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The Amazon in Brazilian Speculative Fiction: Utopia and Trauma

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There are two key moments when the Amazon is used as the setting for Brazilian science fiction, both during periods of dictatorship in the twentieth century. The first takes place during the authoritarian government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), the second after the decades-long push for modernization and technological change imposed by the military government from 1964 to 1985. Curiously, however, the portrayal of the Amazon during these two periods is strikingly different. As Candace Slater has noted, Amazonia has traditionally been portrayed in an ambivalent way, either as a verdant inferno or as a paradise filled with unattainable riches (38-48).¹ Indeed, the Amazon region can be termed an “empty signifier” into which any number of meanings can be placed: nationalist projects, utopian dreams, and nightmarish scenarios of cultural and ecological destruction. My study shows that, for writers of the first half of the twentieth century, the Amazon is a place of adventure, a setting for stories whose imaginative events ignore the region’s anthropology, history and indigenous cultures. In contrast, authors writing between 1983 and 2008 portray dystopian outcomes for the local populations and the environment. In other words, contemporary authors choose to depict traumatic events and to focus on the symbolism of the Amazon as “virgin territory,” a term that engages the imagery of rape, vampirism, and psychological and bodily invasion, highlighting the consequences of dictatorship and modernization.

In *Entangled Edens* (2002), Slater speculates that the association of technology, wilderness and women warriors can be traced to early chroniclers who claimed to have seen Amazonian women wearing golden crowns, overseeing subterranean mines, and weeping tears of pure silver (83). The topos of the virgin territory changes over time, transforming the Amazon from a place to conquer into a place to respect and preserve. During the early part of the twentieth century, the Amazon was generally an unknown hinterland for most Brazilians, a remote place to be civilized for the nation, according to Brazilian journalist, author and engineer Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909),² or to be explored by the likes of military engineer Marechal Cândido Rondon (1865-1958), who supervised the laying of hundreds of kilometers of telegraphic wire in the Amazon and other remote regions of Brazil.³ Yet for others, such as English explorer Percy Harrison Fawcett (1867-1925),⁴ the region was key to solving the mysteries of the sunken city of Atlantis and its esoteric knowledge (Slater 240n3). During the military dictatorship, the vast region was the object of the military’s plans for economic development and gold mining, especially after the discovery of gold at the Serra Pelada mine in 1979 (Slater 105). In the post-dictatorship years, the Amazon became associated with the causes of ecology and the biodiversity, and what was previously conceived of as a “jungle,” became known as the “rainforest,” an area whose preservation was also justified by the presence and rights of indigenous peoples (Slater 149).⁵ Thus, while early novels evoke the exoticism of the wilderness in lost world narratives, the more contemporary works examine the region’s political and ecological impact. Yet in both cases, the Amazon remains a special locus for the national imagination, where aspirations for national greatness and dramas of psychological trauma may be played out with this vast, isolated region as backdrop.

As I have shown in my own work, especially *Brazilian Science Fiction* (2004), this genre can be interpreted in the context of national myths, among them that of the Edenic “green land” (17), a trope that certainly applies to the idealization of the Amazon. Here I take the opportunity to examine several works that fall outside the purview of my

book, which focused on works published between 1960 and 2002 and uses science fiction as a barometer to measure shifting attitudes towards modernization. By focusing on the Amazon in the Brazilian imaginary and its relation to dictatorship for two different generations of writers, the present study complements and expands my other work.

In his study *Ficção científica, fantasia e horror no Brasil: 1875-1950* (2003), Roberto de Sousa Causo points out that some of Brazil's most significant works of early twentieth-century science fiction take place in the Amazon and fall under the "lost world" subgenre.⁶ In examining several of these early works, I apply John Rieder's colonial paradigm, according to which a technologically superior culture justifies an incursion into a primitive or decadent civilization through its "civilizing" mission (52). However, in Brazilian lost-world novels, interestingly enough, we have a case of internal colonization, where technological society is generally rejected, and the idealized Amazonian space is portrayed as a *tabula rasa* or a new start for an alternative society. Among the Brazilian Amazonian adventure fiction novels studied are *A filha do Inca* (1930) and *Kalum* (1936),⁷ both by modernist Menotti Del Picchia,⁸ and two works by science fiction writer Jerônimo Monteiro, *O irmão do diabo* (1937) and *A cidade perdida* (1948). I show that these narratives promote conservative views of race, class and gender, as a way of returning to nature and simpler times in reaction to the modernization policies of the Vargas regime in the 1930s and 1940s.

