

## Migrant Women and the Land in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Film: A Chronotopic Study from the Backlands to the Metropolis

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My wing is ready for flight,  
I would like to turn back.  
If I stayed timeless time,  
I would have little luck.  
Gerhard Scholem, cited in Walter Benjamin

### "The Reality of the Brazilian Countryside"

Unlike the US where homesteading laws encouraged common folk to own small farms, Brazil has always leaned toward large landholdings, or latifundia. Serious agrarian problems exist in Brazil...Land ownership in Brazil is concentrated in the hands of a minority characterizing one of the highest indices of concentration in the world.

The migration of rural populations to urban agglomerations is a natural and constant process in all societies and accompanies civilization. However, in the Brazilian case, the velocity and volume of people who have to migrate from their rural communities of origin is appalling, being expelled from the countryside and having to search for cities as the single possibility for survival.

The conditions of work and the relationships of domination and exploitation imposed especially on the rural wage earners, are an affront to human dignity. ...The labor and social rights established in the Constitution are completely disrespected, and unknown by the workers themselves.

Among the people who live in the countryside, those who most suffer the wretched living conditions are, without doubt, the women and children. The women perform a double work shift, dedicating themselves to domestic activities and labor in production. ...

From "Manifesto from the Landless (MST) to the Brazilian People"<sup>1</sup>

Meu Deus, meu Deus

Aquele nortista /Partido de pena /De longe acena /Adeus meu lugar

Ai, ai, ai, ai

Patativa do Asarré<sup>2</sup>

The migrant, the nomad, the seeker, the wandering landless are all subject positions that imply movement, a fluid location within and through space. An ongoing process of migration-settlement-migration can create an almost ritualistic sense of time and its passage. The constellations of time-space through which the migrant moves seem to evoke a continuous coexistence of past-present-future time associated with, or rooted in, diverse

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<sup>1</sup> I open with this rather long citation from the MST (Movimento dos Sem Terra) manifesto in part because of the important connections it makes between migrants, migrant rights, the need for land reform and the special situation of women within this social group in Brazil (and beyond). The second reason has to do with the grounding or concretization of the poetic quote by Scholem before it, and finally, and perhaps most importantly, to give center stage to the voice of the MST – to take the meaning of this study out beyond literary and cultural analysis and connect it to real life movements for social justice.

<sup>2</sup> This citation comes from the popular song "A Triste Partida" by Patativa do Asarré. Asarré was a beloved singer/song writer of the Northeast, the *sertão*. He lived into his nineties and never left Brazil in spite of his great popularity. It has been said he is the artist who best expresses the life circumstances and sentiments of the *sertanejo* migrant workers and migrants. As he got older he went blind and almost deaf. He lived very humbly in the *sertão* and continued to perform and speak until he died in 2002. See *Waiting for the Rain* by Nicholas Arons for examples and insights into the life and work of Asarré. As the reader will see, I open each section of the essay with an associated verse from "A Triste Partida" in an attempt to recreate one of the roles of the popular singer in the *sertão* – that of narrator and disseminator of histories. Ideally there would be music to accompany his verses as well.

and particular spaces. Thus, passage through time becomes fused with passage through space in the life stories and experiences of this social subject, the migrant.

This essay analyzes the representation of migrant women and their relationship to the land – their passage through time-space – in four classic Brazilian films of the twentieth century. They are: “Vidas Secas” (based on the 1938 novel by Graciliano Ramos, the 1963 film was directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos), “Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol” (the 1964 film was written and directed by Glauber Rocha), “Terra em Transe” (the 1967 film was written and directed by Glauber Rocha) and “A Hora da Estrela” (based on the 1977 novel by Clarice Lispector, the 1985 film was directed by Suzana Amaral). The analysis seeks to show how the migrant women characters, as they are represented in the films, contribute to the creation of a historical map of the voyage of the rural migrant working her way from the *sertão* to the metropolis.<sup>3</sup> The voyage, as we will see, is marked by resistance, persistence and by the critical, questioning eye that can only be located at the margin, a “space of radical openness” (hooks 156). The female migrant subject, arising from the socio-economic and political context of the *sertão*, can be seen to produce a kind of counter-knowledge to that of dominant society, her perspective is that of a “differential oppositional consciousness” (Sandoval 195) whose power lies in her mobility and ability to work between the lines, at the margins, and to view dominant society from that de-centered perspective. Through her gestures, thoughts, words, actions, reactions, and silences female migrant character offers a language of survival, of resistance and persistence as she walks forward – a clay pot on her head and a child on her hip – to create a better life for her family, her community, and herself.

The counter-history she carries with her through time-space can be seen to open a path for a collective subaltern memory-history which on the one hand, questions and denounces official history and established ways of knowing and being, and, on the other, affirms a process for change and for justice. The logic of the female migrant is a logic of survival, a logic of refusal in the face of the unjust, abusive master/Nation-state, leading toward a logic of collective justice in terms of what Mies and Shiva have called the “subsistence perspective” in which freedom does not mean

subjugating or transcending the ‘realm of necessity’, but rather focuses on developing a vision of freedom, happiness, and the ‘good life’ within the limits of necessity, of nature. ... because to transcend nature can no longer be justified, instead, nature’s subsistence potential in all its dimensions and manifestations must be nurtured and conserved. Freedom *within* the realm of necessity can be universalized to all; freedom from necessity can be available to only a few...(336)

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<sup>3</sup> When I say historical map, I refer to the cultural representation of the social history of migration from the backlands to the city and then how that history is grounded in the land, and how movement across geographical spaces at the same time makes articulations with the human relationships that are carried out upon that land. In this sense, the land can be seen to be saturated with human relationships, with human action, leading to the city which, in the case of the metropolis considered here, is nature transformed by human work taken to an extreme, basically to the point where the space is hardly fit for decent human life.

In the context of the Brazilian migrants, this means: a home, a plot of land, sufficient water for everyday life, fair pay for work, fair price for products of labor, a decent bed appropriate for people, school for the children, in sum, human dignity.

As we will see, in the cases of our main female migrant characters: Vitoria's strong legs and desire move her forward through "Vidas Secas"; Rosa takes up arms against an oppressive "saint" in "Deus e o Diabo"; Felicio's wife stands in solidarity and truth as Felicio confronts those in power in "Terra em Transe"; and finally, Macabea's timid, bewildered countenance and meanderings through the streets of São Paulo in "A Hora da Estrela", all reverberate with the musical poetry of the popular singer-chronicler of the *sertão* experience, Patativa do Asarré. Asarré is their background music, the chant or mantra that accompanies them and leads them forward in spite of terrible odds, as their relentless hope and action open a path to the contemporary collective, subsistence and social justice work of the MST-Movimento sem terra.

