

The Geopolitics of Amazônia in Souza's Fiction

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**Thomas O. Beebee,**

**"The Geopolitics of Amazônia in Souza's Fiction "**  
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**Abstract:** In his article "The Geopolitics of Amazônia in Souza's Fiction" Thomas O. Beebee examines the ways in which the historical fiction of Brazilian author Márcio Souza (1946-) confronts prevailing notions of Brazilianness conceived as the unity of citizens within a fixed territorial space. Souza undermines this notion by frequently using non-Brazilians as protagonists of his novels that have as their theme the struggle over control of territory "within" Brazil. Beebee reviews the role played by the concept of national territorial control in theories of nationalism and the modern state, including in the Brazilian school of geopolitics developed by Eduardo Backheuser and Golbery do Couto e Silva. National territorial control has been an issue in Brazilian history owing to the country's expansionist tendencies. Beebee examines a range of Souza's fiction -- from the early *Galvez, Imperador do Acre* (1976) through the popular *Mad Maria* (1986) to the Grão-Pará tetralogy (1997-2008) -- that challenges the foundations of Brazilian geopolitics by detailing how the country's Amazon region has been both a colony of the southern and northeastern regions of the country and a free zone for international capitalism and capitalists.

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**Thomas O. BEEBEE****The Geopolitics of Amazônia in Souza's Fiction**

A fundamental concept of the modern nation-state, one which differentiates its specific political ordering of life from previous incarnations of the nation, and one which accompanies a larger cultural movement that replaces place with space (see Casey), is the linking of state sovereignty to the maintenance of a mostly homogeneous, enclosed, and bounded territory. Indeed, a classic and often-repeated definition of the state (as opposed to the nation) is of a political organization exercising legitimate power within a specified territory. Concomitantly, Simon During identifies modernity with "the core feature that the world is divided into sovereign nation-states with no remainder" (98). The principle of national territorial control (NTC), that is, the powers ceded to governments to regulate activities within their spaces and to prevent undesired individuals, individually or in groups, from crossing their borders and entering their spaces, has become as naturalized as the principle that those residing within a given territory would share a "national" language (for further discussion, see Guichonnet and Rafestin; Storey; Théry). These two commonalities provide the basis for a "national literature" that reports on activities occurring within the politico-cultural space of the nation-state, contributing its share to the "imagined community" that brings citizens who have never seen each other together through the medium of a shared imaginary.

Literature has had a role to play in how territorial boundaries are made, perceived, communicated, and deconstructed. Benedict Anderson, for example, argues that the novel, which he identifies especially with the picaresque genre -- "the movement of a solitary [picaresque] hero through a sociological landscape" -- is powered by a "national imagination" (*Imagined Communities* 30). Perhaps the most famous example of a wandering, solitary hero is Don Quijote, who has since become an abiding symbol of Spanish cultural identity. The realist novel, whose literary dominance accompanied the triumph of statist ideology following the French Revolution, contributed in spite of itself to the pedagogical discourse of nationalism discussed by Homi Bhabha: "The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression. There is, however, always the distracting presence of another temporality that disturbs the contemporaneity of the national present" ("DissemiNation" 295). Alongside the critique of *mores* intended by many realist novelists, then, came an implicit use of their novels to adumbrate a homogeneous national space.

In Brazil, according to Yves Lacoste, the image of national territory became all the more central due to the lack of a definitive independence narrative and founding fathers. This is not to say that "foundational fictions," to use Doris Sommer's term, are lacking in Brazilian culture, but that the fundamental narrative of conflict with and eventual independence from the metropole shared by most American nations did not occur in Brazil, which instead became the seat of empire. In any case, one can agree with Lacoste that "In the case of Brazil, one could say that the very idea of the nation is based on its geography." (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) ("Au Brésil, on pourrait dire que c'est la géographie qui est à la base de l'idée même de la nation" [7]). After all, if space matters, then territorial expansion can be seen as a Brazilian success story. The Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 set nominally the Portuguese holdings in South America at only 40% of Brazil's present-day size. Since then, Brazil has acquired territory by various means from nearly all of its neighboring states. The association of territorial control and expansionism with Brazilian nationalism became especially well-defined in the twentieth century, when thinkers such as Mário Travassos and later Eduardo Backheuser absorbed the ideas put forward by the founder of the discipline. Friedrich Ratzel, and others who propounded, among other elements, a Darwinian idea of the struggle for space between nations, where the stronger would expand and the weaker contract. Bertha Becker has even contributed a volume specifically on the geopolitics of Amazônia (for a summary of Brazilian geopolitical thinking, see, e.g., Child 89-94).

