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**“THE FUTURE, THAT NEVER-ENDING FALLACY”:
AN ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MILTON HATOUM’S
*THE BROTHERS***

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*Before the final countdown some things I ought to say
For words shalt never perish, whilst death is humans' fate
Thenceforth I hail my parents, their guidance night and day
And my beloved lover, tho' wee can't procreate*

*My sisters who I love albeit we fight
And brother even though hee doth not drink
My kindred as a whole hath given light
For me to cross this tunnel dark as ink*

*I also extol my mates, the major role they played
And my sage adviser, who haunteth all my ghosts
My comrades and professors, all sapience they purveyed
And the financial aids, that CAPES gave me loads*

*I laud thee, "Magic Island", for thy sea
I laud ye, all the ones abetting me*

Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge: it is those who know little, and not those who know much, who so positively assert that this or that problem will never be solved

(Charles Darwin, 1871)

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the decolonising challenge to the developmentalist depiction of the Amazon addressing, more specifically, the normative discourse of hegemonic temporality and spatiality whose biased tenets are put into question by Eduardo Galeano (1978) and Judith Halberstam (2005); therefore the perspectives gradually articulated by Nael, the narrator of Milton Hatoum's novel *The Brothers* (2002), are analysed as to identify how his descriptions of the events narrated impinge upon the contemporary notions of progress and development. Accordingly, my critique regarding how Amazonian time and space is constructed and problematised by the narrator's characterisation of the twin brothers Omar and Yaqub, who are the novel's protagonists, shall be developed through the antipastoral and postcolonial analytical lenses as they are elaborated by Frederick Douglass (1845) and Stuart Hall (1996). The findings are guided by my research questions regarding the narrator's response to Michael Bennett's concept of antipastoral ecocriticism (2001) and to the developmentalist discourse of linear temporality and hierarchic spatiality as examined by Johannes Fabian (1983) inasmuch as such results reveal how the ideological shift from pastoral to antipastoral in his point of view concerning the utopian hope for "a glorious future" (Hatoum, 33) uncovers the inherent flaws of developmentalist linearity.

Keywords: Amazon. Antipastoralism. Ecocriticism.

RESUMO

Este estudo discute o desafio descolonizante contra a representação desenvolvimentista da Amazônia abordando, mais especificamente, o discurso normativo da temporalidade e espacialidade hegemônicas cujos pilares arbitrários são questionados por Eduardo Galeano (1978) e Judith Halberstam (2005); para este fim as perspectivas articuladas gradualmente por Nael, o narrador do romance *Dois Irmãos* (2000), de Milton Hatoum, são analisadas com o intuito de identificar como suas descrições dos eventos narrados entram em choque com as noções contemporâneas de progresso e desenvolvimento. Da mesma forma, minha análise acerca da forma como o tempo e espaço Amazônico são construídos e problematizados pelo narrador através de sua caracterização dos irmãos gêmeos Omar e Yaqub, protagonistas do romance, se desenvolve com o respaldo das lentes analíticas antipastoral e pós-colonial conforme elaboradas por Frederick Douglass (1845) e Stuart Hall (1996). Os resultados respondem às perguntas da pesquisa no que concerne ao paralelo entre o posicionamento do narrador com relação ao conceito de ecocrítica antipastoral de Michael Bennett (2001) e ao discurso desenvolvimentista de temporalidade linear e espacialidade hierárquica como examinado por Johannes Fabian (1983) já que tais resultados revelam como a transição ideológica no ponto de vista do narrador, do pastoral para o antipastoral, no que diz respeito à esperança utópica por um “futuro glorioso” (Hatoum, 33) desmascaram as falhas inerentes à linearidade desenvolvimentista.

Palavras-chave: Amazônia. Antipastoralismo. Ecocrítica

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION THE TEMPORAL CONFINES OF THE AMAZON

This study problematises the capitalist discourse of progress in the Amazon. Its general topic, therefore, comprises what Eliana Ávila describes as “the decolonising challenge to the developmentalist representation of the Amazon”¹ addressing, more specifically, the discourse of hegemonic spatiality as it is brought forward by the narrator of the novel *The Brothers*. In the 21st century, notions of progress and development are still what lead pastoral interventions in what are considered pristine settings; a reason why concepts that have become second-nature for our contemporary society, sanctioned by the anthropocentric romanticisation of nature, are hereupon problematised through an ecocritical antipastoral approach aiming at raising questions that tend to be obliterated in discourses which support such concepts. Bearing in mind that “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle” (Foucault, 1970, 53), I want to rethink the problematic division between underdeveloped and developed regions by analysing Milton Hatoum’s literary treatment of the developmentalist structure.

So the corpus for this investigation is, as mentioned, the Brazilian novel *The Brothers*, written by Hatoum in 2000 and translated into English by John Gledson in 2002. Milton Hatoum is one of the best-known writers in contemporary Brazilian literature; he is also a journalist, translator, and professor, having taught literature at Universidade Federal do Amazonas. His books have a patent political agenda, addressing issues such as the ecological imbalance and social inequality emerging from the advent of commerce and industry in the Amazon; his narrative is also marked by the issue of migration and by his problematisation of language, family, and identity singular structures, an aspect that is perceptible from his first—*Relatos de um Certo Oriente* (1990)—to his last novels—*Órfãos do Eldorado* (2008).

The narrative of *The Brothers*, specifically, is developed through the observations of Nael, a narrator who realises the dichotomies represented by the twin brothers who are the novel’s protagonists. Through Nael’s observations Hatoum discloses the gradual

¹ Personal Communication: all footnotes on personal communications concern comments, reflections, suggestions, and remarks brought forward by Professor Eliana Ávila during the advisory process through emails and/or personal encounters between advisor and advisee.

destruction of a “savage” world, defeated by this new and “modern” one that does not lose its splendor even after showing how destructive it is. In the developmentalist narrative Manaus is a city confined in the end of the world, in the midst of the carcasses of a never-ending past and the promise of a new and great empire, wherein the owners are replaced but the marginalised are still the same, however now enhanced in number. As analysed by Germana Sousa, in the novel these subjects are beggars, fishermen, lepers, prostitutes, *caboclos*, natives; in the words of Nael: the ruined lives (34). It is this marginalised subjects’ Amazon that I am about to explore.

Regarding my focus on the British translation of the novel, promoted by John Gledson, rather than on Hatoum’s original, Edwin Gentzler (1993) has already alerted us to the fact that “translation has been shown to be a marginal activity in the imperialistic phase of any given culture [...but...] is one of the primary means of introducing new ideas and stimulating cultural change” (260). Hence my interest in working with Gledson’s translation, for it stands for this introduction of new perspectives potentially capable of stimulating cultural change from the very inside of the hegemonic system the narrative problematises (that is, in the central literary system of English written literature). In the end it is also by being translated that the frontiers separating *Dois Irmãos* from the rest of the world are liquefied.

If normative ideological frontiers already hamper the proliferation of marginalised discourses inside Brazil, internationally this matter gets even worse. As Julian Go (2011) suggests, when compared to the British empire, one could say “the American state has been constrained to exert power over other societies in seemingly ‘noncolonial’, informal ways” (18). Thence, and according to one of the author’s main thesis in his book *Patterns of Empire: the British and American Empires*, if the contemporary notions of progress and development have been mainly constructed in English, initially due to British expansionist objectives and later as a result of the dominant industrial capacity of the US during the post war period, it is in English too that they must be debunked. This statement does not mean at all that a writer’s project would not be valid if not translated; translation is not about putting up boundaries for literary projects, but about expanding existing ones.

Therefore the general aim of this thesis is to analyse the industrialist discourse of progress in *The Brothers* in order to articulate whether and, if so, how the novel problematises it. Analysing the unique manner whereby the narrator experiences the paradoxical moment when

the romanticism of an idea flies in the face of the harsh reality of a region I want to find out how the general idea that “Manaus is ripe for growth” (194) is challenged by him. The debate here concerns the unilateral manner through which the contemporary notion of growth, development, improvement and, ultimately, progress is generally associated with the obliteration of those peoples and regions that do not fit in the hegemonic system. The specific objective is thus to verify specifically how Nael’s point of view (which is far from being a reliable one, as I shall demonstrate) responds to the marketing values gradually inserted in the Amazon, by analysing in which sense his perspectives can be read in relation to Michael Bennett’s notion of an antipastoral ecocriticism (2001) and to the hegemonic discourses of linear temporality and remote spatiality as specified by Johannes Fabian (1983).

1.1. Theoretical Framework

The conceptual parameters for my analysis of *The Brothers* are herein divided in four parts. Bearing in mind that “Ecocriticism” is a rather broad theoretical arena², in the first part of my research I define the notion of antipastoral ecocriticism, which shall guide my analysis, by discussing the definitions of pastoralism put forth by Leo Marx (1964) and of antipastoralism brought forward by Frederick Douglass (1845) and Michael Bennett (2001). In the second part, the concept of normativity, defined by Joseph Raz (1999), is brought in as to understand the structure of the hegemonic reinforcement of expansionism as discussed by Mary Louis Pratt (1992) and problematised by Johannes Fabian (1983) and Judith Halberstam (2005).

² Lawrence Buell, in “The Ecocritical Insurgency” (1999), explains, as simply as he can, how ecocriticism is generally understood: “an environmentally-informed literary criticism” (707). Nevertheless, in “Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies” (2008), Ursula Heise warns us that such a wide possibility for abstraction has acquiesced to what she considers an overt misuse of the concept; Heise criticises what she calls the “environmental rhetoric” emerging from a romanticised approach on the parallel between literature and nature, highlighting the fact that, since such relationship started to be studied, “a good deal of environmental rhetoric has [...] underemphasised the inherent dynamicism of ecological processes in favour of more static images of harmonious, balanced, and homeostatic ecosystems that seemed to provide more reliable sociopolitical models” (401). This is why it is essential to reflect upon which specific ecocritical lenses this research shall make use of inasmuch as, notwithstanding how important it is to think ecocritically, in general terms, one must be aware that “the contemporary world system can hardly be thought today without reference to the larger—and until recently unthinkable—totality of the ecological system which both sustains and interpenetrates with the political-economic system” (Ivakhiv, 99). This “larger [...] totality” pertaining to the interconnection between global politics, economics, and ecology shall not be further ignored hereinafter.

In the third, the postcolonial subject as defined by Stuart Hall (1996) is discussed, and so is the relevance of this theoretical realm for understanding the institutionalisation of regions marginalised by hegemony as Eduardo Galeano (1978) and Arturo Escobar (2009) describe them. In the fourth and last subsection, the issue of Latin American postmodernity as elaborated by Santiago Colás (1994) is put forth as to identify how the deviation of Amazonians from hegemonic chronology can be understood in the terms of Foucault's (1970) view on the madmen: those who, like Amazonian natives and *caboclos*, deviate from normativity, and in the terms of Jacques Attali (1977)'s elaboration on the "noise" produced by those outside the main spheres of social hierarchy.

1.1.1. The Confines of Pastoralism

The term "Pastoralism"³ is brought henceforward as problematised by Leo Marx, in the book *The Machine in The Garden: Technology and The Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964). In his view pastoralism as related to the idea of a supposedly virgin continent—as if the natives who were here before the arrival of the Europeans were just a picayune detail mixed with the fauna and flora enveloped by the mysticism of their exotic milieu—deserves to be reconsidered. This opportunity for the new beginning of Western civilisation, whereby humankind would be able to give life to their poetic fantasy and environmental romanticism, is also debunked by Carolyn Merchant (2003) and Mary Louise Pratt (1992). Pastoralism as an ideological stance has been ultimately removed from its traditional literary context and brought therefrom to the ideological and political construction of

³ In "What is Pastoral" (1982), Paul Alpers admits to being mesmerised by what he calls the "exaggerated heterogeneity" permeating the definitions and usages of pastoralism and suggests that, even though it seems to stand for "a fairly accessible literary concept" (437), it is necessary for one to be careful not to apply such term in a "reductive and simplistic" (438) fashion. Alerting his readers to the fact that it "sometimes seems as if there are as many versions of pastoral as there are critics who write about it" (437), Alpers explains that "the problem is not to fix on a single trait, as if it will provide us with the essence of pastoral; the question is rather how all the evident features of literary pastoral are related to each other and how we can define pastoral in a way that will enable us to say when we are dealing with it and when we are not" (439). In order to disclose his version of pastoralism, therefore, Alpers discusses about the interaction between landscape and shepherd; in his view "many interpreters of pastoral think of landscape as representative anecdote [...], but this view of pastoral comes from Romantic poetry and aesthetics, which give a privileged status to [...] individual sensibility and spiritual experience; it seems to make far more sense [...] to say that the representative anecdote of pastoral is the lives of shepherds" (449). Hence my specific usage of pastoralism, which shall be exactly the one concerning the critique expounded by Leo Marx (1964) regarding the mentioned landscape vs. shepherd traditional dualism.

nature as belonging to a transcendental scope. The classic figure of the good shepherd resurrects with a clear agenda; taken from the industrial and corrupted European existence, he/she believes in the chance of a new beginning in the New World (3).

In the article “Anti-pastoralism, Frederick Douglass, and the Nature of Slavery”, Michael Bennett shows the dangers and controversies of a pastoral approach to nature. Inspired by the experiences of Frederick Douglass⁴, Bennett confronts the pastoral approach not only to nature but also to society. Hence the emergence of the term “antipastoralism”, which is here employed as a more specific theoretical basis for a focused analysis. Environmental matters are seen by Bennett as not devoid of social and political constraints, and he suggests that it “would behoove all of us interested in the fate of our shared planet to work for an ecocriticism and an ecological movement that accounts for and is accountable to this vision of environmental justice” (209). Through analysing the roots and fundamentals of Western discourses regarding nature in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Bennett indicates how contradictory the concept of pastoralism is in his contextual analysis of the idealisation of nature as a refuge.

Such idealisation is ultimately defied and debunked by Douglass’s concrete experience in both urban and rural environments where he is taken from and to as a slave. According to Bennett, “the world Douglass lived in is one in which the myth that ‘the fruitful earth unforced bare... fruit abundantly and without stint’ can only be maintained by the erasure of the slave labour that brought the fruits of southern agriculture and husbandry to the tables of the white ruling classes” (199). One of the main points of such critique is that the romanticism of pastoralism fails to acknowledge the usual marginalisation of the natives who have their cultures obliterated during the process of Westernisation. The categorical division proposed by pastoralism, in which the city is “bad” and the field is “good”, is,

⁴ According to *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (www.uncpress.unc.edu), Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), who “levied an irresistible indictment against slavery and racism”, was one of “the most important black American leader[s] of the 19th century”. This is so for, besides having “immortalized his formative years as a slave in [...] *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*”, he has also set forward “a moral crusade to eradicate the evil of slavery” elsewhere. Not to be forgotten, Douglass is considered a “brilliant, heroic, and complex [...] symbol of his age and a unique American voice for humanism and social justice”. His life and thought shall “always speak profoundly to the dilemma of being black in America”. Copyright © 2000 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. All rights reserved: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/bio.html>

therefore, demystified by Douglass when he describes his life as a slave in the US:

I had resided but a short time in Baltimore before I observed a marked difference, in the treatment of slaves, from that which I had witnessed in the country. A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation. There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation. (30)

Between the country and the city, therefore, Douglass seems to prefer the latter because it was capable of giving him at least “a vestige of decency”⁵. One cannot think of the environment without taking into account its social and political atmosphere; in many cases the field ends up being worse than the city since the possibilities of escape and of people’s noticing inadequate slave’s treatment are terribly poorer therein. There was no paradise for Douglass in the forest; the notion of

⁵ In the book *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams problematises the categorical divisions between city and nature which justify the confusing pastoral romanticisation wherein Douglass found himself inserted. The author’s thesis focuses on the interdependence rather than on the autonomy of both realms, suggesting that the notion that supposedly “natural” or “rural” settings are less damaging to subjects is potentially dodgy, even though this “contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times” (2). The problem of this contrast, in his view, is the fact that both country and city have been institutionalised by hegemony and are now interconnected through complex but effective means responsible for reinforcing meanings rather than allowing them to deviate from one another. As Douglass’ experience demonstrates, the same unfairness and difficulties faced in the city, regarded “as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition”, could be found in the countryside as well; this is why it is so important for Williams to challenge the traditional idea of a “natural” environment that might be defined simply as surrounded by “peace, innocence, and simple virtue” and paradoxically seen, at the same time, “as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation” (3). The author would later suggest that this dualistic tradition cannot be taken for granted because it results in a narrow and simplistic fabricated linearity which has a very clear agenda: “It is significant [...] that the common image of the country is now an image of the past, and the common image of the city an image of the future; that leaves, if we isolate them, an undefined present” (297). It is within this “undefined present” that marginalised subjects (like Douglass and/or Amazonian natives and *caboclos*) living the culturally generated conflict between the “rural” and the “urban” have been consecutively and despotically interjected.

nature as Eden has never been offered to his class. The romanticised image of nature, of the countryside, furthered by pastoralism, does not exist for people in the condition wherein Douglass finds himself; both city and nature have been corrupted. This is so for, even though it has often put unilateral notions regarding several other realms into question, the postmodern world has not been able to confront hegemonic chronologies and come up with new conceptions of space. Notwithstanding such constricted tradition, time and space are not universal concepts but abstract notions, regardless of Western attempts to impose one single chronology and geography to all settings; for many years, Western civilisation has given shape to a developmental structure, whose designed path has preconditioned time to pass in a singular manner for every globalised country—implying that time must behave according to human desire.

Johannes Fabian poses that “time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance: a form through which we define the content of relations between the Self and the Other. Moreover, [...] time may give form to relations of power and inequality under the conditions of capitalist industrial production” (ix). Therefore, the chronological order of these preconceived procedures serving the interests of “capitalist industrial productions”, which are to be undertaken by the so-called Third World nations, have no other option rather than to respect practically immutable steps: steps that have already been taken by the “developed” countries and, thus, shall fit perfectly to everyone. Eduardo Galeano, in his masterpiece *Open Veins of Latin America*, shows how hegemonic interests succeed in convincing the whole world that the future of all regions are predestined to be the same, no matter how iniquitous such future might be. As he wisely puts it, “[s]overeignty is mortgaged because ‘there’s no other way’; the oligarchies’ cynical alibis confuse the impotence of a social class with the presumed empty destinies of their countries” (4).

The method whereby we define how time must direct our future decisions has been granted by the genius of a hegemonic model which presents itself as a single chance of any prospect for those regions and peoples so far restrained by their empty destinies; the ultimate status of a developed country being the greatest ambition that developing ones shall aim at achieving. Furthermore, in order to discuss the hybrid and postmodern condition of both Nael and Omar, Santiago Colás’ view in *Postmodernity in Latin America* is of paramount importance. The author problematises far-reaching generalisations and universalisms that scaffold geopolitical binarisms concerning the globalised picture of

postmodernity; Colás does that by problematising the oversimplified epistemes that define and naturalise Latin American postmodernity. Emphasising the need to recognise their active role in the globalising world map, he summons Latin American individuals to “renounce the discourse of the universal and its implicit assumption of a privileged point of access to ‘the truth,’ which can be reached only by a limited number of subjects” (172).

There are distinct versions of the postmodern around the globe, mainly since the fluidity given to hegemony is much smoother than the one given to the margin. Or better: taken from the margin. One cannot simply think of Latin America as essentially, individually, and isolatedly postmodern; one, on the contrary, must acknowledge the heterogeneous experience of each postmodern region as a meaningful source of other constructions of temporal and spatial logics distinct from those stalking the margin. Colás bluntly argues that “Latin American postmodernity [...] produced under a variety of local social conditions and aesthetic traditions [...] requires us to grasp the various, local postmodernities as related, but not therefore homogeneous or identical” (17). Yet, nonetheless, capitalist expansive, hostile, and repressive interests need new spaces to occupy. In fact, “they require time to accommodate the schemes of a one-way history: progress, development, modernity (and their negative mirror images: stagnation, underdevelopment, tradition)” (Fabian, 144).

The manner we have learned to understand our chronology is directly connected to hegemonic interests involved with the passage of time in a very specific fashion. This is perhaps why Halberstam suggests that understanding deviating behaviours, like those of marginalised regions or subjects, entails “articulating and elaborating a concept of queer time” (6). The consequences of such passage, taking place especially due to the financial matters of hegemony, are far from limiting themselves to the exclusive realm of economy. Actually, for the transformation of time and space into commodities to effectively happen the neoliberal market needs to be inserted not only in every aspect of the commercial interactions of a desired region, but inside the deepest core of its (supposedly belated) cultural system. It was through the remodeling of people’s habits, desires, and ambitions, that the market was able to enter every scope of society. Development, more than a seemingly natural process, is an ideological and cultural construct. According to Arturo Escobar:

It was only through a slow process that today's dominant [capitalist] economic practices became the common property of communities in Western societies, that they came to be seen as normal, transparent ways of behaving and acting. It is precisely these practices and rationality that are now being introduced in the Third World through development in a scale larger than ever before [...]. In this way, long-standing cultural practices and meanings—as well as the social relations in which they are embedded—are altered. The consequences of this are enormous, to the extent that the very basis of community aspirations and desires is modified. Thus the effect of the introduction of development has to be seen not only in terms of its social and economic impact, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in relation to the cultural meanings and practices they upset and modify (438).

Worse than altered, the long-standing cultural practices and meanings—as well as the social relations in which they are embedded are actually disqualified; so perhaps modifying them may be inevitable as a way for them to, once again, become re-qualified. This is obviously not just a matter of economic trades; the market is part of a broader system and it affects much more than business, as I shall later demonstrate. The emotional coexistence of people with one another in a society whose basic structure considers commerce as its most pivotal sustainer is irrevocably affected by the commoditisation of things which had no financial constraints beforehand: commoditisation, therefore, functions as the reduction of meaning. Through the delineated pastoral lens, which relies on the Old World regeneration in a “pristine” land, the Amazon is, per se, meaningless and “outlaw”; it is only after being inserted in the capitalised narratives of time and space that it might make any sense.

