

THE BRAZILIANISTS' BRAZIL:  
Interdisciplinary Portraits of Brazilian Society and Culture

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- BRAZILIAN LEGACIES. By Robert M. Levine. (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997. Pp. 209. \$62.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.)
- "CIVILIZING" RIO: REFORM AND RESISTANCE IN A BRAZILIAN CITY, 1889–1930. By Teresa A. Meade. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. Pp. 212. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- BRAZIL, THE ONCE AND FUTURE COUNTRY. By Marshall C. Eakin. (New York: St. Martin's, 1997. Pp. 320. \$35.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)
- BRAZILIAN MOSAIC: PORTRAITS OF A DIVERSE PEOPLE AND CULTURE. By G. Harvey Summ. (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1995. Pp. 209. \$50.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)
- THE BRAZILIANS. By Joseph Page. (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995. Pp. 560. \$26.50 cloth, \$17.50 paper.)
- SEVEN FACES: BRAZILIAN POETRY SINCE MODERNISM. By Charles A. Perrone. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996. Pp. 234. \$49.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)
- OUTRAS PRAIAS: 13 POETAS BRASILEIRAS EMERGENTES / OTHER SHORES: 13 EMERGING BRAZILIAN POETS. By Antônio Cicero et al. Edited by Ricardo Corona. Translated by Charles Perrone, David William Foster, and Ligia Vieira César. (São Paulo: Iluminuras, 1998. Pp. 300.)

Brazilian studies constitute a particular case in the current trend toward interdisciplinary studies across the humanities and social sciences. As the term *Brazilianist* suggests, scholars in this area have tended to be conversant with various disciplinary discourses articulating dimensions of this national society. The study of Brazilian literature in ignorance of the country's popular culture (including its music) or of national economic structures without reference to Brazilian social conditions seems inconceivable. Ethnomusicologists must incorporate socioeconomics, history, anthropology, and aesthetics. Moreover, Brazilianists frequently cross the substantial psychological barriers between the social sciences and the humanities.

A number of structural factors are at work in this sense. While North Atlantic cultural styles and studies of them tend increasingly toward aesthetic considerations (the final term of which may be the socially decontext-

tualized postmodern paradigm), Latin American humanist studies exist in a context of pressing social imperatives. These social problems are so obvious and urgent that they cannot be abstracted away or removed far from the central focus of creative writers. Among writers identified with the Spanish American literary boom, from García Márquez's Marxist sense of *soledad* as betrayed solidarity to Octavio Paz's conservative sense of a Mexican *soledad* that is historically humanist and mythologically generative, the writer's creative adventure is consciously a national or continental exploration.

In the Brazilian domain, a similar yet inverse process has been operating. Many of Brazil's most celebrated writers are not writers of fiction but social scientists who have written humanist essays exploring national identity. The first great generation of such writing in the 1930s included Paulo Prado's *Retrato do Brasil*, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Raízes do Brasil*, and Gilberto Freyre's seminal *Casa grande e senzala*, the most culturally influential Brazilian text of all time.<sup>1</sup> Although Freyre's text was conceived as anthropology and derived from his doctoral dissertation at a U.S. institution, its opulent prose is more literary than scientific, earning the author the epithet of "o Proust da sociologia." These three works are intriguing from an interdisciplinary perspective: all attempt to characterize Brazilian society through culturalist explanations of history that are highly literary (Buarque and Freyre also published works of literary criticism). Against the current of U.S. sociology, conceived in terms of quantitatively measurable and narrowly defined variables, the Brazilian tradition of humanist socio-anthropology continues its fertile speculative vein in the work of Roberto da Matta. This vein of subjective analysis seduced U.S. sociologists and anthropologists interested in race relations, who then visited Brazil.<sup>2</sup> In the literary arena, in contrast, a long line of critics from Antônio Cândido to Roberto Schwarz have oriented their readings of erudite literature toward materialist social exegeses based on dependency theory. Their approach to Brazilian identity recalls the essays of the Spanish American Boom novelists, but they tend to maintain a sense of the cultural uniqueness of Brazil.

Figures like Schwarz and da Matta represent Brazil's leading national essayists today. Although they are domestic Brazilianists, they are not referred to as such, the term *Brazilianist* being usually reserved for foreigners. This separation is appropriate, for while the foreigners are now

1. Paulo Prado, *Retrato do Brasil: Ensaio sobre a tristeza brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Briguiet, 1931); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1936); and Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala* (Rio: Maia e Schmidt, 1933).

