TO RE-MEMBER THE *ÍNDIO* IN BRASÍLIA AND BOA VISTA: A REFLECTION ON TWO URBAN MONUMENTS

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O que se diz por sob as palavras é: um ser puro como este não merece ser extinto – mas será.

What is said between the lines is: a being as pure as this does not deserve to be extinct – but will be.

Antônio Paulo Graça: Uma poética do genocídio

To re-member

The park is a modest one, located between residential blocks not far from the monumental axis in the rigid plan of the Federal capital. The people of Brasília colloquially call it *Praça do Índio*, although the official name is *Praça do Compromisso*. Both names are given in remembrance of a crime that took place here in 1997. In the early hours of April 20, while sleeping at a bus stop next to the park, Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe leader Galdino Jesus dos Santos was set on fire by a group of upper-middle-class youngsters. While the perpetrators fled, witnesses put out the fire and called for ambulance. Galdino was brought to hospital, but died of his injuries. His memorial, made by Siron Franco, is an iron plaque showing the silhouette of a man surrounded by flames. When I pass the park in May 2009 somebody has spray painted the dark iron with the silver text: *Índio tambem é gente, na FUNAI índio p/ presidente* ("*índios[1]* are

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[1] I have opted not to translate the term *índio* into English, since its connotations are rather different than in the Anglo-American usage. The term was reappropriated by the Brazilian indigenous movement in the 1970s and 1980s, and, as Ramos remarks, infused with political agency (Ramos 1998:5-6). It is therefore a term of self-reference among indigenous groups, at the same time as

people too, let FUNAI have an *índio* for president"). FUNAI, *Fundação Nacional do Índio*, is the authority responsible for indigenist policy in Brazil.

The federal capital Brasília is only one of several planned capitals in Brazil. The planned cities stand out as manifestations of numerous projects for populating the *sertões*, the backlands. We have, for example, Goiâna, capital of Goiás, inaugurated in 1937; Palmas, capital of Tocantins, inaugurated in 1989; and Boa Vista, capital of Roraima, inaugurated in 1943. This last city, Boa Vista, is located roughly 2,500 kilometres from Brasília, in the northernmost periphery of the Amazon.[2] Roraima, being the most sparsely populated state in Brazil and bordering both Venezuela and Guyana, is the object of projects of both frontier expansion and the demarcation and surveillance of national borders.

Compared to the utopian modernism of the federal capital, Boa Vista lacks most of Brasília's sophistication. Rather, it is a city of the extreme periphery, heavily marked by a historically strong military presence and migrational movements of colonial settlers. Both the Federal District and Roraima have received great waves of migrants mainly from the poor northeast. But while in the federal capital migrants have been attracted by the prospect of work in the city, in Roraima the prospects have been vacant land and gold. The state also hosts two of the largest *Terras indígenas* (Indigenous lands, TIs) in Brazil: *Terra indígena Yanomami*, covering roughly 9.7 million hectares and ratified by presidential decree in 1992, and *Raposa Serra do Sol*, covering 1.7 million hectares and ratified in 2005, but effectively

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it can refer to a colonial and exoticist idea of what an *índio* is or should be. This douality of the term should be kept in mind.

[2] With "Amazon" in this article I refer to "Amazônia Legal", the socio-geographically defined area in the Brazilian Amazon Basin encompassing the states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, Tocantins, Mato Grosso and most of Maranhão.

turned into a TI only in 2009, the delay being due to the Roraima government's decision to appeal against the ratification in the Supreme Federal Court. Both these cases have been surrounded by hard conflicts and at times open violence (Ramos 1998:210, Santilli 2000:93-127).

In the centre of Boa Vista there are several monuments that narrate bits and pieces of the history of Roraima. At Praça Barreto Leite, close to the bustling area of bars and clubs by the Rio Branco shore, we find the *Monumento aos Pioneiros*, a large stone relievo by Luíz Canará inaugurated in 1995 to celebrate one among the newest of the Brazilian states (Roraima was granted this status in 1988). In the *Monumento aos Pioneiros* we can follow pioneers settling the region on foot, on horseback, and by canoe. All are moving towards a large bust of Makunaima, founding hero of the Makuxi people. Surrounding Makunaima are naked indigenous bodies, wild beasts and plants.

Monuments, statues and memorials representing indigenous peoples can be found in many Brazilian cities, and they relate to particular sets of historical narratives and ways to envisage the present and the future. One such monument is highlighted by Terena spokesperson Lisio Lili, in his speech to the First Brazilian Congress for indigenous scholars, researchers, and professionals (published in this edition of *Anales*). The huge *Parque das Nações Indígenas* in Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, is a tropical recreation spot in the city. Tribute is paid to the *índio* with a museum and statues in the park. The indigenous peoples are thus honoured but, as Lili maintains, they are honoured as a feature of the past.

Lili's critical discussion of the *Parque das Nações Indígenas* highlights the question of how the *índio* in Brazil is represented in urban space. Brazil – like other American countries – was built on the ruins of pre-conquest cultures. However, unlike British or French colonial projects, and similar to Spanish ones,

the legitimacy of Portuguese expansion in the Americas rested heavily on the image of Christian liberation of the indigenous soul. The *índio* thus held a key role in the ideological legitimization of colonial expansion. With the nationalist movement for independence, this role was rearticulated into the *índio* as mythical ancestor, signalling the particularity of Brazilianness as a distinguishing mark in contrast to the Portuguese (Ramos 1998:66).

