

## BINARY OPPOSITION IN LITERATURE:

### THE EXAMPLE OF BRAZIL

#### TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF "NATIONAL" LITERATURE

The remarks which follow arise from the daily and simultaneous consulting of two literatures and, in a larger sense, of two cultures, Portuguese and Brazilian, both expressed in the same language, Portuguese.<sup>1</sup> They also arise from an attempt to describe and define by categories which are "internal" to literature the differences which exist between the two bodies of writing under discussion. But they are equally inspired by a desire to isolate in the corpus of the texts which conventionally constitute a national literature those thematic and stylistic recurrences which may serve as starting points for an attempt at formalization.

As with any historical product of human activity, each national literature, however it is defined, appears as an ensemble which may be classified according to *type*. Typological grouping, by mak-

Translated by Jeanne Ferguson

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ing use of the comparison of two or more structures, enables us to perceive the superimposable traits, the coincidences which are found in and make similar two or more national literatures. At times, a typological study also permits us to compare the so-called literary series and the other non-literary series, such as works on politics and economics: this is the case with "colonial" literature, so called because it is written in the language of the colonizer. We are thus able to verify whether similar literary products correspond to similar conditioning or, at least, if we want to preserve the concept of the uniqueness of each poetic work, to see if similar thematic and formal choices correspond to them. For example, when an entire generation of writers chooses, from time to time, commitment or non-commitment, incarnating his choice in such and such a subject and presenting it in such and such a form.

If this is comparative literature, as it seems to be, this way of comparing is quite different from that of the positivists of the 19th century: our attitude is descriptive, while theirs was explanatory. We start from the texts to reach by a centrifugal movement their "cultural ingredients;" they started from external facts and by a centripetal approach sought the "reflection" of those facts in the texts. They were especially concerned with finding the "why" of certain conditionings and looked for them first of all in historical events and environmental situations. We, on the contrary, are interested in "how" each national literary development is presented, also in relation to non-literary works. And it is in this sense that in my work, *La Letteratura Brasiliana* (Milan-Florence, 1972), I was able to classify literary histories in terms of "how" and "why": my own work I defined, at least in its intentions, as a history of "why."

All of the above takes nothing away from research in its historical dimension, because the fact that we speak of literary history implies that we recognize the legitimacy of considering literature under a historical profile. But it also implies that autonomy and esthetic individuality are granted not only to different literary personalities but also to the structure within which they operate and which they enliven by their presence.

#### NATIONAL LITERATURE AS ARBITRARILY DEFINED MACROTEXTS

For the structure of a national literature to be isolated it must first of all be studied and synchronically described as a single macrotext made up of all the texts which, in our opinion, comprise this literature. A macrotext is complete in the sense that it begins with a given text and ends with another text. And it is we who create beforehand the subject of our study.

The study of the history of a literature thus coincides with the description of a corpus of texts previously defined on the basis of determined criteria. These criteria may be concerned with 1), the means of expression, that is, the language; 2), the coordinates of time and space which define the limits of the macrotext; and 3), the function, or at least the predominant function, assigned to the text in the beginning by the author (transmitter) and later by the readers (receptors) who come into contact with the work. That is, if I decide to write a history of Portuguese literature I may choose at the start and on the basis of language to consider only texts written in Portuguese, while another critic starting from a different set of criteria, cultural area, for example, may decide to include texts written in Spanish by Portuguese authors, texts which I would consider it more logical to assign to Spanish literature. And I might decide on the basis of a previously-established criteria for choice of functions to consider only works which the author had written with a predominantly literary intention, thus excluding scientific treatises, of which the predominant function for the author was that of communicating scientific ideas. But if I consider the function of a text on the basis of "literary success," its acceptance by the public on the poetic level or my own personal opinion of the literary value of a scientific work could persuade me to include it in my corpus. This last choice explains how the Nobel prize for literature may be awarded to the author of a historical work and also how with changes in taste the body of texts which conventionally represent a national literature also changes and is constantly modified by inclusions and exclusions, which we should not forget are always arbitrary and ceaselessly renewed.

