

INTRODUCTION¹

Mapping

Mapa de Lopo Homem II, kindly made available by the artist Adriana Varejão, incites an excavation of Brazilian contemporaneity, in search for the roots and present mechanisms causing profound inequalities and injustices scarring its tissue, and for new disruptive and libertarian emergencies. The nautical chart -here evoking the work of the XVI century cartographer of the Portuguese Court - supported the imperial enterprise of territorial conquer and exploitation of peoples and natural resources in the *Mundus Novus*, neatly categorized according to a system of representation that codified world regions outside the European center in terms of naturalized subjection to it. Varejão appropriates this imaginary and disrupts its ascetic tidiness, giving it a scatological body. We have before us a desecrated map, which recovers the obscured violence that accompanied colonial expansion and outlasted it.²

The cartography of human suffering is a recurrent figure in some criticism to colonialism, which deserves center stage in postcolonial scholarship. In the writing of the Afro-Brazilian Beatriz do Nascimento, Alex Ratts associates the *corpo* (body) with a map of a distant country (Ratts 61). Nascimento works with the memory of such remote location and its resilient sores, to find a house in the *sendas* (alleys) (qtd. in Ratts 71). These tropes point out to the materiality and currency of the colonial past and its recovery, in an attempt to *make feel* and reveal the usurped bodies of its subalterns. They affiliate with Franz Fanon's exposure of "the gangrene ever present at the heart of the colonial domination" (103); with Eduardo Galeano's denouncement of Latin America's *venas abiertas* (open veins) – a region pray to colonial and

¹ I am grateful to Emanuelle Santos' and Flavia Dzodan's careful reading and am indebted to their comments.

² For further analysis of *Mapa de Lopo Homem* elucidating the relationship between the artist's Barroc aesthetic and criticism to colonial historiography and iconography, see the essays by Silviano Santiago, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Karl Erik Schøllhammer, in Isabel Diegues' collection.

imperial exploitation - which resonates into Gloria Anzaldúa's *herida abierta* (open wound) that is "the US-Mexican border ... where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (25) but is also "[t]he [w]ounding of the *india-Mestiza*" (44); and with the recalcitrant figure of the "colonial fracture" in the memorialization disputes in contemporary France, critically studied by Mireille Rosello (7). They enact the biopolitics of colonial life under Portuguese rule, unraveled by Roberto Vecchi, in its intimate association to the exceptionality of Portuguese colonialism packed in a Luso-tropical rhetoric of imperial benevolence. Vecchi enters this *fissura* (fissure) in order to reveal the workings of the colonial system on the flesh. This is to say that the subaltern was denied belonging to the body political – citizenship - and concurrently her *corpo vital* (vital body) became the object of colonial politics (Vecchi 188). Altogether these tropes act the eruption of a painful lesion on the gendered and racialized bodies of the subaltern.

Further the map supports gazing at Brazil in search for its new position in the reconfiguration of global power taking place today. Yet, simultaneously to observing this departure from peripherality, we want to explore dynamics in the entrails of the periphery. This gaze is here informed by the space opened through the injury, that is Anzaldúa's *borderland* and Nascimento's *senda*. Postcoloniality attends to the conservative and boldly emancipatory acts taking place at such locations violently subjected to hegemony, where struggles for self-representation and fair engagement with the body of humanity erupt in the face of the nation.

Here the image and its associated metaphors affirm their pertinence to (re)think Brazilian culture and society in light of its colonial past represented as a suture, for the actual violence was argued to occur in locations other than "the world the Portuguese created". On the flesh of those other (Anglophone) colonial subjects, injuries were apparently not cared for. On the Brazilian subaltern, despite sutured, they remain sore, half-open. This lesion offers itself to us as a window.

We invited elaborations on the postcolonial other than the straight import of "foreign" intellectual thought to pack aspects of Brazilian contemporaneity taken as research object, a trend recurrently criticized in Brazil. Lara Allen and

Achille Mbembe have already argued for a “politics and ethics of mutuality” inscribed in the postcolonial terrain as critique to Eurocentrism (3). This involves listening to the voices of the South as a producer of theory, revealing the Southern genealogies of theory with high currency in the North and, above all, departing from the entanglement between theories and social conditions, enveloping North and South, however with radically different effects at each end. It draws other routes than the overly pursued ones in the map of *traveling/trafficking theories*, and it uncovers a veiled direction of processes of transformation, from the peripheries (including the South within North and South) to the center.

Concurrently the intent of such an endeavor is twofold, on the one hand it seeks to make use of critical theory that dislodges hegemony (colonialism and imperialism) - which is local and simultaneously inscribed in larger global processes - to reveal traumatically silenced, obscured or erased aspects of Brazilian (cultural) history haunting the present, for its transformation. On the other hand it aims to expose processes in the periphery, however in transition from such a location and imagination, which can be seen as forebodes of intellectual, aesthetical and political processes in the North. This associates with Jean Comaroff’s focus on “ex-centric visions” of, about and from those who are in the vanguard of the future.