Beyond the fact that national sovereignty may appear to some, in the early twenty-first century, to be in the process of yielding to alternative forms of political organization (see Hardt and Negri), the

reality of NTC has at times been more of a fiction than a reality. Control is challenged by disputed areas, by *de facto* or *de jure* autonomy granted to regions within a country, such as northern Pakistan, or by generally grey areas such as the Amazon region between Brazil and Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Guyanas, especially in the nineteenth century. It seems to be almost a law of nature that NTC failure correlates with increasing distance from the political and economic centers of a nation, though topography and environment also play key roles, and at times failures occur within those very centers. It is important not to equate this failure automatically with the idea of a "failed nation," which is a rather different concept. No one would call Brazil a failed nation; yet its size, its geographic diversity, the history of its colonization, and its imbrication in the system of world capital have all given rise to issues of NTC. Among Brazilian writers, Márcio Gonçalves Bentes de Souza (1946-) is unparalleled in writing fiction whose characters and events are driven by such issues. While the title of my paper is somewhat hyperbolic, it accurately reflects the critical question I posed to myself while reading Souza's novels: where are the Brazilian characters? Souza's propensity for using non-Brazilians as protagonists connects with the success or failure of NTC that is an element of plot in his novels. Here, I examine *Galvez, Imperador do Acre*, *Mad Maria*, and the Grão-Pará tetralogy for their elaboration of a model for Brazilian spaces that escapes NTC.

Souza is one of the most prolific and important contemporary writers of Brazil. Beyond his fiction, he has also contributed to the areas of cultural and literary history. Born in Manaus, capital of the state of Amazonas and the largest city in the region, Souza has frequently turned to the genre of historical fiction to tell the story of Northwestern Brazil. This represents an interesting development in Brazilian literature, which throughout its history has been dominated by writers from the Northeast and the urban centers. On occasion, the latter have made use of the Amazon region as a setting for their fictions that construct a symbolic cradle of the Brazilian nation. Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1928), whose eponymous protagonist is an Amazon Indian and Raul Bopp's *Cobra Nonata* (1931), both foundational texts of Brazilian modernism, are perhaps the best-known twentieth-century examples. In a series of historical novels, Souza has covered a great deal of Amazônia's vast territory, including Acre, Rondônia, and Pará, revealing it as a "zona franca" subject to the currents of adventurism and multinational capitalism. Much of his fiction follows a clear pedagogical agenda of undermining the implied effects of national homogeneity. Souza brings, to coin a phrase off of Bhabha's formulation, the "distracting presence of another spatiality" to the surface in the novels discussed here, implying an alternative chronotope (Bakhtin) for the concept "Brazil."

For each of the areas mentioned above, Souza picks a historical moment at which NTC was in question. It is important to note both the historical accuracy of Souza's fictions in their broad outlines, and his constant mixing of "real" with invented characters and incidents. It is useful, for example, to read the author's non-fictional *Breve História da Amazônia* as a skeleton key to his novels. There one encounters names of real historical actors such as Galvez, Farquhar, Batista Campos, and others. Details on the problematic of NTC in the region, which involves both the ethnicities and loyalties of its inhabitants and the uncertainties of its territorial boundaries, will emerge from the discussion of specific fictions in the following pages. *Galvez, Imperador do Acre* (1976), the first important fiction by Souza to be based on the thesis of NTC, was quickly translated into English, appearing in the prestigious Avon series that brought Latin American literature to North American attention. The novel is told in the picaresque first person by Luiz Galvez Rodriguez de Aria, a historically documented Spaniard born in Cadíz in 1859. Galvez's memoirs are accompanied by the descant of a disembodied editor (of the Galvez manuscript), who constantly supplies facts, corrects Galvez's vainglorious embellishments, and above all connects the *pícaro's* exploits with the present situation in Acre, which he summarizes thus: "After him? Multinational tourism." (11) ("Depois dele: o turismo multinacional" [15]). "Turismo" here is a metaphor: the "tourists" who follow Galvez into Acre are multinational capitalists like Percival Farquhar of *Mad Maria*, and perhaps also the Brazilian writers who, like Andrade, "extract" from the Amazon its myths and supposed Indianness for their work. Galvez's imperial ambitions are egotistical and amateurish, and the narrator's preface detailing the purchase of his manuscript in a second-hand bookstore shows that the Spaniard's writing has not yet attracted the attention of anyone. While Galvez tells naturally a story centered on his own rise and fall as the "Emperor of Acre" from July through December 1899, the narrator places this story in a larger frame of reference and connects it to the

present tense of his reader. An important reason for this at times conflictual double narration is Souza's "belief that deflation of external discourse about the region must be achieved through metalanguage" (Maligo 72).