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### DEFINITION OF A MACROTEXT OF BRAZILIAN LITERATURE

Now, I can state that *I consider, that is, I decide to consider here as Brazilian literature, the subject of my study, the corpus of "literary" texts written in Portuguese from the 16th century to the present day by writers born or matured in Brazilian environmental conditions.* The specification of the language as Portuguese deliberately excludes (because of a preliminary and convenient choice) all texts in a native language or, in any case, one different from Portuguese. Another critic, or myself in a different study, who would be subjected to different criteria (geographical, for example) might include texts in *nbengatu*. Furthermore, in my choice I have fixed the limit of time at the 16th century in order to include in my corpus those texts which the label "colonial" included in the literature of the mother country. The specification "literary texts" excludes those texts in which (in my opinion) the poetic function—an expression borrowed from structuralist and Jakobsonian terminology—is not predominant. Finally, the concept of cultural coordinates is used here with the idea of cultural area (Colonial Brazil and later autonomous Brazil) to discriminate between the Brazilian author and the Portuguese author.

Within these limits the body of works under study appears as a single text, the "text of Brazilian literature" which it is permissible for us to study as a system because of its structural homogeneity.

The system is defined exactly because of its autonomy and limited nature. It is a connotative system, according to the terminology of Hjemslev, because it is a system which is "secondary" with regard to a "primary" system of meanings, which is that of language. And it is a system which we may analyze in its form (rhetoric, narration, thematics or expression) as in a semiotic perspective.

To define this macrotext by categories which are "internal" to the literature is not to refuse an epiphenomenal concept of the literature. But it is to say that many "external" criteria chosen for example to indicate the limits between literature of the Old and New World reduces and falsifies the perspectives. Brazilian literature is reduced and falsified when we say it begins in 1808, the year the Portuguese court arrived, harassed by the Napoleonic

invasion, and the colonial conditions which tied Brazil to Portugal came to an end; or when we start with 1822, the year of the proclamation of independence; or when we start with 1836, the year the first "Brazilian" book was published in Paris under the impetus of European Romanticism (*Suspiros Poéticos*, by Gonçalves de Magalhães); or even with 1922 when, with the "Semana de Arte Moderna" of São Paulo, Brazil finally freed itself from European subjugation, with an autonomous program "made in France."

At what moment can we say that a country is culturally autonomous? When it submits to countries other than the mother country, substituting as in Brazil's case the French model for the Portuguese or, shall we say, Iberian model, or later and only partially the North American? And what is cultural autonomy?

On the other hand, why is it that a country under a colonial regime cannot express in literature its "world concept," a world concept which is proper to it?

The alternative solution would be style. But not that which merely substitutes labels such as colonial baroque, colonial arcadian, American romanticism or South American realism and neo-realism for categories which are historically fixed in other climates. Instead, that which in our particular case takes into consideration the moment when Brazil, occupied by the Portuguese, became a Portuguese-speaking country and tried to characterize from within this particular literature in Portuguese (since we decided at the beginning to limit our choice to this literature); and to characterize it an autonomous stylistic tradition, a combination of forces at the interior of a structure which was self-sufficient.

There is one danger, that of hardening a concept of "Brazilianity" as might have happened in the history of Spanish literature with the romantic concept of "Hispanidad." But it is a danger which can be avoided by continually opposing the preestablished category to the examination of the different forms of expression at the interior of the structure. The question of language itself, which has played such an important role in the definition of Brazilianity, may thus have a place in a more balanced perspective.

A stylistic tradition is established on the two levels of content and expression. To the system of content belong, first, the themes;

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to the system of expression, the linguistic and in a broader sense stylistic means. Our research will be spread over the two levels, which are complementary and interdependent. At the same time we will try to bring out the "meanings" which are concealed in whatever choice of content and expression, and which determine and motivate it.

### BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN BRAZILIAN LITERATURE

What first imposes itself on one who is trying to reveal through examination and classification of texts the structures which are inherent in the historical development of Brazilian literature is a series of well-defined and characterizing oppositions around which seem to be organized the different poetic expressions, the different ideological and esthetic choices of each author.

Most of the oppositions have their origin in precise historical events, are born of determined circumstances and social milieus. Others seem to be derived from the first, but as stylizations of *topóí* which are already literary.

On the surface (what linguists call the surface of the texts) these oppositions are numerous and varied, but as we shall see they are reducible to a small number of opposing pairs. In each case ideology fills these two coupled terms with different meanings and values, conferring on each sign, positive or negative, a *euphoric* or a *disphoric* connotation. And in this sense the significance of apparently eternal oppositions changes in time and in each work, throughout the panorama of the literature.

