discerned after their formative productions. Often, when we look further, we find that these are articulations of much wider effective formations, which can by no means be wholly identified with formal institutions, or their formal meanings and values, and which can sometimes even be positively contrasted with them.[...] Moreover, since such formations relate, inevitably, to real social structures, and yet have highly variable and often oblique relations with formally discernible social institutions, any social and cultural analysis of them requires procedures radically different from those developed for institutions. What is really being analysed, in each case, is a mode of specialised practice." (Williams [1977] 2009: 119)

In this sense, the “Middle Passage”<sup>267</sup> presents an alternative to what has remained repressed due to the bedazzling and self-indulgent *fixation*<sup>268</sup> with and at the “Parisian passages” of Baudelaire and Benjamin (and all its possible surrogates: London, Berlin, New York, etc.). And a fundamental aspect that has been problematised by turning the eyes to Paris but stopping dreaming of it<sup>269</sup> is the fact that, throughout whole centuries, the colonial project was also the project to constitute the colonized, the enslaved, in a word, the subaltern subject as Other: a “precarious Subject-ivity” whose “unhappy consciousness”<sup>270</sup> struggles against the asymmetrical obliteration of its own trace (Spivak 1988: 281), as it may be seen in the works by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Paul Gilroy.

A further characteristic of this formation has been the primacy of the tension between the national and the racial ontologies expressed in the disproportionate role accorded to the search for “roots” and rootedness, which contrasts with the difficulties and afflictions provoked by the anti-essentialist challenge of constructing “routes” to identity (Gilroy 1993:

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<sup>267</sup> “As it were, getting on board promises a means to reconceptualise the orthodox relationship between modernity and what passes for its prehistory. It provides a different sense of where modernity might itself be thought to begin in the constitutive relationships with outsiders that both found and temper a self-conscious sense of western civilization.” (Gilroy 1993: 16–17)

<sup>268</sup> This passage deploys a Freudian psychoanalytical vocabulary with the deliberate purpose of exploring some diffuse negative connotations common-sensically associated with the idea of “fixation”, such as immaturity, perversion, obsession, etc. To discuss whether Freud’s theory of sexuality is still of any relevance may be here beside the point, but, nevertheless, I would like to voice a conjecture made by Stefan Etgeton. According to him, Freud’s passage about the ‘perverse Verlangen’ possibly remains quite interesting nowadays, for, he guesses, readers “fühlen sich [...] bei den Schilderungen der ‚Perversen‘ besser verstanden, oftmals gar ertappt; sie erkennen sich selbst heute wie vor hundert Jahren nicht im ‚Normalen‘, sondern im ‚Perversen‘ wieder.“ (Freud [1905] 1961: 13–78; Etgeton 2006: 69–73)

<sup>269</sup> I am here referring to the importance of the works of thinkers who lived and taught in Paris (Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Lyotard, etc.) for the postcolonial critique of Eurocentrism. By the same token, I am pleased to hint at the deeply Eurocentric fascination attached to the indigenous products of this location, a trace that is utterly valid to the intellectual production. The oneiric imaginary associated with Paris is a sort of cultural commodity whose exploration ranges from street-commerce to the Hollywood film industry. An illustrative example thereof is Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris* (2011).

<sup>270</sup> In ‘Gilroy’s definition, the vernacular variety of “unhappy consciousness” to which the Black Atlantic’s cultural manifestations have contributed to form is one that is “acutely aware of the potential of the modern world”, but equally aware that, to the extent that the “advances of modernity are in fact insubstantial or pseudo advances, contingent on the power of the racially dominant group [...], the critique of modernity cannot be satisfactorily completed from within its own philosophical and political norms, that is, immanently.” This “unhappy consciousness”, he argues, “demands that we rethink the meanings of rationality, autonomy, reflection, subjectivity, and power in the light of an extended meditation both on the condition of the slaves and on the suggestion that racial terror is not merely compatible with occidental rationality but cheerfully complicit with it. In terms of contemporary politics and social theory, the value of this project lies in its promise to uncover both an ethics of freedom to get alongside modernity’s ethics of law and the new conceptions of selfhood and individuation that are waiting to be constructed from the slave’s standpoint—forever dissociated from the psychological and epistemic correlates of racial subordination.” (Gilroy 1993: 56) I will resume the issue of the “unhappy unconsciousness” at the end of this text (see footnote 302).

1-40). In addition, there are the damages caused by the association of this formation with androcentrism and misogyny, and finally the prominent role of music as its “central and even foundational element”. (Gilroy 1993: 173–186; 75)

I have thus defined, or rather invoked, a synoptic<sup>271</sup> view of traits that comprehends the Black Atlantic, a long-term Historical event. Despite the empirical character of the events referred to above, the Black Atlantic does not correspond to them in the sense that it did not happen like them. But it happened. And its very emergence<sup>272</sup> is what instigates the elaboration of disruptive contributions to a well-established semantic pattern of how to conceive continuity of long-term in the writing of History.

Among the different forms of Historical time that of long-term has stood out as an easy-going, uncomplicated and welcomingly expected one. To admit it into the very heart of History has not been a difficult task because it entails a repeated reinforcement of the most firmly established ways of conceiving social affairs: it basically means becoming able to mobilize at any time the whole epistemological apparatus of the social sciences so as to define and to stabilise whatever a Historian chooses to be the subject matter thought to remain the same over a determined time span whose long duration is presented in terms of chronological measurement. Not by accident, one of the—if not “the”—most famous canonical texts about the issue bears the title “History and The Social Sciences: the *Longue Durée*”. At the *longue durée* stage, “though not at any other”, as the text’s author, Fernand Braudel, makes a point of emphasising, Historians find themselves on the deepest possible point of observation. From these depths they can rethink the totality of history: “all the stages, all the thousands of stages, all the thousands explosions of historical time can be understood, as if on the basis of an infrastructure.” (Braudel [1969] 1982: 33)

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<sup>271</sup> Synoptic view, in the sense I use it, which is the one put forward by Louis Minks, “directs the attention to the act of ‘seeing things together’. That events occur sequentially in time means not that the Historian must “relive” them—by reproducing a determinate serial order in his thought—to understand them, but that he must in an act of judgment hold together in thought events which no one could experience together.” (Mink 1987: 84)

<sup>272</sup> Raymond Williams’s ideas about cultural phenomena are of great value in preventing the evocation of that usual image of “emergence” as the sudden appearance of something that already existed and just came fully to the light or to the surface. For the purposes of the argument I am developing here, two features of his idea of emergence of cultural formation are of fundamental importance: first, “definitions of the emergent [...] can be made only in relation to a full sense of the dominant”; second, an emergence is “never only a matter of immediate practice; indeed it depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of form.” In the strict sense, Williams says, rather than merely novel, emergent is what is “new” because it is being continually created. (Williams [1977] 2009: 123–127) Its main quality is to be steadily and insistently at hand, not hidden somewhere.

Braudel behaves here like a historiographical personification of Atlas, who is sure to know better than anyone where the whole (history of the) world ultimately rests: upon the shoulders of his *longue durée*: a time which stands for a space underlying everything. This titanic effort to conquer totality presupposed a panoptic architecture where, contemplating the full magnitude of his domains from the central tower (Foucault 1979: 200–209), the Historian can calmly meditate on the most reasonable way of dividing them in Cartesian extensions thought to reassure him that totality would never escape from his hands.

When that happens, the restoration of the sovereign subject's consciousness also happens:

“the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness—will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference.” (Foucault 1972: 12)

To personify a Black Atlantic-perspective requires an entirely different attitude, a change of style, a perversion of familiar ways of thinking Historical continuity of long-term. First and foremost, we shall eschew to spatialise time in terms of superposed or juxtaposed slayers hierarchically endowed with immanent epistemological power. This entails a particularly careful deployment of the vocabulary proper of the metaphysics of presence whose basic assumption reads that long-term History—in one way or another—“uncovers”, “reveals” what is behind or hidden under the surface of reality. Such a procedure brings into question the explanatory discursive frame articulated around the notion of “infrastructure” and, for that matter, of “superstructure”, in all its variants and, for obvious reasons, with special emphasis on the Marxist one. The idea of structure itself although need not be given up (Hall 1985: 91). Long-term Historical continuity might be imagined as a self-referential process of comprehension by means of which fragments are supposed to be part of fractal structures, related on the basis of criteria of similarity and self-similarity. Historical events resulted from such a procedure would follow a pattern of development that prevents them from being smoothly inscribed into any organic or systemic form whose morphological fixedness functions as proof and guarantee of the totalizing universality of their own generative principles.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> The fractal geometric conception of space was thought to study the forms, “that Euclides leaves aside as being formless, to investigate the morphology of the ‘amorphous’” (Mandelbrot 1983: 1). I would say that to spatialise History in this manner, that is, ascribing amorphousness to it, amounts to an attempt to make that “the world may once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous” (Chakrabarty 2000: 46).

Three consequences ensue from this way of spatialising Historical time. First, long-term continuity loses its traditional epistemological prerogative in what concerns the issue of the “totality of history”. The Historian who addresses the past reality “at the stage” of long-term continuity does not necessarily see further and certainly not “deeper” than any other. At least not, if one means by this to see what might be concealed under the surface of reality. In such spatiality there is no room for hidden elements. What it makes visible are not underlying permanences but rather certain types of general, wide range changes spread on the surface of reality itself or, if you want, “emergencies”<sup>274</sup>.

Second, one of the main features of fractals is its recursive self-referentiality. The discombobulating conspicuousness of self-reference and recursion makes a nuisance value out of an aspect whose banality easily leads to an underestimation of its importance: Historical accounts are themselves a defining element in the emergence of the long-term processes they historiographically represent, and an element that, evidently, was not present in the past. In this sense, such a structure of Historical time works against History’s historicism, for it makes plain that in giving an actual account of past realities, one, actually, excludes the possibility of presenting them as they actually were<sup>275</sup>.

These two points lead us to the third and last one: fractal forms are spatial ways of representing infinity in a finite space (Schnattschneider 2010: 712). Gilroy says he thinks of fractal geometry as an analogy for the long-term Historical character of the Black Atlantic because “the opposition between totality and infinity is thus recast in a striking image of the scope for agency in restricted conditions” (Gilroy 193: 237). Here, the spatial metaphor that gives shape to long-term Historical time represents (*darstellen*) not only an analytical tool that granted the Historians’ epistemological power but also represents (*vertreten*) subject positions in asymmetrical relations of power with respect to that which undergoes historiographical examination.<sup>276</sup> Gilroy’s insight points to the fact that every conception of Historical time, no matter how schematic it might be, is used to signify subject positions that

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<sup>274</sup> By a lucky semantic coincidence the term “emergency”, by referring to a state of affairs requiring immediate action, helps to obviate the idea of passivity, the suggestion that History “simply happens”.

<sup>275</sup> If it were possible, it would nevertheless be pointless, for in such a representation the very movement that constitutes History must be pure absence. I do not see what else could be of interest to us, Historians, if not exactly to re-present the past as it is seen from now.