This pastoral resurrection takes place through supposedly peace-loving and utopian contacts between the observer and the observed; interestingly, for I believe a landscape completely devoid of the features that make a place “developed” provides a completely contrary image if compared to that which is represented by Western

ambitions, “none of the obstacles to occidental progress appear in this landscape” (Pratt, 127). Patrick Holland (1998) also puts into question Western curiosity towards the “unknown”, inasmuch as most hegemonic contacts with realms previously unvisited by colonial conquests pastorally express the exotic, but also envelop it; “in scanning the past, they compile an inventory of domesticated mysteries, and yet they are made to confront the unexpected strangeness of the present” (24). Such temporal and spatial muddle shall be further addressed when I discuss *The Brothers*’ rupture of the tenuous line supposedly dividing the urban future from the rural past.

1.1.2. A Postcolonial Antipastoralism

It would be a mistake to believe that the pastoral dream has been abandoned by contemporary views on the Amazon and on its natives and *caboclos*. In the words of Mary Louise Pratt (1992), this is because “the edenic and the pastoral are often replaced [...] by a modernising extractive vision” (150). Notwithstanding how controversial it may seem, Western civilisation was and still is capable of placing the edenic and the pastoral close to the destructive and greedy processes undertaken by developmentalist enterprises; development is still both destroying and defending nature at the very same time. As Leo Marx (1964) suggests, such paradox “enabled the nation to continue defining its purpose as the pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth and power” (226). Western desire is not (and has never been) to preserve the environment, but to preserve a manmade garden; not to respect nor try to understand nature, but to institutionalise it, to cut its deviating branches.

After all lack of restraint results in the proliferation of pluralities, and pluralities jeopardise the possibility of universalising one single manifestation of meanings. For commercial interests this would be a nightmare since it would make its normative restraints vulnerable. It is impossible to tackle such norms without addressing the matter of normativity. Defined by Judith Halberstam, in “Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies” (2005), the term is here employed to refer to “the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction [...which...] pathologise modes of living that show little or no concern for them” (4). This concept draws on Foucault’s notion of the discursive regime that establishes norms through epistemic reiteration (1976), taking into account that “normativity”, as defined by *The Oxford Dictionary*, has functioned as an institution for “establishing, relating to,

or deriving from a standard or norm, especially of behaviour”⁶; the way we learned to look at temporal and spatial configurations has been permeated by this invisible “norm”, by the idea that there is one standardised path and chronology for time to pass and for space to evolve.

This is why the developmentalist transition of the Amazon became second nature to contemporary society, for, in thesis, there is no other choice. Nevertheless, “normativity” has been thoroughly questioned by queer studies which, according to Juana Maria Rodríguez (2010), are “at their core an attempt at recognition [...] that both performs a critique of existing social relations of difference and enacts a commitment to the creative critical work of imagining collective possibilities” (332). The biased determination of what we are and what we must become, how we behave and how we should behave, what is savage and what is civilised, does only exist because the structure of hegemonic epistemes prevents the subject from thinking otherwise by disregarding any other unacknowledged epistemes while normativity is reinforced. The unremitting imposition of normative concepts and behaviours is thus thoroughly reinforced by hegemony, notwithstanding the difficulties found when one tries to justify them. Joseph Raz (1999) elaborates on these difficulties:

It is not easy to make sense of the very quest for the justification of normativity. We can ask whether this fact or that is a cogent reason for action or belief, etc. We can raise more general questions about types of facts: For example: does the law (i.e. the fact that one is legally required to perform an action) constitute a binding reason for action? Do people have good reason to conform to the practices of their country? But what is it to justify reason as such? Presumably the question is whether we are ever justified in holding anything as constituting an “objective” reason? Or, whether it is possible for anything to be a reason? Or, whether there are any facts which are reasons? (366)

⁶ Copyright © 2013 Oxford UP. All rights reserved:
<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/normative>

Is there a direct link between normative reason and reasonable reason? Raz's questions are generally taken for granted, for it is only by taking them for granted that normativity is able to keep thriving. Against such normativity, nonetheless, there is everything which cannot be reduced to it. In this sense, one might find it difficult to build a concrete bridge between postcolonialism, antipastoralism, and queer theory, but, just like Stuart Hall emphasises the necessity of thinking about the postcolonial subject not as narrowly related to a specific geopolitical and racial frame (251), Rodríguez avers that queer perspectives must not be limited to what regards sex, gender, and/or desire (336). The categorisation of female, indigenous, disabled, black, gender-queer and many other marginalised subjects as belonging to specific and isolated realms of analysis obliterates the attributes shared by them; in the end what all proposed terms aim at confronting is normativity, and it is perhaps exactly through their interactive contributions that normativity might, in the end, be discredited. According to Rodríguez:

[I]t has been racialized women and the disabled, along with indigenous populations, slave societies, immigrant groups, welfare recipients, prisoners, gender-queer subjects, and other bodies marked as deviant that have been affected most forcefully by pernicious ideologies of 'perversion, victimization and protection' [...]. Women and people of color have been hailed by these discourses of liberation through sexual sacrifice, disciplined through public shame and censure and the disciplinary power of pathology and criminalization (336).

By criminalising and/or pathologising supposed deviances, future as a prerogative of normative time implies then that the one who is different is, in the end, always inherently worse, no matter what the difference is, such as the space where and the time when he/she occupies is always, and undoubtedly, less appropriate than hegemonic ones. As a matter of fact, one of the upshots resulting from colonial and neocolonial expansionism is that the (supposedly) Old World has been enveloped by what Pratt calls "a framework of nostalgia and loss" (183); framework responsible for categorising Amazonian wilderness as the

past of Brazilian metropolises and Amazonian natives as the past of ourselves. In this sense the Amazon has been both explored and exiled inasmuch as its exploration has, curiously, inevitably resulted in its eviction. Now the Amazon becomes a token of nostalgia of a time that does not return, and a symbol of a space which is lost among the developed and urbanised ones.

Confining their meanings to an exiled paradox—since they are situated in our past even though they exist in our present—the notion that the Amazon is lost does not give time and space another option rather than the pre-designed frameworks of profiteering needs, it decides how time and space work, it sets the track for time and space to keep developing. The pastoral approach questioned by Douglass and further problematised by the notion of queer time and space homogenise and reduce meanings to singular paths which have been tested by hegemony in advance. The urban setting is understood as the next step of the rural ones, and natives are stared at as symbolising what we once were, as some glimpse of ancient times when their existence would be possible; they serve this purpose, and they need to be beheld for us to understand who we are. We become, as a result, the product of the capitalist mainstream narrative that design the other as a strategy to reinforce the self, that portray our past aiming at portraying our future, that say where we come from and where we are going, and that show us how our past was and how our future shall inexorably be.

1.1.3. Postcolonial Linearities and the Queering of Binaries

If Halberstam puts into question the credibility of hegemonic chronologies, Frederick Douglass (1845) identifies some of the controversies which accompany pastoralism, and, “filled with unutterable loathing”, the criticism he directs at such system of beliefs has been called by Michael Bennett (2001) as “antipastoralism”, for “the resulting cultural outgrowths of these dramatic [...] developments shaped [...] anti-pastoral qualities” (206): “We have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church members” (Douglass, 102). The “anti-pastoral qualities” of Douglass’s critique concern his ability to identify the fallacious nature of Western discourse, to, in 1845, bring about the paradoxical character of Western taken-for-granted institutions:

The man who robs me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class-leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way of

life, and the path of salvation. He who sells my sister, for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. He who proclaims it a religious duty to read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read [...]. We see the thief preaching against theft, and the adulterer against adultery [...]. The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master [...]. Here we have religion and robbery the allies of each other—devils dressed in angels' robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise. (102)

What becomes thus evident after Douglass' description of these numberless paradoxes is the problematic nature of pastoral enterprises. In this sense my usage of antipastoralism for analysing *The Brothers* does not intend to refer to the supposed antithetical effects of pastoralism, but “to the critique of pastoralism because of those antithetical effects” (Ávila, Eliana⁷); that is, my analysis of the novel does not aim at testing the validity of the opposing nature of antipastoralism when compared to pastoralism, but at applying this analytical tool as to identify how problematic the structure of pastoralism is in the first place. It is important for one not to confuse the antipastoral with what Raymond Williams (1973) defines as “the counter-pastoral” which, according to the author, “opposes its descriptions of pain to the pastoral descriptions of pleasure” (92). The antipastoral, different from the “counter-pastoral”, does not aim at simply “opposing” pastoralism, but at contradicting it.

Accordingly, in this previous excerpt, Douglass seems to recognise the inner flaws of Western pastoralism. When he compares these civilisation beguilers to devils dressed in angel's robes, and their discursive apparatus to hell presenting the semblance of paradise, he seems to be knowledgeable of the controversial nature of these subjects' strength of character. He knows that those who supposedly embody the higher moral, educated, and civilised values are rather different from what their social status grants them with. This might look like an old and

⁷ Personal Communication

cliché discussion, but, actually, Amazonian natives are still presently being christianised; they are still being given the Bible, even though do not need to be saved by any insatiable christian god. Curiously, such issue demonstrates how it would be equivocate to imply that the postcolonial moment as lived by Douglass, and by any other supposed “ex-slave”, would mean a dismissal of colonialism just because it is called “*postcolonial*”; as if “post”, meaning “after”, would automatically entail the disappearance of what came previous to it. This is not the case whatsoever.

Such an assumption can be easily rebuked since “the postcolonial is no different from the other ‘posts’. It is not ‘after’ but ‘going beyond’ the colonial, as postmodernism is ‘going beyond’ [...] modernism, and poststructuralism both follows chronologically and achieves its theoretical gains on the back of structuralism” (Hall, 253). Hermeneutic discourses regarding chronologies, single and Cartesian views on the past, present, and future must be reconsidered; what came “before” does not disappear, it is just an illusion caused by hegemonic perceptions regarding the temporal construction of, not only the Amazon, but any of our epistemes. The binary divide between colonial and postcolonial, margin and centre, colonisers and colonised, black and white, is an oversimplified view on different regimes of reason, as usually all binarisms are. The assumption that there is always an opposition to the other side requires that there are, necessarily, definite spaces and times.

Society can be granted with identity democracy and it can come up to innovative possibilities for pondering upon civilisation next steps only if we start doing what the hegemonic chronology of capital accumulation prohibits: “thinking the present historically and [...] summoning the return of a seemingly eliminated space” (Hall, 8). Temporal locations are deeply rooted in relations of power; hegemony has been granted the authority to proscribe any attempt at thinking the present historically and to pinpoint who are those subjects still occupying the supposed eliminated spaces. Economic relations between peoples have thus been forged rather carefully, giving way to alliances which determined the spatial and temporal constraints of all those who are making businesses. According to Fabian: “A temporal conception of movement has always served to legitimize the colonial enterprise on all levels; temporalizations expressed as passage from savagery to civilization, from peasant to industrial society, have long served an ideology whose ultimate purpose has been to justify the procurement of commodities for our markets” (95).

The chronology that emphasises the “passage from savagery to civilisation” entailed several changes in the lives of subjects like Douglass, who were not used to the supposedly universal capitalist neoliberal enterprises before their actual arrival. Just like it happens to Douglass, then, the postcolonial subject would also become gradually aware of the paradox of living in a “seemingly eliminated space” (Hall, 8). Here we should look at the concept of classical and neoliberalism as defined by the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; that is, standing for the idea that “the dispersion of power that results from a free market economy based on private property protects the liberty of subjects against encroachments by the state”⁸. Curiously, this evinces the fact that contemporary culture prohibits at the same time as it unshackles; the liberal world that supposedly liberates subjects through the imposition of free market, shaping a profiteering mould wherein these subjects have been popped in, has controversially set them free from their freedom, transforming their history into a past that can no longer be achieved materially, physically, but only recollected by a lingering but innocuous nostalgia that permeates their murky existence.

As previously mentioned, the autonomy the system of insertion and liberation gives to some is fairly distinct from the one given to others, for the freedom of commerce does not necessarily result in the freedom of subjects; actually, and as I hope to demonstrate, it goes pretty much in the opposite direction. This notion of liberal practices is understood here as put forward by Escobar (2009); that is, as standing for the economic behaviour adopted by “the advanced countries, particularly the United States, with the need to find overseas investment opportunities and, at the same time, markets for their goods”. Affecting the globe and impinging upon the lives of real people, finding markets and investment opportunities have dramatically affected those who had never asked for such markets or investments. Therefore, and for this ambitious project to be successful, “economic development, trade liberalization under the aegis of the nascent giant corporations, and the establishment of multilateral financial institutions were to be the main instruments to satisfy these requirements and advance the new strategy” (430).

This new strategy, the artificial linearity that places the Amazon in the past and more urbanised regions in the future implies that marginalised subjects belong to the wilderness, to the rural landscapes,

⁸ Copyright © 2014 Stanford ULC. All rights reserved:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberalism/>

to a place uncorrupted by developmentalist intercourses; but how meaningful can Douglass's experience be if he does not enter the hegemonic systems of meaning? Otherwise how can he change such systems? How can we? This is exactly why he writes, and, more importantly, this is why he thinks he should be listened to: "Douglass seeks admission to a common moral world in which he is bound up with his opponents and in which he can hope to reach them by attending, in a disciplined and critical way, to the sources of his own beliefs" (Burt, 17). Just like Douglass was not satisfied with escaping from slavery, so wouldn't Amazonians with escaping from the institutionalisation of their societies and obliteration of the space where they live, for the whole narrative of progress should be problematised. When the Amazon goes through development and is inserted into its appropriate temporal box it is not its conditions that are enhanced, but the tentacles of the social dominance which determine its destiny.

The effects of developmentalism are mesmerising inasmuch as, in the words of Escobar, "certain types of social dominance may be analysed as the product of the interconnection between the introduction of dominant discourses about the economy, their inscription in institutions and practices (e.g. through development), and their effect on local historical situations, including the resistance to these processes" (438). As mentioned previously, development interferes not only in the economy but in many other institutions and practices; it alters the historical pattern of the Amazon, and involuntarily allows diverse forms of resistance to these processes to surface. Those who resist processes responsible for instituting the normative are the postcolonial subjects who, forced to limit their existence to a temporal and spatial configuration which is regarded as queer, end up becoming capable of providing epistemes that transcend the narrow positionings brought forward and commended by normative institutions; the colonial moment had and has depended on the developmentalist linearity not only to survive but to be deemed justifiable.

The postcolonial moment, resulting from the fragments and scars left by such problematic enterprises, is a moment whence developmentalist chronology is put into question, when that which must be scrutinized and, possibly, discredited can no longer be that which deviates from the pattern, but the notion of a pattern itself. If there is something that marks contemporary heterogeneity, such thing is what Foucault (1976) calls "the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions, practices, and discourses". Normativity and hegemony are now being thus threatened by this general feeling that

“the ground is crumbling” beneath their feet, “especially in places where it seemed most familiar, most solid, and closest to us, to our bodies, to our everyday gestures” (30), such as the industrial approach towards time and space. Foucault highlights that “alongside this crumbling and the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local critiques”, such as the ones uttered by the Amazonian marginalised subjects, “the facts were also revealing something: beneath this whole thematic, through it and even within it, we have seen what might be called the insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (31). And it is exactly these subjugated knowledges which we can no longer fail to acknowledge.

1.1.4. Discourse or Mere Noise?

In the words of Santiago Colás, “society must be understood as the ‘crystallisation’ of social practices, some of which continue to exist uncrystallised as the social itself” (15); in this sense, the discourses regarded by Foucault in “The Order of Discourse” (1970) as “mere noise” are those supposedly uttered by the “madmen”, which “surprise society by contesting it at those sites it has overlooked as it focused on the conventional, official terrains of struggle” (Colás, 15). Nevertheless, the logic of hegemonic constructions depends on the integrity of these conventional and official terrains. This is exactly why a counter-project of “remaking history, of reconstructing the future, as an ongoing and impure process [...] confronting the present as the future of the past” (172) is so pivotal, and it is generally those discourses regarded as mere noise the ones capable of not only taking part but of actually leading the combat with the most effective weapons to fight back in acknowledged (or not) terrains.

But if time is not as linear as we think it is, why do we think it is? Why is pastoralism more credited than antipastoralism? As it has just been mentioned, in Foucault’s view there are reasons for us not to listen to the discourses that imply the opposite, and, more importantly, there are reasons for our deeming these discourses mere noise. According to the author “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events [...]” (52). That is, the discourses to which we are daily exposed are carefully devised and propagated by capitalist needs, and the ones which might endanger the character of such needs are promptly choked. Warding off those subjects that might endanger hegemonic social and financial functioning, the

implementation of capitalism in the Amazon is, in *The Brothers*, embodied by Yaqub, who supposedly deserves his father's respect for having become a respectful and educated adult—at least in the terms of normativity, but is consequently forged by a whole new conceptualisation of business which is opposed to his father's.

Linear development imposed by capitalism does not only change other ways of making business per se, but also discredits any noncommercial behaviours; the consumerist cycle has been re-produced by people and people have been re-produced by the system. But if the values of the capitalist system are questionable, the values of people become likewise. In order to discredit the arguments of those subjects who do not endorse and/or passively accept the main storylines, discourses which happen to deviate from the mainstream discursive practices of hegemony, are, as a result, ridiculed and deemed insane just like the discourse of any other person who fails to fit in the hegemonic system would also be. These people's stories, however, are far from being an exception in what concern discursive practices: "Since the depths of the Middle Ages, the madman has been the one whose discourse cannot have the same currency as others [...]. This whole immense discourse of the madman was taken for mere noise, and he was only symbolically allowed to speak, in the theatre, where he would step forward, disarmed and reconciled [...]" (Foucault, 53).

Discourses of marginalised subjects are, indeed, usually—at least—allowed to be uttered in contemporaneity, but when they do they are generally disarmed and reconciled. Their discourse is deemed interesting, funny, and eccentric, but nothing more complex, significant, or evocative than that, exactly like the discourse of madmen. In a way, when these natives and *caboclos*, who were previously hidden in the deep forests of the Amazon, are sought by Brazilian media for them to speak to the rest of the country, isn't it generally as theatrical as in this example given by Foucault? There is, undoubtedly, a contemporary interest in writing about these natives, about their land, taking pictures, visiting them, even in giving them a microphone and letting them speak. Nevertheless, the requisite is always maintaining a safe distance, always departing from the assembly of imaginary walls accompanied by the supposedly clear distinction in our minds that on one of the sides we have lucid people producing discourse, and on the other we have these madmen producing mere noise. Here Foucault's discussion on the madmen and their production of mere noise seems to be connected to Jacques Attali's view on the epistemologies of noise in vogue during certain periods and for diverse reasons.

In the book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977), Attali brings the notion of noise re-presenting, which stands for the condition of the musician as a performer who is taken as a token of an autonomous entity free in appearance but who is actually “a producer and seller of signs [...] always exploited and manipulated by his clients” (46); this condition can be thought in parallel to the one of the Amazonian natives and *caboclos* when placed before the unilateral developmentalist chronology by those who get its benefits; every subject becomes the client of a single pastoral story regarding Amazonian temporal configuration, and those who try devising antipastoral possibilities are likewise seen as nothing but madmen. These clients are later defined by Attali as “an audience generally familiar with the [...] recordings” whose performatic appreciation of music as discursively acceptable entails the habit of “hearing live replications” (85).

Even though Attali’s critique focuses on music, the argument can be expanded, for there is a clear parallel between such notion of noise and Foucault’s view on the discourse of the madmen. Such dialogue seems to be pertinent for both authors and their given insights agree that those producing mere noise are doing so because of the cultural restraints that convince listeners and readers to deem their discourse mere noise. For this picture, responsible for creating the image of the madmen living in a non-time/space and describing why and how they are mad, to be counter-argued, the notion of queer time emerges anew. Time, space, and the subject are all interconnected, and, if someone produces noise at the same time that noise is producing him/her, this is perhaps because, as Halberstam suggests, a “‘queer’ adjustment in the way in which we think about time, in fact, requires and produces new conceptions of space” (6).

Indeed, marginalised discourses might be too threatening if they are really listened to. They might damage Western “will to truth”, as Foucault has called it, which depends strongly on its “institutional [...] power of constraint on other discourses” (55). Foucault’s view on the matter seems to contribute to an analysis of the pastoral discourse in the Amazon as an attempt to institutionalise the region in the terms of hegemonic chronology which is, on its turn, only able to take place through continuous chains of constraint on other discourses. It is both the silencing of these other discourses or subjugated knowledges and the noise (dissonance) they make that must be thus analysed as to question Western linear progressions such as from savage to civilised and/or from rural to urban. In this sense, hegemonic normativity, as questioned by

Foucault, becomes a tool for marginalising the queer perspectives of those who do not put such theory of wealth into practice, for ridiculing their presence in the progressive chronology of hegemonic development, and for, ultimately, convincing the speakers and listeners that there is one single narrative of life.

The perspectives devised by Fabian (1983), Halberstam (2005), and Rodríguez (2010)—among others—have proven then to be pertinent for my analysis inasmuch as they not only endorse Douglass' (1845) accounts but are actually complementary to his notion of antipastoralism as defined by Bennett (2001): a tool which proves to be pivotal for analysing the positioning of *The Brothers'* narrator against the pastoral hope in the Amazonian space. The attempt of hegemony to place the Amazon and its inhabitants in a logical linearity regarding their temporal and spatial arrangement—which implies the existence of an inevitable fate for both—is also problematised by Galeano (1978), Colás (1994), and Escobar (2009). These authors' critique on such determinist linearity as supposedly able to control chronological progressions of both space and time, together with Foucault's (1994) discussion on the madmen and Hall's (1996) elaboration on the postcolonial subject, demand an antipastoral approach concerning the Amazonian condition.

