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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERUDITE LITERATURE AND POPULAR CULTURE IN THE
NORTH EAST OF BRAZIL: ARIANO SUASSUNA AND THE MOVIMENTO ARMORIAL.

by

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts of the
University of Glasgow in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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TO MY PARENTS,
ALAN AND NANCY DINNEEN

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SUMMARY

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERUDITE LITERATURE AND POPULAR CULTURE IN THE NORTH EAST OF BRAZIL: ARIANO SUASSUNA AND THE MOVIMENTO ARMORIAL

The basic objectives of this study may be summarized as follows. Firstly, the work aims to highlight the crucial differences between the erudite literary tradition of North East Brazil and the popular cultural expressions of the region, especially the popular poetic or romanceiro tradition, showing how those differences are rooted in the contrasting objective conditions within which the respective literatures are produced. Secondly, the study follows the attempts made through the years by erudite writers of the North East to overcome the problem of those cultural divisions and incorporate elements of popular culture into their work in an effort to affirm a distinctly regional identity. This leads on to a third objective of the study, that of tracing the broad historical development of North East regionalist literature, indicating the principal transitions it has undergone in response to changing perceptions of national culture, regional identity and popular culture. Finally, the study presents an analysis of the work of Ariano Suassuna, seen as the major contribution to this regionalist artistic tradition in recent decades.

Chapter 1 reviews the historical development of erudite literature in the North East of Brazil from the colonial era to the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter 2 continues to trace that development through the twentieth century, up to the present. Chapter 3 examines the origins and evolution of the romanceiro tradition and its development into a written form, the folheto, and then studies the role of the folheto within poor rural and urban communities of the North East, the themes it deals with, and the profound changes it has experienced in the last few decades. Chapter 4 traces the development of the cultural and aesthetic theories of Ariano Suassuna, culminating in the launching of the Movimento Armorial in 1970. Chapter 5 assesses Suassuna's main contribution to the movement, his novels O Romance d'A Pedra do Reino (1971), and Ao Sol da Onça Caetana (1976).

The conclusions emphasize: (1) That the assimilation of popular culture into erudite literature of the North East has produced work of outstanding quality and originality, but which has also frequently embodied the contradictions inherent in the schemes of cultural nationalism and regional affirmation which have provided inspiration for so many of the writers concerned, (2) That the distinctive qualities of the popular poetry of the North East can only be understood within its social context, and that the tendency of certain writers and critics to separate it from that context necessarily transforms those qualities in fundamental ways, (3) That the work of Suassuna offers an original contribution in terms of its direct employment of popular poetry, but that his theories on culture, which must be understood as a crystallization of many ideas elaborated in previous eras, are still unable to deal adequately with the deep divisions and contradictions within North East society.

Unlike previous studies of Suassuna's work, this research considers it within a broad historical context in an attempt to find new perspectives for understanding and interpreting it. Also for the first time, this study places the development of his work within the context of the significant transitions undergone by the whole debate on national culture and popular culture between the 1950's and the early 1980's; transitions which were directly linked to broader political and cultural changes in Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

The debate around the ideology of national culture.

The origins of the present day concept of *national culture* -based on the notion of a state unified by fundamental common characteristics, such as race, language, shared beliefs or perceptions -are generally traced to the late eighteenth century. The German Romantics, seeking to elaborate a theoretical basis for the unity of the numerous German states and free cities then existing, are frequently seen as the first to develop the conception of a *national spirit*, a force providing cohesion among certain selected populations and contrasting them with others. It was a concept that went on to play a crucial role in the processes of consolidation of nation-states in Europe in the nineteenth century, and of increasingly intense political and economic competition between them.

Those emerging nation-states, however, were also characterised by sharp divisions of social class, and concomitant cultural divisions which intellectuals and writers of the nations concerned had to confront in their deliberations on the question of *national culture*. Even in the 1770s, long before German unification, the participants of the Sturm und Drang literary and philosophical movement, which included Goethe and Herder, had recognised such cultural stratification within society, deliberately emphasising in their work the particular traits which appeared to differentiate regions, communities or individuals. Reacting against the neoclassical view of reason, erudition and decorum

as the basis for cultural expression, they advocated a free role for the creative imagination, emphasising subjectivity, spontaneity, intuition and passion in opposition to pure intellect, tendencies which clearly signalled the emergence of romanticism. They also explain why, of all the social classes, it was the peasantry for whom they expressed most admiration. Clearly, they did not look upon the life of the rural poor with any real understanding, such was the distance that separated them, but rather with a sense of romantic attachment, seeing in the peasant's communal way of life, his continual interaction with the natural environment and his daily practical labour, an existence that seemed in many ways more authentic and fulfilling than their own. Their intellectual activity only appeared to condemn them to isolation and spiritual malaise. (1)

It was that search for an artistic expression which sprang directly from the emotions and the imagination which explained the argument of Johann Gottfried Von Herder that the purest art was that of the volk, the poor, illiterate sectors of the population, comprising peasants, day labourers and artisans. At a time when most of the privileged, learned classes regarded folk poetry and song with total contempt, Herder argued that it represented a more natural and spontaneous expression of human feeling than the dry, artificial and scholarly creations of erudite writers. He sensed that the latter had become increasingly isolated from daily, mainstream social life and from the mass of the population, making their work frequently seem superfluous or reclusive, whilst the poetry of the volk issued from an active community within which it functioned as a vital social force. These ideas led Herder to argue that folk art was the true expression of the

national spirit or soul, and therefore provided the basis for the most valuable national literature. Two hundred years later, remarkably similar views would form the conceptual foundation for the Movimento Armorial in the Brazilian North East.

The whole debate on the relationship between high culture and popular culture must therefore be understood first and foremost as the product of a particular historical era. The process of conceptualization and definition of *national culture* was necessarily accompanied by consideration of the contributions made by each social class, and the relationships between those classes. Vastly differing attitudes to the problem can be traced in Europe throughout the nineteenth century. In the early decades, for example, many romantic writers showed the same attraction to peasant life as Herder had done. Troubled by what they saw as the suffocation of free creativity by the mercenary nature and cold regimentation of industrial society, and by the growing divorce they detected between creative capacity and normal, daily productive capacity, they viewed peasant culture as a realm where balance, harmony and cohesion still existed. This vision found numerous forms of expression, varying considerably from one writer to another. In Britain, for example, Walter Scott collected, studied and even rewrote folktales and folksongs, whilst carefully maintaining his distance from the rural communities that produced them, whereas Wordsworth, seeing in those communities a set of alternative, more positive values, not only idealised the peasantry in much of his work, but also attempted to overcome his own sense of separation from them by making an effort, albeit fitful, to integrate himself into their culture, seeking to adopt their living patterns and perceptions of the

world, and to write a type of folk poetry with which they might identify. According to one critic, such extreme romantic idealisation imbues much of the resulting work with "an element of pastoral masquerade." (2)

In the latter part of the century, Matthew Arnold presented a rather different conception of culture, essentially seen as *high culture*, embodying the highest qualities of human sensibility and intellectual achievement, the guardians of which would therefore have to be a highly educated and refined elite. The common people, now the proletariat rather than the peasantry, had little part to play. Submerged in ignorance, they constituted a threat to the perfect, civilized culture that Arnold envisaged. With the dissolution of aristocratic cultural values in the wake of accelerating capitalist development, Arnold attempted to counteract the "anarchy" he perceived in the new patterns of life and thought that were emerging with an elitist ideal of culture. (3) Similar arguments would be proposed by many other intellectuals in the present century, during which the whole discussion on the question of culture continued to intensify, eventually to become an arena of vigorous and highly contentious debate.

The development of the debate must therefore be seen as one response by bourgeois thought to the increasingly glaring contradictions inherent in the development of modern capitalism; contradictions which provided inspiration for a vast range of artistic expression. On the one hand is capitalism's promise of progress and modernization, with the rapid expansion of urban, industrial society, systems of mass production creating greater material wealth than ever

before and huge advances in technological development. Indeed, the bourgeois intellectual, privileged in society by his specialised education and professional formation, appears as a living symbol of that progress. That situation is perhaps the core of his personal contradiction: how to relate critically to a social environment that has formed him, structured his perceptions and apparently favoured him in significant ways. On the other hand however, are the striking contradictions within capitalist development which appear to negate that promised progress. The huge wealth generated has been accompanied by stark inequality and exploitation, conditions which have provided the inspiration for countless novels of social protest, like those of the nineteenth century realist authors such as Dickens (1812-1870) and Mrs Gaskell (1810-1865). A very sophisticated and highly structured social and economic framework has emerged, apparently permitting a high level of social integration, and yet the antagonistic social divisions intrinsic to that framework have continued to foment tension and conflict. The rapid process of modernization and technological advancement has provided undoubted benefits, but the consequent destruction of traditional patterns of collective life frequently instils a sense of loss, of dehumanisation, a key aspect of much romantic literature of the nineteenth century.

Concern for the break-up of communal forms of life recurs in the work of many cultural critics of the present century. F.R. Leavis, for example, views the demise of traditional, organic community life as leading to the fragmentation of cultural practice and production. What he sees as the essentially harmonious order of pre-capitalist society has been destroyed, and with it the common, unified culture shared by

all sectors within the community, to be replaced by a degraded mass culture which has led to a fall in cultural standards. (4) Many other writers have concentrated their attention on the expansion of mass society, arguing that if, on the one hand, the rapid social changes and advances in technology that have occurred during the past one hundred years have opened up new possibilities for social development, on the other they have led to the consolidation of a stereotyped, monotone mass culture which smothers original, creative expression. Again however, widely differing responses to the question have been presented. For some conservative critics, the major negative effect of the expansion of mass society has been the standardization of cultural expression and consequent decline in quality that has resulted, for they consider cultural production to be the natural domain of an enlightened and highly specialised elite. José Ortega y Gasset for example, writing in the 1920s when the organised, urban working classes had become a major social and political force in most European countries, including Spain, decried the encroachment of the masses into new spheres of social and cultural life, previously the domain of a privileged minority, threatening individuality and quality. Even the writer now had to create with low level, popular tastes in view. (5) Others however, like Richard Hoggart, writing in the 1950s, were more concerned with the corrosive effects that mass culture had on traditional, independent working class culture than on that of the learned, leisured elite. (6)

In recent decades writers and scholars in Europe and the United States have shown increasing interest in the question of popular culture and its role in contemporary urban, industrial society. To

some, the term *popular culture* is essentially synonymous with the mass culture industry, operating through powerful media such as radio, television, the popular press and the cinema. For others, the term refers to a complex of subcultures of certain, generally underprivileged, sectors within modern society, such as working class youth or ethnic communities. The conclusions that have resulted from such research have been as varied as the approaches used. The participants in the Frankfurt School of the 1930s and 40s, for example, viewed popular culture with pessimism, seeing it dominated by a powerful culture industry which commercializes and trivializes production, ensuring that it remains essentially conservative and passive. (7) Other scholars, however, have indicated more positive qualities within forms of popular culture, particularly when understood in terms of subcultures, which, they argue, have retained a capacity for original creative expressions which frequently assert resistance to the dominant culture of the wider society. (8)

There is no doubt, however, that the whole debate that has developed around the problem of culture has added a dynamic new dimension to social analysis. Earlier, studies on the development of society tended to place heavy emphasis on economic and political factors, with cultural activity relegated to a secondary position, attractive perhaps, but not regarded as an essential component of historical development in the way that economic or political processes are. Now, however, more realistic recognition is given to the importance of cultural processes in that overall development. This has been stimulated by the specific contributions of the different

approaches and ideological positions within the debate, and, more importantly, by the polemic that has taken place between them.

Empirical sociology and anthropology, for example, have focused attention on the multiplicity of forms of cultural manifestations, and this, though frequently resting on description rather than penetrative analysis, has at least stimulated serious interest as to the real significance of diverse cultural practices that were previously dismissed as simple diversion or mere frivolity. On the other hand, a vital contribution has been made by the various lines of Marxist thought. No one has been more influential in this area than Antonio Gramsci, who cast aside the mechanical models of other Marxists in which basic economic factors rigidly determine the nature of all other activity in society, and highlighted instead the influence that ideas and cultural practices have in shaping the very structure of society. Particularly important is his concept of *hegemony*, the process by which one class asserts its particular values and perceptions as the dominant ones in a given society, therefore helping it to preserve the economic and social structures which benefit it. Notably though, Gramsci argued that such ideological control was never total, for if part of the consciousness of the subordinate classes was determined by dominant class ideology, another part was shaped by their practical experiences of life and work in an exploitative society, and so held revolutionary potential. In this sense, popular cultural expressions can be creative and critical, rather than merely passive. (9)

Such thinking has provided considerable stimulus for the study of the role of ideology in cultural life, and neo-Marxist writers have gone on to study the different spheres of cultural activity and

production as arenas of ideological dispute, articulating the desire either to reproduce or transform the existing relations of production that characterise a particular socio-economic formation. Of present day Marxist thinkers, special mention must be made of Raymond Williams, whose work has added significant new dimensions to cultural theory. One of his major contributions has been the analysis of the problematical concepts which underpin all discussion on culture, showing how words like *art*, *class* and *culture* itself have developed and changed through history, parallel to social change. His work also emphasises the analysis of literary works within the broader orbit of cultural studies, establishing the links between those works and the forms of consciousness and types of social structures that prevail within the historical conjuncture at which they are produced. (10)

Studies of cultural phenomena have advanced dramatically during the present century. Cultural practice no longer tends to be viewed as an isolated, capricious activity, peripheral to fundamental socio-economic development, but rather as an integral part of that development. Furthermore, *high culture* and *popular culture* are not seen as separate realms, but instead are generally perceived as having a dynamic, dialectical relationship, the interaction, and sometimes tension, between them greatly helping to explain the content, and even in some cases the form, of the expressions which each produces.

The debate in Brazil.

The quest for a national form of expression has been a major dynamic force throughout the historical development of literature in

Latin America. It has been an integral part of the affirmation of a distinctly national identity that has arisen from the experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Sometimes it has manifested itself in carefully considered theories or even programmes of action, and at others it has been expressed in a more unconscious way, as in the case of many literary works which, without necessarily being intentionally nationalistic, can still be seen to express a latent nativism in their treatment of local themes, human subjects and environment.

Examples of that process can be found in every Latin American country. The case of Peru is particularly striking, for there cultural nationalism has had to confront the problem of integrating two very distinct, even conflicting, cultures; the European and the Indian. In the 1920s, José Carlos Mariátegui addressed himself to the problem of the elaboration of a national literature, recognising that, regardless of their quality, Peru's indigenista works were still essentially a bourgeois form of expression with indigenous content, and that only the mass of the population, Indians and mestizos, could ultimately produce an authentic indigenous literature. Nonetheless, he concluded that the early decades of the century had seen writers responding in an increasingly critical way to the colonial patterns of thought which still persisted, and that there were indications of a new generation creating a literature more sensitive to the nation's particular problems and to the life and culture of the Indian population. (11)

Some decades later, José María Arguedas, convinced that an authentic Peruvian culture had to be founded on that of the Indian, dealt with the more specific problem of how the erudite writer could penetrate Indian culture in order to write convincingly about it. Indignant at

the way many novelists portrayed the Indians, documenting their life at such a distance that their social and cultural practices appeared dramatic or picturesque but essentially incomprehensible, Arguedas wrote arguably the most outstanding Indianist literature of Latin America, based on an intuitive understanding of Quechua cultural tradition that was rooted in his upbringing within an Indian community. (12) Most of Peru's indigenista authors did not write from the same experience however. The Indianist stories of Ventura García Calderón and Enrique López Albújar, for example, have many qualities, not least of which is the recognition given to the distinctive attributes of Indian life and culture, which are documented in detail, but the reader is constantly aware of the great distance between the world view of the author and that of his Indian subjects, viewed with paternalism by García Calderón and with sympathetic curiosity by López Albújar. (13)

A similar nationalizing tendency can be traced through the literary history of Brazil, where numerous writers have contributed to the debate on the problem of national identity and how authentically Brazilian art forms might be produced. Like his Spanish American counterparts, the Brazilian intellectual has been placed in an acute predicament as a result of the nation's experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Brazilian by birth, yet with his perceptions, beliefs and modes of expression largely formed by European cultural tradition, he has been beset with the need to elaborate an alternative cultural system truly capable of expressing the distinctive qualities of the nation. The result has been a continuous effort to adapt Western models and tendencies to the particular natural and human realities

of Brazil, and, arguably, it is that effort which has provided Brazilian literature with its main dynamism. Numerous approaches to literary nationalism have been attempted, involving formal experiments, linguistic innovations or the incorporation of typically Brazilian themes and popular cultural expressions. As might be expected, such deliberate, at times programmed nationalism, has often resulted in artificiality, with the effort to create a work of national content given priority over ideas, arguments, creative imagination and aesthetic quality. Nonetheless, it may be asserted that some of Brazil's finest literature has resulted from the continued attempts by writers to express a national consciousness and document and discuss in their work the particular qualities and problems of Brazilian life. As Antônio Cândido comments however, there is little sense in condemning or extolling this literary nationalism *per se*, for it has arisen as a necessary response to specific historical conditions. (14) Instead, studies must examine critically the way that process has shaped the works that have emerged, identifying both positive qualities added and limitations imposed.

It is within the context of this search for national identity and self-expression that the debate on the question of *high culture* and *popular culture* in Brazil must be understood; a debate that has been given particular significance as a result of the nation's imbalanced pattern of historical development. Instead of organic socio-economic development from within, the experience of colonialism and dependency has led to fragmentary, uneven growth stimulated mainly from without. As a result, a highly stratified society has emerged, ridden with

racial and cultural divisions, acute contrasts between social classes and severe regional imbalances. Such stark divisions obviously make the concept of a *national culture* extremely problematical.

However, the divide between *high* and *popular culture* is not always explicitly acknowledged. So many works on Latin American cultural history concentrate almost exclusively on the *high arts*, such as erudite literature, painting and music, that the reader might easily forget that such works are the product of the cultural activities and practices of a minority, often a very small minority. (15) Literature offers a very extreme example. One critic, David Haberly, estimates that the active consumers of erudite literature in Brazil did not exceed one percent of the national population between 1822 and 1950, and that even in 1973, Jorge Amado's Teresa Batista Cansada de Guerra achieved record sales with approximately 250,000 copies sold, equalling about 0.53 percent of the national population in the over twenty age group. (16) The vast majority of the population, therefore, lives, works and conducts its social relationships within a very different cultural environment. It is an environment where alternative modes of artistic expression prevail, popular forms of dance, drama, carnival, music, poetry and story-telling that have been passed down through the generations, emphasising collective activity rather than individual expression, and oral transmission rather than the written word. Such expression cannot be ignored by the erudite writer seeking to integrate his work into the broader society and culture of his native land. His problem is finding ways of achieving that by assimilating aspects of *popular culture* into an erudite work of literature.

Nowhere are social and cultural contrasts more apparent than in the North East of Brazil, o Nordeste, formed by the nine states of Bahia, Sergipe, Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí, Ceará and Maranhão. The first region colonized by the Portuguese, it has a strong elite cultural tradition, jealously guarded by a minority, generally linked to the bourgeoisie and the old land owning aristocracy, whilst the mass of rural and urban poor produce their own, very distinct cultural expressions. Rich folkloric forms of song, dance, poetry and legend have remained vigorous in the North East, particularly in rural areas where they are deeply rooted in traditional, less fluid patterns of life, whilst they have declined or even disappeared in many other regions of the country.

For the first two centuries of the colonial period, the North East was the major centre of economic activity in Brazil, with agricultural production, essentially of sugar, providing considerable prosperity for the oligarchy. By the end of the seventeenth century however, sugar production was in decline and the axis of the colonial economy had moved south. Since then, the growing political, economic and cultural influence of states such as Minas Gerais, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro has produced a defensive reaction from the dominant classes of the North East, anxious to protect the distinctive culture of their region against the increasing domination of other areas. The result has been the long series of attempts to affirm North Eastern regional identity which are traced in this study. Through them there runs a line of continuity. In broad terms, all of them attempt to confront the contradictions inflicted on the region as a result of Brazil's particular pattern of development by promoting and reinforcing the

particular qualities of North East life and culture in opposition to what is perceived as the expanding cosmopolitanism of the South. It will be seen, however, that the forms within which those efforts have been expressed have varied considerably, developing in accordance with changing perceptions of cultural nationalism, regional identity and the *popular culture* which so frequently provides the raw material for the affirmation of a distinctive North East identity.