The first opposition presented to us in the works of voyagers, missionaries and court poets who are the authors of the 16th and 17th centuries in Brazil is the dichotomy New World/Europe, which makes concrete, by filling with a contingent historical meaning, the abstract opposition New/Old, of which the terms may coincide with the terms Present (or Future)/Past, at the time level, and at the space level, Here/There. According to whether the author is a historian, a missionary or a spokesman for the Portuguese court, the dichotomy New World/Europe may be embodied in pairs such as Tropical Natural Landscape/European Natural Landscape; Indian/White; Natural Man/Civilized Man;

Noble Savage/Corrupt European; Souls to be Saved/European (Portuguese) Evangelists; Colony/Mother Country.

The European who landed in the New World of America brought with him pre-formed oppositions which contained values such as Colony/Mother Country; Extra-European Man/European Man. But in the macrotext of Brazilian literature the oppositions which refer to these concepts and which later constitute the back-bone and recurrent obsessional theme of this literature were when on April 26, 1500 the Portuguese admiral Pedro Álvares Cabral took possession of the new territory in the name of the Catholic sovereign Dom Manuel I of Portugal, calling it Vera Cruz. The serialization of meanings began immediately. From the point of view of the conquerors (the only one which interests us here and the only one which we can verify since Brazilian literature begins with them) Vera Cruz, that is, the cross of Christ in the shadow of which was celebrated the first mass, was at the same time the symbol of domination and the hope for evangelization, a signal for navigators, a refuge in a past which was identified with the nature rite. The semic element Mother Country has a euphoric connotation. A positive sign, it is closely related to the values "civilization, tradition, culture, religion," while the element Colony has a disphoric connotation in regard to the same values and a euphoric connotation with the values "adventure, power, wealth and possibilities for evangelization."

The letter with which Pero Vaz de Caminha, ship historian, announced the discovery of the country to his sovereign appears on the one hand as the birth certificate of a Catholic and Portuguese Brazil and on the other hand (for us as well) as the first text in Brazilian literature. Throughout the centuries the latter would draw on the myths set down in the *Carta do Descobrimento* of Caminha: the seductive myth of an Eden-like Eldorado, a "vision of paradise," which Camões would introduce in his *Island of Venus*, a salvaged Atlantis for the safety of navigators; the myth of the Noble Savage which a weary and bored Europe would soon appropriate in order to entrust it (through the intermediary offices of Montaigne) with the destiny of its own redemption: the myth, which we must not underestimate when the navigator is a Latin, of an innocent and seductive exotic femininity (the noble female savage!), the myth-program of evangelism, instrument and

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mask, but also transfer and ethical justification of imperial conquest.

### COLONY/METROPOLIS

In the beginning the land was only the object of literature, seen from the outside through the eyes of voyagers who described its immensity and variety. Then little by little the process of putting down roots began. For the descriptive "journal" of the foreign voyager was substituted the poetic attempt of the settler, who used material from his surroundings (themes and terminology) as local color. Sometimes the epic exalting of the European homeland gave way to the glorification of the new continent. And Brazil became the subject instead of the object of literature. The point of view changed. The colonist-writers now felt that they were part of the conquered country, though they still made use of the opposing pair Conqueror/Conquered, as far as the natives were concerned. And in their works appeared pairs of the type Colony/Metropolis; Brazilian Portuguese/Metropolitan Portuguese; Brazilian/Portuguese.

Colony is in opposition to a mother country of which it was the reflection, a non-autonomous shadow. But every time the position became autonomous, the colony was the one which was trailed by the inexorable shadow of its matrix-past. Thus it is that the opposing pairs Colony/Metropolis may be rendered in the form of a visible metaphor such as Shadow/Body. When at first the shadow is the colony the qualitative passage to autonomy occurs at the moment when the roles are inverted and the colony becomes the body, relegating the metropolis to the function of shadow. Even though, on the Brazilian side, the same rage against Portugal continued, which in the 17th century had suggested to Gregório de Matos, the greatest of the Brazilian baroque poets—*the Boca do Inferno*—the opposition Maganos (Do-nothings)/Bestas (Beasts):

Que os brasileiros são bestas  
e estão sempre a trabalhar  
tôda a vida por manter  
maganos de Portugal.  
(For Brazilians are beasts of burden  
who work unceasingly)



all their lives to support  
the do-nothings of Portugal.)