1.2. Research Questions and Significance of the Research

In order to achieve this thesis' objectives I propose two main research questions. The first is related to the subaltern positioning of marginalized subjects and regions whose perspectives might be directed to the counter-hegemonic versions of ecocritical thinking brought forward by Frederick Douglass (1845) and Michael Bennett (2001); and the second concerns the spatial and temporal deviant configuration of the Amazon as experienced by the novel's narrator, whose descriptions shall be analysed through the critical lenses developed by Johannes Fabian (1983) and Judith Halberstam (2005):

- 1) How does the narrative point of view respond to Michael Bennett's notion of antipastoral ecocriticism (2001)?
- 2) How does the narrative point of view respond to hegemonic discourses of linear temporality and hierarchic spatiality as discussed by Johannes Fabian (1983)?

An answer to such questions shall contribute to ecocritical studies in PPGI insomuch as there have been no theses or dissertations in the programme relying on ecocriticism. Moreover, this study is germane to my self-accomplishment since Hatoum is a writer I frankly admire, especially because I acknowledge the literary quality of his

work and reckon the ideological debate he raises against Western hypocrisy to be pertinent, sagacious, and appealing. Likewise, the ideological criticism permeating *The Brothers* gives room to a vast body of critical perspectives, like the one proposed herein, directed towards a problematisation of taken-for-granted issues in contemporary society. Although a great number of our contemporary novelists have become mere tools of capitalist interests, writing futile novels with the sole intention of making money without providing any further contributions to social and political reflections, as suggested by Zygmunt Bauman in *Capitalismo Parasitário* (2010, 30)—which has curiously never been translated into English—regarding Hatoum my agenda is also to demonstrate that this is decisively not the case whatsoever.

As to properly answer my research questions I shall separately address each of them in two analytical chapters. The following one, “A Promising Future: Yaqub’s Pastoralism”, concerns the narrator’s antipastoral shift when he describes the novel’s sequences of events, especially when he characterises Yaqub, one of the eponymous twin brothers, taking into account how such point of view responds to Michael Bennett’s notion of antipastoral ecocriticism (2001). The third chapter, in its turn, titled “The Future demands my Opinion: The Fallacy of Postmodern Mobility”, is whereby I analyse the narrator’s point of view now in relation to the temporal dichotomy placing past, present, and future in distinct realms through his description of Amazonian temporal and spatial wavering condition; examining how his mother and himself experience the postcolonial Amazon, I identify how the narrator responds to hegemonic discourses of linear temporality and hierarchic spatiality as discussed by Johannes Fabian (1983). In “Pouncing like a Panther: The Postcolonial Antipastoral”, the fourth and last chapter, I conclude the thesis by analysing the previous chapters’ findings appraising the relevance of the whole analysis for answering the research questions.

CHAPTER II

“A PROMISING FUTURE”: YAQUB’S PASTORALISM

This chapter addresses the narrator’s point of view in relation to how it responds to Michael Bennett’s notion of antipastoral ecocriticism (2001). In this sense, its purpose is to identify how the narrator positions himself before the events narrated and how he characterises the twin brothers Yaqub and Omar in *The Brothers*⁹. Firstly his initial view on the brothers, limited by a romanticised pastoral foundation, is analysed, focusing on the portraits emerging from his descriptions; such representations shall be later problematised through the narrator’s own ideological shift when he starts relating the twin brothers’ development to the overall picture of the Amazon and its marginalised subjects—a moment when he begins to come up with antipastoral perspectives in parallel with Douglass’ ones.

In the beginning of the novel, Nael, whose mother had been sold to Zana, an Amazonian woman of Lebanese origins, already gives readers some clues about the fact that the brothers Omar and Yaqub do not have many things in common. The narrator grows up much more

⁹ In her review on *The Brothers*, the British novelist A.S. Byatt (Dame Susan Duffy) poses that the novel can be described as a “tale of the intricate conflicts within an Amazonian Lebanese family—the parents, Halim and Zana are of Islamic and Maronite Christian stock, and held together by a durable and violent sexual passion that began when she was 15”. If their daughter Rânia is nontoxic and controllable, their twin sons, “Omar and Yaqub, who hate each other and cannot be reconciled” are basically the reason for the wrecking of the family. Its members are characterised by “the illegitimate son of the family’s native servant, Domingas”, who “inserts himself quietly, observation by observation, into the family and the events” and would ultimately prove to be “the true heir, in a sense, both of the family and of Manaus”. Initially Yaqub is seen by this untrustworthy narrator as “Halim’s ‘good’ son who is sent back to a Lebanese village for a time and returns a stranger”, ultimately leaving to São Paulo as to become an engineer. Omar, on the other hand, “much loved by his mother, is a no-good slob who lies in a hammock and consorts with prostitutes”. In the novelist’s view, Hatoum manages to “use the energy of the repeated stories of all cultures”; that is, Omar and Yaqub “are like the two rivers that can’t mingle; they are also like the biblical pairs of brothers, Esau and Jacob, and behind them Cain and Abel, whose stories are paradigmatic in Judaism, Islam and Christianity”. Apart from Byatt’s examples one could also think of Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “John Inglesfield’s Thanksgiving” (1837), Mark Twain’s “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins” (1875), Machado de Assis’ *Esau and Jacob* (1904), and Ben Elton’s *Two Brothers* (2011). This tale of the twin brothers is, it seems, universal, but in this specific case readers gradually learn how the traditionally oversimplified dualism between them no longer applies when it goes to the complicated ideological and physical separation of the twin brothers Omar and Yaqub in Hatoum’s novel. These brothers are therein no longer simply a manifestation of the victim vs. villain polarity; they are both victims of a same enemy. Copyright © 2014 Guardian News and Media Limited. All rights reserved: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/jun/01/asbyatt>

attached to the latter, not exactly physically but through some sort of platonic esteem regarding his image: “I grew up with Yaqub’s photos, listening to his mother reading his letters. In one of the photos, he posed in an Army uniform; a sword again, but this time the two-edged weapon made the reserve officer look all the more formidable”; since this first moment Nael is already aware that one of the brothers must be his father, and for the reader it is clear that he prefers the one who fits best in the hegemonic model (notwithstanding his two-edged sword, whose meaning Nael would only later understand) one that represents everything that is admirable and respectful in a gentleman: “For years, this image of the dashing young man in uniform was imprinted on me. An Army officer, a future engineer from the Polytechnic School...” (53).

This crystal clear image is forged by the context of that specific moment of Brazilian political history. There seems to be here an important allegory concerning Yaqub’s portrait and the relations of power being reinforced in Brazilian society at the end of World War II; he, in a way, personifies the hands of military; which also comprises the idea of future, of improvement, of strength. Moreover, it is interesting to ponder upon his choice to become an engineer and not to follow another career, a choice that seems to be motivated not only by the fact that engineering is a highly recognized profession but also because of its metaphorical richness; what I mean is that, as an engineer, Yaqub materially embodies this construction of a new country, as that who constructs and sets the scaffold for a new national structure to be born. The boastful nature of Yaqub’s construction as a character is reinforced by Nael’s recollections regarding the brothers’ early days: “one morning, in August 1949, the twins’ birthday, Omar asked for money and a new bicycle [...]. Yaqub refused the money and the bicycle. He asked for a gala uniform for Independence Day. It was his last year at the College, and now he was going to parade with the others, with a sword by his side” (30). Yaqub, who at this moment is about to travel to São Paulo, seems to be fairly attracted to the chance of performing and exhibiting his adulthood as well as possible. He is getting ready for the future and for the great revolutions of development.

Omar, on the other hand, seems to be much more attached to the present and averse to taking any responsibilities for his actions as his brother does. While Yaqub’s happiness depends on the performance of his mission, on Independence day “Omar was looking at the spectacle from his bicycle, a slightly dopey look on his face, and a strange smile, whether of resentment or mockery there was no way of knowing. He

took no notice of the parade, or of Independence” (33). Observing that he took “no notice of the parade, or of Independence” the narrator starts to describe Omar’s indifference as not only a sign of his resignation, but also, and perhaps more important, as one of conscious skepticism; his resentment, the feeling that he is not being acknowledged within developmentalism, is mixed with his mockery towards this very same process. At the same time, since Omar was a child he does not seem to be as interested to becoming a main character of developmentalism as Yaqub seems to be; while, as a kid, the former worries about his present condition, enjoying pleasure provided by the act of riding his new bicycle and staring at the future with the same slightly dopey eyes, the latter already looks as if his only worries are related to his future, wherein simple and childish things (such as bicycles) do not apply.

Incorporating the regime, Yaqub’s image becomes one of primary importance for him: “He [Yaqub] was already smart in mufti, so you can just imagine how he looked in his white uniform with gold buttons, his epaulettes decorated with stars, his leather belt with a silver buckle, his spats and white gloves, and the shining sword he gripped in front of the mirror in the drawing room” (31). A metaphorical connection, conscious or not, between the portrait of Yaqub and the portrait of Brazil is gradually articulated by Nael’s observations. Yaqub sustains his pastoral image, that of “the good shepherd” (Marx, 3), as an ideological icon, admiring his reflection as representative of a great and shining future, which he is willing to fight for—even if that means functioning as a hammer in the hands of the regime. Just like the future of the country, Yaqub’s own image, covered by beautiful and glowing details, is nothing but a façade. The romantic pastoral surface that grants him the privilege to imagine a new beginning for the country might seem pure and innocent, but the shining sword that accompanies the package makes us remember that all that symbolic exuberance only thrives because it is implemented through violent means: in the end both the sword and the progress are only capable of shining when blood is spilt in the process. Moreover, in the final part of this quotation we can see a clear reference by Nael interconnecting Brazil and Yaqub:

The parade in his gala uniform had been Yaqub’s farewell: a little show put on for the family and the city. In the Salesian College they had a ceremony in his honour. He got two medals and ten minutes of speeches: he was also praised by the Latinists and

mathematicians. The faculty knew that their ex-pupil had a glorious future ahead of him; at that time, both Yaqub and Brazil itself seemed to have a promising future. (32)

Besides foreshadowing Yaqub's future hideous actions, since, ironically, the glorious future ahead of him is one that will be achieved through the implacable ruining of his parents' and siblings' lives, this quotation shows us how, although being twins, the brothers represent pretty distinct realms of Brazilian historical layers, the two edges of the sword Yaqub carried as a child. And if both Yaqub and Brazil itself seemed to have a promising future we can think about this idea of future as, at least, problematic. At this moment both Yaqub and Brazil are in the process of development, but what is the role of Latin American regions like the Amazon while such process is carried out, and how assertive and compulsory is such development? According to Eduardo Galeano, "Latin American underdevelopment is not a stage in the road to development, but the counterpart of development elsewhere; the region 'progresses' without freeing itself from a structure of 'backwardness'" (245).

Even though Galeano sees our victories as symbolic, at the same time "the symbols of prosperity are symbols of dependence. Modern technology is received as railroads were received in the past century, at the service of foreign interests which model and remodel the colonial status of these countries" (245). As Eliana Ávila puts it "the supposedly isolated Amazon might be backward in the terms of normativity but it is, at the same time, more independent than the idealized integrated Amazon"¹⁰. Yaqub, in this sense, is looking for a future dictated by others, where people, no matter how many possessions or accumulated wealth they might have, will still have no freedom. Just like a wax statue when set under the sun, the illusion of freedom offered by capitalism, by neoliberalism, by this future so eagerly expected, melts as soon as it is put in the spotlight. The illusion of progress raises, thus, an ultimate conundrum regarding the symbols of prosperity and the symbols of dependence represented by the medals given to Yaqub. Are these symbols the result of his achievements? Or are his achievements the result of these symbols?

2.1. "No Fixed Points": Omar's Antipastoral Resistance

¹⁰ Personal Communication

As the narrator observes, Omar's girlfriends are never well seen by his family, especially by his mother Zana, inasmuch as they are generally "'nameless' women, women of whom nobody in the neighbourhood could say: she's the daughter, granddaughter, or niece of so-and-so. They were unknown women, who never went to the fashionable beauty salons, much less to the Green Salon in the Ideal Club; he courted girls who had never left Manaus, never gone to Rio de Janeiro" (93). The fact that he does not get married, in this sense, has nothing to do with a supposed inability to love or to be loved, it is only related to the lack of marriage as an institution in his life; it is who he relates with and how he does it that exasperate those surrounding him. In this sense, Yaqub's obsessive worry with the performative appropriateness of his image does not seem to be shared by his brother.

Omar enjoys going against the supposedly "natural order" of events, against the "pastoral pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth and power" (Marx, 226); he does not worry about not fitting in how things are supposed to be by the pastoral chronology. Omar does not care about the status of his girlfriends just like he does not care about the status of a developed Amazon. Deviating from the pastoral "modernising extractive vision"¹¹ (Marx, 150) as it has been applied in the region, Omar's conduct, his (mis)behaviour, allows conflicting images of Amazonian progress to be gradually forged. Later on, when Omar leaves home to live with one of his girlfriends—a project that does not last long partly due to his mother's interference—the readers can see one more time both his father and the narrator's uneasiness when they face Omar's lack of attachment to contemporary worries and values.

¹¹ In the book *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964) Leo Marx exposes and criticises Eurocentric pastoral descriptions of "America as a primal world of nature, an unclaimed and timeless space occupied by plants and creatures, some of them human, but not organised by societies and economies; a world whose only history was the one about to begin" (126). In this sense he explains that, traditionally, the "New World" was one whose "only history was the one about to begin" because, curiously, within the pastoral narrative, "the contemplative, aestheticising rhetoric of discovery is [...] replaced by a goal-oriented rhetoric of conquest and achievement" (148). Soon "the edenic and the pastoral" accompanying the American (or, in this case, Amazonian) atmosphere are updated by a developmentalist "modernising extractive vision" (150) that recreate and reinforce a developmentalist chronology in the "new" soil. The task of those representing the "Old World" would be thus "to reinvent America as backward and neglected, to encode its non-capitalist landscapes and societies as manifestly in need of the rationalised exploitation" (152), and to impose themselves as "the futures of those they sought to exploit, as a kind of moral and historical inevitability" (153). This matter of the "historical inevitability" of exploited peoples and regions' futurity, and how it responds to antipastoralism, shall be further addressed in the following chapter.

The problem is that Omar does not want to be accepted on the grounds of normativity; he, likewise, does not want any professional or educational prospects. Different from his brother, he does not want to be tamed and he is not as optimistic about allowing his life and values to be reshaped by the developmentalist epistemology. Later, when Yaqub offers money for his family to become more integrated in a changing society (for their life to be “improved”), Nael observes that “Omar was contemptuous of the renovation of the house and the shop. He didn’t allow them to paint his room, and deprived himself of any signs of material comfort coming from his brother” (125-126). Comfort, in the end, is a very paradoxical term, for the comfort given by developmentalism always depends on the deprivation of some other source of comfort—generally simpler and more effective.

The only comfort both Yaqub and Nael have learned to envisage is that which is directly related to financial profit. In this sense, watching the behaviour of Halim—the brothers’ father, who never saves a penny, who is “not stinting on food, on presents for Zana [his wife, and the brothers’ mother], on things children asked for” the narrator asks himself: “How was he going to get rich? He invited friends over for games of tabule, and it was a real feast, nights that went on into the early morning, with endless food” (49). Yaqub’s family as an institution attempting to survive, and whose ultimate endeavour for this purpose is to categorise their world within the temporal and spatial frame imposed by hegemony, becomes immobile due to such learned cynicism; members of institutions with supposedly pre-given framings have accepted to regard their interactions in the limited way they are supposed to; in the case of those who understand the hegemonic order as a pattern to be followed, anything or any person who go against such an order must be reinserted in the system, by will or by force; and this process takes place both consciously and unconsciously. Here the reader can easily notice that the narrator—for endorsing Yaqub when criticising Halim due to his inability to make as much money as any good entrepreneur would in his position—is not devoid of bias; on the contrary, he often endorses normativity through his rhetorical and sarcastic questions:

[L]iving in an old motorboat, rented, really cheap. They [Omar and his girlfriend] slept in the open air on deserted beaches, wherever they moored their boat. Could they go through life like this? [...] They fished in the

deserted branches of the Anavilhanas, laying their net near the boat, gathering the fish before dawn. They lived an amphibious existence, clandestine, both of them in a dignified poverty, with no set time for anything. Unfettered and free, their life had no fixed points (167).

Living a life with no fixed points, Omar, in a very postmodern fashion, accepts the fluidity that he shares with the Amazon. But is such a condition helpful, detrimental, or innocuous in terms of his prospects as a marginalized Amazonian? It is difficult to think about a right answer for this question unbigotedly. Perhaps Halberstam said it best when he defined “postmodernism as simultaneously a crisis and an opportunity—a crisis in the stability of form and meaning, and an opportunity to rethink the practice of cultural production” (6). That is, the postmodern condition of the Amazon, this meaningful but spatially and temporally problematic piece of Latin America, allows marginalised subjects to misbehave in what concerns normativity, to reposition the tracks of pastoralism; and the fact that he dares to submit himself to an antipastoral dissonance with traditional life habits, if compared to hegemonic ones, strongly problematises the categorical notion that development has necessarily to be directed through a narrow and unilateral path.

As Colás observes, “the Third World returns from its annihilation, paradoxically, to serve as the cultural source for historical rethinking” (7); nevertheless, and as well noticed by Nael, at the same time “the future, or the notion that it held out great promise, melted in the sultry Amazon air” (123). The narrator finds it controversial that “there were blackouts in the north of Brazil, while the country’s new capital was being inaugurated”, and, in his view, “the euphoria from this far-off country was nothing more than a tepid breeze when it reached Manaus” (122). Thus the distance of the Amazon when set before the developed Brazil is what ironically constitutes its potential for counter-hegemonic resistance; it is only in places such as the Amazon, which have still not been completely reformulated by neoliberal values, that people like the brothers’ father, who never wanted more money than it “was necessary to eat” (122) are still able to speak; and, perhaps—if only we allowed—to have their voices being heard.

2.2. “Far from Voices, Threats, and Orders”: The Pastoral Lie

Readers would later get to know Reinosos' family, whose members Nael calls a "lazy bunch". This family in particular provides a clear picture of how ambiguous the pastoral hope is; that is, controversially, for the narrative of betterment to be successful, the presence of those whose lives cannot be made better (in this case Reinosos' maids) is of paramount importance—they are the ones who are to provide the foundation for such narrative to prosper. In this sense, what makes the situation of Nael, Nael's mother, and the maids in the novel—the former being a *caboclo* and the latter ones natives—even more problematic is their supposedly inescapable subalternity (situation similar to Douglass' one), as observed by the narrator:

I went out to do shopping at any time, and tried to help my mother, who never stopped for a minute. It was one thing on top of another. Zana invented thousands of tasks every day [...]. Also, there were the neighbours. They were a lazy bunch, and kept asking Zana to do little favours, and off I would go to buy flowers at a house out in the Vila Municipal, or a piece of organdy from the Casa Colombo, or take a message to the other side of the city [...]. To go into the Reinosos' kitchen I had to take off my sandals; that was the rule. In the house there were maids that Estelita always complained about to Zana. They were so clumsy, so careless, no use at all! There was no point in trying to educate these savages; they were all lost cases, an utter waste of time! (74-75)

Albeit savage, clumsy, careless, and useless, these maids (slaves?) are an essential detail for the functioning of Reinosos' family as well as for the functioning of the whole consumerist society. The antipastoral perspectives emerging from Nael's observation, growingly emphasising the here and now of these marginalised subjects (and not its idealised possibility of future), problematise, then, the temporal linearity of what is and what has been. The colonial nature of Amazonian natives' and *caboclos*' contemporary experience, here represented by the maids and by Nael and his mother Domingas, does, in a way, render a view on postcolonialism as manifesting not what comes after the end

of colonialism; it is, on the contrary, what stands for the pastoral institutionalisation of such colonialism in a hegemonic, however modern, episteme. The system is still being fed; it is being kept alive.

The context moment might now be different, but what Nael observes is that the exploitation and animalisation of the margin have not been left behind, it has only been re-systematised afresh in the terms of Latin American postmodernity. Domingas is like the other native maids who work and live in the neighbourhood; still deemed savages in the midst of a civilised forest in the process of being gardened by those whose leadership had been granted by the pastoral dream. These people are narrated as still slaves, though now in a more updated style. In the end one can only talk about spreading his/her democracy if such democracy existed in the first place, which is not the case whatsoever when it goes to Reinosos' family, who embody the monarchic structure (as the metaphorical presence of the Portuguese word for "king", in their name, suggest) through the disguise of our republic.

