



A Disruption of the National Identity in the Brazilian-American Novel *Samba Dreamers*

Ruptura com a identidade nacional no romance brasileiro-estadunidense Samba Dreamers

Marcela de Oliveira e Silva Lemos

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais/Brasil

marcela-os@ufmg.br

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2124-9828>

Abstract: The intensification of anti-immigration policies and discourses in the United States during Donald Trump's administration reveals a reaction against the foreigner characterized, as Jacques Derrida proposes, by the widening of ethnocentric and xenophobic circles in face of the fluxes of capital, people, and information in contemporaneity. In this context, it is part of the critic's responsibilities to address the link between literature and national identity, while attesting to the way literature transgresses the borders imposed upon it. This is the stance this article intends to take as it analyses Kathleen de Azevedo's 2006 Brazilian-American novel *Samba Dreamers*. For this purpose, I depart from a discussion about the intrinsic relationship between hospitality and hostility to the foreigner, as well as from the possibility of literature of saying everything (*tout dire*), to argue that this novel objects to stable notions of nation, gestures towards a displacement of identity beyond the constraints of the state, and invites a post-national mode of thinking.

Keywords: immigrant writing; post-nationalist literature; Brazilian-American literature; national identity.

Resumo: A intensificação de políticas e discursos anti-imigração nos Estados Unidos durante a presidência de Donald Trump revela uma reação ao estrangeiro caracterizada, como coloca Jacques Derrida, pelo espessamento dos círculos etnocêntricos e xenofóbicos diante dos fluxos contemporâneos de capital, pessoas e informações. Nesse contexto, é papel do crítico abordar a relação entre literatura e identidade nacional, atentando para as formas pelas quais a literatura transpõe as fronteiras que lhe são impostas. Este é o posicionamento que se pretende ter aqui, enquanto se analisa o romance brasileiro-estadunidense *Samba Dreamers*, de Kathleen de Azevedo (2006). Para isso, parte-se de uma discussão sobre a relação intrínseca entre hospitalidade e hostilidade ao estrangeiro, assim como da possibilidade da literatura de dizer tudo (*tout dire*), para propor que o romance se opõe a

noções estáveis de nação, articula o deslocamento da ideia de identidade para além dos limites geopolíticos do estado e convida a um pensamento pós-nacional.

Palavras-chave: escrita de imigrantes; literatura pós-nacional; literatura brasileiro-estadunidense; identidade nacional.

A year and a half into his now finished administration as the 45th President of the United States of America, Donald Trump established, in April 2018, a so-called “zero tolerance” policy, according to which the Department of Homeland Security should refer all cases of illegal entry into the States for criminal prosecution. This policy received worldwide attention and criticism because, according to figures obtained by The Associated Press, from April 19th through May 31st, it caused nearly 2,000 minors to be separated from their parents, who were charged with illegal entry. This episode added to an escalating suspicion, in the political and academic spheres, of the idea of a truly globalized world, as the “zero tolerance” stance exemplifies an increasing tendency towards protectionism and nationalism in the international domains. It also revealed the rules, often disguised under the cosmopolitan claim to world citizenship, that maintain mobility as a prerogative of few.

In a discussion about hospitality, Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle (2000, p. 53) consider the emergence of xenophobic attitudes in a technological and interconnected scenario in which public and private spaces overlap:

Wherever the “home” is violated, wherever at any rate a violation is felt as such, you can foresee a privatizing and even familialist reaction, by widening the ethnocentric and nationalist, and thus xenophobic, circle [...] one can become virtually xenophobic in order to protect or claim to protect one’s own hospitality, the own home that makes possible one’s own hospitality [...] I want to be master at home [...] to be able to receive whomever I like there.

Trump’s “zero tolerance” politics and the support it found among some citizens suggest that Americans’ feeling of sovereignty is threatened by the flow of refugees and asylum seekers from low-income countries, but also by the cyberspace in which information about this flux is often manipulated. This fearful reaction, as Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000) propose, involves a widening of “the ethnocentric and nationalist, and thus

xenophobic, circle,” a graphic description that indicates the enhancement of the invisible lines drawn between spaces and peoples. The paradox that Derrida underlines in this passage regards the fact that xenophobia becomes, in this context, a condition for hospitality, as one defends at any cost their need to be the master of the house to be able to offer hospitality and maintain the foreigner in the position of the subjugated stranger.

