

A Paradox of Brazilian Counterculture: The Hemispheric Politics of José Agrippino's *PanAmérica* and *As Nações Unidas*

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Abstract: Despite frequent associations with Tropicália, Brazilian writer and multimedial artist José Agrippino de Paula has received little critical attention in comparison to other alternative artists associated with the cultural movement. Drawing on Christopher Dunn's exploration of Brazilian counterculture's contradictory relationship to consumerism and cultural dependence, this article examines how Agrippino's anti-novel *PanAmérica* (1967) and his originally-censored play *As Nações Unidas* (2019) diverge from his contemporaries' approaches to pan-Latin American identity by ironically appearing to embrace both consumer culture and the US cultural industry. Viewing Agrippino's violent eschewal of genre conventions through the prism of *cultura marginal*, I contextualize his challenge to contemporary cultural approaches to nationalism before demonstrating how *As Nações Unidas* acts as a companion piece to *PanAmérica* that provides new clues for decoding his timely societal critique.

Keywords: censorship, *cultura marginal*, dictatorship, pan-Latin Americanism, Tropicália

Published in the weekly magazine *O Cruzeiro* in late 1968, journalist Marisa Alves de Lima's "Marginália: Arte e cultura na idade da pedrada" is as much an

artistic statement as a work of art.¹ To identify the vanguard of Brazilian counterculture, the article showcases personal manifestos and images from twenty-five radical artists spanning the genres of music, literature, visual and performance art, theater, and cinema. The spread begins with a centerfold; on one side, Caetano Veloso stares combatively off-camera as his flapping orange *parangolé* creates a striking contrast against a blue backdrop.² On the opposing page, a series of maxims read like protest slogans, proclaiming, “O novo de hoje pode estar morto amanhã. Abaixo o preconceito. Arte e cultura como totalidade. Nova estética. Nova moral. Comunicar através da polêmica. Oswaldo de Andrade: não estamos mais na idade de Pedra, mas na idade da Pedrada” (Lima 45). The reference to modernist Andrade, author of the “Manifesto antropófago” (1928), signals the revived importance of cultural cannibalization and the repurposing of foreign models for disaffected artists’ anti-imperial stance during the military dictatorship (1964-85). Attacking hegemonic and conformist culture, the diverse voices united behind a common trope in Marxist-inspired social discourse: “De baixo pra cima. Tudo mudou. Imaginação no Poder. Terceiro Mundo... Marginal, marginália. Eles, os rebeldes, pensam assim” (Lima 45). Physicist Mário Schenberg, who sums up the article’s general sentiment with a final intervention, envisions avant-garde artists leading social transformation from the margins: “Na criação da nova cultura, os povos menos influenciados pela cultura europeia e pelo seu ramo norte-americano deverão ter um papel predominante, cabendo-lhes introduzir as posições essencialmente originais e descompromissadas, as mais ‘loucas’ segundo a ótica moribunda do passado” (56).

The artistic credo of resistance, however, was also a political act of solidarity against domestic censorship. Though Lima compiled the statements over several months, the article appeared the day before the military regime passed the most sweeping of its Institutional Acts—known as AI-5—that effectively paved the way towards a police state. In the name of national security, the measure suspended Congress and habeas corpus, legitimized torture against perceived enemies of the state, and established censorship over the press and forms of creative expression. While few could imagine just how repressive Brazil’s

¹ I would like to thank Christopher Dunn for his insightful feedback on an earlier version of this article.

² Famously displayed in the 1967 *Nova Objetividade Brasileira* Exhibit, *parangolés* were artist Hélio Oiticica’s invention: interactive, brightly colored capes that took life when spectators at the show put them on (Santos 41).

dictatorship would become during the first half of the 1970s, politically committed artists still harbored hope that the grassroots activism and public demonstrations that inspired the 1968 “March of the One Hundred Thousand” in Rio de Janeiro could successfully destabilize authoritarian rule.

In his recent *Contra cultura*, Christopher Dunn explores the different forms alternative Brazilian culture took depending upon political, ethnic, and geographical associations. At the same time, he contextualizes paradoxical positions inherent in countercultural critiques of class and racial paradigms. For example, despite wariness of North American political influence, the trend was subjected to accusations of illegitimacy precisely for having been imported from the United States, although such claims ignored how cultural discourses were transformed by local social contexts (13-14). And while the movement officially rebuffed materialism, by the 1970s “hip consumerism” emerged to profit off symbols associated with hippie culture to market clothing and other products, with the “proliferation of advertisements that deploy countercultural ideas, themes, and images suggest[ing] that there was a substantial audience of potential consumers who responded to this language of dissent and transgression while pursuing conventional middle and upper-class lives” (68). Such contradiction in terms of reception is on display in *O Cruzeiro*, which, like most popular publications dependent upon advertising for revenue, tailored its sponsors to a middle-class demographic. The radical rejection of cultural dependency in Schenberg’s conclusion, for example, is abutted by a full-page advertisement for US export Coca-Cola in which a family lounges by a swimming pool, a juxtaposition emblematic of the paradoxical situation in which consumerist critiques found themselves during the dictatorship’s push to modernize the Brazilian economy.