#### DEFINITIONS A NEGATIVO

What is interesting about the Brazilian pairs in this larger system of opposition is the fact that each element of the pair originates and develops in literary *topos* from the negative of another reality which already existed in the culture of the first voyagers. The Portuguese did not arrive unsullied to colonize Brazil; he carried on the ships of Cabral his experience of the conquest of other continents, especially Africa. The dichotomy New World/Europe was thus a tracing for him of the African model with which he was familiar, Colony/Mother Country (Brazil/Portugal = Africa/Portugal). In the new land the colonists were essentially looking for, unsuccessfully in the beginning, those minerals which would have made Brazil the American equivalent of the *mina* of Guinea, and they saw and defined things only through the African prism. In the *Carta* of Pero Vaz de Caminha, for example, the description of the physical aspect and character of the inhabitants of the new land of Vera Cruz was a description *a negativo*. A differential description, in opposition to the human model which had been until then for the Portuguese colonialist the other pole of the dichotomy Conqueror/ Conquered, that is, the Negro of Guinea. The young Indian girls of Cabras will thus *no longer* have frizzy hair but long ebony locks falling softly on their shoulders; the skin color of the Indian will *no longer* be black but a reddish-brown; and his nose will *no longer* be flat like the Negro's but fine and elegant. Thus it is that from the beginning the series of negative (the country without) and secondary definitions, describing the physical and human landscape of Brazil, is installed and will characterize the entire Brazilian reality. This search for an autonomous characterization will be manifested and culminate literally in the choice made by Mário de Andrade (1928) of *Macunãima*, "O herói sem *nenhum* carácter," a hero without character and the symbolic representative of the country. It is with a mixture of sadness, pride and irony that this stylistic choice is made, in which there is the attempt to attribute a positive, definitive and selective character to the negative formula.

HISTORICAL OPPOSITIONS

Very soon, however, historical events offered other terms of local oppositions to the Brazilian man of letters. As soon as the Indian revealed himself to be refractory to civilization, not opposable to the White as a slave and not similar to him as a Catholic (the despair of Nobrega in *Diálogo sobre a Conversão do gentio!*) the importation of Negroes led to the formation of the pair Indian/Negro. Here we have a pair which can be structured in opposition. On the one hand, the Indian, nomad, cannibal, constitutionally rebellious and non-evangelizable; on the other, the Negro, hard-working, converted, and in this sense similar to the White in a system which has as coordinates labor on Earth and reward in Heaven. The pair may thus be also written Indian/Black: White. But if on the contrary these elements are used in relation to the hierarchy, that is, in relation to the pair Conqueror/Conquered, the opposition would be White/Indian: Black. In its turn the relationship White/Black will produce in the environmental structure of the *engenho*, that is, in the zone of the sugar plantations, the oppositions which are derived from the dichotomy Proprietor/Slave; *Casa Grande\*/Senzala\**;<sup>2</sup> *Menino de engenho\*/Moleque\**; *Saudade\*/Banzo\**. (While the White carried with him his Lusitanian *saudade* the Black remained anchored to the nostalgia he had for his lost homeland: *banzo* is derived from the word *mbanzo*, village, in Bantu). Again we have Catholic Olympus/Black Olympus; Afro-Brazilian Culture/European Culture; Slavery/Abolitionism.

From the expansion of the conquest toward the South and into the interior will be born the ecological oppositions, then the socio-economic oppositions which have for origin the dichotomy Development/Under-development. And we will have South (Industrialized)/North (Under-developed); Coast/Interior; *Povoado\*/Sertão\**; *Town/Roça*; *Fartura\*/Seca\**.

The pair Past/Future (Tradition/Innovation) as well as the pair Development/Under-development (or Rich/Poor) with which it often intersects presents the local oppositions South/North-east; Illiteracy/Culture; *Morro\*/Praia\**;<sup>3</sup> *Favela\*/Arranhaceu\**, but

<sup>2</sup> See glossary at end of this article for definitions of starred words.

also the pair Rio/São Paulo (which could be translated as Diversion/Commitment) to which may be added *Macumba\** (or Samba)/Political Commitment; the Land of the Carnival/the Land of Repression and Torture.

