

## MARANHÃO – MANHATTAN: a bridge between us and the U.S. A dissonant view of Brazilian Literature and Culture.

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“Há surpresas no passado, como no futuro.  
Depende de como você solariza o objeto...”  
(Décio Pignatari, 1997)

“Do passado ao porvir, neste presente”  
(Sousândrade, Canto II, *O Guesa*, 1868)

“as the twentieth century winds down  
the nineteenth begins  
again”  
(Jerome Rothenberg, 1990)

“S'estalonen l'infern e el paradís.  
I el bressol i la tomba, i les paraules  
i el cos: país natal, exili”.  
(Maria-Mercé Marçal, 1988)

### Introduction

What I would like to present here is a thought experience that focuses on thinking about Brazil outside Brazil, literally and physically think about Brazil from Stanford and take advantage of this to think about Brazil outside itself, not as a foreigner might see it but rather as how a native might find it strange, in order to reflect about what makes it different and what we can find within Brazil that differs from itself.

I'll start very briefly by introducing myself as a Brazilianist. Then, I will present a debate that involves two distinct, yet co-related themes. The first one is the work of Joaquim de Sousândrade, a poet of the Brazilian Romanticism period, who was born in Maranhão in 1832 and died there in 1902. In his poem *O Guesa* (1884/88?), he establishes *literary diplomatic relations* with Hispano-America and the

United States, particularly New York, where he lived for fourteen years. Sousândrade was characterized as an “extravagant provincial” writer and became a case of exception in the history of Brazilian literature: he was first viewed as a minor writer and only 60 years after his death was he recognized by the avant-guard poets of Concretism, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos (1964, 1982, 2002), as the most interesting poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil and the precursor of the main trends of 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry. I’ll discuss Sousândrade’s work, more specifically his poem “O Inferno de Wall Street” (1877/1888), which I will compare to Federico Garcia Lorca’s book *Poet in New York* (1929-30), debating the impact of their poems and their lives.

The second theme doesn’t have to do with a single author, but rather with a collective, the Amazonian Indian peoples. What interests me is to highlight that these *societies against the state*, to use the famous expression coined by Pierre Clastres (1974), produce a cosmology, an ontology, and a mobile epistemology which were translated by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro into two fundamental concepts: *perspectivism* and *multinaturalism*. These concepts contrast with our Western *relativism* and *multiculturalist* cosmologies. In an open conclusion, my intention is to apply these concepts to a theory of fiction, asking whether it is possible to read Western poetry/fiction as an anthropologist reads non-Western culture. That is, instead of reading Amerindian culture from the point of view of our cultural code, I propose to read – or unread – our culture from the point of view of the native Indian code, so as to move our critical thoughts to unknown territory. What I intent to present here is the beginning of this debate. In both topics, the purpose is to re-think literature – whether it is the narrative of Brazilian Literary History, or our western definition of literature.

### **Brasil/Brazil (S/Z)**

As a scholar of the literature and culture produced in Brasil, I propose to think about the relationship between Brasil (spelt with an s) and Brazil (spelt with a z), S/Z, similar to the name of the famous book by Roland Barthes. We can say that the S represents the local, *Brasil*, and the Z, the universal, *Brazil*. But as a structural

opposition, they do not mean anything by themselves; their significance exists only in their relationship. As a Brazilianist I posit myself not in Brasil nor in Brazil, but between them, in the middle. To escape this structural opposition between the local and the universal I would like to propose here a *multiversal* perspective (Sloterdijk, 1987, Marquard, 1999), which includes *Brasil in Brazil*, as a bridge between us.

Therefore, instead of Brazilian roots, I propose to look at what, inside Brazil, remains outside; what inside is outside because it crosses borders and goes beyond territorial boundaries, and also because it escapes the standard measures and is, therefore, defined as eccentric, outside the conceptual center. It is an attempt to think about the multiplicity of relations instead of the plurality of identities. The problem with the concept of national identity is that it admits the plural, but not the multiple; it can admit the plus 1, but not the minus 1, which relates to that element that escapes the standard model and claims the right to a different singularity.