In *Brutality Garden*, Dunn had importantly documented the development of Tropicália as the first material example of Brazilian counterculture, noting that Lima’s article in many ways acted as the artistic movement’s swan song (149). Lima claims *marginália* is part of a larger global trend that extends beyond Tropicália to break with all existing structures (45), though several contributors rose to prominence for their involvement in the national movement, including Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Hélio Oiticica, Rogério Duarte, Torquato Neto, José Celso Martinez Corrêa, and José Carlos Capinam. Countercultural contradictions emerged regarding popular consumption and production, however, the legacy of Tropicália provides another type of paradox. Despite

receiving increasingly hostile responses from both leftist and conservative audiences during 1968, many of its musical practitioners gained cultural cachet after returning from exile via their assimilation by national popular music for middle class listeners—institutionalized for their critique of dictatorial institutions—while other artists of the period remained at the margins of contemporary popular imaginary (Coelho 240).³

The latter is the case of another artist featured in Lima's article: writer and multimedial artist José Agrippino de Paula (1937-2007), whose foundational Tropicalist influence is frequently lauded in passing, although his work has received significantly less attention. His most-recognized book, *PanAmérica* (1967), provides a distinct examination of imperialism and consumerism where the everyday consumption of Coca-Cola casually appears alongside regional resistance to military regimes. Despite being adopted as “um livro-chave para a geração do desbunde dos anos 70” (Albuquerque 1), and Veloso and Gil referencing the work in their song lyrics, the “epic poem,” as Agrippino subtitles his publication, curiously remains “um dos livros mais citados e menos lidos da literatura brasileira do século 20” (Bressane). Schenberg originally claimed the formative work as the definitive Brazilian novel, perhaps even more important for Latin America than Colombian Gabriel García Márquez's 1967 *Cien años de soledad*, although the authors' international fortunes would diverge radically.⁴ Márquez was adopted as a representative of the region via the Hispanic American “Boom,” winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982, at the same time that Agrippino retired from public life and fell into relative obscurity.⁵ Compared to the popularity of contemporary works of Brazilian film and theater, its literature had limited circulation, and despite a reedition in 1988, *PanAmérica* enjoyed a cult status but was relatively unknown to mainstream audiences (Maciel 144; Favaretto). At the turn of the twenty-first century, Nelson de Oliveira lamented that Agrippino was “[um] dos autores amaldiçoados pelo esquecimento” (45), but the artist's critical fortunes changed after the 1997 publication of Veloso's formative memoir *Verdade tropical*. He references Agrippino more than twenty times, and he would go on to write the preface to the third edition of *PanAmérica*

³ See Chapter 6 of Dunn's *Brutality Garden* for examples of the afterlives of musical Tropicalism.

⁴ See Schenberg's dustjacket preface to the first edition, reprinted in the 2001 Papagaio reedition (11-12).

⁵ Agrippino's curator and archivist since the 1980s, Lucila Meirelles created her multimedial documentary *Sinfonia Panamérica* (1988) because he had been forgotten by Brazilian culture (personal correspondence).

in 2001. Veloso ascribes the experimental book's influence on Tropicália, beyond its exploration of Brazil's peripheral relation to the global economy, to its absolute foreignness to the nation's literary tradition (*Verdade* 148-155). A slew of graduate theses began to appear after Agrippino's death in 2007, and Evelina Hoisel's seminal book-length study, *Supercaos* (1980), was reissued in 2014. In 2019, the long-delayed publication of *As Nações Unidas*, Agrippino's almost "secret" play (Terron), finally made the text commercially available. Similarly pushing the bounds of genre, the theater script was originally censored in Brazil and only circulated via mimeographed copies in English made by an unofficial translator living in Rio de Janeiro.⁶

In the pages that follow, I argue that *As Nações Unidas* provides the clearest indication of Agrippino's innovative international politics while serving as a prism for parsing the challenging symbolism of *PanAmérica*. I will examine some of the contrasting approaches to nationalism, cultural imperialism, and hemispheric relations circulating in academic and Tropicalist circles before demonstrating how *PanAmérica* and *As Nações Unidas* act as companion pieces that contradict cultural nationalism's positive challenge to authority. Taken together, these two "bastard texts" of Brazilian literature allegorically represent the chaos of Brazil during the 1960s (Hoisel 19), but more importantly, they draw attention to the paradoxical role of mass media and consumerism in shaping the artistic market. Ironically, given the book's rejection of such conventions, the reedition of *PanAmérica* in 1988 was timed as a tie-in with *Mostra Agrippino*, the first public exhibition to include all of the artist's work, and, while the honored artist did not attend, Veloso along with other artists associated with Tropicália were featured (Albuquerque 1; Meirelles "artista Pop" 62).

Finally, I will examine Agrippino's distinct reception in light of *cultura marginal*. If Lima's article signaled the end of Tropicália, Frederico Coelho emphasizes in *Eu, brasileiro, confesso minha culpa e meu pecado* that it also served as the first manifestation of marginal culture, later generally associated with the cinema of directors like Rogério Sganzerla and Júlio Bressane between 1970 and 1972. Until the twenty-first century, however, many of its proponents were critically ignored or stigmatized, and thus overshadowed by the musical Tropicalists. Agrippino's films such as *Hitler Terceiro Mundo* (1969) were

⁶ Little is known regarding the specific nature of the censorship. In the English translation, Agrippino references local repression and thanks those who helped his "promulgation" internationally (*As Nações* 13).

associated with early *cinema marginal* (Bernardet 231), though his literary works have been recuperated under the banner of Tropicalism. Nonetheless, his artistic manifesto in “Marginália”—one of only a few published declarations or interviews before his societal withdrawal—provides a framework for reconsidering his particularly successful rejection of the literary conventions associated with hip consumption or contemporary mainstream recognition.