Some North Eastern intellectuals did play a part in political movements pressurizing for secession in the nineteenth century, but generally they have limited themselves to asserting the right and need of the North East to maintain a strong degree of cultural autonomy. The tension generated by the conflict of interests between regionalism and broader, national cultural trends, especially when the latter are perceived as emanating from the growing cultural hegemony of the Centre-South, has often manifested itself in polemics between writers of the North East and their counterparts further South. However, regionalist thought need not necessarily negate projects to elaborate a *national culture*. The majority of North Eastern intellectuals have not seen any fundamental contradiction between regionalism and nationalism, but instead have tended to consider the reinforcement of regional culture as strengthening rather than undermining Brazilian culture as a whole. The characteristic features of the region, they argue, are distinctly native properties which can counterbalance the external cultural tendencies and influences transplanted into Brazil. It is an argument which has a long history, stretching back into the early decades of the last century, and which is still voiced today. In the 1970s, the writer Ariano Suassuna, speaking of the aims of the

Movimento Armorial, the latest in the line of North Eastern movements promoting the region's culture and which is studied in the final chapters of this work, emphasised the role of himself and other participants in fortifying the bases of Brazilian culture, so that

"(...) qualquer coisa que nos venha de fora passa a ser, em vez de uma influência que nos esmaga e nos massifica num cosmopolitismo achatador e monótono, uma incorporação que nos enriquece." (17)

In similar vein, the critic Afrânio Coutinho sees literary regionalism as demonstrating the rich variety of Brazilian culture, but in no way indicating national disintegration, for the divisions are counteracted by strong forces of unity, such as a common language, perceptions and patterns of behaviour. (18) In this sense, the relationship between regionalism and nationalism can be understood as one particular aspect of a major paradox inherent to Latin America as a whole: that of a vast continent which at one level appears unified, but at another, is characterized by sharp contrasts.

Coutinho is one of many critics who emphasise the emergence of a national cultural expression in Brazil as an essentially natural process that began from the earliest moments of colonialism. The cultural inheritance of the mother country was shed as the colonists adapted to the new environment and, of necessity, devised new patterns of life, methods of work and forms of expression. (19) In recent decades however, a number of scholars, such as Dante Moreira Leite, Carlos Guilherme Mota and Darcy Ribeiro, referred to in later chapters, have produced research on the ideological underpinning of

notions such as *national culture* and *national character*. (20) The dominant classes which have been the beneficiaries of Brazil's unbalanced pattern of development have had to seek ways of justifying and perpetuating the socio-economic processes and structures inherent to it. A wide-ranging and increasingly sophisticated ideology of *national culture* has resulted, developing through the decades, and functioning to interpret the acute contradictions, tensions and conflicting social forces generated in the course of Brazil's historical development in such a way as to harmonize them with the dominant order. Within this scheme, antagonistic forces are given new definition and value so as to neutralize their threat and integrate them into the overall process of national development. The ideology of *national culture* promotes the notion of homogeneity and unity under an all-embracing, abstract national identity. It presents an image of all the diverse forces that have emerged in the course of Brazilian history peacefully coexisting as component parts of a natural, harmonious order, and so legitimizes existing socio-economic structures and the position of the dominant classes within them.

Moreira Leite and Mota show that this ideological framework has become so powerful and pervasive that it has structured the bulk of work produced in Brazil in the arts and social sciences during the past century. Relatively few intellectuals have managed to free themselves from the conceptual constraints imposed by it, and those that have have often been marginalised, or even forced into exile at times, as a result. Many writers engaged in the task of forging a national literature have participated, consciously or unconsciously,

in that process of elaboration of an ideological *national culture*, and the concepts and patterns of thought integral to it are visible in their work. At times, however, consciousness of social contradictions becomes so sharp as to rupture those ideological concepts, and works of considerable critical tension result. A striking example is Da Cunha's Os Sertões (1902), which will be studied in chapter two, a work which, whilst assimilating the notions of climatic and racial determinism prevalent at the time, still offers one of the most powerful critical studies of Brazilian society ever produced. (21) Da Cunha's observations and experiences in the North East backlands whilst working as a journalist covering military operations against the messianic community of Canudos, contradicted his preconceived notions about the peasants of the region.

Popular culture, the cultural activity of the most deprived sectors of Brazilian society, has been a key element in the ideological process of cultural integration. Despite its own considerable contradictions, it is an alternative culture to that of the dominant classes. It is rooted in, and inseparable from, the particular material conditions of existence of the poorest classes of Brazilian society, and so its expressions are produced, disseminated and consumed according to very specific patterns and moulded by a particular world view. It therefore has the potential to challenge and undermine dominant ideology, and, as will be seen in chapter 4, it was that potential that the radical Movimento de Cultura Popular attempted to cultivate in the North East in the early 1960s, in order to raise political awareness. However, other movements, organizations and institutions have played a more conservative role, functioning to

patronise and control popular cultural expressions and integrate them into the overall process of national development, neutralizing their conflictive quality in the process. It is in this way that *popular culture* may be understood as an arena of conflict. Within it, a constant struggle is in progress between, on the one hand, the attempts to appropriate popular cultural practices and expressions and incorporate them into a broad scheme of *national culture*, and on the other, the resistance put up by the social forces behind those practices and expressions.

Many writers of the Brazilian North East have participated in that conflict, some quite consciously, others perhaps drawn in unwittingly through their simple desire to create a literature representative of regional reality. As the cultural expression of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the North East, *popular culture* has to provide the symbols epitomizing the distinctive qualities of the region. Implicit in this is the recognition by the writers concerned that their own cultural development and forms of expression have been largely shaped from outside by dominant metropolises, and the feeling that true *Brazilian culture* is really rooted in the lives of the poor masses, seemingly the sector of the population least affected by cosmopolitan cultural trends. This view has provided the basis for the many arguments that have emerged in the North East over the years proposing that *popular culture* be defended against the advance of industrial mass culture, so as to conserve it as a unique part of national patrimony. Programmes have even been elaborated outlining means by which the survival of popular cultural expressions might be ensured. Such ideas were central to the thought of Gilberto Freyre in the

1920s, and have also been a vital component in that of Ariano Suassuna in the 1970s.

The work of Suassuna and the Movimento Armorial represents the latest phase in a long regionalist tradition in the arts in the Brazilian North East, and one more phase in the continuing debate on the issues of *national culture*, *high culture* and *popular culture*. It must be understood in this historical context, for many of the ideas which motivate it have acquired their deep roots through decades of intellectual and artistic activity in the region. The Movimento Armorial has revitalized these ideas, and, like the regionalist movements that preceded it, has made its own original contribution to North East art and literature as well. The most striking aspect of that contribution has been the attempt to fuse erudite literature with North East popular literature, essentially the ballad or romanceiro tradition which still survives amongst the poorest sectors of the region's population. The results of that attempt, exemplified by the plays and novels of Suassuna himself, are analysed in chapters 4 and 5 of this work.

Clarification of terms.

As has already been implied, a major difficulty with research into the field of cultural studies is the fact that most of its central concepts are used in a wide range of different senses, varying from one writer to another. To avoid confusion it is therefore necessary to define from the outset the meanings of certain fundamental terms as used in the present study.

One of the most problematical is the concept of *culture* itself. It is here understood in a very broad sense as a complex of values, beliefs, customs, creative expressions and social practices shared by a human community. However, it should be recognised that a major difficulty with the term is that it is frequently used to imply large scale unity, as in the case of *regional culture* and *national culture*, both of which tend to obfuscate the crucial cultural differences between classes, racial groups and areas which characterize every nation and region. It is therefore generally necessary to employ more differentiated terms in recognition of such diversity.

High culture refers essentially to the cultural practices of the bourgeois intelligentsia. This does not necessarily mean art and practices produced exclusively by that sector however, but rather any which it sanctions as *high culture*, for expressions of other classes and groups might eventually be incorporated into the category.

Linked to the above, *erudite literature* refers to the poetry, novels, stories, essays and works of non fiction that are associated with the bourgeois intelligentsia, mainly produced by that group, but not exclusively, for works from popular genres, such as detective fiction, may eventually be included.

Popular culture is used in two ways. Firstly, in a broad sense, it is used to refer to all cultural activity of those classes which are economically and socially subordinate. Secondly, in this study it is applied specifically to the cultural practices of the rural poor of the North East of Brazil, consisting of peasant families, labourers, artisans and cowhands. In this usage, it embodies at least some of the characteristics of *folk culture*, a term used by some anthropologists

to refer to the cultural processes associated with more communal, traditionally organized, homogeneous societies, such as peasant communities. Unlike *mass culture*, this type of *folk culture* is generally seen as a set of traditional practices developed, shared and perpetuated by a community for its own use. (22)

Popular literature is used in this work to refer to that created by the poorest classes of North East Brazil, both rural and urban. It is essentially an oral tradition of memorized ballads, tales and legends, and so has some of the qualities of what many literary critics designate as *folk literature*, though there are a few basic features which differentiate it. Firstly, it is not exclusively oral, for the peasant poets who maintain the tradition have elaborated a written form in cheaply produced chapbooks or folhetos of ballads. Secondly, these folhetos have now generally come to be identified as the creations of individual poets, so that the anonymity usually associated with *folk literature* does not apply. Thirdly, as will be seen in chapter 3, the production and distribution of folhetos is carried out on a professional basis, whilst folk culture as a whole is frequently perceived, arguably erroneously, as functioning outside the market.

Nationalism, as already referred to, denotes the conception of a state unified by common characteristics, such as race, language and basic perceptions, shared by all members. It may therefore be understood at one level as a purely ideological construction. This, however, is not to deny the positive role that nationalist ideologies have played in certain historical contexts. Franz Fanon, for example, concerned with the the struggle of the African nations against

colonialism, saw *nationalism* as a crucial phase in that process, uniting the population and providing the basis for a deeper social and political consciousness necessary for national reconstruction. (23) In the context of neo-colonialism or dependency, as in the case of Brazil, *nationalism* might likewise be interpreted more positively in certain cases, serving as a vital element in the development of an awareness among the population of the broad economic and social structures that adversely affect their lives and of the need to change them. In this sense, it is perhaps preferable to speak of *national consciousness* in order to avoid the negative connotations of the term *nationalism*.

The term *ideology* is used here in its basic Marxist sense as a set of assumptions and perceptions which by concealing or distorting certain aspects of social reality propagate a false understanding of it. The construction of ideologies is crucial for the process of *hegemony*, a concept already referred to, describing the way in which the values and beliefs of one class achieve dominance in society. Finally, *world view* is used to refer to the complex of perceptions and beliefs through which a particular group or class within society attempts to reach an understanding of the world and its particular role within it.

NOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION.

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CHAPTER 1

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ERUDITE LITERATURE IN THE NORTH EAST OF BRAZIL UNTIL THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Regionalism and cultural nationalism.

The colonial exploitation of Brazil was conducted through a succession of socio-economic growth poles in different zones of the territory, essentially isolated from one another, with virtually all commercial and cultural links confined to the metropolis. Each area thus developed its own distinct social and cultural characteristics, determined by the particular process of land occupation or economic exploitation which prevailed, the racial or social groups which participated in that process and the specific articulation the area concerned had to the national and, more importantly, international economies. It is in this sense that Alfredo Bosi speaks of colonial Brazil as an 'arquipélago cultural', and emphasises the relevance this formation still has for Brazilian literature today. (1) The Movimento Armorial, to be studied later, demonstrates that regionalism is still a significant force in Brazilian art and literature, even in the 1970s; a symptom of that fragmentary pattern of development which Brazil has experienced throughout its history, and continues to experience today.

This chapter will follow the historical development of regionalist literary tradition in the North East, tracing its roots back to the earliest phase of the colonial period. Since from its beginnings the production and consumption of erudite literature has

been confined to a small and isolated sector of the North East population, a crucial part of this regionalism has been the need for those writers to contribute to bridging the social and cultural chasm separating them from the mass of the region's inhabitants. While some of the resulting formulations presented by individual writers or groups of writers over the decades proposing ways of integrating their literary work with the lives and culture of the wider populace have long been superseded, others have survived in a modified form up to the present day. It will be necessary to consider changing perceptions of *national culture* during the period in question, since, as already mentioned in the Introduction, the exaltation of regional values has frequently emerged as an integral part of broader schemes of cultural nationalism. However, before beginning a historical survey of literary regionalism and nationalism in the Brazilian North East, some preliminary discussion of both processes is required.

Firstly, it is undeniable that regionalism has contributed to the production of some outstanding works of literature, highlighting local themes and problems previously ignored, and, in order to express them, producing some creative variants of pre-existing literary forms and styles. Frequently, the motive force for this has been a heightened social consciousness, enabling the writer to break down at least some of the barriers separating his creative work from the lives of the majority of the population, deepen his understanding of other social classes and intensify his involvement in their concerns and problems. This process has produced some fine works of social criticism, exemplified by those regionalist novels produced in the North East in

the 1930s by writers such as Jorge Amado and Graciliano Ramos, examined in chapter 2.

To retain its dynamism into the later twentieth century however, regionalism has had to undergo continual modification. Angel Rama has produced the most complete study to date of this crucial process in Latin American literature, showing the deepening conflict between regional cultures and the modernizing, cosmopolitan cultural forms propagated by the major urban centres during the course of the present century. The traditional regionalism that dominated until the 1930s, its roots stretching back to nineteenth century sociology and psychology, could not resist the advance of the influences of vanguard artistic forms and new critical realism. Since resistance on the part of artists on one hand, and total acquiescence on the other, both threatened regionalism with complete extermination, a middle course of accommodation was sought by the new regionalist writers emerging in the 1940s and 1950s, who attempted to incorporate those new artistic structures and techniques into their work, using them to reexamine the thematic material of their local environment. In the words of Rama:

La solución intermedia es la más común: echar mano de las aportaciones de la modernidad, revisar a la luz de ellas los contenidos culturales regionales y con unas y otras fuentes componer un híbrido que sea capaz de seguir transmitiendo la herencia recibida. Será una herencia renovada, pero que todavía puede identificarse con su pasado. (2)

The result was that, instead of regionalist literature being eroded and condemned to obsolescence by the expansion of the new cultural patterns, a new type of regionalism emerged, typified by the work of Rulfo, García Márquez and Guimarães Rosa, where local content is

reworked through the technical innovations newly received. It has been a question of positive adaptation, Rama argues, as the newly incorporated forms are constantly counterbalanced by those from regional cultural expressions, seen in the way a writer like Guimarães Rosa, for example, employs vanguard literary techniques to investigate the rich oral culture and vast body of myth and legend of the inhabitants of the interior of his native state of Minas Gerais. (3)

Rama recognizes Latin American literature as part of a broader Western literary tradition, within which its evolution has been shaped crucially by the dialectic of regionalism and cosmopolitanism. His studies of the work of Arguedas, García Márquez, Guimarães Rosa and Rulfo suggest a process, not of servile imitation or reproduction of external models, but one of reciprocal cultural interpenetration, or acculturation, where the Latin American writer sees himself as participating in shared resources, to which he adds his own contribution. However, this is not to deny the continued cultural dependency of Latin America at many levels, exemplified by the mass media which have expanded so rapidly in most nations of the region in the last three or four decades. Indeed, the process can be considered one of the most positive responses to that dependency, creating some of the most original literature ever to have come out of the region.

Obviously, any attempt to reach an understanding of the cultural production of the Latin American countries must recognize the colonial and neo-colonial context within which it has been realized. As the Mexican critic, Eli Bartra, writes:

Se a criação artística é um produto do ser social e esse ser foi conquistado, reconquistado, colonizado e neocolonizado e o desenvolvimento, em todos os níveis da existência, foi determinado ou condicionado pelas circunstâncias históricas de uma colonização, o latino-americano na arte será justamente o resultado dessa situação. Se parece haver tanto empenho em encontrar o latino-americano em arte, seria conveniente partir da realidade do colonizado. (4)

It is necessary to emphasize this seemingly obvious point because so many schemes of cultural nationalism and regionalism have failed to give it due recognition, seeming instead to be distracted by the mirage of a pure, original native expression, totally uncontaminated by external modes. Such a vision has undoubtedly played a part in the exaltation of popular cultural expression by certain artists in a still largely rural Brazil. For Gilberto Freyre, in his North East Regionalist Movement of the 1920s, and for Suassuna in his Movimento Armorial of the 1970s, popular culture is seen as an authentic, pristine expression of the Brazilian people, and therefore the basis of a truly regional, and by extension national, culture. The concept of a pure, original and independent cultural development distracts attention from the objective historical circumstances which have really determined Brazil's cultural formation, such as the links of dependency, or an unbalanced pattern of growth and the inequalities resulting from it.

Those inequalities, manifest in the acute social, cultural and regional divisions within Brazil, obviously make any programme of cultural nationalism problematical. The response to the problem from literary critics has varied considerably, and it is instructive here to compare the approaches of two of Brazil's finest critics of recent

decades, Antônio Cândido and Afrânio Coutinho. Cândido shows a keen awareness of the dangers of an all embracing, ethnocentric nationalism which obscures the historical forces that have shaped cultural expression in Brazil and the divisions and conflicts that continue to characterize Brazilian society:

Sabemos, pues, que somos parte de una cultura más amplia, de la cual participamos como variedad cultural. Es que, al contrario de lo que han supuesto a veces cándidamente nuestros abuelos, es una ilusión hablar de supresión de contactos e influencias. En un momento en que la ley del mundo es la interrelación y la interacción, las utopías de la originalidad han perdido su sentido patriótico, comprensible en una fase de formación nacional reciente, que originaba una visión provinciana y umbilical. (5)

Analysing the development of Brazilian literature within its historical and social context, Cândido's work emphasises the crucial interaction between literary production and wider social and cultural processes. (6) This enables him to recognize the ideological dimension of literary creation, clearly seen in its development as a tool for forging national identity. A writer may sincerely seek to affirm regional or national values in his work, but his unconscious assimilation of ideologically constructed concepts may in fact produce work that, paradoxically, serves to reinforce dependent schemes of thought. Cândido notes that such a writer

(...)propone lo que hay de más peculiar en la realidad local, insinuando un regionalismo que, siendo aparentemente una afirmación de la identidad nacional, puede ser en verdad un modo insospechado de ofrecer a la sensibilidad europea el exotismo que ella deseaba, como distracción, y que así se vuelve forma aguda de dependencia en la independencia. (7)

Coutinho rejects Cândido's approach, warning that heavy reliance on extra-literary criteria can produce an interpretation of literature as little more than a passive reflection of historical or social forces, devoid of any innate qualities of its own or any capacity for autonomous development. (8) The danger certainly exists, and is recognized by Cândido himself. (9) Certain Marxist literary histories can undoubtedly be criticized for presenting an excessively mechanical interpretation of the relationship between literature and socio-historical development, where literature, part of the superstructure, is seen first and foremost as a reflection of the economic base. (10)

However, Coutinho's approach has risks of its own. Its starting point is earlier work by Araripe Júnior, who developed the notion of obnubilação brasileira, strongly influenced by nineteenth century evolutionary theory. It argued that the colonists who settled in the New World were forced to adapt to the new environment and, forgetting the cultural inheritance of the mother country, effectively became *new men*, with different perceptions, responses and values, who would necessarily produce completely new cultural expressions. (11) Coutinho develops this notion, arguing that Brazilian literature was therefore unique from its beginnings, and gradually matured as a distinct, national expression as consciousness of Brazil's differential culture asserted itself over the models and patterns of thought imposed from outside. In Coutinho's words:

(...)um homem novo criou-se desde o primeiro instante em que pôs o pé no novo mundo. Foi o americano, o brasileiro. A sua fala, sua sensibilidade, suas emoções, sua poesia, sua música, tinham de ser, e foram, diferentes, diferenciados desde o início. Nada tem de comum com o que se produzia na Europa. (12)

Coutinho seeks to assert Brazil's fundamental cultural independence by severing the country's culture from the broader, European based cultural complex that imposed basic values, perceptions and forms on the colony. In doing so, he distracts attention from the many contradictions resulting from the experience of colonialism.