Thus, I discuss Brasil starting from that aspect that escapes it, by asking: 1) how can we understand the work of a dissonant writer such as Sousândrade? His main character, the Guesa, is not a dead Indian native from the past who is transformed into a hero of the origins of the Brazilian nation; rather, he is a live anti-hero who becomes the symbol of a pan-American world. The guesa (which means “errant, homeless”) is a legendary character taken from a myth of a Colombian Indian tribe, the Muíscas (described by Alexander von Humboldt (1810-13) and, in the poem, the character is at the same time, the Inca, the Tupi, the Araucano, the Timbira, the Sioux, and Sousândrade himself, an errant, a homeless, a man without a nation. The Guesa is a metamorphic character, multi-ethnic, transcontinental, American; and 2) how to incorporate (“embody”) the native Brazilian Indians in their differences instead of eliminating them through our similarities? They are ethnic minorities inside the Brazilian territory. Whenever they were included in our national identity, they were portrayed as exotic and folkloric. That is why it is preferable to think about them not as part of Brazil, but as situated in Brazil; not as a group linked to a theory of Brazil, but to think about them for their presence and for their active and autonomous cultures (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 1992, note 3).



What I propose, then, is to question, through a comparative perspective, what kind of different singularity we can find in Brazilian Literature and Culture of intercultural cross-roads that mutually affect and alter one another and that could be important in a multiversal point of view.

### **Theme 1. Sousândrade**

While living in New York, Joaquim de Sousa Andrade changed his name to Sousândrade (with this dissonant sonority) so that it would have the same number of letters, eleven, as in Shakespeare, his favourite poet, according to his legendary biography. We could call him our “Shakespeare from Maranhão” or our Ulisses because he lived in a “classic” São Luis where Homer was translated (Rodrigues, 2000), being himself a Greek teacher at the end of his life, and also because he spent 30 of his 72 years traveling (“Maranhão is the Itaca of this new Ulisses” as pointed out by the Campos (2002)). However, above all, it is preferable to situate him in our *pobre arrabal sudamericano*, as Borges situates Funes. Still, unlike Funes, a character who remembers everything, Sousândrade remained forgotten for years and, even today, is rarely mentioned in the Brazilian literature landscape.

Born in 1832 in the state of Maranhão, in the Northeast of Brazil, he lived on the Island of São Luis, which, in those days, was much closer geographically to the Amazon Region and culturally to Portugal than to Rio de Janeiro. He died there in 1902. His literary work belongs to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (his first book, *Harpas Selvagens*, was published in 1857). In Brazil, Sousândrade was a contemporary of Gonçalves Dias, José de Alencar, and Machado de Assis, who was 7 years younger than he was.

A firm republican, he could not stand Dom Pedro the second, whom he ridicularized in his work, and never received any financial support from the court (Dom Pedro II supported many writers financially). Consequently, Sousândrade spent his entire fortune (he came from a wealthy family of cotton farmers) financing the publication of his books and his constant trips. He can be described as a traveler-poet (anti-sedentarian): Sousândrade first traveled around Europe (France and

England) and then moved to New York with his daughter where he lived from 1871 until 1885, having also traveled widely around Latin America.

Because Sousândrade lived between two islands – the island of São Luis, in Maranhão, and the island of Manhattan – he may be defined as an island-poet because he was at the same time connected and disconnected from Brazilian national territory. He was also an island-poet because he was isolated from his peers, the other Brazilian writers.

As we know, Brazil became independent from Portugal in 1822 and was governed by a monarchy until 1889. So, what we call Brazilian “literature” was born at this moment (of course, before that we had Colonial texts belonging to Portuguese America) as a literature that supported the Nation-State. This situation coincided with the presence of Romanticism in Brazil in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century - a movement that instead of generating a critical, theoretical and reflective view, similar to what happened among the first German and English romantics, sustained the Nation-State, represented by D. Pedro II, who supported and financed it. It is, in general, a sentimental Romanticism, with well-behaved words, created by public employees working for the construction of a Brazilian national identity (Cf. Guimarães, 1988; Costa Lima: 2008: 155-158).