These utopian visions of the Amazon give way to nightmarish imagery in the aftermath of the Brazilian military regime and its policies of repression and economic expansion. Brazilian society changed dramatically in the intervening years 1950-1980, continuing earlier trends established during the military regime's nearly twenty-year rule. Brazil's urban population grew from 36% in 1950 to 66% of the total population by 1980 (Piletti 162). Beginning in 1964,⁹ the military regime pursued a policy of rapid modernization and foreign investment, resulting in an economic "miracle" that coincided with the worst years of repression, i.e., 1968-1973 (Piletti 170, 174-178). Here the combined factors of economic and ecological exploitation of the Amazon, increased industrialization, and practices of torture and disappearances resurface in the "return of the repressed"¹⁰ in several Amazonian novels of speculative fiction. Hence, I discuss the presence of the monstrous in three such novels: mainstream writer Marcio Souza's allegorical science fiction novel, *A ordem do dia* (1983), Ivanir Calado's tale of dark fantasy *Mãe do sonho* (1990) and finally Roberto de Sousa Causo's novella of alien invasion *O par* (2008). Here I approach the texts through the use of trauma theory as outlined by Cathy Caruth, Anne Whitehead and Judith Butler, arguing that the region represents Brazil's collective unconscious, a site far from its main population centers – a metaphorical "heart of darkness" – suitable for reenacting the trauma of the dictatorship and its policies of repression and forced economic development.

The Amazon as the Site of Conservative Utopias 1930-1948

Amazonian novels can be seen as reflecting certain atavistic impulses as Brazilian society is transformed by modernization in the 1930s and 1940s. By 1929, Menotti Del Picchia is known for his endorsement of the right-wing nationalism associated with the modernist Verde Amarelo group and their manifesto "Nhengaçu do Verde Amarelo" (also called Manifesto do Verde-amarelismo, da Escola da Anta), which

proclaims: “Aceitamos todas as instituições conservadoras, pois é dentro delas que faremos a inevitável renovação do Brasil, como o fez, através de quatro séculos, a alma da nossa gente, através de todas as expressões históricas” (qtd. in Teles 367). The 1930s novels by Menotti Del Picchia contrast with the left-leaning and aggressive “Manifesto Antropófago” (1928) of his contemporary Oswald de Andrade, with its exaltation of matriarchal, communistic values and assimilation of foreign cultural elements. While the experimental and parodic poetry and prose of Oswald de Andrade question the colonial legacy of Brazil, Del Picchia’s novels affirm the importance of traditional institutions of Brazilian culture, an approach more appealing to middle class readers (Bosi 368).

By the 1930s, Del Picchia began to work for the Brazilian government and was elected as a state and federal congressman during the Vargas regime, even serving as the first director of the Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (Rónai xii). On the opposite side of the political spectrum was Jerônimo Monteiro, a self-made man and writer who worked in radio and penned popular mysteries and adventure stories as well as the works of science fiction for which he is best known. He was arrested as an alleged communist in 1964 by the Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (DOPS),¹¹ and although he was wary of Brazil’s institutionalized conservatism, he too was fascinated by the myth of Brazilian greatness, comparable to those of Atlantis and Eldorado.

Menotti Del Picchia’s ideological association with the conservative wing of modernism, with its idealized primitivism and sense of national destiny, clearly informs his science fiction novels. His first, *A filha do Inca* (1930), displays a curious combination of primitivism and technology, incorporating a love story between Captain Fragoso and the Incan Princess, Raymi, in the context of a superior technological society established by a lost race that originated in Knossos, Crete, but settled in the Amazon thousands of years before. This race, whose technological advances have turned them into proto-cyborgs, captures the descendants of the Incas and keeps them as slaves, at times sacrificing them for ritual or punishment. Indeed, the Incan princess is about to be the next victim of sacrifice when, abruptly, the proto-cyborgs complete their long-term preparations for space travel and depart from Earth.

The novel reflects Menotti Del Picchia’s political concerns in two ways. First, it neutralizes the threat of internal primitivism by arranging for the marriage of the Indian woman to a Europeanized Brazilian, who acts as a civilizing force, and second, it deals with the threat of external technology through the abrupt departure of the advanced lost race. Images of death linked to the advanced technological culture are vividly described in the text, including their defense system, which consists of an electrified fence covered with bones of its victims, and their practice of carrying out human sacrifice. In this respect, Del Picchia has inexplicably incorporated the savagery traditionally associated with indigenous cultures into a highly technological one. It appears that for him, the Amazon could be incorporated and nationalized as part of the new state only by being cleansed of both primitive rituals and foreign technology. We also note that Del Picchia had no real answers for technology, as he resorts to a fortuitous departure of this technological society rather than suggesting a way to deal with it directly, emphasizing the novel’s function as an escapist fantasy.

Menotti Del Picchia’s 1936 *Kalum, o sangrento* is a variation of the “national romance,”¹² a genre characterized by the union of an Amerindian female and European male, as in *A filha do Inca*. The peculiarity of this story is the fact that the female is

ultimately of European origin, again having originated in Crete. *Kalum* begins when German adventurer and filmmaker Karl Sopor,¹³ who is trying to film a tribe of Brazilian cannibals, is captured by them and their chief, Kalum. After managing to escape, Karl finds himself among a race of undersized blond women living in a large underground cave with their normal-sized queen, Elinor. Like the advanced technological society in the previous novel, these originally Cretan women have been transformed by their technology, their small size being due to the freedom it has given them from physical labor. Elinor, realizing that her race has stagnated, hopes to escape and arranges to have a new passage to the surface engineered, but Kalum's tribe, having followed Karl's escape route, invades the cave and massacres everyone except Karl and Elinor, who survive by completing a new opening and escaping to the surface.