The Third World Curse: Competing Visions of Pan-Latin American Relations

Originally an architectural student in São Paulo in the 1950s, Agrippino sought motivation for continuing his studies by moving to Rio de Janeiro, where he was introduced to theater productions and soon began to act, direct, and adapt (Agrippino, “Um depoimento” 191). The fusion of disparate genres, what Agrippino termed “mixagem,” would become a hallmark of his search for an integrated or total art (Rosenfeld 232). By the start of the 1960s, he adapted works by Fyodor Dostoevsky for the stage, and his first experimental novel, *Lugar público* (1965), led journalists to view him as a rising literary heir to European experimentalism.⁷ After publishing *PanAmérica*, he turned from literature to theater, writing *Tarzan Terceiro Mundo* (1968) and his censored dramatic script *As Nações Unidas*. Agrippino would soon adapt portions of this anti-play into a multimedial performance titled *Rito do amor selvagem* (1970), melding “theater rock,” film, television, dance, and electronic music to great success. In this same vein, he directed performance spectacles such as *Planeta dos Mutantes* (1968), featuring the band Os Mutantes, and, shortly after the AI-5 decree, the cult film *Hitler Terceiro Mundo*, which was never commercially released in theaters. After this period of intense activity, increasingly visible police surveillance led to several years of self-imposed exile after 1971 with his partner and collaborator Maria Esther Stockler, and the two would shoot several Super-8 films in West Africa, including *Ceú sobre água* (1978).⁸ In 1980, following his return to Brazil after the 1979 Amnesty Law, he would be diagnosed with schizophrenia, his retirement from public life to his family home in Embu precipitating obscurity.

⁷ The 2004 reedition of *Lugar público* includes journalist Carlos Heitor Cony’s dustjacket blurb comparing Agrippino’s voice to the French New Novelists (5-9).

⁸ See Bressane for more on Agrippino’s production during exile and his clinical diagnosis after returning to Brazil.

Despite continuing to fill more than one hundred and fifty personal notebooks with short stories and an intended novel, he never published again, although the possible posthumous release of boxes of writing discovered upon his death is still being determined (Ezebella).

Lídia Santos contends that the echoes of US counterculture in Brazil form the inspiration for *PanAmérica*, as the book amounts to “a farcical representation of the behavior of a generation and of a social class paralyzed by the collision of contradictory references” (42, 49). In order to appreciate the purposeful paradox of this work, however, it is necessary to establish prevailing attitudes towards regional identity during the early years of the military regime. In contrast to Marisa Alves de Lima, Marxist critic Roberto Schwarz famously questioned the role of Tropicalism as a tool for revolution or breaking down class barriers in “Cultura e política, 1964-1969.” Generalizing artistic tendencies over the period, Schwarz concludes, “O processo cultural, que vinha extravasando as fronteiras de classe e o critério mercantil, foi reprezado em 64... De revolucionárias [as soluções formais] passaram a símbolo vendável da revolução” (79). Via case studies of troupes such as Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina, which began incorporating attacks upon their audience into their performances, he argues the cultural movement’s “systemization of shock” was emblematic of its “paradox as an art form” (88).

While the 1960 Movimento de Cultura Popular (MCP) brought cultural consciousness to the working and rural masses in Pernambuco, for example, Schwarz maintains that by 1968 the apparent visibility of the creative left did not extend beyond students, journalists, and artists: “É de esquerda somente a matéria que o grupo—numeroso a ponto de formar um bom Mercado—produz para consumo próprio” (62). Schwarz draws on dependency theory to contextualize a clash between the archaic and the modern underlying the tropicalist national allegory, yet he is also concerned with its simultaneous cultivation of “latino-americanidad[e].” Such continental solidarity has less precedence in Brazil than in its Spanish-speaking neighbors, he notes, but since the concept is atemporal, abstractly embracing all countries at all stages of their history and politics, the gesture is robbed of reaching its specific audience (77).

These indictments paint a potentially reductive picture of the complex and at times contradictory conclusions regarding Brazil’s regional agency reached by artists experimenting across media. Veloso, for example, openly blended musical genres from across the hemisphere, and, as he explains in *Verdade tropical*, he

was the first singer to mention Coca-Cola in his lyrics (23). Yet he rejected the commercialism of Americanization—exemplified by mass media figures such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley—not because it was inauthentic, but because consumption promoted conformity rather than critical awareness. Nonetheless, Veloso notes, “O paralelo com os Estados Unidos é inevitável. Se todos os países do mundo têm, hoje, de se medir com a ‘América,’ de se posicionar em face do Império Americano, e se os outros países das Américas o têm que fazer de modo ainda mais direto... o caso do Brasil apresenta a agravante de ser um espelhamento mais evidente e um alheamento mais radical” (14). This ironic integration is most famously illustrated in “Soy loco por ti, América” (1968), written by Gil and Capinam and recorded for Veloso’s self-titled second album. The piece embodies Latin American solidarity through its playful mix of Spanish and Portuguese lyrics, a type of “anti-Monroe Tropicalism” that explicitly rejects long-legitimized US exceptionalism (Campos 170). Thus, the lyrics describe a “país sem nome” with musical styles such as tango and ranchera serving as markers of multiple Spanish-speaking countries, and “América” takes on anthropomorphic characteristics as a universal object of desire. Most notably, the decision to name the “mujer playera” in the first stanza “Martí” provides a suggestive allusion to Cuban poet and journalist José Martí, whose foundational call for Pan-Latin Americanism, “Nuestra América” (1891), distinguished between Latin and the “other” America to the north. Most contemporary, however, is the “hombre muerto,” easily deciphered by contemporary listeners as Ernesto “Che” Guevara, whose name the dictatorship banned from media circulation in the wake of his failed socialist revolution.