We are landless. We are workers and dream of a better Brazil for all.  
But in Brazilian society, the right to a dignified life is currently denied to the people. From "Manifesto from the Landless (MST) to the Brazilian People" (366)

These migrant women begin the long march toward a better Brazil. Their strength provides the foundation for future grassroots work, as we will see, they lead with dignity and hope.

The first three films form part of the important Brazilian *Cinema Novo* movement. Internationally, and especially within the field of "third world cinema", this group sought to represent the particular situation of the Brazilian people through an approach they called the "aesthetic of hunger" which clearly broke with the classic Hollywood technicolor model of film making. Director Glauber Rocha has described *Cinema Novo's* "aesthetic of hunger" thus:

...the hunger of Latin America is not simply an alarming symptom: it is the essence of our society. There resides the tragic originality of *Cinema Novo* in relation to world cinema. Our originality is our hunger and our greatest misery is that this hunger is felt but not intellectually understood....We know – since we made these sad, ugly films, these screaming, desperate films where reason does not always prevail – that this hunger will not be cured by moderate governmental reforms and that the cloak of technicolor can not hide, but only aggravates its tumors. ...*Cinema Novo* shows that the normal behaviour of the starving is violence; and the violence of the starving is not primitive. Only when confronted with violence does the colonizer understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits.(Cited in Johnson/Stam 70)

*Cinema Novo* sought to raise social issues within the film media and at the same time to create alternatives to the aesthetics of mainstream cinema. *Cinema Novo* films created within the "aesthetic of hunger" mode were "low-budget politicized films" with "an anti-colonialist thrust". (Xavier 1) They incorporated elements of Italian neo-realism and French new wave film techniques, into an innovative and organically Brazilian film-making style and brought it all together with very little expendable capital. Yet, as we will see, the often "primitive" filming techniques employed consciously (and out of necessity) by the film makers, represented beautifully (and horrifyingly) the social and economic conditions of the filmic narratives – the migrants and their life stories. For example, filming on location in "Vidas Secas", at times the intense sunlight of the *sertão* seems to white out and wash out

the scenes in a way that is overexposed, blinding – yet, this seems to be exactly the intention of the filmmaker, to insert the viewer into that blinding, intense experience of sunlight, with no shade to soften the view, rest the eyes or cool the head. In this way, the viewer is put face to face with a reality often far removed from their own, and then is compelled to accompany that reality for the duration of the film and, ideally, beyond.<sup>4</sup>

The fourth film, “A Hora da Estrela” clearly has its roots in the *Cinema Novo* movement, but incorporates contemporary innovations in film language as well. For this 1984 filmic creation, our migrants are installed in a vast urban space, and the film technique employed reflects that new modern encounter. This film employs color, while the other three don’t, and follows the main character from her workplace to her shared flat, to the city park and through the streets of the great metropolis. It is the character that marks the space with the *sertão*, with tradition, with the naïve eye of the migrant margin, while the film simply watches her and registers her story for the viewers’ consumption. Absent are the shiny, sunny, glitzy tourist spots of Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo or Brasília. With Macabea, our hero or anti-hero, we “tour” the common, dirty, dank spaces of the red-light district and popular inner city slum neighborhoods that the common folk, the workers, the migrants inhabit.

As we will see, the female migrant subjects in each narrative, not only display (each in her own historical way) the resistance and persistence of movement necessary for her survival and that of her family, but also, through her social position as migrant, nomad, seeker, her insider/outsider status enables her to reveal the inconsistencies, contradictions and injustices of a system which seeks to exclude or ignore her altogether. In each case, and to varying degrees, we will see how these initial female migrant characters – Vitoria, Rosa, Felício’s wife, even little Macabea – move the nation forward as they contribute to the creation and potential for opening a time-space for important social political and environmentalist movements like that of the MST.

The life stories, roles, and struggles of the women characters represented in these filmic narratives, in their quest to create a better life for themselves, their families and their communities, can be connected to historical women migrants, shantytown dwellers and urban professionals who have worked at the grassroots level to build solidarity and alternative ways of producing social, political and economic relationships. One outstanding case of a real migrant woman working for change is that of Benedita da Silva who grew up in a shantytown near Rio de Janeiro and later became an important political figure on a national level (senator and vice-governor) representing and advocating for the needs of her community of Afro-Brazilian and migrant women of the shantytowns. Grassroots groups are

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<sup>4</sup> The Cinema Novo movement was informed and influenced by the writings of Franz Fanon, Jean Paul Sartre, among others, and part of their project had to do with what Paulo Freire has called the process of *conscientização* in which the “viewer” (or student, in the case of Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) is made aware of a situation of injustice to which they normally would not have had access or have been aware, and through their growing awareness and identification with the plight of those who are suffering that injustice, they ideally will not leave the theater and forget about it the next day. Instead they will feel compelled to take action in some way to change that situation of injustice – to be actors in history, to contribute to the creation of social change.

formed by the descendants of the early migrant women, learning from their errors and building on their courageous acts of resistance and persistence.

Like the little "angel of history" to whom Walter Benjamin refers in his famous essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (and in which the poem by Scholem noted above is cited), the migrant is propelled forward through time and space, through history, by way of history.<sup>5</sup> Keeping one eye on the past, the migrant must take to the road and seek her life, create her life, she must walk ahead. The migrant condition is one of change and of movement, yet the notion of change is a tense one in that a dynamic of change in the migrant is infused with a staticity of change in that the ongoing cycle of migration-settlement-migration seems at times to be a perpetual motion, a perpetual wandering. Like Fernando Ortiz' notion of transculturation<sup>6</sup>, the migrant condition is a force for syncretic blending in that it involves the selective and dynamic retention of elements of a past located in a different time-space as it simultaneously incorporates elements of the new milieu, some of which are imposed, others of which are chosen as more compatible or functional. Thus the migrant subject holds within it the tense and sometimes contradictory forces of diverse time-spaces, even as she attempts to settle, to create *home* with each hopeful stop along the way, repeatedly, within these diverse time-spaces. Eduardo Galeano sums up the role of Benjamin's "little angel of history" with his own prophet, the prophet of history: "History is a prophet who looks back: because of what was, and against what was, it announces what will be." (Galeano, 8) And, we could say, as do the female migrant subjects to be studied here.

Due to its suggestive implications related to the cultural representation of geography/space, history, and human action, I have chosen Mikhail Bakhtin's adaptation of the notion of *chronotope* as a central analytical tool in my analysis. Bakhtin has discussed in-depth this notion, which he borrows from mathematics and Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity, suggesting that it "expresses the inseparability of time and space".

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.