Written just before the official declaration of the neo-fascist corporate Estado Novo in 1937, this novel portrays a new whitened version of the national romance story, complete with a German adventurer. Once again we have a divided Amazon, and once again both the indigenous tribe and the lost race are undesirable—the cannibals representing the purely violent male aspect of the Amazon, and the women, an overly-civilized and decadent female aspect. The text associates the small and child-like women with technology, warning of the physical degeneration and debilitation it will inevitably cause. In addition, the story implies that the women's rejection of men – who are used only to maintain the basic operations of the underground habitat – undermines the idea of heterosexual union, contributing to cultural “stagnation.” Between these two extremes of masculine savagery and female decadence are Karl and Elinor, the very model of cultural and eugenic robustness.¹⁴ Del Picchia's stories reflect his belief in the elitist, eugenic model that Getúlio Vargas would impose during his mandate, in order to “protect” Brazil from ethnic groups that did not contribute to national unification (Stepan 142).

Jerônimo Monteiro's 1937 adventure novel *O irmão do diabo*¹⁵ is similar to *Kalum* in being a “pulp” novel aimed at an adolescent male audience recounting the heroic adventures of a German adventurer, this one named Walter Baron. Walter organizes an expedition of eighteen men to find the lost city of Manoa in the Amazon, and has to kill snakes, piranhas, panthers and hostile Indians along the way in order to protect the others. Finally, the group finds Manoa, which turns out to house a society dominated by females. Small, dark, black-haired and red-eyed, the mysterious women of the society rule over the even shorter, bearded, rotund men of their race. The women are at first suspicious of the interlopers, but eventually show them a nearby lost city full of gold and treasure. Walter studies the culture's elaborate social organization, religious traditions and rituals, but ultimately concludes that they are an inbred, decadent race, which he believes to be descended from the original Atlanteans. Later, the men of the expedition help themselves to treasures from the lost city before beginning their journey back to civilization, but only Walter survives the many trials, including cannibals and illness, that befall them.

Although both Del Picchia and Monteiro use colonial literary conventions in their novels, they do not go so far as to portray a colonial conquest. In his *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2007), John Rieder sets forth a series of Victorian-period plot conventions of the “lost-race” or “lost-world” novel, including a perilous journey leading to the discovery of a remote location and a beautiful exotic female, often a princess. The arrival of the outsiders usually precipitates a conflict, which often

necessitates the “rescue” of the princess by her new Western lover, whose actions concomitantly “free” her land and people from subjugation by an evil and corrupt leader (22). Del Picchia’s and Monteiro’s plots are very similar, although Monteiro’s diverges from the template in that his protagonists neither conquer the land nor rescue any princesses, perhaps because the Amazon region is already part of Brazil, making the conquest more cultural than literal. In his book *A Critical Anthology of Subterranean Worlds* (2004), Peter Fitting has pointed out that alternate “underground” worlds often appear when the growth of government, rationalism, and ever more complex social structures enter into conflict with other forms of human knowledge, especially those of mythic or symbolic power (12). This is the case in both of these Brazilian authors, who portray distinct reactions as Brazil falls under the influence of a bureaucratic corporate state and its pseudo-fascist ideology. Thus, these novels re-imagine the Amazon, and, after ridding the region of advanced technology or overcoming hostile forces of nature in the region, propose a new Brazilian model of cohesive social organization based on heterosexual union and the simple life of ancient cultures.

This proposal is repeated some ten years later, when Jerônimo Monteiro writes another adventure story, his 1948 *A cidade perdida*, a more didactic and utopian novel for young adults.¹⁶ This time, three Brazilian explorers set out from São Paulo to find the city of Atlantis in the Amazon, following the tradition of Colonel Fawcett’s mystical beliefs. After a series of hardships, they arrive at the new city of Atlantis where they learn about the utopian, almost communistic nature of Atlantean society. Their leader, Sálvio, a type of priest, explains that the ancient Atlanteans, having at one time had the most materially advanced civilization of the classical world, gave up their material gains and power and mysteriously relocated to the remote Amazon in order to live a simple life, far from modern civilization. Sálvio explains that many of the world’s great doctors, scientists, engineers, and technicians are actually Atlanteans who set out to fulfill selfless missions throughout the world and communicate information back to Atlantis. The visitors are shown events from recently concluded World War II in order to emphasize the Atlantean’s message of peace and the values of rural existence, while urging them to shun government, competition, material progress and domination.