It is in this sense that, despite the increasing flow of information, goods, and capital around the planet, it may be said that we live, as Elena Isayev (2017) suggests, a de-globalizing moment, as borders become more rigid instead of permeable and there is a growing emphasis on individual nations and national identities. While academics often notice and denounce this scenario, we also need to carefully inquire into the almost natural pervasiveness of the national in our discourses and micropolitics. In the study of literature, for instance, the national functions as a structural category according to which publications, programs, departments, and courses are organized. In face of the hostile contemporary discourses I have characterized, however, it may be inappropriate or outdated to continue to rely on the concept of nation to inform our practice. We may ask, for example, whether, as critics and scholars, when we speak of national literatures, we are not but subscribing to flawed master narratives, or if it is still suitable to think of national identities and literatures as they were once conceived.

In this paper, I attempt to approach those issues through the study of Kathleen de Azevedo's 2006 novel *Samba Dreamers*, an under-investigated work of Brazilian-American writing. *Samba Dreamers* is the first novel authored by Azevedo, a writer born in Brazil, but who has resided in the United States since early age. I argue that Azevedo's narrative, instead of serving the project of a national literature, objects to stable notions of nation and national subject, helping denaturalize these concepts as part of normative discourses of power, while gesturing towards a displacement of identity beyond the geopolitical constraints of the state. This novel invites a transgressive, post-national mode of thinking about identity processes in contemporaneity that seems more appropriate to our times.

Samba Dreamers consists of the initially parallel stories of José or Joe Silva, a Brazilian immigrant, and Rosea Socorro Katz, the American-born daughter of Carmen Socorro, a famous but deceased Brazilian hat designer, actress, and singer who resembles the star Carmen Miranda. Joe travels to the United States after being imprisoned and tortured by the Brazilian military

dictatorship for his supposed involvement with revolutionary movements. In this political context, he loses his lover, Sonia, also a potential rebel, who is taken by the police and never seen again. In the new land, he attempts to rebuild his life in spite of the hardship of a low-paying job, a different language, and the traumatic memories that haunt his failed marriage and parenthood. His situation worsens when he meets Rosea, recently released from jail, with whom he becomes romantically entangled. Following her mother's history of nervous breakdowns, Rosea, who was imprisoned for burning down her former husband's house, is a troubled woman abandoned in the void between American and Brazilian traditions and expectations.

In my discussion of *Samba Dreamers*, I seek to disclose the way it challenges the idea of the national on both sides of the trace that separates the Brazilian from the American part of a hyphenated identity. I believe the relevance of this research lies in fostering the undoing of the national as a normative, circumscribing category, as well as in promoting a look towards this hyphen placed between the Brazilian and American parts of the self. In this way, it might be possible to also see what relates these sides once separated by the arbitrary borders of the states.

1 Literary disruptions of borders

In *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova (2004, p. xi) restores “a point of view that has been obscured for the most part by the ‘nationalization’ of literatures and literary histories, to rediscover a lost transnational dimension of literature that... has been reduced to the political and linguistic boundaries of nations”. This transnational dimension of literature informs her idea of a world republic of letters whose limits, if existent, do not depend on or coincide with the borders of national states. The notion of this republic dialogues, in this sense, with what I prefer to call post-national contemporary literature, a configuration that does not entail a reformulation, but a rupture with the concept of states. To arrive, however, at the possibility of such a republic or post-national rupture, which is not, as I will argue, unproblematic, it might be necessary to look at what Casanova considers the beginning of the imbrication between nation, language, literature, and identity.

In discussing the historically national foundations of literature, first, in Europe, Casanova (2004, p. 35) claims that:

[B]oth the formation of states and the emergence of literatures in new languages derive from a single principle of differentiation. For it

was in distinguishing themselves from each other, which is to say in asserting their differences through successive rivalries and struggles, that states in Europe gradually took shape from the sixteenth century onward [...] In this embryonic system, which may be described as a system of differences (in the same sense in which phoneticists speak of language as a system of differences), language evidently played a central role as a 'marker' of difference.