2. See for example Donald Pierson's *Negroes in Brazil: A Study of Race Contact at Bahia* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1942); or Marvin Harris's *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (New York: Norton, 1964).

also engaging in interdisciplinary approaches, the path that has brought them to this juncture is virtually opposite. The Brazilian essayists suggest the continuity of the positivistic intellectual approach of the late nineteenth century, which tends to fuse data drawn from various disciplines in a speculative reading ultimately based on a subjective notion of some kind of national essence. The outsider Brazilianists, working within the frame of contemporary North Atlantic academia, come from a postdisciplinary perspective. In this approach, the internal coherence and logical necessity of each single discipline as a discrete entity has been problematized and counterbalanced with the notion of the need for a hybrid approach in which the source discipline of each scholar is fertilized by another field.

The substantial number of U.S. scholars focusing on Brazil have gradually accumulated a body of research. Much of this material was originally focused more narrowly. From the trend toward interdisciplinary studies, a willingness to approach Brazil from a more general and interpretative perspective has emerged, and in the last decade, major explorations of themes in Brazilian culture have been undertaken. The approaches and the cultural or political agendas of these critics of Brazilian reality have varied greatly. Collectively, they have introduced an invigorating complexity to the domestic Brazilian tradition of cultural exegeses.

The contributions of U.S. women scholars have added thematic and conceptual breadth to the traditionally patriarchal portrayal of Brazilian reality. The collection of oral histories entitled *Brazilian Women Speak: Contemporary Life Stories* by Daphne Patai, a feminist literary critic rather than an ethnographer and not exclusively a Brazilianist, exemplifies the genre of penetrating and dense studies of particular subaltern communities. A major work on Brazil was undertaken by another non-Brazilianist scholar, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, an anthropologist concentrating on children's issues in different global locations. Her monumental *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* examines the life of poverty-stricken women in the old sugar belt of the Northeast. It oscillates between a highly empathic, almost existentialist penetration of the minds of her subjects and a critical exposé of oppressive social conditions and mechanisms. Another excellent work, *Samba* by journalist Alma Guillermoprieto, examines the cyclical and communitarian existence of poor Rio acolytes in the *escolas de samba*. This rich text exhibits an honest awareness of the existential gap between observer and observed subject and looks at how these roles can reverse: as the observer becomes aware of the depth of her physical ineptitude in the ritual dance, she also learns from her new teachers about the profound life-art of samba. A more literary hermeneutic approach, one still aimed at communitarian insight, is taken in much of Candice Slater's work on oral literature and surviving myth systems, including *Stories on a String: The Brazilian Literatura de Cordel* and *Dance of the Dolphin: Transformation and Disenchantment in the Amazonian Imagination*.

These kinds of studies incorporate a series of themes around the central focus on a specific human community. Acknowledgment of the psychological distance between observer and subject occasions in responsible authors extraordinary carefulness in addressing the issues raised. This sensitive listening and observing is characteristic of the best “outsider” (Brazilianist) work. While it may be characterized psychologically as feminine, it is not restricted to women, as can be appreciated in the patient communitarian hermeneutic method of Rowan Ireland’s *Kingdoms Come*, a twenty-year study of religion, politics, and life options in a small community outside Recife.<sup>3</sup>

All the texts under review here are interdisciplinary, or better said, non-monodisciplinary. But they respond to the recent trends in research agendas and to the structural contradictions of our profession with diverse strategies, and they illustrate various approaches in the current proto-interdisciplinary moment.

Teresa Meade’s *“Civilizing” Rio: Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City* examines violence in Rio in the early twentieth century—more precisely, popular civil disobedience in Rio in reaction to the government’s authoritarian program for engineered social progress. Meade probes a magnificently paradoxical historical kernel in the cries of the rioting workers of 1904: “‘Death to the police!’ ‘Long live the working class!’ ‘Down with forced vaccination!’” (p. 2).

Meade argues against the usual neat diachronic distinction made between modern and pre-modern protest. She notes that what is usually accepted by leftists as characterizing the political sphere in the modern era—essentially, strikes and rationally organized class conflict centered on labor—is actually a narrow interpretation of experience and the product of a particular historic conjuncture. Meade points out how the centrality of consumerism links “the pre-modern” to “the postmodern.” As capitalism matures, the loci of economic interaction and conflict become dispersed, undermining the central stage of the factory as the site or scene of conflict. Attention to the consumption process also leads to gender displacement because it integrates the role of women, domestic or not. Finally, in relating the past to the present, Meade observes that “pre-modern protest” is not re-

3. Daphne Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak: Contemporary Life Stories* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); Alma Guillermoprieto, *Samba* (New York: Knopf, 1990); Candace Slater, *Dance of the Dolphin: Transformation and Disenchantment in the Amazonian Imagination* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Slater, *Stories on a String: The Brazilian Literatura de Cordel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982); and Rowan Ireland, *Kingdoms Come: Religion and Politics in Brazil* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).

stricted to the Third World, reminding readers of similar processes in the 1990s in metropolitan locations such as South Central Los Angeles.