<sup>276</sup> Thus, Paul Gilroy’s remark on long-term Historical continuity and, by extension, my own reflections, are in a sense an effort to think together, on the one hand, Ginzburg’s preoccupation with how to combine morphology and “relation of forces” among social actors and, on the other, Spivak’s concern with epistemic violence and representation. (Ginzburg 1999; Spivak 1988)

correlate the explanatory power of “Historicising” with the agency of what happens to become “Historicised”. Such a procedure counterbalances the currency and powerful suggestiveness of the historicist idea that time is something empty and homogenous “within which” a process of development “takes place”. This secular externality of Historical time respecting the events which they are constituted of has been one of most ostensive assumptions of historiographical views that are frankly evolutionist (Benjamin [1942] 2007: 258–261), what is a matter of far graver concern than being “just” Eurocentric.

Such an assumption has an equally powerful and suggestive correspondent in the idea that the discipline of History is “the sum of all possible histories—an assemblage of points of view from yesterday, from today, and tomorrow” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 253). The commonplace friendliness of these words is compelling to the point of unfairness, at least if taken into account that such a stance—which is, by the way, a patronisingly comfortable and still widespread<sup>277</sup> viewpoint—such a stance on our discipline, I was saying, was stated with the conspicuous purpose of arguing that among all “possible histories” there was one, namely, the one the author himself professes, which should *alone* occupy the fairly privileged position of being able to speak about the world and the times in its full totality.

For me, History is a sum of all possible Histories in very much the same way in which a historiographical work is the sum of all its statements, that is, in no way at all! Whether you take 1958 or this year of grace of 2017, the problem of Historians learning their craft is not only to comprehend their subjects but also tackling the hierarchy of forces that constitute their own field of knowledge.

These three points succinctly elaborated here, relating fractal spatiality to long-term Historical time, correspond roughly to those three pairs of concepts which were unfolded—in a more or less fractal fashion—in the course of this work. By way of conclusion, I would like to resume them briefly.

### **Ideology and anachronism**

Many of the remarks I have been making so far are, of course, banal. Nevertheless, since historiographical works usually find small room, or any reason, for writing about the issue of

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<sup>277</sup> The new technologies have given us curious ways of “measuring”, or at least noticing, the influence of some ideas: the passage we are here discussing is automatically underscored in the latest electronic version of Braudel’s text (in English). (Braudel [1958] 2012: 253)

time, some of those remarks address not properly “untouched” points —as banalities might be deservedly treated—but “untouchable” ones, a quality that makes them run the risk of playing all roles except that of banalities.

Still, how strange it feels to try drawing up a firm accusation against History so as to declare it guilty of not accepting time as a dimension necessary of its studies. The concern with periodisation and anachronism, for example, which restores the centrality of the element of time in every historiographical work, is never omitted from its theoretical-methodological deliberations. But what an unequal treatment! It must be admitted that Historians, by taste or more probably by training, have a constant tendency to treat periodisation with care and curtsies, devoting to them deep acknowledgment and shrewd explanations. At the same time, they frequently tend to shy away from discussing anachronism, evading it in a very precise way: by making it a matter of course to present anachronism as a mistake, a serious one.

Although, in performing what I called a theoretically oriented exploration of the disciplinary semantic<sup>278</sup> of History, I maintained that the writing of History is precisely the practice of anachronism. I do not hold this view alone<sup>279</sup>. Even if I did, it should not be difficult to my fellow Historians to see the cogency of my point. Which Historian was never confronted with the basic problem of anachronistic names? The trouble with a trivial phrase like “The discovery of Brazil” is not just some unease at times associated with the idea of “discovery”<sup>280</sup>, but also

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<sup>278</sup> It had been wiser to follow Lyotard’s example and to name it an exploration into the disciplinary “pragmatics” of History, for I am interested in how the meaning of some concepts depends not only on a knowledge of the literal code of historiographical language, with its proper lexicon, grammar and syntax, but above all on contexts of utterance, inferentially, non-truth conditionality and others issues assumed to be classical pragmatic topics. Unfortunately, I thought about this point more judiciously only when the thesis was practically finished. At any rate, this lapse is not so great if one considers what Ariel conjectures about the difficulties in distinguishing grammar from pragmatics and pragmatics from semantics (Ariel 2010: 1–16; 230–273). Jean-François Lyotard, I almost forgot to say, structures distinction between “narrative knowledge” and “scientific knowledge” around the idea of “pragmatics”. This distinction is in some sense very close to the one I draw on the basis of Danto’s idea that philosophy of history is like a “theory of narrative representation.” (Lyotard 1984: 18-27; Danto [1965] 2007)

<sup>279</sup> An author who develops his argument by formulating this point as explicitly as I do is Seth Sanjay: “Far from being defined by its avoidance of ‘anachronism’, history-writing as discipline and practice is in fact based upon anachronism, continually translating the understandings of historical subjects into our modern, anthropological understanding.” (Sanjay n.d.: 71–81)

<sup>280</sup> If you think this expression is no longer used in scholarship, you are deluded. In a book released as late as in 2016 you will find such a passage: “The world historical process—the European discovery of America—posed crucial challenge, but the responses to this event remained in many ways incommensurable” (Conrad 2016: 22). The comment refers to two 15<sup>th</sup>- Century works that, in Sebastian Conrad’s opinion, represent early example of “world-historical models”. Even if the “discovery-viewpoint” might be the one adopted in the works he analyses, this of course does not force the reviewer to subscribe to it and even less, to subsume the “world historical process” under “European discoveries”. Now, I would like to observe that you will find in the same book, just some forty pages later, a remark that reads that one

the obvious character of the fact that the Portuguese cannot have “discovered” “Brazil” because there was no Brazil back then. Names are split (and badly split) between those which work better for the past and those which do the same for the present. If they were wise, Historians would balance between them. They largely have no other choice<sup>281</sup> but to refer and to describe past events by using names that must be misplaced in time.

The anachronism brought into effect through naming, by virtue of its very practical inevitability, is neither very clear nor worrisome. It grows therefore less important when compared with the anachronistic attribution of qualities, features and characteristics. This would be a much more serious error, and one which Historians are supposed to avoid at any price.

Still, we saw how João José Reis advanced his thesis about "Catholicism baroque" by deploying narratively his sources in such a manner that conflates present and past temporal orders. The present, the order of Reis' own voice, is the time in which the concept of Catholicism baroque is an analytical tool. The past, the temporal order in which the religious phenomenon he names Catholicism baroque took place, is re-presented by the voice of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century European travellers. The bottom line in this is that an actual set of characteristics defined on the basis of sociological and aesthetic notions applied to early religious practices, which is synthesised under the idea of Catholicism baroque, happens to be rendered into something that 19<sup>th</sup> century European travelers had already witnessed!

The main operative element in such a procedure can hardly be characterised as something other than an anachronism. Historiographical accounts of the most variegated fields and subfields are unfolded by following a similar impulse. There is no Historical account, however sophisticated, which can escape the claws of an anachronism of this stock; nor any which can entirely cover the scars it left. There is no need to complain about this matter nor insist on it further, for, judged by the disciplinary yardstick of historiography, there is nothing wrong with it. To put it in Richard Evans' words, João José Reis simply does his job by following “the usual

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crucial feature, which set global History approaches apart from older variants of world history writing, is that they are “self-reflective on the issue of Eurocentrism” (Conrad 2016: 67).

<sup>281</sup> Mostly, not always. Luiz Felipe Alencastro, for instance, uses “brasílica” instead of “brasileira” to refer to the colonial society of the Portuguese America of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to him, the “brasílicos” became “brasileiros”, in the actual sense of the word, only in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 28)

rules of evidence” established by “scholarly criteria” for assessing the merit of a particular Historical argument (Evans 2000: 219).

On the other hand, the quarrel about anachronism is a rather bitter one in cases in which it stems from the fact that the Historian’s “political or moral aims become paramount in the writing of history” (Evans 2000: 219). When that happens, Richard Evans warns, “scholarship suffers. Facts are mined to prove a case; evidence is twisted to suit a political purpose; inconvenient documents are ignored; sources deliberately misconstrued or misinterpreted.” In such a scenario, Historians are no longer “engaged in the pursuit of truth” and “objectivity is [thought to be] merely a concept designed to repress alternative points of view” (Evans 2000: 219). Here one arrives at the point where the issue of anachronism unmistakably meets that of ideology.

Historiographical investigations that follow the “usual rules of evidence”, which are a mixture of the belief in a crude empiricism and a deference to academic protocols, are, according to Richard Evans, more likely to achieve truth, that is, objective, scientific truth. Although, he hastens to remark, “no historian really believes in the *absolute* truth of what they are writing, simply it is the *probable* truth.” (Evans 2000: 219)

This perspective concedes that History is brought about “through the use of a disciplined historical imagination” and that “historians are certainly swayed, consciously or unconsciously, by present moral or political purposes in carrying out their work”. Their main task is in fact to control them. The more control they have the more probable is that truth, which is arrived at “without distorting or manipulating the reality of the past”. For “the truth about patterns and linkages of facts in history is in the end discovered not invented, found not made” (Evans 2000: 214; 222–223; 252). An obvious and dangerous oversimplification. But the power of this vocabulary ravishes more than enough supporters to justify expounding briefly what happens to possible dissidents.

When Historians’ present moral and political convictions take control over the Historical imagination, instead of scientific truth, subjectivity and positionality arise as keywords. These are notions that encourage Historians “to intrude into the text to such a degree that in some cases their presence all but obliterates the historical subject.” (Evans 2000: 200) But even when things do not go that far, those guided by such epistemological principles would be more liable to distort and to manipulate facts and, in so doing, they would stop pursuing the

empiricist dream of making of Historical science the true and truthful mirror of the reality of the past. Rather than “scientific” such Histories would then be “ideological”.

Even more to the point, researchers occupied with their own political and moral aims will be unable to arrive at “probable truth” because they are unwilling to attempt to switch off the filters of the present so as not refusing to accept at face value the past reality they perceive. They rather truncate it, try to transcend it. Such maneuvers are thought of as a way of controlling it. In doing so what they deliver would be perhaps a true photography of the present time as an ideologically distorted portrayal of the past.

Still, Historians come all too oft to the conclusion that works which had been for a long time regarded as “scientific” are also “ideological” to a degree that makes them incapable of representing that objective, “probable truth”. The mea culpa for such failures is usually synthesised in the idea that Historians are in the end just “children of their time”. This expression is not only a sort of resigned confession that historiographical writing is the exercise of a particular form of (controlled) anachronism. It also insinuates that there are perhaps too many “probable truths” whose trueness and truthfulness cannot be established on the basis of our “usual rules of evidence”.

Imagine, for example, that a Historian, relying primarily on ecclesiastic documents of the Catholic Church, but also crossing them with other types of empirical evidence, were able to prove that during a particularly severe yellow fever epidemic in Angola of the 16<sup>th</sup>-Century, Jesuit monks had successfully treated their slaves with a preparation made out of local plants with curative properties.<sup>282</sup> Consider still that the evidence were also enough to determine that the slaves attended the religious services which took place regularly in the place where they are kept captive.