If a *new man* with a distinct identity was indeed created in the first stages of colonization, and already expressing himself through a unique literature, one might suppose that the whole question of self definition would hardly be a major problem. Yet Coutinho goes on to speak of the prolonged struggle that ensued precisely in order to affirm a Brazilian identity and culture:

Era problema de ser Brasileiro, e do que é ser brasileiro, problema de país novo, resultado de transplante de uma cultura tradicional e já formada para uma região nova. Era a busca de resposta à pergunta da autodefinição nacional, da auto-identificação, isto é, do conjunto de características que fazem o brasileiro diferente dos outros povos. (13)

Coutinho's explanation is essentially that the newly formed Brazilian spirit was prevented from fully expressing itself by the oppressive nature of the colonial complex, which smothered native cultural initiatives and successfully indoctrinated many Brazilian writers. So not until after the overthrow of Portuguese domination could an authentically national literary conscience really develop, thanks to the work of Romantic writers of the mid-nineteenth century, like José de Alencar. (14)

At the root of Coutinho's arguments is a concept crucial to much of the nationalist thought that has developed in Brazil over the

decades: that of an innate, spiritual quality which is seen as peculiar to all Brazilians and which is commonly expressed in such terms as alma brasileira and espírito nacional. Although indefinable, it is taken for granted by many writers and critics, and is frequently seen as the essence which defines the particular characteristics of Brazilian culture, and therefore literature. In this way, Coutinho argues that Brazil's colonial literature should be recognized as distinctly national rather than considered as a mere reproduction of Portuguese literary work, describing it in the following terms:

É a literatura que exprime a alma brasileira, no contato da realidade histórica, social, psicológica, humana, característica da civilização brasileira. (15)

The concept, however, has a long tradition in Brazilian criticism. It is frequently found in mid and late nineteenth century writing on literature when, following political independence from Portugal, a major concern of the intelligentsia was to define an identity that would differentiate the nation from Europe. Writers like José de Alencar and Machado de Assis saw literature as a vital instrument for the task. The Brazilian writer needed to confront the problematical position in society consigned to him by colonialism: his close identity with European cultural patterns on one hand, and his separation from the lived reality of the broader Brazilian population on the other. The solution, Machado argued, was for the writer to look inwards at the reality of his own environment, and to develop a national awareness that would integrate him into the historical period and place of which he was a product. (16) That national awareness is frequently expressed by nineteenth century writers in terms of a

Brazilian soul, seen as the vital quality needed for the production of a truly national literature. At the end of the century, for example, Machado de Assis extolled the contribution of José de Alencar to the development of Brazilian letters in the following terms:

Nenhum escritor teve em mais alto grau a alma brasileira. E não é só porque houvesse tratado assuntos nossos. Há um modo de ver e de sentir que dá a nota íntima da nacionalidade, independente da face externa das coisas. (17)

Despite changing historical circumstances, the notion has survived up to the present day. The *Brazilian soul* is seen as the pith of sentimento nacional or consciência nacional, and the need to give it expression has provided the nationalist momentum for writers throughout Brazilian literary history. In the 1950s, for example, Adonias Filho used such terms in describing Mário de Andrade's modernist novel Macunaima, of 1928:

Com os elementos que se encontram em *Roteiro de Macunaima* torna-se possível auscultar, nesa personalidade, os dados de interação que refletem a alma brasileira. (18)

Clearly, the concept of alma brasileira, presented as an absolute value, is exceedingly problematical. Firstly, suggesting the existence of a spirit common to all Brazilians creates a sense of fundamental national unity which can naturally lead on to arguments in favour of a *national culture*. In this way the acute regional, racial, sexual and class differences which are still so evident in Brazil are obscured. For example, the material and cultural gap between the prosperous urban classes of the coastal belt of North East Brazil and the

peasants of the interior is clearly so enormous as to belie the possible existence of any profound common characteristics which could form a link between them. This is the essential point emphasised in Dante Moreira Leite's research into the elaboration of an ideology of *national character*. Standardised characteristics, Moreira Leite argues, are more likely to be formed on the basis of social class rather than on any instinct of nationality. Noting the similarities in the descriptions given by Oscar Lewis of the lives of the poor sectors of Mexican society, and those of Carolina Maria de Jesus, documenting life in a Brazilian *favela*, he concludes that

(...)indicaria a existência de padrões, não nacionais, mas de classe social e situação econômica. Se isso for verdade, indica que, independentemente da comunicação ou tradição comum, a mesma situação econômica e de trabalho tende a criar condições muito semelhantes para o desenvolvimento e a expressão de emoções humanas. (19)

He goes on to argue that the cultural patterns of the dominant economic classes in Brazil are far more similar to those of equivalent classes in the United States or Western Europe than to those of their poorer countrymen. In this sense, what is commonly presented as *national culture* must be seen as the cultural manifestations of certain dominant classes within Brazil, whilst the dominated or subordinate classes have cultural expressions of their own, which may be designated *popular culture*.

A second problem with the concept, which follows naturally from the first, is that it obscures the important question of the position of the writer in Brazilian society. Since the writer is intimately bonded to all his compatriots through possession of the same *alma*

brasileira, he is often automatically considered to have the intrinsic capacity to act as the spokesman for his people as a whole, and this idea frequently comes to predominate over any notion of the writer as a member of a particular social class. It will be seen later that this tendency can have far reaching consequences, with the writer presented as expressing deep truths rooted in the collective subconscious of the Brazilian people, and in the process apparently transcending the perspectives of the class or sector with which he is associated.

An interest in manifestations of popular culture, those forms which express the lived experience of the mass of the Brazilian population, has been an integral part of the erudite writer's quest for a national literature, and that interest has increased as class conflict has intensified and become more complex. Many writers have produced powerful and original works on the lives of the poor, nowhere more so than in the North East, but those poor sectors of the population have their own perceptions and values, and express them through their own cultural forms, and the results are necessarily very different from the vision that is presented -perhaps on their behalf and in their interest, perhaps not- in the work of erudite writers.

To summarize, a strong current within Brazilian literary criticism has perpetuated, up to the present day, the conception of an unproblematic alma brasileira, imbued with a spirit of Brazilian identity which can provide the basis for a *national culture*. This has been exalted through a progressive literary nationalism which obscures the true dialectic of Brazilian development, concealing or negating class conflict in all its regional, racial and sexual variants over time. It will be seen that this vision, expressed in a variety of

forms, has reappeared constantly in the regionalist projects promoted by writers in the North East.

The Colonial Period.

By the mid sixteenth century the Portuguese were developing the North East of Brazil into the colony's first region of large scale economic exploitation, with sugar production introduced into the fertile coastal belt, the Zona da Mata. The social structure of this area was initially very rudimentary, starkly divided into the small, dominant elite of landowners, government officials and clergy on the one hand, the mass of negro slaves on the other and a very limited number of free labourers in between. Salvador, Olinda and Recife emerged as important towns within the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and would eventually establish themselves as prominent cultural and educational centres for the local elites. As the population in the Zona da Mata expanded, the harsh, dry interior of the region, the Sertão, was gradually occupied by cattle breeders and cow hands, mainly mestiços, aiming to supply the growing markets in the sugar zone with beef, hides and work animals. The specific patterns of social and cultural life which evolved in the different zones of the North East as a result of these developments would eventually attract the attention of local writers as, striving to strengthen the national content of their work, they intensified their interest in the particular characteristics of their region.

Most of the literature which emerged from the North East during the first two centuries of the colonial period was linked to a few specific functions: documenting the new land, justifying the

Portuguese colonial process and converting the native population to Christianity. The rudimentary economic and social life of the new colony meant that initially the only space available for the development of education was amongst the religious orders responsible for the social and cultural integration of the territory. Hence the pedagogical and moralizing intentions behind the early colonial literature produced by priests such as José de Anchieta (1534-1597). Born in Tenerife, he reached Brazil when aged nineteen, and spent some time in Bahia. His vast production of poetry, sermons, orations and autos, written in Latin, Spanish, Portuguese or Tupi, exemplifies the intimate relationship between erudition and religious teaching. It was also the clergy who produced much of the early documentation of the new land, climate and native inhabitants, typified by the writing of another Jesuit based in Bahia, Fernão Cardim (1540-1624).

Nonetheless, the greater part of the intellectual activity of these men of religion remained marginalized from the daily life of the colony, concerned strictly with questions of faith, and aiming to provide enlightenment and instruction to fellow clergy. It was an extremely restricted literature, completely alienated from the lives of the mass of the population. For Nelson Werneck Sodré, this situation was sharply demonstrated by the employment of Latin in many of the works concerned:

Numa colônia do tipo do Brasil, a utilização de uma língua culta, em contraposição a uma língua popular, denuncia, com veemência, o largo divórcio existente entre os homens de pensamento e o povo. (20)

The only other sector involved in the production of literature was the landowning or bureaucratic elite, and the work of the few of its members who wrote, such as Pêro de Magalhães de Gandavo and Gabriel Soares de Sousa, both sugar plantation owners, essentially amounted to informative documents which, in the words of one critic, simply aimed to

(...)dá a conhecer a Portugal a riqueza natural da terra do Brasil e as imensas possibilidades que ela oferecia, a ponto de profetizar a formação aqui de um grande e poderoso império. (21)

Descriptions of the exuberant flora and fauna were deliberately exaggerated in order to stimulate the interest of the Portuguese Crown, whilst eulogies of the task undertaken by the Portuguese, bringing salvation to the Indians and receiving just reward through the wealth of the new land, provided the ideological justification for colonialism. Most of this writing in the North East was therefore strictly utilitarian, and strictly imitative of standard Portuguese models. One of the earliest descriptions of Recife, for example, was provided in the form of an epic poem, *A Prosopopéia* (1601), by Bento Teixeira (1545-1618), written in homage to the then governor and major land owner in Pernambuco, Jorge de Albuquerque Coelho. Though of some historical interest for the information it provides about local life, most critics now regard it as a poor, insipid copy of the poetic style of Camões. (22)

Nevertheless, the early colonial period did see a literary tradition firmly established among the dominant sectors of North East

society, regardless of the quality of the work that resulted. The region's elites prospered during the latter part of the sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries, as Bahia, Paraíba and Pernambuco developed into the major sugar producing area in the world. The economic and political importance of the region was demonstrated in the establishment of Bahia as the colonial capital in 1549, and today, in cities such as Recife, Olinda and Salvador, some elegant colonial architecture, especially opulent churches, still stand as testimony to the great wealth generated by the sugar trade. In addition to their ideological role, literary production and scholarship were further developed by the elites as a demonstration of cultural refinement and status, activities ostentatiously contrasted with the manual labour that occupied the majority of the region's population. The literature that resulted was more often than not of poor quality, imitative and essentially decorative, yet the process further consolidated literary activity among the privileged of the North East, providing the deep roots of a long regionalist literary tradition.

Clearly, however, it would be absurd to dismiss all colonial literature as merely a second rate copy of Portuguese work. As Antônio Cândido indicates in an essay on the development of a Brazilian self-identity, though strongly influenced by its condition of isolation and its function as an ideological instrument to impart clearly defined moral, religious and political values, colonial writing, like all other spheres of activity, was acutely affected by the contradictions generated by the colonial process. The necessity on the part of the colonists to adapt to the new environmental conditions

they encountered instilled within them a growing sense of identification with the new land at the expense of the metropolis, and this was given expression in the nativist trend which gradually emerged in some colonial writing. (23) Initially however, it was still a largely instinctive, spontaneous attachment to the land of birth, and did not yet reveal any conception of a distinct national unity. The Bahian writers, Manuel Botelho de Oliveira (1636-1711) and the priest Manuel de Santa Maria Itaparica (1704-1768) did produce poetry exalting the natural beauty and potential of their native land, but such work rarely progressed beyond superficial and pretentious verse, strictly moulded to classic Iberian models.

A similar pattern can be seen in the work of Bahian prose writers such as Nuno Marques Pereira (1652-1728) and Sebastião da Rocha Pita (1660-1738), which ingenuously describes the colony in terms of an earthly paradise generously bestowed upon man. In fact, Rocha Pita is regarded by many critics as the first clear example of ufanismo colonial, the exaggerated exaltation of the Brazilian natural environment. However, at the same time that he praised the virtues of his native Bahia, he also reaffirmed his loyalty to the Portuguese Crown upon which his privileged position as landowner, nobleman and knight depended, leading José Aderaldo Castello to describe his work as

(...)misto de exaltado amor particularista pela terra e de veneração patriótica pela Monarquia Portuguesa, à qual, segundo o Autor, nos orgulhávamos então de pertencer. (24)

In a few early Northeastern works however, nativism begins to reveal signs of a critical dimension. For example, Diálogos das Grandezas do Brasil, published in 1618 by Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão (dates unknown), who was born in Portugal but spent most of his life as a sugar plantation owner in Paraíba and Pernambuco, goes beyond a mere inventory of the assets of the new land to criticize the slowness of consolidated development in the colony, for which he blames the predatory mentality of the Portuguese colonialists. José Guilherme Merquior says of his criticism:

Nem se restringe aos defeitos de superfície. Censura o imediatismo e o espírito predatório dos portugueses; admira-se de que não se organize devidamente a pesca num litoral tão fértil e extenso. Verbera a auto-suficiência antieconômica, a negligência criminosa dos colonos indolentes; sabe que não têm amor à terra, que aí residem de passagem, com a idéia de retornar ao Reino tão logo consigam dinheiro. (25)

Such sentiments are developed even further in the writing of the Bahian priest, Frei Vicente do Salvador (1564-1636), who completed his História do Brasil in 1627, a work which contains criticism of the Portuguese Crown for not devoting more resources to the development of the colony, and of the colonists for only thinking in terms of immediate profit. Unusual for the period, the work reveals a genuine concern to investigate the major problems of the society of the time, and, according to one critic, the perceptive analysis produced is as much the result of the author's own studies and experiences of life in Bahia as it is of scholarly research, again unusual at a time when most writing was so divorced from daily social life. (26)

The major critical writing of North East colonial society however, was that of Gregório de Matos (1633-1696), who was born in Bahia of a landowning family, studied law in Coimbra, Portugal, and eventually returned to the Brazilian North East to work as an administrator within the church, and later as a lawyer. His satirical verses on avaricious colonists, corrupt merchants, hypocritical priests and pseudo-intellectuals leads Pedro Calmon to write of him:

Introduziu um valor novo na poética popular, que foi a nota política avivada de nativismo. Acorre à defesa dos naturais do Brasil; estranha a fortuna dos forasteiros; quer equiparação de destinos. (27)

Certainly, Matos revealed a critical conscience rare for the time, and did suffer persecution on account of his satires. His clashes with the authorities even led to his deportation to Angola for a period. Yet it would be misleading to suggest, as some critics have done, that he was imbued with a real national sentiment. His scathing verses hit out at all sectors of colonial society, not just at those in authority, and suggest personal frustration, and even envy, rather than a committed nationalism. Despite his privileged background, Matos spent a large part of his life marginalized from the high society to which he aspired. For Alfredo Bosi, the contradictory content of his work, with religious sonnets and lyrical love poetry mixed with harsh, often crude satires, is indicative of the contradictions within colonial society itself, where a stark contrast existed between the established laws of the authorities and the strict moral teaching of the church on the one hand, and the practical realities of everyday colonial life on the other. Deeply entangled in those contradictions

through his experience in legal and religious circles, frustrated professionally and sexually, Matos gave vent to his feelings in his poetry. For Bosi this also explains Matos' rejection of classic lyrical Portuguese on occasion in favour of the popular Brazilian idiom, indicated by some critics as a sign of rebellious patriotism.

O desejo de gozo e de riqueza são mascarados formalmente por uma retórica nobre e moralizante, mas afloram com tôda brutalidade nas relações com as classes servis que delas saem mais aviltadas. Daí, o "populismo" chulo que irrompe às vêzes e, longe de significar uma atitude antiaristocrática, nada mais é que válvula de escape para velhas obsessões sexuais ou arma para ferir os poderosos. (28)

The conditions of early colonialism, with the population dispersed in isolated clusters, and a rudimentary and rigidly divided class structure, made it impossible for the writers of the time, generally privileged by their social background and European education, to develop any real conception of nationhood, involving a distinctive cultural unity.

The major part of Matos' work still reveals the clear influence of the baroque style common in Portugal and Spain at the time, and which marked much of the writing in the North East in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, being discernible too in the work of Botelho de Oliveira and Itaparica, for example. Accompanying the counter-Reformation in Catholic Europe, emphasizing the spiritual, the emotional and the imagination in opposition to the increasing rationalism of Protestant Europe, the baroque was adapted by Brazilian writers to construct an imaginative idealization of the new land, embellishing reality to create an illusory vision which contrasted

sharply with the paucity of resources in the colony, the slowness of its development and the low level and atomized nature of cultural production among the elite. This role of the baroque in colonial Brazil is summarized succinctly by Antônio Cândido:

As a powerful ideological factor, it compensated to some degree for the meagerness of means and achievements. By giving transcendence to things, facts and persons, it transferred local reality to the level of dreams. (29)

More vivid expression of the baroque spirit would be found in architecture and sculpture in the eighteenth century, especially with the development of gold mining in Minas Gerais. Nevertheless, its influence in the North East was significant, providing the means of expression for an exaggerated literary nativism. Soon superseded by other literary forms, its influence did not die completely however. As will be seen in chapter five of this study, Ariano Suassuna regards the baroque in Brazil as having been responsible for some of the country's most creative art, and an important part of the work of the Armorial Movement of the 1970s was the recreation of baroque influences.

It is important to emphasize the fundamental alienation of these colonial writers from the mass of the population. With a reading public virtually non-existent in the colony, and printing and publishing only permitted in Portugal, their works remained extremely restricted, devoid of any significant impact or influence within Brazil itself. This lack of any real repercussions for their literary work drove intellectuals and writers into increasing insularity,

demonstrated by the formation in the first half of the eighteenth century of a series of literary academies in various parts of the colony, aiming to unite writers and provide incentive for their intellectual creativity and reciprocal appraisal of work produced. Accompanying the gradual growth of the towns and the expansion of the professional classes, the academies brought together landowners, priests, government administrators and lawyers interested in scholarship and literature.

Two of the most celebrated academies were founded in Bahia, the Brasílica dos Esquecidos in 1724, and the Brasílica dos Renascidos in 1759. Highly elitist, the opportunity they afforded to confirm status and display erudition was as important as anything else. Critics today find little worthy of acclaim in the creative literature produced by the academies, considering most of it to be a poor imitation of European baroque writing, but they do recognise their historical importance. In an effort to combat the indifference to their work, writers attempted to form nuclei of cultural activity capable of providing mutual support and interchange between them, as well as a sense of continuity to what had long been a spasmodic and fragmentary process of literary production. (30) The participants did show an interest in Brazilian history, society and the local environment, but they still remained detached from it, unable to analyse it critically, working within their enclave and seeing their intellectual activity as a sphere totally separate from the general productive and social life of the colony.

Despite such clear limitations, the academies were nonetheless an early indication of the emergence of more favourable conditions for

literary production in eighteenth century Brazil, largely stimulated by the thriving mining economy. The increase in commercial activity in various parts of the colony and the expansion of urban life, with its developing social and institutional infrastructure, generated greater demand for skilled professionals such as administrators, lawyers and teachers. These sectors played an increasing role in literary production, no longer so sporadic and reclusive, but more systematic and interconnected, integrated into broader patterns of public and commercial services and professional activities.

However, the increasing complexity of the economic, social and administrative structures of the colony during the period was accompanied by deepening social tension, much of it emanating from the frustration of those emerging professional classes of the growing towns, who, though of privileged background and education, found their political and economic ambitions constantly impeded by the restrictive framework of the colonial system. These sectors began to organize themselves politically in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and that political activity was frequently combined with literary activity. The clearest manifestation of these developments undoubtedly emerged in Minas Gerais with the Escola Mineira, a small group of writers, most of them administrators, lawyers or doctors, who not only produced a prolific range of literary work, but, in many cases, also engaged in political activity against the colonial authorities. Several participants were involved in the Inconfidência Mineira of 1789, and at times their literary and political activities converged in tangible form, as demonstrated by the Cartas Chilenas, a series of

letters distributed in Vila Rica around 1789, satirizing the state governor. (31)

Broadly similar developments occurred in the North East however. There, the decline of the regional economy which resulted from foreign competition in the sugar market and the transfer of the economic axis to the south, did not eradicate the elitist cultural tradition of the dominant classes. Sons of prosperous families continued to be sent to the expanding urban centres of the region, or to Portugal, to receive the traditional, European education, many of them then to be absorbed into the liberal professions. Such men made an increasingly significant contribution to literary production in the North East in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, like José da Silva Lima (1756-1835), a Bahian teacher, journalist and politician who wrote works of history and political economy, and Domingos Borges de Barros (1779-1855), also from Bahia, a politician and diplomat, in whose verse most critics detect the early indications of romanticism.