In other Tropicália media, the role of Pan-Latin Americanism was more oblique. Antonio Manuel openly borrowed Veloso’s song title and politics for his interactive installation *Soy loco por ti* (1969), a mattress made of grass where spectators could raise a curtain to reveal a painted outline of Latin America in which national borders were erased. Manuel’s anti-institutional stance and his public calls for Latin American cooperation against US imperialism initially worried exhibit organizers, though the anti-corporate message became confused when a bank purchased it for display in its headquarters. Perhaps appropriately, upon delivery the new owners discovered parts of the work were decomposing and it was therefore unusable (Calirman 60-63).

In 1968, visual artist Oiticica claimed his interactive installation of the same name had been designed the year before to topple the universalist approach to

national culture based on European or North American ideals, instead creating a homegrown model for black and indigenous miscegenation. At the same time, he complains that the concept had become a fad, for “quem fala em tropicalismo apanha a imagem para o consumo, ultra-superficial, mas a vivência existencial escapa” (Oiticica). He therefore formulates his concept of “anti-art” around breaking down the “established structures” separating art and the public. By making the spectator participate in artistic creation, or in some cases, be devoured in anthropophagous fashion by the work, Oiticica attempted to create individual experiences that could not be superficially consumed. While his contribution to Lima’s article was censored, his silkscreen work “Seja marginal! Seja herói!” established him as a key original proponent of the marginal turn.

If Veloso believed that consumption promoted conformity at the expense of critical awareness, Agrippino’s *PanAmérica* seems to both draw on Oiticica’s experiential anti-art and repurpose Manuel’s deterritorialized map to parabolize the effects of foreign dependence and mass conformity. Frederico Coelho notes that marginal artists took a political position of aesthetic isolation—representing violence, criminality, and lawlessness, valorizing precarious materials and limited distribution as alternatives to official production, while often exploding accepted mores of good taste—though they were not necessarily themselves marginal in social terms. Initially, marginality signified one of three cultural attributes: working outside the cultural market; adopting hippie model associated with *desbunde*; or being “cursed,” which referenced the artist who is consumed by the desire to create the great or total work of art (Coelho 217).

Agrippino begins his brief statement in “Marginália” by identifying with the first and third options but distancing himself from nationalist markers: “Todo autor do terceiro mundo é maldito. Eu sou um autor maldito pelo terceiro mundo. Era uma vez um velho que olhava um outro velho num restaurante sórdido e pensava: ‘Este algum dia sonhou em ser uma grande artista’” (Lima 49). With a deadpan delivery representative of his literary works, he includes the “philosopher” Adolf Hitler (*Mein Kampf* represents the urtext of repression) on the list of those individuals with grandiose intentions of being successful artists. Juxtaposing the serious and the trivial, he ironically lists the rise of mass culture and “popular opinion” as forms of oppression after the threat of nuclear warfare, Stalinism, and the neocolonial reach of the Marshall Plan. Whether acknowledging the harsh treatment of tropical musicians or signaling his own marginal rejection of the market, Agrippino drily notes that those who do not

take refuge in popular opinion die and disappear, likely unaware how apt the description might prove. Addressing the influence of Marxist theory upon resistance movements, he contends that “[o] próprio proletariado, segundo o seu partido, se refugiou na opinião pública deixando que loucos e santos Guevaras lutassem pelo seu mito” (49). Significantly, then, the historical proletariat had become a symbol that contemporary, middle class Brazilians revived as a marker of exploitation, circulating indistinguishably from other imported hemispheric myths, be they revolutionary figures like Che Guevara, US Civil Rights activist Rap Brown, or Marilyn Monroe. The public personas of Monroe and Guevara notably appear in both *PanAmérica* and *As Nações Unidas*, notably as characters defined by their media saturation rather than any individual qualities. As if anticipating Schwarz’s critique of an essentialist nationalism formulated by the attempted subtraction of all foreign influences in “Nacional por subtração,” the artist concludes by dislocating himself from current debates: “Só existo no protesto total contra o que é, não carrego *nenhuma cultura nacional ou internacional* e o meu mito ainda é pela destruição do opressor” (49; my emphasis).

A Marilyn Monroe Doctrine: The Challenge of Consuming *PanAmérica*

Flora Süssekind has lauded the aesthetic experimentation of Agrippino’s most famous work for capturing the frenzied rhythm of a country captive to the society of spectacle in its own modernization (*Literatura* 109). Luiz Carlos Maciel utilizes a similar musical description, comparing the author to an improvisational jazz musician who, in this case, writes as if he does not know how to write, “violating” accepted good taste (147). The vertiginous text never pauses for reflection, features no paragraph indentations or chapter markings, and consists of chapters defined by a single block of text, where no action receives greater importance than any other. In short, it frustrates the codes of production and reception as well as attempts to read political agency into its allegories (Favaretto), for it purposefully casts imperialism and guerilla warfare as similarly essentialist narratives ascribed to each region of the Americas. The book’s title provides the first clue to its convergence with Agrippino’s manifesto in “*Marginália*,” as rather than promoting regional solidarity, it evokes US diplomatic policies of Pan-Americanism.