Meade's study undercuts the notion of Brazilian civility between classes. As exercises in historical documentation or informatization of the past, studies like hers are crucial in localizing Third World individuals of the past as authentic human subjects, as real people. In this sense, they are more precious in their ordinariness (in their similarity to ourselves) than as the miraculous incarnations of some fascinating cultural alterity.

Meade's "*Civilizing*" *Rio* also alerts scholars to the extent to which the dominant imagery of historical popular resistance in Brazil has tended to be rural and Northeastern rather than urban and Southeastern. This emphasis is understandable from the point of view of Brazilianist teachers. For example, for purposes of pedagogical illustration of Belle Epoque Brazil, the much-documented and -cited episode of Canudos seems the perfect foil for the discourse of Republican positivist ideology.<sup>4</sup> An arbitrary hierarchy of imagery exists for connoting subaltern alterity and resistance: as semantic clusters, the rural works better than the urban, Northeastern better than Southern (and thus Canudos over the *Contestado*), nonwhite works better than white, and in religion, syncretist better than Protestant. But many of the values and issues connecting Meade's *cariocas* tie in with those affecting the *sertanejos*. The anti-metric riots across Pernambuco in the late nineteenth century are spatially and temporally proximate to Canudos but conceptually closer to the anti-vaccination rage. "*Civilizing*" *Rio* helps deconstruct that persuasive but simplified sense of an unbridgeable cultural gulf between the pragmatic, epicurean littoral of Brazil and the fanatic, stoic interior.

Meade's work is interdisciplinary but is grounded in historiography. The popular classes of Rio through the Old Republic are the true subjects of her work. Hers is not a case study to test a theory. In this sense "*Civilizing*" *Rio* maintains a hermeneutic dignity and legitimacy, inviting readers to step into a complex living moment in the past. As a book of history, it is essentially a narrative. This structure outweighs the incidental attempt to integrate the urban sociological theory of Manuel Castells, in which a city's spatial dispositions are read as a text illustrating social relations, exclusions, and conflicts. Castells evidently influenced Meade's perspective, but she wisely refrains from more than sketching out his perspective. In Meade's work, Castells's theory is plausible but unproved. Its restricted inclusion is appropriate for a general readership untrained in urban planning or sociology or history and therefore not equipped to judge its validity. Meade's historical study is nonetheless enriched by Castells's scientific spatial discipline and the book's progressive agenda that subjec-

4. For example, Bradford Burns's *A History of Brazil* uses the Canudos episode in this way.

tifies urban marginals as socioeconomic protagonists rather than merely cultural ones. But the text never loses the historian's humanist instinct. One finds no rhetorical heroizing of *o povo* (the people). "Civilizing" Rio maintains judgment and poise in portraying a "class" now made complexified or conceptually enriched as to its living experience and subculture.

Harvey Summ's *Brazilian Mosaic: Portraits of a Diverse People and Culture* is an anthology of impressionistic descriptions of Brazil, most of them extracted from book-length texts. The writers cited include acute foreign visitors of varying professions, such as Karl Von Martius; foreign Brazilianist scholars like Wayne Selcher, Thomas Skidmore, David Maybury-Lewis, and Phyllis Harrison; and famous domestic articulators of national identity, as will be discussed. The volume draws on the views of twenty U.S. writers, fourteen Europeans, one African (Anani Dzidzienyo), and nine Brazilians.

*Brazilian Mosaic* is an extremely handy reference tool. A number of nineteenth-century perspectives offer keen observations on the social order but also reveal the writers' consistent sense of racial superiority. The vignettes from great Brazilian writers acquaint readers quickly with actual prose passages whose ideas have passed into common lore: Euclides da Cunha's *sertanejo*, Prado's *homem triste*, Freyre's Luso-tropical civilization, Buarque's *homem cordial*, da Matta's invoker of social authority. Even readers familiar with these writers will find surprises in the short passages selected, such as Buarque's sense of the cordial man as being neither polite nor "Nietzschean" and therefore comparable with citizens of the United States.

The portraits are inherently interdisciplinary. They are intuitive apprehensions of Brazilian reality and identity that address sociability, style, morality, religiosity, sexuality, and more. The subjectivity of these texts is evident from the internal contradictions among them. Prado's sense of Brazilian sadness contradicts most portraits, while the weight frequently attributed to *saudade* (continental or otherwise) disputes the common perception of Brazilian spontaneity and "presentness." Austrian writer Stefan Zweig declared on fleeing Nazism, "every form of brutality, loudness, rudeness, and arrogance is missing. The Brazilian is a quiet person, dreamy and sentimental . . . , his manners are subdued. One seldom hears anyone talk loudly. . . ." (pp. 109–10). Charles Wagley suggested, "Brazilians are very political . . . , endlessly speculating on the tortuous twists of political figures and parties" (p. 151). Needless to say, these impressions are frequently belied. Overall, despite their engaging quality, the tiles of the mosaic do not really make up a comprehensible composite picture.