Naming

We borrowed the term postcoloniality from Achille Mbembe for his foregrounding of the aspects of *displacement* and *entanglement*. This term is manifestly dissociated from the temporal mark of the post-. The postcolony calls for a perspective unarguably anti-essentialist for its enmeshed gaze to local sensibilities – for they have been historically shaped - taking into account global dynamics of (colonial) enlacement. It follows that its geography is expanded, for the condition of postcoloniality is not exclusively experienced in former colonies, but also continues to affect (former) metropolitan countries (Allen and Mbembe 2). Displacement is a paramount dynamics of postcolonial critiques that depart from forced exile as an epistemological and bodily distancing from one’s home. This movement implies what Boaventura Santos called de-familiarization with the canonical traditions of the imperial North, in order to

build new epistemic grounds, away from the center (Santos 367). This process must be aware of the very hegemonic structure of knowledge production and circulation. At the production end, postcolonial criticism has re-centered the colonial metropolis and elected master narratives of comparison (Stam and Shohat 29) for a pretense understanding of the periphery. At the reception end, the peripheries continue to figure as consumers of theory produced elsewhere, reproducing the very *order of things* denounced by Galeano. With a measure of realism concerning our minute dimension, we must remain aware of our very position in this cartography.

We also followed Luís Madureira borrowing from Gayatri Spivak a sense of postcoloniality as political agency (Madureira, "Nation, Identity and Loss of Footing" 206), evident in his foregrounding of Southern resistance and criticism. This move entails decanonizing the master narrative of progress and dethroning its agents, and therefore provincializing the West. A critique of the Brazilian national imaginary shaped by the hegemonic national narrative targets both Eurocentrism and "internal colonialism" (Stavenhagen), with which it is enlaced, through the scrutiny of a powerful apparatus of marginalization. Subaltern voices and epistemologies must be invited to shape the terms of their engagement in an inclusive conversation born out of a "productive complicity" regarding an envisioned future (Spivak xiii).

The line of continuity between colonialism and current structures of domination and exploitation is the core aspect of Latin American counter-discourse on the "coloniality of power" (Quijano), which we aimed at incorporating in this issue. From Dependencia Theory to the Coloniality of Knowledge, Latin America has been offering critical thought associated with indigenous movements that depart from its "colonial difference" (Mignolo) to put forward a decolonial project. This project however has its own absences and occlusions, which must be unraveled.

The concatenation of African and Latin American criticism to Eurocentrism and imperialism to shape what we are here tentatively calling Brazilian Postcolonialities, is informed by the common denominator between colonialism in Africa (and Asia) and neo-colonialism in Latin America, at the end of the XIX century, that is modern imperialism and its motor, namely

capitalist expansion (Pratt 464). This framing of postcoloniality acknowledges the historical difference between such experiences, despite of strong imbrications between Brazil and the African continent in terms of shaping history and imagination (Almeida; Thomaz). However it seeks explicitly to benefit from (less explored) convergences, which might contribute to a momentous critical endeavor protagonized by regions and agents historically excluded from the production of knowledge. Postcolonialities in the plural sign to the myriad of contemporary experiences and expressions of the ways found to deal with and surpass coloniality in Brazil.

Inviting

Our intention is to contribute to a historicized, contextual and highly politicized postcolonial. In this sense we are concurring with Ella Shohat's call for a postcolonial articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations for not running the risk of sanctifying the *fait accompli* of colonial violence (Shohat 109). It is in fact a critical perspective that attends to the continuing machinery of hegemony put at work with imperial conquest. The linkages between postcolonial criticism produced at the European center and its engagement with subaltern enunciations from Southeast Asia, with the political radicalism of the coloniality of power - with high currency in North and Latin America - are to be explored, as much as the articulations with feminist, subaltern and anti-colonial struggles and criticism, the latter noticeably absent in the Portuguese postcolonial field (Madureira, "Nation, Identity and Loss of Footing"). Brazil has a marked protagonism with *avant la lettre* postcolonial critique emergent with Modernism (Shohat; Gomes; Madureira, *Cannibal Modernities*), and with social movements countering cultural exclusion and resisting socio-economic exploitative practice. This history of counter-hegemonic projects invites exploring the approximations between these and postcolonial criticism and agency. Concurring with Gustavo Ribeiro, "colonialism cannot become an interpretative panacea" (290) given to the critical differences between colonial experiences and state development; we must then foreground difference and insist on articulation with other interpretative roads and "progressive cosmopolitics" (287). We are hereby advancing an invitation for a "polylogue" between such modes of critique which

is found fruitful to the mammoth task of decolonizing culture, politics and scholarship (Stam and Shohat 19).

The post- is here a utopia for surpassing coloniality through the explicit evocation and scrutiny of colonialism with the knowledge that imperialism and racism are very well alive in forceful and pervasive ways. At a time when Brazil becomes *a bola da vez* (the next big thing) gaining global protagonism and, at instances painstakingly, at others cosmetically, attempting to recover “Fourth World peoples” (Shohat 105) into the body of the nation, scholarship has the task to gather the varied sibling critical practices to rip the wound open, enter the alley and stick its nails into the fissure.

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