Other featured characters of *Galvez* are Luiz Trucco, the official representative of Bolivia to Brazil, his U.S. counterpart Michael Kennedy, the *Commédiens Tropicale*, a French troupe that begins by performing Italian operas that Galvez skillfully converts into patriotic *zarzuelas*, and an English mystic. The narrator deftly summarizes the issues involved in the struggle over Acre: "Our story begins ... with reference to a triangle of territories that once belonged to the tribes of Amoaca, Arara, Conamari, and Ipuriná Indians. On the Bolivian maps of the period, it seems that this triangle was more or less *Terra Incognita*, a zone of tropical diseases and sinuous rivers etched in between the adjacent frontiers of Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil. ... The Territory of Acre was rich in lovely specimens of *Hevea brasiliensis* [rubber trees], and would exist for many years under the sign of equivocation." (12-13) ("A história começa falando sobre um triângulo de terras que pertencia aos índios amoaca, arara, canamari e ipuriná. Parece que nos mapas bolivianos daquela época o triângulo estava assinalado como 'tierras no descubiertas.' Era um triângulo de moléstias tropicais e rios tortuosos encravado entre a Bolívia, Peru e o Brasil. ... O ACRE era rico de belos espécimes de *hevea-brasiliensis* e viveria por muitos anos sob o signo dos equívocos" [16-17]).

The published English translation does not reproduce the effect of having Spanish (the oxymoronic "tierras no descubiertas") inserted into the Portuguese. As the land wavers between possession by Bolivia and Brazil, so the text wavers between national languages. This passage alludes to several aspects of Brazilian territory that made NTC difficult if not impossible for the regions Souza writes about. First of all, the sheer number and differential patterns of independence and governance of the states contiguous to Brazil -- that is, every country of South America except Ecuador and Chile -- made coming to an agreement about borders a rare occurrence. As Paul Guichonnet and Claude Rafestin point out (131), there are 13 *triplex confinium* (i.e., points where boundaries of three countries meet) along Brazil's borders, which increase the difficulties of negotiation exponentially. Secondly, the motivation for negotiation was low as long as the territories were sparsely populated and devoid of economic interest -- a *status quo* that suddenly and briefly reversed itself during the rubber boom that began in the late nineteenth century. Thirdly, the topography, flora and fauna of the region made accurate surveying difficult. Treaty after treaty of the nineteenth century neglected to demarcate the boundaries belonging to each country. Wetland areas -- devoid of economic interest and population due to difficult access and prevalence of diseases -- were frequently used as no-man's land without strict demarcation, amounting to quite a large "remainder" on the continent exempt from NTC.

Acre, then, was one such "remainder," a territory beyond the effective control of any one nation. By the Treaty of Ayacucho of 1867, Acre belonged to Bolivia, but this meant little as long as its borders remained undetermined. In the intervening years, Brazilian settlers moved into the region. Furthermore, with the rise of the automobile rubber became valuable. In the novel, while the Brazilian national government favors the honoring of Bolivian claims to the region, the governor of Amazonas supports Acre as a Brazilian national cause, and pays the adventurer Galvez 50,000 pounds to start a rebellion in the region resulting in an independent Empire of Acre, which would then solicit annexation by Brazil. The plot is launched just as Kennedy and Trucco are about to agree on the formal cession of Acre to Bolivia, and it briefly succeeds. The complete text of the treaty is reproduced, showing that the United States pledges to secure Acre for Bolivia in return for financial and military assistance, including the right to navigate the waters of the Amazon and free passage through customs in Manaus and Pará. In the event of war with Brazil, Bolivia is to abrogate the 1867 treaty and cede the territory to the United States (52 [48-49]). Galvez's revolution makes the treaty null and void. However, without a real political agenda the regime cannot sustain itself, and it is swept aside by an uprising on New Year's Eve 1899-1900. Galvez ends his days back in Cadíz.

The patriotic Brazilians who play significant roles in the action are all women: Cira of Belém, who initiates Galvez into a secret society that considers Acre to be Brazilian territory; Joana, an ex-nun who helps Galvez in his plot and dies defending the palace from the counter-coup; and Vitória, wife of local colonel Pedro Paixão whose fifty *capangas* (gunslingers) hold the balance of power in Puerto

Alonso. Vitória's religious devotion gives her the backbone to oppose Galvez, whose government is decidedly secular. One cannot entirely agree with Robert DiAntonio that Joana "is the work's only character with a sense of conscience" ("The Aesthetics of the Absurd" 267). Vitória has it as well, and while Joana has *revolutionary* conscience and follows her French namesake to defeat and death, her landowning counterpart lives up to her name as well. Vitória's slogan, "Down with the cancan!" (184) ("Abaixo o can-can" [168]) becomes the rallying cry of the counter-revolution. It is at once anti-French, nationalist Brazilian, and an upholding of the conservative Catholic political order against amoral debauchery.