Summ attempts in his introduction to distill a synthesis from these syntheses, a consensus regarding Brazilian identity. His composite of Brazilianness includes sensibility, tempered either by a darker melancholy

side or by pragmatism; suspicion; the capacity for occasional spurts of great energy; a lack of civic virtues; and a strong sense of family. The result resembles just one more speculative passage. Summ switches between cited characteristics and what are apparently his own conclusions: that Brazilians “believe that man is evil unless proved to the contrary” (p. xii), and that their addiction to playing the lottery (*jogo do bicho*) “may be connected with the Portuguese messianic cult of Sebastianism” (p. xiv).

The work of domestic articulators of Brazilianness (from da Cunha to da Matta), although more profound and informed, is curiously similar in approach to that of foreigners. This similarity reminds Brazilianists of the subjectivity of Brazilian social science as seen in the fact that the country’s most famous scholars are really “writers,” essayists of impression and intuition rather than empirical social scientists. This mode of praxis is exciting from the interdisciplinary perspective but raises the troubling suspicion that Brazilian social scientists’ assertions have no objective validity or are at least flawed as objective statements.

An element missing from *Brazilian Mosaic* is the inclusion of views from diverse subject positions. If the intent is to present a diverse “mosaic,” subaltern voices are crucial. A couple are included: Daphne Patai’s oral-history transcription of a middle-aged Afro-Brazilian activist in Rio named “Vera,” and an extract from Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s great *Death without Weeping*. These passages are fascinating. Despite her limited education, Vera’s sheer power to analyze social mechanisms is impressive. Scheper-Hughes, meanwhile, seems to have taken structural social anthropology to a new level of psychological acuity in portraying a brutalized rural *rua* and a *casa* sick with poverty.

These two powerful selections are placed after a congenial Brazilian diplomat’s sympathetic but impressionistic and condescending comparison of Brazilians to adolescents. This cliché contrasts with a penetrating summary by David Haberly, included here in an extract from his *Three Sad Races*. This juxtaposition as well as the book’s abrupt ending after having finally arrived at more visceral and more challenging testimonial material both alert readers to what is lacking in *Brazilian Mosaic*. The book is out of tune with Brazil’s appeal as an interdisciplinary topic in the modern age: the vigor of its popular culture, taken aesthetically or politically as resistance. The single black academic voice of Dzidzienyo diverges sharply from the other scholarly voices. The editor should have realized the significance of such alterity in assembling the materials and worked further in this direction. Summ’s collection contains no indigenous or Afro-Brazilian voices whatever. One can only hope for a second volume—a Brazilian mosaic as seen from the underside.

Robert Levine’s *Brazilian Legacies* consciously takes on Brazilian reality as an interdisciplinary object. This work attempts to synthesize an im-

pressive body of scholarly research (including Levine's own)<sup>5</sup> and to incorporate the wealth of uncategorized experiential data soaked up by this conscientious Brazilianist over his career.

The kaleidoscopic knowledge assembled includes hard statistics, summaries, and anecdotes. *Brazilian Legacies* moves fluidly and with subtle humor among different registers of intellectual profundity—from the academic to general journalistic comment to emotional pathos. Levine has achieved an unusual balance between his confidence in subjective assertions and an awareness of the need for caution in making massive generalizations.

The chapters and their topics are worth enumerating: "The Legacy of Color" (slavery); "Social Realities" (classes, the rural poor, urban poverty); "Outsiders" (immigration, women, prostitution, children, homosexuals, Amerindians); "The Brazilian Way" ("*jeitinho*," paralegal infrastructures, the lack of democracy, criminal impunity); "Tools for Survival" (religion, the informal economy, carnival, and popular culture); "Diversions and Assertive Behavior" (recreation); "Beyond Coping" (civil disobedience, dissent); and "Toward a New Civil Society" (progressive policies in government). The chapters are organized according to a subjective sense of predominant themes. The themes—race, class, and gender, the pragmatics of everyday life, religion and culture, dysfunction, dissidence, government interventions—are consistent with the categories of an educated general reader's apprehension of most modern societies.

Inevitably, in moving from one topic to another, Levine makes broad observations that will be objected to by specialists in those areas as inappropriate simplifications. For example, religion is treated as a "tool for survival," a pragmatic mechanism. Carnival and popular culture are viewed as therapeutic devices. The text opts against the "prosecution" of parties involved in perpetuating oppressive social mechanisms. This choice is understandable in that Brazilianists want to be positive about their subject, but it is also ironic given that the author, with interdisciplinarily creative insight, has elevated criminal impunity to the level of a subchapter.

