

METAPHYSICS, LANGUAGE, ART AND SCIENCE

Nietzschean Echoes, National Thoughts

<http://dx.doi.org/10.25091/S01013300202200010004>

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ABSTRACT

The homonymous research presented in this article will be developed on different fronts, interconnected from Nietzsche's work and its reflections on Brazilian writers. It is about investigating apparently disconnected works that have ties of affinity and need to be understood not only based on what we call Nietzsche's reception, but linked to a movement of revision and critical formation that has been built throughout the 20th century.

KEYWORDS: *Nietzsche; Brazil; literature; reception*

Metafísica, linguagem, arte e ciência: ecos nietzscheanos, pensamentos nacionais

RESUMO

A pesquisa homônima apresentada neste artigo se desenvolverá em frentes distintas, interconectadas a partir da obra de Nietzsche e seus reflexos sobre escritores brasileiros. Trata-se de investigar obras aparentemente desconectadas que guardam laços de afinidade e precisam ser compreendidas não apenas a partir do que chamamos de recepção de Nietzsche, mas ligadas a um movimento de revisão e formação crítica que vem se construindo ao longo do século XX.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Nietzsche; Brasil; literatura; recepção*

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[1] See the journal's website (in Portuguese): <https://www.scielo.br/j/cniet>. Accessed on Nov. 18, 2021.

The story of the reception of Nietzsche's work in Brazil has gained valuable syntheses and contributions in recent years. Among these, we highlight the special "Recepção: Nietzsche no Brasil: núcleo histórico" ["Reception: Nietzsche in Brazil: historical group"], published in various issues of *Cadernos Nietzsche* as of December 2014.¹ An important fact we notice when accessing this collection now gathered together is that the first two specials begin by showing that the initial reception took place, mostly, in texts published by the press, that is, Nietzsche was, above all, *news* from abroad that drew attention here, but this only applies for part of the reception, possibly the most fragile and faltering, which appropriated Nietzsche at the whim of ideological winds and fashions. That thorough gathering of docu-

ments brought together in *Cadernos Nietzsche* — to which we must add other kinds of reading besides the journalistic and occasional ones —, along with the rough absence of comments on the conceptual and philosophical intricacies of this reception at the time, serves to show how much the story of this assimilation demands attention from Brazilian commentators even today. In general, the exegesis — the philosopher's main task? Rubens Rodrigues Torres Filho asked in a magnificent essay (Torres Filho, 2004) —, which took over a large portion of Brazilian Nietzsche-Research, was not concerned with the various ways of reading this author since the arrival of his work in the country, which were not always accurate from a conceptual and historical point of view, but often antagonistic. Rather, this exegesis remained limited to something like a feedback circuit — of which the relevance is not in question here. Despite the importance of the initial reception, it is not on this we will preferentially dwell on here.

It seems that, even before World War II, Nietzsche's name and fame extended beyond German and European borders. Although his work faced the corrosion of Nazi interpretation soon after that, there were several types of readings of his work around the world. In Brazil, what is certainly noticeable today is that Nietzsche was far from being just a curious figure who aroused the interest exclusively of the journalistic circles. There was an assimilation of his work on several fronts, from journalism to literature, from theater to music, as well as in other unexpected environments. The hypothesis for which I intend to argue for goes beyond the documentation work and advances in a direction that, if cannot be called unprecedented, is perhaps a demand revived by our times, based on the following questions: in what manner did the broader program of Nietzsche's work, synthesized in the concept of *transvaluation of all values*, affected us throughout the 20th century and how can it ethically and aesthetically still affect us today? How does his work come through after everything that the country experienced over the last century and experiences in an unprecedented way in the first two decades of the 21st century?

If we stand back a bit, we will see that, since the beginning of what we can call Brazilian studies — the name of a set of works which had the country as its object and which, at this point, established a canon —, Nietzsche's name, along with several other references, was present in different attempts to interpret the Brazil-Nation. This helps us, straight away, to avoid any kind of overvaluation of his work, something far from the purposes of this research. What is at stake is not the number of quotes or allusions to his books, but his presence at another level of identification, which we will attempt to explain shortly.

As we know, Nietzsche's work is not the result of a traditional conceptual construction, like that of his predecessors in the already

long history of philosophy, something that, surprisingly, is still used to challenge his philosophical legacy today. However, the inflection point that his work generated in the modernity inaugurated by Descartes is no longer discussed. Against rationalism, Nietzsche's work has always acted as a sort of "inside-out philosophy", an antidote injected into the veins of logical optimism, which produces its effects on science, history and politics. What they often fail to remember is that this deviant place started not only a crisis in modernity, shaped as a suspicion about the promises inscribed at the highest point in the history of the uses of reason, but also a new path which few dared to follow, because it was an erratic path and, for many, one without any practical sense. It was precisely this path that some more advanced arts dared to take, including in Brazil. It is not by chance that Nietzsche could be read and prescribed by a shapeless ideological diversity; his work does not deliver solutions, formulas or action programs, but a utopia of reinvention, all too often interpreted according to the interests at heart.