When it comes to education this lack of democracy becomes even clearer, for, if there is no point in trying to educate savages, if they are all lost cases, any intellectual instruction would serve no purpose. The matriarch in the house, Zana, even though valuing education as an authentic possibility for granting Amazonians with this universal citizenship, seems to apply such discourse only when it comes to her sons—that is, those who are male and of purer breed. Nael's condition, in this sense, as both a savage and a bastard, places him in a distinct stage if compared to the brothers, and by obstructing his possibilities of leaving such condition, Zana seems to be willing to make that crystal clear; if the brothers deserve the universal citizenship which is being brought through Westernisation, Nael's fate is to be forgotten by it; that is what is expected of him:

I missed classes two or three times a week. With my uniform on and ready to go, Zana's orders put paid to my morning in school: 'You've got to pick up the dresses from the seamstress and the go by Au Bon Marché to pay the bills'. I could easily do those things in the afternoon, but she brooked no refusal. My homework was late; the teachers reprimanded me and called me thickhead, lazybones and worse. I did everything in a hurry; even now I can see myself rushing

from morning till night, desperate to get some peace, to sit in my room far from voices, threats and orders. (80-81)

The fact that Nael could easily do those things in the afternoon is an evidence that Zana's interest is not only in getting her dresses back or having her bills paid when she asks him to do these favours; she seems actually to be trying to situate him in his preordained space as a *caboclo* who has to be often reminded that he does belong to the system; he is part of the democracy being outlined by progress as far as he understands his role—which is pretty limited—in the gardening of the Amazon; if Amazonian pastoralism is to be led by “the classic figure of the good shepherd” (Marx, 3), Nael does not take an active stand in such process; he is closer to the sheep than to the shepherds. For Zana it does not matter if Nael missed classes two or three times a week since a native like his mother or a *caboclo* like himself going to school ultimately stands for a useless effort—just like it would seem worthless for the hegemonic spheres being delineated in the novel to respect and/or listen to Amerindians and *caboclos* when the subject to be addressed is their part in the contemporary developmentalist picture. What would they know about development, anyway? Why should one listen to those who might disagree?

For Zana, then, the trivial tasks she assigned Nael are undoubtedly more important than his going to school. She impersonates this new face of traditional colonialism, one that, by promoting the sole maintenance of colonialism, problematises the notion that the “post”-colonial Amazon has surpassed the colonial Amazon, for the relations of power are not abandoned but reinforced through development, which emerges here as another tool for hindering “the insurrection of subjugated knowledges” (Foucault, 31). This moment for marginalised subjects redimensioning in the all-embracing framework of contemporary society is only one more step in a primeval flight of stairs. Furthermore, if giving the margin the necessary tools to have fair access to everything that has been granted to hegemonic representatives were really one of the goals of developmentalism, then its homework would be much later than Nael's.

2.3. “Manaus is Ripe for Growth”: Freezing Liquid Identities

When the brothers are kids, Yaqub is sent to live with some relatives in Lebanon for some time and Omar stays with his parents—a decision taken by their mother due to the brothers' conflictive

relationship that is nonetheless not mitigated but enhanced after such trip. Their response towards the possibility of leaving the Amazon marks the moment of their first separation: “Omar didn’t move an inch; he stayed sitting at the table, motionless in front of his untouched plate, looking sideways, furtively at his brother’s face [...]. He was going to stay there, in the house, the streets, the city, but the other had had the courage to leave” (35). Nael believes Yaqub was brave because he is chosen to leave, but is leaving or staying a token of courage? If the fact that Yaqub’s departure marks the widening of his ideological configuration, so does the fact that Omar stays at home, notwithstanding the narrator’s belief that “at bottom, Omar was the willing accomplice of his own weakness” (176).

The fact is that Zana’s desire to take the brothers apart has physically marked their ideological separation (a dualism that, in the end, proves to be less dual than one could imagine), a chance for their identity to develop according to very distinct systems of meaning; the space and time surrounding them was broadened, and everything that characterised Yaqub, his symbols, clothes, and values “seemed like the reverse of Omar” (133). The logic of the opposites is a virus; if Omar’s decision to remain attached to the present is taken by Nael as a token of “his own weakness”, his attempt at breaking through the future is likewise understood as his trying to be “the reverse” of what he was. It seems that it is not the twin brothers’ supposedly intrinsic binary division that defined their difference (in the end we are all different), but it is their difference that supposedly forced them into such questionable binarism (as the narrator would later realise).

In this sense Yaqub’s first trip to the East and his future trip to São Paulo can both be compared to the conquest of the New World, working as a sort of upside-down colonialism. When systems of meaning that belong to the Old World come to the New World, such systems somehow transform the new locale to fit certain perceptions and interests, adapting both that spatial and temporal configuration to hegemonic needs; Yaqub does the opposite, and with a difference: if the colonisers came to the New world willing to change the land and reinforce their own Eurocentric perspectives, when Yaqub travels he is the one willing to be changed by the unknown, to “wear the camouflage of everything that is modern [...and...] more refined” (53). If Yaqub gets to other places protected by the camouflage and the armor of superiority, Omar is doomed to travel naked. But, likewise, when Yaqub embarks on the boat of progress there is no one putting sand in the boat; he should decide whether to go or to stay. Who is the most vulnerable,

Omar, for his resistance, or Yaqub, for his flexibility? Even the latter's purported flexibility emerges as essentially problematic, for he does not really enjoy modernity and refinement, but only their camouflage; he assimilates and assumes the same characteristic of modernity as it takes hold of him (and of) everywhere, anywhere.

When Yaqub returns to Manaus for a visit and is greeted by his father, who is terrified due to the coup d'état, he is curiously not at all worried with the entrance of the military into the Amazon: "Halim was complaining that the city was flooded [...], surrounded by soldiers. 'They're everywhere,' he said, embracing his son. 'Even in the trees in the bits of wasteland you can see bunches of soldiers' [...]. 'Those plots are asking to be occupied,' Yaqub smiled. 'Manaus is ripe for growth'" (194). The reader can imagine Yaqub's smile, the satisfaction of the foxy and strategic brother, who "slid by silently under the foliage" (53) but whose naivety hampers the capacity of autonomously looking beyond the artificiality of Western discourse, of raising some awareness for understanding growth less predictably. Hidden behind his smile and sympathetic hug is his ironical and sarcastic preoccupation not with his father's well-being, but with Halim's peasant and backward character; Yaqub's hug, in this sense, is an attempt to didactically prepare his rustic father for Amazonian development, forasmuch as, deep inside, he knows some of the price the margin has to pay for evolving is abandoning those who can only belong to its past.

The scraps of identity resulting from the coup would, indeed, allow mobility to take place more evidently, but such mobility is encompassed by numberless variations, limited by a myriad of obstacles imposed by the reaffirmation of hierarchical systems of domination; this is why Halim' and Yaqub's generations experience the process of entering the world map in distinct ways. If Halim "suffered, like many other immigrants who had come to the Amazon with nothing more than the clothes on their backs", if, "drunk with idealism, he believed in ecstatic, passionate love, with every metaphor under the sun – or the moon" (44), Yaqub was the mathematician, the ambitious and proud young man who spent "days and nights in his room, never going for a plunge in the creeks" (22); while the former came with nothing more than the clothes on their backs, Yaqub, as a child, was already given "medals and ten minutes of speeches" (33). Even though Yaqub seems to disregard Halim's ability to undergo the developmentalist "transition", from savage to civilised, he sees somehow the possibility of remission for his father even if he does not when it goes to Omar. It is not that his father is a good prototype of those who can be deemed

responsible for endorsing development, but perhaps he could adapt well enough not to be engulfed by development, he would just need to remodel his backward epistemes, those of a “a late-flowering Romantic, a little out of place and time, indifferent to the power of money” (44).

Omar, on the other hand, is one of those who have no chance of being reinserted in the new Amazon; the fact that he is knowledgeable and proud about who he is and wants to be, the fact that he had no need of money “to be what he was” (121) since he still lived on the money of his parents (taking advantage of his hegemonic condition as Nael or Domingas would never have the chance of doing), ends up obstructing his capability of allowing development to rebuild his character in this new industrial era. However, if we are to understand and try to reposition the margin in the postmodern globalising world, it is not Yaqub who has the answer either, he is just too tamed to ask any questions. Abandoning his past, his history, and his culture—in his quest for his universal citizenship—the brother’s ability to contribute with a distinct view, a conflicting perspective, becomes growingly remote. Nael is by and large impressed by “Yaqub’s obstinate dedication to his work [...]. He spent a good part of the night working, with the table in the living room covered with graph paper, full of numbers and drawings” (195). Having no time to think critically and/or panoptically about the development of the Amazon, due to his obstinate dedication to his work, in a way he could only understand the notions of revolution, development, growth, profit, progress, etc. in their specific terms; culturally and socio-politically the bias has overwhelmed him. Yaqub has fallen into the trap set by Neo-Imperialism: ultimate alienation.

Worried about his “numbers and drawings” (195), but disregarding more subjective facts of the present, Yaqub, the “mathematician” (22), is infatuated with the idea of progress as based on what Colás calls an “economic means of production devoid of any valorization of political and cultural practices [...] as fundamental to social transformation” (14). One’s positive reaction to the military intervention in a marginalised region, one’s notion that it was asking to be occupied, allows one to embody the figure of the good shepherd, to understand the pastoral gardening of the land as the only chronological direction it would ever be able to take. For Yaqub, social transformation is the natural result of economic transformation; he does not look around, he does not see what Nael sees—and slowly starts to ponder upon—when the narrator walks through the outskirts of Manaus and experiences the maintenance of monarchy in supposedly democratic realms. As an Amazonian flâneur, “wandering aimlessly around the city,

crossing the metal bridges, roaming in the areas beside the creeks”, the narrator describes Manaus periphery as consisting of a “secret world”, of “the city we don’t see, or don’t want to see” (73). The boundaries separating the centre of the Amazonian capital and its outskirts can be thought of as an analogy for the centre of progress–developed countries–and its margins–developing ones. The existence of two cities, the city we don’t see and the one that was ripe for growth, suggests that developed centres need the underdeveloped margins (such as the centre of Manaus needs its outskirts to sustain itself); to put it bluntly: one cannot exist without the maintenance of the other.

In this sense, if Yaquib can decide whether or not to look at what surrounds the city centre, at the dirt that capitalism needs to hide, Nael has no choice whatsoever, he has to go to the city we don’t see when he is asked to, and, as a result, he ends up developing a more extensive perception about the developmentalist landscape: “He’d [Halim] taken me to a small bar at the very end of the Floating City. There we could see the shanties of the Educandos, and the huge creek separating this amphibious neighbourhood from the centre of Manaus; it was the busy time of day” (114). The amphibious existence of these people that Nael observes can be interpreted as a metaphor for the problematic postmodern and postcolonial existence of the marginalised Amazonians, for amphibians are defined by their fluid and transitory nature per se, never belonging anywhere, appearing and disappearing without drawing anyone’s attention:

The labyrinth of houses built on wooden posts was humming: a swarm of canoes wound their way between the floating houses as the inhabitants returned from work, walking in single file along the narrow planks that allow people to circulate in this labyrinth. The more daring carried a large flagon, a child, or sacks of manioc-flour; they had to be acrobats not to fall into the Negro. From time to time, one would disappear into the darkness of the river and turn into a news item. (115)

Watched and reflected upon by both Nael and Halim, these people living in houses built on wooden posts on the river seem to be an antipastoral allegory of the side effects of developmentalism; they have

lost their ground and are now on the liquid surface of a labyrinth, a situation that emphasises their in-betweenness as belonging to a non-spatial and non-temporal condition, in hegemonic terms. The single file along the narrow planks that allow people to circulate in this labyrinth can be read as a metaphor for the imposition of one single but controversial linearity; their path is predetermined, their destiny inevitable and irrelevant for, when they die and if they die, the only consequence is that they shall be turned into a news item. There is some lack of chronological sense in the water and in the nature of amphibians themselves; there is, likewise, a lack of chronological sense in the lives of the marginalised Amazonians observed by the narrator, who are allowed to circulate only within their labyrinth, which is also a token of this puzzling conundrum (it is important to notice how recurrently the image of the amphibians is put forward by Hatoum in other circumstances for similar analogies).

Imagetically, the water is a great puzzle for most observers: its passage seems to be always the same but is never repeated; in this sense, these new floors for the houses of Amazonians are almost never-ending whilst they are also ever-changing; it is like watching the sea and having the delusive impression that waves are nothing but reverberations, cycles of brand-new replications, like all time and all space. The chronological instability of these peoples' floor is just like the chronological instability of their past, present, and future, which seem to be all interwoven in a hybrid space and time and not in impermeable closed boxes as we are generally made believe; water goes in and out all the time. The liquid floor, this physical embodiment of ceaseless and timeless spatial instability, is a continuation of the fluid selves. Identity, in this sense, does not go through transition; identity is transition itself.

2.4. Between the Pastoral and Antipastoral: Nael's Binary Divide

Nael would only interrupt his reflections when he realises that Halim has joined him: "his [Halim] gaze wandered between the Floating City and the jungle. Now we could hear the racket of people carrying their nets, the shouts of the boatmen grunting pigs, voices nearby, children crying, all the noises of nightfall" (116). But why is this marginalised population of Manaus put in the spotlight during nightfall and not in the morning or afternoon? Maybe because it is only when the lights of progress decide to rest that these people are noticed; they can only be heard, seen, or even taken into account when the day is over (though never by their bosses; only by themselves), for, to the white-collar workers, these people's voice is supposedly so shady, neutral, and

silent as the night inherently also is. Within the normative chronology, if hegemony lives forever in the light, the margin is eternally doomed to circulate in the labyrinth of shadows. Slowly Nael gets to understand the atmosphere that surrounds him; gradually he becomes capable of hearing those noises he did not care about in the beginning of the novel, when, hearing nothing but “live replications” (Attali, 85), hegemonic discourse is powerful enough to direct the narrator’s point of view to a single and predictable perspective towards Amazonian noise.

In this sense such erratic neutrality becomes clear when the light is out, when Nael is finally capable of listening to all the noises of nightfall; the day is guarded for production, for capitalism, for all those who lead the machine of developmentalism; the night is there for the common subject to stop and think, for him/her to reflect upon what can be gained tomorrow and upon what has been lost today. The noise of existence is distinct from the noise of progress; it is perhaps the opposite. Nael describes Yaqub as “a real mystery: a silent person who never gave voice to his thoughts” (53). The reason for the purportedly civilised brother not to give voice to his thoughts is perhaps because he is not really supposed to think for too long. If life asks us to remember, capitalism asks us to forget; after all thinking of the past does no good if it is the future that requires our outright devotion. In the end, what seems to bother the romanticised pastoral will as imposed by those incorporating the classic figure of the good shepherd in this hidden world—the noises of an irrelevant margin—is actually a cry of pain of the real living ones, those who have been there before the arrival of modernity and that today can only be heard when it decides to take a break; those whose resistance endeavours to remind hegemony that the supposedly virgin continent available for a “new beginning” (Marx, 3) is neither virgin nor in need of a gardener.

The institution of development has aggravated the situation of this margin that Halim and Nael are now observing; and, perhaps, if Yaqub did realise, as Nael does, that this very questionable development has brought more suffering than betterment to his hometown perhaps he would understand that developmentalism is not worried about improving the Amazon or the lives of Amazonians since, as Galeano has put it, “industry lands as an airplane does, without affecting the airport” (211). Nael’s admiration for the brother whose image used to hypnotise the narrator’s eyes is, initially, unquestionable. When the narrator gazes at Yaqub at the beginning of the novel he tells readers that, since he “was already smart in mufti”, they could “just imagine how [Yaqub] looked in his white uniform with gold buttons” (30). Nevertheless, there are

moments when he ends up finding Yaqub's connection to the developed space as peculiar as Omar's connection to the Amazonian space, but in the opposing sense. Nael emphasises the former brother's atypical social habits among those who have assimilated the master narrative of development in the region, and pinpoints signs of his individualist behaviour since his childhood, when studying and working had already achieved the addiction whereto the commodification of our minds is aimed at getting.

He [Yaqub] was a mathematician, and a proud young man, guarded and trusting in no one; the chess-player who, on the sixth move, wrapped the game up and whistled like a bird, in an aimless, guttural fashion, with the concerned king already in sights. He would beat his opponent, emitting this rather irritating whistle, the sure harbinger of checkmate. Days and nights he spent in his room, never going for a plunge in the creeks, not even on Sundays, when the people of Manaus come out in the sun and the city makes its peace with the river Negro. (22)

Concerned about his own triumph and about the defeat of those who surround him, the self-confident brother, trusting no one, withdrawn from community and pleasure, exposes tokens of a highly destructive potential—much like Amazonian progress. The chess-player, who has the king already in sights, is a reclusive but proud strategist since his work and studies are much more commendable than going for a plunge in the creeks. This specific quotation, to a certain extent, can be understood as not only a foreshadowing of his future actions against Omar but also as a foreshadowing of the future condition of the Amazon itself. At the same time, despite the fact that our narrator tends to admire Yaqub much more than Omar, whose “excessive hostility to everything and everyone in this world” (263) was seen by the narrator as a sign of immaturity, we also see here that there is something in Yaqub's irritating whistle that Nael cannot really grasp: some obscure kernel in this superficially educated body made the narrator suspicious; curiously, he realises that even before moving to São Paulo it is as if Yaqub had never belonged to Manaus, and this is the moment when the metaphors

he comes up with embody this shift in his perspective regarding the brothers' ambivalence:

He was a different Yaqub, wearing the camouflage of everything that was modern about the other side of Brazil. He was becoming more refined, getting ready to take the big jump: a worm that wants to be a snake, is one way of putting it. He made it. He slid by silently under the foliage. Outside, he really had changed. Inside, there was a real mystery: a silent person who never gave voice to his thoughts. [...] Omar, on the other hand, was all too present (53).

Worms look rather harmless and innocuous, whereas the “snake” is a predator, as treacherous as Yaqub. Hence Nael’s sarcastic comment regarding Yaqub’s camouflage of everything that was modern about the other side of Brazil; his big jump, nonetheless, would only much later be affiliated with the “sordid underside of his calculating ambition” (264). Until then the only clear-cut thing that Nael can see is that Yaqub is becoming more modern and that this should be good just because it is what everybody tells him. The whole image of modernity was once seen by Nael as it was by any other *caboclo* children in the region; his description of one of the vehicles which get to Manaus through the advent of development is actually a rather symptomatic substantiation of that: “children from the neighbourhood were touching the convertible, marveling at such a wonderful car; like a machine from another world: stunted, rickety, but still seductive” (157).

The fact that the wonderful car (a symbolic allegory of the approaching modernity) observed by Nael was stunted, rickety, but still seductive is a very rich parallel not only to the inner flaws of the developmentalist narrative but also to his description of Yaqub, for, as the narrator admits, “something in his behaviour escaped [him]”; growingly, such “uncertainty left [him] confused” (107); this seems to contradict his initially unequivocal description of Yaqub as that “ex-pupil [who] had a glorious future ahead of him” (33). Nothing is as obvious as it was once, it seems; the wonderful car starts to manifest its stunted and rickety aspects; just like the convertible, the future Yaqub is not as conspicuous as he was when he wore “his white uniform with gold buttons, his epaulettes decorated with stars, his leather belt with a

silver buckle, his spats and white gloves” (30). Nael is now able to look through the armour of civilisation, beyond its white uniform with gold buttons and into its putrefied core.

By this time the pastoral romanticism of the good shepherd who “believes in the chance of a new beginning in the New World” (Marx, 3) had started to melt. If “the little harbour” whereto Nael often went “smelt of oil and garbage” (173), so did the character of the educated brother who, “rejected and resentful, was also the more brutish and violent of the two” (260). The narrator, who has thus become increasingly suspicious towards Yaqub, ends up experiencing what is hidden in that rejected and resentful educated and civilised body and being forced to acknowledge the evil and greedy side of that seemingly harmless person, but actually the more brutish and violent of the two, and whose ambition would ultimately result in the crumbling of his family. Both Yaqub and progress appear as capable of easily deceiving those who, like Nael, have known them superficially; but the narrator’s gradual careful examination of such an opinion, that has so plainly divided the inferiority of ones from the superiority of others, ends up going through a severe change as he finds out that “in the end the madness of Omar’s passion, his excessive hostility to everything and everyone in this world were no less harmful than Yaqub’s plans: the danger and the sordid underside of his calculating ambition” (264).

Here Nael problematises the civilising mission of the gardener arriving in the Amazon by describing Omar’s madness and his excessive hostility to everything and everyone as less harmful than Yaqub’s plans. Yaqub’s plans are, though, nothing but a reproduction of that which he has learned from the consumerist society. Like developmentalism, he too “had calculated the right moment to act” (256); he had calculated how beneficial it would be to sell the house where the family lived, to renovate their store, and to get rid of his useless twin brother. Omar, the savage and uncivilized brother, becomes the central target of Yaqub’s schemes. It is when Nael finds out that “in São Paulo, [Yaqub] had engaged lawyers and was coordinating Omar’s persecution” (256) that his antipastoral perspectives become much more intense than the pastoral hope of the new beginning for both the brother and the Amazon inasmuch as he realises that Yaqub was actually living his life like he played chess, ruthlessly beating his opponents and trusting in no one. Paradoxically, the civilised brother demonstrates his savagery, and such savagery goes way beyond Omar’s lack of civilisation.

When Rânia tries to amend the situation and sends a letter as an attempt to convince Yaqub not to destroy his brother’s life just because

he was envious that “Zana never left his side” (59), Yaqub calculates “that silence would be more effective than a written reply” (263), judging that it would be more sensible not to take the trouble of replying; he ignores his sister, as he had already ignored his past and the suffering of the others, for, in his agenda, there is no time or space for him to waste with such unimportant matters. In the end, like development, Yaqub destroys more than he constructs, and forces his family to enter the same boat, where they must learn how to live in this new condition that faces them in the same glorious future in which Nael and Halim once believed, and that Yaqub has embodied heretofore; a “glorious future [whose ground is] covered with dead lizards and grasshoppers, fruit and leaves; from the ditch, by the side of the flooded henhouse, came the stink of rot” (231).

