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+ A RETÓRIA DO INDIGENISMO

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A HALL OF MIRRORS.
THE RHETORIC OF INDIGENISM IN BRAZIL

Alcida Rita Ramos

The Indian as mirror

The historical roots of indigenism in Brazil go back to a time before any Indian had even been seen by any white. The Tordesillas Treaty signed by Spain and Portugal in 1494, in anticipation of what was to come, divided the lands of the New World into two halves, one apportioned to each of those two European powers of the time. Whatever was to be found in those lands would belong either to Spain or to Portugal. By the stroke of two royal pens the fate of millions of indigenous peoples in South America was set there and then. In the decades and centuries that followed many rules and regulations emanating from the Portuguese crown affected indigenous peoples both directly and indirectly (Carneiro da Cunha 1987). The Indians were alternately treated as assets or as liabilities, depending on the specific projects of the conquerors.

The trajectory of the explorers known as Bandeirantes is an example. From the end of the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th, these tough men forced open the Tordesillas line to create an oversized Brazil. Their feats of daring, to this day, have been proudly passed on to countless generations of Brazilian school children. They are praised for their courage, patriotism, and determination, but, in a more cynical light, these qualities can be seen as sheer lust for hidden treasures such as gold and emerald mines. The Bandeirantes were responsible for the decimation and disruption of numerous Indian villages. In fact, the more ferocious and recalcitrant the Indians were in defending themselves against

1. By "white" I mean the majority population, not skin color.

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the invaders, the more heroic the Bandeirantes became in the eyes of posterity. Naturally, they were highly commended by the Portuguese rulers for expanding the boundaries of the Colony and for clearing the new land of their native but inconvenient owners.

On the other hand, live Indians were useful as forced laborers. Before Indian slavery was abandoned as unproductive, many an Indian group had become totally subjugated to the Colony and the crown. Centuries later, in 1910, the Brazilian government opened an office especially charged with the protection of what was left of the Indians and their land rights.

Why should the Brazilian state bother to guard the rights of aboriginal populations to occupy what was -- and still is -- considered to be national territory? The answer, to my mind, is that Indians are not simply good to conquer and rule; they are also very good for whites to reflect upon their self-image. Like a convenient mirror, the Indians, despite themselves, help reinforce the faith in the superiority of our European origins. Let us integrate them, but not completely; let us christianize them, but not to the last soul. Since they are Indians, they can never be like us, anyway. In fact, it is not uncommon to see descriptions of indigenous character in terms of the exact opposite -- a perfect mirror-image -- of the qualities attributed to whites: lazy, dirty, untrustworthy, etc. (Bruzzi 1962).

Ever since, first Columbus, then Cabral set foot on American shores, the history of interethnic contact has been the history of perfecting the arts of indigenism, this complex edifice constructed as much with pens as with guns, designed both by good intentions and in bad faith to keep the Indians under the hegemonic control of the whites. It is, as it were, an elaborate laboratory for testing one's skills in handling alterity to one's advantage. I am referring here specifically to the Brazilian case which is probably the most revealing instance of a combination of crude and

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subtle strategies to maintain the Indians under surveillance and control.

Brazil has the smallest indigenous population and yet the most visible Indian issue in the Americas today. They are less than .2 percent of the national population (i.e., 185 thousand Indians in a country of 130 million; see Carneiro da Cunha 1987), but their problems are known virtually around the world; Brazil has been questioned in international forums such as the Organization of American States, the United Nations, the International Labor Organization for mistreating its Indians, and at home the Indian question absorbs a great deal of political and moral energy on the part of both Indians and whites. Why so much fuss over proportionately so few people is a question that can lead us into a multitude of meanders through the historical, cultural, and political background of the Brazilian nation. Obviously, I cannot cover so much ground within the scope of this paper. All I can do here is simply point out some of the strongest images that have been built about the Indian in the field of indigenism in Brazil and what purpose such images seem to serve their creators.

There are many voices with different intonations speaking for, against, about, or to the Indians. Depending on who does the speaking, the imposition of one's views is more or less shrill, more or less intentional, more or less compelling. Politicians and missionaries, for instance, do it as a profession. Their discourses are aimed at persuading, or coercing, in order to change what they take to be inadequate, even if they know, somehow, that their goal may not be achievable or even desirable. But there are other professionals who perceive their own work as free of imposition, as ideologically neutral, such as journalists who strive for impartiality, or anthropologists who advocate cultural relativism. I maintain that such absence of imposition is an illusion. We, as social scientists, are well advised to recognize this, and regard

our work with a critical eye, even if by so doing we run the risk of skirting nihilism. The awareness that whatever we do, say, or write about the people we study can be appropriated for purposes not always beneficial to them does not warrant an attitude of immobilism. The ostrich syndrome may bring psychological comfort, but not ethical or political immunity. On the other hand, whatever approach we adopt for portraying a culture, no matter how scientifically neutral it may seem, is never devoid of an ethical-political stance. That being so, we might as well admit it and consider this problematic as worth reflecting upon.

I focus on the imagery that has been created in the context of indigenism, in order to demonstrate the idea that for the whites it is useful to have Indians around, not only because of their desirable lands and labor, but because indigenous people provide a convenient reflector for the self-contemplation of the whites as superior men. The central line of my argument is that otherness serves the purpose of defining the contours of a positive identity for the dominant population. I have chosen five such images as the starting point for an analysis that should be pursued further in the near future. These five images of the Indians in Brazil reflect, again like a mirror, the interests of various kinds of whites with the common concern to see in the imagery of the Indian a projection of how they would like to gaze at themselves. We shall look at the Indian as a figure which conveys ideas of exoticism, romanticism, backwardness, paganism, and, last but not at all least, a threat to national security. To end the paper I would like to say a few words about the role of anthropology in the construction of indigenism.

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The Indian as exotic

We might say that the exotic Indian in Brazil is an import-export product. It seems to me that the image of the exotic, although widely portrayed by the media, is not ordinarily evoked by average Brazilians, but rather is used by them to impress outsiders. Perhaps the Indians are too close to home to be cute in their bizarre ways. What seems to happen is that the notion of exoticism is generated abroad and trickled in to make some sort of an impression on the nationals. Take, for instance, the case of the Yanomami. While in North America they are the wild creatures of Chagnon's *Fierce People* (Chagnon 1983 [1968]), catching the fancy of thousands of undergraduates and other lay audiences, in Brazil they have become the symbol of the noble savage being threatened by the barbaric expansion of savage capitalism. It is when powerful interest groups invest in character assassination of the Yanomami who, unfortunately for their welfare, have a territory rich in gold and other minerals, that Chagnon's rendition of the violent savages is appealed to in Brazil, as in a recent appropriation of North American newspaper articles by the media of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (see *Anthropology Newsletter* of January 1989; *Science*, 3 March, 7 April, 12 May, 1989). The Yanomami, described as incorrigible warmongers, the epitome of the Wild Man (White 1978), under the exploitative imagery of exoticism (Ramos 1987), become easy prey to the powerful, under the disguise of defending civilization.

