New World Soundings

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One day many many many years ago our hero, Marechal McLuhanaima, was born in an antiseptic hospital room near the headwaters of the Mississippi River. It was somewhere in the unexplored territories of Minnesota or Ontario in the land of Yankanada. He had no mother or father. Only a doctor and a nurse and an incubator and a resuscitator and a catheter and a thermometer and a syringe and an electric blanket and a life insurance policy and some pills to sleep and some pills to wake up and some pills to help decide which pills to take.

Every single day McLuhanaima's nurse administered a total massage. But for years he never responded or talked. Each year the nurse grew uglier and her breasts hung lower. Then one afternoon when McLuhanaima was thirty-three years old, she massaged him more completely than usual (her breasts as well as her hands were now touching him), and he cried out: "THE MASSAGE IS THE MESSAGE!!" The nurse was terrified and fell dead; but because she had brought vigor to our Marechal, she became an entry in the *Dictionary of International Biography*. You can still find her there, although without her pendulous breasts.

When McLuhanaima began to scream, the hospital staff immediately installed a computer terminal next to his bassinet. He idly began to feed numbers into it and soon discovered that there is no necessary correlation between literary genius and length of bibliography, or between GNP and income distribution. So he began to want qualitative data.

Fortunately McLuhanaima's new nurse not only wore shorter skirts than the old one but also was something of a littérature. One day she became so interested in applying a strategic massage that when she finally went away, she forgot two books on his bed table. One was *Convents and Bordellos*, written by a famous sociophagite, the Hermit of Apipocas. The other was *Roots of the Root*, written by a noted hysterian, Sergipe Boato de Antuérpia. McLuhanaima seized both volumes. Being illiterate, he processed them through his computer. The first volume he found less satisfactory because the Hermit was not able to distinguish convincingly...
between convents and bordellos. Sergipe Boato, however, was able to demonstrate conclusively that the roots penetrate more deeply than the root. Were the reverse true, the book would obviously have been entitled *Root of the Roots* instead of *Roots of the Root*.

Two things fascinated McLuhanaima. First, both books dealt with a distant, exotic, lecherous, totally undeveloped territory called the Land of the Parrots. Second, the two authors offered accounts of this land that were diametrically opposed.

The Hermit described in lascivious detail how the Land of the Parrots had been an idyllic jungle peopled by beautiful, dark Amazonian women with only one breast. They sat under the trees quietly weaving tangas (mini-bikinis made of dental floss) and drinking Coca-cola and waiting to be raped. In the year 5000 B.C, the patriarch João Washington Luis Getúlio Médici Tibiriçá Ramalho, duque de Cu-de-Ferro, arrived in the Land of the Parrots. He was a castaway from the cruise ship *Lusitania*, torpedoed by Hans Staden, a gunner on a German submarine. João Ramalho founded a harem called Piratininga and attempted to gratify the Amazons in the finest traditions of machismo. When he discovered that the maidens were intolerably innocent, he imported ten million African slave women to teach them every kind of lechery and sacanagem. But even after male mamelukes appeared, only João Ramalho was allowed to brincar. He had established a unitary, totalitarian, monolithic patriarchy. According to the Hermit, it still exists today. And should exist.

The hysterian Sergipe Boato took a more complex view of the matter. He felt that human drama isn't static. It moves. And it moves by dialectic, which he baptized the "dialectic of malandragem." (Others were later to call it a Marxist dialectic, but Sergipe Boato formulated his theory long before *Animal Crackers* and *A Night at the Opera*. In fact, some scholars speculate that Sergipe Boato may have inspired the Marx Brothers themselves, although it is scarcely permissible to assume that a hysterian from an undeveloped country can influence general theory.) In any case, according to Sergipe Boato, João Ramalho immediately established a dialectic with the Amazons. To the point that he insisted on their growing a second breast to create a pectoral subdialectic, just as the Senegalese maidens had taught them an orificial subdialectic. Hence the origin of the fact that all women in the Land of the Parrots today have two breasts.

Once the dialectic was established, things had to change. The idyllic situation described by the Hermit could not last forever. The change occurred in the year 1922 B.C. In Piratininga lived four siblings who had been saved when a big Varig Goose died while carrying them through the air. They were descended, not from João Ramalho, but from a famous musician, John Philip Sousândrade, who lived on Wall Street and

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had composed stirring military marches as well as a sentimental Neapolitan opera about an Apache princess, *La Guarana*. Sousândrade had lost his wampum in the Wall Street crash of 1929 B.C., and his progeny escaped to avoid paying their father's debts. They were named Mariândrade, Oswândrade, Drummandrade, and Carmemirandrade. The Ândrade clan went to João Ramalho, and their pope, Mariândrade, said: “We're tired of your unitarian, totalitarian, monolithic patriarchy; what we want is a pluralistic, oligarchic patriarchy run by colonels. Four men should brincar and not just one. We don't ask for a revolution because we need your money to celebrate our Ano de Coronelismo Moderno, when the governors will take over politics. We want a Federal Republic. Massacre becomes massage. That’s the message. Your motto is o massacre é a mensagem! And ours is a massagem é a mensagem!”

Oswândrade looked angry and muttered that the revolution might not come now but was due in ten years, as soon as he had exhausted all the rhymes for his Pornassian poetry. Drummandrade said nothing because he was a cautious miner and public functionary. And Carmemirândrade simply flashed her hostile, sexy eyes. João Ramalho smiled a patriarchal smile, gave them two coppers, and said, “Go have your Ano do Coronelismo Moderno. I've explored so many anos myself that one more won't matter. After all, meu ofício e orfício. And the motto of the Land of the Parrots is ‘Orfício e Ingresso.’” “Yes,” sighed Mariândrade with his sad, sweet smile, “tem muito orfício, sim, mas o problema é a distribuição dos ingressos, não é?” And thus was born the Science of Economics in the Land of the Parrots.