If European national states emerged in contrast with one another, they also depended on the similarities supposedly shared by groups of people. In this sense, what develops as a national character follows the duality Susan Stanford Friedman (1998, p. 19) associates with the word "identity." The term, she argues, performs a kind of dialectic between difference and sameness "embedded in the double meaning of the word identity itself. Identity is constructed relationally through difference from the other... on binary systems of 'us' versus 'them'... Conversely, identity also suggests sameness, as in the word identical". As tokens of this duality, language and literature become essential to national identities. Casanova's (2004, p. 36) discussion of the intricacies between language, literature, and the national suggests that this is a constructed rather than a natural relationship. As she puts it, "[l]iteratures are therefore not a pure emanation of national identity": language, although anterior to the appearance of the state, is seized as its cultural patrimony along with literary materials, often summoned to represent a singularity supposedly exterior and anterior to the text.

This constructedness may become clearer if one thinks of the emergence of geopolitical states out of previously colonized lands. Regardless of the process of colonization they experienced, former colonies seem to partake, at some point, of a desire to establish an idea of national identity that inaugurates their political autonomy. In this context, literature is expected to serve the ideal of a national identity, textually creating, reproducing, and disseminating a local character supposedly distinct from what is found in the literature of the colonizer. Although in different historical moments, this has been the case of both the United States and Brazil, the two countries between which the characters in *Samba Dreamers* are displaced.

In the United States, after the declaration of independence in 1776, authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, for instance, advocated intellectual independence and the foundation of a new American tradition. In Brazil, the

independence from Portugal in 1822 did not result in immediate political transformation, for power was still concentrated in the hands of a member of the Portuguese royalty. Nevertheless, part of the writings produced in the country in the late 19th century displayed a preoccupation with a national identity and literature. A case in point is Assis's essay "Instinto de Nacionalidade," first published in 1873, in which he states that "[q]uem examina a atual literatura brasileira reconhece-lhe logo, como primeiro traço, certo instinto de nacionalidade" (ASSIS, 1959, p. 28). This instinct, he explains, is the desire to establish a Brazilian literary tradition, still in its "adolescência literária," based on a "sentimento íntimo que [...] torne [o escritor] homem do seu tempo e do seu país" (ASSIS, 1959, p. 32). In turn, in the beginning of the 20th century, a new movement, Antropofagia, urged for a national production that would feed off European culture, digest it as local art, and regurgitate it back to the former masters. Antropofagia marks a violent return of the oppressed that produces a sense of shocking estrangement within traditional forms.

It is perhaps through this figure of the stranger that one may begin to question the notion of national identities and literatures. "Stranger" encompasses not only the term used by others to characterize an unknown person, but the feeling of estrangement that marks the relationship between the foreigner and their languages of expression. One who writes in another language is estranged from their own mother tongue. They are also, nonetheless, never entirely familiar with the foreign language. Thinking about words such as "stranger" and "(un)familiar," it seems fitting to recall Sigmund Freud's (1955, p. 241) discussion about the *unheimlich*, in which he states that the uncanny impression is fundamentally caused by the return of the repressed. What, then, in relation to the foreigner, is uncanny? Why does the outsider so often arouse repulsion? In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva (1991, p. 1) proposes that "[s]trangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder". In this line of reasoning, the stranger would be *unheimlich* because he disrupts the identities and meanings we have established for ourselves, reminding us of the artificiality behind which we hide our own foreignness. The immediate reaction to this "wrecking of our abode," the sinking of our assumptions, is usually violence, denial, and attempts at the neutralization of the threat.

If strangers, in the figure of the immigrant, the dispossessed, the refugee, disrupt the categories with which we make sense of the world, what is the pretense of classifying their foreignness, in the field of literature, but an attempt to make them conform to the very system they undermine? In other words, who does the literary theorist, the critic, the professor, or the student serve when they continue to fit writers, characters, and texts into boxes labeled after an ideal of national identity conceived a priori? Perhaps the initial project of immigrant literature was to show the interchanges between these boxes, or the possibility of adjusting to more than one. But, just as “immigrant” entails movement and fluidity, it is also haunted by the presupposition of the national: a country of departure, a place of arrival, a political status granted by the authority of a state. So much it is that the study of immigrant literature almost inescapably relies on hyphenations that merely put together individual national identities.

The world republic of letters and the post-national mode of thinking are not to be accepted without criticism either. We cannot simply presume a fair equality between different writers and texts and ignore the power relations that exist between them. For years, the nation and its legacy have been informing the ways people around the world see and deal with each other. This history is introjected into our collective unconscious, discourses, and micropolitics, and it cannot, and must not, be forgotten. In this sense, perhaps we do not have the tools to appropriately deal with the question of the foreigner in literature yet. Still, even if we do not rule out the national as an organizing category of thought, it is necessary to acknowledge and reflect about how it is transgressed in contemporary literature.