The dichotomy Religious Power/Military Power is more subtle. Carried over into the area *sertão* (now considered as an autonomous universe and not as an opposing pole) this has produced the pair *Cangaceiro\*/Beato\**, that is, an opposition which was widely exploited by the radical novel of the Thirties and passed into the new cinema with the tropical and committed films of Glauber Rocha. But in the new structure the two terms, instead of opposing each other, come together to constitute different aspects of the same revolt, the violent and irrational revolt of the *sertão* against the city.

#### LAND OF CONTRASTS/LAND OF CONVERGENCES

We have thus arrived at one of the key points of our discussion. More than a land of contrasts, so picturesquely described by Roger Bastide, Brazil in fact appears to us as a land of convergences.

We all know that in the anthropological reality of the country White and Indian, Black and White, Native and European, European and Asiatic, White and Yellow, Yellow and Black, do not oppose each other as racial abstractions but live together and become mixed as ingredients of historical individuals. These individuals may be designated as *tapuios\**, *caboclos\**, *curitobas\**, *mamelucos\**, Negroes, *cafusos\** or *mulatos\** as they differentiate socially and economically from the dominating class. But when they reach a certain social level (even though it is certainly more difficult for a Black than it is for a White) they are all Brazilians entirely apart from their skin color.

The culture of the country (in the broadest sense of the word, at the anthropological level as well as at the language, religious or artistic expression levels) is by definition composite. Sílvio Romero (1851-1914), the positivist historian of Brazilian literature, put this consideration as the foundation of his historico-sociological study: the distinguishing factor par excellence is *métissage*, physical and spiritual. Any study on any aspect of Brazilian history (including literary) cannot but take into account that we

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have here a case of a new and particular people. This people was born from the cross between Indian, Black and Portuguese, to which European and Oriental contributions were added in the course of the centuries: it suffices to recall the crusade, "Let us whiten the skin of the Brazilians," launched by the Paulists at the end of the 19th century to counterbalance the effects of abolition and slavery. In this people lives all the past of the country. Thus the "pre-Cabralian" Indian, found in the savage state, hunted and destroyed, lives on in the faces, rites, fears and names of White, Yellow, Black and Mulatto. The religious syncretism which derives from a superimposing of Catholicism on an underlying African mythology identifies the goddess of water, Yemanjá, with the Virgin Mary; Xangó with Saint George; and Yansã with Saint Barbara.

The Black of Brazil is never as black as the African or North American Black. At some ramification in his genealogy some event produced in him a lighter skin, which means that he no longer has a place in the Manichean opposition White/Black but in a whole gamut of color nuances. The differentiation is established, as we said above, on an economic basis rather than on pigmentation, even though most of the time there is a coincidence between skin color and social function. (A Recife woman said to me, "Black women today don't want to work, so now I have two white Negroes for the kitchen.") We could say, to use a not very original linguistic metaphor, that the distinction between White and Black, Indian and White, is phonetic, whereas in daily life we witness only oppositions of a phonological type. The Black is not necessarily a person with a black skin but one who "exercises the functions" of a Black.

#### BRAZILIAN CONVERGENCES—A STUDY OF MEANINGS

The argument of historical convergence with respect to conceptual opposition could be repeated for all the other terms of the oppositions we have listed. Brazil is a vast crucible, and nothing which concerns it is intelligible if that fact is not taken into account. Religion, with its Afro-Catholic rites, has a composite character, as does folklore, where Charlemagne, assimilated as Carro, is a friendly neighbor of Lampião and Pedro Malasartes, the Portu-

guese equivalent of the Spanish Juan de Urdemalas. In the literature *de cordel* of the North-east, a series of popular books peddled from door to door, the satanic adventures of Robert le Diable dialogue with the tales of Trancoso (José Lins do Rego wrote the name of Trancoso—"voltador a lo divino" of the 16th century of Boccaccio and Sacchetti—with a small letter, thus giving *trancoso* a vague flavor of something archaic, familiar and forgotten.) But also in their company are the zoomorph African fables, the Indian stories of the *Onça*; the *jabuti*\*; the Great Cobra.