Sousândrade does not follow the common trends of Brazilian Romanticism - more than a Brazilian writer he could be defined as a *pan-American writer*. From this place in Brazil, the Island of São Luis, Sousândrade showed that he himself was aware of his difference and how difficult it would be for his work to be accepted, when he said (in a sentence that has become famous): “I have heard, twice, that *O Guesa Errante* would only be read 50 years after my death. I was saddened – the frustration of someone who writes 50 years too soon” (1877:489).

Sadness and frustration, but it is also a declaration of hope in the future, like a bottle thrown to sea, similar to what he said at another moment of his life: “I continue”. And this is what really happened when he was re-introduced as one of the main cases of poetic injustice in the history of Brazilian literature, as a “clandestine earthquake” to quote the beautiful definition by the Campos brothers. They



published the book, *ReVisão de Sousândrade*, in 1964, together with the Brazilian literary critic, Luiz Costa Lima, who wrote: “Sousândrade is the only Brazilian poet who, before modernism, anticipated forms that would only later be developed in the international poetic heritage” (2002: 477).

### **The Poem**

Sousândrade’s most important work, written in the course of almost 40 years, *O Guesa Errante* is a narrative poem comprising 13 cantos (some of which are unfinished) and 13 thousand verses. It was published in New York in 1876 and 1877, entitled *O Guesa Errante*; and later in London, in 1884? [88?], entitled only *O Guesa*.

As it was said before, its main character is a sacrificial myth of the Muíscas Indians of Colombia (described by Humboldt, 1810-13). The name Guesa means “errant, homeless” and it is the name of a child destined to be sacrificed after traveling for five years, when a new cycle begins with the choice of a new guesa. In the poem, the story of the character blends with Sousândrade’s biography and his trips through the American continent.

### **A Vision of two hells**

The two most contemporary and most interesting parts of *O Guesa* are two ritualistic moments, two infernal moments, both comic and satirical: a fragment from Canto II and another from Canto X, which have become known by subtitles that do not appear in the original edition: “A Dança do Tatuturema” and the “Inferno de Wall Street”. They correspond to the two “Walpurgis Nights” in Goethe’s *Faust*, as pointed out by the author himself. The poem describes two hells: the hell of the Amazon jungle (Tatuturema) and the hell of the modern city (Inferno de Wall Street) represented by the New York Stock Exchange Market.

Through the first hell, Sousândrade provides us with an absolutely unique satirical description of the Amazon in those days and allows us to study the universe of Amazonian Indian tribes, a topic which has recently become the main field for theoretical experimentation in anthropology in Brazil (as we shall see in the second theme of this essay). Through the second hell, he does something extraordinary



when he gives a poetic description of the ebullient capitalism in North America in those years. The interesting thing is exactly the contrast between the two cantos: on the one hand, a description of corrupted Amazonian tribes; on the other hand, the corruption brought about by money moving the circuit of literature; on one side, the world of the gift, on the other, the world of the debt (commodities).

### Maranhão-Manhattan

Like the opening scene of a play, the poem starts with a fall: the physical descent of the Guesa from the Andes towards the Amazon River. In this downward movement, the Guesa arrives in the first hell in the Amazon Region. Leaving this Inferno, the Guesa will start walking to the second hell in the opposite direction. If on the first he goes down the Andes towards the Amazon, on the second, he goes up, from Maranhão to Manhattan.

1.(Guesa having crossed the ANTILHAS, believes himself rid of the XEQUES and enters the NEW-YORK-STOCK-EXCHANGE; the VOICE, from the wilderness:)

-- Orpheus, Dante, Æneas, to hell  
Descended; the Inca must ascend...  
= *Ogni sp'ranza lasciate,*  
*Che entrate ...*  
-- Swedenborg, do future worlds impend?