Some Northeastern writers of this period, like their counterparts in Minas, came gradually to express a growing disaffection with colonial rule, their discontent given a further dimension by the political and economic decline of the North East relative to other areas. Inconfidências occurred against the colonial authorities in Bahia in 1798 and Pernambuco in 1801, and the North East continued to be one of the most politically volatile regions of the country during the early decades of the nineteenth century, as different factions struggled to protect or enhance their position nationally or regionally. Major revolts took place in Pernambuco in 1817, in Maranhão and Pernambuco in 1822, and Pernambuco again in 1824, all

marked to a greater or lesser degree by republican ideas and, against the background of regional decline, the desire to assert local rights and liberties against what was perceived as the monopoly of power by central government. A spirit of regional autonomy was therefore an integral part of most of these movements, the 1824 revolt even advocating the installation of an independent confederation of northern states.

Frequently, the political activists who participated in these uprisings, again generally from the middle classes, were also creative writers, such as Miguel do Sacramento Lopes Gama (1791-1852), a political journalist from Recife who wrote satirical verse, José da Natividade Saldanha (1795-1830), a Pernambuco poet forced to flee into exile because of his political activities, and most notable of all, Frei Joaquim do Amor Divino Caneca (1779-1825), a priest from Recife, best known for his political essays and pamphlets. Regarded by some as one of the first fighters for republicanism and federalism in Brazil, Caneca was executed for his part in the 1824 revolt. (32) However, significant though such writing is, it must be stressed that it constitutes only one part of the literary output of the North East of the period, representing the contribution of the most radical elements of the middle class intelligentsia. Most works of the time were still socially uncritical, essentially reproductions of European paradigms.

Many historians have interpreted these political developments as simply successive phases in a steady linear process towards national independence, with the political break with Portugal in 1822 marking the definite affirmation of a clear national identity among the Brazilian people as a whole. E. Bradford Burns serves as an example:

The growth of a national consciousness, which Luccock so accurately noted, had its inevitable triumph in the proclamation of Brazil's independence in 1822. Members of the Brazilian elite, transformed from bucolic nativists into radical nationalists, helped to create and swore to defend a sovereign nation. Brazil sprang forth and grew as a unified nation thanks at least in part to virile nativism or precocious nationalism. A national sentiment among the native-born elite, and a vague feeling of devotion to their native land among scattered segments of the masses, help to explain why that gigantic country, unlike the other huge administrative areas of colonial Latin America, did not fragment after Independence. (33)

In fact, the whole socio-political process was far more complex than Burns suggests, and he blurs the issue by failing to consider the class contradictions already emerging within Brazilian society. As has been seen, many of the revolts which took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were motivated essentially by the embryonic urban middle classes. They were generally lacking in significant popular support, and the collapse of such revolts was mainly due to the fact that they alienated and antagonized the still politically dominant landowning-bureaucratic elite, which was determined that political independence would only be attained on terms favourable to themselves. The more radical, idealistic intellectuals demanding changes in the structure of power therefore tended to be isolated, and the political movement which finally gave formal independence to Brazil was essentially conservative, shaped by the interests and perspectives of the traditional dominant elites, and different in significant ways from most of the revolts already mentioned.

Those elites perceived that their interests would best be served through direct links with the emerging manufacturing powers, especially Britain, and so saw the need for freeing themselves from the restrictive policies imposed by Portuguese control. The 'national consciousness' which Burns sees as achieving victory in 1822 is therefore essentially synonymous with dominant class perceptions, and the image of the emergence of a 'unified nation' stimulated by the 'radical nationalism' of the Brazilian elite is misleading. The aspirations of the majority of the Brazilian population did not play a significant part in independence in 1822, and for many decades afterwards revolts were launched in various parts of the country against the new government. Also misleading is the implicit suggestion that it was the Brazilians' extra national sentiment or devotion that enabled the country to retain its geo-political unity, unlike the Spanish American viceroyalties. Nationalist ideologies were elaborated by most of the other Latin American governing elites around the same period, and there is no rational justification for supposing that the Brazilian masses should feel any differently towards their native land than Latin American masses elsewhere.

Again, the problem is that nationalism as an ideological force is not given due recognition, but understood instead as an inherent psychological or spiritual quality shared by all members of a particular nation. The tensions within that nation are concealed as a result. It is this same thinking which frequently obscures the ideological dimension of literary nationalism as well, dimensions that can be detected in most colonial writing of the North East, which,

despite signs of a growing nativism, still generally embodied the dominant ideological values of the time. Works which genuinely challenged those values were really exceptions to the general pattern. For the most part, the prevailing schemes of thought into which he was integrated severely limited the writer's attempts to understand and analyse critically the realities of his native land. Sylvio Romero's comment on the poetry of Botelho de Oliveira applies equally to virtually all the other nativist writers of the colonial period:

a pena queria pintar o Brasil; mas a alma era o
cultismo espanhol ou português. (34)

What a broad historical study of the colonial literature of the Brazilian North East also confirms is the early establishment and then steady consolidation of a firm literary tradition among the privileged sectors of society, essentially the landowning aristocracy in the early colonial period, and then incorporating urban professional classes in the later phase. That tradition has been earnestly cultivated by generations of intellectuals ever since, undeterred by the region's political and economic decline. Indeed, it has been suggested that the dynamism of intellectual and artistic activity in the North East has been stimulated at least in part by a desire to compensate for that decline, an attempt to highlight the region's distinct position within, and contribution to, the historical development of the nation. (35) A striking feature of the literary circles that emerged in the evolution of that regionalist tradition however, was their insularity, with their intellectual work totally

alienated from the lives of the illiterate masses of the region. It was a growing consciousness of that alienation and the desire to relate their work more directly to the wider social life of the North East that provided a major stimulus to writers in the region during the nineteenth century.

The early nineteenth century: Romanticism

A strong national sentiment prevails in much Brazilian writing of the nineteenth century. As has been argued however, it is important not to see this as simply a maturing of the nativism that developed during the colonial period. Obviously, many writers would continue to develop their awareness of, and interest in, the particular characteristics and problems of their land, and that growing consciousness would be given expression through the themes and style of their work, but recognition must also be given to the role played by the nationalist ideology elaborated by the Brazilian dominant classes in order to justify and perpetuate their own privileged position in society. The restrictive political and economic links with Portugal had to be severed in order to permit the more advantageous integration of Brazil into the commercial system being elaborated by the industrializing capitalist nations. External capitalism channelled its interests through the Brazilian dominant classes, which, in return, saw their own interests protected by those same external powers. In this way the Brazilian elites worked in cooperation with the interests of foreign capitalism, both complementary and

interdependent parts in the same economic, political and ideological system.

For the interests of both sides to be realized, political independence had to remove Portuguese dominance and pass control into the hands of the native elite, whilst ensuring the maintenance of essentially the same socio-economic structures that had been established during the colonial period. Hence the apparent contradiction of a forceful nationalist ideology on the one hand, virulently anti-Portuguese during the early nineteenth century, and, on the other, the incorporation of European ideologies, such as racial and climatic determinism in the latter part of the century, arguing that the existing socio-economic order was the most appropriate for realizing the material and human potential of the respective nations.

Brazilian writers and intellectuals obviously played a major role in the construction and reproduction of this ideological system, and long before 1822 the dominant classes had begun to form ranks of intellectuals for this task. Many still originated from the landowning aristocracies, although, as has been seen, increasing numbers were recruited from the emerging intermediate classes, urban based and associated with the expanding liberal professions. On occasion, these classes would produce critical work voicing dissatisfaction and frustration, and the series of revolts which took place against the Imperial government during the first half of the nineteenth century does demonstrate the emergence of some radical, conflicting thought. The case of the 1824 Pernambuco revolt in which writers of the middle classes participated has already been mentioned. Overall however, those classes were as yet too weak and incohesive to affirm any

authentic self identity and, given the impossibility of any fraternization with the working masses of the population, despised as natural inferiors destined for servile work, most of the emerging middle sector intellectuals remained firmly under the tutelage of the dominant elite. They therefore had little alternative but to interpret and express, consciously or unconsciously, the perspectives of that elite.

The dominant ideology had to reconcile the paradoxical position of the Brazilian ruling classes, which, externally dependent and hence externally orientated, nevertheless had to forge a national cultural complex, which would consolidate their power and integrate the rest of the population into the established order. Against the reality of a deeply divided society, where a small minority monopolized political and economic power, and relied heavily on slave labour, a national culture would need to be affirmed, emphasising independence and unity. It was into the resulting ideological framework that most literature produced in Brazil in the early nineteenth century would be integrated.

It was romanticism, still dominating European art of the period, that provided the model for that literature. Attempting to cast aside Portuguese models following the political break with the metropolis, Brazilian writers turned to other European nations, notably France and Britain, for alternatives. In those countries, romanticism had developed in the late eighteenth century in response to specific historical circumstances, -the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, the ascent of the bourgeoisie and the expansion of modern, capitalist systems of production. No such conditions existed in Brazil

however. The landowning aristocracy still dominated, slave labour still prevailed and the bourgeoisie was still weak. The Brazilian writer was thus caught between the European schemes of cultural expression into which he was integrated and the distinct realities of his native land. His response was to give those romantic tendencies transplanted from Europe new forms and connotations as demanded by the particular circumstances of the national environment. Suitably adapted, romantic perceptions and aesthetic models would thereby provide the vital instruments for the task of forging a nationally representative art and literature in the wake of Independence.

Any nationalist ideology seeks, on the one hand, to integrate the population into one overall cultural scheme, and, on the other, to distinguish the nation from all others. The Brazilian romantic writers contributed to this process in searching for symbols which could identify the common heritage of all Brazilians, and differentiate Brazil from other nations, particularly Portugal, extolling the virtues of the new land in the process. For this purpose, the Brazilian natural environment, the Indian and regional customs and cultural expressions were all developed in Romantic literature. However, many of those themes and symbols betrayed the severe inequalities and tensions which, inherited from colonialism, still characterized Brazilian society, and in order that they might fulfil their role in the project of cultural nationalization, would have to be remodelled in accordance with the schemes of dominant class ideology. Their contradictions neutralized, they could then be developed as symbols of Brazilian nationhood; symbols of unity and harmony which concealed divisions and served to justify the status

quo. This process characterized much of the romantic writing that sought to elaborate a Brazilian self-expression. Only occasionally were works produced which fractured prevailing ideological perceptions and revealed some of the underlying contradictions.

The process of recasting reality in accordance with the matrix of the dominant ideology was compounded by the writer's own isolation and alienation within nineteenth century Brazilian society. Given the rigid class divisions that existed, and the external orientation of the privileged classes to which he was associated, the writer was in no position to comprehend the reality lived by the mass of the population, but which he wanted increasingly to incorporate into his work. The result was the superficial and picturesque vision of Brazil that characterized much romantic writing, of which Nelson Werneck Sodré comments:

Aquela superficialidade, a tendência à imitação, a ausência de um pensamento original, denunciavam os fundamentos da transplantação, e denunciavam ainda o formidável esforço para enganar a verdade profunda com a verdade superficial, travestindo, na prosa e no verso, as manifestações com o espírito patriótico, com a tendência à diferenciação do idioma, com a exaltação do pitoresco, com a infatigável busca do trivial, do quotidiano, do comum. (36)

Two of the major elements cultivated in European romantic literature were the wild natural environment and the Indian, or *noble savage*, both of which epitomized the romantic resistance to a reality characterized by the growth of industrialism, materialism and competition, all associated with developing capitalism, and the desire to return to a state of complete liberty, harmony, innocence and

spontaneity. It was the same elements, the natural environment and the Indian, which became the major nationalist symbols for the Brazilian romantics. The glorification of nature had already been a key theme of the nativist literature of the colonial era, and this was now expanded by the romantics in the belief that the contemplation of the natural world around them, and vivid description of its beauty, exuberance and majesty, could provide the inspiration and originality that would help free them from mere imitation of external patterns. Frequently in Brazilian romantic verse, the vitality of the tropical flora and fauna is contrasted with the seemingly drab and stagnant natural environment of Europe, as can be seen in some of the work of Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864), from Maranhão. It is typified in the best known of all Brazilian romantic poems, Canção do Exílio, which he wrote in 1843 whilst living in Portugal in dedication to his native North East:

Minha terra tem palmeiras
 Onde canta o Sabiá;
 As aves que aqui gorjeiam,
 Não gorjeiam como lá.

Nosso céu tem mais estrelas,
 Nossas várzeas têm mais flores,
 Nossos bosques têm mais vida,
 Nossa vida mais amôres.

En cismar, sozinho, à noite,
 Mais prazer encontro eu lá;
 Minha terra tem palmeiras,
 Onde canta o Sabiá. (37)

Exaggerated, idealized, almost dreamlike, the distinctive qualities of the Brazilian natural environment are emphasised. Constant references to plants and wildlife particular to Brazil are scattered throughout

many romantic works of the same period, the tendency to particularize and exalt nature serving to emphasize the notion of a new nation, no longer a mere appendage of Portugal. Some fine writing resulted, but the tendency also reveals much about the contradictory position of the romantic writer within Brazilian society, and exemplifies the ideological dimension of much of his work. Firstly, linking his work to the natural world, and seeking inspiration there, could serve in some measure as compensation for the sense of alienation many writers felt within a society where the process of writing was still essentially a marginal activity, disengaged from general social life. Secondly, the glorification of nature, presenting a vision of grandeur and harmony, distracted attention from the conflicts within society and the rudimentary level of most aspects of social, political and economic life. Hence the paradox confronting the writer: on the one hand, his task of elaborating a nationally representative literature, but on the other, his position in society, in terms of class affiliation and of the nature of his artistic activity, which distanced him from crucial aspects of national reality. The paradox did not, of course, prevent romantic literature of high quality being produced, but it does offer an explanation for the thematic and aesthetic tendencies which characterized its conscious efforts to nationalize Brazilian literature.

In the work of Gonçalves Dias and Alencar the idealized vision of the natural world is combined with an equally romanticized image of the Indian to present a picture of harmony between man and nature. Against the harsh national reality of poverty and inequality, a utopian vision of Brazil is elaborated. The Indian provided the

romantic writers with an ideal symbol to be incorporated into the nationalist ideology that was in the process of development, facilitating the repudiation of Brazil's colonial past and the creation of a mythical national patrimony. Perceived as the only autochthonous social element, the Indian was lauded as a hero who had resisted European colonization, as seen in O Canto do Guerreiro, by Gonçalves Dias:

Aqui na floresta
 Dos ventos batida,
 Façanhas de bravos
 Não geram escravos,
 Que estimem a vida
 Sem guerra e lidar.
 Ouví-me, Guerreiros,
 Ouví-me cantar. (38)

In fact, Indian culture had been virtually annihilated in the first century of Portuguese colonialism, and the Indians that still lived in contact with nineteenth century Brazilian society were for the most part destitute and subservient, bearing no resemblance to the image created by Gonçalves Dias or Alencar. This, however, perhaps explains the attraction of the Indian for some writers, for as the symbol of a defeated culture, he offered no threat to the existing order.

In prose, the exaltation of the Indian found its finest expression in the novels of José de Alencar (1829-1877), born in Ceará of a landowning family. In his best known Indianist works, O Guarani (1857) and Iracema (1865), the idealized Indian appears as the central element in the reconstruction of a mythical national past. In Iracema, the love affair between a Portuguese soldier and an Indian girl, Iracema, ends in tragedy when she dies whilst he is away fighting in

Ceará, but their son, Moacir, is left as a symbol of the Brazilian mestiço, the core of the people of Ceará and of Brazil as a whole.

Sânzio de Azevedo emphasises the regional aspect of the myth:

Trata-se, por tanto, de uma lenda, criada, como dissemos, para narrar as origens do povo cearense, sendo Moacir o símbolo do filho de nossa gleba, predestinado às migrações. (39)

In fact, Alencar creates a myth of not just regional but national identity. Fusing history and legend, the two conflicting cultures, European and Indian, are harmoniously united, with Moacir effectively representing the new Brazilian culture that is created. In this way, indianismo served to negate the reality of Brazil's colonial past and create the illusion of a distinct and original Brazilian culture, that could be traced back to the earliest period of Portuguese rule. The negro slave, a vital source of wealth and power for the landowning oligarchy, was conveniently ignored. History was thereby reconstructed within the framework of a new nationalist perspective, eradicating conflict and affirming a particular Brazilian identity and culture which, as the natural result of the blending together of the finest qualities of two races, effectively gave legitimacy to the existing socio-economic order.

Alencar argued forcefully for the elaboration of a national literature, and a crucial element within his thinking was the aim of establishing a distinct Brazilian idiom within literature, in opposition to the standard classical Portuguese which, though obviously identified with the former metropolis, was still employed by most Brazilian writers. Alencar saw that the language would

necessarily undergo modifications in the new environment and these had to be incorporated into literature.

A língua é a nacionalidade do pensamento como a pátria é a nacionalidade do povo. Da mesma forma que instituições justas e racionais revelam um povo grande e livre, uma língua pura, nobre e rica, anuncia a raça inteligente e ilustrada. (40)

Alencar identified two main mechanisms by which the language of literature could be *Brazilianized*. Firstly, Indian vocabulary and expressions could be incorporated into erudite works, and secondly more colloquial forms of language could be employed. In line with other romantics, Alencar argued that the most authentic Brazilian Portuguese was that used in daily life by the mass of the population, whilst the literary language of the erudite writer was artificial and static, a notion that has constantly recurred among Brazilian writers since, as will be seen in later chapters. Certainly, a major part of the originality of *Iracema*, and much of its appeal, resulted from the linguistic innovations introduced by Alencar, mainly through a lyrical prose style, employing many Indian terms, which gives the language an oral quality, evoking spoken legends and ancient epic tradition. This was a new development in Brazilian literature; the first really systematic attempt to produce a distinctly Brazilian literary language. *Iracema* is an exceptional example, however. In other works such linguistic experiments resulted in artificiality, with Indian words and popular expressions merely adding piquancy to the formal and erudite prose.

Like their European counterparts, the Brazilian romantic writers developed an interest in a wide variety of popular cultural expressions and local customs, and it was through that interest that they made their major contribution to specifically regionalist literary tradition. Their motivation was not only the need to seek elements able to symbolize the nation, but also the desire felt by many romantics to escape from the present and return to a collective past. A number of North Eastern writers incorporated elements of popular verse into their poetry, such as the Bahian poet and monk, Luís José Junqueira Freire, (1832-1855), and Juvenal Galeno, (1836-1931), a poet from Ceará. Speaking of this influence in his work, Galeno alluded to the distance that separated the dominant classes from the mass of the population:

Sei que mal recebido serei nos salões aristocratas, e entre alguns críticos que -estudando nos livros estrangeiros o nosso povo- desconhecem-no a ponto de escreverem que o Brasil não tem poesia popular! (41)

Such a statement exposes the problem confronting the writer utilizing popular expressions, yet totally alienated from the sectors of the population from which they originate. In O Sertanejo, (1875), José de Alencar, portraying the backlands of his native Ceará, uses a traditional romance to develop his theme, and includes much detailed description of local customs and examples of popular verses to provide the narrative with atmosphere and colour. The following extract is typical:

Mais longe, em frente às casas dos vaqueiros, a gente do curral fazia o serão ao relento, deitada sôbre os

couros, que serviam de esteiras. Uma voz cheia cantava com sentimento as primeiras estâncias do 'Boi Espácio', trova de algum bardo sertanejo daquele tempo, já então muito propalada por toda a ribeira do São Francisco, e ainda há poucos anos tão popular nos sertões do Ceará.

Vinde cá meu Boi Espácio

Meu boi preto caraúna

Por seres das pontas liso

Sempre vos deitei a unha.