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<sup>282</sup> As early as in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuits were already active in the business of slave trade between Africa and Portuguese America. Luiz Felipe Alencastro reports that: “Ultrajado pelos negócios dos missionários que arrebanhavam escravaria negra e indígena, padre Miguel Garcia previne Roma em 1583: ‘A multidão de escravos que tem a Companhia nesta Província, particularmente neste colégio [da Bahia] é coisa que de maneira nenhuma posso tragar.’ Em seu juízo, todos os índios e africanos empregados na Bahia haviam sido ilicitamente cativados [...]. Não era o único inaciano a pensar assim. De Lisboa, o procurador de missões, padre Jerônimo Cardoso, escreve ao geral para criticar o fato de a Companhia possuir escravos no Brasil em Angola. ‘Pedimos ao rei que mande que todos [os índios] sejam livres, tendo nós muitos cativos e servindo-nos dos das aldeias, mais que todos os brancos.’ Em Angola, completava ele, todos dizem que ‘temos trato e exercitamos mercancia *sub praetextu conversionis* [a pretexto de conversão]: e diria que se não podemos sustentar muitos [padres] sem ter estes [escravos] que sustentemos menos sem tê-los, que assim faziam os antigos.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 163)

Also Jacob Gorender remarks that the Catholic religious orders, especially the Company of Jesus, administrated properties where lived thousands of slaves (Gorender 1990: 42; 58).

If our hypothetical Historian used these facts to state that those Jesuits saved the lives of their African slaves as well as provided them with spiritual care, he would not be wrong, for such a statement could be directly confirmed by the empirical evidence adduced. Within a framework within which the “rules of evidence” instate a binary opposition between the positive objectivity of scientific truth and the negative proclivities of ideology and which treats anachronism just as a mistake to be avoided, more than not wrong, he would be rigorously right! So, if pressed to relate his statement to the central role played by the Catholic Church in the process of legitimation of colonial slavery and/or with the fact that the Society of Jesus had been a player in the very business of slave trade between Angola and Brazil<sup>283</sup>, he could serenely answer that there is no contradiction at all between these empirically verified Historical facts and his own statement, whose true character had been equally established on the basis of empirical evidence. But Historical truth is more cunning prey than that.

To be truthful, why should we, Historians, be interested in writing History like that? It reassures us that the past can be, so to speak, mapped out in that sense in which maps point to the possibility and effectiveness of producing representations of reality whose truthfulness is achieved by rendering idle any question about what else they might represent rather than what is immediately re-presented.<sup>284</sup> Therefore, it provides not even an adumbration of an answer to the question about whether those pious slaveholders should not be re-presented in a very different light, for example, by stressing that the treatments for diseases under the slaves were rather (or at least “also”) an obvious way of preventing financial loss as well as that the attendance of slaves to the Mass might be seen as an imposition aiming at forced religious conversion, a practice that was regularly used as ideological justification of the very process of enslavement.

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<sup>283</sup> Again, Alencastro words are exemplary: “Seria [...] excessivo pensar que a legitimação do tráfico decorre exclusivamente da política colonial da Coroa e da atividade dos negociantes negreiros. Boa parte dos missionários, e singularmente os jesuítas da África e da América portuguesa, tiveram um papel decisivo nesse processo.” (Alencastro [2000] 2014: 168 – emphasis added)

<sup>284</sup> Map users do not ask the question “What does ‘looking at a map’ mean?” as long they get from the map the information they need, as long as the map does not challenge the map literacy. A map is [in this sense] transparent to its meaning, to the information it delivers.” But “maps suggests ways of thinking as well as seeing. They materialize a view of the mind rather than of external reality. They project an order of reason onto the world and force it to conform to a graphic rationale, a cultural grid, conceptual geometry”, maps are, in short, “formidable instruments of power.” (Jacob [1992] 2006: 1–9) Unless we want that our reader does not ask the question “What does ‘reading History’ mean?” we should carefully avoid such an empiricist approach to History.

It is impressive and somehow delightful to see how Historians organise the huge volume of information they generally deal with, the interesting problems they formulate and the way these are then solved, in short, all the peculiar intricacies of Historical pictures. But if the *probable* response we can give to the question about whether our imaginary Historian—in speaking about those Jesuits as people who saved the lives of African slaves and provided them with spiritual care, which is very much the way in which the Jesuits used to present themselves<sup>285</sup>—was not effecting a *Synchronisierung*<sup>286</sup> of his own voice with that of the Jesuits so that the words of old slave holders becomes presently “speakable” not only without any embarrassment but also with some of the (religious or academic?) nonchalant authority of those who are sure of their impeccable righteousness.<sup>287</sup> If the probable response we can give to this question is that it, the question itself, amounts to an exercise in “manipulating and distorting the reality of the past” by inappropriately giving paramount importance to “moral and political aims” which do not allow for performing the movement entailed in the genuine writing of History, if, in one word, such a question must be regarded as an attempt on the historiographical building of the complex called empiricist social scientific truth, then we

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<sup>285</sup> Jacob Gorender believes that the Padre Antônio Vieira “*tinha clareza acerca do papel pretendido pela religião cristã como cimento ideológico supostamente capaz de conciliar senhores e escravos*” (Gorender 1990: 41) and Luiz Felipe Alencastro adds that he, Vieira, wrote in the *Sermão XIV* a passage that could be considered one of the most audacious ideological justifications of Atlantic trade of enslaved Africans:

“Assim a Mãe de Deus, antevendo esta vossa fé, esta vossa piedade e esta vossa devoção, vos escolheu de entre tantos outros de tantas e tão diferentes nações, e vos trouxe ao grêmio da Igreja, para que lá [na África], como vossos pais, vos não perdêsseis; e cá [no Brasil], como filhos seus, vos salvásseis. Este é o maior e mais universal milagre de quantos faz cada dia, e tem feito por seus devotos a Senhora do Rosário [...]. Oh! se a gente preta, tirada das brenhas da sua Etiópia, e passada ao Brasil, conheceria bem quanto deve a Deus e a sua Santíssima Mãe por este que pode parecer desterro, cativo e desgraça, e não é senão milagre, e grande milagre.” (Viera quoted by Alencastro [2000] 2014: 183)

As you see, according to Vieira’s terms, the Catholic faith and Church in general, the Company of Jesus in particular and his very person were, in what they supported the slave trade, working the wonder of “saving” the lives of the enslaved Africans.

<sup>286</sup> As explained in the section ‘On the issue of representation: synchronising History and theory of History’, I use the cinematic metaphor of “*Synchronisierung*”; in German common parlance this word bears a meaning which is absent in English: it also stands for the process of replacing the voice of the actors shown in the screen with those of different performers speaking another language. “*Synchronisierung*” means thus *not only* the process of making adjusts so as to correlate the subject (of the past) with the demands (of the present), that is, the first and more or less literal meaning of “synchronizing” different Historical times; it *also* means the act of silencing Other’s voice through what one paradoxically utters in a way that ideally grants its full meaningfulness: a translation.

<sup>287</sup> Richard Evans with the word: “For my own part, I remain optimistic that objective historical knowledge is both desirable and attainable [...]. I will look humbly at the past and say [...]: it really happened, and we really can, if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it happened and reach some tenable though always less than final conclusions about what it meant.” The “key point” to be accomplished within History is then to consider that “the element of moral judgement, insofar as it is exercised at all, is in the end extraneous to the research rather than being embedded in the theory or methodology of it.” (Evans 2000: 253; 52)

definitely shall continue sparing no effort in writing Histories assumedly anachronic and ideological!<sup>288</sup> Let us beware of thinking we should pursue the truth for truth's sake.

One last remark: we Historians are the first ones to stress, not seldom by means of dull repetition, that past and present illuminate each other reciprocally or, to borrow Marc Bloch's lapidary formulation, "the solidarity of the ages [past and present] is so effective that the lines of connection work both ways." (Bloch [1940] 1963: 43) To be sure, in current historiographical language, to affirm that present issues play a pivotal role in shaping Historical accounts is perhaps a platitude even more obvious than to regard anachronism a mistake.

These two platitudes shall also be seen in their reciprocal lights. The role of the lesson to be drawn from it would be to caution us against our possible fear of anachronism, where this fear means to be "moral and political": do not think that any particular state of affairs is, as such, already a Historical one, do not believe that the act of writing History, of making the "Historical" come true could ever be at any moment an apolitical and an amoral one. Otherwise, History will be the everlasting representation of those Historical actors who, having produced the archives that circularly guarantee their own authenticity, encapsulate themselves in a soundproof cave that reverberates incessantly their own words and is permeable just to the silence coming from the outside(rs). Embracing anachronism enables us at least to try listening whether there is some noise coming from the cave's margins and beyond and beyond them ... for the others inhabiting over there might have been never quite silent. As if anybody did not know that already!

### **History and theory of History**

The preceding question about the borders of anachronism and ideology may be a passionate matter, but it is also one whose debate, here at least, has been conducted without any great revelations. The crucial point in lingering on it is to carry it over into a problematic that lies elsewhere, in the relation between the so-called meta-theoretical and theoretical-methodological levels in History.

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<sup>288</sup> Paraphrasing Spivak: the limits of History's "naïve realism" are reached when it conflates the arena of Historical truth with that of the "concrete experience", as "what actually happens". This epistemological move induces a foreclosing of the difficult task of counter-hegemonic ideological production, a foreclosure that, Spivak assesses, has not been salutary. (Spivak 1988: 274–275)

It was not difficult to plead the case that no historiographical account can avoid anachronism as well as that this anachronism is performed through an epistemological procedure that necessarily entails an ideological movement. I believe it will be by no means more difficult to argue—again—that Historiography is not to be separated from theory of History<sup>289</sup>.

Those who have followed my argument so far, whether in agreement or not, will have certainly weighed for themselves each conceptual pair which has been reworked in our semantic exploration of the disciplinary vocabulary of History. In any case, I would like to be more explicit about the concepts of structure, model and translation. The following commentaries are in many senses linked to a problematic common to the social sciences as a whole.

### *Structures*

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the idea of “structure”, a preeminent category of social analysis to which Historians—no less than social scientists in general—invariably resort to, are, first, its recurrence when one intends to bring up the idea of totality; second, the fact of granting a “meta-status” to the subject categorised as “structural”. Structure has been insistently presented as what is “hidden”, “under” or “behind” that which can be immediately apprehended, as though it were our abstract amulet against the evils originated from believing that any truth could ever coincide with the description of what is perceived by direct, empirical observation. If the truth about things were directly accessible to us in our “normal modus”, the idea of structure reiterates, there would be no need of engaging ourselves in scientific investigation at all.

Within this framework, the main effect of the very idea of structure has been, in fact, that of increasing the scientific potential of an explanation, where “scientific” means simpler, easier

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<sup>289</sup> It is a relatively easy task to put together a dozen renowned authors who remark that in spite of the solid establishment and high reputation of theoretical works stemmed from the field of History, “der ‘Alltag des Historikers und die historische Theorie’ relative unvermittelt nebeneinander”, a fact to be interpreted as a sign that “im Bereich der Theoriegebrauchs oder auch ‘Theorieanwendung’ in der Geschichtswissenschaft bleiben nicht wenige Probleme ungeklärt.” (Hacke/Pohlig 2008: 7–8)

Ann Laura Stoler, in her brilliant analysis of Foucault’s History of Sexuality, writes some words that express in a straightforward manner the watchword of postcolonial approaches to History: “Während viele Historiker Foucaults empirische Arbeiten als hoffnungslos falsch abgetan haben und auch Anthropologen und andere Sozialwissenschaftler, die sich von seinen Theorien anregen lassen, seine konkrete historische Thesen für weniger richtig halten, muß man diese klare Trennung zwischen Theorie und Historiographie in Frage stellen.” (Stoler 2002: 317 – my emphasis) In this sense, postcolonial approaches are particularly promising in what concerns the development of analytical strategies designed to prevent the avoidance of the rapprochement between History and theory.

to exploit—something which includes to be questioned—than others in which the “structure” is a missing link in approaching the subject matter at stake. One has, then, to concede that the “structural”, in order to be so, must not be only clearly perceived but perhaps even conspicuously exhibited.