That's the first stanza; the answer comes in stanza108:

(SWEDENBORG answering *later*:)

-- There are future worlds: republic,  
Christianity, heav'n, Lohengrim.  
This new world foments:  
Patents,  
*Vanderbilt-North, South-Serafin.*

The world that is decadent in the Amazon jungle is the ebullient world of the Stock Exchange Market, the world of patents, of railways, of millionaire families such



as the Vanderbilt: an effervescent world that has Mammon, the god of money, as its prince and king – the god of speculation, the symbol of the “golden years” of North American History (1870-1884). I can say that the myth of the *El-dorado* is transformed into the *Gilded Age* of North-American republic. The Inferno ends with the dissolution of language and the sacrifice of the guesa-poet by the financial agents known as the Bears.

– Bear... Bear is ber'beri, Bear... Bear...  
= Mammumma, mammumma, Mammão!  
– Bear... Bear... ber'!... Pegàsus...  
Parnasus...  
= Mammumma, mammumma, Mamão.

The end of this second Inferno presents us with names used for financial agents, Bears, which can be compared to the dancing bear Atta Troll in the satirical poem written by Heinrich Heine (1847). In Heine's poem, the character runs away from humans, abandons his mate Mumma and defends an egalitarian society. In the last line of the sousandradian Inferno, the term “Mammuna” appears, a name that puts together mamma (mother in German), Mammacocha (the Inca Godness), “mumma”, and “Mammão”, the god of money, also a symbol of the bankruptcy of the sacrificed poet-guesa Sousândrade.

### The three differences

Because of these special Cantos, Sousândrade is seen as a pioneer. I can say that he was the first in three main aspects:

1) He is the first indianist in Brazil to portray the contemporary native Indian from the Amazon River, corrupted by the white men and not the dead idealized Indian.

2) Sousândrade is the first author in the Americas to write a pan-American poem. As the Italian historian Claudio Cuccagna said, his pan-Americanism is “one of a kind in all the continent during the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (2004:54). Written 10 years before *Nuestra America* by José Martí, Sousândrade proposes the total union between

the South and the North in the 1880s.

3) Besides these two aspects, Sousândrade is the first one to put into poetry the world of the Stock Exchange Market, in a style that uses, at the same time, the English limericks, the Iberian tradition of ballads, and the headlines of North-American newspapers, creating a satirical and synthetic poem that is “unique worldwide” (Augusto de Campos) and the first of its kind (published in 1876-77). The *Guesa* allegorizes the situation of modern poets: the *guesa*-poet who is sacrificed in a world where the god of finances, Mammon, eats up the god of poetry, the Muse.

Because it's impossible to be the first without committing some transgressions (Cf. Gumbrecht (1998: 35), I would say that Sousândrade interests us today because he is a writer who crosses boundaries, in space and in time: he crosses geographical boundaries in his constant trips, in his pan-American poem, going beyond his national limits; and he crosses temporal boundaries because he goes beyond the limits of his time.

### **From Pre to Post-everything**

As pointed out by Augusto de Campos (2002a), Sousândrade is a “pre-everything”: “Sousândrade: pre-everything; pre-collage and pre-montage in the satirical stanzas of “*Inferno de Wall Street*”, .... The boldness of experimentation in all senses (...) A miracle of invention...”. The interesting thing is that Augusto de Campos is the author of an important poem called “*Post-everything*” (1984). We can thus establish a line for the poetry of invention in Brazil that goes from pre-everything Sousândrade to post-everything Augusto de Campos.

In a synchronic view, it is also possible to study Sousândrade's works as a point of convergence of distinct traditions. Looking back in time, *O Guesa* includes numerous intertexts with the Chronicles of discovery and conquest of the New World (to Columbus, to Vespuccio, to Caminha, especially Bartolomé de Las Casas as well as Garcilaso de La Vega, and others as Lopez de Gomara). On his Romantic present, *O Guesa* establishes dialogs with travel writers such as Humboldt, Spix and



Martius, and Ferdinand Denis or other European writers such as Chateaubriand, Byron, and Goethe. We can also draw parallels with North-American literature, in particular Emerson and Walt Whitman. In relation to Brazilian and Hispano-American literature, we can discuss the epics and indianist texts. If we look forward, as I have already mentioned, Sousândrade allows the simultaneous study of modern poets.