The model of exoticism in Brazil is the indigenous concentration of the Xingu National Park. For decades the Xingu Indians have had the dubious privilege of being visited and profusely photographed by diplomats, royalty, VIPs of all kinds. This showcase status has in no way kept the Indians from being deprived of some basic rights, such as adequate medical care, a proper educational system, or guarantees against land invaders. Imported as the image

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of the exotic Indian may be, nevertheless, it has done plenty of damage to these Xingu groups. As exotic Indians, they are set aside, preserved as in a cage, denied access to institutional participation at the regional and national levels. It was not until they showed some muscle, by kidnapping airplanes and ferry boats and taking whites as hostages in the early 80s that they were taken seriously by most of the country. Cief Raoni's highly conspicuous lip plug became then an emblem of indigenous courage and wisdom and has since then received a great deal of national and international publicity, turned into a symbol of indigenous resistance against ethnic disrespect and ecological devastation. On a recent tour with Sting, the rock star, Raoni, profusely photographed, enraptured affluent Europeans avidly in search of a cause.

We should not, therefore, underestimate exoticism; it is a powerful rhetorical tool which can be put into action at politically crucial times. A case in point is the public career of the Shavante Mario Juruna who was elected to the Federal House of Representatives in 1982. In 1983, the press exploited ad nauseam the repercussions of one of his speeches where he violently accused top members of the Figueiredo government of corruption and other illegal practices. Juruna almost lost his mandate, but was made into a hero by journalists who vicariously indulged in the politics of confrontation at a time when the press was not yet free to criticize the military. Juruna was a convenient public figure who, properly encouraged, could express the frustrations of the whites without being tied down by their political vulnerability. As a Congressman and an Indian he enjoyed a double immunity. Juruna's usefulness was squeezed out to the last drop, after which he began to be portrayed in newspapers and on television as an exotic fool who, after all, was not above the lure of corruption. He can still be seen in the corridors of Congress or of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), an overweight shadow of his past glorious self.



The romantic view of the Indian

The romantic figure of the noble savage, explored in literature, painting, and music, has been a benign form of domination only in appearance. In order to sustain itself, it needs to keep the Indian in the bush or in purity of sentiments. A drunken Indian lying in some town's gutter would be unthinkable to writers such as José de Alencar or to musicians such as Carlos Gomes. Equally unthinkable to these artists would be the image of a vociferous Indian leader accusing the national authorities of murder, theft and immorality. A typical 19th century product of Romanticism, José de Alencar wrote three novels that had Indians as their main characters: O Guarani in 1857, Iracema in 1865, and Ubirajara in 1874. Known as the "indianist-poet", Alencar created classical prototypes of Rousseauian innocence in the bush. His Peri, a Guarani warrior, for instance, is dedication personified, pledging a lifelong dogged fidelity to his white lords.

This self-sacrificing Guarani of Alencar's novel and Carlos Gomes' opera, or the noble Arariboia hero of our phony history, are all useful accessory figures in the creation of a powerful fiction of the melting pot which somehow succeeds in producing the incredible juggling act of keeping the noble savages noble and isolated, at the same time as mixing them with the rest of the population to give birth to this miracle which is the Brazilian nation. Folkloric to a fault is, for instance, the much repeated story of the Indian grandmother who was lassoed in the old wild frontier days. To have a lassoed Indian grandmother (not, interestingly enough, a lassoed grandfather) is reason for pride, is equivalent to having a valid passport to authentic Brazilianness.

A modified rendition of the noble savage who is bound to turn into a good Brazilian is easily detected in the positivist philosophy that guided Marshall Rondon's incursions into official

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indigenism. Charged with the task of opening up the interior of states such as Mato Grosso by means of a telegraph line early in this century, Rondon faced the problem of meeting many isolated indigenous peoples with the attitude that they should be preserved in order to have time to harmoniously, smoothly, but inevitably embrace civilization, i.e., accept integration into Brazilian society. Under the banner of humanism, Rondon created the motto that became associated with his name: to die if need be, to kill, never. Thus seen as innocent, unprepared, and vulnerable, Brazilian Indians acquired from Rondon the quality that was to remain with them to the present day -- the status of "relatively incapable" by law. With this dubious status they are officially under the protection of the Brazilian state to which they are wards. With the excuse of "protecting" the Indians' innocence, the federal agency (FUNAI) in charge of the wardship for the last 25 years has been the champion of paternalistic and exploitative actions against them.

Advocates of the romantic vision of the Indian are a resilient lot, not at all confined to past centuries. They still exist, increasingly shocked by the spectacle of fast change where the pure Indian is steadily disappearing behind pants and shirts, transistor radios, pocket calculators, sun glasses and cynicism. For them a good Indian is a naked Indian, unspoiled by the evils of civilization. Those Indians seen on television delivering fiery speeches in Congress, threatening to throw the President of FUNAI out of the window, denouncing missionary excesses at the Russell Tribunal, or waving a machete at the face of top level executives, are not really Indians, but subversives, no longer a redeeming race, but a threat to civilization. It is only in the condition of natural purity that the Indians can be raised to the honor of ancestors of today's Brazilianness.

A modern version of the romantic mode of indigenism is the attitude of some "friends of the Indians", amongst university

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people, journalists, artists, anthropologists, etc., who seem to demand from the Indians an unshakeable integrity of principles. Indians must defend to the death, if need be, the firmness of their convictions, be these fighting for land, resisting official or private development plans, refusing bribes, or repelling dubious dealings. These friendly whites have shown themselves to be willing to lend their solidarity only to the Indians who demonstrate ideological purity. In 1982, I witnessed, albeit unwillingly, an instance of white intransigence to indigenous political autonomy. It was during the first national meeting of indigenous leaders held in Brasília, when most of the dozen or so anthropologists who attended it rebelled against the Indians' decision to invite the President of FUNAI to speak to them. At a time when growing opposition was gathering momentum against the military, the move by the Indians to pay tribute to a man such as Colonel Leal (head of FUNAI and a member of the National Security Council) was taken to be a slap in the face of the friends of the Indians present at the meeting. Having helped the Indians organize and run the event gave them the notion that they had the right to tell the natives who were the good and the bad guys. Some felt betrayed by the indigenous leaders who showed no consideration for their political feelings.