Monteiro’s re-writing of the origin of humanity reveals certain pseudo-scientific beliefs of the period as well as the nationalist bent of the novel. Sálvio claims that South America, more specifically Brazil, was the cradle of human origins, and he dismisses scientific archeological evidence that points to Africa in this regard. For this reason, Brazil can be regarded as a source of cultural knowledge for Europe, inverting their traditional roles of cultural center / cultural periphery and providers / consumers of science and culture. The text also repeatedly emphasizes the blond, robust appearance of the Atlanteans in order to emphasize the fact that they were originally outsiders, a lost race in the New World. However, it is also claimed that humanity spread to other continents from this new South American location. Sálvio insists that all the indigenous peoples of Latin America are:

descendentes dos atlantes. Apenas, colocados em situações diversas, obrigados a lutar com dificuldades e tendo que viver em climas e ambientes discordantes, e talvez, também por outras causas que não conhecemos, nem suspeitamos—desviaram-se da vida primitiva e se tornaram selvagens, adotando novos hábitos,

iniciando vida diferente. Perdidos pelas selvas, espalhados pelo continente durante séculos e séculos, sofreram profundas alterações. (159)

He also alleges that when Pizarro arrived in the sacred city of Cuzco, he found a civilization that worshipped the sun, confirming the Atlantean origins of the Incas. This, along with the esoteric drawings in the novel, suggests that Monteiro is following the tradition of Colonel Fawcett's occult beliefs surrounding Atlantis. A considerable portion of the text is devoted to the religious beliefs of the Atlanteans, who reject the crass materialism and technology of modern civilization, choosing to live a simple or "primitive" existence dedicated to the goal of spiritual evolution.

Del Picchia's formula for Brazilian identity involves two imaginary spaces: the Amazon and the paternalistic corporate state. Monteiro, in contrast, believes in decentralizing the state, with his characters caught between the utopian dream of the Atlantean city located in the Amazon, and their reality, the modern society from which the three explorers depart. In both cases, the incorporation of the simple life of the Amazon may be seen as a return to an idealized past. Thus, despite the distinct political views of the two authors, the *zeitgeist* of this period leads them to write similar stories about the utopian possibilities of the Amazon region. For Del Picchia and Monteiro, Brazil's modernization comes at a great cost: social unrest and the loss of a more traditional way of life. During the 1930s, the rise of more radicalized political parties on both the left and right threatened the political stability of the Vargas regime. However, it was armed uprisings and demonstrations by the left that gave Vargas and his supporters in the military and other conservative sectors the excuse they needed to carry out a coup and establish the Estado novo in 1937, staving off elections scheduled for 1938 (Skidmore 29-30). Vargas would remain in power until 1945 and continue to industrialize the country, shifting its economy from a predominantly agricultural base to a more industrialized one (Fausto 216-217). In light of this, it is understandable that both Del Picchia and Monteiro evoke the Amazon as source of national identity, unity and pride, as a utopian space outside the parameters of urban unrest and socio-political change.

The Amazon as a Site of Trauma

Beginning in 1980, the Amazon region shifts its significance in the Brazilian imaginary from being a place of hope to a place of violence and despair. No longer a venue for a new start, it is now seen as a place for processing the trauma of the dictatorship and for representing Brazil's collective unconscious, where psychological and physical violence can be explored. In analyzing a set of three contemporary novels, I apply paradigms emerging from trauma studies by Anne Whitehead, Cathy Caruth and Judith Butler in order to understand the role of the monstrous fantastic. While the Brazilian military regime practiced disappearances, torture and censorship, it also inflicted another type of trauma on the population, that of authoritarian modernization. As we shall see, in the three novels of speculative fiction that portray trauma, each takes a separate approach to the aliens or supernatural monsters that cause traumatic events.

Márcio Souza's 1983 novel, *A ordem do dia*, written two years before the end of the dictatorship, uses supernatural or paranormal events as well as bodily invasion and violation to portray the trauma related to political torture and imprisonment. Souza's

novel includes two interweaving narratives involving mysterious alien ships in the Amazon and the struggle between two powerful aliens in Brasília, along with a brief section on military reports about UFOs, paranormal events, torture and disappearances. Written before the official end of the dictatorship, with multiple points of view and references to Anglo-American works of science fiction and film, this fragmented discursive novel represents one of Brazil's first steps towards re-democratizing itself by exorcizing its demons through literature.

At the center of the novel is the mystery surrounding a mutilated male body, with a broomstick still lodged in it, floating in the Amazon. This image serves as a reminder of political torture and sexual violation, recurrent images in the text. While the human torturers are a type of monsters, the alien “chupa chupas” are another. Using sinister lights and tractor beams launched from their ships, the aliens force terrified villagers to abandon their land, mirroring the Brazilian military's destructive policies in the region of the rainforest, where the building of hydroelectric dams and highways and the creation of a “duty-free” zone in the capital city of Manaus were undertaken to attract foreign investment and spur economic growth. When a female agronomist working with the local population attempts to inform the authorities and the media of these events, she is arrested and held naked in a cell, yet another representation of physical trauma. Cathy Caruth notes the continuity between physical and psychological violence, since its Greek origin trauma referred to a bodily wound (3). For Caruth, trauma is “the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us a reality or a truth that is not otherwise available” (4). In *A ordem do dia*, the hidden nature of the regime's repression comes to light in the images of physical and sexual torture in this novel, which are displaced to the Amazon, a remote region far from public scrutiny or consciousness. In this sense it is both hidden and revealed, capturing the paradox of trauma fiction.