Maybe the author of *Beyond Good and Evil* would reject the application of the adjective "utopic" to his work, but the term encompasses both the idea of an ideal society and that of an illusion. This is why we should not fear its closeness to Nietzsche's philosophical program, for no one understood this ambiguity better than he did. In opposition to Kant — aware of his "dogmatic slumber", but accused by Nietzsche of "tautological slumber" (Torres Filho, 2004, p. 47) —, he also kept his beliefs, although closer to an allegory of existence than to a universality or a metaphysical necessity; perhaps a reverse of Kant, but equally radical. This deviant condition of the Nietzschean philosophical program did not only impact his peers, who, strictly speaking, barely read it. In fact, his work only came into being based on an assumption, which is often reminded by Nietzsche himself, that his work had been written for the "philosophers of the future", or simply for the readers of the future. It is at this point that this text is inscribed, as the opening of a cycle of articles that will develop from it — for this reason the reader should not disregard its programmatic content.

It would be possible to include in the bibliographical references of this wider project a number of authors which are hard to name with precision, and the reasons for this are not difficult to understand. Nietzsche was widely read in Brazil, in what became an overwhelming fashion, in the same manner as we were invaded by the "the coats and the dresses" (Veríssimo, 2014, p. 125). What else did the country need, after 400 years of colonization, including 350 of slavery organizing its entire social structure? It longed for any kind of utopia, especially the libertarian ones, which was how Nietzsche's was seen

to a large extent. Devoid of sciences, arts, narratives and organized knowledge, in the early years of the 20th century, a passive continuity in relation to the European matrix, our critics found in Nietzsche an author who might be a potential ally. It is not by chance that many of those first texts published in the press are signed by members of the Academia Brasileira de Letras [Brazilian Academy of Letters], such as José Veríssimo, Tristão de Alencar Araripe Júnior and others. It was as if Nietzsche could lend his grandeur to the peripheral country. The number of anonymous texts about Nietzsche, in an amount equal to or greater than the signed ones, is also somewhat strange, but this may be an unimportant detail.

There is, therefore, a selection that has been entirely chosen by this author, since it is necessary to delimit a path that can be followed with cohesion and a sense of organization. This choice has not been in any way random, even if it is interconnected by personal affinities and readings. There are four pairs of authors that guide this broad research on the perpetuity of the ethical-aesthetic dimension of Nietzsche's work on the periphery of capitalism (as Roberto Schwarz described Brazil): Monteiro Lobato/Oswald de Andrade, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda/Euclides da Cunha, Guimarães Rosa/Clarice Lispector, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro/Davi Kopenawa. They will be studied from a selection of texts that are core to the general argument. It is worth saying, before anything else, that these pairs of authors are not isolated pairs, in comparison or confrontation to each other, and therefore impenetrable. On the contrary, our intention is to show how these authors form a *web* of which the connecting threads cannot always be demonstrated in the form of an equation, although they still maintain a profound relationship.

As can be noted, the first and the third pair are formed by writers, and the second and fourth ones by authors who, with the exception of Davi Kopenawa, can be classified as social scientists; however, this serves only for a first identification, for the truth is that we cannot deny to any of them all the apparently particular designations that I have just pointed out. Perhaps this is the best motto to express what is in fact at stake in this risky grouping: what brings them together in this research is a free interpretation of a task that is reduced to reinventing the language, history and ranking of Brazil within the framework of modern nations, each in its own way and each with its unique way of execution. Despite the great stylistic openness that involves the work by different authors, it is argued that they all were and are united by a task that, explicitly in some and veiled in others, can be subsumed to Nietzsche's ethical and aesthetic rectitude, without however limiting itself to it — after all, something indefectible in all these authors is that they were born in the tension of the formation

of contemporary Brazil and this is the determining condition for their works to exist as we know them, in form and content.