Such shift to the future, though, is much more painful for the rest of his family than they imagined it would be, due to the most petite reasons: “The house gradually emptied, and aged in a short time [...]. She [Rânia] told her mother the move was inevitable [...]. How could she [Zana] live without the cries of the fishmongers, coal-heavers, pedlars and fruit-sellers? The voices of people who already in the early morning had stories to tell” (245). The community, the voices of people which are to development nothing more than “mere noise” (Foucault, 53), are going to be missed by those who have learned to live connected to other subjects; after all, it is the history we tell and the one we hear that grants us the right to have a memory, to recollect our lived experiences, but the selfishness and self-interest entailed by the advent of modernity cannot afford wasting time with people who had stories to tell since these stories are also now plainly deemed mere noise.

The family’s house, as observed by Nael, can be read as a microcosm of the whole Amazon, and his description about its transition from one time and space to another is not optimistic whatsoever; the city which was full of stories to tell is made silent. Yaqub’s interferences (more carefully addressed in the next chapter) accompany the development of the Amazon; both promote a restyling of meanings that bring indeed other values, relations, and sounds; if Zana used to listen to the voices of friends and the cries of street vendors, now she would have to get used to the other sounds: the sounds of progress. The land, trees, and people are replaced by concrete, buildings, and machines. The house that aged in a short time is accompanying the region’s temporal and spatial problematic remodeling; in a short time, it was forced into the past by the romanticised pastoral delegates who portray the supposed virgin land as a new beginning for Western epistemes. There will no

longer be stories to tell; in this promise of progress and development there is no time for talking, chatting, for being. The sounds of the glorious future, that accompany Yaqub and the Amazon itself, supersede those of existence.

It is not this glorious future that Nael observes in the margins of Manaus, in the places that have had their past reshaped by the master narrative that assumes linear temporality. It is in the periphery of the city, where the social inequalities and/or environmental destruction resulting from the development and progress (that once gave shape to the prospects of both Yaqub and of the Amazon) assume their most patent character. Nael's empathy regarding both the civilised brother and civilisation itself deviate from the path they seemed to be doomed to follow; the dark and hidden outcomes of hegemonic interference in the Amazon force the narrator to look at the benefits of progress more critically than he would if not positioned in-between this two-sided landscape: "The beach in the little harbour smelt of oil and garbage, and the dawn breeze brought the smell of the forest, still dark on the other bank of the river" (173). Even though he is positioned between development and belatedness, ideologically Nael already regards what reminds him of the forest as belonging to the other bank of the river, placing himself, consequently, on the developed side, on the side of the future.

Here the narrator impersonates the pastoral logic: that which sees in the forest a possibility for a reverie concerning a past that can no longer be reached while the future would stand for interchangeable realms. Nevertheless, the interaction between the smell of the forest and the smell of oil and garbage in the very same place and time is what marks the fallacy of Amazonian pastoral chronology, of its inability to prevent the past and the future from intermingling. Likewise, if the future of the developed Manaus becomes as dark as the other bank of the river, so does the future of those who are marginalised by such process. Nael's observations suggest that the commercial advantages of Manaus growth get to a select few but end up being ultimately detrimental especially for the poor subjects, immigrants, and Amerindians whose lives are hidden outside the glow of the city centre.

The smell of oil and garbage, even though resulting directly from the overlooked leftovers of Amazonian gardening, shall get only to those of the margin. The coexistence of two distinct smells (that of the forest and that of oil and garbage) would be later replaced by the coexistence of two distinct worlds, because it is at this moment that Zana, looking for her son, visits some of the places where she does not

seem to fit: “Nobody understood why she was there, in a place so full of poor people: boatmen [...], half-naked porters, vendors of sugar-cane juice and fruit-sellers setting up their little canvas stalls. Elegant from her shoes to her hat, she was wearing a subdued grey dress, more suited to an evening reception than a morning encounter on a filthy quayside” (173). Nobody understood why Zana (his and Domingas master, thus a representative of hegemony) was there because people like her, for whom people like Nael and his mother “only existed as an echo of her sons’ world” (26) do not usually go to a place so “full of poor people”; not because they are not welcome, but because the structure of the pastoral hope inflicts their belongingness to predetermined sectors of the city.

The reason for creating and nourishing these categorical divisions problematised by Nael’s observation is simple: “the system prefers to hide the dirt under the rug. It is clearing the *favelas* from the bay area and the villas’ miseries from the national capital at gunpoint [...], conjuring away the spectacle of the poverty the system produces: soon only the mastications of prosperity, but not its excrement, will be seen” (Galeano, 249). If Zana emerges here with her elegant clothes as the ideal of progress, as the mastication of prosperity, the poor people (boatmen, porters, vendors of sugar-cane juice and fruit-sellers), these who are the excrements of prosperity in the filthy quaysides of Manaus, are unarguably fabricated during the very process that pretends to be taking them from one level to another (from a considered savage to an advertised civilised existence). In the end of the novel Nael takes one last stroll through the streets of Manaus and, once again, shares his insights wherein more excrements of prosperity are described:

I came back here on foot, in the rain, looking at the waste being dragged down the gutters, the lepers piled on top of one another, hunched up under the oitizersos. I looked, shocked and sad, at the city which was maiming itself as it grew, distancing itself from the port and the river, refusing to come to terms with its past [...]. I had left the little that remained of the trees and climbers to the fury of the sun and the rain. Looking after all this meant submitting myself to the past, a time that was dying inside me (264-265).

Time seems to be the key of this excerpt. Manaus is refusing to come to terms with its past because this past has been dismissed; the waste being dragged down the gutters and the lepers piled on top of one another are the fragments that remained from this great enterprise called development, scattered throughout its margins. They remained, and they will always be there; every centre requires a margin, every city that develops does it by necessarily “maiming itself” as it grows. To this logic, the temporal and spatial reconfiguring of the Amazon is inevitable, even though inherently it is not. Nevertheless, according to Eliana Ávila, environments and the people living therein “are not always ignored in such proportions, not when they participate as other than mere resources to be colonised or assimilated” or to be sold out to developmentalist discourses “by those like Yaqub—the many who detach themselves from past values, ‘maiming’ the place by cutting off its history and commodifying it instead of ‘coming to terms with’ its meanings”; Yaqub could be thus understood in this sense as a key figure in the commodification and fabrication of a past treated as if it were lingering on, “as if recalcitrantly or essentially unfit for progress”¹².

The portrait described by Nael is indeed a token of such ideological unfitness; it is a glimpse into the world of those who have been discarded by developmentalist plans due to their supposed essential “disability”. Nael cannot help looking shocked and sad at such picture, he had to submit himself to the past every time he faced such iniquitous situations. It is difficult for him to associate all that glamour and richness accompanying Yaqub and his beautiful costume to such a painful image; the ideological structure of the good shepherd leading the pastoral expansionism¹³ is one that places past and present as devoid of

¹² Personal Communication

¹³ In the book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt (1992) explains that, for Imperial conquests to be justified, one could never “simply depict the planet as it was” (30). In this sense colonial entrepreneurs needed to conceive of the “New World” not only as “new” but as “a chaos out of which an order had to be produced” (31); and of course such interest in “producing an order” was (and still is) directly connected to the “search for commercially exploitable resources, markets, and lands to colonise” (32). Such debatable agenda allowed Pratt to effortlessly expose the main contradictions permeating the discourse of hegemonic representatives concerning their entrance in these supposedly “virgin” lands; in her view there the bourgeoisie has sagely “sought to secure their innocence in the same moment as they asserted their hegemony” (7). Ergo, within the master narrative of development, “alongside the frontier figures of the seafarer, the conqueror, the captive, the diplomat, there began to appear everywhere the benign, decidedly literate figure of the ‘herboriser,’ armed with nothing more than a collector’s bag, a notebook, and some specimen bottles, desiring nothing more than a few peaceful hours alone with the bugs and flowers” (27). This apparently innocuous process has inevitably resulted in the contradictory creation of a conquest plus anti-conquest ambivalence surrounding the obliteration and institutionalisation of the new lands and

any connection. The romantic and exotic images of nature are tamed, domesticated, situated in a distant realm where the urban sphere has supposedly sheltered them.

However, the advent of lepers piled on top of one another, hunched up under the oitizeros, in the landscape described by Nael, strongly problematises such division by mixing the fallacious pastoral image of a licania tree with those of marginalised subjects. As a child, though, Nael had already been forced to look under the hegemonic rug at the counter-hegemonic realities steaming therefrom; his daily life between the mastication and the excrements of prosperity makes him growingly critical towards the unfair and questionable circumstances encompassing the development of Manaus, allowing him to gradually come up with an antipastoral perspective regarding them:

On Sundays, when Zana sent me to buy beef offal at the Catraia Harbour, I took time off, wandering aimlessly around the city, crossing the metal bridges, roaming in the areas beside the creeks, in the neighbourhoods that were expanding in those days, surrounding the centre of Manaus. I saw another world in these areas, the city we don't see, or don't want to: a hidden and secret world, full of people who had to improvise everything to survive, some just vegetating, like the packs of squalid dogs prowling under the mud. I saw women whose faces and gestures reminded me of my mother's, children who one day would be taken to the orphanage Domingas hated (73).

peoples; hence the emergence of this “protagonist of anti-conquest [who] is [...] the ‘seeing-man’ [...], whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (7). Thus, bearing in mind that the conquest of the New World “had become the major object of expansionist energies and imagining” (24) since its “discovery”, the advent of “a story of urbanising, industrialising Europeans fanning out in search of non-explorative relations to nature, even as they were destroying such relations in their own centres of power” (28) is what I regard herein as “pastoral expansionism”: event which was and still is carried out mainly by the figure of the superior gardeners who supposedly need to transform the forests into gardens for their own appreciation and for some “order [...] to be produced” (31) in the terms of hegemonic versions of what is taken as “order” and what is taken as “chaos”.

At the same time that glamorous houses are appearing in Manaus, there are also those other things which are so unpleasant that they are kept in distant areas surrounding the centre of Manaus in order not to jeopardise the metropolitan outfit. Nael, while wandering aimlessly around the city notices that this secret world is filled with people who are vegetating like packs of squalid dogs; comparing them to squalid dogs the narrator reminds readers that these are animalised beings, still trying to move from their savage to a more civilized condition, but whose transitory condition is not seen by the narrator optimistically whatsoever. He does not know where they are heading to, but, no matter where, it does not seem to be very promising. The image of vegetating people who had to improvise everything to survive is very rich for the transition of a vegetating person is not something that one covets; the prospects of those who vegetate are the prospects of the institutionalized Amazon: their future is likely to be much less cosy than the painful and miserable present they are being forced to acknowledge at the moment.

These people's condition is paradoxical and thus potentially capable of challenging the pastoral logic: notwithstanding the fact that they are kept in a hidden and secret world due to how unpleasant and hazardous they might be for the reaffirmation of the prestige of hegemonic linearity, they are also a pivotal piece for such linearity effectively function. In the words of Galeano: "The strength of the imperialist system as a whole rests on the necessary inequality of its sectors, and this inequality assumes ever more dramatic dimensions" (3). Hence the fallacy of the pastoral hope; the neighbourhood Nael observes is expanding, notwithstanding the clear difficulties that he mentions, as an evidence of the dramatic dimensions the system assumes. Such dimensions are everlasting; the colonial and neocolonial system has to promote a repetition of events in a supposedly smooth spatial and temporal cycle. In this sense the children who one day would be taken to the orphanage Domingas hated can be read as a token of historical reverberation; Domingas fate, their fate, and probably most of their descendants' fate all confirm that Amazonian past, present, and future are intertwined moments and not categorically separated from one another.

What has been seen in this chapter is, thus, Nael's gradual and painful shift in what concerns his perspectives regarding the changes through which both Yaqub and the Amazon are going. His initially romanticised view on the advent of civilisation and development both in the Amazon and in Yaqub's life slowly make room for a less predictable

observation regarding the landscape of capitalism as it has been promoted inside the novel. The narrator, then, gets to think more critically, allowing counter-hegemonic and antipastoral perspectives to emerge; such perspectives put into question the linearity of progress, by problematising the chronological fate of the Amazon and of all its marginalised subjects who are dismissed from the developmentalist tale for supposedly not being capable to have any major role in the hierarchy of modernity. It is now exactly such notion of a chronological fate that needs to be readdressed.

CHAPTER III

“THE FUTURE DEMANDS MY OPINION”: THE FALLACY OF POSTMODERN MOBILITY

This chapter addresses the narrator’s point of view in relation to how it responds to hegemonic discourses of linear temporality and spatiality as discussed by Johannes Fabian (1983). In this sense, its purpose is to identify the contradictions inherent to the narratology of Amazonian space and time configuration in the terms of normativity put forth by *The Brothers’* narrator. Firstly his problematisation regarding the categorical allotment responsible for placing past, present, and future in distinct realms is analysed, for the Amazonian condition allows such times not only to dialogue but actually to impinge upon one another. Later his and his mother’s counter-hegemonic characterisation are brought forward as to analyse how they construct and are constructed by the narrative of development. Then I look at Nael’s point of view when describing Halim, the brothers’ father, who embodies physically and ideologically what proves to be a critique against normative temporal and spatial linearities.

It is exactly because he does not fit in the hegemonic linearity that Nael sees its flaws; it is because he feels like a misfit that his skepticism gradually emerges. Ultimately believing that the only way to keep on moving in a sensible chronology is the one that “worked” for developed countries proves to be an imposition by hegemonic epistemes, one that is mistakenly taken as the only choice by those who are prevented from promoting less predictable perspectives. Reaching the climax of the novel, the narrator realises that the idea of future is a lie, and that all those values he admired for so long in Yaqub’s personality were just part of a façade that masks the ideology of expansionism. He gives up his dreams of a better future and becomes growingly suspicious about the “civilised” brother:

He [Yaqub] asked if I needed anything, and when I was going to visit him in São Paulo. I put the visit off for more than twenty years. I had no urge to see the sea. I had already thrown away the sheets with Yaqub’s architectural plans that Omar had ripped up in his fury. I was never interested in

structural designs with their reinforced concrete, or in the math's books Yaqub had so proudly given me. I wanted to keep my distance from all those calculations, from the engineering and the progress Yaqub aspired to. In his last letters all he talked about was the future, and even demanded to know my opinion – the future, that never-ending fallacy (263).

This is when the narrator gets to know Yaqub somewhat better and gradually considers the possibility that perhaps he has been biased when he chose this brother as the father he would like to have and Omar as the one he would not bear if he were. Now he does not want to go to São Paulo and had no urge to see the sea. The architectural plans so important to Yaqub had no relevance for Nael, he was no longer interested in structural designs with their reinforced concrete, or in the math's books Yaqub had so proudly given him. The concrete used for the construction of Amazonian future is the same concrete that transformed Yaqub into the subject he ended up being, and the progress Yaqub aspired to is the same progress supposedly aspired by the Amazon. Nael, nonetheless, knew such future to be a never-ending fallacy. His admiration towards Yaqub had been predetermined by the permeating discourse of hegemonic linearity that emphasises the importance of working hard to become a successful professional rather than nourishing a healthy social life and an attachment to noncommercial places.

Since the brothers' childhood Nael was already capable of observing an ideological discrepancy between Omar and Yaqub, and did not hide his admiration for the hard-working brother: "In those days, what impressed me most was Yaqub's obstinate dedication to his work; and his courage. He spent a good part of the night working, with the table in the living room covered with graph paper, full of numbers and drawings. He got up at five, when only Domingas and I were up" (195). Nael's initial bias, holding Yaqub in great esteem and disdaining Omar's attitudes, is explainable forasmuch as that is how he learned things shall be, that is how he sees things happening everywhere, and that is what the development of the Amazon has been so promptly reinforcing. The fact that the narrator knew "the engineer was getting more important, making money" and that, on the other hand, "the other

twin had no need of money to be what he was” (121) strongly directed him to Yaqub’s side in a first moment.

When, later, both Nael and Halim judge Omar for leaving home to live in a boat where he would be sleeping “in the open air on deserted beaches [...] laying his net near the boat, gathering the fish before dawn”, and end up criticising what they call the “clandestine existence” (167) Omar’s nonstandard behaviour implies, their bias is clearly enhanced. In the outskirts of development, Nael becomes unworried about defying concepts that growingly do not seem to be able to convince him any longer; he is not afraid of considering deviating from the place wherein he has been put by the inequitable expansionist plan. Such plan, he learns, saves the best spots in the hegemonic linearity for some privileged subjects but eliminates the possibility for marginalised ones to enter. When he listens to the gossip of the neighbourhood the narrator learns that, although some people deserve attention and shelter given, others are completely forgotten: “the son of that big-wig in the law had raped an Indian girl—news that never got into the paper” (245). Gender proves here to be a structural element in articulating the narrator’s shift (or learning) towards non-normative temporality. Nael’s sense of commitment to those who are raped and to his mother (tackled in the following section) leads him to refuse the binary perspective of development.

3.1. Lengthening the stride of Amazonian time: On the Agency of those “Outside the Organisations of Time and Space”

The transitory but controversially never-ending process of becoming marks both the characters of the novel and the Amazonian temporal configuration itself; for the narrator, though, this transition is even more complex and severe due to his status as a *caboclo*, consequently neither a representative of Amazonian Amerindian past nor of its white future. That is, if Domingas can escape to a secret past hidden in her memories by “humming the songs she’d heard in her childhood” (237) when her present betrays her, Nael sees the possibility of materially fleeing from where/when he is as his only alternative to evade the excruciating condition wherein both mother and son find themselves; his hesitation, though, prevents him from leaving:

How many times I thought of running away!
Once I went onto an Italian ship and hid – I’d
made up my mind: I was going away, two
weeks later I’d get off in Genoa, when all I

knew was that it was a port in Italy. I had sudden urges to go, maybe to Santarém or Belém; that would be easier. I looked at all the boats and ships moored in Manaus Harbour and put the journey off. I pictured my mother; I didn't want to leave her there at the back of the house, couldn't face it... She never wanted to take the risk. "Are you mad? It gives me the shakes just to think about it, you have to be patient [...]" (82-83).

It is important to notice, in this excerpt, the complexity of Nael's values, which seem to be connected to the development of his point of view concerning the brothers. He wanted to go to Genoa, even though the only thing he knew about it was that it was a port in Italy; his idealisation of this developed—thus perfect—destiny is the same idealisation that, in the beginning of the novel, shapes his admiration towards Yaqub, the brother who wore a gala uniform and "had a glorious future ahead of him" (33). His sudden urges to go are the imposed sudden urges of the third world to be transformed into the first, to abandon its supposedly belated condition and become part of hegemony. The existence of ships moored in Manaus Harbour is a temptation for Nael; the narrator sees the reachable possibility of mobility nearby, but it is a possibility that, legally, is not accessible to him as demonstrated in the previous chapter. Actually, Yaqub was the one who taught Nael that "the upsets and the purgatory of daily existence only happened to other people. 'Other people' meant us" (112).

Manaus Harbour, a way out, is a microcosm for the macro urbanisation of Manaus, disclosing what the tricky attempt at inserting the past into the future has been doing with natives, *caboclos*, and all other marginalised Amazonians: these other people Yaqub talks about. The harbour loudly advertises mobility (and escapism), several paths and opportunities, even though Nael cannot see himself as a meaningful part of this grand new era represented by such advertisements, since he realises he is in the same condition of those other people restrained by the purgatory of daily existence. Ships, like the future, can be watched, witnessed, observed; but that does not mean at all that they can be actually officially attained, let alone by people like Nael, who would only escape if hidden in a ship. Nevertheless, it is not because he would have to hide in order to leave that his decision is unlike Yaqub's, but

due to the motivation for their configuration. This is so for Nael is worried about the mother who he “didn’t want to leave her there at the back of the house”, worry that Yaqub, the “proud young man, guarded and trusting in no one” (22), would never have for his own family.

Through legal or illegal means, any possibility of escape is an illusion; both Nael and Yaqub are idealising a better place for them to go based on preconceived epistemes reinforced by the hegemonic tradition; but, if the sense of community that the former feels towards his mother and his region help him see himself as attached to the Amazon, the ambition and selfishness of the second become his ticket to the future. When Nael says that his mother never wanted to take the risk of going away from Manaus it seems that, for him, escaping was a proof of bravery, a token of boldness. His description regarding the brothers’ decision either to leave or remain in the city seems to imply the same: “Omar was going to stay there [...] in the house, the streets, the city, but the other had had the courage to leave” (35). Yaqub was the courageous one, he was bold enough to leave, but how is leaving his city and family a synonym for his bravery? Deciding to stay would also require such bravery, perhaps even more, for the Amazonian space should not be escaped or avoided, let alone discarded as done by Yaqub. The ships are just part of the landscape of capitalism, a landscape of desires never to be fulfilled; to accept this supposed bucolic localisation advertised by the pastoral hope is to accept, indeed, that one’s only possibility of future is one whereto one has to go hidden to another spatial and temporal configuration since the hegemonic linearity limits Amazonian time and space to a nostalgic past to be either missed or domesticated.

According to Eliana Ávila it is important to notice, in this same excerpt, “the shift from Italy to Santarém and Belém, and then back to Manaus, where Nael sees the boats and ships moored. In the same sentence he curiously puts off the trip; perhaps this narration of his temptation to travel is interrupted by the narration of (his identification with) the moored state of the boats and ships”¹⁴. Nael realises there are many places for him to go and, predictably, he chooses a port in Italy, that is, in a 1st World destiny. Though he does that by deferral he does it acknowledging the force, within dominant values, of the social pull to correlate himself with the global centre–Italy–rather than with its periphery–Amazon; his choice to go to Italy would be, in this sense, associated to Yaqub’s choice to go to São Paulo. As argued by Harvey (1989) the harbour is, in the end, like the bus station, the railway or the

¹⁴ Personal Communication

airport: institutions working as tools, hubs of linear temporality, responsible for inserting and endlessly reinforcing the illusory egalitarianism of a commonality outside hegemonic time.