As soon as the Ândrades left the royal bedroom they began to fight. Mariândrade wrote five essays for the *Correio Piratiningano* to absolve his guilt and praise the merits of João Ramalho. Oswândrade kidnapped João Ramalho's favorite brincadeira, named Tarzana do Amoral, and vociferously flew with her on a Varig Goose to Europe. Drummandrade crept silently back into his mine to dig for agates. And Carmemirândrade said: “You are really chato-boys! I'm going to split forever and live in the Village of the Cariocas. Ano do Coronelismo! What a bore! I can do more in a Minuto de Jeitinho Moderno than you can in a whole Ano. After I get to the big Village every cat in the street is going to brincar.”

So Carmemirândrade stole the magic musical talisman of Mariândrade, inherited from John Philip Sousândrade, and left him with only two antiquated modinhas in a minor key and three out-of-tune rural sambas. She then traveled to the Village of the Cariocas riding on top of a jaguar (she was a real amiga da onça) and did the following things: she invented Carnival and used the magic musical talisman to set the martial tunes of her ancestor John Philip Sousândrade to a syncopated beat called the urban samba. Her Carnival slogan was *A moça é a mensagem!* During Carnival she felt sorry for two melancholy pubescent seminar-
ians, Tristram Shandy Ataúde and Andrew Jackson Figaro, and she went to brincar with them. She left them in such ecstasy that they invented the Catholic Church and shouted, "A missa é a mensagem!" Then she went to brincar with Júlio Carlos Prestes to console him for not having dethroned João Ramalho. He was so delirious that he invented Communism and shouted, "A massa é a mensagem!" This provoked a ferocious scuffle between the proletariat and the Italian restaurateurs. The Italians claimed that they had been saying for a thousand years that the "massa" was the message. Then Carmemirandrade decided to brincar with all the lieutenants in the Army because they were lonely in their barracks. They were so overwhelmed by her charms that they recruited five hundred thousand pivete-pickpockets to invade Copacabana. They met no resistance whatsoever, and by now the pivetes have extended their occupation to Avenida Rio Branco, Ipanema, Leblon, and Jardim Botânico and established a frontier in Barra da Tijuca. The slogan of the lieutenants was o missil é a mensagem! On Copacabana Beach you can still see a statue of a lieutenant being fleeced by a pivete. Carmemirandrade thus became the heroine of her people, the Poke-ahontas of the southern latitudes.

This was how the Land of the Parrots was modernized to abolish the old Terra-Massacre: moça, missa, massa, missil, and above all massagem. A patriarchal pentalectic.

Naturally, João Ramalho was infuriated at the disintegration of his empire. He sent bandeirantes commanded by Antônio Guloso Tavares (O Sargento das Malícias) to all parts of his Terra (even to Chile and Nicaragua) to look for uranium and for aboriginal maidens ("piranhas") who lived in rivers. This would reinforce his authority. But the only bandeirantes who returned home were those who had found nothing. Meanwhile, João Ramalho was having difficulty satisfying all his women, who were by now mamelucas, mestiças, cafusas, mulatas, morenas, cabrochas, and sararas. And he was four thousand years old and had only five testicles. So he wrote to his consul in Sicily and requested one million hot-blooded Sicilians who could help satisfy his women. The consul replied that he would send them if there were jobs, because even red-blooded Sicilians can't brincar twenty-four hours a day. João Ramalho replied that as far as he was concerned, they could pick worthless coffee beans. Soon there were fifty million Sicilians in Piratininga, picking coffee and brincando with the great-great-great-great-granddaughters of João Ramalho. They were great. Then suddenly foreign aristocracies decided that coffee, although it was extremely bitter, at least tasted better than Coca-cola. And João Ramalho found himself rich.

With his new money João Ramalho built one million factories to manufacture color TV sets so that the Sicilians would have less time to brincar in the evening with his great-great-great-great-granddaughters.
But then the TV stars needed a place to save their immense salaries. So João Ramalho created one hundred thousand banks. Unfortunately, the red-blooded Sicilians were freezing to death in the thin drizzle and cocky little chill and commotion of Piratininga, and they began to spend weekends in the Village of the Cariocas. The pivetes of Copacabana painlessly relieved them of all their profits from coffee, industry, and banking. With them the pivetes bought cafezinhos and color TV sets, and they deposited the remainder in the Bank of the State of Piratininga. This is what ecomunistas call “the integration of the national market.” And this was how the modern Land of the Parrots was created.

McLuhanaíma was stupefied by the thrilling hysteriography of Sergipe Boato de Antuérpia (although it had no footnotes at all). He decided that he must do research in the Land of the Parrots to see whether there was empirical basis for this miraculous account. He applied for funding from the SantaCasaFord, the SantaCasaGuggenheim, the SantaCasaCarnegie, the SantaCasaRockefeller, the SantaCasaSSRC, and an infinity of SantasCasas, including some located in Sweden, Japan, and Argentina. (Outside the Land of the Parrots there are lots of philanthropophagis.) Our hero won every fellowship. In this fashion the profession of Brazilianist was created.

TWO

LE MILIEU

... ver a bunda passar ...  
—Chique Boate