The better the Indian is at enduring hardships the more eligible he becomes to deserve the solidarity of whites. Cooption, then, is not for Indians. The 1988 massacre of fourteen Tikuna in the upper Solimões region at the hands of invaders who extract lumber from their lands has had an amount of white sympathy only proportional to the censure that friends of the Indians poured on a group of Tukano Indians of the Uaupés region for having made agreements with the military in charge of the Calha Norte Project (see below).

Virtuous principles, purity of ideology, disposition to die heroically are, of course, white fantasies, but it does not occur

to these militant indigenists that by demanding them from the Indians they are, in fact, looking for the ideal of the idealist who does not crumble under pressure and who is very hard to come by in this day and age. The contrast between the martyred Indian and the sold-out Indian becomes the contrast between honorable whites and corrupted whites. It is a typically one-way ideological mirror. To expect the Indians to resist pressures and die in the name of unreachable principles is as intolerant an attitude as to deny Indianness to those Indians who wear Western clothes and speak Portuguese.

The romantic attitude is perhaps the most evident manifestation of the naturalization of the Indian. Since he is closer to nature, they gather, he is purer, less affected by the evils of this world and, therefore, he should always demonstrate the wholeness of the unspoiled. To fall from the purity of nature is to be lost to humanity and, as such, not worthy of one's protective zeal. Defenders of the Amazonian ecology provide the latest and perhaps purest brand of naturalization of the Indian. It is common to read or hear in the same discourse appeals to save nature: from trees to birds to the air to the Indians, as if the latter were inert elements in a mass of fragility:

Comparing the romantic attitudes of the 19th and the 20th centuries we can detect an interesting difference underneath their common denominator, which is the image of the noble savage. While last century romantics used indigenous imagery to highlight the virtues of Western Civilization -- Alencar among others was searching for the foundations of a Brazilian nationality -- 20th century defenders of ecology, an international crowd intent in the preservation of wilderness areas such as Amazonia, embrace the cause of the forest and the Indians as an instrument to criticize that same Western Civilization. One century later, the promises of

industrial society have turned into polluted nightmares for those critics of progress and technological expansion. For them the Indian has maintained his pristine innocence and is, therefore, a convenient symbol for the paradise on earth that is on the verge of being lost.

The backward Indian

The backward Indian is the Indian of the regional populations. Called by different names according to the regions -- caboclo in Amazonia, bugre in the West and South -- the backward Indian is inherently incapable of being a good white. He is also, by and large, the government's, or more specifically, FUNAI's Indian. It is very common to hear semi-literate FUNAI employees boasting of having taught the Indians how to work in the fields, planting manioc, of all things ! It is a manifestation of the pecking order syndrome, the convenience of always having someone below you to lift you a little bit above the rock bottom of society. But while FUNAI aims at bringing the Indian out of his backwardness by integrating him into the national society, his regional neighbors keep him at arm's length. While the official policy says -- integrate ! -- the regionals who are in direct or indirect contact with the Indian say -- keep away, you're an Indian ! This head-on collision between integration and segregation makes the indigenous people a permanent target for prejudice, discrimination, and sheer persecution, and is responsible for many conflicts that actually occur in areas where the indigenous population is large or especially visible.

Of all the rhetorical modes in existence in the interethnic arena, perhaps the most blunt, frank and sincere is that of the regionals. For them the Indians are undesirable, and should either be killed off or pushed back into the wilderness where they belong, away from civilization. It is the most candid way of

naturalizing the Indian. One can hear regionals comment on the incredible skills the Indians have in hunting, tree climbing, negotiating thick vegetation, in being, as it were, part of the physical environment. These same regionals are unambiguously clear when they describe how awkward the Indians are when they come to town and try to be "civilized": they don't know how to work, can't handle the most trivial affairs of the whites, are hopeless, useless, and a constant irritation. Moreover, even if they wanted to become civilized they couldn't, for it is in their nature to be Indian, they can't help it. Nor can the whites tolerate any advances; they are the civilized, the Indians are wild. Anything in between is sheer pretense, like the caboclos, Indians who play at being white but convince nobody. Perhaps even more than the wild Indians, the caboclos are subjected to heavy doses of prejudice and discrimination (Figoli 1982).

The pagan Indian

An arm of civilization, the Church is a strong, muscular, and prolific arm. Missionaries of all Christian creeds rejoice in the Indians' paganism, for it provides them with an opportunity to gain points in Heaven, as the Baptist fundamentalists in Amazonia put it. In their vast majority, missionaries take the backwardness of the Indians for granted. Some may actually reach the point of having so much familiarity with them as to admire their culture, but that does not deflect them from the goal of winning their souls, transforming them into good, well-behaved, obedient serfs of the Lord, and, by extension, of the powers-that-be, including the missionaries themselves.

In the name of the Christian faith much damage and abuse has been committed. Ranging from boarding schools run by Salesians that deprive indigenous children of a proper socialization process,

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to the cold wars between Catholics and Protestants that divide entire Indian societies, missionaries of various persuasions exercise one of the most efficient kinds of control over the lives of whole communities. As sure as any Westerner, or even more so, of being superior above any suspicion, missionaries have in the Indian populations an especially fertile field of the Lord where they can play out their superiority. The arrogance of the conversion enterprise is justified precisely by the conviction that the Indians are brute matter in search of a skilled sculptor of souls, a cultured and enlightened human being capable of molding raw nature into a divine creation (for a splendid demonstration, see Rafael 1988).

In many parts of the country missionaries have been the first whites to come into contact with indigenous peoples. They have paved the way for the arrival of more pragmatically oriented intruders. But, with regard to the Catholic Church, new trends have changed the style of interaction with the Indians. Under the influence of liberation theology, missionaries have become defenders of indigenous rights to land, and put themselves in open confrontation with economic groups and the government. This attitude, humane as it may be, is not, however, the result of self-contrition in the face of Indian wisdom. It is, rather, one more manifestation of their certainty of being right, of knowing what is best for the Indians. Frequent complaints on the part of some indigenous leaders about the control of Catholic missionaries over their actions provide vast examples of this brand of white paternalism. Like children, the Indians need to be guided even to remain Indians.

The Indian as a threat to national security

In 1978, Rangel Reis, the Minister of the Interior of one of Brazil's military governments, declared that the Indians should have the right to become important people, even to be the President of the Republic. But for that to happen they would have to be "emancipated". Emancipation, a normally enlightened word, which in that context was used with a great deal of deception, meant the termination of the special status the Indians have in a country that has no legal provisions for communal land ownership. In the end, to emancipate the Indians meant, and still means, to emancipate their inalienable lands for sale to whoever has the money to buy them, just as North American history demonstrates with the Dawes Act of 1887.