Os tons doces e melancólicos da cantiga sertaneja infundiram um enlêvo de saudade, sobretudo naquela hora plácida da noite. (42)

Divorced from their true social context, isolated and refashioned according to a romantic vision and romantic literary conventions, such popular forms of expression emerge in the erudite novel as picturesque touches blended into the fantasy world created. In this particular case, Alencar recreates the sertão as a medieval kingdom according to the patterns of the chivalric romance, with typical heroes, heroines and feudal lords. Manuel Cavalcanti Proença provides a vivid description of the hero of the work:

Como um herói medieval, o sertanejo toma parte numa festa de cavahada e, cavaleiro mascarado, brilha no torneio, pura transposição de Ivanhoé, amigo de Ricardo Coração de Leão, herói de Walter Scott. (43)

It will be seen that Ariano Suassuna's vision of the North East sertão nearly a century later has striking similarities with that of Alencar. O Sertanejo has undeniable qualities, but it highlights one of the major problems of Alencar's project to create a national literature. Aspects of popular culture are seen as vital sources for the writer, but, removed from context and transformed by the author's imagination, they lose their original significance to become little more than items of curiosity or ornamentation within the erudite work. For José

Guilherme Merquior, the imitation of popular forms in an effort to nationalize literature has often imposed such severe limitations on literary works that they have ended up stranded between erudite and popular expression, without achieving the attributes of either, and this is a defect he detects in some of the work of Alencar:

(,,,)O que é viço e beleza no terreno do folclore se converte em simplismo e clichê no domínio da arte culta. A popularidade de Alencar não é argumento contra o rudimentarismo psicológico dos heróis d'*O Guarani*, d'*As Minas de Prata* ou d'*O Sertanejo*. No fundo, o problema alencariano é o de toda a literatura brasileira em sua fase formativa: então, para ser autêntica, para criar raízes no país, a literatura tinha que despojar-se da sofisticação mental dos seus modelos europeus -tinha que colocar-se na fronteira do aliterário ou do subliterário; e, principalmente, que renunciar à "crítica da vida", àquela *capacidade de problematização da existência e da sociedade*, em que, desde o romantismo, reside o cerne da arte ocidental.
(44)

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, certain writers, detecting the contradictions resulting from the attempts to fuse romantic perceptions and literary form with documentation of rural life and popular culture, became increasingly critical of Alencar's project for literary nationalism. One of the most notable of these critics was Franklin Távora, (1842-1888), a lawyer, public official and novelist from Ceará, who, under the pseudonym *Semprônio*, contributed to a series of articles on Alencar's novels in a Rio de Janeiro journal, *Questões do Dia*, in 1871 and 1872. For Távora, Alencar's literary nationalism had failed because the author's romantic imagination had prevented authenticity in his portrayal of popular customs, cultural expressions and local environment. What was required, Távora implied, was a more realistic interpretation of

Brazil's natural and social environment, based on more rigorous analysis and observation.

Távora's criticism was not purely a disagreement over literary approach, however. He also resented the decision by Alencar, a fellow cearense, to write novels such as O Gaúcho (1870) and Til (1872), based on Southern regions of the country, at a time when, on the basis of the flourishing coffee economy, the Centre-South appeared to be establishing economic, political and cultural hegemony over the rest of the nation, including the once dominant North East. Távora argued fervently for the elaboration of a distinctly North Eastern literature, for it was in his native region, he believed, where authentically Brazilian traditions were best preserved, whereas the South had become distorted by cosmopolitan values. He wrote:

As letras têm, como a política, um certo caráter geográfico; mais no Norte, porém, do que no Sul abundam os elementos para a formação de uma literatura propriamente brasileira, filha da terra. A razão é óbvia: o Norte ainda não foi invadido como está sendo o Sul de dia em dia pelo estrangeiro. A feição primitiva, unicamente modificada pela cultura que as raças, as índoles, e os costumes recebem dos tempos ou do progresso, pode-se afirmar que ainda se conserva ali em sua pureza, em sua genuína expressão.
(45)

The notion of the North East embodying everything most typical of Brazil, essentially because the region's particular historical development has produced a much slower rhythm of change of its social structures and traditional patterns of life than in other zones of the country, has reappeared in the work of many other North East writers right up to the present day. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, it can be detected in both the Movimento Regionalista of 1926 and the

Movimento Armorial of 1970, for example. It reveals both the strong sense of regionalism that has continued in the North East, and the contradictory position of the writer, seeking to affirm regional culture, yet unable to reconcile himself to the dynamism of that culture, constantly changing and assuming new qualities.

Távora believed, therefore, that through a detailed narrative description of the life and customs of the rural North East, he could capture the essence of Brazilian culture. In fact, his novels reveal his inability to escape completely from the romantic literary conventions still dominant at the time, and of which he had been so critical. In O Cabeleira (1876) for example, the presentation of the protagonist, José Gomes, a cangaceiro whose nickname provides the title of the work, is highly romanticised, and aspects of his life, and particularly his execution at the hands of the authorities, portrayed with considerable sentimentality. Details of local environment are described and quotations from popular verses on O Cabeleira included, but the reader is distanced from such aspects of North East life by the refined prose style and interventions of the author himself, expressing his own opinions, characterized by a strong liberalism, of the events narrated:

A justiça executou o Cabeleira por crimes que tiveram sua principal origem na ignorância e na pobreza. Mas o responsável de males semelhantes não será primeiro que todos a sociedade que não cumpre o dever de difundir a instrução, a fonte da moral, e de organizar o trabalho, fonte da riqueza? (46)

Távora's two following novels, O Matuto (1878) and Lourenço (1881), which both recreate life in Pernambuco during the Guerra dos Mascates of 1710-1714, where conflict between mill owners and merchants led to outright war, form with O Cabeleira Távora's project to create a specifically northern literature. Its major contribution to regionalist literary tradition was that it incorporated historical sources and popular poetic expression in a more direct and systematic way than previous North Eastern literature. However, the concentration on external documentation frequently results in flat, lifeless characterization, while the constant interposition of the author's individual viewpoint between reader and subject matter means that aspects of regional life and culture dealt with are often presented as themes and exhibits for discussion, lacking life and function of their own. As M. Cavalcanti Proença says of Távora:

Ele está sempre fora de seus personagens, assistindo ao drama, julgando, opinando, procurando trazer o leitor à sua opifição. (47)

Távora's work, still with strong romantic characteristics, yet placing greater emphasis on the study of man in his environment, and stressing the need for accuracy in recording the resulting observations, reveals the transition from romanticism to naturalism that was taking place in the North East of Brazil in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and which will be discussed shortly.

The achievements of the romantic writers must not be denied. The influence they had, especially Alencar, on the literature of the North East was profound, and is still felt today. They stimulated awareness

of local customs, forms of expression and the peculiarities of the language spoken in various parts of Brazil, and developed them all in their work as a source of pride, the indications of the distinct identity they sought. In a highly stratified society, the writer could only view such aspects of popular culture from afar, tending to idealize them, harmonizing them within the overall scheme of a national culture. The tendency for escapism traditionally associated with much romantic writing can undoubtedly be detected in many Brazilian works of period, though on occasion the contradictions within society were embodied in literature. Arguably the most striking example can be found in some of the writing of another major Romantic poet of the North East, Antônio Castro Alves (1847-1871), a student of law from Bahia, who contrasted the idealized perception of most writers of the period with the reality of slavery. Written at a time when the campaign for abolition was mounting, his anti-slavery poetry is accusatory and indignant. In one of his most famous poems, the images of new world purity and innocence cultivated by other poets are shattered by the symbol of the tarnished national flag:

Auriverde pendão de minha terra,
 Que a brisa do Brasil beija e balança
 Estandarte que a luz do sol encerra,
 E as promessas divinas da esperança...
 Tu, que da liberdade após a guerra,
 Foste hasteado dos heróis na lança,
 Antes te houvessem roto na batalha,
 Que servires a um povo de mortalha! (48)

For the most part however, such reality was concealed by the utopian, romantic vision which, in the euphoria following formal independence,

attempted to present a positive national image on one hand, whilst preserving essentially the same colonial structures on the other.

The late nineteenth century: realism and naturalism.

By the last few decades of the nineteenth century, romanticism had been superseded by a whole new approach towards literature in the North East of Brazil. The roots of this change lay in the transformation undergone by Brazilian society at large during the course of the century, with the expansion of the economy, fostered chiefly by coffee exports, stimulating the modernization of the basic socio-economic structures which had been established under the colonial regime. The expansion of commerce, accelerating urbanization and the emergence of the first industries were reflected at the social level by the decline of the traditional plantation aristocracy, and the rise of the urban middle classes, totally divorced from the land. From those middle sectors emerged new ranks of writers and intellectuals increasingly vociferous in their challenge to aristocratic thought and values, epitomized by monarchism and slave ownership.

This changing environment provided a receptive atmosphere for the whole gamut of scientific formulations that had emerged in Europe in the course of the century, such as positivism, evolutionism and naturalism, all of which were integrated into the thought of the ranks of the Brazilian intelligentsia. On the one hand such theories provided the basis for a new critical and scientific intellectual approach to the study of society and culture, more in keeping with the

pattern of modernization and economic development, whilst on the other they furnished new material for the dominant ideology. Racial and climatic determinism not only justified imperialist control over Brazil at the international level, but also the position of the Brazilian dominant classes nationally.

Nowhere in Brazil was this process of change more evident than in the North East. At the socio-economic level, the gradual replacement of the traditional sugar mills by the usinas was clear evidence of the decline of the old sugar aristocracy, the senhores de engenho, and the pattern of plantation life associated with their patriarchal dominance. This process of decline was to be documented by numerous twentieth century North Eastern writers. At the cultural level, the Escola do Recife emerged in the latter decades of the century as a major focus for the new scientific doctrines emanating from Europe, demanding a new critical and systematic analysis in all disciplines, through the implementation of scientific criteria. Based at the Recife Law school, the most influential figure of this group of intellectuals was Tobias Barreto (1837-1889), a lawyer, journalist and teacher from Sergipe, who argued for the complete renovation of Brazilian thought, paralyzed, he believed, by stagnant, out-dated romantic perceptions. In literature, such thinking was almost inevitably reflected by the replacement of the idealist, romantic vision, dominant for so many decades, by the explicit desire to create a more authentic impression of the world; to record it with greater realism and objectivity.

The work of Sílvio Romero (1851-1914), a law student from Sergipe who became one of Barreto's main disciples, encapsulated this new outlook, and was to be a major influence on many twentieth century

Brazilian intellectuals. However, for Romero, and many other Brazilian scholars still struggling to define a national identity, the realist perspective they adopted tended to engender a pervasive pessimism. The theories of racial and climatic determinism which they assimilated appeared to prove scientifically the inevitability of the superiority of some nations over others, and to condemn Brazil to perpetual underdevelopment. Romero's ambiguity regarding so many fundamental problems is symptomatic of this continuing contradiction in the position of the Brazilian intellectual, on the one hand working to affirm a national identity, yet on the other integrated into the framework of European perspectives which led to exceedingly problematical conclusions about the nature of that identity. Although the more untenable notions propagated at the time, particularly those related to race and climate, were soon discredited and discarded, others, refracted through the work of critics like Romero, have maintained a certain influence to the present day.

Romero attacked romanticism and Indianism for distorting Brazil's historical development, and attempted to reach a more objective interpretation through the application of new scientific criteria. The fact that those criteria were as much the product of European ideology as of scientific research, explains the contradictions in the resulting work. Rejecting the Indian as a national symbol, Romero saw true Brazilian culture embodied in the mestiço. Miscegenation had created a new type, conditioned by the physical environment and a transplanted European culture:

Todo brasileiro é um mestiço, quando não no sangue, nas idéias. Os operários dêste fato inicial têm sido: o

português, o negro, o índio, o meio físico e a imitação estrangeira. (49)

However, the theories of biological determinism which Romero was incapable of rejecting, implied the inevitable inferiority of the Brazilian mestiço, and Romero was forced to try to resolve the dilemma by advocating increased European immigration in order to whiten the population, through the process of natural selection, and thereby enhance its capabilities. The conclusion is inevitably pessimistic, with the mestiço, the *true Brazilian*, perceived as inadequate and in need of transformation. As will be seen, the idea of the emergence of a completely new racial type, peculiarly Brazilian, was to be developed by many other intellectuals, notably Gilberto Freyre, who attempted to rectify Romero's negative interpretation in the process.

In accordance with his scientific approach, Romero also rejected the literary nationalism of the romantic era as being too concerned with superficial, external appearances, and making no attempt to understand the psychology of the Brazilian people. His efforts to tackle this problem led him on a search for a spiritual quality unique to Brazilians, the *alma brasileira* that determines national identity:

Ser brasileiro é sé-lo no âmago de espírito, com todos os nossos defeitos e todas as nossas virtudes. É ter em si um quê indefinível mas real, que é só nosso, que ninguém mais tem. (50)

As with other intellectuals, this concept provided the basis for a systematic classification of the psychological characteristics of the Brazilian, which could then be used as explanations, at least partial,

for virtually all aspects of national reality, including cultural manifestations.

It has already been noted that *alma brasileira* is perceived as a quality common to all Brazilians, transcending regional and class differences. Yet those differences, vividly exposed by the varied forms of cultural expression throughout the country, were too obvious to be ignored. Romero's solution to the problem was to argue that Brazil's condition of dependency meant that some regions and certain social sectors, namely the privileged classes, had become imbued with alien values which acted as a barrier against an authentically Brazilian expression. For Romero therefore, such an expression had to found among the poorer mass of the population:

Nas criações populares é onde se pode hoje bem divisar o caráter nacional. (51)

Significantly, it was this period of development of the social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century that produced the first systematic studies of popular culture in Brazil. Celso Magalhães (1849-1879), from Maranhão, another member of the Escola do Recife, wrote História da Poesia Popular in 1873, the first study of North Eastern popular poetry, and Romero himself soon followed by compiling a detailed catalogue of such material, published as Contos Populares do Brasil (1883) and A Poesia Popular Nordestina (1885). Soon, many North Eastern scholars, such as João Ribeiro Fernandes (1860-1934), a Sergipe journalist, and José Rodrigues de Carvalho (1867-1935), from Ceará, were contributing to the study of regional folklore.

The ideological implications of this interest in popular culture must not be overlooked. The dominant classes attempting to construct an ideology of national culture which would legitimize their position were obliged to find the necessary tools in the very classes they dominated, and this contradiction deeply marked much of the work of the many writers who, consciously or unconsciously, participated in the process. It could already be detected in the work of Romero himself. On the one hand he asserted the existence of a national character, rooted in a spirit or soul which fundamentally united all Brazilians, whilst on the other he argued that that character could only be properly perceived in particular social classes.

For Romero, the contribution an author made towards distinguishing national identity in his work was regarded as a major criterion for evaluating its merit. Imitations of European tendencies were condemned, and encouragement given to writers to project that which could be regarded as most characteristic of Brazil. It was an attitude shared by many other writers and scholars of the time, clearly evident, for example, in the thinking of the two Ceará critics, Araripe Júnior (1848-1911), to whose work reference has already been made, and João Capistrano de Abreu (1853-1927). Such a nationalist stance frequently led to distortion, encouraging writers to record in detail the appearance of things without considering the forces underlying them. The notion that some aspects of national life were *more Brazilian* than others could only compound this very unbalanced portrayal of national reality, with authors emphasising those particular features that appeared to serve their ends. Like Távora, Romero saw the North East as the region where national character was best revealed, and he too,

conscious of the contrast between the growing dominance of the South and the decadence of his native North East, was anxious to reaffirm the cultural tradition of his region's elite. Later North Eastern writers were to feel the same necessity.

These attitudes came to predominate in intellectual circles of the North East at the end of the nineteenth century, propagated by groups such as the Escola de Recife, and providing the main orientation for most literary criticism of the time and a host of writers in the naturalist-realist vein. Academic research and literary production flourished in the region during this period, an indication of how socio-economic development, with increased urbanization and the expansion of the reading public, had broadened the base of that production. This was demonstrated by the significant increase in the number of newspapers printed in the region in the latter decades of the century, the strengthening of educational institutions and the founding of numerous literary associations throughout the region, such as the Academia Francesa, which functioned between between 1872 and 1875 in Ceará, and in which Capistrano de Abreu was a major participant, and the Padaria Espiritual, also in Ceará, founded in Fortaleza in 1892. The manifesto of the Padaria Espiritual typically revealed the regionalist and nationalist preoccupations of the time:

21: Será julgada indigna de publicidade qualquer peça literária em que se fala de animais ou plantas estranhas à Fauna e à Flora brasileiras, como: cotovia, olmeiro, rouxinol, carvalho, etc,etc.

(...)

34: A "Padaria Espiritual" obriga-se a organizar, dentro de mais breve prazo possível, um Cancioneiro Popular, genuinamente cearense. (52)

The emphasis on Brazilian subject matter and the attraction towards popular culture, characteristic of so much erudite writing of the period, was to be developed further by the Modernist Movement of the 1920s.

Again, though, it is necessary to emphasise the social and cultural gulf that separated these nineteenth century intellectuals from the lives of the poorer sectors of the population in which they were interested, for it is crucial for understanding the limitations and contradictions which can be detected in their work. Charles Wagley, for example, having acknowledged the development in publishing and education in Brazil in the course of the nineteenth century, stresses that at least eighty percent of the national population was illiterate in the 1870s, and that education still remained the exclusive domain of of a small elite (53). The nature of that education is well described by Afrânio Coutinho as:

(...)divorciado do organismo social, como formador de uma "elite bacharelícia", ensino para as classes dirigentes, sem interesse para a massa do povo, ensino à base de latim e retórica. (54)

Viewed in retrospect, it appears clear that the intellectual formation of these later nineteenth century writers and critics was incapable of furnishing conceptual tools and techniques which could enable them to accurately record the life of the urban and rural poor. Many North Eastern writers of the time, however, believed that naturalism provided the answer. French literature had been very influential among Brazilian writers since the early part of the century, and the works of Zola were widely read by North East novelists

in the latter decades. In naturalism, with its emphasis on the natural forces of heredity and environment as explanations for the human condition, they saw the hope of a scientific approach for dealing with regional reality, particularly its contradictions and conflicts; an approach which might therefore correct what they perceived to be the excessive subjectivity of much romantic writing. Biological and environmental factors are therefore given considerable attention in the naturalist novels of the North East, presented as explanations for the backwardness, poverty and suffering of the region. Such a deterministic approach, with human development ultimately dependent upon forces beyond man's control, helps account for the tone of pessimism which pervades many of the works.

The efforts of the naturalist novelists to document objectively the reality of their environment added new elements to the thematic content of North East literature, and produced a detailed, historical record of many aspects of regional life. However, despite their claims to scientific method and objectivity, and their belief that rigorous observation and description could present a more realistic projection of Brazilian life, the regional materials they employed were selected and shaped in accordance with their own deterministic philosophy. The resulting works therefore reveal as much about the prevailing ideology of the time and the individual vision of the author concerned as they do about regional reality. Furthermore, as Lukács indicates, social reality cannot simply be represented by a banal reconstruction of the external, superficial details of life, since the factors that essentially determine that reality are the tensions and conflicts that

underlie those details. (55) Such underlying factors are rarely touched upon by the naturalist novelists of the North East. As has been seen, their social background and cultural formation hindered them from apprehending the true significance of the contradictions and conflicts within their society, and it might also be argued that as participants in the dominant ideological system, it was not in their interests to do so. In general therefore, they distanced themselves from the subjects of their work, frequently the poorest sectors of society, observing them passively from afar, diligently recording the external details, as if that alone were sufficient to convey the reality of their lives and problems.

The limitations of the naturalist novel are therefore very evident. Distant from their subjects, they tend to rely on minutely detailed description of physical appearance to suggest the personality of the character being portrayed. Typical of the fundamentally pessimistic view of the naturalists, such characters are frequently depraved or pathological. The depiction of João da Mata, one of the characters of A Normalista, written in 1892 by the Ceará novelist and member of the Padaria Espiritual, Adolfo Caminha (1867-1897), serves as an example of this descriptive technique:

João da Mata era um sujeito esgrouvinhado, esguio e alto, carão magra de tísica, com um cor hepática denunciando vícios de sangue, pouco cabelo, óculos escuros através dos quais boliam dois olhos miúdos e vesgos. Usava pêra e bigode ralo caindo sobre os beiços tensos como fios de arame; a testa ampla confundia-se com a meia calva reluzente. Falava depressa, com um sotaque abemolado, gesticulando bruscamente, e, quando ria, punha em evidência a medonha dentuça postiça. (56)

A major objective of A Normalista is to convey the author's contempt for the narrow minded and hypocritical provincial bourgeoisie of Ceará, a contempt apparently heightened by the scandal and vindictiveness he experienced as the result of an illicit love affair. As with much naturalist writing, its main merit lies in the images it evokes of aspects of regional life at the end of the century.

An important by-product of the desire for social documentation, with particular concentration on the seamier side of human existence that characterizes many naturalist novels, was the embracing of themes hitherto rarely tackled by Brazilian literature, often leading to accusations of immorality by the church and authorities. For example, Bom Crioulo, published in 1895 and generally regarded as Caminha's best work, uses the navy as the setting within which to explore human sexuality, including homosexuality, and the human degradation resulting from injustice and oppression. The naturalist work of Henrique Maximiliano Coelho Neto (1884-1934), born in Maranhão, but who sets most of his novels outside the North East, frequently develop the theme of sexuality as well, as in Inverno em Flor (1897), where the protagonist, Jorge Soares, lives in anguish, torn between his sexual desire for his stepdaughter and his own moral conscience. The notion of biological determinism has a powerful presence too, for a mass of detail concerning Jorge's past life reveals that his mother suffered from insanity, and his torment degenerates into complete madness.