Indeed, in Agrippino's title, the "pan" is one of cooptation, as the United States appears as an empire of signs homogenizing culture across the hemisphere. In contrast to anti-Monroe Tropicalism, Agrippino creates what might be termed a counterpart, "Marilyn Monroe" Doctrine, utilizing similar symbols to vastly different ends. If Manuel's artistic map represented Latin America as an indivisible unit, for example, one of Agrippino's chapters, comedic actor Harpo Marx (who in the text is associated with terrorists) has created an alternative painting by throwing miniature arms and legs at a canvas that, on second glance, is revealed both as a map of the United States and a portrait of Monroe's body (102-3). Monroe and Hollywood, by extension, act metonymically to signify the technological reach of the US military. In contrast to this imperial ideology, Latin America is marked as underdeveloped by its anonymity, represented as a borderless collage of military dictatorships echoing the fictional Eldorado in Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe* (1967) (Hoisel 38), and Brazil is only identifiable through internationally recognized tourist sites. At the same time, the guerilla warfare represented in the novel, a clear evocation of Brazil's urban movements of resistance, is imported from Cuba. In other words, the book also ironically negates the very basis of revolutionary nationalism; Brazil appears as a spectator that copies and consumes the ideologies that vie for its political and cultural control.

Schenberg proposes the novel's subtitle "Epopéia" refers not to classical Greek mythology, but rather the mythology created and disseminated around the globe by Hollywood (11). Like Greek epic heroes, Agrippino's characters are also one-dimensional, although, robbed of their meaningful quest, they ultimately appear to be most interested in forms of conspicuous consumption. The response to mass consumerism is evident in the book's "kitsch" aesthetic comparable to Argentine Manuel Puig's tendency to borrow from other popular genres such as radio and cinema (Santos 47). But even more significant is Agrippino's insistent repetition of phrases and words. Some of these appear to be literal translations of English phrases (his unnecessary use of the singular pronoun "eu", for example), which he suggested came from his frequent reading of English and French literature in the original language (Ribeiro 108; Veloso *Mundo* 257). Multiple and redundant references to the "multidão" in numerous chapters identify the marginalized while also symbolizing the mass audience behind oppressive "popular opinion."

Tellingly, Latin America is completely absent from the first seven “chapters” or textual blocks. Instead, the narrative begins in Hollywood with the shooting of a biblical film in the style of Cecil B. DeMille’s 1956 *The Ten Commandments*, a big budget production antithetical to marginal cinema. The film is described in serious terms as a work of realism despite the fantastical nature of its climactic scenes and the death of several extras, who make up part of the expendable masses and are seen as financial liabilities, and the end of the book reenacts this same violence. Initially, the unnamed narrator is revealed to be the film’s director, conspicuously driving expensive automobiles while attending festivities in Hollywood film studios and across the Atlantic. In the process, he has encounters with well-known film and sports figures from the cultural industry while engaging in a series of explicit sexual encounters with Monroe, who had already been dead for five years. Her presence is inspired by Andy Warhol’s famous *Marilyn Diptych*, composed in 1962 in the wake of her drug overdose, and which Agrippino saw in 1966 as part of the São Paulo Biennial showcasing US pop artists (Machado; Ribeiro n.4, 109). Consisting of fifty “serial reproductions” of Monroe’s face from a 1953 film publicity near the peak of her fame, one side of the silkscreen in black and white and the other in cartoonish color, the actress’ image is immediately recognizable but also empty of meaning. Paradoxically, at the same time that Warhol captured the public gaze by appealing to its most vulgar emotions (sexuality, mortality), the proliferation of her image helped revive her fading reputation (Ketner 66).

Warhol had begun focusing on the categories of celebrities and disaster in his work around this time, and Agrippino similarly voids characters and concepts of meaning through textual means. This proves particularly challenging to the conventions of reading, as his characters are superficial images, public personas divorced from their real identities and devoid of internal reflection. In fact, each chapter exists as a sequence of events, but there is no order or causal link between them, simply the narrator’s camera-like, passive witnessing of fantastical violence. In contrast to Veloso’s lyrical sexualization of “América,” here Monroe embodies both innocence and violent objectification as male characters wage war over her body, and while she dies in multiple chapters, she reappears without any explanation. Warhol’s pop-cinematic influence is also evident, for his sexually explicit short films frequently focus on the banal while detailing a single action in front of a stationary camera. Agrippino’s narrator similarly relays violence and mundane activities with an equally casual distance (Ribeiro 109).

Without warning, the novel's setting relocates to the rest of the Americas in its eighth "chapter," the director-narrator inexplicably transforming into a soldier who alternately fights and supports urban guerillas in a variety of locations. Instead of Monroe, Guevara takes on the primary mythological reference, although he is the only character to be named, a telling evocation of US misperceptions of the region. What Sérgio Sant'Anna refers to as the novel's "pansexuality" evolves, as the guerilla-narrator immediately engages in homosexual acts with an adolescent soldier. Although he eventually assassinates a North American military attaché specializing in fomenting Latin American coups, the soldier-narrator is rarely an agent of change himself. In the space of a page, he witnesses US and Dominican officials commiserating on an aircraft carrier as communist guerillas defeat an unnamed Latin American regime, always with an eye to how the "masses" manifest popular opinion: "O regime capitalista e as forças do governo haviam caído e os comunistas estavam no poder. Eu saltei de alegria no meio da multidão e tomei um ônibus abarrotado de camponeses... eu desci do ônibus e a multidão gritava com ódio agitando os braços para o porta-aviões 'Lyndon Johnson' que atracava no cais" (Agrippino, *PanAmérica* 99).