Galvez's last words concern neither Acre nor Brazil, but Spain: "I, too, am a Spaniard of the melancholy generation." (189) ("Sou também um espanhol da geração melancólica" [172]). The reference is to the so-called "Generation of 1898," consisting of writers such as Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset who were marked by the historical events that deprived Spain of its last colonies. *La generación del 98* included as well the scholar Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, who was largely responsible for articulating the idea of "Hispanidad" as an ideal spatiality replacing the actual territory lost to Spain: "on the one hand, hispanidad is a nostalgic continuation of the lost empire, while on the other it constitutes an element of national identity." ("por una parte [hispanidad] es una prolongación nostálgica del imperio perdido, y por otra constituye un elemento de identidad nacional" [Santos-Rivero 23]). Souza belongs, on the other hand, to the "Generation of 1968" (on this, see, e.g., Johnson). That is, he is a writer marked not by the loss of Brazilian territory but by the military dictatorship that overthrew the elected Brazilian government in 1964. Among Souza's many novels, only *Operação Silêncio* and *Ordem do Dia* deal directly with events of the 1960s, but his concern with geopolitics may be considered an indirect response to the military junta. One of the masterminds of the dictatorship, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, is the author of perhaps the most important and widely read book on Brazil's geopolitics, aptly titled *Geopolítica do Brasil*. In that work, Couto e Silva's dramatic prose style at times seems imitative of Euclides da Cunha in *Os Sertões*, for example when he contrasts Brazil's *bloco metropolitano* (metropolitan block) with an Amazônia that remains beyond NTC: "In the far-reaching arc of the Northwest, from Corumbá -- or perhaps a bit south of that city -- to the distant province of Amapá, through the territories of Guaporé [Rondônia] and Acre, all of western Amazônia of the Juruá river, the Javari, the Japurá e the Uaupés, Rio Branco and the Guyanian province, we find semideserted 'marches,' still unstable, almost totally abandoned, open to penetration by groups without a defined flag and to invasion by outlaw nomads." ("no arco a noroeste distendido, de Corumbá -- ou mesmo mais ao sul -- até a comarca distante do Amapá, pelos territórios do Guaporé [Rondônia] e do Acre, todo o ocidente amazônico do Juruá, do Javari, do Japurá e do Uaupés, Rio Branco e a província guaianense, sucedem-se as 'marcas' semidesertas, instáveis ainda, quase de todo abandonadas, abertas a penetrações de grupos sem bandeira definida e a correrias de nômades sem lei" [108-09]; emphasis in the original). It is as if the General were providing an introduction to *Galvez*. The word "march" (*marca*) refers to territories in feudal Europe that were contiguous to hostile states, and hence prone to instability. One solution, of course, is to populate the region, using settlers as buffers and unofficial militia against the stateless nomads. Following the military coup of 1964, the Brazilian military attempted practical measures to solve these issues, such as building the Trans-Amazon highway, expanding the "Zona Franca de Manaus," and otherwise promoting settlement in the region (of course, like Galvez, the international community of multinational, ecological tourists belongs to a melancholic generation that thinks of the parlous deserted areas mainly as reserves of biodiversity now destroyed).

Galvez's last sentence, like his character, decenters the narrative once again by focusing the reader's attention not on Brazilian national ambitions, but on Spanish ones. The last Spanish colonies -- Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines -- were all lost to the United States, and the U.S. representative to Brazil, Michael Kennedy, has an appropriately rapacious attitude towards his country of assignment: "patriots shivered at the continual threats his country was wont to bandy against the integrity of the Amazon." (26) ("arrepiaava os nacionalistas pelas constantes ameaças que seu país costumava fazer contra a integridade da Amazônia" [27]). The US-Americans support the Bolivian position on Acre in exchange for economic concessions in the rubber trade. Galvez moves up the Amazon from Belém to Manaus on a steamer that also carries the French theater troupe that he turns into