The very conspicuousness of the “structure” makes of it an especially well-suited way of evincing dominances, of manifesting certain tendencies, of displaying distinct dispositions, in short, of demonstrating that “structures” organise themselves around particular configurations, or, as Hall says, that they have “a definite structuration” which, to the extent that it constitutes itself on the basis of its own relative openness and indeterminacy, might be conceived as fairly complex (1983: 83–84). Or at least complex enough to enable one “to live in and with *difference*” by satisfying “the necessity of thinking of unity *and* difference [...] without this becoming hostage [neither] to the privileging of difference as such” nor of structural foreordinations. “This is why the term ‘structure’ remains important” (Hall 1985: 91; 95). All the more with respect to the main subject matter of this thesis, since the time assigned to “structural Histories” has been *par excellence* that of long-term continuity.

The association of “structure” with this peculiar task of demarcating dominances, asymmetries, spheres of control, renders the distinction between weak and strong lines of “structural” force an undertaking that is not properly difficult and surely not uncertain.

That, for example, not “beyond”, not “over and above” but *in* the very fabric of historiographical accounts lies a massive History whose power and thrusts are as perfectly recognizable as its laws and directions is an acknowledgment that, nowadays, has been finding institutional ways of increasing its sharpness: Chakrabarty’s expresses this insight catchy in the simple formula “first in Europe than elsewhere”. Yet, the (double) consciousness out of which this conception of the “structure of global historical time” (Chakrabarty 2000: 7) emerged has not been in play since only yesterday. And the Histories which may ensue from such a double consciousness shall call for no revolution of the mind, or at least not if one supposes that this amounted to treating “structures” as a “half-darkness” (Braudel [1958] 2012: 260) that, once bravely confronted and put at reason’s feet, would then bring about (another) triumphal moment of Historical consciousness (Foucault 1972: 12).

## *Models*

“Structures” commonly appear through theoretical models. Such models play a pivotal role in social science to the extent that they form an essential part of knowledge shared by different scientific communities—despite their particular fields of expertise—and are a dominant aspect of teaching/learning inasmuch as they are supposed to strongly condition the apprehension of reality.

One may think of models as being nothing but hypothesis, systems of explanation tied solidly together in the form of an equation or a function so that a certain element A would always be equal to or determine another element B, or, Historically speaking, one particular reality would never occur without being accompanied by another determined one in such a manner that reveals strict, constant relation existing between them. In this case, once thoroughly established, the concept should allow one to inquire, across time and space, into other social spheres similar to the one on the basis of which the model was originally created. It is this feature that endows models with recurring validity. (Braudel [1958] 2012: 260)

But if one thinks of models in this way, in adopting, say, Lévi-Strauss structuralism as a model, one must—among other assumptions—accept that the “exchange of women” is a precondition of culture. Consequently, as Gale Rubin remarks, “it can be deduced that the world historical defeat of women occurred with the origin of culture”. In such a scenario, she adds wittily, “the feminist program must include a task even more onerous than the extermination of men; it must attempt to get rid of culture and substitute some entirely new phenomena on the face of earth” (Rubin 1975: 176). Putting it in other and harsher words: *modeled* in its pure form, Lévi-Strauss’ structural anthropology is, in one sense at least, a highly sophisticated ideology of sexism (Rubin 1975: 200).

It is blatant—and widely discussed—that pretty much the same occur with Marxist models in what concerns the question of social evolutionism (Chakrabarty 2000: 12).

But if one considers that models function also like metaphors<sup>290</sup>, the discussion would then be conducted in an entirely different set of conditions. More than “functioning like metaphors”, some models are manifestly metaphorical. This is the case, for example, of

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<sup>290</sup> If, as a very first and tentative move in a train of thought about this complex point, one considers that “ontologically, a model is something *as which* something is being conceived of, and concretely, being a model is the content of a judgment in which something is being conceived of as a model” (Mahr 2011: 301 – emphasis in the original), one may already prefigure some aspects in which models and metaphors overlap.

Braudel's *longue durée*, which we examined at length in the section 'Fernand Braudel's *longue durée* and Eurocentrism'.

We can conceive a (metaphorical) model as a filter, as a way of evoking a system of commonplaces and/or implications that organises our view on the subject(s) referred to metaphorically. Establishing metaphor-based relations—for instance, by using a “subsidiary subject”, say, Braudel's three-leveled “sea” or unifying “white light”, to foster insights into a “principal subject”, in this case, “the *longue durée*”—amounts to a distinct intellectual operation that demands simultaneous awareness of both subjects but is not reducible to any comparison between them. Indeed, one of the most important points in employing metaphors at first place is that they cannot be replaced by a literal paraphrase without a substantial loss of cognitive content: the most relevant weakness of literality is that it fails to be a translation that gives the type of open-ended insights that metaphors do. (Black 1968: 39–47)

But, of course, as Max Black remarks

“explication, or elaboration of the metaphor's grounds, if not regarded as an adequate substitute for the original, may be extremely valuable. A powerful metaphor will no more be harmed by such probing than a musical masterpiece by analysis of its harmonic and melodic structure.” (Black 1968: 39)

So, it will do no harm to strike again a note of attention to the fact that Braudel's metaphors evoke a certain geometry (Euclidian), a certain subject (centered), a certain consciousness (sovereignly sure of its power to penetrate the surface of reality until arrive at its very—and impassable—bottom).

The suggestion that we might conceive Historical continuity on the basis of fractal spatiality, with its faculty of disturbing the naturalistic and reassuring perspective of Euclidian geometry, its emphasis on notions such as self-referentiality and recursivity, which points out to narratives of the self that constitutes a (decentered) subject, and, finally, its property of representing infinitude in the finitude as a manner to relate the issue of totality with that of agency, all that evokes a particular system of implications that challenges the positivist empiricism inherent to the representationalist realism of hegemonic approaches that have been epistemologically organizing our view on what it means to write History.

Braudel once said he has sometimes compared models to ships. What interests him, as soon as the ship is built, “is to put it in the water to see if it will float, and then to make it ascend and descend the waters of time, at my will.” And the most significant moment, he stresses, is always the shipwreck, which will, according to him, show that the model is no longer adequate

(Braudel [1958] 2012: 267). It is an interesting exercise to see this metaphor in light of that other famous one, which Braudel uses to compare structures with the sea itself, the *longue durée* being presented as constituted by the deepest currents of history, running almost unaltered in the bottom of the ocean. Ironically, only shipwrecked vessels (failed models) would arrive at the depths where the *longue durée* structures lie! And a structure, Braudel explains elsewhere, again metaphorically but this time resorting to physics' language: "is a body removed from gravity, removed from the acceleration of history" (Braudel [1969] 1982: 76).

Remaining in the field of nautical metaphors but launching my ship so as to have the wind of Braudel's physical-aquatic imaginations in my sails<sup>291</sup>, I would rather suggest that we (also) think of models as a body thrown into the water. Not a peaked, perforating body, which would sharply pierce the fabric of the past until its structural depths, but rather one that, sharing the fate of Historical gravity, would fall flat and hit the water with a thud. The unavoidable dispersion provoked by the shock of such bodies against the water produce contingent fractal structures—the pattern of their splash and of the waves rippling away—which would then be the result of an intentional act of breaking the surface tension of the past in order to bring about History.

At the limit, this kind of model explores relations kin to those used in "ordinary" language. Its claim to be rather "theoretical" is purposely catachrestic in the sense that it is meant to represent something "for which there is no adequate referent to be found" (Spivak [1993] 2009: 67). Such a model creates a productive confusion that could give rise to a practice of historiographical writing whose aim would be to swerve us from the closures provided by the straight line of of "model in the form of a function or of an equation" and facilitate the kind of openness that can be put under the general name of "translation" (Spivak [1993] 2009: 200-225).

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<sup>291</sup> Walter Benjamin once wrote that "Thinking for him means: to set the sails. It is the way they are set that matters. Words are his sails. The way they are set turns them into concepts." (Benjamin quoted by Gilroy 1993: 1)

In a text entitled "The Homeward Ship: Analytic Tropes as Maps of and for African-Diaspora Cultural History", J. Lorand Matory discusses "the analytic metaphors and other analytic tropes that scholars have employed to highlight what matters in the cultural history linking Africa with its New World Diaspora." (Matory 2012: 95-96). Evidently, Matory enacts the ship as a metaphor of this type in the very title of his contribution. Gilroy does the same by making the ship "the first of the novel chronotopes [...] to rethink modernity via the history of the black Atlantic and the African diaspora into the western hemisphere." (Gilroy 1993: 17) I am gladly adopting their discursive strategy.

## *Translation*

Stuart Hall underlines the enormously generative power of the metaphor of language for the task of rethinking many fundamental questions in the social sciences. On the other hand, he warns us against the dangers entailed in the conceptual slippage of thinking that something *is* a language when it just *operates like* a language (Hall 1996a: 146). Such a misstep, Hall argues, often becomes a kind of reductionism, and this, I may add, should not surprise anyone, for in this case language is no longer taken *as* metaphor but as the “thing itself”: it usurps the position of the subject matter. And since the metaphorical relation is where the conceptual fruitfulness of the operation comes from, its erasure provokes a collapse of the explanatory chain. But the main danger, coming back here to Hall’s argument, is that “of losing the reference to material practice and historical conditions”. (Hall 1996a: 147)

If we want to avoid these risks when architecting our *translational* escape from the positivist-empiricist chains of the realist representationalism that functions as a trampoline of the manifold coercions of another “isms” (sexism, evolutionism, racism, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, etc.) potentially put forward in the act of adopting—even if “reflexively”—the theoretical models resulting from the hypostasis of that “hyperreal Europe”, we have nonetheless to take a perilous course, namely, one along which the metaphor of language is not thought of in the distanced terms of the grammarian, but, as Spivak says, as

“a staging of the agent within a three-tied notion of language (as rhetoric, logic, silence). We must attempt to enter or direct that staging, as one directs a play, as an actor interprets a script. That takes a different kind of effort from taking translation to be matter of synonym, syntax, and local color.” (Spivak [1993] 2009: 203)

A three-tied notion of language, then: rhetoric, logic, silence. It must be stressed straight away that rhetoric has absolutely nothing to do with setting any limits to Historical inventiveness in the sense of giving ourselves a blank check to joyously exercise a Nietzschean “affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation” (Derrida 1978: 292). No, it is definitely not like that. Here, we shall follow—without reservations—Carlo Ginzburg, who takes great pains to explain not only that empirical “proofs, far from being incompatible with rhetoric, are its fundamental core” but also that “the projection of desire, without which there is no research, is not incompatible with the

refutation inflicted by the principle of reality. Knowledge (even historical knowledge) is possible.” (Ginzburg 1999: 25; 50)

Yes, it is. The trouble has always been with its “value of truth”, the validity and legitimacy of which has the consolidated disciplinary structure of the authoritative apparatus of universities as its headquarters.