The final chapter's title, "Toward a New Civil Society," was not conceived as a critique of the status quo but rather as an anticipation of predictable progressive evolution. This overview presents a Brazil that is gradually overcoming obstacles, shedding old vices, and moving in the right direction. Levine's assumption of good faith on the part of politicians may be optimistic, however. Former President Fernando Collor de Mello's "impeachment" is taken as evidence of civil maturation (it suggests the oppo-

5. See Levine's substantial mapping of scholarship: *Brazil, 1822–1930: An Annotated Bibliography for Social Historians* (New York: Garland, 1983); *Brazil since 1930: An Annotated Bibliography for Social Historians* (New York: Garland, 1980); and *Historical Dictionary of Brazil* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1979).



site to Marshall Eakin, whose book is also reviewed here). Space constraints prevented Levine from presenting significant progressive social elements. The growth of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) with its integration of workers and professionals is surely precious evidence of the strengthened fabric of civil society and resistance to what current President Fernando Henrique Cardoso called in 1988 “the restoration of oligarchic power” (p. 97). Levine barely mentions the PT, except to note that progressives eventually defected from the party to Cardoso prior to the 1994 election. The ongoing vital issue of land reform is explained in terms of nonimplemented, long-standing government policy finally being put into action, but the *movimento sem-terra* (landless movement) is not mentioned directly. This top-down presentation belies the extent of social tensions and the degree of influence on government of entrenched interests opposing the terms of the legislation.

On another level, *Brazilian Legacies* suggests a commonsense materialist approach over a subjective cultural reading. Positive and negative cultural characteristics are examined on the basis of considerable reflection and experience but are ultimately viewed as incidental to the appropriate path of national development, whereas culturalists might perceive them as constituting the very fabric of Brazilian society. As an eminent social historian, Robert Levine has contributed greatly in other works to expanding U.S. knowledge of the Brazilian social fabric, including Canudos and the life of Maria Carolina de Jesus.<sup>6</sup> He attempted to structure this book to move broadly from a negative past (slavery) to a positive future (humane democracy). While *Brazilian Legacies* is a study of Brazilian culture and its people, the movement of the narrative suggests that the work is ultimately concerned with the destiny of the Brazilian nation-state rather than with culture itself.

Joseph Page’s *The Brazilians* constitutes yet another attempt to outline the Brazilian experience and characterize Brazilian identity in categories not derived from traditional disciplines. The chapter dealing broadly with politics is conceived in terms of power and representation and provides two contrasting outlines, one on the Globo television network and one on the Partido dos Trabalhadores. The contrast is neat but merely illus-

6. Levine supervised the re-edition of the texts by Carolina Maria de Jesus that had been translated into English. After the successful 1962 release by Dutton of her original diary-book *Child of the Dark* (*Quarto de despejo*), her texts became unavailable. Through Levine’s efforts, in the last three years, English translations have appeared as *I’m Going to Have a Little House: The Second Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) and *Bitita’s Diary: The Childhood Memoirs of Carolina Maria de Jesus* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998). See also *The Life and Death of Carolina Maria de Jesus*, edited by Robert M. Levine and Jose Carlos Sebe Bom Meihy (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Levine has also written a major study on Canudos, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

trative rather than a real portrait because the chapter excludes most of the rest of Brazilian politics. This choice demonstrates how such encapsulations will infuriate specialists as snapshot distortions of the overall Brazilian reality. Other chapters look at violence, religion, and national obsessions (soccer, *telenovelas*, carnival, and various heroes). *The Brazilians* amounts to a series of sketches of aspects of Brazilian identity that might constitute episodes of a documentary series (ethnicity, politics and class representation, social dysfunction, religion, national obsessions). The book is fast paced and well written by an author not ignorant of Brazil but without academic pretensions. The result is that *The Brazilians* reads well, particularly for the educated but uninformed readers targeted by Page.

The stated purpose of Marshall Eakin's *Brazil, the Once and Future Country* is to provide educated beginners with a single-text initiation into the Brazilian experience. The five chapters include a historical overview; a description of major regions; Brazilian cultural modes and pursuits; an examination of the pragmatic human constants of Brazilian civic organization, power, patronage, and clientelism; and finally, an analysis of the achievements and failures in government-engineered economic development.

Eakin has succeeded in creating a reliable reference book. The overall structure of *Brazil, the Once and Future Country* is a series of discrete investigations that can be consulted separately but also fit into a logic suggesting a thoughtful meditation on how Brazil works. The last two chapters address cultural habits and the often problematic methods and patterns of government planning. Eakin thus distinguishes the subjective human factors without viewing cultural features as overdetermined by a necessary relation between structure and superstructure.