Social criticism similar to that found in Bom Crioulo marks much of the work of Aluísio Azevedo (1857-1913), from Maranhão, classified by many critics as Brazil's foremost naturalist novelist, and often

credited with being the first Brazilian to earn his living exclusively from writing, which he did for many years before entering the diplomatic service in later life. Although best known for his work depicting the life of Rio de Janeiro, one of his early books, *O Mulato*, published in 1881, and often regarded as Brazil's first truly naturalist novel, is a sharp satire of the bourgeoisie of Maranhão. Written when the movement for the abolition of slavery was rapidly gaining impetus, it particularly attacks racial attitudes among the region's privileged classes by narrating the tragic story of the protagonist, Raimundo, well educated and refined, but scorned by high society because of his slave ancestry. Central to the plot is his love affair with Ana Rosa, which, socially unacceptable because of his background, leads the couple to a frustrated elopement and to the death of Raimundo. So, despite the naturalist style and the concentration on the impact of racial factors and social environment on human existence, traits of romanticism are nonetheless manifest in the plot and the melodramatic ending. As one critic comments:

No momento em que as tendências idealistas do romantismo declinavam nos seus processos literários, Aluísio Azevedo destes não se desvencilhou completamente quando pretendeu fazer descrição fria e distante, fiel e reprodutiva, daquilo que o romantismo velou e deformou com os seus clichês amenizadores(...) *O Mulato* apresenta romanticamente a fatalidade, no lirismo sombrio e patético com que vê o comportamento histórico que pretende analisar cientificamente. (57)

In fact, such difficulties of form and style frequently hinder the development of the thematic content in North East naturalist writing. Another example can be seen in *Luzia-Homem* (1903), by another Ceará writer, lawyer and journalist, Domingos Olímpio (1850-1906). In

its vivid portrayal of the severe drought of 1877, the work attempts to show the dehumanization of the rural population at the hands of the hostile environment. The effect is undermined, however, by the author's refined, at times grandiloquent language, which constantly clashes with the harshness of the content. His description of the reaction of famished children to market stalls laden with foodstuffs serves as an example;

Os míseros pequenos, estatelados ao tantálico suplício da contemplação dessas gulodices, atiravam-se às cascas de frutas lançadas ao chão, e se enovelavam, na disputa desses resíduos misturados com terra, em ferozes pugilatos. Era indispensável ativa vigilância para não serem assaltadas e devoradas as provisões à venda, pela horda de meninos, que não falavam; não sabiam mais chorar, nem sorrir, (...) Privados de memória, bestificados pela carência de carinhos, anestesiados pelo contínuo sofrer, eram esses pequeninos mendigos gravetos de uma floresta morta, despedaçados pelos vendavais, destroços de famílias, dispersadas pela ruptura de todos os laços de interesses e afetos. (58)

The horror of the drought is also the theme of A Fome (1888), by Rodolfo Teófilo, from Ceará, where the characters are reduced to animals by their milieu. In comparison to Olimpio, a far harsher style is used to depict human misery. Much attention is given to graphic description of the repellent scenes resulting from such an environment, as if the greater the detail, the greater the degree of accuracy:

Os raios do sol bateram em cheio no pavimento, e um espetáculo horrível viu o fazendeiro. Apodrecia ali o cadáver de um homem, cujo rosto já estava medonho pela decomposição. A pele cianótica se estalhava na putrefação, que fazia a cara disforme e horripilante. A fisionomia mais hórrida tornava o nariz que, diluído em uma amálgama de pus e vermes, caíra sobre a boca, já sem lábios, e não cobria mais os dentes alvos e sãos. Os olhos arregalados a saltar das órbitas, num olhar do

morto sem luz e consciência, pareciam fitar-se no fazendeiro. O cadáver estava vestido de camisa e calça de algodão. O hábito, entretanto, na altura do ventre estava rasgado, rasgado também estava o abdômen pelo cão, a cevar-se nos intestinos e vísceras do morto. (59)

The morbidity of such scenes is repeated in many naturalist works, where humankind is constantly shown to be at the mercy of hostile natural, and at times social, forces. It is a view which contrasts sharply with the luxuriant and benign natural environment envisaged by the earlier romantic writers. Elements of both these visions, albeit in revised form, can clearly be seen in North East literature of the present century.

Usually included among the writers of regional naturalism is Manuel de Oliveira Paiva (1861-1892), a journalist from Ceará, whose novel Dona Guidinha do Poço (1891), regarded as one of the finest of the period, focuses on a story of adultery against the background of the rural North East. It is generally considered an exception among contemporary work, however, breaking from the naturalist formulae in significant aspects of style. Above all, it is the author's concise yet vivid language which sets Oliveira Paiva apart from other North Eastern writers of the time, and which is achieved in part, according to one critic, by his preference for the form and style of popular poetry and story telling, instead of the conventional literary language, erudite, at times pompous, and frequently scattered with scientific terminology, that was generally employed by the North East naturalists.

A maior importância do romance consiste no desenho vivo, realístico e pormenorizado do ambiente rural, numa fazenda cearense: os hábitos, o trabalho, a

mentalidade e a fala dos habitantes. Duas fontes folclóricas da narração do autor -a narrativa e as canções do povo cearense- documentam como foi sempre viva e forte, no Nordeste, a influência da literatura oral na literatura escrita. (60)

It will be seen how twentieth century North Eastern writers make increasing use of such forms of popular speech and oral literary tradition in their work.

The naturalist novel proved to be short lived in Brazil. Flourishing in the 1880s and 1890s, it soon faded in the early years of the present century. However, its influence continued, clearly marking the work of Coelho Neto and Antônio Sales (1868-1940), from Ceará, and providing certain themes, patterns and approaches that were developed by the social realist writers that dominated the North East in the 1930s and 1940s. It is not perhaps surprising that it should be the North East that produced the major naturalist writers of Nineteenth century Brazil. Intellectuals of the region saw the scientific method naturalism seemed to provide as a possible way of reaching an understanding of the region's decline, seeking explanations in the hostile natural environment, racial mixture and beginning to sense the social tensions generated by a declining system of agricultural production based on slave labour and the patriarchal dominance of the traditional landowning aristocracy.

However, in the absence of objective conditions similar to those which had engendered the movement in France, naturalism was unable to establish itself as a dominant, pioneering force in Brazilian literature as a whole. (61) Outside the North East, other writers, like Machado de Assis and Raul Pompéia in Rio de Janeiro, attempted to

fulfil the demands of a realist portrayal of their society whilst avoiding the restrictions of naturalist dogma. Both of them exercised a power of imagination that would have been condemned as romantic and unscientific by the strict adherents of naturalism. In fact, Machado de Assis criticised the naturalist doctrine as being responsible for a sterile and banal literature, produced by carrying literary realism to such an extreme that it stifled artistic creativity. (62) This was one more dimension to the whole debate over the respective merits of objective and subjective approaches to reality and experience that were to continue throughout the present century in Brazil, a debate central to the literary development in the North East.

Ultimately, the naturalist novelists of the North East were too imbued with determinist ideology to achieve the objectivity to which they aspired. The lives and culture of the poor, of whom they sought a deeper understanding, were adapted to fit into that ideological framework. The result was frequently characters lacking animation, mere types at the mercy of hostile forces, like the persecuted negro, the plantation worker crushed by poverty or the sertanejo dehumanized by the drought. Helpless against such forces, the characters seem at times fatalistic, stoic in their acceptance of misfortune, and at others the tragic victims of adversity. When included, popular poetry and song is either presented as a lament to suffering, or simply used to in an attempt to increase accuracy in the representation of regional life. Comparing this with the approach towards popular culture of earlier romantic writers, one critic writes:

The element of folklore, unlike that in the earlier regional novel, was not an inherent central interest in the naturalistic novel of Brazil. On the contrary, one

has the feeling that this note is injected artificially by some novelists in an attempt to add to the authenticity of their documentation. (63)

With preeminence given to documenting natural and human environment, and to recording its effect, usually corrosive, on humanity, action and plot were often reduced to secondary importance in the naturalist novel. The result are often rather static, descriptive works, giving detailed observations of life, but rarely its underlying tensions and conflicts.

Yet naturalism nonetheless established certain vital elements in the literary tradition of the North East that would be developed further by writers in the course of the present century. One was the sharp social criticism found in the work of such novelists as Azevedo, Caminha and Teófilo. Many of these men emerged from the disaffected professional middle classes of North East society, and fought against what they perceived as the antiquated political and social structures prevailing in the region. Many, like Caminha and Olímpio, were strong republicans. Most participated in the campaign to abolish slavery, with Azevedo, Coelho Neto and Oliveira Paiva particularly active. Frequently their works were condemned by the authorities as immoral or subversive. A new space for criticism was opened up, to be vigorously developed by subsequent writers, like Ramos and Amado. One must also remember the themes and aspects of life which, barely developed in previous North Eastern literature, were firmly established by the naturalists in the erudite literary tradition of the region, such as the drought and rural emigration, which would again be cultivated by later writers, such as Queiroz and Ramos.

As regards the writer's problematical relationship with the forms of popular culture that were seen as central to the elaboration of a national artistic expression, the distinct theories and lines of approach that had been presented by both romantics and naturalists reappear frequently, reworked in accordance with changing circumstances, throughout the present century.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

- (1) Alfredo Bosi, História Concisa da literatura Brasileira (Editôra Cultrix, São Paulo, 1970), pp.13-14.
- (2) Angel Rama, Transculturación narrativa en América Latina (Siglo Veintiuno, México D.F., 1982), p.29.
- (3) Ibid, pp.32-56.
- (4) Eli Bartra, 'Retorno de um Mito: A Arte Popular', in Arte em Revista, Ano 2, Número 3 (Kairós, São Paulo, Março de 1980), p.10.
- (5) Antônio Cândido, 'Literatura y subdesarrollo en América Latina', in Cultura y dependencia, edited by Alfredo Chacón (Monte Avila, Caracas, 1975), pp.178-179.
- (6) See Antônio Cândido, Formação, vol.1, pp.25-42.
- (7) Antônio Cândido, 'Literatura y subdesarrollo', p.181.
- (8) Afrânio Coutinho, A Tradição, pp.156-158.
- (9) On page 32 of Formação, Antônio Cândido refers to the '(...)exageros do velho método histórico, que reduziu a literatura a episódio da investigação sobre a sociedade, ao tomar indevidamente as obras como meros documentos, sintomas da realidade social'.
- (10) Nelson Werneck Sodré, História da Literatura Brasileira (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1960), might serve as an example of this approach.
- (11) For a summary of the work of Araripe Júnior see Afrânio Coutinho, Euclides, Capistrano e Araripe (Ed. de ouro, Rio de Janeiro, 1967), pp.89-158, and A Tradição, pp.127-128.
- (12) Afrânio Coutinho, Conceito, p.10.
- (13) Ibid, p.63.
- (14) Ibid, pp.58-60.
- (15) Ibid, pp.15-16.

- (16) 'O que se deve exigir do escritor antes de tudo, é certo sentimento ítimo, que o torne homem do seu tempo e do seu país, ainda quando trate de assuntos remotos no tempo e no espaço.' Machado de Assis, 'Instinto de Nacionalidade'(1873), in Massaud Moisés, Machado de Assis: Crônicas-Crítica-Poesia-Teatro(Editôra Cultrix, São Paulo,1961), p.97.
- (17) Machado de Assis in Josué Montello, Para Conhecer Melhor José de Alencar(Bloch, Rio de Janeiro, 1973), p.39, from the original Machado de Assis, Páginas Recolhidas(Garnier, Rio de Janeiro, 1899)
- (18) Adonias Filho, Modernos Ficcionalistas Brasileiros(Edições O Cruzeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1958), p.242.
- (19) Dante Moreira Leite, O Caráter, p.119.
- (20) Nelson Werneck Sodré, História, p.58.
- (21) José Aderaldo Castello, A Literatura Brasileira. Vol.1: Manifestações Literárias da Era Colonial(Editôra Cultrix, São Paulo, 1965), p.38.
- (22) For example, on page 37 of José Veríssimo, História da Literatura Brasileira(José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1954), Veríssimo writes of the work: 'Não tem mérito algum, de inspiração, poesia ou forma.' In similar vein, on page 24 of Haydeé M. Jofré Barroso, Esquema histórico de literatura brasileira(Editoria Nova, Buenas Aires, 1951), the author says of the attempted: 'El intento se frustró por falta de recursos literários que le permitieran alcanzar altos vuelos, contentándose con matices y giros evidentemente camonianos.'
- (23) Antônio Cândido, 'Literature and the Rise of Brazilian National Self-Identity', in the Luso-Brazilian Review, vol.5, no.1, summer 1968, University of Wisconsin Press, pp.31-32.
- (24) José Aderaldo Castello, A Literatura, p.89.
- (25) José Guilherme Merquior, De Anchieta a Euclides(José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1979), p.5.
- (26) José Aderaldo Castello, A Literatura, pp.86. There Castello states that in addition to erudite sources, Frei Vicente probably used '(...) muitas outras fontes, desde manuscritos e informações orais até ao seu próprio conhecimento do Brasil, a ponto de poder realizar uma obra de surpreendente senso de oportunidade e perspicácia(...)'
- (27) Pedro Calmon, História da Literatura Bahiana(José Olympio, São Paulo, 1949), p.32.
- (28) Alfredo Bosi, História Concisa, p.42.

- (29) Antônio Cândido, 'literature and the Rise of Brazilian National Self-Identity', p.33.
- (30) See, for example, Ronald de Carvalho, Pequena História da Literatura Brasileira (Editôra Itatiaia, Belo Horizonte, 1984), pp.113-116. On page 116 the author writes 'Não há como negar, entretanto, que tais corporações eram seguro indício de que se estava operando uma transformação lenta na história do nosso pensamento, ainda que as correntes portuguesas fossem as únicas portas abertas que tínhamos para o mundo das idéias'.
- (31) Escola Mineira is merely a generic denomination used to refer to a group of approximately half a dozen poets who emerged in the mining towns of Minas Gerais during the eighteenth century, and does not appear to imply any precise common aesthetic or ideological tendencies between them.
- (32) See José Honório Rodrigues, História, Corpo do Tempo (Editora Perspectiva, São Paulo, 1975), pp.119-132, for details on Caneca.
- (33) E. Bradford Burns, Nationalism in Brazil, a historical survey (Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1968), p.28.
- (34) Sylvio Romero, História da Literatura Brasileira, 5 vols (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 6th edition, 1960), vol.2, p.384.
- (35) See Maria Elisa Collier Pragana, Literatura do Nordeste em Torno de sua Expressão Social (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1983). On page 18 the author writes that, for the North East, the arts and literature of the region constitute '(...)uma das mais significativas compensações para suas perdas de liderança e de atuação, noutros setores, sócio-economicamente de valor mais prático.'
- (36) Nelson Werneck Sodré, História, p.197.
- (37) Antônio Gonçalves Dias, 'Canção do Exílio', in Obras Poéticas de A. Gonçalves Dias (Companhia Editora Nacional, São Paulo, 1944), p.21.
- (38) Antônio Gonçalves Dias, 'O Canto do Guerreiro', in Obras Poéticas, p.23
- (39) Sânzio de Azevedo, Literatura Cearense (Academia Cearense de Letras, Fortaleza, 1976), p.52.
- (40) José de Alencar, in the postscript of Diya, in Obra Completa, vol.1 (Editôra José Aguilar, Rio de Janeiro, 1959), p.559.
- (41) Juvenal Galeno, in Sânzio de Azevedo, Literatura Cearense, p.41.
- (42) José de Alencar, O Sertanejo, in Obra, vol.3, p.1123.

- (43) M. Cavalcanti Proença, Estudos Literários (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1974), p.105.
- (44) José Guilherme Merquior, De Anchieta, p.83.
- (45) Franklin Távora, preface to O Cabeleira (Editôra Atica, São Paulo, 3rd. edition, 1977), p.10.
- (46) Ibid, p.135.
- (47) M. Cavalcanti Proença, Estudos, p.111.
- (48) Antônio de Castro Alves, 'Tragédia no Mar - o Navio Negreiro', in Poesias Completas (Companhia Editôra Nacional, São Paulo, 3rd edition, 1959), pp.240-241.
- (49) Sílvio Romero, História, vol.1, p.54.
- (50) Ibid, vol.2, p.383.
- (51) Ibid, vol.2, p.384.
- (52) Extracts from the manifesto of the Padaria Espiritual, which is reproduced in Leonardo Mota, Padaria Espiritual (Edésio, Fortaleza, 1938).
- (53) Charles Wagley, An Introduction to Brazil (Columbia University Press, New York, 1971), p.187.
- (54) Afrânio Coutinho, 'A Formação de Capistrano como crítico', in Conceito, p.90.
- (55) Georg Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (Merlin Press, London, 1978), p.68.
- (56) Adolfo Caminha, A Normalista (Editôra Ática, São Paulo, 1972), p.33.
- (57) Dirce Côrtes Riedel, in the introduction to Aluísio Azevedo, O Mulato (Edições de ouro, Coleção Clássicos Brasileiros, Rio de Janeiro, undated), p.13.
- (58) Domingos Olímpio, Luzia-Homem (Editora Ática, São Paulo, 1980), p.71.
- (59) Rodolfo Teófilo, A Fome (Impresa Inglesa, Rio de Janeiro, 2nd.edition, 1922), pp.56-57.
- (60) Pavla Lidmilová, 'Transformações da ficção regionalista brasileira', in Algumas Temas da Literatura Brasileira (Editorial Nórdica, Rio de Janeiro, 1984), p.35.

(61) See Georg Lukács, Studies in European Realism (Hillway Publishing Company, London, 1950), chapter 4, 'The Zola Centenary', in which Lukács refers to the growing conflict which emerged between the bourgeoisie and the working classes in latter nineteenth century France, particularly after the 1848 Revolution, accompanying the development of industrial capitalism. It was against this background, he states that Zola elaborated his *scientific method*, the basis for French naturalism. No such conditions existed in Brazil at the time, where industry and a free, wage earning labour force were merely embryonic.

(62) Machado de Assis, 'Eça de Queirós: O Primo Basílio' in Obra Completa (José Aguilar Ltda, Rio de Janeiro, 1959), pp.913-923. Machado makes a strong indictment against the ideas of Zola and Eça de Queirós, the principal naturalist writer in the Portuguese language.

(63) Dorothy Scott Loos, The Naturalist Novel of Brazil (Hispanic Institute in the United States, New York, 1963), p.109.

CHAPTER 2THE DEVELOPMENT OF ERUDITE LITERATURE IN THE NORTH EAST OF BRAZIL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.The early decades.

Brazil, like other Latin American nations, underwent significant economic and social change in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as the whole region became increasingly integrated into the international market system under the hegemony of the major industrialized nations of Europe. Within this system, Brazil developed its role as a supplier of primary products and, on the basis of a dynamic export sector, experienced considerable economic growth. (1) As a consequence, increasing pressure was placed on the antiquated social structures which corresponded to traditional agricultural production, a process epitomized by the shift from slavery to free labour. Economic expansion, however, only served to highlight and aggravate the already existing social and economic contradictions referred to in the previous chapter, and, as already noted, nowhere was this more starkly exposed than in the growing disparities between regions. Whilst the Centre-South prospered on the basis of coffee production, and São Paulo accentuated its political and economic dominance, the decline of the North East accelerated, its production patterns rigid, outmoded and inefficient, and its products increasingly uncompetitive. (2)

To the Brazilian intellectuals and writers who regarded themselves as natural heirs of European civilization, their country

appeared desperately primitive in comparison with the often idealized models to which they aspired. National integration remained at a very rudimentary level, with much of the more crucial political activity carried out at a regional rather than national level. The mass of the population continued to live in abject poverty, totally excluded from the national political system monopolized by the elites. The pressure for reform of the rigid social and economic structures steadily mounted as the urban middle classes increased in strength and allied themselves to certain sectors of the dominant classes also desirous for change. The last decades of the nineteenth century saw literature increasingly utilized as a means for expressing those demands for change. The press, expanding with the process of urbanization, emerged as a vital vehicle for propagating such ideas, and numerous authors writing at the turn of the century initiated their writing careers as journalists before moving into the more restricted field of book publication.