Neither Portuguese colonialism nor Brazilian nationalism were thus built on any simple negation of the *índio*. On the contrary, the *índio* is remembered as an integral part of history, and represented as materialised collective memory in urban monuments. But who is it that is being *re-membered* in these statues, parks, and monuments?

The word *remember* derives from Latin *remomorari*, re + *memor* (mindful), to call (back) to mind. Coincidentally, this calling back to mind could also be read as the joining together of severed limbs (from Latin *membrum)*: the *re-membering* of what has been dismembered. The aim of this essay is not to present a thorough study of monumental representation of indigenous people in Brazil. Rather, I wish to explore a way of thinking about these monuments, through which we can perhaps better understand how they and the stories they convey function as a *dis-membering* and *re-membering* of the *índio*. I will do this by relating the Galdino memorial in Brasília and the pioneer monument in Boa Vista to a discussion of the place of the *índio* in the imagined community of the nation.

From *índio* to *caboclo* to *índio* again

What is a nation? The word itself derives from Latin *natio*, to be born. And who is more "born" in Brazil than the *índio*? On the other hand, Brazil itself was born out of a colonial project that was characterised, as Antonio Carlos Roberto Moraes notes, by

having a territory long before it had a people. A territory is demarcated; a people is yet to be formed (Moraes 2008:94). The Amazon stands as the emblematic image of this non-fulfilment of the nation; even today it is frequently described as a "demographic void", requesting a population.

This notion echoes widely within the scholarly world. As I sit in my office at a university located in a northern periphery of Europe, news about the Amazon reaches me through the university website. Brazilian scholars together with researchers from my own university have discovered archaeological remnants of an Amazonian society of surprising size and level of advancement. The findings are treated as a late vindication of Francisco de Orellana, who journeyed up the Amazon River in the mid 16th century. A subsequent era would treat the reports of densely populated areas and towns that Orellana's expedition found along the river as mere fantasies. The Amazon, later travellers would tell, was a wilderness populated by wild beast, and by people almost as wild.

What is presented as "surprising" says something about the boundaries of the possible in a certain regime of knowledge. Indeed, neither the old reports from Orellana's expedition, nor the recent findings of archaeologists in the Amazon, fit into the image of a primeval Amazonian wilderness. When an area is envisaged as "empty", this in itself can be a preparation for emptying also in practice. Emptiness is constructed on at least two levels: as a lack *of* people, and as a lack *within* people. The Occidental colonial understanding of difference is to a large extent structured around this sense of lack. At the time of Orellana's expedition, difference was mainly understood as a spatially related lack of Christian faith, which would be overcome through the spreading of salvation. During the 18th century, the barbarians came to be increasingly relegated to a primitive, less developed "contemporary" past. Whole regions were emptied of history in what Fabian has called a "denial of

coevalness". Difference came to be understood as distance in time (Mignolo 2000:283-284; Fabian 2002).

There is, however, a complex interplay between time and space that can already be discerned in the early days of Occidental expansion, making any clear-cut distinctions impossible. In the Renaissance invention of the "Middle Ages", something Mignolo describes as a colonisation of time, a whole period was placed outside of meaningful history (Mignolo 2002:940). At about the same time, the Americas were conceptualised as a "new" world, in which history in any more meaningful sense had only begun with the arrival of the Christians and the inclusion of the Americas in the universal history of salvation. Early European accounts from the Americas already tend to negate the contemporaneity of the *índio* with the European, placing the *índio* at a sort of infancy of humanity (Ramos 1998:16).

It was the Portuguese grammarian and chronicle writer Pero de Magalhães Gândavo who coined the rhyme *sem fé sem lei, sem rei*, referring to the observation that the Tupi language lacked the letters F, L and R. The Tupi were said to lack the letter F because they hade no sense of faith (*fé*), L because they had no law (*lei*) to obey, and R since they knew no king (*rei*) (Monteiro 2000:703-704). For the Portuguese, as well as for the Spanish, subjugation of the indigenous populations was rarely questioned in itself; what was subject to discussion were methods. This specifically concerned the forms of indigenous labour, now that Pope Paul in 1537 had declared the *índios* to be human beings with souls, and that they should be treated accordingly for their salvation (Graça 1998:86).

For the colony, the *índio* was labour. For the church, also a soul to save. In the mid 18th century, the colonial government of Marques de Pombal created an official indigenous policy with the aim of civilizing the *índio*. The monopoly of the Catholic missions was broken, and the *índio* became encompassed

within a civilising project that would later be translated by the republic (instituted in 1889) into a "nationalising" of the *índio*. However, already prior to independence (1822) the *índio* had become part of growing nationalist consciousness. The slot available, since there were no grandiose ancient civilisations in Brazil on which to fall back, was that of the noble savage (Monteiro 2000:710). This noble savage was elaborated in 19th century Romantic literature and art, as in José de Alencar's famous indigenist novels *O Guaraní* (1857) and *Iracema* (1865).