The imagery of violation and violence is echoed in a short second section of the novel, which consists of a compilation of 22 military intelligence reports about paranormal activity and UFO sightings, along with documentation of torture and the activities of paramilitary death squads. Souza employs varied tones of narrative and diverse points of view, in the postmodern style of trauma literature, as a way of portraying acts of trauma all over Brazil. As Anne Whitehead notes, repetition, narrative disruption, and metafiction are all techniques used to evoke traumatic memory and political violence (81-82). Ultimately, the reader must re-order and tie together the disparate storylines to interpret events fully, taking on the role of witness to the violent acts whose reality is officially denied by the government (Whitehead 8). This narrative technique invites the reader to construct a larger picture of national trauma and state terrorism, in an experience that “simultaneously defies and demands our witness” (Caruth 5). Souza uses the intercalated texts of torture and alien invasion effectively, since both serve to undermine the military and its legitimacy to rule.

The struggle to reveal the hidden violence of the military regime is at the heart of the novel, and conspiracies abound among those who struggle to explain the unidentified body, which is suspected to be that of a CIA agent. As conservative and liberal military factions fight to gain political control of Brazil, they not only provoke the interest of the CIA and KGB, but also that of powerful alien allies.¹⁷ In the end, the body turns out to be that of an American UFO specialist who was tortured and killed when he revealed that the conservative general is possessed by an alien entity.¹⁸ At this point, the general

responsible for the act is arrested and the female agronomist released, a process that marks the return to civilian rule and an exorcism of trauma from the monsters of the past. As a political novel published in 1983, this work mixes science fiction with realistic reports of violence in part to avoid possible censorship in dealing with sensitive issues of torture and infighting among the military high command, who would not officially renounce power until 1985.¹⁹

While *A ordem do dia* focuses mainly on the political and collective monsters responsible for torture and corruption, psychological trauma is the topic of Ivanir Calado's text *A mãe do sonho* (1990), which offers a more individualized portrait of post-traumatic stress and psychological trauma as described by Caruth. Set in the 1970s during the investment boom in the Amazon and the construction of the Transamazonian highway, the novel begins with the massacre of all but one member of an anthropological expedition, leaving the sole survivor to face trauma that he experiences in the form of flashbacks and hallucinations. As Caruth explains, "the wound of the mind—the break in the mind's experience of time...is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that...is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness" (4). Traumatic memories, therefore, are not actively controlled by the survivor, but manifest themselves in what Freud called a "deferred action," as traces of unresolved events that surface in an atemporal way. This is the trajectory of the protagonist of *A mãe do sonho*, whose trauma eventually leads him to recapture repressed memories and to seek personal and political redemption.

The story is told from the point of view of Jorge, an anthropologist suffering from malaria, recurrent nightmares and horrifying visions. While attempting to contact a previously undocumented Amazonian tribe, Jorge suddenly loses his team to a massacre, learning later that the spirit gods of the elusive tribe have physical powers that allow them to carry out extreme violence in order to protect it from outsiders, though the fact that the tribe is subsequently massacred at the hands of military forces sent to take away their land proves that the spirit gods are no match for modern weapons. The anthropologist's recurrent images of trauma and psychological breakdown has a parallel in the violence of deculturation experienced by the indigenous group, whose deities and traditions lose their context and proper use after the massacre. Jorge manages to escape with the sole survivor of the tribe, a young boy named Terié. They flee to Rio de Janeiro where they hope to start a new life together. However, the murderous deities—manifesting through Terié—continue to inflict violence on innocent victims in urban areas, and Jorge and Terié eventually have to make their way back to the Amazon, where Terié enacts a ritual to free himself of the destructive gods.

Wanted as a serial killer for the crimes committed by the indigenous deities and haunted by images of violence as he attempts to save himself and Terié, Jorge at times appears to experience blackouts and the strange paradox of trauma as described by Caruth: namely, that witnessing a violent event may result in "an absolute inability to know it" (92). Terié becomes the key to unlocking Jorge's repressed memories linked to a childhood trauma in which he witnessed the brutal murder of his Amerindian caretaker during a home invasion. Through his experiences of protecting and caring for Terié, Jorge is able to end the nightmare of his trauma, eventually marrying and settling down to live with his wife and the boy as a family. The book's title *A mãe do sonho*, suggests the

presence of a female deity from the Tupi tribe, an archetype that may destroy, but also heal, completing the cycle of trauma and recovery. Hence, while *A ordem do dia* emphasizes political healing, *A mãe do sonho* quells the monsters of the dictatorship through psychological healing, unifying previously estranged regions, cultures and races in Brazil.