Therefore, what we intend to demonstrate is how the game of critique around the idea of national formation takes place within a multiple language, organized at different levels, but spanned by one and the same solid will of self-assertion. Unfolding from this impermanent language, many of our writers helped to establish an ethical canon that, following quite the national mode, is not always ideologically or aesthetically aligned. None of this, however, deprived them of unity and humanistic commitment. The risk of standardizing different languages is avoided when a great issue is considered, which should guide these considerations at all times in their development: these authors subscribe to a great key of criticism towards modernity, in all cases guided by the task of defining the country according to its linguistic and cultural uniqueness. Nietzsche, therefore, is not the fundamental theorist of the ideas developed by this range of names — which would reduce this project to a recurrent notion that “there is Nietzsche in everything” —, but an ethical-aesthetic daimon prostrated in the euphoric moment of the industrial and rational modernity of the late 19th century, unable to convince his peers of the deceit of pure and simple optimistic historical progress.

The arrival of his work in the tropics can be interpreted in a number of ways. We will follow the one which sees in his philosophical program an antidote against the overwhelming historical progression, with the consequent forms of reaction to the dictates of both the peripheral position of our writings as well as the possible misplacements that Brazil as a lost promise made to the West — that is, if we believe, of course, in the idea of *Brazil: land of the future*, just like Stefan Zweig named one of his works, what can only be read as something laughable in this day and age. Let us see, albeit schematically, some points that exemplify this possibility of joint and comparative interpretation.

Monteiro Lobato himself personally organized the volume of his correspondence with Godofredo Rangel, a professor and judge who had been his colleague during his student years in São Paulo, and called the epistolary meeting *A barca de Gleyre*. As is written in the introduction, “with this volume, the reader will have the chance to get to know Monteiro Lobato’s dreams, thoughts and desires and follow his intellectual formation step-by-step” (Lobato, 2010, p. 13).² Therefore, it is not by chance that I take this book as a fundamental text, as it is in it that we will find the theoretical grounds of this writer who, today, is discussed in a different key — that of diluted racism in his children’s works, which, nonetheless, formed, without exaggeration, the absolute majority of Brazilian intellectuals and writers

[2] It is worth saying that there are only three published volumes of Lobato’s correspondence, and that only this one aforementioned has a unique sender, which seems to have been chosen with the purpose of making the exchange a sort of testimony of the period, as Lobato himself states.

in their first moves as readers. How is it possible that there was an ideological cover-up of this dimension?³ Let us briefly go over his first intellectual moves.

In one of the first letters, from a correspondence of about 40 years with Rangel, Lobato says: “We are now full of ambitious projects. In January, we’re going to go to the Mantiqueira backlands to feel the cosmic terror and read out Nietzsche screamingly loud from the top of the *maçaranducas*. And pantheize [...]. LOBATOYEVSKY” [São Paulo, 1903] (Lobato, 2010, p. 45). The young Lobato, aged 21, initially sees in Nietzsche a pantheistic promise, therefore a God-universe-nature connection. One might think that Nietzsche would foment in the future author of children’s and youth stories this integrated vision of man with the abyssal, but that is not be the case. This somewhat esoteric Lobato, who saw in Nietzsche a bridge to a certain hermeticism, would soon give way to another perception, just a year after the first reference — in August 24, 1904 —, in an unequivocal synthesis:

I have long wanted to insist on Nietzsche, and I send you a volume written by him that you will read and return, and then I will send you another [...]. These came to me from France. I consider Nietzsche the greatest genius of modern philosophy — the one who will exert the greatest influence. He is the “objective” man. The impersonal man, detached from himself and the world. A fixed point above humanity. Our first point of reference. Nietzsche is au delà du bien et du mal, perched on top from where he sees everything as one, and from where the perspective is not our little horizontal perspective.

After bathing in Nietzsche, we emerge washed from all the barnacles that come from the outside world and that denature our individuality. (Lobato, 2010, p. 66)

If we could think that Lobato is reading Nietzsche in isolation, as part of the aforementioned fashion, he himself answers this query in the same letter: “From Spencer’s work we come out Spencerians; from Kant’s we come out Kantists; from Comte’s we come out Comtists — from Nietzsche’s we come out tremendously like ourselves. The way to follow him is to follow ourselves. ‘Do you want to follow me? Follow yourself!’ Who ever said anything bigger? Nietzsche is caustic potash. He washes out all the scabies” (Lobato, 2010, p. 66). As can be seen, his reading was not disconnected from a clear understanding — perhaps to our surprise — of the history of philosophy. But if Nietzsche is going to influence in any way the author’s later works, something that the development of this project will cover, there are still points of interest in this long letter, almost entirely dedicated to the theme “Nietzsche”:

[3] The number of intellectuals who point to the work of Monteiro Lobato as a type of reference of their formation would extend a simple list.