However, it is a really bad idea to argue that Historical truth is established only by “power” if one understands by “power” that the canon of authors and works, the methods and theories, even the very Historical narratives supposed to interpret and explain them, in short, all the contents taught by the traditional academic authority are merely and indistinctly ideological impositions. A joke (told by Bernard Williams) is worth a long explanation:

“The hard-pressed chairman of an English department once confessed to me that, faced with a group of faculty accusing him of being an agent of the hegemonic power structure, he would have liked to say, ‘You are right, and you are fired.’” (Williams 2002: 8)

The role and position of that “principle of reality”, which Carlo Ginzburg talks of, in the establishment of “truth” is defined by a network of techniques of knowledge and strategies of power that, no matter how tangling and shifting (Foucault 1978: 98–99; Spivak [1993] 2009: 67–68), has been spoken in the language of the Eurocentric universals which constitute the “theoretical skeleton” of History (Chakrabarty 2000: 29). These universals stand for the logic of the social scientific language and, as such, provide the logical systematicity perceived as the scientific detachment proper of scholarly works.

To me, this is perfectly acceptable (as though I had another choice!). We should take it this way and we should really welcome, learn and articulate as masterly as possible this language, for, in fact, it has a tremendous heuristic power and indispensable political utility. But we should not proceed as though this language were deprived of rhetoric. As Spivak says,

“There is a way in which the rhetoric nature of every language disrupts its logical systematicity. If we emphasise the logical at the expense of the rhetorical interferences, we remain safe. ‘Safety’ is the appropriate term here, because we are talking of risks, of violence to the translating medium.” (Spivak [1993] 2009: 201)

So, to translate it the other way round, that is, so that rhetoric may be disrupting logic is, as already argued in the chapter “The Heart of Blackness”, everything except “safe”. Rather, it presupposes to advance a point of view willing to put at stake its own condition of possibility of speaking. And it is so because it indicates “the founding violence of the silence at work within [the] rhetoric” of the universals (Spivak [1993] 2009: 201). In such a framework, the

language of the Eurocentric universals *operates like* the original from which translational accounts constitute both a “return of the same” and its necessary “deviation” (Spivak 1988: 284–285).

Yet this “deviation” is not just another name for the stock-in-trade procedure of testing a theoretical model against the reality and then, in the case it does not fit, going back and forth, from reality to the model and vice-versa, making adjusts, until either they fit well ... or one or both gets discarded. Neither is it a search for the right place for ideas regarded in principle as right until otherwise proven.

It is a procedure that rather, without pretending to avoid or to deny entirely these two movements, represents the effort of leaving as little room as possible for the exteriority produced by the idea that there is a gap between meta-theoretical and theoretical levels in History. As epistemologically self-explanatory as institutionally well-established, this gap opens the void through which it is delivered the building material for the construction of the gated condominium where the old-established couple of binary categories like primitive/civilized, modern/backward, conscious/alienated settled down and has been raising a large—and loyal—family, while deporting difference to the confines of mere identity politics.<sup>292</sup>

The undaunted acknowledgment that the “teaching machine” of History can digest anything—provided it is fed into with the right regime, prepared in advance and with stuff rendered edible by being finely seasoned with Eurocentric theoretical spices—is what furnishes the translational act performed “outside in the teaching machine”<sup>293</sup> with the necessary energy for carrying out its proper labour, which is neither that of sabotaging nor of attempting to squeeze itself into a blind-ended appendix connected to, but kept apart from the moving course of the disciplinary regime of Historical truth.

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<sup>292</sup> But, as Spivak puts it, the emancipatory intervention entailed in identity politics “is not primarily a question of redressing victimage by the assertion of (class- or gender- or ethnocultural) identity. It is a question of developing a vigilance for systemic appropriations of the unacknowledged social production of a *differential* that is one basis of exchange into the networks of the cultural politics of class- or gender-*identification*.” (Spivak [1993] 2009: 70 – emphasis in the original)

<sup>293</sup> By “teaching machine” Spivak means the universities as the most privileged site of neocolonial education system, a consolidated authoritative apparatus that has among its mains functions the training of teachers. The intended mistake of the formulation “outside in” is her way of emphasising the necessity of acknowledging the complicity of postcolonial thinkers in the functioning of this machine. (Spivak [1993] 2009: 64; xi–xv)

To conceive Historical writing in terms of translation, resorting once more to Spivak's reflections, is a question of developing a vigilance for and a protection against the systemic appropriations of difference by showing that in dealing with the Eurocentric universals one must always consider the seductions of the "miming of the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self", a feature that provides plenty of room to get around the confines of one's identity, which is, in turn, something highly touted by our disciplinary norms. By the same token, it evinces that Historical knowledge arises from "a relationship by which a world is made for the agent, so that the agent can act in an ethical way, a political way, a day-to-day way" (Spivak [1993] 2009: 203).

The task of the Historian<sup>294</sup> concerned with this particular problematic while translating a given past experience into historiographical language—with the compulsoriness of its social-scientific structures and models—is to make of it the plain recognition that the "what *actually* happens" of History is indelibly constituted by and as "what they are *theoretically* believed to be" and that this very fact ensures a disposition of pasts within which the political-epistemological power that might be derived from them has been regarded as asymmetrical from the outset.

So far as I know, in what concerns the Brazilian historiography of slavery, there have not been attempts in this direction. Such work is long overdue. I would wager that this kind of epistemological venture will tempt at least a few of our fellow Historians. Some others will probably follow, but, disciplinarily claiming the necessity of identifying which were the new impulses that could effectively prompt changes in History, they will try to delve into what will perhaps be regarded as the *rhetorical haze* advanced by the initial endeavours (Costa 2007: 118). I would further wager that this very movement will precipitate, first, a necessary revision of deep-rooted ideas about the ways of representing historiographically colonial slavery, in its articulations with racism, sexism, and colonialism, and, second, that this revision will be accomplished through creative investment in the coinage of a vocabulary in which notions such as political (consciousness, participation, action), reflexivity, emancipation, and freedom

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<sup>294</sup> It is as though theories endowed with universal pretensions were Benjamin's "reine Sprache" that the Historian-translator should try to release in his own language: "Jene reine Sprache, die in fremde gebannt ist, in der eigenen zu erlösen, die im Werk gefangene in der Umdichtung zu befreien, ist die Aufgabe des Übersetzers." (Benjamin [1923] 2006a: 60) What in Benjamin is "just" linguistic freedom, becomes, in the writing of History, 'freedom' in a much more broader sense, which is anyway closely related to what I, following Chakrabarty's rhetoric, would like to call loosely "social justice".

will be brought in relation with as well as expressed by words like *mocambagem*, *trança*, *gira*, *ginga*, etc. (Rosa 2013) As a result thereof, the whole representation of Brazil's History might be affected. Anyone who expects that future disciplinary developments follow a course akin to this cannot help desiring that that rhetorical haze be a thick one!

### **Time and event**

After this incursion into the realms of anachronism, ideology, structures, models, translation, etc., here I am, back at the question of the relation between long-term Historical continuity and totality. Still working on becoming the Historian I want to be, it is the reverse of pleasant to attest that, yes, there is afoot in our discipline some ill-defined idea, some vague notion that can be called, as Fernand Braudel did long ago, the "uniform time of the historians" or plainly "the world's imperious time", which has been providing us with an "unitary white light" capable of enlightening everything under the/its sun. This time, however undiscussed, stretches over our problems and our reflections as a tegument.

I will take now the liberty of re-baptising this time "imperial time" for I want here to shift the emphasis away from any vestige of metaphysics or pure epistemological necessity and towards a particular gaze that unmistakably points to a broad and intricate field of violent and asymmetrical power relations in whose ambit knowledge is turned into normative truth.

The distinctive characteristic of History has been that of the discipline that *per se* cannot neglect that any social phenomena must be conceived as in movement, as always changing over time, no matter how static may be the explanatory device through which it happens to be represented. It is the discipline that prevented one from thinking of human affairs as a mechanism that can be frozen at one's leisure so that an immobile picture thereof could be presented.

The utility of this maxim against teleology has been meant to be almost infallible. History was supposed to avoid following consistently the systematicity of theoretical models or reasoning because, regardless of the process of change possibly presented, that ever-changing Historical time eventually remained confined to the static sameness provided by the encompassing framework, which teleologically grants the arrival at the aimed final destiny, like Odysseus' vessel blown up by Aeolus' fair wind. Historians were rather those who open Aeolus' goatskin, liberating all winds of the past so that they can go to wherever they have to, to wherever the

empirical evidences and the particular circumstances of production of the historiographical account bring them.

I have myself witnessed Historians stating either directly or by implication that the complexities of deconstructive approaches, whose supporters like calling, in a mood of self-congratulation, “theoretical sophistication”, besides being boring, can achieve no more than History achieves with its most basic assumption, namely, that for social-scientific purposes, there is in human social life nothing that could be taken as an essence except the steady process of changing itself.

I would be the last one interested in raising objections against such a dictum. But, besides the fact that no one needs to be lectured about Historical time to know that, when I ask myself what History has been making in order to meet it, I do not find a great deal of contributions. The writing of History, as I argued by voicing the criticisms made by postcolonial theorists and tried to demonstrate on the basis of my analysis of the recent Brazilian History of slavery, has been far from engaged in the deconstruction of essentialisms. History’s fundamental role in the dissemination of the master-narrative of modernity as well as in the related process of conformation of nation-states and of national identities, two features that partially explain its weight in the very methodological nationalism, makes of it a discipline as bogged down in the profoundly essentialist quagmire of Eurocentric views as any other of its relatives in the social sciences.

My interest in the brotherly realm of Fernand Braudel’s work stems from the same wonder. His concept of *longue durée* is one of the most prestigious theoretical-methodological reflections on the nature of Historical time and has been considered by some commentators as containing powerful anti-Eurocentric epistemological potential (Tomich 2012; Mielant 2012; Kaltmeier 2012). Braudel’s genius, one of the reasons of his lasting influence, lies in the fact that he, taking as target Marxism and Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism, fiercely attacks the pretension of universality of theoretical models rooted in the neighbouring social sciences, whereas, by putting forward his concept of *longue durée*, he does not give away an inch of History’s own claims on embracing totality.

In order to illustrate it, it suffices to note that he unabashedly suggests the model for explaining commercial capitalism he had developed in his *The Mediterranean* as an alternative to the ones that can be drawn from Marx’s work, for this latter, he alleges, leave the door open to all sorts of extrapolation, whereas his own, even if more limited in scope, would be

much more easily extended in time and space (Braudel [1958] 2012: 261). Eventually, he proved he was not just boasting: some twenty years later, Braudel released the last volume of *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries* (1979), a work of monumental dimensions and pretensions based on that model.

Here, I would like to repeat Steve Feierman's words and expressly make of them my own, for I think that he, thinking from the perspective of a Historian concerned with African History, offers a lucid and critical appraisal of Braudel's oeuvre:

"Braudel himself could not break out of a unidirectional history of the world with Europe at its centre. *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme*, his three-volume history of the world between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, is driven by a tension between Braudel's disciplined attempt to find the correct spatial frame for each phenomenon [...] and his definition of modern world history as the rise of a dominant Europe." (Feierman 1993: 171–172)

Braudel's idea of *longue durée*, as we saw in the chapter "Time and Event" (Part Two), is a multitude of metaphors whose purpose is to convey an idea of how to grasp historical totality. These metaphors, as such, require a particular kind of interpretation that may lead into many different understandings, but I sustain that none of them would even roughly allow the kind of emancipatory reading supported by other thinkers concerned with the issue, such as Marx or Foucault, as we can see, to mention just a few names, in the re-elaboration of their ideas in the works by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Stuart Hall, Gayatri C. Spivak, or Anibal Quijano.