The last two decades of military rule in Brazil saw drastic and fast changes in the political position of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis the nation-state which surrounds them. From the early days of timid organizing in the 1970s to the nationwide conventions of the early 1980s, the Pan-Indian movement in Brazil has accomplished in less than ten years what indigenous groups in other countries have taken twenty or more years to achieve (for instance, the Shuar Federation in Ecuador that took about twenty five years to get established). The growth of the Indian movement has alarmed the rulers of the country who see, or say they see, in the organization of the Indian peoples a threat to national security, especially along the international borders. They say, for instance, that a large Yanomami Park is dangerous to the nation because the Indians may some day get organized into a separate State. One reaction to this threat was the "emancipation" decree of 1978; another reaction was the attempt to apply a set of "criteria of Indianness" by means of which FUNAI would decide, on a 0 to 100 scale, who was to be passed or failed as Indian. Yet another

reaction was to discourage anthropologists, national and foreign, from entering indigenous territories, particularly in areas that become sensitive at times, such as the Xingu Park, or the Yanomami territory, or the Tikuna villages. A decree was passed in 1983 that in effect put the Indians under the control of the National Security Council. Demarcation of their lands had to be decided by a large interministerial group under the virtual command of the military. Also authorizations to go into Indian areas had to have their approval.

Behind the rhetoric of concern for national security, which claims to defend the Indians from unscrupulous manipulations by foreign gold smugglers, drug dealers, or political agitators, is clearly the work of powerful lobbying by economic groups, such as mining companies or land speculators who pressure the government and congressmen to release indigenous lands from official protection. Earlier outbursts, such as that of Roraima's governor in 1975 who declared that a handful of Yanomami should not be allowed to stand in the way of progress (he was talking about the largest concentration of Yanomami in Brazil, the four thousand who live in the Surucucu area), were replaced by more subtle expressions of concern for the common good, such as Rangel Reis' goading remarks about having an Indian as President of the Republic.

After the creation of UNI -- União das Nações Indígenas -- in 1980, the military who ruled FUNAI and some Ministries focused their attention on the dangers of the name "Nações Indígenas". Brazil, they repeated, could not afford to have nations inside it. Besides, the Indians are Brazilians and must define themselves as such. They are entitled to harvest the benefits of a developing country, so long as they keep quiet and perhaps cooperate by having their natural resources exploited, thus contributing to the advancement of the Brazilian nation. Some concessions were made. One Indian was elected to the House of Representatives; another was

made Chief-of-Staff to the President of FUNAI; and another became the director of the Xingu Park. At the time such concessions were impressive and set a historical landmark (Ramos 1988). In the long run, however, they appear to have made no difference to the trajectory of the Indian movement. The official policy has never been changed from integration to self-determination. It is still as covertly ethnocidal as ever, although it has been insidiously dressed with a cloak of liberalism.

The border area of northern Amazonia, the home of about 140 thousand Indians, or 63 percent of the indigenous population in Brazil, is now under the undivided control of the military, despite the challenge of the fifty thousand illegal gold miners whose invasion of Yanomami lands has got out of hand (Albert 1989; Ramos 1989). Apart from FUNAI personnel, very few whites have been allowed to go into Indian areas in that region. Missionaries and researchers have either been forcibly removed or forbidden to return to the field. The installation of the Calha Norte Project, which covers 14 percent of the national territory (CEDI 1986; Buchillet 1987), has meant the closing off of the region, the opening up of runways, and the construction of military outposts; it also contemplates the building of a network of hospitals, bank agencies, and other facilities along the 6,500 kilometer of northern border². The figure of the "Indian colony" was invented by the military even before the Constitutional Assembly had had the chance to decide what would be the Indians' status and share of the country's land. "Indian colonies" would be given to "acculturated" Indians, whereas "unacculturated" Indians would get "Indigenous areas". As it turned out, the new Constitution ruled out such a distinction, rendering unconstitutional this military maneuver.

2. But with little chance of completion, given the resources and time limit of five years (1986-1991).

A test case for the establishment of these "Indian colonies" was the Tukano area of Pari Cachoeira. Small pockets around these villages have been set aside for indigenous use with the possibility that whites may also use them if the Indians gave their consent. It was either that or no guaranteed land at all, in which case these Tukanoans would have been at the mercy of thousands of gold miners who operated in their territory. The land package included a deal between the Indians (or rather one of their specific factions) and the large Paranapanema mining company, which allowed the latter to exploit gold in their lands.

The previous experience of the military with "Indian colonies" was with the Tikuna of the upper Solimões. The latter's reluctance to compromise has meant fending for themselves in terms of land and life protection, with tragic results, as witness the 1988 murder of a boatful of Tikuna people by local gunmen.

One by one, each indigenous group in north Amazonia is meeting its fate: compromise or be left on its own to ward off invaders. The Indians either let themselves be engulfed by the advance of the national society, or try out their political muscle against a giant whose size and power few of them can hardly imagine. Thus, the Indians of Brazil come to the close of the twentieth century in the condition of obstacles to the country's development. After nearly five centuries of being encroached upon by whites, they have become intruders in their own land. Yet, the rhetoric of the authorities, civil and military, insists that the Indians must be guarded, for they don't know any better. Because they are innocent pawns to foreign greed, they put the nation in awkward situations, such as having to defend itself against accusations by international courts for breaches of indigenous rights. The solution, then, is to bring them to civilization, or better still, bring civilization to them in the form of white occupation of their lands. To the government a good Indian is an integrated, subjugated Indian.

The Indian as the Other within us

Hayden White traces the trajectory of the notion of the Wild Man in European thought from an early phase in which the civilized whites rejoiced in their self-esteem when compared to the natural, Wild Man, hardly human, but human enough to be the subject of contrast to Europeans, to another phase where the Wild Man vanished from the exterior world to occupy the inner space of one's psychic depths of uncontrolled emotions (White 1978:150-182).

While it may be true that the dark regions of one's unconscious are associated with the wild nature of the uncivilized, it is certainly not the case, at least in South America, that the Wild Man has been despatialized. Indians are still out there, prototypically in the jungle, surviving by hunting, fishing, etc., as oblivious as ever to the cultured ways of civilization. This is still a recurring image in the thinking of South American whites.

What has been the contribution of anthropology to the construction or deconstruction of this notion? How do anthropological discourses relate to the building up of indigenism?