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<sup>5</sup> "This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward...." Walter Benjamin "Theses on the Philosophy of History", 1940.

<sup>6</sup> I hesitate to refer to the Brazilian notion of *anthropofagia* here in that the migrant condition which I will analyze and discuss in the essay confronts the issue of starvation, famine, lack, scarcity to such a degree that the glorious consumption represented in *anthropofagia* seems to be inimical to the conversation. In fact, *Vidas Secas* was written in opposition to the urban experience of *modernismo*. *Anthropofagia* was an ironic, painful emblem in the context of the *sertão* in the early part of the twentieth-century.

The chronotope is the place where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied. ...Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins... Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as the center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. (250-251)

Within the historical and narrative world represented in the films to be studied here, the notion of the chronotope provides a useful tool in the articulation of points of mediation between the characters and historical figures/historical forces, between scenes and geographical spaces, a filmic world that evokes and becomes saturated with the Brazilian national imaginary. The chronotopic force of the time-spaces represented in the films permits the images to take on a life, a historic life of their own and contributes to the sense of verisimilitude in the fantastic and perhaps shocking situations, characters, landscapes represented. In each case, there is a sense of familiarity and yet estrangement as time and space are intertwined and the faces and sounds that populate the time-spaces call us back into history that is also now and part of the future.

For the purposes of this study, I concentrate on four central chronotopes at work in these films: the *sertão*, the road, the metropolis, and the public square. These are four central areas of importance within the filmic narratives, the life circumstances and actions of the main migrant characters. In each case, these geographical-cultural spaces evoke relationships and historical events: the dry open agro-spans of the *sertão*; the movement between spaces and toward the future of the road; the modern hustle and bustle of the great metropolis; the site of social reunion in which the private is made public in the square. Given their particular situations in history, the time-space characteristics of each of these chronotopes can be made specific and thus will be shown to evoke a series of social relationships, tensions and contradictions particular to the Brazil of the twentieth century.

Certain motifs arise within these chronotopes that broaden, deepen and also particularize them. One motif that I find to be greatly important in relation to the migrant subject, is that of "the fool". This motif, within the four chronotopes mentioned above, can be associated with the marginalized position of the characters to be discussed, those migrant characters who are central to the films and will form the center of this analysis, but whose social location is located far from the center of power. This can be seen for example, through certain characters' lack of language to express their reality in terms of dominant discourses; characters' perplexity when faced with the logic of neo-colonial relationships; characters' confusion with and rejection of dominant modes of dress, communication, use of space, comportment. Bakhtin refers to this as the fool's "device of not understanding – (which) always takes on a great organizing potential when an exposure of vulgar conventionality is involved." (164) In these films this can be the exposure of semi-feudal or nascent capitalist unreasonableness, injustice, exploitation and can be extended to the exposure of an entire existing social-cultural structure associated with those economic

systems. As viewers, we must read this device of “not understanding” by discerning the clues displayed in the multilayered language offered by the migrant subjects which incorporates facial, muscular, bodily, and verbal communication, we must read the totality of the character, the fullness and perplexity of their lives. (hooks, Bakhtin)

In the Brazilian national imagination and historical memory, the *sertão* - the Northeast Backlands region - represents a geographical space that is saturated with history, inhabited by its past, it is a geography that evokes a series of events, historical figures, social, economic, and cultural conditions. First and foremost, and deeply rooted in the geography, in the land of the *sertão*, is the recurring climatic condition of the drought. Yet even the “naturally” occurring weather conditions of the area carry the mark of human history, of social relationships and dominant modes of economic production.

The *sertão* is marked by erratic and cyclical movement between periods of rain associated with fertility, production, relative prosperity and extended periods of drought associated with infertility, lack of production, famine. This broad, flat, semi-arid plains area has been cultivated for centuries in the production of cotton and sugar and used by the great haciendas in the cattle ranching industry. Thus the *sertão*, on the one hand represents a natural geographic and climatic space, but over time, with the use and overuse of the land, the geographic and climatic factors have been exacerbated producing an ever greater imbalance between drought and rain, productive and barren land. The extreme and at times catastrophic, prolonged periods of drought and then excessive rain producing flooding, have served to reveal and make more apparent the great injustice of the situation of poverty and oppression of the majority of subsistence farmers and migrant workers in the region. Contingent then, with the phenomenon of drought are a series of social and economic issues incarnated in clusters of social characters, rooted in historical living/dead people. These would include issues of large extensions of land used for raising cattle and cultivating cotton/sugar under the ownership of very few –local landowners-political leaders-social bosses, or *latifundia*– and numerous landless migrant workers and subsistence farmers who toil on the *latifundistas*’ land for little or no pay and are viewed nationally as “backward”. Corrupt politicians arise within this dynamic, ready to take advantage of the vulnerability of the vast majority of *sertanejos*, promising reforms that never materialize. The local banditry of the *cangaceiros* seeking a primitive form of justice and the religious fanaticism of the millenaristic movements promising a better life are all evoked in the idea, the national imaginary, the collective historical memory that is associated with the backlands, the *sertão*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Contemporary regional identity of the NE is a social construct, an artifact of human imagination whose origins lie in the latter portion of the nineteenth century:

\*The Great Drought of 1877-1880- measure by which all other droughts are compared – provides the conceptual context – drought refugees: *retirantes* or *flagelados* (the scouraged or afflicted)

\*Canudos 1896-1897 – transfixed the nation – central understanding regarding the nature of the backlands and its people...

\*Cangaceiros early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> C. – continued devastating droughts and failed government initiatives.



These social, economic, cultural and climatic, geographic conditions have provoked constant internal migration of farm and cattle workers, moving within the *sertão* in search of land to cultivate and cattle to herd, as well as the out-migration, movement from the *sertão* to the cities of the south as the *sertanejos* seek a new, more prosperous, stable life.

In Brazil, 1.6% of the landowners control roughly half (46.8%) of the land on which crops can be grown. Just 3% of the population owns two-thirds of all arable lands. (MST website) In 1940, just 15% of the population lived in urban areas, by 1970 over 50% were living in cities. This trend, which continues, reflects the impact of structural changes in Brazil's economy including urban industrialization, rural, agricultural automation, modifications of programs and policies of Brazil's changing governmental elite, lack of attention to the consistently difficult situation in the *sertão*. In order to stem this migratory flow from the country to the city, the government will be required to make structural changes in the economy comparable to those which brought about the migration in the first place. To date, this has not been carried out in a consistent or realistic way. (American Journal of Economic and Sociology, Vol. 39)

Within this migratory reality, the chronotope of the road is central to all four films as the migrants set forth, searching for water and work beyond the drought or seeking a new life beyond the *sertão*.