### **The poetics of concreteness**

Campos compares Sousândrade's poems to Pound's *Cantos*. I, however, would like to compare him to Federico Garcia Lorca who will contrast his "agrarian complex" to the extra-human architecture of the city of New York during the crash of the Stock Market in 1929.

Like two peripheral looks, Lorca and Sousândrade experienced, half a century apart, the city of New York as a place where the capitalist world was rising (in the case of Sousândrade) and the great crash of the Stock Market in 1929 (Lorca). Their poems show us the impact of the Stock Market and the city of New York. Here I mean impact as the force of the event on the body. Lorca named it his "lyrical impressions". Sousândrade created a performatic poem.

They are both poems to be heard, read aloud. Sousândrade's canto is like an opera. Lorca's is a *cante jondo* mixed with African drums. So, more than representing the Stock Market, they use procedures that make it present. In this sense, the Stock Market and the city of New York would not be just the context from which their work emerges, but the referent, the thing itself put into words, enacted. And at each re-reading, that world emerges.

Moreover, both poems are complex for their incorporation of distinct cultural traditions. In Lorca: the gitano, the black man from Harlem, the Christian Spanish man, and even the crocodile in New York... they all compose a great masquerade. In Sousândrade: the muísca Indian, the Incan warrior, the Amazonian girl, the North-American, the Stock Market broker, all compose an operistic chant. That is why reading them produces a great feeling of freedom: they produce a kind of "universal singularity", a *theatrum mundi*.



One of the issues that I raise here concerns the relationship between the economy of the financial world of the Stock Market and the poetic economy, between poetry and money. We know that this topic has been widely explored in modern literature as an opposition: poets affirming that poetry is useless if compared to the usefulness of the market. What I suggest here is that we need to re-think this relationship as being not merely a contrast but a paradoxical convergence.

I'd like to suggest that this contact between poetic sensitivity and the world of finances is marked simultaneously by a negative and positive side. On the positive side, it is as if the Stock market world itself and the city generated new thoughts, a new way of connecting ideas and words; and accentuating in both the world of the accumulation of capital – economic and cultural, as an addition of complexity. On the negative side, the contact between capitalism and poetry symbolized by the Stock Market reaches such a state that part of the poem “crashes” with the explosion or implosion of the words (and the poets) themselves.

It is not a coincidence that some of the main poets who lived this situation had tragic political fates. Think of Ezra Pound, for instance, with his *Cantos*, denouncing the idolatry of money (the “usurocracy”). Think of Maiakovski who went through New York in 1925 some years before Garcia Lorca. All – Pound, Maiakovski, and Garcia Lorca – united by similar tragic political fates, whereas Sousândrade had the typical destiny of a cosmopolitan intellectual in the province, isolated and marginalized.

Sousândrade (as described by his biographer Frederick Williams) dies alone, seen as a crazy weird man, without money, “eating stones”, as he himself said (he sold stones from the wall of his house to a construction company). But it was he – from his *arrabal* – who created the symbolical image of the guesa-poet. The errant poet that is going to be sacrificed or that sacrifices himself on the world political stage, sacrificed in the modern world whose symbol is the stock market. It is no longer Heinrich von Kleist's suicide as a work of art. It is the sacrificial death as the symbolic or true end of poets in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I come to the second theme I mentioned in the beginning: the Amerindian



thought from the Amazonian tribes. And I do this to pay homage to these poets and to suggest a possible alternative for our thought about the Arts in today's world.

### **The second theme: The Amerindian thought and the symbology of alterity**

The most interesting thought produced in Brazil today comes from the field of anthropology of Amazonian Indians, which can be extended to all Americas. This thought involves a network that starts with the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and relates to the philosopher of science, Bruno Latour, and by extension, to Peter Sloterdijk, and a number of other anthropologists: Marilyn Stharten, Roy Wagner, Alfred Gell, James Clifford.