Roberto de Sousa Causo's Amazonian novella *O par* (2008) also involves psychological trauma, but with a new twist, since it involves alien-produced clones that mix race and gender. Here Judith Butler's fluid concept of gender beyond the customary binaries, as outlined in *Bodies that Matter* (1993), allows us to understand the transformative aspect of traumatic events, offering a model for understanding this type of bodily invasion and trauma. While *A ordem do dia* and *A mãe do sonho* represent trauma through external monsters, the protagonist of *O par* (2008), Oscar Feitosa, ultimately discovers that he himself is a monster. Traumatized by the accidental death of his girlfriend, Joana, Feitosa re-enlists in the army and is sent to the Amazon, a no-man's land where aliens have been killing humans, leaving their bodies behind, sucked dry, the apparent victims of alien experiments. Feitosa decides to desert his unit when he begins to distrust his superiors and comrades, and he kills anyone who threatens him. As he wanders through the rainforest alone, he meets Conrado, a character reminiscent of Kurtz from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), who in tacit agreement with the military uses his extensive weaponry and numerous henchmen to enslave workers and poachers in order to establish a personal empire based on selling animal pelts and drugs to foreign markets.

In addition to this human monster, the monstrous element is also represented by aliens. Though they usually kill their human victims, in some instances they experiment with them, extracting pieces of leg tissue and memories from their brains in order to recreate or "clone" a deceased loved one, creating sets of inseparable "pairs." Feitosa meets several of these as they wander through the Amazon. Some are later burned as werewolves by fearful and superstitious indigenous groups, while others are implanted with tracking devices by the military, apparently in the hope of gathering intelligence about the aliens.

Metaphorically, these pairings, caught in the timeless landscape of the Amazon, are eerie reminders or living representations of traumatic memories, outside of time and non-linear (Caruth 6-7). Feitosa eventually realizes that has been "paired" with Joana, his deceased lover, who suddenly appears after he murders five poachers, although she is now white, not black. Although this discovery temporarily quells his anguish over her death, it is exacerbated when she is later raped by Conrado's henchmen. Because they are a "pair," Feitosa shares Joana's thoughts, feelings and abilities, a sensibility that becomes more acute after this traumatic event. Finding himself no longer able to operate within the conventional boundaries of masculinity and femininity, he begins to realize that he is one "of those abjected beings who do not appear properly gendered, calling their very humanity into question" (Butler xvii). When Feitosa realizes that Joana may be only a projection of himself, he begins questioning his sexual identity. In this ambivalent state of desire, he seems to embody Butler's deconstruction of Lacanian theory that "opens up anatomy—and sexual difference itself—as a site of proliferative significations" (56), undermining the assumptions of heteronormative sexuality. As he internalizes the new

sensibility affecting both mind and body, he realizes that he has become something beyond human, outside “masculinist and heterosexist privilege” (Butler 56).

As a type of symbiont, neither human nor alien, male nor female, Feitosa exemplifies Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s idea that “the monster’s destructiveness is really a deconstructiveness” (14) that allows for difference, forbidden desire and Otherness. Throughout the text, Causo not only breaks down stereotypes of gender, but also indirectly questions the cultural myth of Brazil as a fertile, green land inhabited by a peaceful and racially harmonious population. *O par* thereby undermines Brazil’s traditional concepts of gender tied to the heteronormative pairs of national romance.

These three authors choose to portray trauma by focusing on the female symbolism of the Amazon and the rape or violation of “virgin territory.” On the one hand, this can be seen as a response to the military regime’s pursuit of development at all costs, including the economic policies that led to the Trans-Amazonian highway, encouraging the “opening up” and pillaging of the interior and indigenous lands. At the same time, it serves as a locus of the collective unconscious, where trauma and its hidden violence become apparent and accessible. The idea of using the Amazon as a place for recovering from loss or regaining a utopia recalls John Cuthbert’s study on French modernist writers and anthropologists who travel to exotic lands in order to recover a connection with the past, only to be confronted instead with sense of absence or an unfulfilled utopia (42). This sensibility is captured by Causo’s character Feitosa as he ponders what he and Joana may find in the Amazon after coming upon the wreckage of a Boeing B-17E:

Talvez encontrassem o El Dorado, nos próximos cem quilômetros. Ou a cura para o câncer em uma flor que Joana admirasse. A tribo perdida das amazonas. E a aldeia de Macunaíma. E sítios secretos de testes atômicos. E três milhões de espécies animais e vegetais desconhecidas e não catalogadas pela ciência. Navios ancorados no topo de montanhas. Ouro e prata. E animais antediluvianos pastando tranquilos nos altiplanos. E o elo perdido. ...E a sombra de tudo o que poderia ser sido. (119)

The paradox of past and future is illustrated even more concretely by Causo’s idea of a Brazil that remains unrealized or unfulfilled in the trauma that is modernity, as Feitosa and Joana walk towards an unknown future.