2 Fictionality and the myth of the national in *Samba Dreamers*

I want to begin my interpretation of *Samba Dreamers* arguing that one of the ways through which it objects stable discourses of nation and national subject relates to the novel’s constant play with the idea of fictionality within its own narrative and characters. Permeating the text from the setting to the stories people tell about themselves, this fictionality within the fiction suggest the frailty and constructedness of other more pervasive narratives, such as the myth of the national.

Samba Dreamers is set in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, and Hollywood, a place of fantasy, shows, and performances that fill the imagination of the

numerous potential artists who live there. Although Joe, a former newsstand owner, does not migrate to Los Angeles to pursue an artistic career, but to escape the military dictatorship, his descriptions of the city often produce, at least upon his arrival, a dreamlike atmosphere: “Joe grinned a smile of relief, and his excitement churned like the waves and dazzling undertow of this new land. Oh, Terra Nova! Oh, this new country with rivers of gold. Oh, the hidden life of Los Angeles. Terra Incognita. Land of lovelorn sighs” (Azevedo, 2006, p. 35). For my purposes, it is also important to highlight that this poetic definition recalls, with its use of interjections and adjectives, the letters and poems elevating Brazil that were sent to Portugal by commissioned travelers of “the new world.” Brazil was also considered a dazzling “terra incognita” or “terra nova.” Besides, the country experienced a period of search for and exploration of gold mines similar to the California gold rush of the 19th century. In this sense, Joe’s description helps approximate political spaces understood as different by submitting one to the same look according to which the other was shaped.

As time goes by, Joe realizes Hollywood is also a place of deceit, where the achievement of one’s dreams is often postponed while replaced by insufficient, incomplete versions of them. It is as if Los Angeles had at least two faces, two masks, that parallelly attracted and terrorized the characters, leaving them “full of hope and full of despair” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 285). The theme of this alternation between masks, costumes, and disguises, behind which there is no achievable essential identity, is recurrent in *Samba Dreamers*. In this sense, it is possible to read identity in the novel as a constant performance, a repeated change of masks, in an attempt to cover a repressed emptiness, to hide a lacking essence that threatens to surface and wreck the characters’ images of themselves. The male protagonist, for instance, oscillates, from the beginning, between José Francisco Verguerio Silva and Joe Silva, respectively, his birth name and the name by which he chooses to be called in the States. Besides, after his twin sons are born, Joe gets a job at the Hollywood Celebrity Tours to guide tourists through visits to celebrities’ neighborhoods, houses, and life stories. It is part of his attributions to dress and act as the Cuban movie character Ricky Ricardo, a role he accepts because “[h]e knew he could fake it; he could fake anything at this point” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 60). Thus, at the same time that Joe paradoxically speaks of his “Brazilianness,” he moves between supposedly fixed national identities as if changing clothes, exposing their limits and constructedness.

The stories Joe tells about celebrities and about himself function as another of these masks. During his Hollywood tours, in order to entertain tourists eager for fantastic, cinematic narratives, Joe replaces an entire script of basic information about actors, movie, and real estate, with his own version of the lives of the Hollywood rich and famous:

[H]e dared to change the usual bla-bla-bla because, as he knew from torture, a lie can be a lot more productive than the truth. He passed by the home of Jasper Wilkens, maker of movies, man of twelve wives, and of Chet Kastlebaum, who tried to design a new hanging tower of Babylon, which got destroyed in a fire, and on and on with famous people who didn't exist, but so what? Joe devised adventures for them [...] his bus came to life; people slide forward on their seats and asked him enthusiastic questions, wanting more of the fantasy than he could possibly hold in his heart. (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 64-65)

When his stories are confronted, Joe defends based on the logic that “[i]f lies could come from Hollywood, why couldn't lies come from him? And frankly, he was a better liar because he had lied to save his life” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 153). In another passage, the ironic mention to a college student who praises Joe's supposed cynical attitude towards Hollywood, while other tourists take it as an offense to the American cinematic legacy, suggests that there is more to Joe's tales than a critique to the movie industry of the United States. His stories also introduce in *Samba Dreamers* a consciousness of the indistinctiveness between “truth” and “lies” as textual constructs, emphasizing, in this sense, the inevitable degree of fictionality and the choices implicated in every narrative, be it a novel or a discourse of national identity.