However, little of this dissident opinion was politically or culturally radical, for the strength and ambitions of the groups concerned were still decidedly limited, and the conditions for a full scale attack on the status quo by writers would not emerge until well into the present century. In contrast, the challenge advanced by the revisionary intelligentsia of the turn of the century strictly followed the fundamental precepts of European liberalism, and the changes sought essentially amounted to the eradication of certain anachronisms in order to modernize Brazil and bring it into line with France and the United States, the vanguards of political liberalism. It was in such a context that Abolition and Republicanism became the

two major issues for the more reform minded writers in the last decades of the nineteenth century, as seen in the previous chapter. It was a paradox that such fervent liberalism, founded on the principles of universal liberty, should become such a prevalent element in erudite culture where scholarship and literary activity were as elitist and divorced from mainstream social life as ever.

The writers and thinkers imbued with such liberalism were deeply marked by this contradiction, as typified by the two major North Eastern intellectuals of the turn of the century, both of whom had considerable influence nationally -Rui Barbosa (1849-1923), from Bahia, who divided his career between law and politics, and Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910), a politician and diplomat from Pernambuco. Both viewed with anxiety Brazil's apparently intractable backwardness in comparison with the advanced Western nations, which, for them, provided paragons of civilization. Barbosa, recognized as one of the most knowledgeable thinkers of the time, devoted himself to legal, political and educational reform, never questioning the applicability of the examples of European and North American institutions for the Brazilian experience. Seeking the solution to national problems through an intense and wide ranging erudition, he remained completely divorced from the harsh realities underlying those problems. Magalhães Júnior comments how, even during his unsuccessful presidential election campaign of 1919, Barbosa remained incapable of comprehending the deprivations suffered by an increasingly restless proletariat, and gives a graphic example that typified his whole approach:

Homem que não saía de casa senão de carro, para ir ao senado, ao Supremo Tribunal, ao cinema ou às livrarias, só caminhando a pé, raramente, pela Avenida Rio Branco,

rua do Ouvidor e adjacências, nunca tendo convivido com o povo ou subido a uma favela, o candidato de 1919 resolveu falar aos operários sôbre o problema das habitações. Sem nada saber de ciência própria, o que fez então foi ler retalhos do 'Jornal do Comércio' de 1910 e de 'A Noite' de 1919, sôbre a miséria das casas de cômodos e dos barracos dos morros. Como se os verdadeiros operários precisassem se informar de tais condições através da imprensa ou da palavra de Rui! (3)

Barbosa's writing exemplified the elitist, exclusive character of the literature of the period, with originality hampered by the weight of academic learning and the literary grandiloquence typical of the era:

Escrevendo bonito, conforme o gôsto discutível de uma minoria letrada, cultivada com garbo o verbalismo, a altissonância, o palanfrório, num jôgo de palavras que, muitas vezes, escondia apenas a pobreza geral das ideias. (4)

Joaquim Nabuco, who had been a key figure in the Abolitionist Movement, suffered from the same type of alienation, as is clearly conveyed in his autobiography, Minha Formação, a work which, revealingly, dwells more on the respective merits of foreign political systems than it does on the problems confronting Brazil. So pervasive was his European education that he even felt compelled to write his first poems and plays in French. However, Nabuco recognized this dilemma facing the Brazilian intellectual, and was able to give it vivid expression:

A instabilidade a que me refiro, prevém de que na América falta à paisagem, à vida, ao horizonte, à arquitetura, a tudo o que nos cerca, o fundo histórico, a perspectiva humana; e que na Europa nos falta a patria, isto é, a fôrma em que cada um de nós foi vazando ao nascer. De um lado do mar sente-se a ausência do mundo; do outro, a ausência do país. O sentimento em Nós é brasileiro, a imaginação europeia. (5)

This was the key problem perplexing many latter nineteenth and early twentieth century writers in Latin America, torn between what they perceived as *civilization* on the one hand, and *barbarism* on the other.

The founding of the highly elitist Academia Brasileira de Letras in 1897, in which Nabuco played a leading part, further reflected this contradiction. As the first national literary institution, it demonstrated the desire of writers to integrate themselves into national life and gain official recognition of their work. At the same time however, it exposed their isolation, functioning as it did as a means of providing mutual support, and bestowing prestige and distinction on an activity which to many still appeared to be largely superfluous in terms of overall national development. The limited reading public and consequent shortage of publishing facilities could only compound the writer's insularity.

It is not surprising therefore that the majority of writers in the early years of the present century could only respond negatively to the contradictions in the society around them, viewing with dismay Brazil's backwardness. Divorced from national reality and steeped in European philosophy, the historical context of the problems remained beyond the scope of their comprehension, and under the weight of determinist dogmas they tended to survey society with intense pessimism. Social satire did appear in some works, seen, for example, in Aves de Arribação (1913), a novel showing clear naturalist tendencies written by Antônio Sales (1868-1940), a Ceará novelist who had participated in the Padaria Espiritual in Fortaleza with Teófilo

and Caminha, which mocks the triviality and hypocrisy of provincial life. In general however, such criticism remained superficial, never touching on the deeper and more fundamental tensions inherent in the society of the period. Brazilian literature became increasingly characterized by a sense of disillusion and frustration.

The causes of abolitionism and Republicanism, which had provided vital ideological motivation for so many late nineteenth century writers, were finally won in 1888, when slavery was abolished, and 1889, when the Republic was declared. But, ironically, those victories, by depriving the writer of important stimuli, appeared to reinforce the tendency towards literary stagnation. The early years of the Old Republic (1889-1930) were fraught with political strife and severe economic difficulties, and the series of internal divisions, between the modern and the antiquated, the city and the country, the prosperous and the impoverished, appeared to be sharper than ever. It was a period of conservative government, with the oligarchies of the most powerful states ruling through a system of mutual accord, concerned only with attaining a degree of stability and the protection of their own economic interests, and incapable of tackling the major problems of national integration or of recognising the need for a more viable and democratic system of national government. So strong was the pessimism and determinism among the Brazilian intelligentsia that most writers could only respond to such conditions by either retreating into pure aestheticism, seeking refuge from the discord in the society around them behind the maxim of *art for art's sake*, or by producing a conservative, pro-establishment literature which avoided

political and social problems. As Antônio Cândido succinctly describes it, the literature of the period was

Uma literatura satisfeita, sem angústia formal, sem rebelião nem abismos. Sua única mágoa é não parecer de todo européia; seu esforço mais tenaz é conseguir pela cópia o equilíbrio e a harmonia, ou seja, o academismo.
(6)

In poetry, this literary conservatism was evident in the work of the Parnassians and the Symbolists, with their concentration on classical or transcendental themes, and the cult of form and language. Moral or social questions were notably absent. To writers alienated from, or disinterested in, the more dramatic processes within society, elaborate skills in linguistics and versification became a means of bestowing a sense of distinction and purpose on their poetry. Literary virtuosity therefore became the justification for the validity of the writer's work. Symbolism, intensely subjective and orientated towards the metaphysical, widened the gulf between the writer and social reality to its most extreme. (7)

Similarly, the naturalist novel, which in the North East had at least succeeded in producing a considerable compilation of documentary material on regional life, steadily degenerated into pompous verbalism and florid phraseology, with far greater importance conferred upon style than on content and ideas. The work of Coelho Neto in the first two decades of this century, for example, is marked by a tendency towards pedantry and linguistic ornamentation. The Bahian writer and doctor, Afrânio Peixoto (1876-1947) avoided such excesses in works such as Maria Bonita (1914) and Fruta do Mato (1920), which, recording aspects of contemporary life in his native state, are among the best

regionalist novels to be written in the North East during the period, though the themes dealt with are frequently pedestrian. Overall, the beginning of this century saw Brazilian fiction in a state of stagnation, as summarized by Alfredo Bosi:

Nos fins do século XIX e nas primeiras décadas do nosso, começa a hipertrofiar-se o gosto de descrever por descrever, em prejuízo da seriedade que norteara o primeiro tempo do Realismo. Ornamental em Coelho Neto, banalizado em Afrânio Peixoto, esse estilo epigônico irá corresponder ao maneirismo ultraparnasiano da linguagem *belle époque*, para a qual concorreria não pouco a oficialização das letras operada pelo espírito que presidiu à fundação da Academia em 1897. (8)

Only a few writers, defined by Bosi as pre-modernists, managed to escape this cultural paralysis afflicting the Brazilian literature of the time, and confront the vital social and political questions facing the nation. (9) In the south, for example, the novels of Lima Barreto revealed the tensions and contrasts that accompanied the many changes that the city of Rio de Janeiro was undergoing at the turn of the century. In the North East, a major example was the work of José Pereira da Graça Aranha (1868-1931). Although born in Maranhão and strongly influenced by Tobias Barreto, under whom he studied, Graça Aranha set his major novel, *Canaã* (1902), in the southern states. The work is used as a forum for debate on Brazil's uncertain future, focusing on the problems of fusing European civilization, embodied in the German immigrants, Milkau and Lentz, with New World barbarism, personified by the mestiço. Within the atmosphere of pessimism prevailing during his time, a Brazil frustrated by glaring problems, Graça Aranha attempts to perceive a new society in the future, a virtual utopia, constructed through the unity and fraternity of all

Brazilians. Milkau turns to the harmony of nature to give expression to his vision of human harmony, a vision that contrasts with the theories of superior and inferior races still prevalent at the time:

Do muito amor, da solidariedade infinita e íntima,
surgia aquilo que nós admiramos: um jardim tropical
expandindo-se em luz, em côr, em aromas, no alto da
montanha nua, que ele engrinalda como uma coroa de
triúnfo...A vida humana deve ser também assim. (10)

The ambivalence, the uneasy mixture of pessimism and hope which the debate reveals, typifies the dualist thinking of a large part of the Brazilian intelligentsia of the era. At the same time, however, the work foreshadows a new attitude on the part of the writer; an increasing desire to turn inwards and analyse Brazil for what it was, to confront its problems rather than ignore them. This more critical nationalism would be a vital component of the Modernist Movement of the 1920s.

Such critical thinking is most clearly demonstrated in Os Sertões, by Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909), a work that was to have a profound impact on Brazilian literature, above all in the North East, for, although da Cunha was born in the state of Rio de Janeiro, it was the backlands of Bahia that provided the material for the book. The messianic movement at Canudos, and the military conflict that ensued, were symptomatic of the chronic disorders afflicting the region, at a time when the newly formed Republic was emphasizing the need for accelerated modernization and development. Most members of the educated classes, concentrated in the expanding urban centres strung out along the coast, remained largely oblivious to the appalling social conditions which prevailed in the interior of the

North East, where periods of drought merely aggravated the poverty generated by an unjust social system. It was a major achievement of Os Sertões to stir the consciousness of those middle classes, by ruthlessly confronting them with a hitherto disregarded dimension of Brazil, and forcing them to face the magnitude of national problems. The book was instantly acclaimed by critics upon publication, and its rapid sales testify to the impact it had on the reading public. Certainly, more than any other work published in the first two decades of the century, Os Sertões ruptured the established literary culture, characterised by the writers social detachment and consequent tendency to evade social problems.

The dramatic force of the language and style adopted by da Cunha certainly helps to account for the book's success, but, as will be seen, Skidmore makes a valid point by suggesting that the absence of any radical propositions within the work may have been another significant reason:

Most of the answer probably lies in the fact that Euclides was able to touch the raw nerve of the elite's guilt about the gap between their ideal of nationality and the actual conditions of their country without making his readers uncomfortable by questioning all their basic social assumptions. (11)

The fact is that Os Sertões reveals the same ambivalent attitude towards the mass of the Brazilian populace and to the problem of defining the nation as that which characterized the work of many other thinkers at the turn of the century. Though sensing the social causes underlying the tragedy, and anxious for greater social justice, da Cunha is unable to extricate himself from the web of determinist

philosophy, and this contradiction explains the ambiguity of so many of his reflections and conclusions. Not surprisingly, as Dante Moreira Leite clearly shows in his perceptive study of the thought of da Cunha, his reaction towards the problem of racial composition is particularly confused, on the one hand attempting to perceive the possibility of future national development, whilst on the other still accepting the notion of progress governed by biologically determined racial aptitude. (12) So, although he asserts that no racial unity exists in Brazil, and possibly never will, he argues that as social development carries the country towards national integration, so a raça histórica will emerge, a people fused together by national development to affirm a true Brazilian nationality:

Predestinamo-nos à formação de uma raça histórica em futuro remoto, se o permitir dilatado tempo de vida nacional autônoma. Invertemos, sob êste aspecto, a ordem natural dos fatos. A nossa evolução biológica reclama a garantia da evolução social. (13)

The notion of the continual process of miscegenation gradually producing an authentic nationhood was a common one at the time, explaining the inadequacies of the present whilst offering hope for the future. Olavo Bilac even employed the theory to account for the difficulties in affirming a national literature, arguing through Darwinian concepts that diverse racial elements were still struggling against one another in Brazil, and only when the final racial type had emerged from the process could an authentically Brazilian literature be produced. (14)

Euclides da Cunha accepts the precept of superior and inferior races, and therefore sees miscegenation as having produced a mass of degenerate mestiços, with the attributes of the strongest races degraded by inferior blood. This would appear to undermine his hopes for an *historic race* in the future:

E o mestiço -mulato, mamaluco ou cafuz- menos que um intermediário, é um decaído, sem a energia física dos ascendentes selvagens, sem a altitude intelectual dos ancentrais superiores. Contrastando com a fecundidade que acaso possua, êle revela casos de hibridez moral extraordinários: espíritos fulgrantes, inconstantes, deslumbrando um momento e extinguindo-se prestes, feridos pela fatalidade das leis biológicas, chumbados ao plano inferior da raça menos favorecida. (15)

However, he sees the inhabitants of the North East interior, the sertanejos or jagunços, as an exception, arguing that, unlike the mestiço of the coastal regions, they have evolved in the isolation of the sertão, free from the distorting pressure of having to adapt to an alien way of life:

O sertanejo é, antes de tudo, um forte. Não tem o raquitismo exaustivo dos mestiços do litoral. (16)

The author goes on to describe with enthusiasm some of the traditions of the Sertanejo, including popular poetry and song. Yet there is inconsistency in his arguments. Having negated the possibility of racial unity, da Cunha then suggests that the sertanejo is the basis of true Brazilian nationality, describing him as:

(...)cerne de uma nacionalidade(...)a rocha viva da nossa raça. (17)

The contradictions produced by determinist philosophy are clearly evident. Like other intellectuals of the time, da Cunha was unable to make a distinction between race and nationality, to break through the conceptual framework of European ideology in order to develop a more autochthonous perception of Brazil. The conflict persisted between the need to affirm a national identity on one hand, and the credence given to racial and environmental determinism on the other.

The sympathy da Cunha holds for the sertanejos increases as the military campaign against them continues, and their ingenuity, courage and dignity become increasingly evident. His doubts about biological factors as a satisfactory explanation for their primitiveness leads him to consider socio-historical factors as well, thereby indicating a critical social consciousness unusual for the time. He recognizes, for example, the problems caused by patterns of land ownership in the North East Sertão:

(...)o fazendeiro dos sertões vive no litoral, longe dos dilatados domínios que nunca viu, às vezes. Heredaram velho vício histórico. Como os opulentos sesmeiros da colônia, usufruem, parasitariamente, as rendas das suas terras, sem divisas fixas. Os vaqueiros são-lhes servos submissos. (18)

With determinist philosophy superseded, the North East novelists of the 1930s would develop this critical social analysis of regional and national problems. Yet if da Cunha was able to at least glimpse the real significance of the maladies besetting the sertão, he also recognized the alienation of the intellectual, and the abyss that separated him from the mass of the population:

Ascendemos, de chôfre, arrebatados na caudal dos ideias modernos, deixando na penumbra secular em que

jazem, no âmago do país, um terço da nossa gente. Iludidos por uma civilização de empréstimo; respigando, em faina cega de copistas, tudo o que de melhor existe nos códigos orgânicos de outras nações, tornamos, revolucionariamente, fugindo ao transigir mais ligeiro com as exigências da nossa própria nacionalidade, mais fundo o contraste entre o nosso modo de viver e o daqueles rudes patricios mais estrangeiros nesta terra do que os imigrantes da Europa. Porque não no-los separa um mar, separam-no-los três séculos. (19)

The real originality of Os Sertões lay in the fact that it presented a penetrating critical analysis of Brazilian society, probing the deep seated contradictions of the nation's historical development that underlay such phenomena as the messianism of Canudos. The baseness of Brazil's dominant society came to disturb da Cunha more than the understandable deficiencies of the sertanejos, and it is with increasing irony that he records the fortunes of the *civilizing mission* conducted by the nation's armed forces. Blaming society as a whole for having failed the sertanejos and thereby provoking the tragedy, he comes to view the entire campaign as virtually a criminal act. The situation must be remedied, he believes, through a positive effort to integrate such marginalised sectors of the population into society:

Tôda aquela campanha seria um crime inútil e bárbara se não se aproveitassem os caminhos abertos à artilharia para uma propaganda tenaz, contínua e persistente, visando trazer para o nosso tempo e incorporar à nossa existência aqueles rudes compatriotas retardatários. (20)

So, despite da Cunha's penetrating social criticism, the fundamental values of Brazil's dominant culture remained essentially unchallenged. Instead, the social problems afflicting the backlands

of the North East are explained by society's neglect of the region's inhabitants. Euclides da Cunha still views the lives and perceptions of the sertanejos as an anomaly that must be corrected by the more advanced dominant society. He looks upon them with paternalism, delegating to society the duty of absorbing them and reeducating them. True to the positivist philosophy of the time, the best course for Brazilian development is seen to rest upon the extension of the hegemony of the dominant classes and the further imposition of dominant class values.

Nevertheless, da Cunha's commitment to a critical analysis of Brazil's social contradictions clearly differentiated his work from most of the products of the dominant cultural matrix of the period, and presaged a new attitude on the part of the writer. It is the emergence of this new approach, consolidated by the Modernist Movement of the 1920s, that Bosi sees as the defining characteristic of those he identifies as Pre-modernists:

Um Euclides, um Graça Aranha, um Monteiro Lobato, um Lima Barreto intejam algo nôvo na Literatura nacional, na medida em que se interessem pelo que já se convencionou chamar 'realidade nacional'. (21)

It was a historian from the North East, Manuel Bonfim (1868-1932), born in Sergipe, who probably presented the most advanced critique of early twentieth century Brazil. Rejecting determinist theories as part of a carefully conceived ideology that aimed to legitimize the domination of some nations over others, he looked to Brazil's socio-economic history for the causes underlying the country's chronic underdevelopment. He was thus able to perceive

that it was an exploitative, predatory colonial system which lay at the root of many of the more serious economic, political and social problems of the nation. He also recognized the need to stimulate awareness of such problems among the population as a whole, the mass of which still did not participate in national political affairs. He proposed a large scale popular education programme. However, such a radical perspective isolated Bonfim from most of his fellow intellectuals, and even an advanced thinker like Sílvio Romero considered that most of his arguments were essentially spurious. (22)

However, despite the fact that very few writers at the beginning of the century were able to identify with the radical stance adopted by Bonfim, there were clear indications of a growing recognition of the need for a reappraisal of Brazilian society and the renovation of artistic expression. This rarely attained the level of the penetrating criticism produced by Euclides da Cunha, generally remaining confined to imprecise condemnation of the stagnation of the existing cultural environment. In the North East, for example, various groups worked to stimulate greater interest in, and production of, literature. (23)

Cecília de Lara has documented the work of the Nova Cruzada, a literary association of middle class professionals in Bahia that functioned between 1901 and 1910, and concludes that, though lacking any clear and cohesive ideological identity, and generally producing rather banal and conventional poetry and prose, the unifying factor of the group was the common desire of its participants to combat local indifference and invigorate the artistic life of Salvador, and this

enabled it to make a significant contribution to literary tradition in Bahia. Emphasis was given to the rich artistic past of the state and the desire expressed to restore some of its lost prestige. (24)

All these pre-modernist tendencies, despite their contradictions and widely varying viewpoints, were indicative of growing strain on the narrow and restrictive political and cultural framework serving the interests of the traditional landowning oligarchy, as increasingly vociferous middle and working classes applied more and more pressure in an effort to see their demands represented. The stimulus given to national industrial development by the First World War simply acted as a catalyst for this process, with political organization and industrial strikes increasing appreciably, until a critical stage was reached by the 1920s. The Tenente Movement, a rebellion of young military officers in alliance with dissident politicians in all states, demonstrated how the political monopoly held by the traditional landowning classes, with the São Paulo coffee bourgeoisie in the forefront, was beginning to crack. Dissension among those classes themselves, upon whose consensus the functioning of the oligarchal political system depended, eventually led to the complete collapse of the Old Republic in 1930, and the consequent fragmentation of political power. An industrializing, urban bourgeoisie seized its opportunity to challenge for political leadership and work for a national reorientation towards the development of industry, centralization and the overall modernization of its social, political and economic structures.