Despite this apparent victory, the marines from the aircraft carrier soon invade and decapitate the communists, whose heads the indifferent narrator discovers preserved inside a refrigerator belonging to the Department of Social and Political Order (DOPS). Such associations of Brazilian dictatorship with Hispanic American settings illustrate a negative type of Pan-Latin Americanism. Disengaged, the narrator deflects reality by turning to the popular, noting that the large heads remind him of the painted cardboard puppets used during Carnival celebrations. The narrator is captured, tortured, and, importantly, given the parallel between political and sexual conquest, castrated. He is spared execution at the last minute, however, when a prison insurrection is assisted by perhaps the previous force of communists, suggesting that the cycle of political violence is perpetual (131).

After the first half of the book, the narrator abruptly returns to his former role in Hollywood. In this hybrid of the two previous sections, his sexual adventures with Monroe are usurped by increasing violence featuring the Italian movie industry, Monroe's ex-husband Joe DiMaggio, Burt Lancaster, Muhammad Ali, and even the appearance of the Ku Klux Klan, which assassinates a mass of spectators at a baseball game. The grand finale devolves into nuclear apocalypse

where the United States is destroyed by its own cultural and political symbols. Echoing resistance against the US military's invasion of communist guerilla insurgencies earlier in the book, the "masses" must battle homegrown terrorism when the Statue of Liberty leaves its island, crosses the river into Manhattan, and begins indiscriminately murdering African Americans and Japanese tourists. Meanwhile, President Johnson has himself become a giant, but only he engages in discursive speeches, inadvertently consuming his fellow citizens as he inhales. On the penultimate page, the narrator observes the formation of a new order, which sees President Kennedy, French President Charles de Gaulle, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., and Hitler working together with archangels before ascension (258). A similarly disparate group will be tasked with responding to global disaster in *As Nações Unidas*.

As Evelina Hoisel has observed, the act of cannibalism that runs throughout the mock epic is a clear reference to modernist *antropofagia*, though the Statue of Liberty's destruction of the very people she is sworn to protect turns a symbol of US sovereignty on its head. Moreover, it attacks one of the primary gestures of Brazilian nationalism, for Agrippino increasingly suggests that little separates cultural cannibalism from quotidian forms of passive consumption, and the act of regurgitating the foreign loses its reactionary agency (*Supercaos* 71-2). Moreover, the parody of anthropophagy, which rejects a progressive nationalism in the face of dictatorship, helps put into focus an additional issue regarding the book's challenge to popular conventions: it rejects the national altogether. Instead of censuring US imperialism, Agrippino juxtaposes the violence and oppression of DOPS in Brazil and the legacy of the KKK in the United States. Indeed, if readers have come away with differing interpretations of the work's oblique allegories, there is a consensus that Agrippino's contribution lies in creating an entirely recognizable and "un-Brazilian" work.

As has become clear, Agrippino's eclectic approach eschews questions of popular taste and challenges conventional interpretation. The scatological narrative explodes the boundaries of any literary metric, casually touching on taboo subjects capable of alienating both conservative and progressive readerships. On the one hand, he erases the borders between literature, cinema, and pop art and purposefully provokes readers by not privileging the guerilla cause. Those seeking an overarching allegory regarding the viability of resistance may well be frustrated, and this provocation seems to be precisely the point. On the other, his particular approach to erasing the frontiers between politics and

media across the hemisphere suggests a marginal or alternative position that diverges from prevailing Tropicalism.

Agrippino Decoded: Expanding Internationalism in *As Nações Unidas*

While *PanAmérica* was translated into French the year after his death (“Morre José Agrippino”), it was the unofficial, English translation of *As Nações Unidas* that played an important role in the play’s recent publication over fifty years after it first appeared. Because certain scenes in the small run of English mimeographs were missing from the poorly preserved original in Brazil, they had to be translated back into Portuguese. By the time Agrippino appeared in “Marginália,” he, along with Stockler, had begun adapting several scenes from the original script into what would become the technologically demanding multimedia show *Rito do amor selvagem*. Blending circus acrobatics and rock music with television projections that simultaneously vied for the audience’s attention, the stage used the UN Security Council as a background and materialized the spectacle Agrippino had hoped to create with his earlier script. The reaction was quite positive. It opened in São Paulo in 1969 and sold out a run of shows in Rio de Janeiro (Hoisel n. 2, 17-18; Meirelles 64). Despite the limited preservation of archived images of the show, a documentary (directed by Lucila Meirelles) about its making and countercultural significance coincided with the publication of *As Nações Unidas*. In some ways, the participatory “mixagem” of this theater rock production suggests a similar approach to Oiticica’s anti-art installations and challenge to consumption.