The mixing does not stop when it reaches the limits of the large cities, which witness what Camõens called *mudanças*, mutations. Even they have a composite and contradictory character. Brasília is the new capital which fixes in cement and the modules of the future the centuries-old march of the adventurous *bandeiras*\* toward the interior, but the new city is already encircled by a belt of hovels with their inhabitants of the most varied colors and customs, living in a misery which dates from the most ancient times. Rio is the marvellous city of a thousand perspectives, where the abstract geometry of the skyscrapers is inserted into the exuberance of a luxuriant landscape with its baroque colors, curves and vegetation, but where the favelas continue to harbor abject poverty and the samba, the diversion of the Negro. São Paulo is the industrial antidote projected toward a future which materializes and dematerializes at each moment. It is the city of the upper middle class and of capital, but it is also the city of strong political involvement and a sordid metropolis teeming with the refuse of humanity.

To have an emblem, a symbol of this Brazilian vocation for syncretism, which is one of the "conspicuous" aspects of the Brazilian style, we could evoke the royal accoutrements designed by Debret, the painter of Napoleonic pomp, which the Emperor Dom Pedro wore when he romantically presented himself as a new Guatimozin; on his white tunic the "purple green" was the symbol of the virgin prairies, and over it, instead of the Nordic ermine, he wore a mantle of yellow toucan feathers, symbol of the historic continuity between empire and native chieftains.

In the Napoleonic geometry of the first national flag, again designed by Debret, the green of the Braganças and the yellow

of the Hapsburgs symbolized the green of the forests and the gold of the Brazilian mines. The armillary sphere of the Indian Company mixed with the cross of the Order of Christ to form, in a more elevated symbolism, the Southern Cross with its crown of stars representing the twenty provinces of the country. All was surmounted by the diamantine crown heraldically enhanced by branches of coffee and tobacco plants, symbols of the cultures which economically and socially sustained this agrarian monarchy.

When in 1889 the Republic replaced the monarchy the flag was also transformed. After a brief refusal of the past in which there was recourse to a flag copied from the Stars and Stripes of the United States (but in green and yellow) the positivist intellectuals returned to the former symbol of the country. But with the neo-classical style of Debret ceding to the Liberty style of Décio Vilares, with asymmetry replacing symmetry, we see the iconic armillary sphere give way to a more realistic blue circle, representing the starry sky with the Southern Cross in the exact position it occupied when it greeted from on high that radiant November 15 of liberty. In the center, a heraldic bar, the Comtian and positivist motto "Ordem e Progresso." A historic adventure which is most of all for us a history of meanings.

#### WHY OPPOSING PAIRS?

At this point another question arises. If Brazil manifests its vocation for syncretism in each of its accomplishments, why has Brazilian literature developed around pairs of oppositions? At first glance it seems that even the most "modern" works of this literature, such as the *Guesa Errante* of Sousândrade (1884) or the *Macunáima* of Mário de Andrade, instead of creating a Manichean hero, all town or all sertão, all White or all Black, all slave or all proprietor, all purist or all slang, have given us a sort of picaresque hero who during his adventures crosses all the social barriers and takes part in all the linguistic conventions of the country. But if we look closer, we see that these works in the end are bearers of a reduced and limited ideal, such as the transposed and metaphysical "Indianism" of *Guesa* or the folklorism of *Macunáima*. They in their turn (in spite of the definition of *Macunáima* as a hero without character) become Manichean. Why? Because a large part of Brazilian writing has been nourished, like

no other "colonial" literature, in America or elsewhere, on the opposition National Tongue/Portuguese.

At the expressive level, in the form of expression, each Brazilian author has always been faced with the ideological rather than the poetical dilemma, of knowing whether he should carve out his "eloquence" in Portuguese or assume at the beginning, by the choice he makes in a determined area, that a Brazilian language exists which is different from Portuguese.

The problem naturally arises in a different way if the writer is a romantic; if he devotes himself to regional novels; or if he is a modernist poet. And it again changes when the one who reflects on the problem is a philosopher, a politician or simply an expressionist writer who uses his material and even constructs it in a regionalist direction (as Guimarães Rosa may do) but always with the creative inventivity which is the privilege of the poet.

For several years the great writers (Murilo Mendes, Drummond, Cassiano Ricardo, João Cabral) and the avant-gardes (more active in Brazil than elsewhere: I am thinking in particular of the concretists and the Praxis group of São Paulo) have imposed on the country's culture new esthetic and cultural models, chosen from among the national and European writers who have been the most attentive to the linguistic question (which goes in a line from Gregório de Matos to Sousândrade, and to Mário and Oswald de Andrade, passing on the way Mallarmé, Joyce and Pound). There is not much argument in Brazil over whether it is necessary to write in Portuguese or in Brazilian—if Brazilian actually exists, as a linguistic manner if not as a language. The Brazilian writer "writes" and his words at once become the language popular forms draw on, as they do on popular songs, advertisements and films.