When Lévy-Bruhl stated in 1910 that non-Western peoples had a qualitatively different way of thinking, he did so in a clumsy way, with an unfortunate choice of terms, such as "pre-logical", "primitive mentality", etc. His thesis was heavily criticized and the profession preferred to ignore the scholar rather than try to understand what he really meant. As I read it, his proposition was that other peoples can be so fundamentally different from Europeans that it may well be impossible for the latter to completely grasp the logic of the former. It is not so much a matter of a pre-logical versus a logical mentality, as of fundamentally different mental processes. Otherness would then be virtually absolute and we would have to admit that we could at the most get to

a mere approximation. To be so radically different, however, to a Western mind, including Lévy-Bruhl's colleagues, meant, necessarily, to be inferior. It seemed inconceivable for Europeans to think of radical differences without an accompanying hierarchical scaling.

As a reaction to such a reading of Otherness -- different, ergo, inferior -- anthropologists turned to a much more comfortable premise: cultural relativism. Cultural relativists propose that there are differences, but only in degree, not in kind. No culture can be judged by the standards of any other, but unquestionably, the anthropologist can understand as many as he can handle.

The perfect combination of relativism and homogeneity was achieved by Lévi-Strauss. In his hands, the dazzling variety of cultural expressions, unique as they may be, are, in fact, reducible to a limited set of underlying principles common to all of mankind. La Pensée Sauvage was the key concept to reveal that what is different in appearance is actually similar in depth.

Here is a sort of epistemological-cum-moral double bind. If, on the one hand, cultural relativism and structuralism contributed immensely to combat racism, by denying innate differences, and, therefore, innate superiority and inferiority, on the other hand, they also deprived the Other of the possibility of being incommensurably different, with an alterity that might be out of our reach. Reducible as it is to our own categories, alterity has been tamed, levelled out, controlled by the concepts and sophistication of our social sciences. Furthermore, the question of Western superiority is not completely disposed of, since the brains behind all the figuring out of apparent differences and real similarities are, after all, Western. The intelligibility of the Other, in other words, depends on the intellectual skills of Western scholars. Savage minds are good for Westerners to think. Meta-thought is not for the natives. Between Lévy-Bruhl's proposition

of radical differences and Lévi-Strauss' radical similarities, anthropological theory has developed its world of concepts and premises. The Other has then been caught between the ethical vulnerability of ethnic differences in the hands of racists and the self-assured omnipresence of the savage mind in all our minds. Again, the Other is reduced to little more than a mirror for us to gaze at ourselves.

Indigenism has drunk from both sources, but the homogenizing version of alterity seems to be more suitable to white hegemony. Let the Other be different, but not so different as to render us impotent to unveil and harness it.

I could conclude by simply saying that indigenism in Brazil is an extravagantly elaborate device for the domestication of the Other. Thus domesticated, the Indians' subjugated alterity serves the purpose of reflecting, like the magical looking glass of the fairy tale, an image the whites strive to project of themselves as a civilized nation in a country that, placed on the wrong side of the developed-undeveloped dividing line, struggles to build a reputation of technological success and worldliness vis-à-vis the first world. It is a clear instance of the global pecking order.

Aknowledgements

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDIGENISM IN BRAZIL

Alcida Rita Ramos

The history of Indian-White relations in Brazil has run along two parallel lines: one, manifested in the rhetoric of the "noble savage" living in a sort of amazing Eden of innocence and freedom; the other, revealed in the attitude of the superior white whose moral responsibility it is to rescue the Indian from barbarism. We may call the former the "edenic" discourse of indianism, and the latter the "civilizing" discourse of indigenism. This is simply a classificatory device to help me put across some ideas on the subject, for I must emphasize that both positions are opposed only in appearance. We cannot forget that while the edenic discourse proclaimed the Indians the enviable representatives of Paradise on Earth, these same Indians were being killed, ransacked, goaded into Christianity and denied their ethnic identity. At the same time, while a whole host of civilizing agents, from missionaries to royalty, writers and administrators, proposed the transformation of the Indians into "civilized whites", these same Indians were being physically exterminated or shoved into the lowest ranks of the social pecking order. Indeed, both discourses are part and parcel of the edifice of inequality that has characterized the relationships between Europeans and indigenous populations since 1492. In this paper I shall focus on these two seemingly conflicting, but in fact complementary, visions of the Indian, calling attention to the purposes each one has served in the effort to construct a nation out of Brazil.

The edenic discourse

From Caminha, Pedro Álvares Cabral's scribe during the discovery of Brazil in 1500, to Sting, the rock star who campaigns for the preservation of Amazon jungle and Indians in 1989, the edenic discourse, with its many versions of the "vision of Paradise" (Buarque de Holanda 1977), has been a constant ingredient in the construction of the complex imagery surrounding the figure of the Indian. From the Renaissance to post-modern times Western imagination has been prodigal in fantasies exploring the ever-present theme of the Indian as a natural phenomenon.

In crossing the centuries, the rhetoric of Paradise on Earth has changed emphases, styles and tropes, but has maintained the tone of contemplative fascination for the exotic. It is, essentially, the discourse of the distant white who does not live at close quarters with the Indians and does not compete with them for resources, natural or otherwise. I shall refer briefly to four moments of the edenic discourse: the first moment of bewilderment at discovery, the nativistic moment in the 18th century, the indianist moment in the 19th century, and the ecological moment in the 20th century.

Innocence found

The first reaction of the Portuguese who arrived on the coast of Brazil in 1500 was to praise the benign climate, the fertility of the soil and the innocence of the Indians. In this new world of neither cold nor hot weather, "anything you plant will grow", in Caminha's colorful expression: no winters, no scarcity, no plagues, no persecutions. This perfect landscape was prodigally supplemented by natives who seemed to be the brown-skinned sweet version of Adam and Eve before the fall, unself-conscious nudity

and everything else that goes with Paradise. Sixteenth century Europeans gorged on this paradisiacal scenery just long enough to establish their definitive presence on the new land. This idyllic interlude lasted but a few decades. It was an ephemeral reaction that did not resist the Western impulse to conquer both nature and people. Soon the initial edenic rhetoric gave way to the civilizing discourse that was built on the precise opposite of Paradise -- savagery, backwardness, paganism, brutality. The following century witnessed the most aggressive moves against indigenous populations. Among these were the attacks on coastal villages by settlers, the catechist campaigns by Jesuits and other missionaries, and the westward expeditions under the leadership of the so-called "Bandeirantes", adventurers from the coastal settlements who, under the banner of protecting and widening the Colony's borders, were in fact promoting the first massive gold rush in Brazil, devastating Indian villages as they found them, and thus sealing the fate of whole populations for centuries to come. In that period entire indigenous peoples were exterminated either by arms or by bacteria. The coastal Tupinambá, the first Indians to meet the Portuguese, were extinct by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The same happened to the Tapajós of the Amazon. The 1600s were not especially strong in producing edenic discourses. The time was for conquest, not for "poetry".