And what a style Rangel! I have learnt from it more than from all of our French [authors]. It's the goat-like style, that jumps instead of walking. Flaubert's style is a caterpillar-like style: it keeps going all the way. Nietzsche's never crawls, it flies from leap to leap — and flashes lightning, and squeaks, roars, insults. It is the most prodigious artistic irregularity. When I read Nietzsche I feel hatred towards Flaubert the Impeccable. Nietzsche is the Great Sinner. (Lobato, 2010, p. 67)

Lobato goes even further, so as to speak of Nietzsche as a “cure for illnesses”, a “sower of horizons”, and tells Rangel that if he does not accompany him in this discovery, he would dismiss him from the position as “number 1 friend”. As it is impossible to show in this space all the implications of this reading on his later work, its contents, etc. (a task which would take a few years), I want to show firstly that one of the leading writers of our first *independent* literature may have been directly influenced by Nietzsche, still not yet fully appreciated with all its consequences. An aside: it was a coincidence that the first reference to Nietzsche in Lobato, about pantheism, was directly linked to the extreme author of this project, Davi Kopenawa and his shamanic cosmology. They are two distant points, yet linked by an aspiration for national affirmation — certainly motivated by questions of different orders, as chronologically distant as they are ideally close.

What motivates this research is precisely the certainty that in some manner our essential writers are linked not only through sparse readings of Nietzsche, in almost all the cases, but through a type of aesthetic-idealist unity, awoken in diverse manners and sometimes not coincidental, such as the case of Lobato and Oswald de Andrade, the latter being approached in the same analytical movement that involves the first. Although they are not in agreement in their literary conceptions of tradition and modernity, they both read Nietzsche at almost the same time. As Benedito Nunes pointed out to us some time ago, Oswald read Nietzsche borrowing different perspectives:

Oswald, unduly generalizing ritual anthropophagy [...], linked this purging of the primitive to the origin of the moral health of Nietzschean's Raubentier, of man as an animal of prey who, according to the digestive image used by Nietzsche in On the Genealogy of Morals, assimilates and digests without a remnant of resentment or spurious guilty conscience, inner conflicts and resistances from the outside world. (Nunes, 2011, p. 28)

It would be almost needless to highlight the stylistic issues that also mobilized Oswaldian writing, its affront to classical formality and the ruptures that shed so much light on the advanced Brazilian art that

would later develop. For now, it is enough to point out that, in both cases, Nietzsche appears less as an external author of reference, focused on theoretical formation within a set that would include so many others, than as a safeguard for the frank development of both authors' innate ideas concerning the country. Here is exactly the distinct hypothesis of the meaning of *influence* mentioned above; Nietzsche contributes not to reinforce the Eurocentric vision but, on the contrary, to emancipate our ideas. This turning inward, at the same time as external readings were swallowed and deformed, was not exclusive to the literary scene, as we shall see. However, once again, Benedito Nunes clarifies these links in a perfect way, almost dispensing comments:

Two concepts were sufficient for Oswald de Andrade to outline the schematic philosophy of history that he exposed in his thesis, A crise da filosofia messiânica: o matriarcado e o patriarcado como totalidades sócio-históricas [The Crisis of Messianic Philosophy: the Matriarchy and the Patriarchy as Socio-Historical Totalities]. Matriarchy includes certain kinship relations (the child by maternal right) and production relations (the collective ownership of the land), corresponding to open social relations (classless societies), incompatible with the existence of the state. It is an organic form of living, closer to Nature, answering to the values synthesized in the anthropophagic attitude — the transformation of the taboo into a totem, as an affirmative expression of praxis guided by primary impulses, not yet repressed, which would externalize, in their natural strength, in the ritual anthropophagy of primitive societies. As this attitude is considered basic, Oswald de Andrade associated Matriarchy with an anthropophagic culture, of an orgiastic or Dionysian nature. (Nunes, 1979, p. 59)

The Oswaldian conception, therefore, kept a strong Nietzschean component, an effective base to which much of what came to be established within the so-called “anthropophagic utopia” would be indebted, including some of its aesthetic heirs, such as Concretism, the Oficina Theater and Tropicalismo. This forces us to revisit the analysis made by Benedito Nunes, an early critic who rigorously pointed out these connections, but it will also be necessary to show how Nietzsche's influence on both Lobato and Oswald can be incorporated without apparent short-circuits, given the programmatic distance between the writers. This is where the idea of *ethical universality* takes shape in the project, superimposing itself on the more or less conservative aesthetic conceptions, defining them less by their form than by an unavoidable need for expression.⁴ Against the current idea of modernity as a space for rationalist — and therefore European — affirmation, a group of authors, certainly not limited to those listed here, arose

[4] For further information on this discussion, see Naves (2011). *A forma difícil* is still one of the most important studies about national specificities in the area of plastic arts.

without a manifesto within a vast stylistic spectrum. This is when one of our first interpreters, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and an emblematic author, Euclides da Cunha, chronologically the first of all, come on the scene, as opposing sides of the political vision of the country.