Characteristic of the romantic *índio* is that s/he is placed in the past, at the early days of the conquest, rather than in the present. On the eve of Brazilian history, this *índio* fulfils a meaningful destiny through self-sacrifice. The *índio* is the one who dies so that the nation will live (Graça 1998:146). As an ancestor, this mythical *índio* follows a strict gender code. As in Alencar's *Iracema*, a new mestiço race emerges, but always from the encounter between a European male and an indigenous womb (Ramos 1998:67-68).[3] In the romantic nostalgic portraits of the past heroism, suffering and death of the *índio*, no place is left for an *índio* in the present. With Antonio Paulo Graça, we can see the idealised romantic *índio* as a devise for looking away from a violent present of which one does not wish to be reminded (Graça 1998).

In his reading of Ernest Renan's *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Benedict Anderson points to Renan's remark about the need to forget. There are, Renan tells us, violent pasts that "we", in order to form a nation, must forget – precisely so that we can be reminded that we have forgotten. This "forgetting" is, thus, a sort of agreement by which we together ensure that certain past atrocities are all forgotten. These past atrocities acquire the

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[3] An objection could be made here that in the early days of the colony, depicted in these novels, there were very few European women in Brazil. The point is, however, that even when a romantic relationship between an indigenous male and an European female takes place, the writer never lets it become physical. Graça discusses this in his reading of *O Guaraní* and *Iracema* (1998:33-52).

function of "reassuring fratricide". Renan explicitly mentions the night of Saint-Barthélemy, a massacre distant enough in time to already have the status of a mythic memory. It is, Anderson remarks, no coincidence that Renan is silent on more recent massacres, as for example the Paris Commune. This still "real" memory would be much too painful to be "reassuring" (Anderson 1991:200-201). Perhaps what is at stake in the relation between the Brazilian *índio* and the nation is precisely this paradoxical forgetfulness, where the forgotten is possible to utter, while the still remembered must be kept silent. The *índio* is at the heart of national formation, but only insofar as no continuity is admitted between the noble *índio* of the past and the violence suffered by *índios* in the present. I will have reason to return to this paradox.

If romanticism placed the *índio* in the past, the state still had to confront the *índio* of the present. And, of course, the indigenous populations had to confront the state. During large parts of the 19th century, intense debates took place between those who envisaged the civilising of the *índio*, and those who promoted their removal and/or extermination. Transporting itself into republican times, this debate would motivate the creation in 1910 of a specific state organ for the implementation of indigenist policy: *Serviço de Proteção aos Índios*, SPI (replaced by the FUNAI in 1967) (Monteiro 2000:712-713; Ramos 1998:156). SPI was given the task of "pacifying hostile tribes" and assimilating them as "national (rural) workers". SPI's goals were articulated in a spirit of positivist humanism, but the assumption that the *índio* had to disappear was as strong as among those who promoted physical extermination – only, it would happen through assimilation (Lima 1995:113, 308; Ramos 1998:155).

If there has been a commonplace assumption that the *índio* will disappear, something of him/her is left in the popular image of the *caboclo*. This vague term usually refers to a "civilised" or "integrated" *índio*, an in-between being. Saillant and Forline see

the *caboclo* as first and foremost signalling a void. The *caboclo* is the detribalised *índio* with no access to the exoticism of the *índio*. Rather than a descendant of the defeated, the *caboclo* is the very manifestation of defeat. As such, according to Saillant and Forline, it is in the *caboclo* rather than in the *índio* that we find the inversion of national identity in the popular imagination (Saillant and Forline 2001:147).

The category of the *caboclo* builds on an imagined opposition between being *índio* and being Brazilian, reproduced in FUNAI's reluctance to recognise as *índios* people living in towns or cities instead of in the indigenous communities, the *aldeias* (Saillant and Forline 2001:150). Ramos sees the *caboclo* as "the embodiment of the paradox in the civilizing project: the effort to wipe out Indianness while closing the doors to their full citizenship"(Ramos 1998:77). In various contemporary conflicts over indigenous land rights, the communities involved have passed through processes of redefining themselves as *índios*, and notions of "authenticity" have become a crucial factor in these conflicts (da Silva 2007:107).

Roraima: the appropriation of a dream

Let us now return to the *Monumento aos Pioneiros* in Boa Vista, and take a closer look at the scene it depicts. The relievo shows a number of people, including a baby, moving from the left to the right. Four of them are on foot, three in a canoe, and one on horseback; there are children, women and men. The people on foot are carrying the baby, a pharmaceutical manual and a small flag. The canoe is labelled with the name *Pioneiro* and the man on horseback points the way forward with an outstretched hand that almost touches the heads of the first of the six *índios* placed to the far right of the scene. In the middle of the *índios*, who are all appallingly naked with uncovered genitals next to the clothed pioneers, a huge bust of Makunaima holding a blossom to his chest dominates. The sun is rising over the

pioneers, while the side with the *índios* appears as a dense wilderness of plants and animals. A stone plaque next to the monument reads:

> Homage from the City of Boa Vista to the Pioneers who with courage and hope initiated the realisation of a Dream called Roraima.

The text is signed Mayor Teresa Jucá, August 18, 1995.

The first thing we can note is the name itself. Roraima, it is stated on the plaque, is the name of a dream. This name is taken from Monte Roraima, a mountain plateau situated where Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela meet. Monte Roraima thus marks the limits of Brazil; but it is also the highest plateau in the Pacaraima chain, and a sacred place for the Makuxi, Wapichana and Taurepang. It is the cradle and the resting place of Makunaima. It follows that for these indigenous populations, this is not a border area. It is located at the centre of their traditional land.