New access to the anti-play script that preceded the show is important for a number of reasons, both as a companion piece to *PanAmérica* and in its own right. First, while several of the same symbols and historical characters appear, the more discernible critical dimension in the play’s representation of the US makes working through its absurdist components more edifying. Second, it documents the growing scope of Agrippino’s politics, taking the primarily hemispheric concerns of his famous novel and globalizing them. Additionally, through its stage directions and dramatic strategies, it draws attention to the theatricality of *PanAmérica* and makes explicit techniques that remain underdetermined in its carnivalesque international policy. At the same time, there is nothing united about the disparate global locations that appear. Its ironic title, clearly referencing the post-war creation of the United Nations, suggests that

PanAmérica is in fact a shortening of the Pan-American Union, first founded in 1890. Creating an artistic counterpart to dependency theory, Agrippino is particularly fascinated with *institutions* and their contradictory relation to “third world” production and inequality. This institutional preoccupation provides new context for recognizing the underlying critique in his surreal portrayal of international relations.

In fact, the bureaucratic discourse that appears in the play’s longest scene, a meeting of the UN Council, reveals the disjuncture between official government euphemisms and the events themselves, for if *PanAmérica* ends with an apocalypse, *As Nações Unidas* is predicated on one. Seated in front of a map of the world where major cities are identified by their primary tourist attractions, Lyndon Johnson, Secretary General U Thant, US General William Westmorland, US Secretary of Defense, and Pope Paul VI meet in a UN Peace Talk about Vietnam. In a reversal of Western domination, the UN Security Council discovers that unknown perpetrators have used hydrogen bombs to destroy multiple cities, from Los Angeles and Paris to Stalingrad and Buenos Aires. Instead of admitting his lack of national intelligence, however, the US Defense Secretary attacks the credibility of the information, claiming some of the explosions are the result of an underground experiment. Perhaps the most ironic line of an absurdist play is delivered in quite realistic language, when the Secretary accuses the UPI Reporter who presses him of fake news: “Minha senhora, sou obrigado a qualificar as suas acusações de acusações fantásticas, absurdas e incoerentes” (Agrippino, *As Nações Unidas* 62). Indeed, while the confusion of fact and fiction via stars like Charles Boyer and Monroe is still nominally present, the focus on celebrity is downplayed in favor of historical actions of oppression, and the dialogue in multiple scenes situates the role of countries like the United States in ongoing conflicts during the 1960s.

Even more telling is the distinct form of performative participation that the play enables. If the novel features a film director as a narrator, the script instead addresses the reader as a theatrical director, which provides more agency in the process of decoding Agrippino’s chaotic vision. On the one hand, the stage directions that preface the text reveal the impossibility of its production, but on the other their applicability to the inscrutable *PanAmérica* is striking. The script begins with a warning that describes the unique and chaotic structure of the production as two separate units of transmission: scenes and interruptions. The scenes feature actors and use purposefully shoddy scenery and costumes to

highlight their own artificiality, whereas interruptions are designed to come from off stage, in many cases involving what might amount to direct audience participation.

These interruptions could easily be labeled social control experiments, for while some involve wrestling in bizarre costumes or exploding musical instruments, several focus on censorship (an audience member claiming to be a military general seeks to stop the show's vulgarity) and racial relations (a group of white actors is replaced one by one with black actors until the final, unsuspecting white individual discovers the complete reversal). Schwarz may worry about the theatrical systemization of audience shock, but everyone is a participant in Agrippino's vision. Members of the public are invited to throw rotten food at the actors, while the actors are encouraged to throw tomatoes right back. The real challenge for production, however, is that there is no specific order to the scenes or interruptions, and no causal link between any of them either, for it is ultimately up to the director to choose how many or how few of the more than twenty-five scenes and interruptions to stage. In fact, Agrippino encourages experimenting with staging multiple scenes/interruptions simultaneously. The notes suggest that the rhythm of the show be free from any pause that could detract from the frenetic speed of the action. The show's essential goal, then, "é não desenvolver-se segundo o autor e o diretor de cena mas cair no caos comandado pelo público" (20). This chaos, the above-referenced pacing, simultaneity of events, and repetition of fragments are, notably, the very same "demanded" by the novel. Whereas the reader must struggle to make sense of the competing actions on its pages, the threat chaos poses to order and progress are manifested in the play through physical participation in these contradictions.

Agrippino even provides specific instructions regarding the characterization that shed light on the pop art sensibilities of *PanAmérica*. For example, he counsels, "Os atores constroem tipos somente exteriores, não dotados de nenhuma forma de interioridade; constroem tipos universais e coletivos, definidos política, social, econômica temporal e fisicamente" (18). Similarly, Agrippino imagines one of the principal attractions of the piece to be the movement of "a multidão" on the stage, and he describes the desired wardrobe as an international mixture of popular culture, including the Rio Carnival, the heroes of Doom Patrol comic books, and DeMille's biblical film epics. Finally, Agrippino provides information regarding the interpretation of the text that acts as a disclaimer against the type of men who wish to be great artists, noting, "O

autor não pretendeu um ‘bom texto’ e foi muitas vezes displicente ao escrever a parte falada da peça. As cenas simultâneas possuem partes faladas, e o objetivo do autor é que o público não entenda nenhum dos diálogos em particular, mas receba fragmentos de frases de uma e de outra cena simultaneamente” (18). Yet his purpose is not total chaos: the same scenes may be repeated as many times as necessary for the audience to salvage some kind of message.