The presence of Nietzsche is not something recently perceived in the work of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda.⁵ We will have to recover the debate around historicism in order to show that, within this context of a critique to modernity, Brazil did not allow itself to be boxed in by the progressive advances proclaimed by the dominant historicist movement at the time, despite Holanda's analysis not passively aligning itself with Nietzsche's historical conception in his "Second Untimely Meditation". To what extent can we exalt Holanda and his most daring essay on national interpretation, *Raízes do Brasil*, in which Brazilian original evils are pointed out in the country's social life as the source of many of our ills? Although widely discussed, how should we think about this interpretation when tensioned by the idea of a philosophy of instincts, of a Gay science that refers to classical science aiming at its destitution, including its history and its ordering narrative? What does *Raízes do Brasil* still have to say to us about national *singularity*? Was one of our first interpreters tending toward the incorporation of a view of historic continuity — and, therefore, an integrated one — or was he proposing the defense of our no-place in the general picture of nations as apocalyptic? Everything points toward the second option, especially when we consider the fact that Holanda came into contact with the work of Walter Benjamin, the anti-historicist antidote by excellence.⁶ Even so, his analysis did not mean a boastful exaltation of national experience, but rather a deep distrust of its paths and boundaries. In an irregular way, there was, in Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, a search for balance, for perspectives and solutions for our apparent apathy, with a less than optimistic feel.

In the "cordial man", life in society is, in a way, a true liberation from the dread he feels from living with himself, from relying on himself in all circumstances of existence. His way of expanding towards others increasingly reduces the individual to the social, peripheral portion, which in Brazilians — as a good American — tends to matter most. More than anything else, it is a way of living through others. It was this type of human that Nietzsche was addressing when he said: "Your bad love of yourselves makes solitude a prison to you". (Holanda, 2006, p. 161)⁷

If my reading is correct, this difficulty in discerning a universal ethic from an "ethics with an emotional essence" produced a structural languor, an impediment to establishing a minimally collective order, whose effects could only be that of cooling down. In this

[5] In this regard, see, for example: Chaves (2008); Burnett (2014); Garcia (2016); and Dewulf (2014).

[6] In this regard, see Ramirez (2007).

[7] The citation to Nietzsche was taken from Nietzsche, F. *Werke* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, IV, n.d., p. 65).

sense, expanding Holanda's analysis retroactively, I believe that *Os sertões* — contrary to the original motivation of its author, who not only acted as a journalistic correspondent, but above all as a “man of the law and the norm”, that is, as a representative of the institutional forces — turned into a story against the grain, to use Benjaminian terminology, a kind of popular testimony of those who lost, who today return due to an uncomfortable identification exactly among those who remain on the margins of the economy, heirs of the massacred backland dwellers, against the model of “human capital”, the principle of productivity of this current “individual-company”.

The perspective invoked here is not one of bringing together authors around a supposed Nietzschean ideal, but an attempt to show that there is a web of national thoughts which are organized from a concept, which is spanned by intellectual and artistic experience developed closely after Nietzsche: emancipation. There are, however, several ways of thinking about this liberation from the bonds of oppression beyond economical-political emancipation. In Guimarães Rosa's short story “O recado do morro” [“A note from the hill”], the backlands and the people who inhabit it are the same as those portrayed by Euclides da Cunha, but with one difference, it is the marginalized and the madmen who occupy the clairvoyant space of poetic and philosophical statements, in a lapidary inversion of the narrative source that in *Os sertões* could not be concluded.⁸ But in Euclides da Cunha's book itself, things would not settle down as the author had predicted. Firstly, because “the hypothesis of a collective madness that seizes Antonio Conselheiro and spreads to his followers became obsolete, an interpretation that had predominated for a long time, including in *Os sertões*, but would eventually fall into disrepute” (Galvão, 2016, p. 612). What is the reason for this reversal? I would say that that human matter — distinctly different from that winning human capital — rose up against the attempt of historical erasure, and the affirmative promises of a counter-history remained active, even if only as a promise. The tragic dimension of this turnaround was signaled without a shadow of a doubt by Antonio Candido:

This is why there is in him [Euclides da Cunha] what can be called a tragic view of the social movements and of the relation between personality and environment — physical and social. Tragic, in the classic sense, of an agonizing vision when human destiny appears directed from above. The Euclidean man is man guided by telluric forces, engulfed in the vertigo of collective currents, strangled by biopsychic determinations: — and yet rising to fight and compose life at the confluence of these fatalities [...]. In Euclides, however [...], we can talk of a tragic feeling, because in his work the determinants of human behavior, the famous factors brought into focus by