In this very giving of a name, something is appropriated from the populations who traditionally inhabit the area that became Roraima. From the perspective of the settlers, Roraima is a place with a short history – and perhaps therefore the state is somewhat obsessed with narrating its history. Local popular historians, such as Aimberê Freitas in *Geografia e história de Roraima* (1997), write in a colonial and pioneer spirit. Freitas's book outlines geographic and demographic conditions, describes the colonial expansion in the past and present, inventories natural resources, and indicates directions for the future development of the state. A sense of a region that needs to catch up is transmitted. Roraima, Freitas emphasises, was "discovered" only 250 years ago, long after the "discovery of Brazil" (Freitas 1997:92-93). As in the *Monumento aos Pioneiros*, its peripheral location is presented as both a lack and a source of pioneer pride.

Roraima, as reflected both in Freitas's text and in the monument, is a place where settler colonialism is a relatively late phenomenon. The first Portuguese fort was constructed in 1775, but the colonising efforts were directed towards the indigenous peoples. By defining the *índios* as Portuguese subjects, the colonisers claimed land also disputed by Dutch and British interests (Farage 1991; CIDR 1989:15). At the end of the 19th century, droughts in the arid northeast contributed to inciting migration to the Rio Branco, and during the 20th century migration intensified with both large-scale cattle ranchers (and later, rice farmers) and poor north-eastern peasants being displaced by drought and land conflicts. The Rio Branco, like the Amazon in general, served as a spare space to absorb potential or actual conflicts in other parts of Brazil. The Amazon was depicted as empty, with an abundance of land, employment opportunities and gold (Santilli 2000:10-11, 61; Ramos 1998:222, 226).

In 1943, what is today Roraima was sectioned off from the state of Amazonas as a federal territory under the name of Rio Branco. Consequently, Boa Vista was planned as a new modern capital, the central city outlined in the shape of a hand-held fan, with Place Charles de Gaulle in Paris as a model. Where in Paris, however, the Arc de Triomphe stands, in Boa Vista we find a huge golden statue of a *garimpeiro*, a gold-panner, at the centre of the plan.

The development projects in Roraima, of which the construction of the federal territory was a part, affected the indigenous populations, many of whom already had had to negotiate with colonisers for two centuries. Freitas's history of Roraima portrays the roles played by indigenous populations in an ambiguous way. On the one hand, the text recognises the role of the *índio* in the colonial projects, both in making these projects possible and in resisting them (Freitas 1997:102, 116-117). On the other hand, the *índio* is only part of Roraima history as either an instrument of, or an obstacle to colonisation.

In that sense, Roraima history is reduced to colonisation. It is, Freitas assures us, a "new" land, a land of "multiple adventures" that meets the settlers (Freitas 1997:132) Returning to the *Monumento aos Pioneiros* a small trilingual information sign next to it, states the following:

> **Monumento aos Pioneiros**. It represents the union of the natives, with their ways and customs, receiving the pioneers and *tamers* who arrived here. It is an homage to the *first people who were willing to populate and develop* this part of Brazil *until then never explored*. The display points to the Rio Branco River, focusing on the image of *Macunaíma, the first inhabitant* of the Rio Branco's fields [... Italics mine].[4]

In this short text we find all of the ambiguity surrounding Roraima's history and the *índios*. While the names and symbols

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[4] I have modified the English text on the sign so as to make it better reflect the wording of the Portuguese version.

(as is in many parts of Brazil) are almost all indigenous, marking the land as having been once in a time inhabited by *índios*, non-*índio* settlers are described as "tamers" of a supposedly wild land, the "first people" willing to populate what until then was "unexplored". The use of the term "tamers" (*desbravadores*) marks the pioneers as spiritual descendants of the *bandeirantes*, who explored the *sertões* looking for indigenous slaves and natural riches during colonial times. The boy carrying a flag can also be read as an allusion to the *bandeirantes* who were named after the flags (*bandeiras*) that they carried with them. In the monument, a narrative is reproduced in which the spirit of the pioneers appears as a driving force, making the domination of space into a result of pioneer activity, rather than a motivation for it (Moraes 2008:86). Further, the pioneers in the scene reach Roraima with a pharmaceutical manual. With demarcating flags and printed knowledge, the wilderness is tamed.

But how then, should we understand the description in the last sentence, of Makunaima as the first inhabitant? The presence of Makunaima activates the Occidental construction of a dichotomy between myth and history. Through the evoking of Makunaima, the *índio* is expelled from history, and into mythology.

If we read the two Boa Vista monuments I have mentioned together, we can sense a temporal relationship in how they are arranged in the urban space. The *Monumento aos Pioneiros* stands close to the spot of the 19th century cattle ranch around which the village of Boa Vista first started to grow. The *Monumento ao Garimpeiro*, the gold-panner, which in fact predates the *Monumento aos Pioneiros* by a couple of decades, is in the middle of the *Praça do Centro Cívico*, at the heart of the modern centre of the planned city from the 1940s. While Makunaima's children are placed in the past, the *garimpeiro* stands at the modern centre, signalling the role of gold in the development of Roraima. The obvious silence here, of course,

concerns the disastrous environmental and demographic effects of the gold rush on indigenous lands. In Yanomami land this led to national and international protests that eventually caused the federal government to launch an operation to remove the *garimpeiros* in the early 1990s. Much of the *garimpagem* then moved to Makuxi land in *Raposa Serra do Sol* (Ramos 1998:210; Santilli 2000:98-111).