Nativism and nationalism

The nativistic moment in the 18th century and the romantic moment in the 19th century are best depicted in paintings, music and especially in literature. The difference between them is subtle and may even be somewhat artificial, but it is useful in the attempt to identify the similarities and differences in the political and ethical modes of those two centuries regarding the

Indian issue.

In a sense, the nativistic era reflects the shock waves of the Enlightenment as they reached Brazil: the fascination with the unspoiled native, the esthetic value of nobility of character, the spiritual potential of the pristine purity of the New World. Perhaps the most outstanding example, despite its religious overtones, is the poem entitled Caramuru, first published in Lisbon in 1781 by José de Santa Rita Durão. An Augustinian Friar, he is identified with the 18th century group of baroque poets from the Province of Minas Gerais. The poem is an epic about a Portuguese man, Diogo Álvares Correia, who went native and married Paraguaçu, an Indian woman who went white. These characters are allowed to cross the cultural boundaries only because the Indian is portrayed as a dignified, courageous, monogamous, impeccably honest figure, unspoiled by greed or any other sin. In the poem, Diogo Álvares, already a noble white, becomes even nobler with his metamorphosis into Caramuru. Never mind that Durão, in the process of glorifying his hero, did a thorough cleaning job of his character, removing embarrassing stains such as accepting the sexual favors of young Tupinambá girls, or passing on to the Portuguese Crown large plots of land he acquired through his marriage to Paraguaçu (Candido 1967: 201-2). Diogo Álvares, the Portuguese colonizer who, shipwrecked, landed on the coast of Bahia in the first half of the 16th century, becomes Caramuru, the hero in Paradise.

Paraguaçu, in turn, when taken to the Court in Lisbon, brings along the innocence and purity of the Indian and adds to these virtues the indispensable qualities of wifely dedication and fidelity, all enhanced by a christianized persona. "Like the most authentic heroine of European tradition", she is depicted in white and rosy skin, rejecting the nudity of her companions, and displaying a pious concern for the spiritual fate of her

fellow-Indians. In changing her name to Catarina, she completes her civilizing process "in an opposite and symmetrical movement" to that of her husband. They are together in "the same ideal situation of ambiguity" (Candido 1967:208), ideal, that is, for the rhetorical style of Durão's century and for the reinterpretations of the romantic times that followed.

The couple represent the best of two worlds. But the fusion of these worlds is only possible because the whites -- represented here by Friar Durão -- projected their own ideal virtues onto the Indians. The proclaimed nobility of the white man was enhanced by his social and sexual intercourse with the noble savage, so long as that savage was domesticated by his own religion. Only thus was it possible to create Caramuru, the European with the strength of character and psychological malleability that was required to colonize the new land. This image of the easily adaptable Portuguese who populated the colonies in Africa and America, thanks to his lack of prejudice toward Black and Indian women, was to remain in the ideological apparatus of Portuguese colonization for centuries to come.

Caramuru is the quintessence of the edenic discourse at the service of exalting the feats of the colonizing whites to the benefit and appreciation of the colonized Indians. Whites and Indians are thus inextricably intertwined in the same historic destiny, the destiny of an emerging nation. It is not a mere coincidence that the political moment was such that "the Portuguese dominion in Brazil was showing the first signs of declining, and the colonial system itself was beginning to run into contradictions with local realities" (Candido 1967:202). In such a context, the literary elite of the Colony was encouraged to promote a "Brazilian historical tradition, in order to justify the political individuality of the country" (:203). On the other hand, it may also be of some relevance the fact that the author, Durão, lived for many years in

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Italy and Portugal, where he died. Proximity with the epic traditions of those countries and distance from the interethnic realities of Brazil may well have influenced his choice of rhetorical mode -- the heroic epic -- and vision of cultural harmony -- Indians and Europeans jointly building a common world.

In the following century, we find the romantic moment also glorifying the Indian from a distance. Two major writers, José de Alencar and Gonçalves Dias, have become the main representatives of indianism, a literary movement whose thrust was the building of the Brazilian nation, now as a conscious enterprise. Their endeavor was no longer to show the nobility of the Portuguese, but the vitality of the Brazilian. Such vigor was not imported from Portugal, but inherited from the natives of the land. From the Indians -- or what they imagined the Indians to be -- they extracted the necessary ingredients, material and otherwise, in order to brew a nationalist concoction with a unique, non-European flavor.

Yet, in making ample use of the exotic, these writers exhorted the reader's imagination not with a concern for ethnographic accuracy, but rather with the equipment which, after all, they knew how to handle: European imagery heavily shaded with erotic details, unusual surroundings, or unbelievable displays of bravery. Gonçalves Dias, in his indianist poems, excels in this formula, by mixing female beauty, minuscule women's aprons, grandiose landscapes, and intrepid male courage. It is, in Candido's expression, a "cocktail of medievalism, idealism, and fantasied ethnography". His poem, I-Juca Pirama, about the lament of a brave Tupi prisoner facing his own death, is, continues Candido, "one of these undisputed things which have been incorporated into the national pride, it is the very representation of the country, such as the magnitude of the Amazon, the Ipiranga cry [of Independence], or the national green and yellow colors" (Candido 1969:85). Candido praises Gonçalves Dias as a great

poet, "in part for his capacity to find in poetry the natural medium for the feeling of fascination for the New World of which Chateaubriand's prose had been up until then the main interpreter" (Candido 1969:84).

José de Alencar's O Guarani is about a Tupinambá Indian, Peri, whose dedication to his white masters saves them from the rage of his own people, warriors and cannibals. He falls in love with the young daughter, Ceci, but, unlike Caramuru, no sanctioned union between them is possible. Heroically, he rescues her from a portentous flood and ends up platonically beside her on the frond of an uprooted palm tree, drifting down the torrent. Almost as strong as the natural elements, Peri is the epitome of abnegation, altruism and strength of character. Yet, he is barred from white society as an equal.

Alencar dedicated two more books -- Iracema and Ubirajara -- to the subject of indianism, in search of a truly Brazilian character and distinct identity. His influence in the national imagination has been considerable, as the following passage by Antonio Candido indicates:

Just as Walter Scott fascinated Europe's imagination with his castles and knights, so did Alencar establish one of the most cherished models of Brazilian sensitivity: that of the ideal Indian, as developed by Gonçalves Dias, but projected by him onto daily life. The Iracemas, Jacis, Ubiratás, Ubirajaras, Aracis, Peris -- who every year for about a century have disseminated the "genteel bunch of lies" of indianism throughout baptismal fonts and registry offices -- translate the deep will of the Brazilian to perpetuate the convention that gives to a country of mestizos the alibi of a heroic race, and to a nation with a short history the depth of legendary times. (Candido 1969:224).