an economic success by making them mouth the lines of nationalist discourse: "I organized a variety act then with a tableau in homage to the Paraguayan War, always a great success in the Amazon. We started rehearsals aboard, alternating with scientific lectures given by Sir Henry. The ship was navigating the waters of Utopia." (89) ("Organizei uma zarzuella com um quadro em homenagem à Guerra do Paraguai. Fazia sempre sucesso no Amazonas. Começamos os ensaios alternando com conferências científicas de Sir Henry. O vapor navegava na utopia" [82]). The Paraguayan War (1865-1870) was indeed a turning point both in Brazilian national self-conception and in its internal politics. The war professionalized the Brazilian military and made it more familiar with the republican forms of government to Brazil's south, thus making the army the chief force in toppling the monarchy. Utopia, of course, is no-place, and the multicultural cast of characters lives in the no-place of international capital. This image returns in the title of another Souza fiction, *Mundo perdido II*, a reference to Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 popular science-fiction novel, *The Lost World*, about dinosaurs still living on a plateau in the middle of the Amazon jungle. However, in Souza's sequel the lost species are entrepreneurial capitalists of the nineteenth-century variety, such as Thomas Farquhar, protagonist of *Mad Maria*.

Although the setting is Rondônia within the national territory of Brazil, the protagonists and antagonists of *Mad Maria* are North Americans, Barbadians, Germans, a Bolivian named Consuelo, and an Indian nicknamed Joe Caripuna. Even the novel's epigraph (in English) comes not from a Brazilian politician, but from Harry S. Truman: "I know he's a son of a bitch, but he happens to be *our* son of a bitch!" (7; emphasis in the original). The Bahian politician Rui Barbosa, the President of the Republic Marshall Hermes da Fonseca, and his Minister of Industry J.J. Seabra are among the few Brazilian actors that matter to the narrative. There is a double plot, alternating in setting between the present territory of Rondônia and the capital, Rio de Janeiro. In the former, the various nationalities fight over the completion of the Madeira-Marmaré railway, a project designed to bring rubber from its source to a river large enough to transport it; in the latter, Farquhar and Seabra intrigue against each other at various levels. The two plots converge when the elite politicians of Rio are invited to Porto Velho in Rondônia to witness the inauguration of the railway.

The first narrative strand is dominated by the dialogue between Finnegan, a young and naïve doctor from the United States made increasingly desperate by the impossibility of keeping the working crew for the railroad healthy, and the works engineer Collier, a cynical Englishman. Through Souza's use of free indirect discourse, we learn of the international composition of the work crew of 150 men: "The Chinese worked on cutting down trees, they went advancing through the forest. The Germans had the job of clearing stumps and leveling. The Barbadians took care of laying down track. The Spanish, having emigrated from a repressive colonial regime, played the role of foremen and made up the security force." ("Os chineses trabalhavam no desmatamento, iam avançando pela floresta. Os alemães cuidavam do serviço de destocamento e da terraplenagem. Os barbadianos estavam no serviço de colocação do leito ferroviário. Os espanhóis, egressos do sistema repressivo colonial em Cuba, faziam as vezes de capatazes e compunham a guarda de segurança" [23]). The Anglos, as explained in an earlier passage, were the brains of the operation ("os mandachugas" [20]), and there were "only a handful of Brazilians, all of them brutes." ("alguns poucos brasileiros, todos estúpidos" [20]). The most obvious precedent for the importation of foreign work crews was the Panama Canal, completed just a few years before the beginning of the Brazilian railway. Like the Canal, the Brazilian project as a whole involved a massive manipulation of the idea of national sovereignty.

The scene in Rio is dominated by Percival Farquhar (1864-1953), a historical personage who played a major role in the development of Brazil in the early twentieth century, who takes advice from Rui Barbosa concerning his personal rivalry with J.J. Seabra. Though it would be digressive to give the details of Souza's portrayal of Barbosa here, it very much goes against the grain of the myth surrounding this "organizer" of the Brazilian Republic, to use Antônio Batista Pereira's words. The Rui Barbosa of *Mad Maria* -- seen almost entirely from Farquhar's perspective -- is a corrupt, rancorous pedant, "anti-U.S. at the Hague, pro-American in the [Brazilian] Senate, and when all was said and done without any position whatsoever." ("antiamericano em Haia, pro-americano no Senado e sem posição nenhuma no final das contas" [65]).

Farquhar, who was born in York, Pennsylvania, embodied the idea of multinational capital, owning companies in the United States, Cuba, Guatemala, Russia, and above all Brazil, where he was the main private investor from 1905 to 1918. Beyond the scene of Souza's novel, Farquhar's financing of a railroad in southern Brazil also contributed to the eruption of the bloody Contestado war (on the Contestado, see Diacon). The 366-km Madeira-Mamoré Railway (Estrada de Ferro Madeira-Mamoré) was constructed between 1907 and 1912, and operated on a commercial basis until 1972. Its principal purpose at the start was the transportation of rubber to the town of Porto Velho where it could be loaded onto boats. After the end of the rubber industry the railway continued to carry cargo and passengers, contributing to the development of Rondônia and Acre. There were few if any profitable years in the company's history, though the payment of the Brazilian government for its construction was highly lucrative to Farquhar; its long life was due to generous subsidies by the Brazilian government. According to Souza, the Brazilian army burned most of the documentation for the project (see Dimas 12).