Putting off the trip because he didn't want to leave Domingas at the back of the house, Nael brings forward another reason rather than ignoble fear or pusillanimity for him not to ultimately look for new temporal and spatial possibilities. He does not put off the trip because it is easier and more comfortable for him to stay; actually, in this excerpt, Nael shows this could not be further from the truth. In the fragile condition of having no clear past or future, the only thing the narrator has is his mother; running away, then, would mean giving up on the only bond he has already been able to construct, which for him seems more detrimental than staying and facing his reality. Nael, nonetheless, cannot stop thinking about how unfair it is for him not to be able to struggle for that better future which sounds ubiquitous for a few but foggy for the vast majority of Amazonians in his and Domingas' situation.

Nael's decision to stay, then, does not entail a resolution of the conflict; as discussed by Williams (1973), conflict is present in both the country and the city, even though that is not what the hegemonic pastoral romanticism implies, for if "the country has gathered the idea of [...] peace, innocence [...], backwardness, ignorance and limitation", at the same time "the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre of learning, communication [...], noise, worldliness and ambition" (1). This ambivalence gave shape not only to how nature is understood as "a myth functioning as a memory" (43) but also to Nael's idea that the brave and obstinate brother is the one who leaves for São Paulo, whereas the one who stays is the coward and apathetic one.

The designation of only two possible paths for Nael—staying or leaving—is what allows the modern pastoral ideal of mobility to be a prerogative of those at the centre. This hierarchy is instituted and promoted through the dissemination of an illusion according to which this better future where mobility reigns cannot take place in the periphery of capitalism but only in its centre. If the centre of Manaus was full of prospects during its urbanization, there is no possibility of future in "the oldest parts of Manaus [...] away from the crowds and the buzz of the centre and hidden at the end of narrow streets [...] where... foreign sailors went with the whores" (229). Such future and such freedom are a chimera for these whores, and the appearance of marginalised subjects institutionalised by development allows the reader to look beyond the discourses that publicise their autonomy. As

demonstrated in the case of Omar, who “deprived himself of any signs of material comfort coming from his brother” (126), the postcolonial subject represented by the narrator puts forth what seems to be an antipastoral critique of the romanticised notion of progress against which he discloses, instead, the “stink of rot” (231) left by development and its legacies.

Notwithstanding this stink of rot surrounding him, though, the narrator thus vacillates over whether to stay or to escape; he would always put the journey off when he pictured his mother; in a way his present prevented him from privileging his future to the detriment of his past. Domingas never wanted to take the risk of physically fighting for her freedom; according to the narrator, “she stayed there in the house, dreaming of freedom that receded into the future” (59); even though she considered herself “desperate to be free” in her son’s opinion she was ultimately “overtaken by inertia” (60). Her past had been obliterated, it lived only in her memory when she “looked eagerly at the vast horizon up the river, recalling the place where she had been born, near a village [...] far away from there” (66). Her impression is surprisingly similar to her son’s view of the Harbour, except it is her past, not future, which has been obliterated.

Linear temporality is deeply shaken. Domingas looked as eagerly at the vast horizon as Nael would later look at all the boats and ships moored in Manaus Harbour. Her attempt at recalling a past that is fading away is like his attempt to reach a space that also seems far away from there. Though he overtly ostracises his mother for her dreams of freedom when he tells her brusquely that “our dreams are all here” (60) he has fallen in the same trap and, placing himself in a similar chronological void. Both characters are not satisfied with their chronological chains; for both the future has left too many gaps. The margin knows its prospects are far from being as enthralling as the prospects of those who have the necessary tools to head civilisation. Moreover, compared to the orphanage where Domingas had lived before Zana bought her, her first integration in the civilised world was much worse than this latter one at the house where she now lives; her memories regarding the nuns, on guard all the time, who educated and civilised Amerindian girls by forcing them to take care of “the stink of the bathrooms, the smell of disinfectant, and the nuns’ sweaty, greasy clothes” (68) were hideous enough to make Domingas regard the opportunity to work for and live with Halim and Zana as something close to paradise:

A young, pretty woman, her hair in clusters of curls, came to welcome them [Domingas and a nun]. ‘I’ve brought an Indian girl for you’, said the sister. ‘She knows how to do everything, she can read and write properly, but if she’s any nuisance, back she’ll go to the orphanage and never get out again’. [...] Zana took an envelope off the little altar and gave it to the sister. The two of them went to the door and Domingas was left alone, happy to be free of that grim woman. If she’d stayed in the orphanage, she’d have spent her life cleaning the toilets, washing petticoats and sewing. She detested the orphanage and never went to visit the Little Sisters of Jesus. They called her ungrateful and selfish, but she wanted to keep well away from the nuns; she wouldn’t even walk along the street where the orphanage was. The sight of the building depressed her. How many times had Sister Damasceno beaten her! You never knew when she’d get the ferule out. She was educating the Indian girls, she said (69).

Even though Domingas was happy to be free, her present condition reminds readers that leaving a physical space does not necessarily imply that she also left her marginalised condition inasmuch as “new conceptions of space” (Halberstam, 6) are not really available to her. Nael’s shifting perspective on temporality concerning the solutionist narrative of leaving when he finds himself immobile in the Harbour is, like Domingas’ lack of futurity in the supposed no longer colonial Amazon, an evidence of the flawed aspects regarding hegemonic discourses of linear temporality and spatiality. In Zana’s house Domingas is but a dehumanised servant and/or a mechanised tool with no feelings or ambitions, living under the threat that if she misbehaved, back she would go to the orphanage. Her marginalisation before the system does not depend on where/when she is, but on the position she is given within the hierarchical structure that otherises her. In this excerpt the obliteration of natives’ past through their institutionalisation in a normative linearity that fails to acknowledge their existence is very well allegorised here by Sister Damasceno, who

euphemistically claims that she is educating Domingas when she beats her for not behaving as a good slave.

Destroying their past, the intention of natives' instruction was to insert in their minds a brand-new memory, a new way of conceiving their future possibilities; in the orphanage Domingas learns how to do everything an institutionalised Amerindian would, and is convinced to stop behaving any differently. The logic of the nuns methodology is granted by their will to tame the natives, by their attempt at teaching them how to forget their past and present; it wants them to see themselves no longer as simply being forced into poverty and marginalisation, but as a low class of humans that is being constructively allowed to be accepted as part of development—less in rank if compared to other classes but, still, part of a strikingly beneficial enterprise. Galeano has alerted us to the fact that priests, nuns, and others who deem themselves responsible for introducing natives to the “magic” of civilisation lie about the past as they lie to us about the present: “they mask the face of reality. They force the oppressed victims to absorb an alien, dessicated, sterile memory fabricated by the oppressor, so that they will resign themselves to a life that isn't theirs as if it were the only one possible” (264).

The trauma of having been forced to absorb this alien, dessicated, and sterile memory results in the fact that, even many years later, Domingas wouldn't even walk along the street where the orphanage was; nevertheless, even though she had been stolen, enslaved, and then sold by the nuns to Zana's family, they called her ungrateful and selfish because she had never returned for a visit, or to thank them for having civilised her. Domingas is living much after the slavery abolition act, which, nonetheless, does not seem to mean much to people in her condition, for “the colonial regime of protected enclaves of privilege” surpassed “the inherent promise of equality or citizenship” (Galeano, 162) for the margin. What problematises the hegemonic linearity of development is the fact that, in the narrative, Domingas is addressed as a maid, but depicted as a slave; disguised as the family's servant, she would work seven days a week, since her childhood and until her death. Only once “she asked Zana if she could have Sunday off. Her mistress was surprised, but let her go, so long as she didn't come back late; it was the only time I went out of Manaus with my mother” (65).

To call these people maids is more than euphemism, it is hypocrisy. This hypocrisy is similar to the one underlying the process of Domingas' catechisation during the period when she lived with the nuns

in the orphanage; those who can never be saved have, controversially, to be Christianised. In doing so the pastoral logic of hegemonic temporality and spatiality controversially “compile an inventory of domesticated mysteries, and yet they are made to confront the unexpected strangeness of the present” (Holland, 24); such is the logic that tries to beguile supposedly primitive people with churches, schools, clothes, education, and tales until they are tamed well enough as to have their meanings successfully reassigned by hegemony. At the same time that the nuns teach them to “read and write properly” they are directed to a reality wherein they would never be given any opportunity to read and/or write again. Natives’ entrance in the civilized world is limited; their inferiority shall be perpetual:

Domingas, the shriveled Indian girl, half slave, half nurse, ‘desperate to be free’, as she said to me once, tired, defeated, caught up in the family’s spell, and not much different from the other maids in the neighbourhood, taught to read and write and educated by the nuns in the missions, but all of them living at the back of some house, right next to the fence or the wall, where they slept with their dreams of freedom. (59)

This excerpt exposes this shriveled native as being half many things and, consequently, as essentially incomplete. Within the hegemonic chronology, the margin has been left in an interlude between past and future; even though taught to read and write, which would supposedly mean one step towards one’s entrance in modernity, Domingas and the other maids are still living at the back of some house where they sleep with their dreams of freedom. Nael’s description of these natives’ condition strongly problematises linear temporality, for the future supposedly given to marginalised people such as his mother or himself has never really been available for them; it can only be gazed at from the other side of the fence or the wall, but the wall will always be there. Domingas is thus half nurse and half slave because, despite slavery had been abolished, her life as a workwoman shows that reality is pretty different from what is claimed in documents which she has never seen. No one can prove Domingas is a slave, officially there is slavery no longer; we are unquestionably restrained by the epistemological tools granted by our temporal and spatial configuration

when giving meaning to events like these, but the effective betterment in marginalised subjects' lives implied by the chronology of developmentalism ultimately fails to materialise.

Nael's retort to his mother's desperation implies that what hegemony gives marginalised subjects, whose histories might be pretty similar to Domingas's, is hope; impalpable, intangible, and foolish hope—like his, in deferral, perpetually postponed. The family's spell is the spell of hegemonic linearity, when it convinces subjects that there is a single and tested linearity; Domingas, in this sense, emerges as capable of problematising the epistemes of such linearity. The narrator saw his mother as not much different from the other maids in the neighbourhood living at the back of some house where they slept with their dreams of freedom. These other maids too end up seeing their freedom as limited to words, to the discursive level; they too do not know if it is more advisable to struggle for staying or for leaving, to make their realities into a dream or to make their dreams into reality; Nael's indignation is a response for this issue:

‘Desperate to be free’: dead words. No one can free themselves with words alone. She [Domingas] stayed here in the house, dreaming of freedom that receded into the future. One day, I said to her: ‘To hell with dreams; if you don't make a move, you'll get a dig in the ribs from death, and in death there are no dreams. Our dreams are all here’ and she looked at me, brimful of words she'd stored up, with the urgent desire to say something. But she didn't have the courage – or rather, she had and she hadn't. Hesitant, she preferred to give in, did nothing, and was overtaken by inertia (60).

The narrator's frustration concerning what he regards as Domingas's lack of mobility, the fact that she has been overtaken by inertia, somehow impinges upon the idea of an upward mobility, which would be in line with the hegemonic valuation of the centre as the referent (or norm) of normative temporality. It is exactly the lack of choice that makes it so difficult for the margin to move up, to think about a next step in the developmentalist ladder; in the array of prospects advertised by hegemony there is nothing for the margin,

which often prefers to give in; one's resistance to move on can be thought of as an analogy for the impossibility of moving from the 3rd to the 2nd to the 1st world; if these worlds are inventions, Nael's impression that Domingas had to move upwards in order to achieve the freedom she aspires to is also an invention. Her unwillingness to escape upsets Nael, but how effective would escaping be? Would leaving bring freedom? Or would it reiterate subordination? Escaping from the narrow hegemonic chronology does not prevent such chronology from prevailing; accepting or fighting back the margin has been ultimately constrained by the epistemological boundaries of development.

Unfortunately, Domingas dies dreaming of freedom and without ever having the chance to know what freedom meant: "Domingas was useful; and she only stopped being useful when she died, as I saw her die, almost as shriveled-up as when she came to the house—for all I know, into the world" (57). When analysing his mother's condition, Nael does not seem to regard himself as accountable at all for not being able to help her. Notwithstanding the clear ironic tone of his utterance, he accepts to assume the passive role given by hegemony to those that are seemingly within a marginal condition and does not consider himself as capable of doing anything else rather than escaping to evade their situation. In this sense Domingas has been useful for the system, for how Nael has learned to understand usefulness; but if she hadn't worked as a maid—slave—would that make her useless in her son's eyes? Perhaps, but even her role in the hierarchic temporality of usefulness is unarguably problematic; the terms surrounding both her exit and entrance into the world are far from homogeneous; as Nael would later demonstrate, her chronology can become even changeable.

This happens when the narrator recollects Domingas' existence through the only picture that included her face in the middle of several ones that the family had taken. Yaqub sends this piece of paper for Nael in some of his letters, one that had no value for the civilised brother but would become the narrator's most important thing: "I only kept one of the letters [Yaqub had sent]. Not even that, in fact: the photograph in which he and my mother are together, laughing, in a canoe moored near the Bar da Margem. She's nearly adolescent, he almost a child" (263). The narrator is aware that Domingas and himself are not part of hegemonic narrative; no one would really care about their history. His status as a *caboclo* and his mother's one as an Amerindian make them even more meaningless to the hierarchic spatiality; it is only the great names of history that are to be reminded, not common and unimportant subjects like the two of them. The problem here is not the fear to forget

one's past, but the fear of going unnoticed—in the end this is not only Domingas and Nael's greatest fear, but perhaps of all human race.

Hence the need for Nael to rewrite his family narrative through the narrative of the brothers: a form of remembering what has been maimed. The narrator explains that he “cut my mother's face out, and kept that precious piece of paper, the only image of Domingas' face left; [he] could still recognise her laughter on the few occasions she laughed, and imagine her large, full eyes, lost in some place in the past” (263). Separating her image, as Nael decides to have it remodeled, from that of Yaqub, putting this slice of temporality within which the narrator wants to save a less painful version of his mother, informs his shift when regarding Yaqub's participation in their lives. The picture of a past which no longer includes Yaqub manifests Nael's will to eliminate this subject from the chronology that he deems estimable; in his memories of Domingas Yaqub no longer deserves to turn up.

Cutting his mother's face out thus Nael disturbs the linear temporality promoted by hegemonic chronology. This is so for, by doing that, he curiously recreates the past by dividing it into two distinct possibilities and chooses one of them; he allows a deviating chronology to be delineated, one that excludes Yaqub from that moment, and he places Domingas as one single protagonist in this past which, in Nael's view, deserves his reminiscence. That is, the narrator receives a photograph in which Yaqub and his mother are together aware that the past was “a time that was dying inside [him]” (265). Hence Nael's endeavour to bury some aspects of his and his mother's past at the same time as he emphasises other aspects which would be less damaging for his memory in the long run; he knows that, by preserving that precious piece of paper, the only image of Domingas' face left, he would always be able to recognise her laughter lost in some place in the past while he could also try to evade Yaqub's shadow when imagining such moments. The narrative point of view has by now constructed the reversal by which Domingas, the present-past she represents, is foregrounded over Yaqub and everything he evokes; if her face is lost in some place in the past, Yaqub's one is lost in “the future, that never-ending fallacy” (263). Nael's affection is gradually re-dimensioned, moving from his hopeful gaze towards the future to his nostalgic reverie regarding the past. He prohibits this past to be lost; it is the only channel whereby he could be eternally connected to his mother. While those who made them suffer do not need to be remembered, Nael knows that, in the case of his mother, recollecting was now the only thing he could do.

Such as our memory lingers on, prohibiting the past to be lost, so does the suffering of the margin; it is through their blemished insertion in the hegemonic narrative of development that the hidden side of the romanticised pastoral dream is unveiled. There are many other Amerindians, *caboclos*, and immigrants who are still suffering the consequences of expansionism in regions where it has never been invited; the improvement expected for so long never gets to those who need it; they die without spotting any possibility of freedom, aware they will also be lost in some place in the past. For both the narrator and his mother their insertion in the civilized world has always meant one step forward and two steps back; for the Amazonian landscape on the whole this seems to be applicable. Perhaps Galeano was right when he said that “places privileged by nature have also been cursed by history” (256).

3.2. “The Thirst for Novelty”: Smuggling Identities

The arrival of foreign products at the port of Manaus is taken as essential for the abandonment of the city’s backward condition; resources are transported from the past to the future and from the future to the past as to universalise the hegemonic linearity, as to determine who is in the process of becoming, and who has already gone through such process. In the narrative, the attempt to desperately insert by force the Amazon in a linearity that is supposedly universal and inherent to any region is represented mainly by the symbolic appearance of several products getting in the harbour through smuggling; coming from developed countries, these products are representatives of neocolonialism, and essential for the hegemonic linearity and hierarchic spatiality to be warranted. Fabian poses that exploitative relations also have temporal aspects inasmuch as “resources have been transported from the past of their ‘backward’ locations to the present of an industrial, capitalist economy” (95). Curiously, nonetheless, the smuggling of goods from hegemonic regions into the Amazon serve the hegemonic temporality even though it seems to be moving to the opposing course, manifesting an inversion in the mainstream functioning of colonial traditions—when most of the products were taken from the margin, instead of being brought to it—and thereby reinforcing the hierarchic spatiality in both directions by promoting the maintenance of the logic that some people and things (such as smuggled goods) come to or from the future in our very present.

“Swiss chocolate, English clothes and toffees, Japanese cameras, pens, American sneakers” (135) and many other goods are some of these products described by Nael that come from the future to

be inserted in Amazonian past—supposedly in order to update Amazonian time and space; again these progressive tools emerge as to reinforce a linearity, as glimpses to a future that needs to be achieved either through legal or illegal means. Similar to the moment when the narrator finds himself before several ships coming from varying times and spaces, the advent of smuggled goods in the Amazon ends up denouncing its supposed belatedness; smuggling, in this sense, would be a medicine for Amazonian disease. The Amazonian condition as a recipient of smuggled goods, an inevitable outcome of the problematic international division of labour on which geopolitical hierarchy depends, only confirms rather than subverts that narrative which pretends to see in “smuggling” an enemy, even though, in fact, it has always worked as an ally for the hegemonic temporality to be reinforced.

Omar finds a job in one of these smuggling schemes, gradually multiplying in Manaus harbour, and his involvement is evidence that during colonisation and neocolonisation not only unnecessary goods are inserted through their overflow where they are not required at all, but also maxims, values, and peoples’ interests end up being influenced by such a process. The needs regarding what gets from the 1st world are based on the simple fact that, whatever it is, it has a foreign shape, and if it is foreign it must be good; the curiosity and admiration of those who received the products is enough for the system to function. This kind of trade occurs not only because what comes from abroad has a higher value, but because of the belief, above all, that such products come from and bring the future. Hence subjects’ belief that such sort of commerce is needed although it is not; hence our belief that what hegemony sends from the future is essential, a symbol of achievement, of power, of ultimate progress. Through the acquisition of futile products, one might buy one’s ticket to enter the circle game—the circus of the vain; and this ticket means one’s entrance into the hegemonic system, becoming one of the elite—or at least closer to it:

Omar worked with Wickham; he was his right-hand man [...]. The stuff was carried in the Booth Line’s ships; Omar checked everything in warehouse number nine and went out alone in the convertible, while the small fry took the merchandise to a house in the suburbs: Swiss chocolate, English clothes and toffees, Japanese cameras, pens, American sneakers. Everything that at that

time couldn't be found in any Brazilian city: foreign shape, colour, labels and packaging—foreign smell. Wyckham understood this. He sensed the thirst for novelty, for consumption, the spellbinding power each thing carries with it. (134-135)

In this excerpt, smuggling seems to reinforce hierarchic spatiality: while Omar is Wickham's (the boss) right-hand man, the one who went out alone in the convertible, the smuggling scheme also needed the small fry to take the merchandise to the suburbs. Slowly hegemonic hierarchy is re-produced, dividing the pyramid of central and marginal participants in the chronological construction of development through the categorisation of varied levels; it is in these levels that Omar has a chance of becoming one of the protagonists; opportunity given by Wickham, who sensed the thirst for novelty in the Amazon. Omar's partner was aware that Amazonians felt in his products a scent of victory, a possibility of conquest, of retrieving some of the autonomy that they supposedly can only get as a consumerist society. What is new is also fresher, futuristic; it is a possibility for the Amazon to move faster on the road to development. The spellbinding power each thing carries with it is a token that every merchandise is, undoubtedly, much more than that; the spell is the power of each thing to convince Amazonians they are being given a chance for becoming meaningful again, for abandoning savagery and belonging to what matters and thus becoming legible within the prevailing value system. Therefore, when one buys Swiss chocolates or American sneakers one is not buying only the products themselves; one is buying identity; and the commerce of identity is, in a way, what comprises the imposition and reinforcement of hegemonic linearity, at the cost of subjects' autonomy and integrity.

Thus, being not only physically but also psychologically exploited by consumerist society, marginalised identities are ideologically reshaped in terms of the foreign shape. According to Stein and Stein the alterations in colonial and neocolonial commercial patterns have actually been more apparent than real; the idea of controlling the entrance of goods in Brazil after Manaus Harbour was inaugurated has never gone beyond the theoretical level "since customs duties which raised the cost of imports appreciably remained the major source of revenue for the ex-colonial governments, the volume of contraband, especially in English goods, long remained high" (151). Wickham, in this sense, appears as a dual figure existing in both polarities of

progress: he is both an enemy and an ally (a wicked ally, as his name suggests) of hegemonic linearity, earning money illegitimately but, at the same time, helping the legitimisation of developmentalist chronology to be reinforced through the advent of products coming from the central regions to the marginalised Amazon.