The chronotope of the road is both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement. Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows into it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course: the course of a life, to set out onto a new course, the course of history and so on; varied and multi-leveled are the ways in which the road is turned into a metaphor, but its fundamental pivot is the flow of time. (Bakhtin 244)

The first film to be studied begins with the *sertão* and the road. Time and space flow together as the migrants move forward, seeking shade, food and water, seeking their means of life.

### **"Vidas Secas": Drought and migration in the 1920s (to the 1960s).**

Meu Deus, meu Deus  
Entonce o nortista /Pensando consigo /Diz: "isso é castigo /não chove mais não"  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
Meu Deus, meu Deus  
A seca terrível /Que tudo devora /Lhe bota pra fora /Da terra natal  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
Meu Deus, meu Deus  
Se o nosso destino /Não for tão mesquinho /Cá e pro mesmo cantinho /Nós torna a voltar  
Ai, ai, ai, ai.  
-Patativa do Asaré

The drought victims had been walking all day; they were tired and hungry. Generally, they did not get very far, but after a long rest on the sands of the riverbed they had gone a good three leagues. For hours now they had been looking for some sign of shade. The foliage of jujubes loomed in the distance, through the bare twigs of the sparse bush.



Slowly they dragged themselves in that direction...(Vidas Secas/Barren Lives Ramos 3)

The film opens with a long, wide shot of the *sertão*, the principal setting and “character” of the film. It is dry, it is broad, it is inhospitable. A grating sound, which seems to come from nowhere, accompanies these initial images of the desolate, arid land. The sound is loud and irritating. Instead of music with the opening credits, we are offered the continuous grating, squeaking sounds that produce discomfort and a kind of estrangement in the viewers, the sound distances us from the reality represented. As viewers, we search the screen for the source of the sound, we want to know what it is and, more importantly, when it will stop. The grating sound is the aural vehicle that introduces us to the landscape, to the filmic narrative. It opens us into the world of the *sertão* and the world of *Cinema Novo*. The poverty of the *sertão* is accompanied by a poverty of sound and by a poverty of resources in the production of the film. The source of the sound is the wheels of a wooden cart.

In the distance, we perceive movement. Slowly, a group of people can be seen walking along what appears to be a dried riverbed. They are silent. They are “on the road”, following a river that is no more. Instead of flowing water, it is they who provide the slow, fluid movement along the riverbed, replacing the water that the drought has taken. They are migrants seeking a better life. They are looking for a home and work at the end of the drought. They carry with them all of their belongings. Slowly, slowly, we will accompany them on their journey. *Sertão* time is slow, arduous, meandering time.

In “Vidas Secas” the chronotope of the *sertão* as the endless, dry horizon extending into infinity, dotted by dry trees and brush, populated by migrant workers and large landowners and marked by the semi-feudal relationship they share, is intersected by the motif of the road. As they move across the *sertão*, following the dry riverbed the migrants flow ever forward, downstream as the water would, they move from job to job, house to house, in and out of drought, that is the life path of this family. The film ends in the same way it begins, the family is on the road, seeking its future, looking for water, work, and some shade to create another home, to continue the series, the ever unfolding of the jujube leaves.

As we focus in on Vitoria, the female migrant in the narrative, we see a wife and mother who, in spite of the overwhelming weight she carries - literally, it is she who carries the bulk of the household items, child, parrot across the *sertão* as the family takes to the road - she maintains her dream of a better future for her children: school, a life in the city, and most importantly, a decent bed in which to sleep, like people, like real people. Her simple wishes that express basic needs, serve to dismantle and problematize any nationalist notion which would appeal to the protection and preservation of the national family or the nation’s children. Vitoria knows that it is up to her and to Fabiano to carve their path, to create their life. As hunger seeps into the family plot, Vitoria quietly wrings the neck of the family’s parrot – it will provide a welcome protein compliment to the dry manioc flour the family subsists on while traveling. This scene could be considered “shocking” to middle class sensibilities regarding the eating of a family pet, but as Rocha emphasizes in his discussion

of the “aesthetic of hunger” and its social-political function, it is necessary that “we” see that the behavior of the starving first and foremost arises from a logic of survival, which may not be beautiful, but it must be witnessed and understood.<sup>8</sup>

Vitoria’s logic of survival and subsistence carries over to the family finances and economic justice. Even though she carefully calculates the family profit/loss in wages for Fabiano’s work on the cattle ranch and gives him the information he needs to collect what he is due, Fabiano is robbed by the fast talking master who pays little and charges a high interest rate for use of the house and goods purchased in town. Fabiano ends up with very little. He leaves the master’s house with his head hanging, embarrassed and dejected, all to the tune of the violin played by the master’s daughter in the parlor.

As “the fool”, Fabiano reveals the injustices of the hacienda system of the time. He enters the master’s home, trusting that he will be paid fairly for his work, but upon entering the inner circle of the master, the large comfortable private family home, he is out of his element, he does not fit in, and he is left in the cold. There is no space for argument, Fabiano lacks the words, the language, to say what he would like to say, and is not altogether sure of the calculations performed by Vitoria even to begin to defend his wife’s work. He offers a semi-audible apology for his wife’s mistake and stumbles out the door back into the bright light of the provincial town.

In the eyes of Fabiano, wearing the mask of the “fool”, as Bakhtin suggests,

All ideological forms.... become hypocritical and false, while real life, denied any ideological directives, becomes crude and bestial. (feudal ideology = falsehood)

Opposed to convention and functioning as a force for exposing it, we have the...fool...opposed to greedy falsehood and hypocrisy we have the fool’s unselfish simplicity and his healthy failure to understand. In the struggle against conventions, and against the inadequacy of all available life-slots to fit an authentic human being, these masks take on an extraordinary significance.(162)

We, as viewers, know that Fabiano is no fool. We see it when he clearly understands the relations of power within different social spaces. In the public square, he and his family must wear the clothes that do not fit them, that make them uncomfortable, and the policeman has the power to arrest Fabiano unjustly. The public square in the town is a space in which the migrant family’s privately-felt marginal status is made public, put out into view, is undeniable. They do not fit in. Fabiano is arrested and beaten by the confusing form of justice carried out by the police in the official space of the town/public square. Later, in the *sertão*, amid the brush, when Fabiano and the same policeman meet, Fabiano knows he has the power to kill the corrupt policemen. The moment is tense, both he and the policeman can sense how the relations of power have tipped in Fabiano’s favor in the *sertão*, his space.