In these two last excerpts from Azevedo's work, moreover, it calls attention that, as Joe explains why he would rather tell his own tales instead of the ready-made lines prepared by his supervisor, he relapses into the traumatic experience of torture: “as he knew from torture, a lie can be a lot more productive” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 64) and “he had lied to save his life” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 153). In the hands of the military government, Joe is imprisoned, interrogated, and abused. His girlfriend Sonia disappears, and his cellmate hangs himself. The memories of these events are fragmented and spread throughout the novel in recurrent and haunting bits and pieces. His sexual performance, for instance, is constantly affected because the moment

of arousal suspends the control he has over these thoughts and allows them to crawl back into his mind during lovemaking. Consequently, he becomes abruptly aggressive while having sex with his wife Sherri and cannot bare her touch: “He got on top of her, hung over her like a roof. She reached up and put her hands around on his back. Suddenly, the flashbacks came roaring through – *He feels the searing pain cutting through his skin, jolting his ribs and his guts. He cries out as he keeps his face pressed against the concrete floor dotted with blood*” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 40), the dash and italics graphically marking the flux of the traumatic memories. Considering that Joe has been repeatedly beaten up, accused, and pressed to confess crimes he had not commit, to the point that he had “denied Sonia so much he almost doesn’t know who she is anymore” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 160), it is comprehensible that he suspects the very possibility of truth, and prefers to build narratives with his own words, instead of those authorities want to put in his mouth. Still, Joe is never capable of telling Sherri about the tyranny he has survived. As a result, his fabricated plots enter his personal life too, especially after he begins to have an affair with Rosea.

Before approaching the complications Rosea brings into the story, it is important to emphasize that her mother, Carmen Socorro, is already a figure involved in an almost mythical aura, a character about whom traditional, reductionist notions of fact and fiction also seem inappropriate. Although she is long deceased, the myth of Carmen continues to populate people’s imagination, especially her daughter’s. Throughout her carrier, Carmen sells Brazilian identity as the invariably exotic, tropical, and joyful image evoked by her extravagant, colorful, and fruitful hats. The fixity of these constraints, however, soon suffocates her too. In this sense, her hat is meaningfully described as such a torturous object that she needs a neck brace to help support it and abusive amounts of painkillers to soften the headaches it causes. The image of “Brazilianness” she symbolizes crumbles along with her mental health and good name. The numerous stories about her downfall suggest, once again, the impossibility of arriving at the truth. This is especially evident when Rosea, consulted for an intended film about her mother, bitterly writes a list of “Ten Lies from the screenplay that did not happen in Carmen Socorro’s Real Life” (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 203), even though she is frequently not sure herself of what happened in Carmen’s troubled, fantastic life. In the end, it is as if there is no “reality” to this star,

but only masks, fiction, divergent narratives. This may be behind the reasons for Rosea's own lack of references, insistent feeling of displacement, and incurable nostalgia for home.

Among the characters in *Samba Dreamers*, Rosea Socorro is the one who best embodies the senses of utter loss and lack I have been discussing. She is a woman without directions, without narrative frameworks within which she could design a convincing mask or identity for herself. In regard to family, for instance, Rosea is a stranger to her father and hardly ever speaks of her mother. When compelled to, she often makes up stories about Carmen not only because she did not know her well, but also because she is painfully conscious that there is no truth about her. Besides, in what concerns her accommodation within an idea of national identity, Rosea seems to escape, to overflow the limits of both Brazilian and American legacies, as she lies outside their borders. To Rosea, Brazil is the fictional setting of Carmen and Joe's narratives. It is also her idea of paradise, desired and pursued, yet irretrievable. In the United States, in turn, she is literally shut out of society when she goes to prison. In this way, Rosea may be understood as a foreigner no matter where she wanders in search of the home she lacks.