Beyond having the plot carried by non-Brazilians acting within national territorial space, Souza also depicts locales within Brazil that are internationalized. One of these is Porto Velho, present-day capital of the territory of Acre. It began as the base for constructing the Madeira-Mamoré railway. Porto Velho "was a very odd town, where Carnival was not celebrated, but Thanksgiving Day was. The 7th of September was not remembered, but the city was festooned for the 4th of July. In the month of June, when cold winds blew down from the Andes mountains, traditional diversions like *bumba-meu-boi* or *caninha verde* were not celebrated, but on the 31st of October people played at Halloween, even though no children lived there. The official language was English, and had an accurate survey been conducted it would confirm that very few of the citizens spoke Portuguese. 1911 found Porto Velho without a single authority of the Brazilian government." ("Era uma cidade muito peculiar, onde não se comemorava o carnaval mas festejava-se o Dia de Ação de Graças. O dia 7 de Setembro não era lembrado mas a cidade engalanava-se no 4 de julho. No mês de junho, quando ventos frios vinham dos Andes, não havia folguedos tradicionais como bumba-meu-boi ou caninha verde, mas em 31 de outubro brincava-se animadamente o Halloween, embora ali não vivessem crianças. [...] A língua oficial era o inglês, e se tivesse sido feito um levantamento acurado ficaria constatado que poucos eram as pessoas que falavam o português. ... Porto Velho não contava em 1911 com a presença de nenhuma autoridade brasileira" [399]).

This "utopian" character of the company town is reinforced at the end of the novel, when Farquhar himself and various Brazilian dignitaries visit it to inaugurate the railroad. The U.S. flag is flying, and when Farquhar notes that it is the wrong one, his subalterns respond by requesting the Bolivian flag. Farquhar inquires rhetorically: "What country are we in, John?" "Brazil, I guess." "The Brazilian flag ought to be there, John." "But Farquhar, how were we to know?" "This here is not American territory, you idiot. Not yet, as far as I know." "Don't worry, Farquhar, your [Brazilian] guests did not even notice the difference." "They're crooks, but let's do our part: they love this patriotism bullshit." ("Em que país nós estamos, John?" "No Brasil, eu suponho." "Era a bandeira brasileira que deveria estar ali, John." "Mas Farquhar, como poderíamos saber?" "Isto aqui não é território americano, idiota. Ainda não é, pelo que eu saiba." "Não se preocupe, Farquhar, teus convidados nem notaram a diferença." "São corruptos, mas não podemos facilitar, eles adoram esta merda de patriotismo" [406]). The flag scene literalizes a metaphor; the lack of NTC on the ground, the lack of a Brazilian authority in town, becomes a literal confusion as to which flag should be raised over the territory. The scene reminds us of the strong analogies between flag and the depiction of state territory on a map: both are bounded, integral, filled frequently in with solid colors. Above all, they are two visual ways of imagining the state through its symbols. The disintegration of Brazilian national territory leads inevitably to the confusion over the proper flag. It is complemented by descriptions that make it sound as though foreign powers are invading Brazil, when in fact what is at stake are economic concessions: "Farquhar was aware of this alliance between [President] Hermes and the Germans and he felt it was up to him to represent the power of North American capital present in the country and capable of blocking the Germans from entry." ("Farquhar sabia dessa ligação de Hermes com os alemães e agora se sentia no papel de representar a força do capital norte-americano presente no país capaz de barrar a chegada dos alemães" [70]). The description is of a battle fought in Brazil between two powers, but the material of



war in this case is financial capital. Such a description conforms to ideas of globalization and transnational capitalism. Distinctive in *Mad Maria*, however, is the literalization of the metaphor, for example through the warring groups of foreign workers (Barbadians vs. Germans) who kill each other daily on the railway line (Porto Velho bears a resemblance in this aspect to the Manaus described in *Valdez*, where "the English presence ... was so strong that there were even a few traditional apparitions" [109]).