From an indigenous perspective, settler history in Roraima has been an *unsettling* process (Moraes 2008:138; Santilli 38-39, 82). Moreover, during recent decades this process has intensified dramatically. The demographic data speak for themselves, even if the numbers differ somewhat depending on the source. According to the *Centro de Informação Diocese de Roraima* (CIDR), the Roraima population consisted of around 80,000 people in 1982, half of them indigenous. According to the national census of 2000, 28,000 persons self-declared themselves as indigenous in Roraima. The centre *Nós esxistimos*[5] gives, for today, a higher number: roughly 53,000 indigenous people. The total population according to the 2010 census is about 450,000 inhabitants. What we see in these numbers, regardless of their discrepancies, is that *índios* have in a very short time been transformed into a small minority in Roraima. Similar to the colonial notion of empty space, however, this minority condition is created in rhetoric even before it is effected in demographic numbers. CIDR exemplifies this by quoting Fernando Ramos Pereira, governor of Roraima between 1975 and 1979, who stated that "half a dozen indigenous tribes will not impede the progress of Roraima" (CIDR 1990:14).

What is indicated by the discrepancies in number, is the highly political tension surrounding who is and is not considered

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[5] *Nós Existimos* is a collaboration between various organisations in Roraima, working with issues of citizen rights and social justice and which aims to create alliances between indigenous peoples, urban workers, and rural workers. Various indigenous, union and Catholic organisations form the alliance. (www.nosexistimos.org).

índio. Since rights, and in particular the right to land, are connected to *indianidade*, the question of who can speak as *índios* is an area of conflict both within indigenous communities and between *índios* and non-*índios* (Baines 2006:92-93).

In 2008, the indigenous organisation *Conselho Indígena de Roraima* (CIR) published an open letter from various indigenous communities. This letter inscribes indigenous resistance precisely on the level of historical narrative. As an organisation, CIR dates back to the political collaboration that started between indigenous leaders and Catholic priests in the 1970s. The letter was published in the context of the conflict over the demarcation of *Raposa Serra do Sol*. It also has a background in the repeated allegations that demarcation is a threat to national sovereignty. The communities signing the letter, declare in response that "in us flows the blood of the true Brazilian people", reminding readers of how the Portuguese colony demarcated the Rio Branco with the assistance of indigenous subjects. The historical references are the same as those of Freitas but, reversing the perspective, the *índios* are now made active agents in these histories. For it was *índios*, and not whites, who were the "walls of the backlands" (*muralhas dos sertões*), protecting the sovereignty of this part of Brazil. When their national belonging is questioned, the *índios* reconstruct themselves as the original Brazilians, traditionally guaranteeing the sovereignty of Brazilian territory. And they do this by evoking nationalist notions of blood, history, and borders (Carta das comunidades indígenas 2008).

The letter can be read as a way of reclaiming both the mythical *índio* forefather and the privilege to define this forefather's significance in the present. Instead of fulfilling expectations of acting either as exotic *others*, or as assimilated *caboclos*, the letter works at the level of depriving the colonisers their right to define their own tradition (Zizek 2010:124). This brings us back to the question of the place of the *índio* within the nation.

The (un)National *Índio* and the question of land

In the 1950s, Darcy Ribeiro, Nestor within Brazilian anthropology, predicted that the *índios*, through contact with national society, would be so deculturated that they would lose their ethnic identities and be reduced to "generic *índios*". But since Ribeiro's sombre prediction, we have seen an intense political mobilisation among indigenous peoples as well as processes of ethnogenesis that have contradicted the cultural void prophesied by Ribeiro (Ramos 1998:119-120; da Silva 2007:107). CIR, which originally grew out of mainly Makuxi mobilisation but works across linguistic and ethnic groups in Roraima, is one of the expressions of this development.

How does the notion of a mythical *índio* ancestor at the heart of the nation relate to these changes?

Alcida Ramos sees it as something of a paradox that while the indigenous populations in Brazil, as reported in national censuses, are only a very small fraction of the population as a whole (less than 1%), the *índio* occupies a powerful place as a symbol of nationality (Ramos 1998:4). According to Ramos, "indigenism", as a set of ideas and ideals concerning the *índio* and his/her relation to the nation, has served a similar function for Brazil as orientalism has done for the West. There is, however, an important difference in the way that indigenous peoples themselves participate in the construction of indigenism; *Índios* and Brazilians, after all, live in temporal and spatial contiguity, within the same nation-state (Ramos 1998:6-7).

I would like to add another difference. While the Orient, for the West, has been the both exotic and barbarous other, the *índio* is not only the other but also an intimate part of the construction of a national self. The *índio* thus occupies an ambiguous position of other/sameness that not least is constitutive of much of the argumentation critical of demarcation of indigenous

land. Roraima politicians, when professing to having *índio* blood in their veins, frequently evoke the *índio* of the past as opposed to the *índio* of the present (Ramos 1998:110, 178). We can also look at PCdoB (*Patido Communista do Brasil*) deputy Aldo Rebelo's *Raposa-Serra do Sol: O índio e a questão nacional* (2010), on the front cover of which the *índio* is represented by Albert Eckhout's 17th-century painting, *The Dance of the Tapuias*, an exotic motif from the eve of conquest. Rebelo reminds the reader of the role of the *índio* in the making of the nation, and does this with the example of *índio* heroes of the past who resisted colonisation and preferred to die rather than accept captivity (27-29). However, in his critique of contemporary struggles for indigenous land, a temporal discontinuity in his narration is introduced. The heroic indigenous resistance of the past, rather than being continuous with indigenous resistance in the present, is contradicted by it. Organisations such as CIR appear as a threat to the front cover *índio*, that is, the exotic fetish of Brazilian nationalism.

Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation-state as an imagined community, exercising sovereignty over a delimited territory, might be useful here (Anderson 1991:6). The nation-state is demarcated and defined in relation to other nation-states; the legitimacy of its limits presupposes another state making legitimate claims on neighbouring land. This gives the particularist nation-state a peculiarly universal claim; it does not recognise any other legitimate political subjects than other territorial states and their representatives.

This state thereby encounters a difficulty in relating to populations that are not understandable within its logic, as is the case with various indigenous populations around the globe. The continuing presence of these "non-integrated" or "uncivilised" people within a territory supposedly controlled by the nation-state, puts its legitimacy as such in question. In order to formulate a critique that goes beyond the modern state, Giorgio Agamben emphasises the secondary character of the

opposition between friend and enemy in Occidental political thought. The real fundamental division originates in the sovereign act that creates the conditions for the political in the first place: the separation between a politically qualified life (*zoe*) and bare life (*bios*) (Agamben 1998:8). Bare life corresponds to the state of nature, as developed by early modern thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke. It is a state beyond any politically qualified society. In other words, it is human life deprived of that which marks it as specifically human.

If we understand the Occidental image of the *índio* as a product of this logic, we can also better understand the sense of void in this image, the absence of that which qualify a life as part of the politically constructed human world. The long tradition of viewing indigenous people as part of nature rather than culture (in Brazil not least expressed in the use of the term *silvícolas*), should be seen in this perspective (Graça 1998:102, Ramos 1998:51). The *índio*, standing at the threshold of inner and outer, is both at the very foundation of society and is what threatens its existence. In the case of demarcation of indigenous land, these are processes frequently depicted as threats to national sovereignty. The reserving of land for *índios* is compared to an emptying of the land, an absence of the nation-state and consequently, the land is seen a being opened to the interference of others (states, international NGOs etc) (Rebelo 2010).

If we very briefly look at the legal situation regarding indigenous rights, there are presently two central documents that contradict each other. The indigenous legislation, commonly called the *Estatuto do índio* (Law 6.001) dates back to 1973, and from the very beginning it reaffirms the position of the *índio* as being at a threshold:

> This law regulates the legal situation of *índios* or *silvícolas* and of indigenous communities, with the purpose of preserving their culture and integrating them, progressively and harmoniously, into the national community [*comunhão nacional*, translation mine].

The *índio* is, here, by definition not integrated. Therefore s/he needs to be integrated, yet, also preserved. The "model" *índio* for the *Estatuto do índio*, it would appear, is the "non-integrated" *índio*, the "not yet" *caboclo*. In the *Estatuto do índio*, the tutelary power of the state over indigenous populations, regulated in the Civil Code from 1916, is reaffirmed. According to the 1916 Civil Code, the indigenous populations are "relatively incapable", comparable to underage orphans.[6] In this sense, the *Estatuto do índio* also reaffirms another significant construction in indigenist policy: that the condition of being an *índio* is transitory, prior to full citizenship.

When SPI was founded in 1910, it was with the explicit goal to protect the indigenous populations, including their right to land. But the legal protection of indigenous land has not been constructed as a consequence of historical rights, but rather as a consequence of the assumed infantilism of the *índio* (Ramos 1998:18: Lima 1995:75-76) Historically, certain communities have therefore even been removed from their lands in order that they can be "protected" from aggressive settlers, as happened in the 1960s to several groups forcibly moved to the Xingu park in Mato Grosso (Ramos 1998:159).

The institution of tutelage has trapped Brazilian *índios* between citizen rights and indigenous rights. Accordingly, the "emancipation" of indigenous individuals or communities has, in different situations, been used as a tool to work against indigenous rights (Ramos 1998:94-98, 246). In Roraima, in the 1980s and 1990s, CIDR denounced the voter-registration of *índios* as being a direct strategy to undermine their land rights, since they were then claimed to be "integrated" and therefore

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[6] In 2002 a new Civil Code replaced the one from 1916.

"emancipated" (CIDR 1990:15) Similarly, for some Roraima politicians, the recruiting and naturalising of indigenous voters from across the Guyana has been a strategy to both augment political influence and undermine indigenous rights (Baines 2003:13).

With the new Federal Constitution of 1988,[7] tutelage was abandoned, as was the construction of *indianidade* as a transitory condition. In two articles, 231 and 232, the constitution recognises the social organisation, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions of the *índios*, as well as their right to land. It also declares the right of the *índios*, their communities and organisations to represent themselves and their interests in all judicial instances (CF 1988: Art 231-232). The former FUNAI monopoly on the right to speak for the *índio* has thus effectively been broken, as has much of the civilising project of earlier indigenist policy (Santilli 2000:46; Ramos 1998:161).