The Amazonian Indians produce a mobile epistemology which was translated by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro into two fundamental concepts: *perspectivism* and *multinaturalism*, both of interest to Western philosophy. These concepts contrast with our Western relativism and multiculturalist cosmologies.

For us, all beings, whether they are human or non-human, live in a single world, objective, natural, universal, and which is represented (only by humans) in distinct cultural ways. In our ontology, there is only one nature and many human cultures – that is why it is called multiculturalism.

In multinaturalist perspectivism, the opposite is true: all beings, whether they are human or non-human – animals, gods, spirits – are subjects capable of thinking and socializing, in various degrees (Lima, 1996). Among themselves, they see themselves as humans and “they experience their own habits in the form of culture”. “But the things that they see are different” (Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 470). In this ontology, there is one single culture and many natures – that is why it is called multinaturalism (it is simply the multiplication of nature).

This variety depends on the point of view of the subject, which in turn, depends on the body he is wearing. It does not depend on a mental representation of the world, but it depends on the body one has. Thus, animals see in the same way as we do different things, because their bodies differ from ours.

### Examples

For example, with my human body, what I see as blood, is maize beer to the jaguar. What I perceive as maggots in rotting meat, is grilled fish to a vulture. What for me are feathers of a bird are regarded as body decorations or cultural instruments by the bird itself. Thus, what is nature for me (blood, maggots, feathers) is culture for the animals in their habitat (beer, grilled fish, clothes) (Cf. Viveiros de Castro, 1998: 470).

Only the shamans have the ability to cross and travel inter-species and to have other points of views, from other bodies; they are the *cosmic diplomats*, like “transpecific beings”: “The animal clothes that shamans use to travel the cosmos are not fantasies but instruments: they are akin to diving equipment, or space suits, and not to carnival masks. The intention when donning a wet suit is to be able to function like a fish, to breathe underwater, not to conceal oneself under a strange covering” (Viveiros de Castro, 1998:482). The body is like a piece of clothing that must come to life by the one that occupies it. A body that can always be metamorphosed.

I also could describe a poet as someone who is able to move intra and inter-species and translate other worlds (extra and non-human) into words. In our Western culture, artists have always been able to occupy distinct points of view: they are capable of seeing what a jaguar sees, they are capable of metamorphosis, of transforming themselves. It is not surprising that *Metamorphosis* by Ovídio is the paradigm of the world of fiction. (cf. Stierle, 12)

### Proposition

These Amerindian concepts open amazing possibilities of new thoughts. Questioning and inverting our separation of nature and culture, it also offers the possibility – and here is my proposal – to question our separation of real and fiction which is what I’m interested in discussing here.

In a world marked by “cosmologic transformism”, in which all beings can continuously transform into other beings, what is imagination and what is real? I mean, where does that place the separation of truth and lie, reality and fiction, from



the point of view of the Amerindian perspectivism?

Because these concepts are derived from mythical narratives, they are useful for a better and more complex understanding of the world of fiction, much better than our thought derived from modern western sciences and its radical distinction between representation and reality. These concepts act on a register that is mobile – the two things – fiction and reality – can exist simultaneously.

In our thought, we place reality on one side and fiction on the other side; the former exists objectively and the latter does not exist objectively – it is the fruit of imagination. The former is, the latter isn't. In multinaturalist perspectivism, they both exist, they are both real, they are both fictional – what is and what isn't will depend on who it is for: I can wonder that for the fictional character, his world exists and is real; we, on the outside, are the ones who do not exist for him; and vice-versa.

According to our relativism, the best writers are the ones who allow us to have another vision of our world (that is also perspectivism as described by W. Iser, the idea of a duplication of our world that we could see from outside and put into perspective). According to multinaturalism (and this is the derivation I am proposing), the best writers are the ones who allow us to have a view of another world that is no longer ours. This other world would then be autonomous, as a world that exists distinctly from ours, but truly exists (virtually for us but effectively for the beings in the world of fiction). It is just another world to where the artists, like the shamans or cosmic diplomats, have access to and come back to tell us.