If to be "too enamoured of the pure model, of the model for the sake of the model" entails the risk of treating them "as immutable laws, as *a priori* automatic explanations, universally applicable to all situations and all times" (Braudel [1958] 2012: 275), to keep distance from them in the way Braudel does, in turn, is by no means an antidote to what is most dangerous in their teleologies, that is, the theoretical performance of Eurocentric modernity. On the contrary, it is a way of putting it fully into effect, equipping theory with the concreteness of empirical evidence and the powerful rhetorical force of creative metaphors.

Putting it in metaphorical terms: it is as though Braudel had forgotten that, once released from the goatskin, Aeolus' winds brought Odysseus' vessel straight back to the same aisle where he had departed from. Translating it now half-literally: in his eagerness to achieve totality, to attest that "history is called by nature to give a prime consideration to *all* the movements into which it [Historical time] can be distinguished" (Braudel [1958] 2012: 274 –

italics in the original) Braudel makes of Europe's History a point of both departure and of arrival, with a journey to nowhere separating them in between!

Nevertheless, Fernand Braudel's *longue durée* is very instructive because it shows us how to present Historical events in "structural" form while relegating clear-cut theoretical scaffolds to an accessory position. His model, he explains, "notes a phenomenon (some might call it a dynamic structure, but all historical structures are to some degree dynamic) that can recur in many different situations and is easy to recognise" (Braudel [1958] 2012: 262).

The operative principle here is a very simple one, and one that we effortlessly perform in many spheres of life: the recognition of resemblances. According to the procedure of juxtapositional spatiality proper of the Braudelian model, through this procedure one can "reveal" underlying permanences lying deep in the structure of society. The changes that occur at this level are not to be in any old Historical time, but in the epistemologically distinguished realm of the *longue durée*, for, as Braudel puts it: "In historical analysis, as I see it, rightly or wrongly, the long runs *always wins in the end.*" (Braudel 1973b: 1244 – my emphasis)

In conclusion, what I would like to emphasise (again) is another possibility for conceiving spatially long-term Historical time, and one that is decisively concerned with a non-reiteration of that (or those?) which (or who?), rightly or unjustly, "always wins in the end".

Instead of thinking of long-term Historical events or, let's use the magic word, "structures", in that very prosaic term in which they are the base of superposed layers, we can imagine them as having the fractal morphology of coloured tiling or tessellations dispersed over the broader and fairly intangible shapeless form of "history as whole". These fractal patterns, whose identification must be effected through that procedure of recognising resemblances, would then provide us with traces that rendered "history as whole" amenable to variegated degrees of organisation and hierarchy.

In such a Historical spatiality, if there is a "revelatory process" at all, it does not unveil what had been hitherto hidden under the surface of reality, but rather what is apparent and repeated at different levels of magnification. In this way, a "structure" arises not as a solid remnant, emerging stolidly from a subterraneous past, but rather as an emergence of the very present, the result of a view that recognises a general change made out of actual traces. Here, the Historian's eyes are like those that identify not a definite form, but a certain pattern of development in a shapeless natural formation (as in a cloudy sky, in trees' dry leaves or their

writhing roots on the ground of a woodland, in the silhouette of a mountain belt or in the contour of a coast line, or still, if you prefer a human creation, in an abstract expressionist painting such as Jackson Pollock's<sup>295</sup> *Number 5*).

Fractals have some characteristics that make of them particularly interesting as a spatial metaphor for conceiving Historical time. First, they are a way of representing infinity within finitude. One has to imagine that to think in terms of "structures" is not a matter of electing winners and losers in the long run, but above all a "setting of limits" within which the possibilities of historiographical representation and re-presentation of a subject matter are truly infinite. This keeps History open, but not arbitrary. It is an image that calls for considering agency and contingency without losing sight of the scope within which they might be meaningfully represented.

Second, fractals, due to the property of recursivity and self-similarity (which is, by the way, why they are thought to be able to represent infinity), may function as a way of maintaining in evidence a kind of motif that in Western thinking goes by the name of "the return of the same". It is that which, in the opening lines of the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx touches on by repeating Hegel's words, which Foucault and Freud deal with by bringing back Nietzsche's, and which has been addressed with a strong accent in theoretical-methodological concerns in the postcolonial debate about Eurocentrism in History and the representation of non-Western pasts.

In making the effort of imagining how to construct a long-term Historical event so that it could be represented as if spatially organised around the dazzling fractal principles of recursivity and self-similarity, one has an easy way of avoiding to evade the difficulties posed by tackling with "the return of the same", whose many different guises are, in at least two interwoven manners, related to the general problematic of modernity: firstly, the political-epistemological problem of having (with or without a fairly evolutionist bias) no choice but to address this issue, and of having to do so by representing what it means to be(come) modern by steadily either accomplishing or struggling not to accomplish it as a return of what had already happened in/to (or because of) Western Europe's agency or thinking; secondly, the question of the never-ending "return of the same" in the confines of the individual, that is, the whole

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<sup>295</sup> In 1999 Richard Taylor advances the thesis that Pollock's paintings are fractal and introduces then the term "fractal expressionism" to name them. Since then there has been an academic debate over the fractal character of Pollock's works (Taylor et al. 1999; 2006; Jones-Smith/Mathur 2006).

set of delicate matters concerning issues such as identity/identification, trauma, and subjectivity, which can be subsumed under the rubric of the “de-centring of the subject” that had come into being in the course of Westernising modernity.

And finally, third, an essential feature of fractal forms is that the boundaries of each completely define the others, leaving no room for gaps between them. This very formulation gives a basic idea of the type of urgent questions that can be said to be here at stake. The most obvious one is perhaps the critique of methodological nationalism and the vast number of problems it has been posing within the social sciences. Among the many developments of this debate, I would like to single out one: the redress of a question as elemental as that of the concept of self-consciousness. In this sense, it is significant that path-breaking works such as Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* or Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* make of this point an integral part of their arguments.<sup>296</sup>

This set of characteristics hint at some reasons why fractal spatiality might be explored towards the development both of metaphorical constructions, that is, of “ways of thinking of”, and of rhetorical devices, that is, of “ways of producing a competent discourse about”, which, notwithstanding its use of complex spatial arrangements such as those evoked by ideas related to entangle, entwine, interweave, etc., which seem to underline horizontality,

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<sup>296</sup> A central argument of Paul Gilroy’s “transnational and intercultural” Black Atlantic is the idea of “double consciousness”. He strengthens this concept by means of a critique of the Enlightenment project, and a critique whose main axis is a reading of Frederick Douglass’ work as an alternative to Hegel: “a supplement, if not exactly a trans-coding of his [Hegel’s] account of the struggle between lord and bondsman”. According to Gilroy, “Douglass can be read as if he is systematically reworking the encounter between master and slave in a striking manner which inverts Hegel’s own allegorical scheme. It is the slave rather than the master who emerges from Douglass’ account possessed of “consciousness that exists for itself” while his master becomes the representative of a “consciousness that is repressed within itself.” (Gilroy 1993: 60)

Hegel himself, in explaining the journey of the mind toward the condition of self-conditioned principle of unity, that is, as the consciousness that exists for itself, resorts to a notion, the notion of force, which evinces the generative character of boundaries as a “zone of contact” where something fundamental emerges rather than ends. Firstly, Hegel postulates that “the notion of force becomes actual when resolved into two forces.” (Hegel [1807] 2014: 347) Then, he explains that:

“Sie [die nun verdoppelte Kräfte] sind nicht als Extreme, die etwas festes für sich behielten, und nur eine äußere Eigenschaft gegen einander in die Mitte und in ihre Berührung schickten; sondern was sie sind, *sind sie nur in dieser Mitte und Berührung.*” (Hegel [1807] 2010: 111 – my emphasis)

Gloria Anzaldúa revisits also the “mortal combat” [Hegel’s life-and-death struggle] that gives rise to consciousness when advancing the consciousness of the Borderlands as “a new *mestiza* conciencia, una conciencia de mujer”. But she does not resolve the conflict in favor of one of the contenders who, in her formulation, instead of “slave and master” are “the cop and the criminal”. Rather, she opts for a third synthetic character who would no longer “react” to each other, but “act” autonomously, as a self-propulsive force. Through a “tolerance for ambiguity”, this new consciousness would then, “in flesh and through the images in her work”, accomplish the task of breaking down dualistic thinking. (Anzaldúa [1987] 2012: 99–102)

inextricability and dispersion, allow for expressly making a point of asymmetrical power relations.

A geometry for conceiving long-term Historical events from a non-referentialist (but not anti-empiricist), de-centred (but not non-situated), and anti-essentialist (but not horizontal) point of view, this could be a provisory definition of the metaphorical spatiality that fractals could open to History.

In practice—for this thesis has a practical aim—I would hope that in trying to develop differentiating viewpoints and possible new ways of approaching the phenomenon of globalisation on the basis of what we have called its “Between Spaces”, we begin arguing more and more about Historical time, but not only in terms of what is or is not an appropriate temporal frame for projecting globalisation’s modern origins, nor (only) in terms of what is or is not its more adequate periodisation. Let us also talk about time in more substantive terms, I mean, in terms that make indelible that to the extent that Historical time can only be constituted by events historiographically narrated, one must think it *with* the events, as a necessary outcome of the events themselves instead of being either the element within which events (happen to) happen or a chronological tape measure. In the time “Between Spaces” there should be no space nor any in-between spaces which allow for any “emptiness” where our particular subject matter could be smoothly located. The very long-term Historical continuity of globalisation—as the abstract construct resulted of our possible desire of hypostatizing “what(ever) actually happened” as globalisation—will then assume the character of an always empirically based but nevertheless non-referential event.

Mingling Spivak, Chakrabarty and Gilroy’s thoughts, I would say that what I have tentatively sought to provide throughout the whole discussion unfolded in and along the consecution of this thesis—that is, with the written and performed meditations on a sketch of a model of long-term Historical time guided by the idea of fractal spatiality—is a sort of vocabulary, rudiments for thinking and enacting a possible form of Historical representation that, by trying to keep its own categories unstable and open without giving up the commitment to theory, aims at generating larger amounts of epistemological energy certain to be spent in political struggles for social justice (Chakrabarty 2000: 86-90).<sup>297</sup> Such a writing of History must attach

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<sup>297</sup> Appadurai also argues that the human sciences perhaps need macrometaphors of the family of fractals, polythetic classifications, and chaos in order to understand what he calls a “word of disjunctive global

positive value to the strive to incorporate the problems of coping with its own openness and, in so doing, must be accomplished with the conspicuous purpose of making the world “once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous.” (Chakrabarty 2000: 86; 46; Gilroy 1993: 223) This means an effort to undermine some premises on the base of which the hegemonic historicist time of Eurocentric modernity might be historiographically reproduced within the “Between Spaces” of globalisation or, alternatively, the concern with having recourse to a whole set of reflections and insights derived from the archives of “Black Atlantic” in order to mine the terrain where “North-Atlantic Universals”<sup>298</sup> have been overindulgently exhibiting their epistemological power. All that is understood as a fundamental step in the construction of a subject position from which the very rhetoric of in-betweenness might be more skilfully— or less awkwardly—articulated.