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<sup>8</sup> Having witnessed a collective expression of shock at this scene when I have presented clips of the film at conferences, I would like to point out another aspect of the film that provokes a ripple through the public: the representation of Vitoria as the family is walking, it is she who carries the bulk of the family possessions, while Fabiano carries just his rifle and, the children, when they are not carried by Vitoria, do not carry anything. There is indignation among members of the viewing public as they witness this “injustice” against Vitoria. These two events occur at the beginning of the film, just as the public is entering the filmic world of the backlands. At this point they do not yet understand who these people are and what their collective reality or destiny will be.

Fabiano doesn't do it, that is not who he is, but in reading the totality of Fabiano, his facial expressions, his gestures, we know that he understands. In the same way, when faced with the power advantage of the master, in the master's private home and following the master's semi-feudal logic of threats and repression, Fabiano is frozen, he cannot speak the language, he doesn't respond, yet we, as viewers see the silent response to the terrible injustice in his downtrodden comportment, his humiliation.

As the drought returns and the *sertão* once again grows dry and endless, our heroes set out along the riverbed, moving downstream, they can look back, but cannot walk against the "current" and return to the past. They leave their temporary home behind and dream of a better future as they walk ahead. The circle is complete and the movement forward is regenerated.

### **"Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol": feudalism, religion, and banditry in the 1960s**

Meu Deus, meu Deus  
A seca terrível /Que tudo devora /Lhe bota pra fora /Da terra natal  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
Apela pra Março /Que é o mês preferido /Do santo querido /Senhor São José  
Meu Deus, meu Deus  
Mas nada de chuva /Tá tudo sem jeito /Lhe foge do peito /O resto da fé  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
-Patativa do Asaré

Approximately forty years later, we return to the *sertão* with "Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol". Little has changed in the natural landscape of the Northeast. But, the broad dry horizon, crossed and dotted by brush and an occasional tree is now populated not only by the subsistence and migrant workers and the landowners, but new social actors have come onto the scene – a millenaristic religious figure promising that the barren *sertão* will one day be transformed into the sea and his fanatic followers; the *cangaceiro*-bandits who attack the rich to mock and punish them and kill the poor to put them out of the misery of their poverty; Antonio das Mortes, the local government paid avenger/hitman; and finally, the blind traveling singer-chronicler, our narrator of the odyssey of the young couple at the center of the film, Rosa and Manoel.

Manoel, like Fabiano, cares for the cattle of the landowner, Colonel Moraes, and the couple lives in a house on the landowner's hacienda. But, in contrast to Fabiano, within the first fourteen to seventeen minutes of "Deus e o Diabo", when the landowner tries to rob Manoel of his portion of the cattle, Manoel takes out his machete and kills his master. Manoel takes justice into his own hands. Unlike the situation in which Fabiano of "Vidas Secas" is deceived by the master while in the master's space, his private home, Manoel faces his master on common ground, they are at an outdoor livestock market, and Manoel is carrying his tool/arm, the machete. Within the public space of the open market, the injustice committed against Manoel is made public as is Manoel's rage at that injustice. The moment is tense, the camera cuts between images, and pauses, focusing on Manoel as he reflects and gains strength. The master begins to whip him and Manoel turns on him with his machete, he will not hang his head and stumble away ashamed, as Fabiano did. Manoel rejects the role of passive fool in the semi-feudal relationships of the backlands.

Following the murder, Manoel takes off on horseback, now a fugitive, to tell Rosa what has happened. He is pursued to the house and his mother is killed in the crossfire, removing all traces of Fabiano's generation from the story of our new heroes. Taking to the road, Rosa and Manoel join up with a religious leader, Sebastião and his fanatic followers. Manoel gives himself over to the messianic promises of the priest. Rosa, however, is not convinced and when Sebastião tries to confront her and defuse her influence over Manoel by murdering a baby with a knife in her presence and threatening to punish her, Rosa herself takes the knife and murders Sebastião. In her attitude toward religious fanaticism, Rosa presents a concrete, down-to-earth response: rejecting the deceitful promises made by Sebastião and wrenching her husband from his misguided path, Rosa shows the other side of the fool. She presents a conscious awareness of the injustice and manipulation of the situation and puts a stop to it in the most direct and complete way she can. At the same time, Rosa, in her act of retaliation to put a stop to Sebastião's deceit of the poor and suffering, is directly associated with "o povo" the people, in the narrative given by Antonio das Mortes regarding who killed Sebastião. "Antonio: Sebastião...foi eles que mataram. Foi o povo mesmo que matou o Santo./Antonio: ..." (script Rocha 273)

Once again on the road, now due to Rosa's murder of the priest as well, Manoel and Rosa join up with a *cangaceiro*, Corisco, and his partner, Dada. They are also fleeing the authorities following the capture and murder of Lampião, the legendary leader of the *cangaceiros* of the *sertão* and his partner, Maria Bonita. In collaboration with Corisco, Manoel is given the *nom de guerre*, "Satanás" as he joins in the ransacking and murder of a wealthy landowner. The Law approaches and Manoel-Satanás and Rosa must choose their destiny. Will they stay and fight with Corisco and Dada or will they continue on their path, back on the road, out of the *sertão* and toward the sea? Manoel leaves it up to Rosa who decides: she wants them to keep moving and have a child, beyond the *sertão*. In the final scene, Rosa and Manoel are shown, from a distance, as they run, crossing the barren plain, heading for the sea, toward the future.

While "Vidas Secas" focused on how drought conditions and semi-feudal relations deformed and damaged the life situation of the migrant family as the center of the plot, in "Deus e o Diabo" that element of *sertão* life is the first motivating factor to set the couple in motion. The conflict with the master happens in the first section of the film and then it is absorbed into the narrative, as an underlying given, part of the landscape of the *sertão* – a chronotopic affect of the *sertão* – and two other outstanding historical elements are emphasized and exorcised: the religious fanaticism and false promises of millenaristic movements (heralding back to Antonio Conselheiro) and the local banditry of the *cangaceiros* (associated most strongly with Lampião and Maria Bonita). The figures of Antonio das Mortes and the blind traveling singer/chronicler are stock *sertão* characters as well who bring their chronotopic presence to the screen enriching the historical depth of the work.