Recalling Agrippino’s assertion of Hitler as a model of oppression in “Marginália,” one of the first interruptions dislocates the Holocaust from a European setting, featuring Gestapo agents saluting their leader as they seek out circumcised men, irrespective of their race or ethnicity. Shortly thereafter, Mussolini provides a speech entirely in Italian when he learns that all of his fascist collaborators are dead, and in a later scene, Hitler is usurped by one of his formerly loyal commanders. This same exploration of the corruption of power imbues the two primary representations of terrorism in the hemispheric Americas. The first takes place in the United States, and the juxtaposition of the poignant and the trivial is again more powerful through its physical enactment. A gigantic papier-mâché head of the dead John F. Kennedy, which functions similarly to Johnson’s self-cannibalization at the end of *PanAmérica*, appears as a prop in multiple scenes. In one, the disembodied head serves as a gas chamber used by the Gestapo, and in another, it acts as a mythical monster that consumes medieval heroes. In a much less epic vein, Agrippino has the dead president speak during a sermon given in his honor, reproducing verbatim a large section of the never-delivered remarks for the Dallas Citizen’s Council that Kennedy had prepared on the day he was assassinated. The speech rhetorically reflects on world peace, but also paternalistically about the US role as international “watchmen” over world freedom. The bitter irony of Kennedy’s words in relation to his untimely death takes on a sarcastic bent, as they are drowned out by a reenactment of the televised murder of his assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, the media spectacle usurping the actual event.

The second instance replays a similar dynamic of spectacle and assassination in Latin America. Order may not be important for the script’s imagined performance, but it is particularly noteworthy that the final written scene is both the most uncomfortable and the only one expressly taking place in Latin America. Dressed in a vampire’s cape with three words emblazoned across its back—“Benfeitor. Ditador. Drácula” (145)—Brazilian President Getúlio Vargas provides a monologue about his legacy to a group of peasants who cheer every

word, a particularly on-the-nose evocation of the masses and the charisma of his populist politics, before committing suicide on stage. All the while Argentine tango music plays, but this is no playful evocation of solidarity similar to “Soy loco por ti, América.” Instead of guerillas, three men dressed in gorilla suits remove Vargas and bring in a young “communist,” whom they interrogate in Spanish about his connections to Che Guevara and guerilla cells, torturing him with electroshocks and eventually murdering him. The torturers, whose costumes visually mark their inhumanity, then cynically discuss how they will officially report his death, settling upon cardiac arrest. The peasants, who have stayed at the edge of the stage throughout, murder one of the gorillas, but the other two continue unperturbed, practicing their planned explanation for the body’s disappearance. The script ends with this bold recrimination of the regime and the limited change brought by resistance, without any final instructions. Similar to the novel, the specific setting of this troubling sequence is deterritorialized, though because it is drawn directly from the actions of death squads that operated across several dictatorships, the fusion of Brazilian and Hispanic American torture is more powerful in dramatic form than the endlessly cyclical war between guerillas and military groups in *PanAmérica*. At the same time, the parallels drawn in these two scenes between the dehumanizing spectacle of Kennedy’s assassination and the murder of so-called subversives speak to the shared hemispheric cost of domestic terrorism waged in the name of the defeating communism.

Through its exploration of fragmentation, urban chaos, historical and contemporary violence, and the role of the media in constructing modern day myths, *As Nações Unidas* shares a similar set of transgressions with *PanAmérica*, yet its stage directions and resulting interactive dimension both help unpack some of the politics of the novel’s hallucinogenic sequences, providing a roadmap for decoding fierce criticism of state oppression across Latin America and the United States. Of note, *Rito do amor selvagem* likely influenced *cinema marginal*, the theater spectacle’s aesthetics and its tension between the role of scenes and interruptions appearing in Rogério Sganzerla’s *A mulher de todos* (Bernardet 231-32). Given that this latter marker of chaos was adapted directly from the stage directions of *As Nações Unidas*, however, and noting in turn the overlapping structural challenges that Agrippino’s anti-novel and play mount toward superficial audience consumption, it is worth reflecting on whether *PanAmérica* might also be seen as anticipatory of the marginal turn.

Wary of labels, Agrippino would likely have rejected such an association, but its framework helps potentially reevaluate his radical repudiation of genre norms and market concerns as well as his eventual “rediscovery” at the start of the twenty-first century. Further developing the visual and political strategies shared across his multimedial productions, Agrippino created his delirious marginal film *Hitler Terceiro Mundo* as a reaction to Tropicalism and a parallel to *PanAmérica*, and he would later suggest that one of his greatest contributions involved bringing urban experience into the center of national narrative (Bressane), a hallmark of marginal production. To repeat Agrippino’s conclusion in “Marginália” with this new context in mind, “Só existo no protesto total contra o que é, não carrego nenhuma cultura nacional ou internacional” (Lima 49). Ultimately, despite his passing associations with Tropicalism, his particular deterritorialization of hemispheric solidarity and colonization, imagined as a series of interruptions and rejections, reveals a distinct location of his critique of cultural imperialism, one that uses the language of empire against itself. The countercultural paradox lies in the fact that the two works’ unique transposition of pop art onto the literary genre, and their hallucinogenic representation of the uncritical acceptance of exported culture, is made possible by the very nation that is ultimately destroyed in the texts. For Hoisel, the passage of AI-5 signaled an end to free creative expression of countercultural movements, yet “as suas marcas já estavam inscritas e, como sintomatologia, apontam para um conflito de forças que diz do novo e do velho, do moderno e do tradicional, do nacional e do internacional, do subdesenvolvimento e do desenvolvimento” (44). As new access to Agrippino’s literary production reveals, however, he conceived of the above social contradictions not as exclusive binaries but rather simultaneous expressions of the region’s “perverse modernization” (Süssekind, “Coro” 32) and the roles that mass media and consumerism played in constructing everyday myths.

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