These goods, thus, disguised as illegal but actually serving the agenda of hegemonic needs, stand for the manner whereby foreign commercial authority manipulates marginalised subjects and their capacity to judge the real meaning of such products; the commoditisation of every value must take place, if it does not that would mean a hindrance to progress; people must learn to need anything just because of its foreign shape, colour, labels and packaging—foreign smell. Halberstam has suggested that “the temporally contingent is made to reveal an underlying logical necessity. The Now and Then is absorbed by the Always of the rules of the game” (99). This logical necessity, responsible for reinforcing hegemonic chronology, becomes growingly cruel not only when it goes to smuggling as an imposition of hierarchic spatiality but to any social functioning being altered by the advent of such necessity.

Nevertheless, foreign shape, colour, labels and packaging—foreign smell are much more than things, they are epistemes; and as epistemes they endorse this supposedly underlying logical necessity; and if there is one character that resists such logical necessity brought forward by Halberstam it is the brothers’ father. Halim had his own shop and was very pleased by his working routine, despite promoting what seems to be a pretty counter-hegemonic manner both of living and of making business: one that did not respect the always of the rules of the game. The narrator observes that Halim “was never in a hurry, not even to speak [...]. How was he going to get rich?” (49). Initially Halim’s behaviour sickens Nael; the narrator is exasperated by the fact that the brothers’ father, who was never in a hurry and who never saved a penny, is so stubborn and unwilling to fit into the capitalist system that is relentlessly paving its way into the Amazon.

It is here that, Nael realises, in spite of his feelings of self-satisfaction as a business man, Halim’s way of managing his store insouciantly starts to bother Yaqub, who, “criticising his father’s out-of-date shop” (110), does not understand why his father has to behave in that manner. In the brother’s opinion regarding the potential of the store, his father could reach much more profitable results if he made a good use of it, if he decided “to modernise the shop, decorate it, and enlarge its range” (123); and this is not an option, it is an obligation. The

financial character enveloping progress introduces a new way of looking at commerce; and the hegemonic culture, endorsing development and depending on capitalism, impinges upon any conduct which is separate from this logic of profiteering. The advent of profit as the sole motivation for one to make business would mark then one's eternal conflict between how one would like to have lived and how one was obligated to live; a conflict that would accompany Halim until the day of his death, just like it shall probably accompany any of us.

3.3. “A little out of place and time”: The Demise of the Present

If Halim embodies some level of resistance against the commoditisation of Amazonian values, Yaqub is the character who impersonates its endorsement; when he starts earning money, his values become a commodity; he sends money to his family not because that is the only thing he could do for them, but because that is the best thing he thinks he could do. It is interesting to observe that when Yaqub leaves Manaus he does it “quietly, leaving the house where he had lived with frugality and discretion. He had hardly occupied the place, hardly more than a shadow” (36-37). Nael seems to endorse the pastoral illusion when he poses that, even before leaving the city for the first time, it is as if Yaqub had never belonged to Manaus; as a matter of fact one's total devotion to capitalism, which withdraws people's abilities of becoming attached to their land, results in their occupying their space as nothing more than a shadow. Therefore, the brother who has never seemed to belong to the Amazon is excluded by himself and by the others, being ultimately literally sent away to avoid further conflicts between Omar and himself.

Halim has never acknowledged any drawback in strengthening Yaqub's detachment from his family and city, from the Amazonian time and space; the father “was daydreaming of a glorious future for Yaqub, and that was more important than his return and stronger than the separation. Halim's greyish eyes lit up when he talked about it” (37). Halim had learned that one's entrance in such future was not only inescapable but actually accurate, a reason why he was proud that his son was getting more important, making money; in fact, initially, no one would have any doubts about how beneficial it would be for someone to leave a supposedly primitive and backward place like the Amazon in order to construct a career in the metropolis, but when Yaqub visits his family Nael ends up not being so sure about that: “Yaqub's visit, though it was only short, let me get to know him a little. Something in his behaviour escaped me: he left a mixed impression on me, of someone

hard, resolute and proud, but marked, at the same time, by an eagerness that was like a kind of affection. This uncertainty left me confused” (107-108).

Nael’s uncanny and ever-growing feeling that Yaqub’s character might not be as clear-cut as it superficially seems to be suspends certainty even for the reader most closely identified with the civilised brother. Here he foreshadows the fact that Halim’s faith in this glorious future for both Yaqub and himself would not last forever: “I saw those [Halim’s] eyes many times, not lit up like that, but not dim either; just tired of the present, and with no future of any kind in their sights” (37). This observation implies some kind of resignation emerging in Halim’s life; Nael seems to find no place and time where/when Halim’s eyes could fit in. The brothers’ father becomes progressively aware that his past is being killed; that makes him dispassionate or rather, what is even worse, tired of the present and with no prospects. This is so for Halim is challenged to accept things he does not agree with and did not want to endorse; for him the commercial logic is not logical at all:

I can hear his [Yaqub] voice, criticising his father’s out-of-date shop, and his friends round the backgammon board. ‘These people get in the way of the customers; they’re like vultures with carrion, waiting for their afternoon snack to turn up. You’ll not get very far that way’. Rânia agreed, but Halim, with his arms resting on the counter, asked: ‘Why go that far? What about enjoying a game, or a chat?’ ‘Business doesn’t flourish on chance pleasures like that, said Yaqub, addressing his sister (110).

I am forced to agree with Yaqub and Rânia’s position here; in the capitalist circle game, business doesn’t flourish on chance pleasures, indeed; if something is getting in the way of the customers, whatever that is, it is consequently damaging to the financial welfare of the store. And it is the welfare of the store that matters; the welfare of those who sell or buy in the store is irrelevant; or rather, it depends on the welfare of the store: for a money-centred consumerist society, if you are financially fine, then you are allowed to be psychologically fine (the problem is: we are never supposed to feel totally financially fine, are

we?). Nevertheless, for the family's business to be effectively led, later Yaqub would convince his sister, Rânia, to take over the management of the shop insomuch as if their father kept heading it the brother would never see his ambitious plans for the enhancement of the store's conditions turned into reality. Halim's resistance has thus no use, his discourse as uttered in this excerpt was heard by Yaqub as the discourse of the madman, a person "whose discourse cannot have the same currency as others" and whose words are ultimately "taken for mere noise" (Foucault, 53).

Both Yaqub and Rânia knew Halim would not be the right person to head the entrance of the store into the future for "he has always seemed a little out of place and time". The narrator gets to know Halim a little bit better than his family because he is curiously interested in his stories; he was there to talk to the brothers' father in several occasions even though "intimacy with his sons was something Halim never had"; in fact, his offspring never had the time to listen to what he had to say; in Nael's case, time is one of the few things he possesses. It is thus through the narrator's curiosity that we get to know some details about Halim's difficulties when he left Lebanon and came to the Amazon, heading to a completely new world wherein, seemingly, a magic land of great opportunities and unmatched prospects was available to him: "he suffered, like many other immigrants who had come with nothing more than the clothes on their backs; drunk with idealism, he believed in ecstatic, passionate love, with every metaphor under the sun—or the moon" (44).

Halim was not an ignorant peasant who was willing to make easy money and who has consequently been deceived by foreign tales because of his stupidity or lack of attention. Actually the narrator describes this passionate immigrant who was drunk with idealism as much more than that: "He was a late-flowering Romantic, a little out of place and time, indifferent to the power of money, whether honestly or dishonestly come by. Perhaps he could have been a poet, a minor provincial flâneur; but all he was was a modest shopkeeper possessed by a consuming passion. That was his way, and that was the way I knew him" (44). If, after he got in the Amazon, Halim's profession was that of a modest but accomplished shopkeeper this has never been a reason for him to abandon his consuming passion for everything in his life. Controversially, it is exactly when this richness finally has the chance to arrive that Halim's accomplishment starts to gradually fade away.

Such transformation in Halim's life is directly associated to the renovation of his store which is aided, especially, by Yaqub. The

thriving engineer, living in São Paulo and thus watching the wonders of progress in the front row seat, first sends successive amounts of money for the family's home and shop to be modernised (becoming, then, not more comfortable or cosy places, but more profitable, practical and capitalised ones) and then asks if Rânia would accept the role of administering how the money should be applied, which she does with an euphoria of modernisation: "Rânia [...] ran the place from top to bottom, looked after the takings, the stock, and the bad debts. She finally finished with selling on credit: 'charity doesn't mix with business.' She [...] got rid of the unsold merchandise, the old stuff belonging to another time. She believed in style, and revered the latest fashions" (125). The reader understands that Rânia is chosen for she is competent enough as to make the plan work; her getting rid of the old stuff belonging to another time is a token of Amazonian repositioning during its insertion in the hegemonic chronology of consumerist society, a society that can only sustain itself through asking "time to accommodate the schemes of a one-way history" (Fabian, 144). Capitalism does not mean coming to terms with the past, it means its total dismissal; in fact, Nael describes the city of Manaus as a region that was growingly "refusing to come to terms with its past" (265). Yaqub's developmentalist discourse was capable of convincing Rânia that, as to embrace the modern, one has to leave the past behind, to forget it and, moreover, ignore it has ever existed; what is ironic is that this dismissal is what characterises devastated (social and natural) environments.

The merchandise which was unsold during Halim's era in the store was also interpreted by Rânia as worthless; the hierarchic spatiality whereto the Amazon was heading implies that what does not have any financial value has, accordingly, no value whatsoever. Once the shop started to change, new interactions were installed; new customers arrived, and the old ones stopped showing up. Halim ended up being "no longer so close to the people from the hinterland, up the rivers, who used to come to the door, or into the shop to buy or exchange goods, or simply chat" (127), but the shop kept on going and, in the final picture, that is what matters. Somehow such change was expected; that is actually the logics of the system: the hegemonic commercial linearity is so stuck in people's minds that its narrow steps are seen as fairly natural—the unnatural becomes naturalised; in this sense, every small store has to develop, everything must go from one stage to another, through very categorical means. Halim shall never feel satisfied again, and his relationship with his friends shall never be as they once were, but the shop will survive and that's quite enough.

Nael, as the good observer he gradually becomes, ends up realising that Rânia's attitudes and opinions as a manager do not come out of the blue, but are actually directly influenced by Yaqub: "I was suspicious of Rânia's burst of enthusiasm, and realised it took its cue from Yaqub's opinions and actions. In less than six months the shop changed course, and anticipated the economic euphoria that would not be long coming" (125). It is now clear that the logic of the market works pretty well in Halim's store; under Yaqub's counsels, through his opinions and actions, Rânia was able to bring progress into the family's enterprise; and she did that by applying a well-known and tested formula. Nevertheless, besides Halim, the only member of the family who does not find such idea attractive is the other brother: "Omar was contemptuous of the renovation of the house and the shop. He didn't allow them to paint his room, and deprived himself of any signs of material comfort coming from his brother" (125-126).

If Omar was stubbornly unwilling to accept Yaqub's plans, though, Halim was much less assertive in his response; Nael's observations regarding Halim and Omar's perception regarding Yaqub and Rânia's attempts to modernise the shop shows that while Omar endeavours to fight development in a very small scale, by not allowing his room to be painted, Halim sees it as inevitable, but, different from Rânia, refuses to applaud it: "Rânia decided to modernise the shop, decorate it, and enlarge its range. Halim made a tired gesture; maybe he was indifferent" (123). This is, perhaps, a matter of a generation conflict; Halim is old and tired, he has lived the past and is hopeless about the future, his energy could only be harnessed for him to make a tired gesture; Omar, on the other hand, is young and rebellious; his contempt and attempt to deprive himself of any signs of material comfort evinces that he is not eager to get smoothly into the hegemonic linearity of development.

Nael observes how Halim seems to turn a blind eye to development, but perhaps this is not because he was indifferent, but because he becomes dispassionate about the prospects for the store; if any enterprise must become more profitable for it to move on in the developmentalist linearity, how can he try to move in the opposite direction? This unresponsiveness might be, in this sense, a sign of resignation: In the end Halim knows he cannot fight the process, but this does not mean he is sentenced to accept it with open arms. Actually the issue of the store is able to expose not only the ideological conflict between how Omar and Yaqub experience development but also between how differently the narrator and Halim understood some of the

issues that triggered the renovations; Nael's characterisation of Halim is thus also strategic for his self-characterisation.

The once gregarious and now depressed Halim has not actually seen it coming; he has allowed the euphemistic actions of Yaqub—the son he admired most for having reached such a privileged position—to happen. Daydreaming of a glorious future for Yaqub, Halim would never have seen the interference of his son in the family's business with suspicion; after the renovation of the store, nonetheless, his grayish eyes that lit up when he talked about Yaqub are replaced by his indifferent and tired gesture when his son starts interfering in his way of making business. It is only a long time afterwards that he stops to think about what has happened in his store; the family's father has been taken by the tide of hegemonic interests (as it eventually happens to all of us) and has ultimately been deceived by it:

When Halim woke up to the fact, he was no longer selling most of the things he had always sold: hammocks, nets, boxes of matches, machetes, rolls of tobacco, bait for troll fishing, lanterns and night lamps. With these changes, he was no longer so close to the people from the hinterland, up the rivers, who used to come to the door, or into the shop to buy or exchange goods, or simply chat: to Halim it hardly mattered. Now the shop-front sported wide windows, and there was almost nothing left to remind one of the old dry goods store less than two hundred yards from the beach of the Negro. The smell did remain: it survived the plastering, the paint and modernity [...] (127).

Nael's language conveys what is left out of modernity: with these changes (brought by the updating and improvement of Halim's shop) Halim was no longer close to those subjects who once used to come to the door not only to commercialise, but, perhaps more important, to simply chat; the shop becomes thus a venue not for relationships to be established and maintained, but for the consumerist society to thrive therein; relationships, in this sense, are important as long as they mean money being made. With the replacement of the commercialised articles, and the shift in the customers that would go

shopping there, Halim's store became appropriate for a single class of people. The only thing that remained, that survived the plastering, the paint, and modernity, was the smell (working as a glimpse into what was forced into his past). Such smell can perhaps be compared to the narrator's picture of his mother, for they are both devices for Nael and Halim to resist temporal compression.

The picture, like the smell, are materialisations of these characters attempt at refusing a chronology they are not willing to accept; in the end it is their configuration that is at stake, and these are the only weapons they have to fight for it. Halim's life had always been connected to his shop; now the only thing left was a fragmented memory of the pleasant moments he had once experienced there. The shop was turned into his job: an obligation, nothing more than a financial enterprise. There would be no more people from the hinterland to simply chat with him; a good entrepreneur cannot afford such waste of time. Halim has been induced to believe that his store needed to go through all those transformations. He has been induced not only by Yaqub but also by the surrounding atmosphere of modernisation in a city that was in Yaqub's view seemingly ripe for growth and "asking to be occupied" (194); actually Yaqub only catalyses the natural changes seen as unavoidable by those living in the boom of development.

Yaqub, therefore, through the status and esteem that his education made him meritorious, has persuaded Halim to let things change for what is supposedly the better. Taking from the store all the products that attracted people who were no longer welcome (hammocks, nets, boxes of matches, machetes, rolls of tobacco, bait for troll fishing, lanterns and night lamps, all those things that the margin of the Amazon would buy, the same margin wherefrom Halim and his family came) is a first step Rânia eagerly takes. Halim was no longer met the people he befriended; he naively accepted the fact that he was not selling the suitable products nor caring for the right customers; believing in the "altruistic" character of his son's advices Halim has been defeated by the needs of capitalism.

Rânia is sure that Halim's behaviour would not fit in what is required by the material values of capitalism: "Sometimes he remembered Cid Tannus, who played backgammon with Halim himself, and was his companion in years gone by [...]. Rânia didn't like him, said he got in the way of the customers, because his short visits got longer and longer" (153). Getting rid of those people who got in the way of the customers, Halim's daughter learns fast enough how one should do business in order to profit in a a system of free competition where

“some are freer than others” (Galeano, 101). Galeano says that for the introduction of free-market just augments any previously existing inequities between privileged and marginalised realms. This seems to be the case of the harbour as well, which, every time it appears, is curiously always observed by the narrator as a concrete embodiment of such inherent inequity between privileged poles and submerged areas. Manaus harbour is described by Nael as a place “frequented by sailors and whores” (150); mesmerised by its grandeur the narrator “looked at all the boats and ships moored in Manaus Harbour” (83) but, at the same moment, he knew that crossing its metal bridges he could easily spot “people vegetating” (73) in its surroundings: “berthed in the Manaus Harbour, the big freighters dwarfed the boats and canoes, hiding the forest on the horizon [...], sitting on the steps [...] Indians and migrants from the interior of the state were begging” (238). It seems that, to Nael, the harbour “smelt of oil and garbage” (173) could no longer pass unnoticed.

Eventually Halim’s resignation regarding the transformation of his store ends up turning him into a bitter man, a man with no beliefs, dispassionate and cynical about his present and future, looking for fragments of life in the lingering memories of a fading past. His daughter realises that is happening, but her only worries regard the welfare of the shop; Nael observes that “sometimes Rânia invited two acquaintances to play in the little upstairs room, just so that her father would amuse himself and not stick his nose into her business, though he took practically no interest in the fate of the shop, nor did Halim pay any attention to the players and their throws of the dice”. Even though he took practically no interest in the fate of the shop, it is interesting to see how Rânia feels threatened by his sticking his nose into her business. The business is not “his”, any longer; he does not belong to the stage whereto the store is being guided. Nevertheless, he does not seem to care at all about his marginalisation in such process; that modern and crowded store does not mean anything to him, therein he can only find peace by looking through the window at those spots of the Amazon that were gradually disappearing: “He let himself be lulled by the hot, humid air and the light, warm breezes coming in the storehouse window. And when he looked at the board, he soon turned his face away to the bay of the Negro, looking for calm in its waters and the huge white clouds mirrored in them” (181).

Gazing at the Negro was an opportunity for Halim to evade a future which is too excruciating for him to acknowledge; but, as well highlighted by Eliana Ávila, “this does not mean he sees the river as a

simple token of the past; his gaze upon the Negro manifests, on the contrary, the fact that he is tending to the present against its demise as past”¹⁵. Halim was not captivated by the “whisky, silk blouses, bottles of French perfume” which were some of the devices “intended to impress” (154) Amazonians. It is not the urbanising and growth of Manaus or these supposedly indispensable symbols of development that draw his attention, but the bay of the Negro, its calm waters and the huge white clouds mirrored in them. Hence his choice to turn his face to what is great, irreducible, and not to the futile gadgets provided by hegemony. His store is thus a token of the paradox wherein he is situated, if it is whence he experiences a present regarded as past, it is also the very same place where such present and past are being gradually obliterated. In one of Rânia’s working days in the shop, after she takes on its management, Nael decides to help her to engage its temporal redimensioning:

She [Rânia] filled a box with samples of the latest things from São Paulo and asked me to chase up the best customers [...]. Some asked me in for a snack, told endless stories, and then said goodbye as if I’d just paid them a polite visit. I remembered Halim’s words: ‘More than anything else, trade is an exchange of words.’ [...] I came down with the boxes, and then she [Rânia] decided to throw out old metal, rotten bits of wood, rusted hooks, rolls of tobacco, measuring tapes, gourds and bottles. She got rid of all her father’s old junk, even throwing things from the previous century into the bin, like the miniature hookah that had belonged to Halim’s uncle. It didn’t bother her throwing all these things out. She operated with a fierce determination, quite aware she was burying a past (184-205).

Rânia has indeed embraced the capitalist cause, and, throwing all those things out is the solution she finds in order to insert the Amazon into the hierarchic spatiality of hegemonic chronology. Getting

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rid of the past did not bother her, as her fierce determination demonstrates; in this sense, burying the past to place the store in the future was for her not only possible but actually laudable. But this same modernity that transforms Halim's savage shop into a updated milieu also turns a simple relation of natural and friendly conversations with customers, that would enter the store by chance, into Nael's necessity to chase them up, almost as animals. In this sense it is curious to observe that the old-fashioned store, which was filled with old metal, rotten bits of wood, rusted hooks, rolls of tobacco, measuring tapes, gourds and bottles, was in some sense more civilised than the modern one, whereto customers have to be chased. Nael's choice of words, then, is undoubtedly very interesting; it might stand for the fact that development does not mean the abandonment of savagery; it means its advent. The Amazon can thus be regarded, in many terms, as less savage before the arrival of consumerist society, and not the other way round as it is constantly assumed.

What this chapter has demonstrated, then, is the narrator's point of view regarding his mother's, Halim's, and his own condition as they are compulsorily inserted in the hierarchic spatiality of developmentalism. Due to his marginalised position in the hegemonic narrative Nael's skepticism towards the future has proven to shape his feeling of powerlessness concerning both his mother and his own part in the prospects of the Amazon as advertised by the modernity gradually inserted in the region. The counter-hegemonic perspectives emerging from these characters resistance against the mistakenly taken as universal projects of development thus effectively require and produce "new conceptions of space" (Halberstam, 6); it is their need to configure a deviating narrative that manifests the importance of such narrative, and that ultimately puts into danger the supposedly unquestionable linearity of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd worlds' steps towards such regions and their subjects' supposed betterment. After demonstrating both his mother and his own temporal in-betweenness regarding their position in the void between past and present it is by characterising Halim that the narrator comes up with his problematisation of Amazonian futurity; the inborn flaws of developmentalism, together with the feeble epistemes responsible for reinforcing it, have been ultimately unveiled.