The international outpost within Brazilian territory is denounced by the journalist Alberto Torres in the *Correio da Manhã* in the following terms: "Above all, Brazilian territory itself, in an area recently litigated over, has been practically appropriated by a powerful foreign group, a fact that represented an obvious threat to national sovereignty." (Alberto De Seixas Martins Torres [1865-1917] was a politician and journalist active in the early days of the Republic. He is best remembered for his writings on the topic of Brazilian national identity.) ("Além do mais, o próprio território brasileiro, em área de recente litígio, estava praticamente açambarcado por poderoso grupo estrangeiro, o que representava perigo evidente à soberania nacional" [382]).

Going back farther in history, however, one discovers that most of Amazônia had been foreign territory to the Brazilian Empire. Souza's Grão-Pará trilogy, consisting of the novels *Lealdade* (1997; Loyalty), *Desordem* (2001; Disorder), *Revolta* (2005; Revolt), and *Derrota* (to appear 2008; Defeat) provides a much larger tapestry for the author's alternative mapping of Brazil, but with a different alienation effect from that of the earlier novels. That is, whereas the earlier two works problematized NTC by following foreign actors and languages at work within Brazilian territory, in *Lealdade* we see characters who are subjects of the Portuguese crown, who speak the language and confront (or help perpetuate) many of the problems associated with Brazil (racism, classism, undemocratic forms of government), but for whom the familiar centers of today's Brazil are both distant and hostile.

In 1621, Portuguese America was divided into two administrative units: *Estado do Brasil* (State of Brasil), with its capital in Salvador and later Rio de Janeiro; and *Estado do Maranhão* (State of Maranhão), with its capital in São Luís and later Belém. In 1777, "Grão-Pará e Rio Negro" became the official name of the gigantic Portuguese colony that stretched from the mouth of the Amazon river westwards, and many miles south and north. As Souza reports in his history of Amazônia, Grão-Pará was far more attached to Portugal than to its continental counterparts to the southwest: "A voyage from Belém to Lisbon, for example, in those times of sail power, took about twenty days, compared to the nearly two months to São Luís and the journey of three months to Rio de Janeiro. This meant that the wealthy and the politicians spent more of their time in Portugal than in Brazil." ("Uma viagem de Belém a Lisboa, por exemplo, durava cerca de vinte dias, contra os quase dois meses até São Luís e a jornada de três meses até Rio de Janeiro. Isto fazio com que os ricos e os políticos freqüentassem mais Portugal que o Brasil" [*Breve História* 96]).

Like most children of the middle and upper classes, then, Captain Fernando Correia, a native of Belém and narrator of the events of *Lealdade*, which stretch from 1783 to 1823, is sent to Portugal for his studies. There, he witnesses Napoleon's invasion of the country before being sent back to Pará as commander of a detachment. The novel follows the gradual development of Correia's political thinking, under the influence of local friends who are attached to ideas of enlightenment reform and, eventually, to the independence of Grão-Pará. Very little information is given about the presence of the Portuguese royal family that has taken refuge in Brazil; instead, we learn a great deal about the repressive measures against local expressions of independence, such as the destruction of a local newspaper. The decisive moment arises in 1822 following the independence of the Estado do Brasil. At that moment, Correia participates in the bloodless coup that relieves the Portuguese garrison of its command. He discusses the future of Grão-Pará with the local canon, Batista Campos: "'Won't the Brazilians help us?' The canon shrugged. 'That is our tragedy, Fernando. Without help from the Brazilians, we won't get anywhere. Grão-Pará and Rio Negro has a larger territory than Brazil does, and that is our limitation. We are unable to control this territory, and we do not engage in economic activities capable of sustaining us as a nation.' 'Does that mean we risk continuing as a colony?' 'We are fated to be Brazil, that's all. And we will have to use our intelligence for Brazil to receive us as equals.'" ("Será que os brasileiros não vão nos ajudar?' O cônego deu de ombros. 'Esta é a nossa tragédia, Fernando. Sem a ajuda dos brasileiros, não vamos chegar a lugar nenhum. O Grão-Pará e Rio Negro tem um território

maior que o do Brasil, e esta é a nossa limitação. Não temos como controlar esse território e não temos atividades econômicas capazes de nos sustentar como nação.' 'Quer dizer que corremos o risco de continuar colônia?' 'Estamos fadados a ser Brasil, é isto. E vamos ter de usar a nossa inteligência para que o Brasil nos receba como iguais'" [175]). This passage, written in Portuguese in a novel published in today's Brazil, defamiliarizes the idea of what it means to be Brazilian, due to the fact that the interlocutors speak of "Brazilians" as foreigners, and lament that they are fated to "be Brazil." It shows with clarity how Souza's Amazonian background has informed his treatment of the thematic of NTC. In the events that follow, the new State of Brazil does not receive Grão-Pará as an equal. Instead, it simply replaces Portugal as the colonizer of Grão-Pará. The use of mercenaries (precedent, we might say, for the foreign work crews of *Mad Maria*) by both sides of the conflict further confuses the issue, as an English naval captain, Greenfell, is instrumental in overthrowing the provisional government of independence.