At the level of theory, however, the opposition exists and persists, and it is much more violently active than other pairs in opposition. What are the causes of this continuity which manifests itself, for example, at the level of popular culture, when the people proudly sing in the samba:

Nossa língua é brasileira  
já passou de português.



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(Our language is Brazilian  
Portuguese is finished.)

Even though today the cultured singer, such as Chico Buarque de Hollanda knows how to take advantage of a Brazilian phonological reality extremely distant from that of the Portuguese mother tongue and can electrify a public which is barely politically aware in having it respond to the song:

Afasta de mim esse cálice  
(Take this cup from me)

with the reprise of the refrain "cálice, cálice, cálice" which plays on the by now homophonic opposition in Brazilian, inconceivable in Portuguese:

cale-se, cale-se, cale-se  
(Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet)

The explanation which can be given for the continuity of this opposition may be simple or complex. But it belongs more to the psychologist or to a literary critic. The latter may describe the modalities of a phenomenon: the causes which produce it rest in the domain of opinion.

However, this hypothesis may be advanced. *It is precisely because he is transplanted, without an autochthonous origin, without his own language, without race, without religion, without a folklore which really belongs to him; it is precisely as an individual defined with the word "without" that the Brazilian builds all his literature as a constant meditation on his own essence.* The disparate instruments he uses, autonomist rhetoric and irony, self-exaltation and self-deprecation, are also the result of convergences and not of choice.

### REDUCTION OF THE OPPOSING PAIRS

If in fact we consider the extremely varied range of the pairs in opposition on which is superficially organized the entire question of Brazilian literature, we see that underlying this structure is a reduced and simplified pair of antagonists: Inferior/Superior, Below/Above. What activates each term of the opposing pairs is ideology. In respectively distinguishing the position of force (that which is found above and that which is



found below), from that of value (what is worth more and what is worth less) ideology gives meaning to the oppositions. The oppositions themselves remain the same. Even when the terms Below and Above are activated in relation to the pair Past/Future or Present/Future and the catalyst Hope gives the certainty of a future inversion of the relationship, in semantically changing each of the terms at the level of reality.

By means of this pair Brazilian literature from the 16th century up until today accomplishes its process of self-definition. On the collective level, it serves to describe a "different" geographic and human landscape. On the individual level it justifies the lyric effusion which follows the introspective verification of *Homo Brasilensis*.

The fact of having a language in common with Portugal leads the Brazilian search toward a more complete and more conditioning self-analysis than that which all the great European peoples have had to make in order to recognize themselves as entities on the historical level. The self-definition in this case is more difficult than that of the North American because the latter has never had a relationship of subjugation toward his country of origin; well before the sanction of independence he had acquired a moral autonomy which was justly his. It was a self-analysis which differed from the self-searching of the Spanish-American, who had a relationship of Colony/Metropolis with Spain, as the Brazilian had with Portugal, but who for the last century and a half has been able to oppose to the mother country (which is *one*) not a colonial political reality but a *multiplicity* of new national realities. The only monarchy (until 1889) among the turbulent republics of South America: the fruit of a peaceful separation from the mother country, a separation which was defined as "legitimate and legitimist independence", and where it was the sovereign (again a convergence) who played the role of liberator, Brazil carved out in the American mid-nineteenth century its own myth of identification and isolation (an isolation which still endures) in the shadow of the Empire.

This is why Brazil repeats on the American continent the condition of linguistic and sociological singularity which characterizes Portugal in Europe and in the Iberian peninsula itself,

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defined in the measure in which it is "different." In the same way as to be Portuguese in Europe means essentially not to feel oneself to be an appendage of Spain, to be Brazilian in America has long meant not to be Spanish-American. Here we have another negative definition: Brazil  $\neq$  Spanish America, which implies the pair Brazil/Spanish America.

Still another negative definition which weighs on the culture of a country which, with its 100,000,000 inhabitants against the 280,000,000 inhabitants of all the other Hispanophone republics together, and its 10,500,000 square meters of area, has difficulty in separating itself and differentiating itself in the cultural profile of the world, to be recognized as a country which expresses one of the two ways in which Spanish-American influence has developed on the American continent instead of being one of the twenty South American republics.