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From Chateaubriand to Sting

Both the nativistic and the romantic modes use Indian imagery to construct identities, be they of the indomitable colonizer or of the proud nationalist. In the 20th century we find a rather sardonic version of these trends during the modernist movement of the 1920s. The figure of the Indian Macunaíma, Mário de Andrade's amoral hero (herói sem caráter), is a symbol of the self-derision that was often used by Brazilian nationalists to mark them off from European hegemony.

There is also a more recent trend which cuts across national boundaries and focuses on environmental preservation. The present-day ecological movement shares with the nativistic and the romantic discourses two main features: the emphasis on the "naturalization" of the Indian and the affirmation of his purity. A latter-day edenic discourse in search of a threatened Eden, the ecological movement, at its most naive presentation (although relatively recent, the movement already shows considerable internal differences), takes the Indian as a monolithic figure, the mate-cum-keeper of both beasts and plants; as an integral part of nature, he is also threatened and needs protection. And thus the protector, preferably European, comes full circle in five hundred years: from invader to savior. Widely publicized international campaigns involving prominent political figures, show business stars, religious leaders, news media experts cry out for the saving of Amazonia and, as an extension of it, the Amerindians. The recent European tour by the rock singer Sting and his indigenous companion, the Kaiapó Chief Raoni, an old man turned into a sort of Bird of Paradise for the media, with his indefectible lip-plug, stirred once again the old romantic feeling of fascination for the New World, this time embedded in a rhetoric of salvation of a Paradise that is being corrupted by the savagery of the white man.

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The reasoning seems to follow a straightforward exercise in Western logic: unspoiled nature is pure; the Indian is part of nature; therefore, the Indian is pure. Such purity then becomes associated with the wisdom that the white man once had but has lost on his way to technological progress and with it to the destruction of his environment. Now the white man badly needs to recover his lost wisdom in order to preserve, no longer simply a nation, but the Planet. The Indian enters this gloomy picture as the unspoiled reservoir of wisdom, ready to be reappropriated by the white man. Thus, the trajectory of the edenic discourse goes from Paradise Found to Paradise Lost, or almost.

For all the apparently sympathetic and benign inclinations such rhetoric -- associated with the less sophisticated side of ecological activism -- displays toward the Indians, it conceals an element of paternalism and intolerance that can easily come to the fore whenever the Indians betray its expectations. If a good Indian is a pure Indian -- and here, as usual, the definition of purity is given by the whites -- an Indian who falls prey to Western coaxing (selling lumber, making pacts with the military, striking deals with corporations) is denigrated and doomed to fall lower than the equivalent white wheeler and dealer. A sold-out Indian is, in short, much less deserving of understanding or pardon than a white in the same situation. Unknowingly assigned the absurd role of guardian of the humanity's reserves of "purity", the Amazonian Indian becomes charged with the "white man's burden" in reverse, whether he wants it or not.

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The civilizing discourse

Running parallel to this eulogizing eloquence, is another series of images of the Indian with as long a history as the edenic discourse, but which exploits traits that are the precise opposite of the previous characterizations. For lack of a better term, I refer to this set of images as the civilizing discourse.

The idiom of direct control and its attendant civilizing rhetoric has as its basic premise the inferiority of the Indians vis-à-vis the whites. Here the Indians are not the children of Paradise, but the creatures of barbarism; they are either renegades or ignorant brutes. It even took a papal bull from Paul III in 1537, declaring them to be humans -- and therefore eligible to Christianity -- for the West to begin to consider them as such (Bosi 1989).

From the 16th century onward, just a few decades after the discovery of Brazil, the Portuguese soon adopted the Aristotelian attitude that the Indians were "natural slaves"; they might even be human, but they certainly were the whites' inferiors, and more suitable for hard work, if properly managed. As it turned out, Indian slavery did not prosper as expected, but indigenous lands were valuable and justified continuous massacres with the help of microbe dissemination. The treatment of indigenous peoples as pests extended well into the 20th century. It has been routine to many regional settlers, and represents the crudest manifestation of white arrogance and impunity. Not only the earlier history of Indian-white relations, but the recent one as well, are crammed with gory episodes of white atrocities, while most of those crimes were left unpunished.

More subtle but no less effective, missionary action sustained the notion that the Indians were helpless without white assistance. Their customs were so primitive as to endanger their

spiritual salvation. Of these customs cannibalism became the banner for the pious interference from the Church's superior men. The civilizing discourse progressed immensely on the basis of deploring the man-eating habits of the Tupinambá. Cannibalism had the power to make both white martyrs and indigenous objects of Catholic indoctrination.

Once the European conquerors got over their first bewilderment at the delights of the newly found Eden, the job of taming the wilderness began. Hardly thirty years had gone by since Cabral's memorable landing on the coast of Bahia, and early traders and settlers were already waging wars against the Indians, enslaving them, looting their resources, and dislodging them from their lands. The arrival of the Jesuits in mid 16th century, with the mission of christianizing the savages, had a rather ambiguous result: by gathering large numbers of Indians in concentrated settlements as a form of protecting them and a convenient strategy for conversions, they provided the white settlers with a handy reservoir of either cheap or slave labor. More interested in saving the Indians' souls than their physical integrity, within a couple of decades, the missionaries adopted the policy of force, rather than insisting on time-consuming techniques of persuasion to convert the natives. The priests José de Anchieta and Manoel da Nóbrega made their name in the History of Brazil with a reputation for extraordinary fervor and determination to spread the true religion among the savages. Both resorted to the expedient procedure of "placing them under the yoke". For the sake of turning the Indians into Christians, Nóbrega wrote,

"I also wish .. to see the heathen subjugated and placed under the yoke of obedience to the Christians, so that we could imprint on them all that we desire ... Nothing can be done with them if they are left at liberty, for they are brutish peoples."

And Anchieta,

"We now think that the gates are open for the conversion of the heathen in this captaincy, if Our Lord God would arrange that they be placed under the yoke. For these people there is no better preaching than by the sword and iron rod. Here more than anywhere, it is necessary to adopt the policy of compelling them to come in" (Hemming 1978:106).

The expansion of Portuguese-Brazilian dominions westward was closely accompanied by Catholic priests. They followed the often rampant assaults on Indian lands by the Bandeirantes, 17th century adventurers in search of precious minerals, and turned the camps strewn along the latter's way into permanent sites of white occupation. The Indians were either dislodged or concentrated in large settlements (reduções).