In their journey, Rosa and Manoel come into contact with each of these historical "characters" and one by one eliminate the most nefarious of them: first with Manoel's murder of his cheating boss, Colonel Morais; then Rosa's murder of Sebastião; and, with the help of the blind singer, they manage to stay ahead of Antonio das Mortes, who does kill

Corisco and Dada while Rosa and Manoel escape to the sea. These migrants face each obstacle in their path, one by one they exorcise and excise them from their consciousness and the social landscape while they move forward on the road out of the *sertão*. Their methods certainly are not within the “law”, but they have learned that within the context of the backlands, in order to oppose authority on its own level, they must employ the strategies of the oppressed. In these acts, Sandoval’s notion of the differential mode of oppositional consciousness is especially useful to illuminate the process of growing consciousness in the migrant subjects’ development from Fabiano/Vitoria to Manoel/Rosa:

The differential mode of oppositional consciousness depends upon the ability to read the current situation of power and of self-consciously choosing and adopting the ideological form best suited to push against its configurations, a survival skill well known to oppressed peoples. (204)

Employing a logic of survival, the couple is able to move beyond the landowner, the false promises of the religious man and the informal, but misguided rebellion of the *cangaceiros*. From and along the margins they make their way as the blind man sings their story. The final verses of the song, as Manoel reaches the sea are: “...que a terra é do Homem/não é de Deus nem do Diabo....” (script Rocha 284)

#### **“Terra em Transe”: Urban Politics and Migration in the 1960s.**

Ai, ai, ai, ai  
Chegaram em São Paulo /Sem cobre quebrado /E o pobre acanhado /Procura um patrão  
Meu Deus, meu Deus..  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
Do mundo afastado /Ali vive preso /Sofrendo desprezo /Devendo ao patrão  
Meu Deus, meu Deus  
O tempo rolando /Vai dia e vem dia /E aquela família /Não vorta mais não  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
-Patativa do Asaré

Felicio: It’s that our families arrived on this land more than twenty years ago, and our people worked the land, planted it, and our women had our children on this land. Now we cannot leave this land just because some owner from who knows where brings a paper from the title company and says that this land is his...That’s what I mean, Doctor...We believed in you, Sir, but if the Justice System decides that we should leave our land, we will die, but we won’t leave it, no.  
(Film Script Rocha 296)

Another key aspect of urban inequality in Latin American is displacement. The low-income community of Barra da Tijuca at the periphery of Rio de Janeiro, for example, has been the target of a concerted eviction campaign by land developers, supported by local government, who want to build luxury condominiums in this attractive mangrove forest area. The eviction campaign has included assassination of community leaders by mysterious death squads, destruction of houses by military police, demolitions by local government and forced evictions.  
NACLA Urban Report

“Terra em Transe” begins with a wide shot of the sea, open and broad, there is no coast in sight. The camera lingers over the open sea, a force of nature, as big and as powerful as the *sertão*. This entrance to the film suggests an association with the last scene of “Deus e o Diabo” in which Rosa and Manoel run to the sea, as if the *sertão* truly did turn

into the sea, but not due to Sebastião's promised miracle, it is instead the result of their journey on foot, they follow the road to the sea to create a new life, to have their child, "to be united once again".

As chronotope in the Brazilian context, the sea could signify or evoke a number of historical events and figures: the arrival of the Portuguese conquistadores and the Catholic evangelists, European pirate invaders, slave traders and their human cargo arriving from Africa, cacao and rubber commerce, are a few which immediately come to mind, and which form part of the historical memory represented in "Terra em Transe" to varying degrees.

The musical background of this film is also large, even epic and nationalist-classical. The score is by Heitor Villa-Lobos, the most famous and important classical composer of twentieth-century Brazil.<sup>9</sup> The issues to be represented in the film also take on epic proportions, and the *Cinema Novo* film style draws in elements of French new wave cinema in the use of jump cuts, the production of a film within a film, and breaking with chronology, the flashbacks, delirium and nightmares which help to tell the tale. If "Vidas Secas" ended the same way it began, indicating the cyclical, circular path of poverty and drought in the *sertão*, "Terra em Transe", now in a more urban setting, begins at the end, and, through a series of flashbacks following the political development of the main character, Paulo, a petit-bourgeois poet, takes the viewer back in time to trace the personal odyssey of this well-intentioned populist who finishes his story on a sand dune, rifle in hand, shouting at the sky.

The struggle in "Terra em Transe" is one of political and economic power carried out in the urban spaces of a provincial capital and a national capital. In this film, the migrants have arrived in the city. They have fulfilled the dream of the northeastern migrant, they have left the *sertão* behind, and are building a new life in the city. Their community now is that of the *favela*, the shanty town, the informal sector – the margins. Upon arrival in the city, the new immigrants set up "invasions" of abandoned lands. There they begin to gather the materials needed to build houses, schools, churches, hospitals. Through cooperation, collaboration and hard work they manage to create decent living conditions, even as they work to bring in water, electricity, and other services. Working against all odds, employing a logic of survival, and strategies of the oppressed: the new arrivals "invade" the urban space and begin to make it their own. Franz Fanon, the influential social critic whom Rocha appreciated greatly, has said of this new phenomenon: "The shanty-town is the consecration of the colonized biological decision to invade the enemy citadel at all costs, and if need be, by the most underground channels." (81) As another step in the development of the oppositional consciousness, that Sandoval discusses, the construction of the urban shantytown is an act of resistance and persistence on the part of the migrant subjects, one that had to be carried out at first, often, under clandestine circumstances or "underground channels", but the communities thrived and grew.

When we as viewers come into contact with the migrants, now established in the city, they are walking the streets of the *favela* on the way to the town square, to attend a

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<sup>9</sup> "Deus e o Diabo" also opens with large broad music by Villa-Lobos, which matches the opening images of that film as the credits appear as well: a view from above of the wide *sertão*, a *sertão* that fills the screen while Villa-Lobos' music fills the ears.

political rally. Candidate for Governor, Vieira, wearing his populist hat, carrying a small child and leading the crowd, is seeking *favela* support. In this scene, the camera angles are off balance, producing jangled and jerking shots, it is hard to focus on the characters, the atmosphere is noisy and tense. Some are shouting and cheering as the candidate declares his dedication to the people. Taking the candidate's concern for their welfare seriously, Felicio, a migrant *favela* dweller, tries to speak for his community. Vieira encourages him, "Speak my son, speak," he says. It is hard for Felicio to find the words to express his problems and the noisy background distracts the candidate. Felicio manages to mumble something about the need for water, but is cut off and interrupted. Candidate Vieira distractedly promises to take care of the abuses.

Later, after his election, now Governor Vieira makes a trip back to the *favela* to reconnect with the people. They have a pressing concern. This time the background music includes an ominous, threatening drum beat and piano runs, with tense, loud cymbal rolls and clashes. Felicio is now the one leading the *favela* community in its meeting with the governor who arrives by car accompanied by military police, Paulo, and a press member with a microphone. The Governor and his group are situated on an incline, a higher space than that of Felicio and his community, and with a sideward glance to the military police, Felicio is separated from the other *favela* dwellers who are blocked by the police from accompanying Felicio up the hill. Felicio is isolated from his community as he is escorted forward to speak with Vieira. Speaking much more clearly and smoothly this time, Felicio makes public the *favela* dwellers' disagreement with a government movement to displace them from their homes in order to carry out a government project. As in the quoted segment of the film that opens this section, Felicio informs the politician that the migrants have built their community with their own hands, their own work, their children were born there, it is their home, they will not accept displacement. Vieira and Paulo do not react well to this "voice" of the people, it is clearly not what they wanted to hear; Paulo pushes Felicio to the ground and a few days later, Felicio turns up dead, murdered by someone in a military uniform, his wife reports.