In this line of argumentation, the unsettling impact Rosea causes in other characters' lives could be read as an effect of her foreignness. This interpretation finds support, for example, in her association with "rotten fruit" (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 48), as well as in her characterization as a woman who "decayed everything she touched; she always reminded people what they were most afraid of, the part of the past that haunts them" (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 42). These descriptions recall the notion of the foreigner as uncanny, for what one is most afraid of is something they tend to repress, and, therefore, what returns to disturb them. To interpret Rosea as a stranger in the novel, then, is to see her, as the last excerpt suggests, as someone who reminds others of their own non-belonging, foreignness, and homelessness regardless of how hard they may cling to their masks and fictions. In chronological order, the first to suffer this devastating effect is Rosea's former husband Jeremy Millard, "Anthropologist, Collector of South America Art, Friend of the Natives. Humanitarian" (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 12). From the moment they meet, Jeremy is taken aback by an extraordinary combination of fascination and terror that he compares to what disappearing in the jungle might feel like. While his particular simile

is somewhat stereotypical because it associates Rosea with the limited view of a wild Brazil, it is also the way Jeremy, a researcher of South American natives, finds to rationalize his contemplation of the catastrophic potential of foreignness. This potential is released when Rosea burns down their home, enjoying the destruction of every object, animal, and document that founded Jeremy's definition of Brazil.

After serving jail time for this crime, Rosea resumes her unsuccessful quest for home and identity. She experiences moments of joy as Joe's mistress, but her love soon turns into obsession, and she demands that he run away with her to the Brazil of her fantasies. During a breakdown, Rosea's compulsions lead her to invade Joe and Sherri's house, attempt to kidnap their boys, and furiously argue with the family. Even though Joe and Sherri's marriage has never been a happy one, Rosea plays a definitive role in the final wrecking of their home. At the same time, she ruins a relationship that had given her hopes of belonging with someone, concluding that "the world had no place for Rosea Socorro Katz" (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 265). In despair, as her last resource, she tries to recover her mother, either by trespassing into Carmen's former house, now a great actor's residency, or by stalking and threatening Nancy West, the actress casted to play and, in a sense, replace Carmen in the movie about her. Not coincidentally, one of the things Rosea considers doing to West is reducing her home to ashes. It is noticeable, thus, that, permanently in the position of the foreigner, this woman menaces people's homes and identities. In this sense, the only resolution for these conflicts is Rosea's death, for it simultaneously restores, as best as possible, the stability of other characters' lives, while also guiding her towards her only possible home: emptiness, silence, nothingness.

At last, to conclude this interpretation of *Samba Dreamers*, I would like to briefly address the figure of the anthropologist in the novel. The first-world, usually European, anthropologist has historically helped construct the notion of identities in the new lands in terms of otherness, of deviation from the hegemonic, normative self. Even Claude Lévi-Strauss's 1955 *Triste Tropiques*, notably, often mentioned by Jeremy, may be said to criticize ethnocentrism from an ethnocentric perspective. Besides, the discourse of anthropology, as part of the human sciences, carries certain dogmatic authority that has allowed it to contribute to the naturalization of national legacies around the world. In Azevedo's work, however, Jeremy's exoticized view of the Amazon is not left unquestioned. While he swears,

without proof, to have witnessed his mentor Dr. Robert Maxwell go crazy and remain in the forest after the leader of a group of female-only Amazon natives rapes him, a colleague of the same expedition writes in his book:

The theory of Amazon warriors proposed by Dr. Jeremy Millard in 1966, though now considered a hoax, is still useful in that it provides us with a perfect illustration of how even twentieth-century anthropologists succumbed to the early European fear of the primitive embodiment of provocative female traits, which include nonlinear formulation of thought, emphasized in the importance of randomness, surprise, and intense sexual engulfment. (AZEVEDO, 2006, p. 231)

As a result of the conflict between these views, enhanced by the epigraphs to the novel's chapters, which quote the fictional 17th century letters of a Portuguese explorer of the Amazon, the anthropological discourse is deauthorized, along with the notions of national identities it has historically supported.

A first glance at Azevedo's *Samba Dreamers* may lead one to think that the novel helps reinforce the contrast between concepts of Brazilian and American nations and national legacies because of the use of the word samba in the title and of the recurrent allusions to jungle, Amazon warriors, and *jeitinho*. Throughout this essay, however, I have proposed different ways through which the novel may be said to invite a move beyond the borders of the national narrative and welcome a post-national reading that is, among other things, a mode of thinking about identity in terms of foreignness. In this sense, it might become possible, in the study of literature, to transpose the naturalness and apparent transparency of organizing categories that subscribe to hegemonic structures.

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