The next four centuries presented variations on this same theme: taming the Indians in the name of Western values, be these religious, political, economic, or social. The civilizing discourse took on new local colors, both in terms of time and space, but the message has been strikingly uniform: Indianness is a temporary, undesirable condition, and must be eradicated from a country that is trying to make it into the community of civilized nations. In this endeavor, Church and State have divided the task of civilizing and integrating the Indians; their discourses many differ in tone, from religious to secular, but they are both powerful instruments with which to control unwanted differences.

Olivegreen garb and drab redtape

As an active representative of the State in indigenous affairs, the Army came later. In 1910, the first national agency for the protection of the Indians was created by an Army officer, Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon, a true believer in Positivism as a humanist philosophy. True to the Comtean brand of evolutionism, he was convinced of the need to preserve the lives of the indigenous peoples as a necessary condition for them to, sooner or later, decide to abandon their primitive ways of their own free will and embrace Western civilization. As a civilizing strategy, Rondon applied some Army devices to Indian villages, such as the distribution of titles and olivegreen uniforms to Indian men who often had no local legitimacy. It was the era of the village "captains". Official indigenism was thus created and the destiny of the Indians was sealed: slowly but inescapably, they were to relinquish their lifeways and integrate into national society. A special status was given to them; they were now considered "relatively incapable" by law, along with married women and children, a triad disturbingly reminiscent of Aristotle's inferior categories -- slaves, women and children. In 1985, married women were elevated to full citizenship, but not the Indians. They continue to be wards of the State. Their first "tutor", the Indian Protection Service (later replaced by the National Indian Foundation), was born amidst the Ministry of War, as the Army Ministry was then called. Throughout the decades it travelled via several other ministries, such as Labor, Agriculture and, finally, Interior. In none of these bureaucratic bodies did it feel easy or comfortable; in none did it command enough respect and interest to be given proper attention and funding. From the 1960s onwards, it has been steadily downgraded. Not even the humanism and humanitarian intentions of the early Rondon days has survived the increasing collapse of this Indian official "tutor".

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The present day National Indian Foundation has fallen to the lowest levels of competence and legitimacy. It has become the epitome of white coercion and the favorite target of irate Indian leaders and indignant whites who have joined the Indian cause. Drowning in redtape, the Indian Foundation has been plagued with corrupt presidents who with impunity have depredated indigenous resources, from the transfer of large plots of land to private hands, to the sale of lumber; or with medical doctors who sit around in town offices while entire Indian villages suffer from white-transmitted diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria or measles. In short, either through outright criminal action or through omission, the Indian Foundation has been more often on the side of the problem than on the side of the solution.

In 1985, the military passed on the federal government to civilians during what was called the "New Republic", a civic interlude when the people's high hopes for better times were only proportional to their later disappointment. The Indian issue was a sort of microcosm of the national climate: great expectations which, one by one, were dissolved into thin air by the subreptitious maneuvers of politicians and interest groups (in the mining and lumbering business, for instance) for whom indigenous rights were an inconvenience. Amazonia came to the fore once again as the last frontier; its abundant resources were now envisioned as the remedy to the cancerous foreign debt. Backstage, the military planned grandiose projects, such as the Calha Norte (North Watershed, or literally, "North Gutter", if you will), designed to bring development into the northern region, while controlling the international borders, and constraining the indigenous populations into small pockets of their original lands. In other words, from behind the scene, the military continue in command of the Indian policy, now inextricably tied to the development of Amazonia. From the recess of their National Security Council offices (since the new

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Constitution under the name of SADEN, Assessoria da Defesa Nacional), the Army in particular has been directing the most important moves by the Indian Foundation: bureaucratic decentralization, the appointment of top level personnel, and even the prohibition of anthropological research in the northern Indian areas. Under the New Republic, the Indian Foundation has been reduced to a mere puppet of the military.

These same military had as their Army Minister the eminence gris of the Sarney government, the powerful man in olivegreen, Leônidas Pires Gonçalves, who, on the National Day of the Indian, April 19th, 1989, declared that the indigenous cultures, being so lowly, were not respectable. The barrage of criticism that followed in the media forced some counter-messages from other military, but the Minister's crudeness rang throughout the country as an apology to white obtuseness and arrogance.

The civilizing discourse does not appropriate the Indian as an image, but as an essence. He belongs to the Brazilian nation, and, therefore, the powers-that-be can do with him as they see fit, regardless of what he may want for himself. Here the Indians are not only nature's creatures, but the nation's children. Their "special" status as relatively incapable beings under the wardship of the State reveals in no ambiguous terms the disparity of power contained in the civilizing rhetoric that is continuously sent forth as the way things should be.

Out of Eden and back again

Neither the edenic nor the civilizing discourse has any concern for what the Indians might be on their own account. The representation of the Indian as either noble or villain requires that he remains mute about himself, a passive figure to be molded by European ideologies, conflicting as these may be.

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The anthropological discourse is the only one that defines itself as "relativistic" to the point of even aspiring to reach that recondite chimera, the native's point of view. It is obviously not exempt from its own ideological load. The commitment to reveal the intelligibility of apparently opaque customs has given anthropologists the opportunity to show that even if the Indians don't compete with whites in the production of material paraphernalia, they are quite capable of constructing intellectual structures so complex that it requires a long professional training to detect them. Despite the attempts to keep an aura of objectivity around the practice of the discipline, most images created by anthropology, with some outstanding exceptions, are reminiscent of the edenic discourse dressed in modern and strenuously unbiased garb.

The specific brand of anthropology in Brazil combines the quest for scientific competence with the moral obligation to be socially responsible toward the people studied. What this means is that the anthropologist working with indigenous peoples cannot afford the comfort of being an impartial observer. Because he is, above all, a social actor, he is called for by his peers, public opinion, and the Indians themselves to take stances on the basis of the knowledge he has accumulated in the field. This activism is not free from prejudices. The charge that anthropologists and other "friends of the Indians" have been responsible for the creation of artificial leaders is not completely unfounded. As old habits die hard, Brazilian anthropologists tend to favor the ideal of the resilient Indian with incorruptible faithfulness to traditional values regardless of the pressures put upon them. Anthropologists are thus not totally free from the charge of contributing to create latter-day heroes who represent the idealized qualities the whites wish they themselves had, especially at certain points in the political climate of the country when corruption, impunity and collapse of legitimacy plague Brazilian citizenry. There is a

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growing awareness on the part of anthropologists that the Indians are reaching the point of not wanting white spokesmen, of reacting to paternalism, be it from the government, the Church, or academia. What the profession will do with this is still to be seen.

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