Somewhat like Fabiano from "Vidas Secas", in the first encounter with candidate Vieira, words do not come easily to Felicio as he speaks to power in the public square, he has trouble expressing himself in a language that is understandable to the politicians, and like Fabiano, he wears a torn shirt. Both elements, "language" and "costume" clearly associate him with his precursor. Moving from Fabiano to Manoel to Felicio, the landless migrants are once again living in a borrowed/invaded space, which is not "really" theirs, according to the logic of the semi-feudal order and then the capitalist urban order. In the second encounter in the public square, when Felicio does find his voice and speak his truth and that of his migrant community, his response from power is death, the ultimate silencing. As inhabitants of the margin, the migrants walk the fine line of insider/outsider. bell hooks sums up this life experience,

To be in the margin is to be part of the whole, but outside the main body.  
We could enter the world but we could not live there.  
We looked both from outside in and from inside out.  
These statements identify marginality as much more than a site of deprivation; in fact I was saying just the opposite, that it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.



This is not a mythic notion of marginality. It comes from lived experience.(156)

Later in the film, Felício's wife appears again in the public square, she is part of a group of migrant *favela* dwellers who are discussing their social economic situation with the politicians and a union leader. Jeronimo, a factory worker and union president discusses the situation of exploitation and misery in which he and his family live. But he is interrupted by the "Man of the People" who points out to Jeronimo and the group that he has seven children, is out of work, he and his family are homeless and landless, he better understands misery. The politicians stuff a handkerchief into his mouth to gag him, to stop him from saying, once again, what they do not want to hear. He is declared subversive for speaking so plainly about his poverty. Felício's wife is at his side to give him comfort and support. This "Man of the People" wears a torn shirt like Fabiano and Felício both did, he carries on their legacy. He has made the attempt to speak his truth in the public square, to defy/correct not only the political bosses but the union leader as well. His truth belies their political discourse, and he is silenced by them both.

As urban chronotope, the public square is an important space for making public what had previously been private, for laying bare the human experience in all its specificity – "the good, the bad and the ugly". As Bakhtin suggests,

In the square, revealed truth, realized concretely, fully incarnated, is made visible, given a face. And, in this concrete as it were all-encompassing chronotope, the laying bare and examination of a citizen's whole life was accomplished and received its public and civic stamp of approval. (132)

And, as we see in the cases of Felício and the "Man of the People", in "Terra em Transe", authorities in the public square can give their stamp of disapproval as well. Yet, it is important to remember that the authorities are not the only interlocutors in these scenes. Each time the migrant/*favela* subjects take to the square to speak, they are backed by a community of their *favela* peers. This group is frightened, but supportive. And in making the community's private individual yet common problems public in the square, they speak for the collective, for their own people. In the square, the margin finds its own center, a place to speak, and in this case, what happens when the subaltern speaks? On the one hand s/he is quickly silenced by those in authority, and on the other, a community of his/her peers hears what s/he has to say, is witness to the reaction of power when faced with migrant/*favela* reality. They thus become conscious of their own situation and can be called to action, can be changed forever.

As the singer/narrator out of shot of the camera sings, "Cantador (off): A

praça é do povo/como o çeu e do condor,/ja dizia o poeta/dos escravos cantador."  
(script Rocha 299) as Brazilian poet, Antonio Castro Alves once said.

### "A Hora da Estrela": *Sertaneja* in the Metropolis, Wandering in the 1970s

Meu Deus, meu Deus  
Só vê cara estranha /De estranha gente /Tudo é diferente /Do caro torrão  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
-Patativa do Asaré

What I am writing is something more than invention; it is my duty to relate everything about this girl among thousands of others like her. It is my duty, however unrewarding, to confront her with her own existence. (Lispector 13)

The film opens with a cat, eating crumbs off of the floor of a warehouse. The camera pans to Macabea, working in the dingy warehouse office. She is typing slowly, she pauses to wipe her nose on the collar of her blouse. She apologizes to her boss for the messy letter filled with errors and food stains that she has just completed. After work she walks the gray streets of the city. The camera follows her as she crosses a bridge, meanders along the grimy sidewalks surrounded by cracked faded walls, factories in the distance. The opening music of the film is the modern, mundane generic "Time Radio Station". Macabea's favorite, it gives the time and trivial fun facts for listeners.

Macabea lives in the city now, but she carries the backlands within her. Their presence is almost overwhelming. Her body is marked by the *sertão*, by drought, by scarcity. She is rachitic, sickly, pale, ugly. She doesn't wash often, this is odd in the city but logical for her and common due to the lack of water in backlands. The booming metropolis is on the outside, it is the urban space that she calls "home", but her life there is marked by her roots in the backlands. Like the *favela* dwellers of "Terra em Transe" she lives at the margin, in that in-between space, not in, not out, not really anywhere. But, in Macabea's case, she does not have the migrant community of the *favela* to share her woes. She lives an isolated existence in the city, in a shared flat with other city girls who are intrigued and repulsed by Macabea and her odd ways. Urban dwellers on the street look at her with puzzlement, disgust or completely ignore her. For the most part she is invisible to them.

Macabea moves to her own rhythm, the rhythm of the *sertão*. Slowly, quietly, she meanders along. The purposefulness and speed of those around her is directly contested by Macabea. She is a slow worker, a distracted eater, a wandering mind. There is urban time-space – part of the capitalist speed principal and urban development – and there is Macabea/*sertão* time-space, as the two chronotopes come into contact, the clash is inevitable.

Perhaps the viewer would be curious, confused about this special character. Where did she come from? Why can't/doesn't she speak up? Why doesn't she at least try to live minimally according to the customs and culture of her surroundings? And, why does she seem to be so pleased with herself? She doesn't even know to complain. Macabea seems to inhabit the space of the "unhomely" as Homi Bhabha has discussed:

In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible. It has less to do with the forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations. (141)

Not in, not out, she resides in a land in-between, but, it must be emphasized that she does reside – she is present – she does not consider vanishing altogether. Macabea, against all odds, survives, she moves ahead in her mundane, unimportant, odd little world and makes that world visible to the viewer/reader. Her survival, persistence, and life path are asserted as part of the national reality, in spite of attempts to erase her.