This subject position assumes the role of a common line that traverses disciplinarily our collective research program. I personally think this common line is the thematic of subalternity<sup>299</sup>.

Thus, it goes without saying that it was not by pure chance that this thesis deployed the double strategy of combining an extended reflection about a “minor”, “subaltern past”, namely, that of Brazilian colonial slavery, with an exaggeratedly clear-cut working hypothesis directed towards something as feeble as the idea of a metaphorical model. Within the knowledge protocols of scholarly History, to adopt such a combination as a guiding line toward research

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flows”. But he puts more emphasis on the importance of such an undertaking for the construction of a “social theory of postmodernity’ that is adequately global” (Appadurai 1996: 46–47) rather than on the way in which such a theory might be politically mobilised by subaltern groups. That is why even sharing precisely Appadurai’s concern, I prefer articulating Chakrabarty’s position.

<sup>298</sup> Of course, I am here playing on words, using Trouillot’s formulation to make a reference to that which Sérgio Costa points to in the title of his *Vom Nordatlantik zum „Black Atlantic“: Postkoloniale Konfigurationen und Paradoxien transnationaler Politik*.

<sup>299</sup> In fact, the pool of authors who have consistently pointed to the existence of “interstices of globalisation” have defined this globalisation with the expression “from below” so as to provide a perspectival gaze, a subject position that makes clear that the main question at stake is one of asymmetry of power (Mathews/Alba Vega: 2012: 10; Ribeiro 2012: 223). Ethnography plays a central role in constructing the idea of “globalization from below”, and not only because it is the sole way of having access to empirical data that is beyond the reach of the institutional apparatus of economic measurement, but also because it allows one to claim that the subaltern voices coming “from below” are amplified to the point of becoming prominently heard (Mathews/Alba Vega 2012: 7).

In addition to the particular difficulties that this formulation of the problem poses (Spivak 1988) as well as to the quite usual dilemmas of perspective and representation each ethnographical work is anyway confronted with, the researcher working ethnographically can almost prefigure the fact that there will be “moments in ethnographic research that resists the doing of ethnography” (Chakrabarty 2000: 101). The Historian working on long-term Historical events, on the other hand, lives in a sort of paradise of universals where, without the pressures, feelings and ethical issues involved in the ethnographic interpersonal contact, the subaltern cannot speak.

does not properly contribute to increase the strength of one's argument<sup>300</sup>, and less so if one sets about tackling a major issue like that of long-term Historical time.

The subaltern replication produced by the puny positivity of this pronouncedly precarious angle of attack aimed at putting myself in the shoes<sup>301</sup> of those who have been authorised to pose, even if not to resolve, some type of very distinguished epistemological problems that have been addressed as the privilege of exposing oneself to *happy* disciplinary risks. Once occupying this position, I could pluck up enough courage to claim that this thesis lays bare an *unhappy*<sup>302</sup> resolution to the question of how to pose those problems once again. These pages are thus a call for epistemological rights.

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<sup>300</sup> To be sure, metaphors are not even arguments! (Black 1968: 25)

<sup>301</sup> In Brazilian slave society, footwear was a distinctive mark of freedom. Given that slaves were forced to stay barefoot, black people who wore shoes were not only asserting their possible status as freeborn or manumitted, but also symbolically taking possession of the master's position, or, to be perhaps more precise, of a position that meant the right to possess at all. Roger Bastide call it "complexo do sapato" (Bastide in Wissenbach 1998: 218; Patterson 1982: 21–32).

I would beg you to incorporate this meaning to my use of the idiomatic expression "put oneself in another person's shoes". What I am asking you for is to consider that what is at stake here is not only an exercise of empathy, but also of rebelliousness, it is not only an attempt to "think from another person's position" but above all from a position that one is not permitted to occupy, for it underpins a fundamental power asymmetry. In this sense, it shall not go unnoticed that shoes, while they might be deployed as mere status symbol, are nevertheless not something whose main specter of associations is related to superfluosity, to a lack of practical relevance for life. On the contrary, they have the function of covering and protecting those bodily tools we have to stand [and stand up] and walk our paths.

<sup>302</sup> In this sentence, the interplay between "happiness" and "unhappiness" conjoins Foucault's idea of "disciplinary power" (see footnote 11) and Hegel's "unhappy consciousness" (see footnote 142).

To take "disciplinary risks"—where 'disciplinary' means a particular field of knowledge—entails doing so with the purpose of achieving a kind of coherence, of unity, if not of epistemological prerogatives that work towards granting normalization, that is, the very effectuation of "disciplinary power" in a Foucauldian sense. Its broad horizon is the reason's certainty and the reason's truth whose reality, is, in the case of the unhappy consciousness, "a 'beyond' remote from itself" (Hegel [1807] 2010: 308).

To say that this thesis is an "unhappy resolution" has therefore a double sense. 'Unhappy' meaning, first, that state of mind of "the Alienated Soul which is the consciousness of self as a divided nature, a doubled and merely contradictory being" (Hegel [1807] 2010: 278). It instantiates thus a way of thinking that explores unlikeness, non-identity with itself, in a word, "doubleness" in order to keep in check the very process of unification that would produce the "complete consciousness of self", that is, "its unity with the universal" (Hegel [1807] 2010: 308). Consequently, 'unhappy' means also inadequate, flawed, and improper, if seen from a disciplinary perspective. Equally, the word "resolution" bears a twofold connotation. More immediately, it means both the action of "solving a problem or contentious matter" and the "expression of a firm decision". In a subsidiary sense, it points to dissolution, dispersion, dispersal (diaspora?!), as in Chemistry, where it refers to the "process of reducing or separating something into constituent parts or components", or in Physics, where it names "the replacing of a single force or other vector quantity by two or more jointly equivalent to it." (Oxford Dictionary of English)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I: "I want to write now about the notion of long-term time in History, exploring an insight that connects Chakrabarty's idea on the impossible project of provincialising Europe with Arthur Danto's thesis on the end of the art."*

*II: "What the hell has all that to do with the Black Atlantic and with the history of slavery?"*

*I: "Well, nothing so far. But after I use them to unfold Gilroy's mention of fractal geometry as an analogy for imagining the articulation of historical events, it will become clear, in which sense all this stuff might be related."*

*II: "Listen, do you have any plans to stay working in German academia as a professional historian?"*

*I: "Actually, not."*

*II: "Ok, then go ahead!"*

This conversation took place after a complete one hundred eighty degree twist in the reflections that culminated in this thesis. At first, it followed closely the guiding thread advanced by the International Research Training Group (IRTG) 'Between Spaces. Movements, Actors and Representations of Globalisation', in whose frame the work was written. This means that it focused on the spatialising character of the Black Atlantic as a conceptual category whose main potential, for our purposes, would be to provide one more way of dealing analytically with the limitations posed by national borders in historiographical analysis.

Things changed quite radically after I took part in a two-day general meeting held in Potsdam in April 2013. Confined in a hotel congress, we discussed intensively many aspects of our research programme; above all, the theoretical one. In fact, even a glossary of key concepts was presented in the occasion. The event was a preparation for the forthcoming process of evaluation of the IRTG. Unsurprisingly, one of our main tasks was to foresee possible criticisms, to identify conceptual weaknesses, to pose thorny questions and, of course, to give cogent answers to them, if available.

I was still in the first semester of my PhD and, expectedly, quite unassertive, though somehow confident about my competence to make a relevant contribution to the ongoing discussion. Playing on words, I remember having made a remark phrased more or less as follows:

*"The issue of time, I mean, the representation of it, has it not been a bit neglected in our questioning about the 'between spaces' created by the movements and actors of globalization? Would it be too far-fetched to speak about the time—or perhaps specific temporalities—of these 'between spaces'?"*

We had no more than crude emergency answers to this question back then. From that moment on, I decided that my main intellectual task in the program would be the formulation of more elaborate ones. The best anchor idea, because of its epistemological

range, should to be the notion of long-term historical continuity; and my main interlocutor, due to his great interdisciplinary influence, Fernand Braudel. As skeptical as I might be about the fact of having been successful in my enterprise, I tell this story nevertheless because it makes clear a decisive feature of this study: its steady disposition to react to the idiosyncrasies of the immediate academic environment in which it was produced.

Thus, as my main focus shifted from space to time due to the contingent, but by no means arbitrary, circumstances surrounding that specific process of evaluation, many other important topics of the thesis were elaborated by following the same principle. This *modus operandi* makes this study especially indebted to the debates and dynamics of the IRTG Between Spaces.

Four of the seven chapters that comprise the bulk of the thesis are slightly modified versions of texts I presented in our forums of academic exchange. A first schematic draft of *Part One* was discussed in the interinstitutional colloquium that took place in March 2014 at the CIESAS, in México City. In this occasion, with his known delicacy, professor Carlos Alba drew my attention to the fact that colonial slavery was not as visible as expected in the text, even though its importance for the general argument was fully perceptible. Professor Luz Elena Gutiérrez de Velasco, on other hand, made magically visible in the text the presence of Walter Benjamin's *fantasmagoria*, a notion that I had indeed in mind, but which I thought of as being still out of service at that point. Connecting both comments, I learned that a meditation on colonial slavery must haunt the whole text, making spectacular apparitions where it was already expected as well as remaining suspiciously hidden where it was already almost absent.

But like everything well learnt, it did not happen at once. The enjoyable commentary delivered by professor Ricardo Pérez Montfort at my paper in 2nd Summer School of the IRTG Between Spaces, in September 2014, found me still groping for the best way of accomplishing what I had discovered. His good-tempered approach had the great merit of not attempting to straighten a text that was perhaps too playful for the academic purposes it should fulfil. Had he done otherwise, his attitude would have conveyed a message usually sent to novices: do not to step out of line! I appreciated his gesture and took it a sign of encouragement.

This courage was nurtured, on the one hand, by the admiration and intellectual exchange with Kenya Herrera Bórquez, who had developed a provocative approach to a research on feminine performativity and narcoculture in the northern border of Mexico, and on the other, by my own process of writing the first configuration of the twin-chapter *History and Theory of History*. I decided to put this text through its paces in the next edition of our interdisciplinary colloquium, which was entitled "Concepts and Categories for Studying the Process of Globalization" and scheduled for February 2015.

My remembrances of this day are remarkably vivid. Just as hungry as I was relaxed, I allowed myself to enjoy a cup of coffee while giving my talk. After that, listening to the comments and questions, I ate some bread as I took my notes. It was an amiable morning smelling of out-of-season spring. The form and colours of the building, the room, the chairs, the table, the walls, no less than of all faces around were familiar to me. It felt intimate and safe.

There was maybe no better environment to begin to comprehend that one of the main problems of my thesis was *not* exactly that it was ambitious. The problem was, in fact, that it was like that blissfully. If it was an invitation for thinking together about History, it was made in such an abstruse manner that its every intention appeared almost cynical. It became clear that whereas the position I tried to inhabit by carving out that locus of enunciation was only as potency conceptually fruitful, its feeble productiveness from a disciplinary standpoint as well as its at best deleterious character in what concerned possible institutional interests, that is, with regard to my academic career, was a virtual certainty.