Eakin can be counted on to think independently. Despite his concern with not being pessimistic, he states clearly the possibility of regression in societal development: that indices of civil society can and often do deteriorate in Brazil rather than improve, a pattern that may continue. For instance, the 1980s were not simply "the lost decade," as the truism goes. Certain powerful interests prospered enormously, and most of the predominant interests in the current democratic government were structurally established or rearticulated in the 1980s. More accurately, the 1980s were a lost decade for the Brazilian middle and lower classes (nothing unusual in Brazilian history, as Meade shows). Noting the traditional gulf between Brazilian poor and rich, Eakin asks a crucial question: "But who are these elusive elites?" He briefly identifies and quantifies the dominant interests, defined not by profession but by family or clan. He concludes, "the most striking feature of Brazilian politics is the ability of this constantly adapting elite to dominate the political process over five centuries and in a variety of regimes" (p. 183). Eakin also points out the effective demobilization and breakup of progressive forces in the Catholic Church by conservatives. Rather than merely demonizing and oversimplifying, he also credits Fer-

nando de Collor with establishing certain aggressive reform policies. Eakin points out that Collor came from the elite and for a time exercised an unprecedented liberty to govern above and beyond the military's agenda. Eakin also highlights Collor's bold attempts to impose government policy in the Amazon, where previous policy was always progressive but never implemented. Eakin notes that a darker view of Collor's downfall may be appropriate—not as political reform and maturation but as a maneuver by other corrupt politicians to force a return to the previous mode of corruption. Eakin also points out the relevance of the much ignored Antônio Carlos Magalhães as a restorationist of the old order.

*Brazil, the Once and Future Country* is not so much interdisciplinary as pluri-disciplinary within the social sciences. Eakin addresses history, economics, and sociology. The third chapter, "Lusotropical Civilization," offers an informative outline covering class, race, gender, sexual culture, carnival, the arts, and soccer. Here Eakin seems aware and even liberated by the fact that he is not an expert and is actually entitled to a subjective impression. There is little new here for experienced Brazilianists but plenty for beginners. This compact section covers in its own way the material that Levine draws out more painstakingly with a more rigorous interdisciplinary approach. Levine's and Eakin's books are both introductions to Brazil by historians attempting to grapple with the cultural paradigm. Levine's work, however, centers around his subjective and speculative identifications and interpretations of the most prominent aspects of existence in the Brazilian culture. Eakin basically conforms to conventional disciplinary distinctions. Richer in conception and detail, Levine's *Brazilian Legacies* prevails as an innovative interdisciplinary text. Eakin's *Brazil, the Once and Future Country* is nonetheless more reliable as a ready source of consultation and more frank in its critique of Brazilian society.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Perrone's *Seven Faces: Brazilian Poetry since Modernism* constitutes a significant advancement in U.S. Brazilianist scholarship in contextualizing concretist poetry in the evolution of Brazilian literature. This study is methodologically interesting for the present review in that one of the book's guiding premises is to avoid the inappropriate confusion of disciplines, issues, and orders of reality, particularly social morality and aesthetics.

*Seven Faces* examines a number of specific developments or topics in Brazilian poetry through the middle and later twentieth century. A background chapter covers the emergence of Brazilian Modernist poetry in the 1920s and briefly explores the major classic Modernist voices (Manuel Bandeira, Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, and Carlos Drummond de

7. Another interdisciplinary survey recently released is the substantial tome entitled *Brazil: A Country Study*, edited by Rex A. Hudson (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1998). The volume features survey essays on history, economics, politics, and other areas ranging from fifty to eighty pages each.

Andrade). Perrone then moves chronologically forward to an eventual conservative reaction in lyric poetry known as the Geração de '45. The second chapter examines the arrival on the scene of what he calls "concrete" (*concreto, poesia concreta, "Concretism,"* concrete or concretist poetry), led by the brothers Augusto and Haroldo Campos. The following two chapters address the adventure of *violão de rua*—the leftist consciousness-raising poetry that flourished in student circles in the early 1960s prior to the military coup of 1964—and the susceptibility to literary influences and impulses of Brazilian songwriters of popular music from Noel Rosa (samba of the 1930s) to the present. Chapter 5 looks at the 1970s and 1980s in terms of two polarized currents: a new turn toward activist, utilitarian poetry called *poesia marginal* and the inheritors of concrete poetry. Chapter 6 examines the evolving work and philosophy of the seminal *concretistas*, assesses concrete poetry's character in relation to postmodern theory, and explores (in order to reject) the hostility to concrete poetry by eminent leftist historicist literary critics (mainly Roberto Schwarz but also David Treece).