Conclusion

For Del Picchia and Monteiro, Brazil’s modernization threatens the traditional family and masculine control. By drawing on the imaginary past of Knossos or Atlantis, these two authors evoke the pillars of several national myths—of national greatness, of the green and fertile land, and of the peaceful people—(Ginway 16), and use them to fill the postcolonial void, projecting a heroic past onto an imaginary utopia located in the Amazonian hinterland.

Contemporary writers Márcio Souza, Ivanir Calado and Roberto Causo employ imagery of violation and bodily invasion to convey environmental and human exploitation in their use of monstrous aliens or supernatural forces. As Cohen notes, “the

monstrous offers an escape from the hermeneutic path, an invitation to explore new spirals, new and interconnected methods of perceiving the world” (7), and these novels forge paths that are simultaneously frightening, cathartic and disorienting. Here the role of the Amazon is to process enforced modernization and ecological destruction and then attempt to recover a sense of wholeness that would replace the violence of colonialism and the trauma of the dictatorship, and even into end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first, the Amazon still plays this role for writers. It is the place to which trauma is displaced, as if its recovery will heal the nation from the past, and integrate its future and its history. While these more contemporary works of Brazilian science fiction and fantasy offer a powerful means of representing the trauma caused by the dictatorship as monstrous or alien life taking root in the Amazon, they also explore encounters among indigenous and Western cultures to offer a new spectrum of racial and gender roles, suggestive of the unsettling nature of modernity, whose repercussions remain long after the monsters have disappeared.

Notes

¹ Pedro Maligo has also explored the contradictory imagery of the Amazon in literature (1900-1925), contrasting the major who viewed the Amazon as a green inferno, with the few who considered it a lost paradise. See “Literature of the Rubber Boom: The Green Hell and the Green Paradise of a Romantic Reaction,” 49-96.

² In *Rainforest Literatures* (2004), Lúcia Sá traces the similarity among the novels from Spanish American and Brazil in their portrait of the Amazon as a “green hell,” a phrase attributed to Euclides da Cunha (73).

³ Rondon is best known to Brazilians for his phrase “To die if necessary, to kill never” in connection with his Indian policy (Diacon 6). After his first expeditions to build telegraph lines in the Amazon beginning in 1900, he established the Indian Protection Service in 1910 (Diacon 30). Rondon was also in charge of organizing the 1914 expedition with former president Theodore Roosevelt. See Diacon 32-39.

⁴ For details about the connection with Atlantis, see the report by the Archeological Institute of America (2009). Peter Fleming’s *Brazilian Adventure* (1933), a text about the search for Fawcett’s lost expedition, mentions the colonel’s obsession with his “private Atlantis” (25), but says little more about it. David Grann explores Fawcett’s story in the 2009 book *The Lost City of Z*, noting that Fawcett was likely the inspiration for Conan Doyle’s 1912 novel *The Lost World* (29).

⁵ For an overview of literary, cultural and ecological conceptions of the Amazon, see Slater’s 2015 article, “Visions of the Amazon,” and her discussion of the shifting notions of the Amazon, along with the discovery of geoglyphs dating back 2000 years in the region (18). Candace Slater, “Visions of the Amazon: What has Shifted, What Persists and Why this Matters.” *Latin American Research Review*, 50.3 (2015): 3-23.

⁶ Causo cites Gastão Cruls’s 1925 novel *A Amazônia misteriosa* as the most important work of the lost worlds subgenre in Brazil (*Ficção científica* 174), an opinion I share. As a novel that echoes H. G. Wells’s *Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), Cruls’s novel is perhaps the most interesting or progressive of these early Brazilian adventure novels, openly condemning colonialism, the destruction of indigenous cultures, and the inhuman experiments carried out by the German scientist. Unlike Menotti Del Picchia and Jerônimo Monteiro, who use the region for political or speculative purposes, Cruls displays a more modern, anthropological sensibility. In general, Cruls’s narrative avoids the more speculative aspect of lost races, such as Atlanteans, miniature races or cybernetic beings which appear in novels by Monteiro and Del Picchia. Even though it may be the most complex of the novels, *A Amazônia misteriosa* has less explicitly nationalist political intent, and is therefore not included in this corpus.

⁷ Here I refer to Paulo Rónai’s bibliography of Menotti Del Picchia’s work in which he gives 1936 as the original publication date of *Kalum*, which appeared under three titles: *Kalum, o mistério do sertão*; *Kalum*,

o *sangrento* and simply *Kalum* (152). He also gives the spelling of *Kummunká* (Romance brasileiro) for the work subsequently published under the title *Cummunká* (153).