In this sense, I am capable of describing the effect of presence of that which we call imaginary worlds. Multinaturalism allows us to read fiction not as an inexistent world, but as a presence – not as an absence – that I can access via imagination; a special type of emergence that I can only visit, much like the way I visit a dream when I sleep – an immaterial existence (in the sense that Deleuze uses when he talks about art and estoicism and their signs), but which affects us, effectively.

There is a sense of urgency to this proposal. My thesis is that, unlike the Indian tribes and the fear and respect that the shamans require, we ignore what poets tell us because we think that what they write is *only literature*; in spite of all that has

been written, we do not take them seriously, for real; we do not take literature seriously as an existential, social, psychological, ecological production. From my point of view, we need to re-think the magical value of fiction without characterizing it as exoteric or exotic. We need to re-think the usefulness of poetry without limiting it to business. The problem is: how do we do this?

For example, experience seeing our world through the eyes of literature – as if we were a character inside a book watching the world that exists outside our own fiction, placing ourselves in its body/under its point of view. It is a type of borgean experiment. Maybe we need to invent a policy of imagination. That means considering what fiction tells us at the same level of what nature sciences tell us; at the same level of what philosophy tells us, granting it the same rights. Maybe we need to re-think the famous expression ‘suspension of disbelief’: suspend the disbelief of the moderns and sustain the literality (not only the *literariety*) of what the fiction writers themselves say.

The times we live in today are times of vertiginous changes. Like Bruno Latour says (this incredible philosopher of modern sciences): “We can’t yet measure this change, but there is big change” (interview to V. Castro). This new philosophy, which questions the idea that we “have never been modern”, is in fact questioning Disenchantment (*Entzauberung*). We need to hallucinate, as Sloterdijk says.

This Amerindian thought opens amazing possibilities of finding alternatives for what Gotthard Gunther synthesized as our 25 centuries of European metaphysics and technology, which are based on a monovalent ontology and a bivalent logic. Regarding the former, it affirms that the being is and the non-being isn’t; bivalent logic states that what is true isn’t false, and what is false isn’t true, *tertium non datur*. According to Sloterdijk, this classic metaphysics is not capable of describing cultural phenomena such as tools, signs, works of art, machines, books, and all kinds of artifacts that are, he says, “by its own constitution, hybrid, with a spiritual component and a material component”. He explains that our way of separating body and soul, spirit and matter, subject and object is not capable of really perceiving these things; it cannot really explain what they are.



### **Cultures of presence**

Therefore, the concepts of perspectivism and multinaturalism are the most inventive and innovative ones I have had the chance to read about lately. They allow us the opportunity to re-think our way of talking about literature and arts. As we have seen, Sousândrade was also an innovative and pioneering poet. And these two themes may be better understood and linked by the concept of *cultures of presence*, those that have the body as its thinking center.

In the poetry of Sousândrade, it is his physical presence, the contact, the impact on his body, that leads him to create two pioneering poems: *Tatutureka* and *Inferno de Wall Street*, performatic poems, a pandemonium.

In much the same way, the Amerindian concepts relate themselves to the body: it is my body that shows me the world I can see. If I had the body of a jaguar, the world I would see would not be the same one that I see with my human body. Thus, the “importance of embodiment in the Amazonian societies”, the symbolic importance of food, of a “memory theory that writes it in the flesh, and more broadly speaking, a theory of knowledge that locates itself in the body” (Viveiros de Castro, 1998, 481)

### **Open Conclusion**

I started this presentation by talking about the importance of being outside Brazil in order to discuss what stays outside, what is kept outside the center. What interests me is what type of contribution Brazilian literature and culture can offer within an international perspective. And this contribution is not something that is ready to be used, but something that needs to be discovered and built through cooperation, mainly because it is kept hidden in its origin.



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