Despite this variety of topics, the subtitle, *Brazilian Poetry since Modernism*, is somewhat beguiling in that the book actually does not cover the greater part of Brazilian poetry since Modernism. The notable missing chunk is the Geração de '60. This label refers not to the volumes of *violão de rua* (terminating abruptly with the coup) but to the same generation's later production, along with some younger voices writing in the 1970s and 1980s, in a relatively conventional lyric style that preserved traditional notions of the *auteur* more than in poetry of leftist engagement or vanguardist deromanticization. This personal voice has been the preponderant one in Brazil. It may often be a mediocre voice, but so is most poetry through the ages. This voice is also consonant with the work of Brazil's greatest poet, the mellow Modernist Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who was also writing steadily and being read throughout this period. *Seven Faces* actually traces the adventures of an extraordinary strain of poetry, *poesia concreta*, which Perrone and various other critics consider the most significant aesthetic innovation in Brazilian poetry since Modernism.

*Seven Faces* is well written, informed, and disciplined in navigating its way through a vast topic. This analytic work constantly balances assertions with demonstrative examples. The analyses of individual poems illustrate magnificently the method of *exposition de texte*. This approach is particularly apt in relation to concrete poetry, not an easy genre to digest.

Perrone's view is anti-traditionalist but aesthetically purist. He points out the distinction between the original military sense of the word *vanguard* and its later figurative sense when applied to artists. Perrone is concerned with artistic innovation per se and rejects the common fusion of the two senses of the term in a single subject. The extent to which art is a social (or socially derived) experience remains unresolved here because such consideration lies outside the disciplinary domain of poetry and poetic crit-

icism. Perrone is not saying that social experience is irrelevant in general, and he acknowledges the emotional legitimacy of activist poetry at vital historical junctures. But he firmly opposes the intrusion of extra-aesthetic criteria into evaluation of the artistic worth of poetry. His distaste for moralizing via poetry is counterbalanced by an emphasis on ambiguity as a key characteristic of poetic discourse.

Although concrete poems and postures were invented in the 1950s, they can appear “postmodern” because of their tendency to subvert conventional narrative structures and syntax itself and to juxtapose heterogeneous elements playfully. These tendencies reduce conventional narrative threads and the normative motifs of lyric poetry. The question arises as to whether or not concrete poetry is post-Modernism *avant la lettre*. Perrone follows the Campos brothers in rejecting this association. Concretism pushes poetry through the multimedia envelope. It is open to drastic formal innovation but remains the art of the word. Perrone rejects postmodern theoretical insistence on the appropriate contamination between disciplines and what the concretists perceive as postmodern vagueness. Like post-Modernism, concrete poetry has been charged by activist critics with historical nihilism and indifference to the need for social struggle. Yet in sharp contrast with post-Modernism, concretism maintains a sense of a historically perceptible teleological line of aesthetic innovation by the vanguard and anticipates future advances. This position assumes that history is “progressing.” But concretism does not assume any necessary relation between art and politics.

*Seven Faces* may prove virtually indispensable for North American modern Brazilian literature classes in the United States. No comparable book on this poetic movement has been published in English. What was difficult to digest and enjoy becomes tangible and its pertinence emerges. Although not a book for browsing, *Seven Faces* is extraordinarily economical, with each example being relevant to a concise argument. Students may contest the book’s lean summations of postmodern theorists or want to investigate the historicist critique itself. And they will still need to resolve the issue of the role of an ultra-intellectual vanguardism in a poor, brutalized society. But students will now have the wherewithal to process intellectually a poetic vein led by brilliant artists of language, an exciting product of a peripheral country in the global system. Concretism’s longevity has demonstrated more mettle than metropolitan neo- or “would-be” vanguardist analogs such as the *nouveau roman*.

This said, *Seven Faces* must be used cautiously as a representation of Brazilian culture. The protagonist of Perrone’s work is neither Brazilian society nor Brazilian letters *grosso modo* but simply Concretism itself. The majority of the arguments presented derive from the movement. Other chapters in Brazilian letters such as *violão de rua* and *poesia marginal* serve here as useful contrasts to concretist poetry, while most of the postwar lyric tradi-

tion is excluded according to a criterion of aesthetic quality. *Seven Faces* is thus a consciously partisan piece.

The emergence of Concretism in Brazil and the ability of the Campos brothers to sustain such vanguardist creativity away from the usual centers of artistic prestige seems a paradox of cultural logistics. Perrone underlines the absolute singularity of Concretism as a vanguardist praxis flourishing in a society at the periphery of the global system. This fascinating observation begs a substantial historical interpretation, however. Perrone comes closest to addressing the point in his examination of Haroldo de Campos's theory of post-utopian eclecticism: the notion that although the etymology of the vanguard can be traced (from Charles Baudelaire to Stephane Mallarmé to James Joyce to Ezra Pound and on down to the Campos brothers), the line in future will splinter. This perspective is problematic. On the one hand, it makes the Campos brothers the end of history; on the other it betrays the influence of the postmodern sense of predictable unpredictability and the impossibility of sustained aesthetic hierarchy. Given Perrone's analytic rigor, one hopes that in future work he will examine the social nature and the future of the avant-garde. For now, Perrone has provided North American Brazilianists with an extraordinarily useful explication of Concretism, that previously unpenetrated monolith of Brazilian artistic endeavor. He has also set a high standard of analytic scholarship, judicious documentation, and pedagogical exemplification.