CHAPTER IV – CONCLUSION
“POUNCING LIKE A PANTHER”:
THE POSTCOLONIAL ANTIPASTORAL

According to Eliana Ávila, “the Amazon is an emblematic locus of the hegemonic discourses and narrative of modernity against which it is described as a land which has been lost in time and isolated in its space”¹⁶. In this sense, as demonstrated in the analysis, the biased conditioning of the postcolonial subjects represented by Omar, Halim, and Nael is what has preconditioned and stigmatised these characters as settled in a certain region and time. As stated by Halberstam, “to all different kinds of temporality we assign value and meaning [...] according to the logic of capital accumulation, but those who benefit from capitalism in particular experience this logic as inevitable” (7); in fact, within a normative system whose foundation is a premise which emphasises its supposed universality, the existence of variations cannot be acknowledged whatsoever; there must be an inevitable logic profitable for those who benefit from one particular temporality. Therefore, in order to understand marginalised subjects’ antipastorally, one should first redesign his/her own mode of understanding the postcolonial and, more importantly, of understanding time itself.

Halberstam believes that it is only after we destabilise the meaning of capitalism, as done by Nael, that “we can begin to see the multiplicity of noncapitalist forms that constitute, supplement, and abridge global capitalism; we can also begin to imagine, by beginning to see, the alternatives to capitalism that already exist and are presently under construction” (12). If Yaqub’s role has proven to be that of instituting, endorsing, and reinforcing global capitalism, if he appears in *The Brothers* as entitled to be one of the protagonists of progress, the antipastoral perspectives elaborated by *The Brothers*’ marginalised characters (especially Nael) are successful in doing the opposite. This array of alternatives to capitalism presently under construction that postcolonial subjects provide is now available because, as suggested by the ideological conflict between the narrator and his mother’s final responses to their marginalisation, despite the unquestionable correlation between the colonial and the postcolonial Amazon, these two distinct periods, perspectives, and possibilities of transformation, albeit interdependent, cannot be understood as defining interchangeable historical moments. This is so for, if the former is thoroughly permeated

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by binary social, political, ecological, and racial conflicts, the latter is also marked by an opportunity for a relativisation of generally taken for granted discourses that had both created and nourished such dichotomies in the first place; that is, if the colonial is where the binary divide regarding past and future is put in the spotlight, the postcolonial is when this and similar binarisms are put into question.

Indeed this is exactly what is done by those whose antipastoral perspectives mark them not as enemies of pastoralism but as evidence of its intrinsic impracticality. Such a disruption in the normative colonial logic is now possible “because the relations which characterised the colonial are no longer in the same place and relative position that we are able not simply to oppose them but to critique, to deconstruct and try to go beyond them” (Hall, 254); that is, the postcolonial has not only provided us with a reflection upon the colonial institution but has also given us the opportunity to subvert its supposed tenability, reasoning and, consequently, its credibility. While hegemony materialises as a symbolic protagonist of progress, the margin is the peripheral character of some sort of counter-progress emerging from the postcolonial: a rich ideological room that, in the novel, allows the ones whose lives deviate from the main theme to retell what has been told, inasmuch as the whole narrative becomes discombobulated by their version of events. What marginalised discourses seem to evince is that to oppose is important, but to critique is essential. In what he calls this postcolonial moment, Hall explains that “the transverse, transnational, transcultural movements, which were always inscribed in the history of colonisation, but carefully overwritten by more binary forms of narrativisation, have, of course, emerged in new forms to disrupt the settled relations of domination and resistance inscribed in other ways of living” (251).

As seen, pre-assigned meanings of domination, resistance, freedom, and autonomy are thus disrupted by the transverse movements upheld by the subjects who, inscribed in the history of colonisation, are deeply marginalised in the colonial and neocolonial processes permeating the pastoral redimensioning of marginalised regions and peoples. In the terms of normativity, thus, if his mother was ultimately “lost in some place in the past” (263), which was “a time that was dying inside [Nael]” (265), the narrator was likewise lost in some place in the present. Nevertheless, he takes advantage from this vacuum wherein he has been forced to describe what development destroys rather than what it constructs; he rewrites what had previously been overwritten by hegemonic narrativisation. The narrator’s experience gives shape to epistemological deviances from pastoral discourses that mistakenly

attest the supposed superiority of hegemonic culture and performs a new, transnational, and transcultural movement that escapes from this logic of capital accumulation. His ideological shift, the fact that he initially endorses developmentalism and later problematises it, is a token that such antipastoral redimensioning regards perspectives that are indeed presently and gradually under construction.

Accordingly, notwithstanding how complicated it might be, such deconstruction of hegemonic supremacy and of its supposed social and economic organisational flawlessness is an inevitable step in the postcolonial moment since, as Halberstam has observed, “little more than technology and sheer economic exploitation seem to be left over for the purposes of explaining Western superiority [...]. It takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West if its temporal fortress were suddenly invaded by the Time of its Other” (35). As demonstrated by *The Brothers*’ narrative, the pastoral temporal fortress leaves the Amazon in no time and place for no temporal possibilities are acknowledged by hegemony if not its own; Western superiority is therein granted not due to a higher quality of condescendence, but rather to the power to strike down and destroy; the West is a hunter, like Yaqub, that, unexpectedly, “pounces like a panther” (257), preying on the game. Moreover, just like the hunter has to allure the prey through his/her disguises—which make him/her look as part of the hunting scenario, so do the ones who, by becoming so attached to the epistemology of development, in the end cannot be disentangled from its pastoral axioms.

The Brothers’ family is completely shattered by the progress the mentioned temporal fortress protects: Halim and Zana die of misery, Omar is arrested, and Rânia becomes as dispassionate about the future as her father was. In the end the only legacy of development and of the pastoral dream for most characters is one of obliteration, forgetfulness, annihilation, and, ultimately, hopelessness. Therefore the antipastoral perspectives, as proposed by Bennett (2001) and experienced by Douglass (1845), that emerge consecutively from the construction and ideological shifts regarding *The Brothers*’ characters are not at all emphasising the gains or enhancements taking place in the developed and pastoral Amazonian future; on the contrary: *The Brothers* is about the destruction of a past through the commodification of a future in our very present. In the end, Omar can be read like the Amazon itself; both have no prospects, no chance of fitting in a future that cold-shoulders the ones who are not willing to be integrated. Contrarily, Yaqub has always been admired by his teachers and his parents; his opinions had

always been the most respected ones before “[...] the danger and the sordid underside of his calculating ambition” (264) were unveiled. How could his family believe in such a pastoral disguise for so long? How can we?

Galeano asked us more than 40 years ago: “Hasn’t our experience throughout history been one of mutilation and disintegration disguised as development?” (277). Is not this the history of the Amazon? This is a question that still lacks proper answers, perhaps future research in the area could look more panoptically at it than I was able to do heretofore. What my analysis has hopefully discerned is that the narrative point of view of *The Brothers* responds to Michael Bennett’s notion of antipastoral ecocriticism (2001) by disclosing the problematic epistemological narrowness surrounding the restraints imposed in the lives of marginalised subjects. The way we look at time and space might actually be fairly distinct forasmuch as both the observer and the images are never the same; or rather, what is observed, in the end, depends more on the observer and on the types of lenses he/she wears, than on the landscape observed since his/her eyes is what constructs such landscape as meaning whatever he/she wants it to mean. Domingas’ death and Nael’s seclusion are an indication that, if we fail to acknowledge that the margin is neither in another space nor in another time, if we do not stop regarding deviant regions and subjects as belonging to a primitive past, we will keep mitigating the revolutionary power of perhaps the only peoples and regions who can provide them; civilisation can only change its behaviour if it is not only capable of accepting the existence of difference but also eager to learn from such difference.

The Brothers’ Amazon is not the pristine land that must be ignored, protected, or abandoned by the pastoral gardeners of civilisation; it is an epistemological possibility; it is a source for antipastoral perspectives regarding the mistaken narrowness of hegemonic linearity which might let us rethink how problematic the developmentalist logic really is. However, if one does not start questioning developmentalism and its normative chronologies there will always be this gap between past, present and future, especially in places like the Amazon, not because it is supposedly drawback in any sense, but due to its condition which embody the several contradictions of development. It is exactly such developmentalist chronology that needs to be debunked; and antipastoralism emerges with such an agenda, not aiming at going against the pastoral but at disclosing its inherent contradictions. What Bennett concludes from his careful analysis of Douglass’ narrative is, among other things, that any attempt at reflecting

upon environmental justice within an ecocritical democracy would sound utopian “unless and until we have broken down some of the racial, class, and gender barriers that distance wilderness and pastoral space from those outside the upper echelons of our society” (208).

Amazonian in-betweenness, in this sense, has convinced me that its condition is already meaningful per se; it is hegemonic notions of time and space coming from the upper echelons of our society that lack a more careful and wide-ranging view on the region. As Eliana Ávila puts it, “the Amazonian conflicting position in the middle of distinct temporal and spatial institutions is in itself a place for identity; that is, the transitory condition of the Amazon and Amazonians is what constructs their identity”¹⁷. In the words of Fabian: “Tradition and modernity are not opposed nor are they in conflict. All this is (bad) metaphorical talk. What are opposed, in conflict, in fact, locked in antagonistic struggle, are not the same societies at different stages of development, but different societies facing each other at the same time” (155). The Amazon is not the Eden expected by the pastoral gardener, this would indeed be bad metaphorical rhetoric; the region is not some mythological lost land that is there to make us return to the past through pastoral enterprises; it is not opposed nor in conflict with the future.

The Amazonian landscape is meaningful right now: the underdeveloped world exist at the same time as the developed one does, and is not less close to the “future”, this “never-ending fallacy” (263) that still manages to deceive us. If marginalised regions sometimes might look as if it is in the past of thoroughly urbanised landscapes, which are much more symptomatic of our contemporaneity, this is so because, as well observed by Wallace and Armbruster (2001), “any human perception of nature is culturally mediated rather than an inherent truth” (213). Accordingly, the chronological order of our supposed development, from savage to civilised, is far from being an inherent truth. Amazonian natives are not what we were once; they do not represent our past and, fortunately for them, we do not represent their future.

4.1. “From Savagery to Civilization”: Refusing the Here and There

If one takes into account Omar’s antipastoral perspectives concerning the modernisation of Manaus, Domingas’ spaceless and timeless existence as half savage and half civilised in the postmodern Amazon, Halim’s unnerving inaptitude to fit his values in a world where

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such values have become disposable, and Nael's shifting observations regarding the confusing atmosphere that surrounds him, it becomes clear through these characters' institutionalisation and silencing that they have been paradoxically enslaved by modernity in the postcolonial moment. The paradox is to be restrained by the very process that is conceived as the one responsible for destroying the chains of any sort of restraint. However, as both Douglass and Domingas' difficulties to become indeed independent demonstrate, modern hierarchy proves to be nothing but a maintenance of its time-honoured structure (in the end it is still a hierarchy); hence the urgency for more surveys addressing the narrow notion of the savage to civilised linearity.

The twin brothers, Yaqub and Omar, have always been described as having completely opposed prospects: one feeling a huge need for progressing, modernising, enriching, and the other devoid of such preoccupations; the personality traits that bring Omar closer to the present and Yaqub closer to the future are not only a token of this distinction but also what allowed such distinction to be shaped in the first place. While the former realises he can live the present without necessarily dreaming about a future that might never come, the latter does not see a possibility for that present devoid of more ambitious prospects. Just as it happens when one thinks about the deviating configuration of the Amazon and Amazonians as they are (dis)placed within the globalizing world map, "the postcolonial [...] value lies precisely in its refusal of this 'here' and 'there', 'then' and 'now', 'home' and 'abroad' perspective" (Hall, 247). While the separation of time and space allows social relations to be lifted out of their locale, place—which is in some senses left behind by modernity—becomes an anxious and contested site for the emergence of the link between language and identity, a possible site for those local realities that the universal separation of time, space, and place leaves virtually untouched (Bill, 162). Perhaps this is indeed a link that could be studied by future research in the area, since it is a connection I have not yet been able to tackle.

The categorical imposition of what a region is and what it must become is what has determined and predetermined the Amazonian stage in the globalising world map. Such stage is one of a paradoxical transition that is not supposed to reach its final result; the place it shall occupy is not the here or there, but the between forasmuch as developed regions need underdeveloped ones in order to survive. Our desperation to leave the "under" prefix behind hampers our chances of achieving the healthy existence that could be promoted if we saw a possibility of

future outside the preconceived ones promoted by hegemonic narrow-mindedness. Keeping up to this argumentation, in Galeano's opinion: "we are not experiencing the primitive infancy of capitalism but its vicious senility; underdevelopment isn't a stage of development, but its consequence." (283)

Hence the questionable pastoral temporalisation and spatialisation of the Amazon as a backward region in an initial stage of development and thus filled with unprepared people and requiring immediate transformation. But commercial processes applied by financial and marketing enterprises in the region have not been characterised by an exchange based on equality, but on the supremacy of ones and marginalisation of others through the determination of where and when they belong in the globalised world: some must be convinced they belong to the past, whereas others must be representatives of a spatial and temporal futurity. Such division happens with the mistaken impression that it is standing for a natural linearity, almost in Darwinian terms—as a matter of graduate, but inevitable, evolution. This is not the case whatsoever; both these imposed models are far from being universal, and the ideology of progress has nothing to do with the passage from savagery to civilisation, for civilisation, by definition, proves to be much more savage than anything else.

Nevertheless, the sine qua non for a possible destabilisation of this problematic logic is, as suggested, the voice of the postcolonial subject; those who have other stories (different from those responsible for reinforcing the narrative of developmentalism) to tell need to be listened to. Against the hegemonic mistaken assumption that the margin is not capable of saying anything interesting enough for the centre to listen, John Burt (2002) suggests the contrary regarding American ex-slaves: "Douglass' text [...] shows that slavery, bad as it is, has not 'disabled' the slaves [...]; indeed, slavery has given them capacities and insights which they would not have come by in any other way" (2). These antipastoral insights which would not have come by in any other way are, as shown, also shared by *The Brothers'* peripheral characters who take advantage of their living in the postcolonial moment. The successful participation of Douglass in the social and political sphere of American society after his life experience as a slave is a confirmation that "histories of slavery and oppression affect us not only in how we construct and experience cultural institutions but also in how we construct and experience nature and wildness" (Wallace & Armbruster, 226).

Hall says it best when he poses that “the postcolonial signals the proliferation of histories and temporalities, the intrusion of difference and specificity into the generalizing and Eurocentric post-enlightenment grand narratives” (247). Nael’s and his mother’s lives are some of these deviant histories and temporalities which multiply even more the array of discursive bodies capable of disrupting the developmentalist logic, normative time and space, pastoral expansionism and all other generalising grand narratives. Accordingly, Hall also suggests that this postcolonial moment wherein contemporaneity finds itself is marked by the valuable emergence of “other theoretical examples, where the deconstruction of core concepts undertaken by the so-called ‘post’ discourses is followed not by their abolition and disappearance, but rather by their proliferation, only now in a decentred position in the discourse” (248); hopefully this thesis shall find its place as another theoretical example of this crucial deconstruction of hegemonic core concepts.

Nael and his mother are, inevitably, expelled from their right to be. It is through the antipastoral perspectives proposed by Douglass’ critique that peripheral discourses might be finally granted their deserved validity; moreover, according to Eliana Ávila, “analysing how time and space might be distinctively (re)articulated by those who have not been completely engulfed by the hegemonic system yet might give society a new version of generally, but erroneously, accredited linearities”¹⁸. The Amazon and its natives have, due to the inescapable logic of their unacknowledged temporality and spatiality, been banalised from top to bottom by the discourses which homogenise the margin and constitute the very regimes of knowledge within which it must operate. In this sense the lenses offered by Douglass antipastoral experiences and both Halberstam and Fabian innovative restructuring of temporal and spatial configuration have proven to be not only beneficial but crucial for analysing the self-characterisation of the novel’s narrator and his version of the events he narrates; if the Amazonian margin wants to speak it behooves us, at least, to listen.

4.2. “A Monstrous Lie”: The Problem of Temporal Representation

The layers of development depend on an ongoing wave of a self-destructive circle game that has no place to stop; when everything gets melted, a new statue is built for the cycle to move on. In this sense, hegemonic notions of progress have not only decimated values which

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had been shared by the “belated” subjects in their “belated” spaces before the chaotic arrival of development; it has also created brand-new symbols of modernity, things that stand for principles which are far more abstract than their materialistic representations (despite our mistaken impressions that the promises of developmentalism are already given facts). The fact that “the parade in his gala uniform had been Yaqub’s farewell” (31) is very symbolic since this is the first moment when we see Yaqub starting to work hard to share those modern values; his farewell in his gala uniform also means his saying goodbye to the aspects that hegemony says the Amazon stands for while he enters in the hegemonic sphere, where there is modernity, education, and more “Latinists and mathematicians” (33) to praise him.

In this sense Yaqub’s intention seems to be that of killing his past; he wants to be identifiable as closer to the future, to fit in this new society by destroying any debris of his Amazonian, backward, primitive, and thus supposedly useless background. This supposedly inherent inflexibility between the configurations of undeveloped and developed spaces, and consequently one’s putative obligation to abandon the past in order to embrace the future, has successfully become second nature for Yaqub because, as Williams pinpoints, “the dominant mode of production and social relationships teaches, impresses, offers to make normal and even rigid, modes of detached, separated, external perception and action: modes of using and consuming rather than of accepting.” (298) Controversially, in order to become fixed in this rigid and detached future he has to be malleable in his present; that is, getting rid of his past in order to become adaptable enough to be converted into a statue of development, he becomes a sculpture forged by the fires of progress.

In order to be forged by these fires of progress, Yaqub would ultimately be getting married, moving to São Paulo, and becoming a successful professional—an extraordinary neoliberal capitalist and, consequently, an awful human being. If the narrator finds it difficult to define the “strange smile” and “dopey look” (31) in Omar’s face when he watches this same parade in which his brother is marching, if his values are hard to be described as representing this or that, Yaqub’s condition as sharing the same glorious future of Brazil, on the other hand, initially seems to effectively represent almost everything about him. Afterwards, however, perhaps “represent” would not be the most plausible word (maybe “remind” would suit better), since Yaqub might indeed resemble his attempt to share the values of developmentalism, but he actually rarely represents such values and/or rarely is sufficiently

represented by them; that is, such resemblance ends up being dual, reflexive, and, unlike representation, symmetric.

Yaqub is like a river reflecting the image of progress, a fluctuating and uneven mirror, its ghastly lineament; and while he might endeavour to represent progress, what we learned is that progress' agenda does not include any will to represent anyone. That is, if contemporary subjects are compelled to endorse and reinforce the hegemonic linearity entailed by developmentalism, such process does not care at all about these subjects. In the words of Nelson Goodman "while a painting may represent the Duke of Wellington, the Duke doesn't represent the painting" (4). This supposed dichotomist reflection is generally taken for granted; Yaqub is eluded by a system which buys his loyalty with symbols such as "two medals and ten minutes of speeches" (Hatoum, 32), manipulating his principles in return, and increasing the profundity of the growing abyss separating his twin from himself. The narrative point of view, therefore, responds here to hegemonic discourses of linear temporality and hierarchic spatiality, as discussed by Johannes Fabian (1983), by problematising such symbolic linearity.

As demonstrated throughout Nael's narration, time and space curiously prove to be always symbolic, always liable to be denoted by political and social instruments of power; it is not where/when Omar and Yaqub are that manifest their difference, it is their difference that manifest where/when they are. As Fabian has stated, "neither political space nor political time are natural resources. They are ideologically construed instruments of power." In his view "imperialist claims to the right of occupying 'undeveloped' space for the common good of mankind should be taken for what they really are: a monstrous lie perpetuated for the benefit of one part of humanity, for a few societies of that part, and, in the end, for one part of these societies, its dominant classes" (144). Hatoum's novel is depicted in a setting where it becomes impossible to believe in the imperialist claims, in the pastoral redemption, and in the beneficial contact between neo-coloniser and neo-colonised, between the neoliberal time/space and the so-called savage ones.

In 1973 Raymond Williams had already observed that the "pastoral vision of simplicity and independence [was] made bitter and desperate by scenes in which they are continually denied: the neglect of the poor, the excesses of the rich" (93). Accordingly, *The Brothers'* narrative (published almost 30 years after Williams' insightful work) puts forward further scenes in which simplicity and independence are

still continually denied, notwithstanding the survival of the pastoral utopia. Nael characterises his mother and himself as postcolonial subjects who have to accept watching the excesses of the rich due to their condition as the neglected poor undeserving to be better assisted in the space and time where they have been embedded in; the narrator unnervingly and antipastorally observes Domingas living her whole life for others, always helping, but never helped. His constant reminders of his mother and his own deprivations are a plead for readers not to turn a blind eye to the fact that the maintenance of slavery through social and economic withdrawals is still happening in the very climax of our contemporary pastoral hope.

It takes much more than ideological eagerness to root your feet on the grounds of your past, to anchor on a safe harbour and say: “this is who/when/where I am” and “this is who/when/where I am going”; in the terms of normativity, who you are and where you come from or want to go is purportedly irrelevant, for in the end what really matters is to define/identify/establish who, where, and when you must position yourself before the hegemonic structure. Peripheral perspectives are perhaps able to present us with distinct and antipastoral perspectives, and, in an ideology-based society, perspectives make all difference. In the novel these antipastoral perspectives are especially the ones gradually shaped by Nael, who, at the beginning of the novel, is anxious about future progress and development, like most of us are, but would later depart from the hegemonic pastoral standpoint to finally make room for his antipastoral positioning regarding Amazonian temporality. Impressed by the tales told by Yaqub and by the promises of hegemonic linearity, he predictably believed in the chronology that has set the Amazon in the tardy path to be “modernised”. By the end what the narrator sees, nonetheless, is not the beginning of a new and great future, but the shattered remains of an abandoned past which had not been less hospitable than what has come after it. Question is: If his hope has vanished in 266 pages, how long is ours going to last?

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