[8] See Cesar-Melo (2011).

science in the nineteenth century, are taken as the great supernatural forces that move men's relations in the Greek tragedy. We will only understand it, therefore, if we place it beyond sociology — because it somehow subverts the social relations normally discriminated by science, giving them a dimension and a quality that, without drowning the realism of observation, belong foremost to the category of vision. (Candido, 2002, pp. 181-2)

To revisit *Os sertões* from this tragic point of view is, at the same time, bringing together language, history, literature, philosophy, social and political life from an anti-ethical viewpoint, against logic and deterministic sciences. Continuing, it also makes one notice how much the backlands of Guimarães Rosa extend geographically and socially alter the representation developed by Euclides, initially ambiguous and ultimately inverted, when Euclides da Cunha realizes the disproportionate force used against those almost defenseless men. The physical environment was also described in great detail in Rosa's short story, but the men were the only ones there who had a connection with the hidden messages of nature, dismantling the logic of the Republic/reason vs. the disorder/barbarianism of *Os sertões*, which alters Euclides da Cunha's point of anchor, even if it did not interfere with the discretionary task he had been given. Free from this bond forever, Rosa takes us into the tragic imaginary of characters who are marginalized and, yet, superior in the game between the literate and illiterate.

It is the illiterate person who, like the poet, looks into the internal volume of the words, who questions the fringes surrounding it, hoping to feed his wisdom. It is when someone falls short of the writing that they can encounter an experience of language similar to that which literature will try to restore: the hope of capturing, in the pure movement of words, in the meager domain they establish, the truth about the world and experience. (Prado Jr., 1985, p. 224)

Bento Prado Jr. clarifies that we are not facing a Manichean division between republicans and monarchists or between erudite and popular etc., but a division between those who are able to enter the labyrinth of language — and from there extract the “truth of the world” and, consequently, the emancipation of the body — and those who aspire to forge a functional country, which comes together with late capitalism, decimating what does not fit the progressive vision dictated by the regressed and still optimistic modernity of the 19th century. Here, then, is the realization of tragic ethics as Nietzsche suggested, since it is from suffering that all human matter is transformed into literary and sociological matter in national narrative experiences. If we stopped for a moment and asked if this

hypothesis would not be supported by a division between rural and urban, between the past and the future, creating a simple logic, Clarice Lispector enters the scene to express — in a language from the city, and through the modern problems of the integrated social life that she knew from within — that emancipation does not only take place in the experiences lived by the heirs of the Canudos⁹ horde — blacks, Indians, Northeasterners and their marginalized peers in general who today disturb public order and economic policy — but in each individual on whom the disastrous action of petty politics weighs. In one of the first complete analyses of Clarice Lispector’s work, there is the following statement about the extension of her narrative language: “In the passages selected here [from the novels], there is a reflective comment that penetrates the narration itself, putting in play its object. Not only the character’s acts and deeds, but also the narrated matter are internalized due to the reflective commentary that tries to describe them, but also the internal experience itself that remains of the *epos* becomes problematic as to the form of its representation. Well, this form of representation is the narrative as such” (Nunes, 1995, p. 51). The critic points out the indelible junction between reflection and the narrative form in Clarice Lispector’s work, confirming the hypotheses previously put forward about the unequivocal proximity between language and ethics that embodies the central conjecture of this research.

As stated by Walnice Nogueira Galvão, one of the main scholars specialized in Euclides da Cunha’s work, during a talk at the 2019 edition of Festa Literária Internacional de Paraty [International Literary Festival of Paraty] (FLIP) dedicated to the author, “*Os sertões* has to be read every day, while the situation of the poor in Brazil continues”. I think that for all the cases listed here, this premise is true. Part of our literature, and of our historical sociology, is spanned by this responsibility, which is why this multidisciplinary project is unavoidable as a methodology of philosophical reflection — Nietzsche reactivated from the experience of language and ethics, and not from the history of philosophy.