These issues were spoken of in a fashion far, very far away from the ill atmosphere of frustration or anger provoked by the everyday effects of academic hierarchy and its petty vicious. Rather, the day had come in which I felt as if our intellectual energy had been fully hijacked by the very discussion, impelling us thus to an unreserved dialogue. Nothing comparable to this would have ever happen without the support of professor Susanne Klengel, who, as commentator, gifted me with a as generous as enlightening assessment of my text, as well as without the engagement of Marianne Braig and Stefan Rinke, professors whose enthusiastic interest in discussing my ideas—in a broader manner—made of that hitherto pleasant morning a memorable occasion. In several other academic encounters in the course of the last few years, these trio have showed me a similar disposition for an intellectual exchange of this nature. I hope these words can express how much I appreciated this and, naturally, how grateful I am to them.

However, from then on, my writing became murkier, as if it were somatising at once all those valuables criticisms. That moment marked a true turning point in the construction of my argument. I had entered into a transitional state, transiting in fact through a liminal space between two epistemological alternatives that seemed not be properly considered so far. The result of this phase was the text *The Heart of Blackness*, which was indeed designed as a “transition” to another moment of the thesis. Through the allusion to Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness* I intended to evoke an oppressive and tenebrous atmosphere for delivering an oblique analysis of historiographical accounts that, in attempting to rescue “the point of view of the slave”, happen to reproduce the conditions in which the state of being unable to speak—if not as a “double”—threatens to have always been and to continue to be a permanence.

At latest here I should have noticed how much these thoughts instantiate the idea put forward by Sérgio Costa’s *Von Nordatlantik zum ‘Black Atlantic’*: from a small flat in Berliner student housing, I was, everyday, writing southward or, maybe, “backward”. Paradoxically, having the Sérgio Costa of flesh and blood as (second) supervisor ended up preventing me from realising this fact, which remained thus a secret, revealed much later, as the thesis was already handed in and about to be defended. I probably became (too) habituated to the decisive contributions he, with the unpretentiousness that habit lends to deeds, made to the work, tactful and, it seemed, even tactically helping me to sort out the theoretical mess I sometimes got into.

It does not look like it, but my work has very much to do with theory of democracy. Its main claim is even phrased in that outworn and almost unfashionable “language of rights”, in this case, epistemological rights. Having written a great deal about it, theory of

democracy is an issue which Sérgio is well versed in. As a rule, people can best teach what they know well. But they not necessarily are able or inclined to live up to what they know and teach. My impression is that if there is something Sérgio also always teaches his students, this is the sense in which to deal with the institutional power of academia is a matter of making democracy theory a daily practice. If I understood it right, part of the game is not to be thankful to him for that. It is in this sense that I thank him.

In a somewhat different sense, I would like to thank Ingrid Simson. It is not uncommon that difficult circumstances appear in the life of a poor, black, foreign student, and above all during the periods in which he has no longer a scholarship. Ingrid was particularly present in these hard times both before and after my official phase in the IRTG ‘Between Spaces’. I would like to stress that a person can be supportive in somehow unwanted ways: she used to ask my opinion about things that, maybe wrongly, I thought I should demonstrate either no competence to judge or some reservation in doing so.

Concerning issues more narrowly academic, my participation in the thematic symposium *La historiografía en tiempos globales*, coordinated by Ingrid and by professor Guillermo Zermeño as part of the XVII AHILA International Congress (September 2015), was the moment she chose to give me precious advices about dealing with Walter Benjamin’s peculiar writing style. Maybe because of this fine attention to the act of writing, the most invaluable advice Ingrid ever gave me was a quite practical one: words are mostly enough to get one into big troubles; I did not need to engage my body into that!

It would have been perhaps more correct to say that one shall engage the body in an adequate manner. Ximena Alba was the person who brought me to think with some more profundity about epistemological issues in its gendered relations with gestural and vocal presentation. We attended together a coaching whose promise was to prepare us for delivering the best academic performance in the defense of our thesis. I lost track of how many hours we discussed the gendered language—also the corporal one—used by the male coach for convincing us how utterly harmful to appear “girlish” could be for the purposes at stake. Countless were also the number of conversations we had on the series “Body, Gender & Power” in the course of more than two years of intellectual exchange. Actually, even a series (a proper one!) was part of the package: two exciting seasons of *Orange is the New Black*! Last but not least, I would like to thank her for the enormous help in the final writing phase, above all with the infernal work of revising footnotes and bibliographical references: Thank you very much!

It is a commonplace in acknowledgements like this to close them with final words thanking again the people for contributing to possible merits the work may contain and, by the same token, to restate that all errors and failures are of total and sole responsibility of the author. I would like, however, to make Debora Gerstenberger, my (first) supervisor, responsible also for fundamental mistakes found in this thesis. To be sure, from a strict, or rather, from a pragmatically academic and disciplinary viewpoint, as the dialogue recollected above illustrates, the whole project of the thesis was, at first place, a tremendous mistake! As such, it accomplished itself generating series and series of further smaller mistakes that could be synthetised by saying that, at the end of the day, this study ended up being neither philosophical enough to belong to the field of theory of history, nor detailed and systematised enough to be a history of historiography nor

empirical in a manner that would make it acceptable as a conventional historiographical account.

It is easy to imagine the intellectual ability, epistemological openness, disciplinary tactfulness and, above all, the enormous patience needed for guiding someone towards such an eccentric result. I think of Debora as—and I thank her for that too—if she was in the wings, in such a position that she could see at will the audience (or, at least, the part of it reserved to the critics), the whole backstage as well as the enactment of the monologue she was—in real time—directing. Conceived (by me) in the Shakespearean form of a comedy of errors, her role in this spectacle was, at every move, to tell me how to turn them, the errors, into something at least bearable, generally desirable and at best admirable. Her insistence on the importance of working close to the historiographical works conjoined with her conceptual open-mindedness were decisive elements in the successful development of this production. Her judicious review of the final manuscript assured me that we were ready for enacting it. This happened on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017, in the defense: the final act.

Coming out from theater, still under its spell, spectators might be assaulted by that disturbing pleasure arisen by the feeling that play and real life are in uncanny ways related. In its academic form, History should provoke the same suspicion: regardless of how close to, or far from, “reality”, historiographical discourse is always a matter of representation.

#### *Post-scryptum*

I use above the Latin expression *modus operandi* to refer to a general proceeding, which, characterized by steady disposition to react to contingencies of local conjuncture, pave the way for the “comedy of errors” that this thesis stands for.

*Errare humanum est, grego ou troiano,  
Latim, tanto faz pra mim: fĩ de baiano*

The few people who will instantaneously recognise and situate this verse are also those who will at best know, with no need of any foreign language, what that *modus operandi* means. These are the people to whom I can write in a crypto-form, positive that they will understand me. So, I thank to/Assim, eu agradeço a:

*Kelly, pelo lindo de “saber que antes de saber, ela já sabia (me) ler”.*

*Júnior, porque “ninguém aqui nasceu com dono!”*

*Shis, pelas “dúvidas certas” e pela bússola de um assincrônico “pré-difícil”.*

*Daniel (vulgo Japonês), porque “mano, é o plano!”*

*Johanna dafür, dass aus mir der “Cidadão” geworden ist.*

*Camila, por fazer eu me perguntar, finalmente e então sempre:  
“Hey, bacana, quem te fez tão bom assim?”*

By the way, a good denomination of that *modus operandi* would read “desire of evanescence”: to have as ideal, as it were, to disappear, by behaving in time only and always as each time demanded. It is also a way of imagining that things were as they were so that they would not come to occupy the place of what they had prevented from existing. Chimerical search for an absolute congruence with the making of itself, this thesis represented a strenuous effort to stay on the edge of obsolescence. As such, it was, so to speak (or so to sing with the improbable duo James Brown & Gayatri C. Spivak), written to “stay on the scene” like “outside in the teaching machine”, but not to be published. In the university’s “public or perish!” world, this is, of course, a terrible prerequisite. As academic project, this intellectual endeavour was thus stillborn. That is why, if, while going through its pages, readers become more and more persuaded that it has nothing to do with real life, they will be dead right. This is the “moral of the [Hi]story”, or, borrowing James Baldwin’s words, the thesis’ optimistic message: “To be a pessimist means that you have agreed that human life is an academic matter.”

Fernando Baldraia  
10.05.2019

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation advances the sketch of a metaphorical model of long-term Historical time based on the idea of fractal spatiality as outlined by Paul Gilroy in his *Black Atlantic – Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993).

This task is carried out by combining aesthetics and analytical philosophy of History with post-colonial theory so as to perform a semantic exploration of the disciplinary vocabulary of History understood as social science. An exploration that, stemming from a reflection upon colonial slavery unfolded in the form of a review of the recent Brazilian historiographical production about the issue, deploys discursive strategies and analytical tools—such as diasporic time, *Synchronisierung*, rethoricity, etc.—that express a distinctive concern with an interpellation of the (excesses) of Eurocentrism, which is here depicted with an accent in its phallogocentric and racist axis.

What results from this analysis is presented in the conclusion (Time Between Spaces: fractal spatiality and long-term Historical time), a theoretical effort that, by assuming the semblance of a mirrored dialogue with Fernand Braudel's *longue durée*, spells out its own political-epistemological consequences and faces thus its limits.

## **Abstract**

Diese Dissertation nähert sich dem Entwurf eines metaphorischen Modells von langfristiger historischer Zeit an, basierend auf der Idee von fraktaler Räumlichkeit, wie sie von Paul Gilroy in seinem *Black Atlantic – Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) entworfen wurde.

Diese Aufgabe wird durch die Kombination von Ästhetik und analytischer Geschichtsphilosophie mit post-kolonialer Theorie erarbeitet, sodass dadurch eine semantische Exploration des disziplinarischen Wortschatzes der Geschichtswissenschaft zustande kommt. Die Exploration entstammt einer Reflektion über koloniale Sklaverei, die sich in der Form eines Reviews der jüngsten brasilianischen historiographischen Produktion über das Thema entfaltet. Dabei werden diskursive Strategien und analytische Instrumente – wie diasporische Zeit, *Synchronisierung*, Rhetorizität, etc. – genutzt, die ein unverkennbares Interesse an einer Interpellation des „Exzesses“ des Eurozentrismus ausdrücken, welcher hier mit einem Akzent auf seinen phallogozentristischen und rassistischen Achsen dargestellt wird.

Das Ergebnis dieser Analyse wird in der Schlussfolgerung präsentiert (Zeit Zwischen Räumen: fraktale Räumlichkeit und langfristige historische Zeit), ein theoretischer Versuch, welcher sich als ein gespiegelter Dialog mit Fernand Braudel's *longue durée* gestaltet und dabei sowohl seine eigenen politisch-epistemologischen Konsequenzen verdeutlicht als auch seinen Grenzen gegenübersteht.

**Erklärung der akademischen Integrität:**

Ich versichere, dass ich die von mir vorgelegte Dissertation "Time Between Spaces: the Black Atlantic and the recent Brazilian Historiography of Slavery" selbständig angefertigt, die benutzten Quellen und Hilfsmittel vollständig angegeben; dass diese Dissertation noch keiner anderen Fakultät oder Universität zur Prüfung vorgelegen hat; dass sie noch nicht veröffentlicht worden ist, sowie dass ich eine solche Veröffentlichung vor Abschluss des Promotionsverfahrens nicht vornehmen werde. Die Bestimmungen dieser Promotionsordnung sind mir bekannt.

Fernando dos Santos Baldraia Sousa  
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