The second novel of the tetralogy, *Desordem*, begins ten years after the events of *Lealdade*. Returning to the "found manuscript" tradition of *Galvez*, the narrative is based on the diary of Anne-Marie, a Frenchwoman who flees France to Cayenne, Guyana, and then to Belém as the result of the Napoleonic wars. Readers of the first novel have already encountered this character as Simone, the hero's mistress who gradually drifts away from him. Besides her own real name she also reveals that of the protagonist of *Lealdade*, Pedro Barata. The two marry in Europe but return to Pará on the eve of the revolt. Anne-Marie shows the same respect for Batista Campos as a leader of the movement for autonomy of Grão-Pará as had Pedro Barata/Correia in the previous novel, and the narrative begins with the latter's death on 31 December 1834. While sympathetic to the movement against the repressive governor, Souza, Barata acts as a brake against hotheads like Antônio Vinagre. The novel's climax comes when the authorities hire two assassins to kill Barata. Popular outrage leads to reprisals on both sides, as events are clearly escaping the control of the governor. The death of Batista Campos signals the end of attempts at reconciliation. For the next six years, much of Grão-Pará will remain outside the NTC of Brazil in a revolt called the Cabanagem.

The third volume commences with an alienation effect that reminds readers of *Mad Maria* and *Galvez*. The narrative turns into another diary, that of Maurício Vilaça, who explains his decision to keep a diary thus: "I decided almost two years ago and wrote my resolution down in a to-do list on Christmas eve 1832, on a winter's morning with much snow in Baltimore" ("Tomei a decisão há quase dois anos, e firmei tal propósito numa lista de coisas a realizar que organizei na véspera do Natal de 1832, numa manhã de inverno e muita neve em Baltimore" [17]). Vilaça has been an apprentice to Moore & Bros. in Baltimore, but returns to Belém on the death of his godfather, Pedro Barata. This novel continues with a series of amorous adventures that reflect the moral chaos and degeneration of the Cabanagem period. Souza seems to have taken the Marquis de Sade as his model for this fiction, which reflects the anarchy and cruelty of the political scene through the protagonist's perverse and unthinking erotic adventures. The murder of Vilaça, reported in a brief note at the end, is made to seem both inevitable and senseless. The fourth volume of the tetralogy was still scheduled to appear in 2008 as I finished this article. There is, however, a blurb on Souza's website that describes the book as continuing the events of the Cabanagem up to 1840, with Indians and a German mercenary as chief actors. Brazil without Brazilians again?

In his critical writings, Souza strives to replace geographical identity with another, more abstract and fluid concept of *brasileiridade*: "It is not only geography that invents us as a nation, and not even language, but this will-to-power, this categorical act of affirmation, that makes us all Brazilians." ("não é apenas a geografia que nos inventa como nação, nem a língua, mas esta vontade de poder, este ato categórico de afirmação, que nos faz brasileiros" [*Fascínio e repulsa* 65]). Unfortunately, Souza does not further specify this mystical act of affirmation or supply it with any content, but his statement gives a clue as to the function of the geopolitical aspect of his fiction, especially in eliding completely the racial question that has motivated many of the debates on Brazilian identity (see Skidmore). DiAntonio suggests (*Brazilian Fiction* 87, 93) that this will is embodied in Joe Caripuna of *Mad Maria*, who recovers from having his hands amputated as punishment for stealing from the whites by learning to play the piano with his feet and travels the concert circuit in North America. In this reading, an

Indian of liminal national belonging would best embody Brazilian national traits -- Andrade and Bopp with a difference.

Ideas of the transnational have become a staple of critical discourse. However, it is not clear whether "transnationalism" should more accurately be called "transstatism," or indeed who or what is "transing" whom, or whether transnational phenomena are added on top of the basic "fact" of NTC or rather expose its fictive aspects. It may be beneficial to pay more attention to some of the narrower concepts related to the idea of transnationalism, such as geopolitics and NTC. Certainly Percival Farquhar, one of the historical personages of *Mad Maria*, conducted one of the most transnational of capital operations (all the more surprising that no one has written his biography since Gauld's sympathetic 1964 tome). Souza's Brazil without Brazilians is meant to focus readers' attention not so much on the transnationalism of its actors as on a country whose northern territory constitutes a "remainder" outside of NTC.

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