When the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro was invited to write a preface to the book *A queda do céu*, by Davi Kopenawa, it is as if all these apparently disconnected ends were immediately attracted by a centripetal movement. In many ways, this project started from the end, that is, by the study of the volume *Metafísicas canibais*, by Viveiros de Castro. The references to Guimarães Rosa, Clarice Lispector, Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari, among others, mobilized from a proposition to reinvigorate anthropology (a red herring, as the author himself makes us understand throughout the book), from an ethnocentric inversion, literally written “for the philosophers”, began

[9] Guerra de Canudos [*War of Canudos*] (1895-98) was a conflict between the First Brazilian Republic and the residents of Canudos, a sort of independent commune with religious and mystical contours led by Antônio Conselheiro in the backlands of northeastern state of Bahia. [Translator’s Note]

to form a strange connection, which was gradually grounded in this research proposal, as a modest acceptance of the anthropologist's invitation to the philosophers of the present — are we those “philosophers of the future” that Nietzsche invoked? In that preface, specifically in this long but essential excerpt, Viveiros de Castro states:

*I take the liberty of suggesting to the reader that the highest poetic significance of this exceptional book, a significance that in no way diminishes it, quite on the contrary, its historical, ethnographic, ecological and philosophical truth, will perhaps become even more moving — that is, capable of setting us in motion together with it — if, when we close it, we pass to the short story “O recado do morro”, which is in Guimarães Rosa’s *Corpo de baile*. The title of this preface, “O recado da mata” [“A note from the woods”], was, moreover, inspired by an allusion made by José Miguel Wisnik [...] to Rosa’s short story. Everyone will remember that in that narrative a caravan of literally eccentric characters parade, people from afar, nomads or hermits, troglodytes, madmen, prophets, wanderers, people who hear disturbing messages from nature and yet they remain deaf — forgotten [...]. Davi is the crucial link in the network, the final point in the series of “eccentric” characters from “O recado do morro” — in fact, who is more out of the center and the One, from the smoke of cities and the murderous shine of metal, than an Indian, a man from the depths of the forest who signed a shamanic pact with the legions of invisible doubles from the forest — with the xapiri who transmit the encrypted message of the forest. A message, let us remember, ominous. A reminder. A warning. One last word. (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, pp. 40-1)*

The urgent tone is not banal. However, fully agreeing with the warning, the above passage refers to a group of questions that seem to demand answers other than just governmental and pressing ones. How can we reflect on this complex tangle that seems to cross the 20th century and reach us no longer as only a representation of what is *national* and *popular* within language, but as a reference ready to support a reflection of an epistemological nature, such as the one that Eduardo Viveiros de Castro highlighted and which finds in Kopenawa’s work its most adequate mirroring? “In other words, perspectivism assumes a constant epistemology and variable ontologies: the same representations, but other objects; a unique meaning, but multiple references. The purpose of perspectivist translation — one of the main tasks of shamans [...]” (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p. 68).

All this seems to authorize us to talk of a unity of language stemming from a detailed reading of some of the essential works by the authors invoked here, having as a central thread Nietzsche’s anti-modernist ethics. Some of our writers, critics, scientists, artists and

philosophers have sought and still seek one and the same synthesis from different perspectives, having language as an anchor; a deviant and peripheral language, no doubt, but still invigorated by a promise that insists on renewing itself. However, paraphrasing Adorno, this cornered emancipatory multiculturalist language persists because the moment of its implementation has already deteriorated, that is, what allowed the Canudos War to take place is the same principle that allows for monumental national inequality, at all its levels and forms of oppression, even today often based on racial distinctions — something that should shock us.

If all the movements of our anti-modernity — a synonym not of delay, but of a progressive historic reaction that legitimized a series of tyrannies of which the apex was slavery — seem to organize themselves around a principle, whichever it may be, this libertarian language, it is also possible to note that this search for forms of emancipation of the Brazilian people, from the description of their idiosyncrasies, unfolded in the interior game of language. The insistence on the image of a web is not trivial, one only has to see how José Celso Martinez Corrêa refers to *Os sertões* together with *A queda do céu*, linking Oficina's productions to the processes inherited by Euclides da Cunha's book updated by Davi Kopenawa — a chain that begins in one of the most cultured and emblematic books in Brazilian history and ends in a shamanic revelation, assimilated in the most Dionysian theater in activity in the country,¹⁰ elements that should not go unnoticed to the eyes of philosophers. Nuno Ramos offers us an important addendum on this, demonstrating that *Os sertões* is a synthesis that goes beyond the momentary record of a localized conflict:

How the civilizing desire reverts to beheading and barbarism, how easy victory turns into slow agony and the abode Troy robs the southerners of the ethics they would be carrying, the land, as a negative support, will be there to guarantee a counterweight and, who knows, a grave and a final resting place, established from the beginning, for Euclides' illusions. (Ramos, 2007, pp. 31-2)