#### CONDITIONING AND MYTHS OF THE BRAZILIAN DIALECTIC

Oppositions create a network of conditionings in Brazilian literature in which the writer, of whatever epoch and tendency, finds himself caught. Myths are born, like that of *ufanismo*\* which may be translated in essence by the opposition We/They, which comprises the opposition Brazilian landscape/European landscape, where the accent is on the first term of the opposing pair:

Nosso céu tem mais estrêlas  
Nossas várzeas tem mais flores  
Nossos bosques tem mais vida  
Nossa vida mais amores.

(Gonçalves Dias, 1847)

(Our sky has more stars  
Our countryside more flowers  
Our forests more life  
Our life more love.)

These myths disappear when, around 1938, the idea of Brazil as a New Country was replaced by the idea of an under-

developed country. This idea had been anticipated in 1928 in the negative manifesto of Modernism, the *Retrato do Brasil* of Paulo Prado: a disenchanted and pessimistic book which opposed to the existential joy of Gonçalves Dias the defeatist slogan “numa terra radiosa vive um povo triste” (in a radiant land lived a sad people). Similar opposition to the romantic exaltation of the Indian, symbol of the race and represented by the romantic Peri de Alencar, was the desolate disparagement of Jeca Tatu of Monteiro Lobato.

At the base, however, there is always the opposing pair Superior/Inferior: Above/Below, which the pairs Past/Present, Past/Future, Present/Future constantly intersect and fill with history. There is a dichotomy peculiar to this literature which appears in folklore as well as in a number of poets, among whom are the ironic Kilkerry and the crepuscular Manuel Bandeira. It is the pair in which the opposition Below/Above is incarnated in the pair *Sapo* (Toad)/*Lua* (Moon).

Confronted with the moon, or the star which shines in the firmament, whether it be the star itself or, metaphorically, woman, the Brazilian poet pictures himself as a toad croaking in a swamp. The opposition has been considered as a sign of an obvious *ternura* but more than that it is the indication of a consciousness of inferiority or perhaps of an unsolvable subordinate condition. Is the *sapo* the Black, never equal to the White, even in the country of mixed races?

The question leads us back to the beginning of our discussion. Will we find the same system of oppositions if we submit other homologous literary systems to the same kind of examination, which is possible for the systems of all literatures born in a climate of colonialism? This is the question I ask the specialists of Spanish-American literature. My opinion (though it is based on a non-specialized knowledge of this literature) is that American literature in Spanish, perhaps because it is expressed under conditions of a greater liberty, especially political (at least until a short time ago) is written, in addition to around the situational pair Superior/Inferior, also around other pairs of a more universal nature, primarily the Manichean opposition Good/Evil, a semantic cell of a large percentage of the literature of all countries. Perhaps the homologue of the system

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of oppositions which make up the surface network of Brazilian literature should be sought not in Latin American but in Africa.

GLOSSARY

arranhacéu	skyscraper
bandeiras	expeditions sent to explore the interior of Brazil
banzo	nostalgia of African Negro slaves
beato	pious hypocrite; santon
caboclos	person of bronze skin, offspring of Indian and White
cafuzos	person of mixed Indian and Negro blood
cangaceiro	outlaw of the interior of Brazil
cariboca (or)	person of mixed European and Indian blood
curiboca	large residence of the Whites, especially of the plantation owners
casa grande	abundance
fatura	shacks on the type of those of a Bidonville, on the slopes of the <i>morros</i>
favela	a Brazilian turtle
jabuti	rite and fetishist cult of African origin, influenced by Christianity
macumba	offspring of White and Creole
mamelucos	the master's son
menino de engenho	<i>negrillon</i>
moleque	rocky hills at times covered with vegetation, very numerous in Rio
morro	mulatto
mulato	village
povoado	beach
praia	plantation, cleared land
roça	strong nostalgia
saudade	dryness, lack of nourishment
sêca	shacks for sugar mill workers
senzala	semi-explored interior of Brazil, savanna or jungle
sertão	person of mixed blood with brown skin and straight black hair
tapuios	pride, vanity of the Brazilian people who think of themselves, sometimes with irony, as the "greatest country in the world," "the best in the world."
ufanismo	