While the novel by Clarice Lispector is narrated by a very intrusive male intellectual who tells the story of Macabea as he philosophizes, argues, and complains to us, his reading public, there is no narrator-voice in the film, not even a blind singer/chronicler to show her the way and tell her story. Instead, the omnipresence of the camera is our narrator and we as viewers follow the lead of the camera as we watch, almost as voyeurs, the private and public life of Macabea in all its splendor and squalor. Thus in a way, her story becomes our story and perhaps we feel we must assume a little responsibility for this unfortunate girl. She seems to be so lost, isolated, so unconscious. She almost provokes a desire in the viewer to wipe the ketchup off of her face, to pull up her stockings, button her sweater correctly, and remind her it isn't appropriate to eat her leftover chicken as she sits on the chamber pot.

As the outsider, the little fool<sup>10</sup>, Macabea, migrant subject, reveals the profound contradiction and failure of a nation, the failure of a system to democratically incorporate all of its national citizens with dignity into a national project. She shows us the brutal reality suffered by the innocent outsiders who do not understand, do not fit in. Yet as Lispector has said, Macabea does not just represent "herself," but thousands of others: the silent unrepresented women immigrants in the enormous metropolitan centers of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo (Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Lima, Caracas...not to mention, New York City).

One Sunday afternoon, while strolling in the public square, Macabea meets a young man who is having his picture taken. The two immediately recognize each other – there is something familiar, they seem to see "home" in each other. Olimpico is from the *sertão* as well, they are both migrants and they begin a sort of companionship. Macabea tells him facts she learns from the radio and he treats her with *machista* contempt but also perhaps tenderness. In the public square the two migrants meet and fall into a natural kind of "at-homeness" together. They seem to be kindred spirits. The problem is that in the city there is the temptation of city girls (representing a "step up") – one in particular, Macabea's sexy co-worker, Gloria, wants to play with Olimpico. She distracts him from Macabea, and then drops him when a more wealthy and sophisticated city suitor comes along. Once again, both migrants are alone, on their own.

The scene in which this betrayal takes place is especially painful and telling of the hierarchies of vulnerability and power in the urban space. Gloria and Macabea are together working in the office when Olimpico calls. He is calling from a public phone and is dressed like a steel worker in his blue jump suit and red hat. He is radiant as he dials the number and excitedly greets Gloria. Back in the office, Gloria, dressed in a tight blouse and short

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<sup>10</sup> It's interesting to note that the cover of the English translation of the novel includes a reproduction of the Paul Klee painting of "The Little Fool". (NY: New Directions Books)

skirt, sits behind a desk with a typewriter in front of her. Macabea is seated at a desk adjacent to Gloria's. As Gloria begins the conversation with Olimpico, she turns sideways with her back to Macabea and casually rests her arm on the typewriter. The date is set while Macabea watches on, seemingly unaware of the betrayal of her "friend" and "boyfriend". Gloria hangs up the phone and turns back to Macabea who looks at her and asks her for an aspirin. Gloria responds, "O que é que dói?" and Macabea answers back, "Não sei. Só sei que dói..." She doesn't know what hurts, she just knows that it hurts.

Yet, in spite of her physical intuition of the betrayal, Macabea goes along blindly content in her existence until a clairvoyant, recommended by Gloria, informs her that she is miserable. Macabea looks at the clairvoyant, perplexed, she hadn't realized that her life was terrible. The clairvoyant does, however, promise her that wonderful things are awaiting her in the future. Macabea becomes hopeful for change in her life associated with a better and more powerful socio-economic situation through marriage to a blonde European, the image of the dream man that the clairvoyant describes to her. Macabea strolls out onto the street dreaming, she is on the road to her bright future. Suddenly tires squeal and "bam!" she is hit by a Mercedes Benz driven by a beautiful blonde young man - run down by the international bourgeoisie, the new man of her dreams. He doesn't seem to notice her and she is left in the gutter to die as the Blue Danube Waltz plays tauntingly in the background.

Macabea is hit by car. Thus the story ends. The urban *road* is for cars and buses, not for foot travel by distracted dreamers. As Macabea sets off for her future, she walks into the street and she embarks on her journey. Like Vitoria and Rosa, she follows her historical path, moving ahead toward her destiny, but in this case she literally is run down. A false dream of integration into the bourgeois capitalist project means her destruction, her alienation. Macabea, as the little fool who innocently believes the clairvoyant's prediction, not only reveals the fissures in a system that will never have a (privileged) place for her, but also the greed-driven falsehood and hypocritical ideological forms of a system that pretends towards democracy, and only leads to her destruction, as she is flattened on her road to urban life. As urban time-space meets the time-space of the backlands, there is a clash and crash, but only insofar as the migrant subject remains unconscious of her circumstances. What will happen when "Macabea" becomes aware of her social and economic situation, without the falsehood and fantasy?

If we look back toward the initial discussion of the subsistence perspective as put forth by Mies and Vandana and what these narratives can tell us about the capitalist patriarchal world system and its destructive tendencies that threaten life on earth - the *sertão*, the *favela*, the metropolis - including the colonization of women, "foreign" peoples and their lands, and of nature, we begin to envision a collective undercurrent that runs through the works: a human rights based, subsistence perspective that calls for a full realization of and responsible attitude toward the silenced injustices produced by this system and a new path toward their correction. The lesson then, in the dynamic of the "fools" is to give us a fresh mis-understanding of a system that has been deemed "natural" by those it serves best.

As we have seen, when the chronotopic migrant social condition is made concrete, when it is particularized in terms of location and the social heterogeneity and contradictions that surround the migrant and into which s/he is inserted - when these particular factors are brought into view and activated - then the ritualistic sense of migratory time is historicized and the fantasy or dreams of streets paved with gold are contested. The migrants become full social actors, participants and creators of history, empty time is filled and abstract space is inhabited and vitalized. As they head out on their historical journey, these "little angels of history" do glance back at the past, they keep one eye on where they came from, but they also move forward in history, creating new roads and claiming a new time-space with dignity.

As the NACLA Urban Report reminds us and the MST provides evidence:

The surplus labor force in the countryside is drawn to the cities where people can find more employment, housing and cultural opportunities....Displacement and the generally poor living conditions in cities have given rise to perhaps the largest democratic movements in Latin America. In all major cities, large community-based movements arose in the 1970s to stop displacement and secure basic urban services. While the movements arose in separate neighborhoods, they have forged coalitions that play a significant role in local and national politics....

Distante da terra  
Tão seca mas boa  
Exposta à garoa  
A lama e o paú  
Meu Deus, meu Deus  
Faz pena o nortista  
Tão forte, tão bravo  
Viver como escravo  
No Norte e no Sul  
Ai, ai, ai, ai  
-Patativa do Asarré

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