⁸ “Modernismo” in Brazil is the equivalent of “vanguardismo” in Spanish America. The “Semana de Arte Moderna” held in 1922 in São Paulo is generally cited as the origin of the movement in Brazil (337-339). Menotti Del Picchia was one of the principal organizers of the Semana and a strong advocate of modern art (Bosi 337).

⁹ The 1964 military coup ousted President João Goulart, who fled to Uruguay. The coup had the support of U.S. government, which intensely pursued an anticommunist policy in Latin America following the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The mobilization of the left among students, artists, intellectuals, rural works and unions unsettled the landed oligarchy and the middle and upper echelons of society. Increased protests, labor activism and urban guerrilla activities, along with civil unrest and protests, culminated with the Protest March of the 100,000 in June of 1968 in Rio de Janeiro (Alves 84-85). By December of that year, the Institutional Act No. 5 closed congress and suspended all civil liberties, habeas corpus and freedom of the press. Beginning in 1964, the secret police operated to root out communists and used torture to extract information from suspects (Fausto 259, 263-268).

¹⁰ Here I am using the idea of the return of the repressed from Freud’s analysis regarding repression and childhood amnesia in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (246-247), but in the more collective or Jungian sense, as it would apply to collective trauma, and the repression and recall of violent or traumatic acts.

¹¹ Bira Câmara writes: “Em ‘O Copo de Cristal’, escrito em maio de 1964, Monteiro sub-repticiamente relata, sem esconder a indignação e revolta, o triste episódio de sua prisão pelas forças repressivas ocorrido pouco mais de um mês antes, na noite de 31 de março, horas depois de os militares terem tomado o poder.” This story is available in English translation in *Cosmos Latinos*, ed. Andrea Bell and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán, and they explain that DOPS stands for the Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (334). DOPS was founded in 1924, but was used most heavily during the regimes of Getúlio Vargas and the military dictatorship.

¹² This is a reference to Doris Sommer’s idea that nationalism in the nineteenth-century Latin American novel consists of the union of an interracial couple, most commonly an indigenous woman and a European man. See *Foundational Fictions*, 77-78.

¹³ Ever since Taunay’s *Inocência* (1872) where the German naturalist indirectly causes the death of the virginal heroine because of his single-minded pursuit of a new butterfly species, the German explorer represents the threat of the outsider/scientist in Brazil. Notably, the cruel Dr. Hartmann in Gastão Cruls’s *A Amazônia misteriosa* (1925) is also German as is the explorer Walter Baron in Monteiro’s novel. However in Del Picchia’s novel, the German is here more as a representative of a eugenic race. See Gilson Queluz’s study for more details regarding the shift in Del Picchia’s vision from national romance and miscegenation to eugenic union.

¹⁴ As Gilson Queluz confirms in his article, “Metaforicamente, na visão de Menotti Del Picchia, um ano antes da implantação do Estado Novo e no auge da influência dos ideais fascistas, o futuro brasileiro é ‘branco e ocidental’” (5).

¹⁵ This book was republished under a new title as Jerônimo Monteiro, *O ouro de Manoa*. São Paulo: Círculo do Livro, 1970.

¹⁶ Del Picchia’s third Amazonian novel, *Cummunká* (1938) contrasts with the first two, since the concept of degeneration shifts from lost races and savage Indians of the Amazon to the “urban jungles” of Brazil. The main female character is a Brazilian Indian who shows a Brazilian male how to live life fully and escape from the prison of urban life, with its pressures of capitalism, mass culture and generalized hysteria. Here, the true savages are whites, while the Xavante tribe and its neighbors embody peace and harmony. When the Xavante leader Cummanká later holds a rich man hostage, he frees him on the condition that he will fund a project to deter human violence via the invention of a super weapon to keep peace among men, anticipating the deterrence of the Cold War. Monteiro’s novel *A cidade perdida* is remarkably similar in its affirmation of the “simple” life, far from urban centers.

¹⁷ I asked Souza about origins of this novel on Nov. 16, 2003 when he was visiting the University of Florida to give two lectures. He told me that the idea originated at a book fair when he struck up a conversation with a man from the adjacent stand, a high-ranking Brazilian military officer, who recounted his experiences with UFOs in great detail.

¹⁸ In *Erotismo e poder*, Rodolfo Franconi examines the use of sexual violence in the novel as part of his study on the literature of the dictatorship. It is one of the few studies that mentions Souza's only science fiction novel (51-54).

¹⁹ Despite the military regime's declaration of amnesty in 1979 and the policy of political opening or "abertura," several newsstands in São Paulo were bombed for carrying publications that were considered to be anti-regime in 1980, and the following year, two secret police agents were suspected of trying to detonate a bomb at a gathering of thousands celebrating O Dia do Trabalho on April 30 in Rio de Janeiro (Piletti 185). In *Muffled Cries*, Nancy T. Baden examines the ambivalence that Brazilian authors experienced their use of allegory and experimental techniques as a type of self-censorship in interviews she conducted with writers in 1983 (153-155).

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