All this structure seems to require philosophy to open to rigorous dialogue with shamanic cosmology, with literature, with Brazilian studies, abandoning its superior condition of isolation, of unsustainable remains when everything seems to conspire to its disappearance. This does not mean a slackening of its conceptual constructions or of its principles, rather the broadening of what defines, in a temporal sense, the *concept*, that is, constructions that try to determine in singularity what cannot always be understood in multiplicity. This

[10] In this regard, check the director's interview to Guilherme Freitas for the podcast "Sertões: histórias de Canudos", available at (in Portuguese): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpt15qrFJbs>. Accessed on: Jul. 26, 2019.

is not something given, but a dispute, as Viveiros de Castro clearly states: “No history, no sociology [no philosophy, we could include here] is able to disguise the complacent paternalism of this thesis, which reduces the so-called ‘others’ to fictions of Western imagination without any voice in the chapter” (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p. 21). It is not a question of remaining in the realm of philosophical speculation as a refuge. There is, in fact, a reflexive subsidy in different instances of our formation, with which philosophy urgently needs to dialogue.

There is no doubt that the outline defined here, which chooses Nietzsche’s ethics and aesthetics as a parameter for an interpretation of the period, leads to a specific type of reading of this group of national authors and works. Supported by an idea that is not entirely new, this research proposes an expansion that is inscribed in a kind of *comparative language*, in which works produced within a period of more or less a century are less compared and more linked from the referred parameter, which gains, in the end, an air of paradigm. It is true that, reviewed together, the authors included here seem to share an ambition, masked by the intellectual activity that equates them all, which echoes in different ways but still in a connected manner a double attempt. On the one hand, to elevate the Portuguese language to the narrative-reflective limit that allowed, almost belatedly, a national self-recognition, pulling along its myths and revelations as a result. On the other hand, the most defining factor for this research is the fact that this self-recognition meant another partition: 1) many of these authors knew Nietzsche’s work to different degrees of depth and use, which immediately calls attention; and 2) that all — here being the main working hypothesis — have developed their works by radicalizing a position that alludes in all aspects to the German philosopher, something that points to an ethical and aesthetic affiliation of which the convergent point is precisely language and its emancipatory possibilities.

Not only do these works contain the principles of a critique to optimistic modernity, possibly because of the peripheral condition from which they come, that is, from a country that has always been refractory to the laws and principles of authority, such as the maturing of the country’s formative processes radicalized an anti-Enlightenment attitude — not only reinforcing the place of myth in its national self-interpretation through literature, but surprisingly in defense of a (new?) science that needs to recognize shamanic revelations as a source of enlightenment from a double movement: “Initiating a cross reading between anthropology and philosophy, informed, on the one hand, by Amazonian thought [...] [and] approaching the ideal of anthropology as an exercise in the permanent

decolonization of thought and proposing another way of creating concepts other than the ‘philosophical’, in the historical-academic sense of the term” (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p. 32). The anthropologist’s work, in my view, is a moment not only of beginning, but of reviving of a long path of decolonization already carried out by authors who have never received attention in their proximity to epistemological and cosmological issues generated from the singular position of a peripheral Brazil. The fact that Viveiros de Castro constantly goes back to authors such as Oswald de Andrade, Guimarães Rosa and Clarice Lispector is unequivocal proof of these precursors and of their connection with the most advanced theoretical aspirations of the anthropologist.

However, something may need to be noted before anything else: all that is sought to be sustained here through this interweaving is that the authors linked to this project seem to have developed their works in the name of several renewing perspectives: a new science, a reinvigorated literature, an autonomous language, etc. The observation is not pointless. It is necessary to clearly understand to which anti-Enlightenment we are referring here, which cannot be confused with some kind of obscuring or denial of science, but in the same key as the critique of modernity as elaborated in the late 19th century. This is because contemporary problems, even if understood from the idea of a “post-industrial society”, in the end are no more than the extreme tip of a crisis announced by 19th century nihilism.

Therefore, going against any kind of idea of irrationalism — a quite recurrent accusation leveled at Nietzsche — what has always been at stake in the reflections on national formation was the decolonization of thought, before this term was conceptually defined and claimed as a proposition as of the 1960s. Our formation, therefore, encompassed self-understanding but also self-criticism. But something unifies and projects the idea of country throughout all the authors exposed here: the suggestion of a progressive inversion of history, an inconvenient certainty about the projected world economic unification as a way out of our secular impasse. That this movement of interpretation has as a *daimon* a wanderer and self-styled stateless person like Nietzsche is not an adornment, but an antidote to the patriotism that threatens us with the resurgence of barbarism.¹¹

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[11] Translated into English by Dominique Margaret Makins Bennett. [E.N.]

Received for publication on September 27, 2019.

Approved for publication on September 9, 2020.

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