When referring to the constitutional right to recognition of social organisations, customs, beliefs, and traditions, one should, however, point out a contradiction in the very granting of this right by means of the demarcation of land. In order to protect their relationship to their land, indigenous communities are forced to profoundly rearticulate this very relationship. João Pacheco de Oliveira has described this dilemma as processes of territorialisation that are a consequence of the colonial situations lived by indigenous peoples (de Oliveira 2006:9-10). As Santilli points out, patterns of movement and mobility through which communities reproduce themselves are not only blocked by invasion, but also restricted within the frames of official recognition of land, an "arrogant materialisation of an alien juridical code" (Santilli 2000:56, 131). Santilli gives a

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[7] The articles concerning indigenous rights in the constitution were preceded by intense lobbying from indigenous organisations, the Brazilian Anthropological Association, indigenist NGOs and other groups (Ramos 1998:172).

concrete example; there are areas that are not in any strict sense "used" by the nearby indigenous communities (which is a criteria for demarcation), but that must still be protected since they are under the dominion of other beings, that have precarious and risky relationships to the human world (133). In the end, how can one, within the legal framework of a colonial Occidental rationality, articulate a legitimate need to keep these areas protected?

The one who was not who he seemed to be

The history of indigenous peoples in Brazil is strongly marked by displacement. It was land conflicts that brought Galdino Jesus dos Santos to Brasília, the national seat of power. So, let us now return to the *Praça do índio*. Looking at the Galdino memorial, one immediately observes a striking difference as compared to the pioneer monument in Boa Vista. There are no signs, no explications of the kind we find in Boa Vista. The motif itself is strongly stylised, with a lack of the sort of attributes that the *Monumento aos Pioneiros* bears. If the monument at Praça Barreto Leite is an abundance of words and signs, Praça do Compromisso stands, at least officially, in relative silence.

When the crime here took place, it received much media attention and publicly expressed indignation. One could ask: If the *índio* is generally seen as belonging to another time and as in the process of disappearing from the present, why did the death of one particular *índio* provoke such an outcry? This question is meant to be naive, not offensive. After all, when violence against *índios* happens in peripheral areas or at the frontiers of expansion, the tolerance towards and/or denial of the crimes seems to be much greater. Nine years before Galdino was killed, his brother was murdered in the same prolonged conflict over Pataxó land. This murder passed practically unnoticed in national media. Another even more telling

example of an atrocity receiving less media attention than the murder of Galdino is the 1993 assault on the Haximu Yanomami community in Roraima. Twelve people, including five children, were killed by *garimpeiros* in one single attack (Freire 2004:15, 90).

The comparatively large amount of attention given to Galdino's death becomes even more intriguing when we take into account that he was killed in an act of misrecognition. The perpetrators claimed that they did not understand that the man sleeping at the bus stop was an *índio*; they believed him to be a beggar. This justifies repeating the question above, but from another direction. Violence against poor and homeless people, not seldom with fatal outcome, is a nearly everyday experience in Brazilian cities (Ramos 1998:289-291). So why, again, did the

murder of Galdino Jesus dos Santos provoke such strong reactions, when other murders do not?

I will return to this question. But first, I wish to reflect on how the patterns of movement of the bodies involved, are already an expression of certain colonial and class relations. Galdino Jesus dos Santos was a community leader who had travelled to Brasília with the grievances of his people over a land conflict in southern Bahia. We can note, firstly, that he did not stay at one of the upper- or even middle-range hotels in the hotel sector; he stayed in a budget hostel that had contract with the FUNAI. When he arrived at the hostel on the night before April 20, the landlady, blaming the late hour, did not let him in. Moreover, Galdino moved about on foot, not in a rented car or a cab. Displaced in the city that night, he found himself sharing the fate of Brasília's homeless and went to sleep at a bus stop.

The five young men who committed the murder, on the other hand, moved by car. They were returning from a party when they spotted the sleeping man and decided to "play a joke" on him. The car affected the speed with which they could get to a gas station, buy ethanol, return to the sleeping man, pour the ethanol over him, set him on fire, and – most important of all – quickly leave the place. However, the car also enabled a witness to provide the necessary information to identify the perpetrators.

Galdino was misidentified as a beggar, a *mendigo*, a person without identity but whose visibility as such was provocative enough to motivate the crime. The perpetrators, on the other hand, moved about as identifiable individuals, and that eventually led to their arrest. The fact that they were all upper-middle-class youngsters, children of the ruling elite, triggered an intense debate on the importance of class in Brazil's judiciary system. In a masters thesis on the media coverage of the crime, Ana Paula Freire has shown how mainstream media – represented in her sample by the daily newspaper *O Globo* –

strongly emphasised the class background of the perpetrators. The victim, on the other hand, was decontextualised. He was a man without place, a condition that in itself contributed to provoking the crime. According to Freire, what is lamented in the news coverage, the object of the indignation, is not so much the violent death of Galdino as the fact that five boys of "good" families could commit such an act. The media coverage takes on the character of managing a crisis in middle-class self-understanding (Freire 2004:126). This is in sharp contrast with how the crime was understood among indigenous groups and indigenist NGOs. Here, the murder was yet another incident in the long history of violence against *índios*, and Galdino was made a martyr in the struggle for land.

Freire provides several examples of how a historical discontinuity was created in mainstream news coverage. On April 22, *O Globo* published an editorial that firmly stated that the murder of Galdino "obviously" should *not* be understood as part of the "tragic history" of indigenous people in Brazil. For the "young criminals" simply did not know he was an *índio*. The following day, on April 23, the news section of the same paper wrote in the lead how "the anniversary of the discovery of Brazil turned into a day of tears" for the relatives of Galdino (quoted in Freire 2004:102, 123).