For readers with more traditional tastes in poetry, a tonic to the exclusive foregrounding of Concretism in *Seven Faces* may be found in another project involving Perrone, a new bilingual anthology of thirteen poets organized in Curitiba by Ricardo Corona.<sup>8</sup> *Outras praias / Other Shores* suggests the prosperity of orthodox literary culture and the spirit of poesy, at least in the south of Brazil (the collection was developed in the state of Paraná, and most of the poets are Paranaenses). Editor Corona notes the anticipation in the 1980s of eminent Curitiba poet Paulo Leminski that the poetry of the 1990s would be marked by a centrifugal "atomization" of praxes rather than by discernible currents. Leminski also stresses "the recuperation of craftsmanship, incorporating . . . the resources of the vanguard" (editor's introduction). This statement echoes the politically disengaged but aesthetically innovative stance of late modernists such as João Guimarães

8. Another notable recent bilingual anthology is *Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sun and Moon, 1996), a more eclectic collection reflecting its original inspiration through U.S. initiatives. *Outras praias* was also partly an outgrowth of interest in Brazilian poetry from the same U.S. source, the post-Beat poetry scene on the West Coast (particularly Lawrence Ferlinghetti). These two works enrich the limited collection of bilingual anthologies in Brazilian Portuguese and English. Among these remains the classic volume edited by famous U.S. poet Elizabeth Bishop with Emanuel Brasil, *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry*. Released by Wesleyan University Press in 1972, the book is currently available in paperback from the University of New England Press.

Rosa fifty years earlier. After the ideological flamboyance of the 1960s and 1970s, there seems to be a return to what may simply be the concept of good taste. In these “emerging poets,” the cool South emerges as Brazil’s New England, a place of modest, faithful, and intense cultivation of the verb.

Perrone’s afterword and the preface by eclectic cultural commentator and poet Antônio Risério attempt to chart an analytic course through the oddly troubling social serenity of these lyric reflecting pools. Risério’s discomfort with his task (for fear of cultural elitism) makes his quick survey of the many possible modes of expression of the aestheticized voice (via Joyce, Pound, Amerindian, and digital tangents) a disavowal of the bourgeois tone of *Outras praias*. Perrone similarly invokes the great tradition of Modernism through Concretism with limited effect. The difficulty encountered by both critics validates Leminski’s economic encapsulation of lyric poetry of the 1990s as a bit like vintage wine making: it suggests individuality, social dispersal, and sheer craft.

In this body of poems, one finds a preponderant disposition toward classic lyric themes such as love, sensation, beauty, and observation of unexpected aesthetic symmetries and dispositions in everyday phenomena. The theme of poetry itself, which obsessively dominates Modernism (and Concretism), is replaced by an increased concern for verbal virtuosity, performative displays that recall the bygone era of poetry as courtly idyll, here scuttling awkwardly and sensually along a liminality between the indulgent generosity of the Italian baroque and the sensual intelligence of the English metaphysical poets.

Perrone offers in *Outras praias* an informative quick guide to a number of pertinent aspects of the individual poets. His observation of the prominence of poetry in Brazilian song lyrics and the importance of popular music to several poets in this collection (some were also rock singers) suggest that they are not enacting the swan song of a stale, peripheral Eurocentric conventional high culture. Rather, such poets represent a healthy and productive middle-class culture akin to but often livelier than Western European sensibilities. In many of these poems, the pursuit of a certain spiritual felicity (or at least the “perhappiness” coined by Leminski) suggests a genial and uplifting light breath, informed by an affinity for sunshine, cultivation of the grace of physical movement, and that eclectically Brazilian organic responsiveness to stimulations of the senses in the sentimental interactions among humans, the darting interstices among mind, body, and heart.

The two literary studies examined in this essay suggest the presence of a positive *dasein* (pursuit of existential plenitude) brooding in white, bourgeois Brazil. But Risério’s reserved and distancing preface to *Outras praias* reminds readers of the problematic status of that entity in terms of conventional liberal political correctness. The insistence on the subaltern, o povo, as the displaced but more legitimate protagonist of Brazilian cultural

history is reflected in the sociologically oriented studies by Levine, Eakin, Meade, and Page. Perrone's argument for the interrelation of poetry and pop lyric is thus potentially far more political than it would appear.

From an academic standpoint, despite the stimulating interdisciplinary approaches and forays undertaken by these studies by Brazilianists, one can discern a return to the respective underlying philosophies of the scholars' original disciplines. Each specialist tends to return cautiously to what he or she knows best, a sober but reassuring impulse that suggests the continuity of culture itself.