In these articles there is a clear break between the crime (a "mistake") and the colonial history of the *índios*. The symbolic charge of the time and place (Galdino was murdered between the *Dia do índio* on April 19 and the "anniversary" of Brazil on April 23, he was murdered in the immediate proximity of the seat of power, and he was struggling with displacement both in Bahia and in Brasília) is here denied meaning. However, it is tempting to read the lead of the news feature as a Freudian slip; would it not make sense, from an indigenous perspective, to regard every April 23 as a day of tears? Indigenous organisations and NGOs, contrary to the *O Globo*, saw a continuity between the exposure to violence of Galdino's

sleeping body and the experience of exposure to violence that is part of indigenous history in Brazil.

After these short reflections on the reactions to the crime, let us return to the park. The naming of the park, its being made a memorial, is a continuation of this reaction and also a plea for us to remember. But what should we re-member? And what should we dis-member? The park is named *compromisso*, signalling reconciliation. At the same time, we are urged to remember a brutal murder. Perhaps the tension that arises should be read as a consequence of two scandals present in the murder of Galdino, one open and one hidden, or rather, suppressed. The open scandal is the fact that boys of "good" families could commit such a hideous act. However, the suppressed scandal – urgently pushed aside by the breaking of any continuity between colonial violence and the murder of Galdino – is that of an *índio* being openly killed by members of the hegemonic class. Brasília, as the utopian modern city, is in itself a trope of civilised Brazil where acts such as these should not happen. Metonymically, Brasília stands for Brazil and Galdino for the *índio*, the perpetrators for the modern Brazilian and the victim for the excluded member of modernity. In a sense, the killers acted precisely like the *desbravadores*, taming (by fire) the uncivilised element in the cityscape.[8] The murder of Galdino touched on a painful trauma.

Concluding reflections

In his study of state indigenist policy, Lima explores how national myths, historiography and indigenist policy together have suppressed histories of violence. The Brazilian people originate in the harmonious miscegenation of three races; Brazil was discovered rather than invaded; the *índios* were not conquered, but pacified (Lima 1995:60). More importantly, by

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[8] I thank Cristhian Teófilo da Silva for valuable contributions to this argument.

constructing the assimilation of the *índios* into the dominant society (labelled "national") as inevitable, other possible histories are silenced, *even* as violence is denounced. The very language used to denounce the dramatic history of colonisation suffered by indigenous people, works as a double-edged sword, something Ramos captures when she calls Ribeiro's concept of the "generic *índio*" the "intellectual creation of a prophesied catastrophe" (Ramos 1998:277).

In a similar manner, Monteiro sees in Brazilian historiography a silence surrounding the presence and participation of indigenous peoples. This silence is produced by an all too commonplace assumption that the beginning of Brazilian history meant the end of the *índio* (Monteiro 2000:717). In Monteiro's words, "most historians treating indigenous subjects seem to cling to the belief that the best they can do is to add another chapter to what has amounted to a chronicle of extinction" (718). There is, in the denouncing of what at the same time is declared inevitable, a production of innocence, one of the main components of Graça's "poetics of genocide" (Graça 1998:26). Graça's concept is similar to what Renato Rosaldo has called "imperialist nostalgia": the act of mourning that which one has condemned to death (Rosaldo 1993:69-70; Ramos 1998:84). In the words of Ramos:

> Brazil needed the Indian but only the fictionalized Indian, the redeeming ectoplasm of troublesome flesh-and-blood Indians who needed to die in order to populate the conquerors' imagination (Ramos 1998:285).

The mourning, however, is mainly a trait of either the metropole or of a colonial society already consolidated, sensing itself to be at a safe temporal and spatial distance from the colonial violence. At the frontiers of expansion, the language is harsher. The "demographic void" that is the Amazon must be filled, and not remain as a consequence of what Freitas calls the

"original vices" of the constitution, that is, inherent obstacles to colonisation (Freitas 1997:126).

Going back to the monuments, let us dwell a moment on the texts accompanying them, and this time also the unofficial one. When the spray-paint on the Galdino memorial in Brasília says that "*índios* are people too", the possibility of uttering the contrary is already assumed. And indeed, is this not the exact meaning of the scene in the *Monumento aos Pioneiros*: first there were *índios*. Then there came people. While the name *Praça do Compromisso* imposes silence on the traumatic implications of Galdino's murder, the spray-painted text cries out against the violent subtexts.

Why did the death of Galdino Jesus dos Santos provoke such an outcry? Looking at the fictionalised *índio* in 19th and 20th century literature, Graça gives us a clue. He presents us with a catalogue of artistic depictions of extinction in the past, a disappearance that has always already happened, or is at least inevitable. Thus is produced the innocence of the present. (Graça 1998:147). But to secure this innocence, the disappearance of the *índio* has to be kept in a mythic past, where it, in Anderson's words, can take on the character of a "reassuring fratricide".

In that sense, Galdino's burned body is scandalous precisely in that it transports the brutal violence that should have been kept in the past into the present again. When believing they attacked a beggar, the perpetrators – all from the hegemonic upper middle class – unintentionally made suddenly visible the trauma of a denied constitutive violence; they brought this violence into the heart of the city, into the present. In the light of this, the name *Praça do Compromisso* becomes a vain appeal that we (whoever is included in this "we") should remember Galdino so that we might once again forget.

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