Correlative developments took place at a cultural level. The ascending urban sectors required new forms of expression to articulate

their particular perception of a modern Brazil, with reshaped national economic and social structures, a modernizing vision aiming to close the gap between Brazil and the industrialized nations of the West. The *pre-modernist* writers had only been capable of expressing a vague, unarticulated unease about the established cultural complex and its specific approach towards artistic activity, but the modernists of the 1920s presented a head-on challenge, as new European tendencies were assimilated by Brazilian intellectuals, providing them with the conceptual tools and formalistic innovations necessary for a thorough renovation of existing cultural patterns. Viewed as central to that process was the need to break the isolation of the erudite artist, and to establish a more intimate relationship between his work and the life and culture of the mass of the Brazilian population.

The Modernist Movement.

The Modernist Movement was too heterogeneous and eclectic in character to bear any coherent and consistent philosophy. Nevertheless, the Semana de Arte Moderna, launched in São Paulo by a group of young artists in February 1922, provided a forum for the concretion of the diffuse ideas that had evolved during the preceding years. An onslaught was made on what they regarded as the narrow, alienated academicism of the Parnassian literature still prevailing in Brazil. It was this offensive, the over-riding desire to negate virtually all the values lauded by the traditional literary establishment, that united writers of diverse political and aesthetic tendencies behind the modernist cause in the early phase of the movement, and thereby provided much of its initial dynamism.

One of its major leaders, Mário de Andrade, later emphasised this explicit rebelliousness of modernism:

Foi uma ruptura, foi um abandono de princípios e técnicas conseqüentes, foi uma revolta contra o que era a Inteligência nacional. (25)

A new artistic vision was called for, rejecting anachronistic poetic abstraction in favour of a more realistic transcription of contemporary Brazilian society. Menotti del Picchia clearly stated this aim in his explanatory speech on the second night of the semana:

Queremos luz, ar, ventiladores, aeroplanos, reivindicações obreiras, idealismos, motores, chaminés de fábricas, sangue, velocidade, sonho, na nossa arte. E que o rufo de um automóvel, nos trilhos de dois versos, espante da poesia o último deus homérico, que ficou anacrônicamente, a dormir e a sonhar, na era do jazz-band e do cinema, com a fruta dos pastôres da Arcádia e os seios divinos de Helena! (26)

The modernization of literature was to accompany the modernization of national structures. Clearly implied was a new attitude on the part of the writer, abandoning his insularity to immerse himself in the social world around him and register the lives of all the Brazilian populace, as suggested by 'reivindicações obreiras'.

Through the development of this consciousness on the part of the writer, the modernists made the long running problem of affirmation of national identity a major objective of their programme. The same explanatory speech by Menotti del Picchia emphasises that the new art should be:

Uma arte genuinamente brasileira, filha do céu e da terra, do Homem e do mistério. (27)

Sérgio Buarque de Holanda expressed the same idea, stressing the need for the writer to base his work in the realities and needs of the Brazilian people:

O Brasil há de ter uma literatura nacional, há de atingir, mais cedo ou mais tarde, a originalidade literária. A inspiração em assuntos nacionais, o respeito das nossas tradições e a submissão às vozes profundas da raça acelerarão esse resultado final. (28)

For Mário de Andrade, the onus was on the writer to develop an intimate sense of identity with his native land, and with its population as a whole, in order to overcome the perennial problem of disinterest and alienation which, he believed, had long hindered the emergence of a distinctly national literature. Only with this type of national creative consciousness could the Brazilian writer achieve the artistic originality necessary to make a truly valid contribution to universal literature:

Só sendo brasileiro, isto é, adquirindo uma personalidade racial e patriótica (sentido físico) brasileira é que nos universalizaremos, pois que assim concorreremos com um contingente novo, novo assemblagem de caracteres psíquicos para o enriquecimento do universal humano. (29)

This nationalistic approach was concretely expressed in the broad thematic content of the modernist poetry that emerged in the years following 1922. A positive effort was made to include those aspects of Brazilian social life shunned as *unpoetic* by the parnassians, who, as has already been seen, had tended to regard classical, academic themes as the exclusive content for erudite verse. Much of the work of the São Paulo poets, Oswald de Andrade, Ribeiro Couto and Menotti

del Picchia, for example, shows a clear desire to capture the everyday life of the expanding urban environment that was such a striking feature of the Centre-South of Brazil(30), whilst, as will be seen, the modernist poets from the North East frequently turned to regional traditions, folklore and dialect as the sources for their work. The finest of them, Manuel Bandeira (1896-1968), born in Pernambuco, summarizes the movement in the following terms:

The Modernists introduced free verse into Brazil; they sought to express themselves in language free of both Parnassian rhetoric and Symbolist vagueness, less bound by the dictates of logic, adhering less closely to classic Portuguese standards of vocabulary and syntax. They boldly broadened the field of poetry, taking in the most prosaic aspects of life. In its beginnings, their movement was destructive in nature and characterized by novelty of form. Later it took on a decidedly nationalistic tone, seeking to provide an artistic interpretation of Brazil's present and past.
(31)

The desire of the modernists to produce a poetic expression that was more representative of the nation as a whole, in all its variety and social complexity, forced them to look increasingly towards the rural and urban masses comprising the majority of the Brazilian population. This implied the recognition that the symbols which needed to be assimilated into creative literature in order to make it a distinctly national expression had to be located within the culture of those working masses. For the modernists, breaking down the barriers between erudite and popular cultural expression offered the hope of creating a truly national art. Telê Porto Anaconda Lopez notes how the work of Mário de Andrade developed in precisely such a way:

(...)o empenho nacionalista de nosso escritor vai se ampliar, como que intuindo que as fronteiras arte erudita/arte popular são, na verdade, fronteiras de classe social determinadas ao longo da História. Acreditará então que a arte culta, privilegiada em seu desenvolvimento, pode, ou melhor, deve, para livrar-se do peso de uma cultura importada e se tornar nacional (e universal, no futuro) nutrir-se também dos recursos da criação popular. (32)

In fact, Mário de Andrade carried out extensive studies on Brazilian popular culture between 1925 and 1929, especially that of the North East. He collected popular songs, poems and legends and watched dances and festivals, noting how such expressions were integrated into the daily social life of the communities concerned. During a visit to Pernambuco in the late 1920s, he listened to a violinist from a peasant community and afterwards wrote of his impression of the music:

Eram os bois saindo no campo; eram os vaqueiros juntando o 'comboio'; era o trote miudinho no estradão; o estouro; o aboio do vaqueiro dominando os bichos assustados... Está claro que a peça era horrível de pobreza, má execução, ingenuidade. Mas assim mesmo tinha frases aproveitáveis e invenções descritivas engenhosas. E principalmente comovia. Quando se tem o coração bem nascido, capaz de encarar com seriedade os abusos do povo, uma coisa dessas comove muito e a gente não esquece mais. Do fundo das imperfeições de tudo quanto o povo faz, vem uma força, uma necessidade que, em arte, equivale ao que é a fé em religião. Isso é que pode mudar o pouso das montanhas. (33)

The popular legends and myths he heard provided vital sources for some of his poetry, as seen in the collection Clã do Jabuti, published in 1927. One example is the poem Toada do Pai-do-Mato, where he adopts a popular ballad form, a toada, to present a figure of folklore from Alagoas, the Pai-do-Mato, an enormous beast, devourer of humans,

taller than all the trees of the forest, whose roaring and laughter
can be heard at night:

A môça Camalalô
Foi no mato colhêr fruta.
A manhã fresca de orvalho
Era quase noturna.
-Ah...
Era quase noturna...

Num galho de tarumã
Estava um homem cantando.
A moça sai do caminho
Pra escutar o canto.
-Ah...
Ela escuta o canto...

(...)

O homem rindo secundou:
- Zuimaalúti se engana,
Pensa que sou ariti?
Eu sou Pai-do Mato.

Era o Pai- do Mato! (34)

For many of the modernist poets, it was such popular myths and legends, which they saw as the distinct creation of the Brazilian imagination, that provided the raw material for a national self-expression. Such an emphasis on images regarded as unmistakably Brazilian often produced a strong element of the picturesque and the exotic in the resulting poetry, seen in some of the work of Mário de Andrade and another major modernist poet of the North East, Jorge de Lima (1895-1953), from Alagoas, who employed aspects of the negro popular culture of his region in his verse. To some extent, however, this exoticism was counterbalanced by the genuine attempt made by the modernists to reach a deep understanding of popular cultural forms and of their social significance, as in the detailed studies carried out

by Mário de Andrade in the North East. This contrasted sharply with the romantic writers of the previous century who were also attracted to folkloric forms, but who could only view them from afar, idealizing them so as to blend them into their romantic world view. Jorge de Lima, for example, was well acquainted with the Afro-Brazilian songs, poems and religious rituals of the North East, and directly employed the idiom and rhythms associated with them to produce his so called negrista poetry, an example of which is Xangô, recreating the incantation of Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies:

Num sujo mocambo dos "Quatro Recantos",
quibundos, cafuzos, cabindas, mazombos
mandingam xangô.

Oxum! Oxalá. ô ! ê !

Dois feios calungas -oxalá e taió rodeados de contas,
no centro o Oxum!

Oxum! Oxalá. ô ! ê !

Caboclos, mulatos, negrinhas membrudas,
aos tombos gemendo, cantando, rodando,
mexendo os quadris e as mamas bojudas,
retumbam o tantã...

Oxum! Oxalá! ô ! ê ! (35)

The use of such sources creates a very distinct and original atmosphere and some very vivid verse. However, though some of Jorge de Lima's poetry protests against white attitudes towards the negro, as in, for example, Essa Negra Fulô (36), much of it tends towards a colourful exoticism which detracts from the real problems experienced by the black population. The same point could be made of some of Mário de Andrade's folkloric verse with regard to the Indian.

Although the nationalist current in Brazilian modernism is rightly emphasised, its most memorable products result not from

attempts to cast aside Western literary tradition and return to what is perceived as a pristine, primitive Brazilian culture, but rather from the utilization of surrealist, dadaist, futurist and other European vanguard influences to recreate popular cultural and folkloric sources. The clearest example is Macunaíma, published by Mário de Andrade in 1927, an extraordinary fusion of Indian legends, folktales and popular beliefs in a unique prose form, often poetic, which combines phrases and vocabulary from varied regions of Brazil. In terms of the conception of the development of a national culture, the vision embodied in the work contrasts significantly with that of the earlier romantics who elaborated a mythical national past with the Indian at its centre. Instead of harmony, Macunaíma presents a vision of cultural discord and conflict within Brazil. Having left his tribe in the jungle and experienced life in the contrasting world of São Paulo, the hero, Macunaíma, finally abandons earth completely and ascends into the sky, and the last images in the work show the culture from which he originated in ruins:

O tribo se acabara, a família virara sombras, a maloca
ruíra minada pelas saúvas e Macunaíma subira pro céu,
porém ficara o aruaí do séquito daqueles tempos de
dantes em que o herói fôra o grande Macunaíma
imperador. E só o papagaio no silêncio do Uraricoera
preservava do esquecimento os casos e a fala
desaparecida. Só o papagaio conservava no silêncio as
frases e feitos do herói. (37)

In Macunaíma, popular culture is employed to produce a critical view of Brazil's cultural past, present and future which shatters the idealistic vision of a harmonious national culture produced by other writers. The work also demonstrates how modernism had consolidated

a change in the writer's attitude towards popular culture, leaving behind the detached observation and documentation of nineteenth century writers, to adopt a position of more active involvement, actually using popular cultural manifestations as the essential substance for literary creation.

Mário de Andrade's desire to work with popular culture forced him to confront the major problem of attempting to bridge the social divisions that sharply split the nation. Some of his poetry laments such divisions, and expresses a longing for greater social unification. Acalanto do Seringueiro, written about the rubber tappers of the Amazon, serves as an example:

Nem você pode pensar
Que algum outro brasileiro
Que seja poeta no sul
Ande se preocupando
Com o seringueiro dormindo,
Desejando pro que dorme
O bem da felicidade...

Essas coisas pra você
Devem ser indiferentes,
Duma indiferença enorme...
Porém eu sou seu amigo
E quero ver se consigo
Não passar na sua vida
Numa indiferença enorme.
Meu desejo e pensamento
(...numa indiferença enorme...)
Ronda sob as seringueiras
(...numa indiferença enorme...)
Num amor-de amigo enorme... (38)

The modernist solution to this problem was to attempt an amalgamation of the numerous and disparate cultural manifestations they encountered, producing a loose cultural synthesis that more

accurately reflected the intense diversity within the nation. It was this type of fusion that was attempted by Mário de Andrade in Macunaima and by Raul Bopp in his poetry. (39)

Even more striking than the new thematic material that emerged in modernist poetry were the innovations pertaining to form and technique that were developed. Free verse, unorthodox syntax and lexical experimentation became common devices, breaking down the rigid grammatical code and phraseology the parnassians had decreed for poetry. A major motivation for these linguistic experiments was the desire to affirm a distinctly Brazilian language in literature, the same ideal towards which Alencar had attempted to work in the wake of political independence during the previous century. Brazilian Portuguese clearly had its own diversity, with numerous variations according to region, ethnic group and social class. The modernists believed that capturing that diversity, and evolving a literary idiom that was based on the colloquial speech of the masses rather than on the formal grammar of academics, which they saw as restrictive, even suffocating, was an obvious method of developing a more nationally representative literature. Manuel Bandeira summarized this view in his poem entitled Poética:

Estou farto do lirismo comedido
 Do lirismo bem comportado
 Do lirismo funcionário público com livro de ponto
 expediente protocolo e manifestações de
 aprêço ao Sr. diretor
 Estou farto do lirismo que pára e vai averiguar
 no dicionário ao cunho vernáculo de um vocábulo

Abaixo os puristas (40)

The writer, *Bandeira* argues, has lost contact with the language of the streets that can give vitality to his work, and *Brazilianize* it, and has become imprisoned within a web of formal, linguistic conventions. Recalling his childhood in Recife in another poem, Evocação do Recife, he writes:

A vida não me chegava pelos jornais nem pelos livros
 Vinha da boca do povo na língua errada do povo
 Língua certa do povo
 Porque éle é que fala gostoso o português do Brasil
 Ao passo que nós
 O que fazemos
 é macaquear
 A sintaxe lusíada (41)

The broadening of literary language was certainly a vital achievement, conquering greater liberty of expression for writers in the future. The North Eastern novelists of the 1930s, such as *Lins do Rego* and *Amado*, were to take full advantage of this when they came to write their social novels centred on regional life. Yet these linguistic experiments had clear limitations when considered within the context of the modernist project for cultural nationalism. *Mário de Andrade*, one of the most active modernists in this direction, recognized this:

O espírito modernista reconheceu que se vivíamos já de nossa realidade brasileira, carecia reverificar nosso instrumento de trabalho para que nos expressássemos com identidade. Inventou-se do dia prà noite a fabulosíssima "língua brasileira" mas ainda era cedo; e a força dos elementos contrários, principalmente a ausência de órgãos científicos adequados, reduziu tudo a manifestações individuais. (42)

At times the language used by the modernists appears artificial, with the original popular expressions and vocabulary divorced from

their wider social context and welded together in the poem to form a new, colourful idiom expressing the personal vision of the writer. Some of the poems of Jorge de Lima, for example, place such strong emphasis on cadence and musicality that the content tends to evaporate into exoticism. Another of his poems based on Afro-Brazilian religious beliefs, Quando êle Vem, published in the 1940s, might serve as an example:

Quando êle vem,
 vem zunindo como o vento,
 como mangangá, como capeta,
 como bango-balango, como marimbondo.
 Donde que é que êle vem?
 Vem de Oxalá, vem de Oxalá,
 vem do ôco do mundo,
 vem do assôpro de Oxalá,
 vem do ôco do mundo.
 Quer é comer.
 Quer é caruru de peixe,
 quer é efó de inhame,
 quer é oguedé de banana,
 quer é olubó de macaxeira,
 quer é pimenta malagueta. (42)

It is a vivid, rhythmical poem, strongly impressionistic and atmospheric, but revealing little about the perceptions and cultural practice that underlie such popular expression. It is when Jorge de Lima injects a note of social criticism into his negrista poetry that the most memorable work results.

As has been seen, the problem of national identity was a major force of motivation for the modernist writers, and it was to provide a wide variety of intellectual responses. The common desire to renovate Brazilian literature and establish a new role for the writer tended to mask the essential heterogeneity of the movement during the early years, but once the broad aims had been presented, and the

attack against the literary establishment launched, the sharp divergences of thought within the modernist ranks quickly became apparent. The question of cultural identity steadily led the movement away from its initial concentration on purely artistic problems, and on to a broader philosophical plane. A number of sub-groups formed throughout the 1920s, each issuing its particular perception of Brazilian culture, and the role the artist was to play in its construction.

Oswald de Andrade was the main motivating force behind the so called primitivist groups, Pau-Brasil (1924) and Antropofagia (1928), which called on the artist to free himself from the traditional, elitist erudition, which had only served to stifle natural, spontaneous creativity, and seek inspiration instead through direct contact with indigenous subject matter. Summarizing this position, Peregrino Júnior writes:

Já os primitivistas se voltiam para as nossas inocentes origens, tocados de ternura nacionalista pelos donos primitivos da terra, repudiavam tôdas as influências alienígenas, fugindo as culturas velhas e ilustres, numa atitude deliberada de libertação, querendo consultar a floresta, tomar o pulso da terra.
(43)

Brazil wood, pau-brasil, the country's first export as a colony in the sixteenth century, and which gave the nation its name, symbolized the national culture Oswald de Andrade envisaged, where the artist would return to the native roots of Brazilian civilization for inspiration, instead of seeking ideas abroad. Antropofagia provided another metaphor for the new culture. a cannibalistic culture in the sense that it would devour cosmopolitan influences,

rather than be destroyed by them, and in doing so would recreate them in a manner that was uniquely Brazilian. Although it has frequently been regarded as escapist, Mário da Silva Brito indicates how Antropofagia rose in opposition to the extremely conservative movements of cultural nationalism, Verde-e-Amarelo and Anta, to present a more radical and rebellious notion of Brazilian culture:

Agora, já é o ano de 1928, Oswald de Andrade lança a Antropofagia, tendo a seu lado Tarsila do Amaral, opositor ao verde-e-amarelo e Anta. Como estes movimentos, a Antropofagia prega o retorno ao primitivo, porém ao primitivo em estado de pureza -se assim se pode dizer- ou seja, sem compromissos com a ordem social estabelecida: religião, política, economia. É uma volta ao primitivo antes de suas ligações com a sociedade e cultura ocidental e européia. A Antropofagia valoriza o homem natural, é antiliberal e anticristã(...) (44)

In contrast, verde-e-amarelo (1926) and Anta (1929), the latter essentially an extension of the former, represented the position of the extreme right. Typically, they stressed national unity as the vital factor, conceived of in deeply subjective terms; the familiar *inner spirit* that unites all Brazilians. The manifesto of verdamearelismo declared:

é a fisionomia própria da gente brasileira, não fichada em definições filosóficas ou políticas, mas revelada nas tendências gerais comuns. (45)

A warning is given against questioning this concept of national unity by making distinctions among the population. Instead, the artist is called upon to reject all theories and preconceived ideas and simply produce, without questioning, in order that cultural identity may

evolve naturally, from the inherent *spirit* of the Brazilian people, free from ideological constraint:

Convidamos a nossa geração a produzir sem discutir. Bem ou mal, mas produzir(...)Procuremos escrever sem espírito preconcebido, não por mera experiência de estilos, ou para veicular teorias, sejam quais forem, mas com o único intuito de nos revelarmos, livres de todos os prejuízos. (46)

However, inconsistencies within the group's manifesto soon betray the deeply reactionary and authoritarian nature of their approach. Having claimed to be fighting the tyranny of ideological systemizations in the name of freedom of thought, they state:

Aceitamos todas as instituições conservadoras, pois é dentro delas mesmo 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. (47)

The text of the manifesto therefore appears to invert completely the fundamental objectives of the group. Behind the call to the artist to cast aside all ideological preconceptions in order to express himself freely, is the clear desire for intellectuals to cease thinking for themselves in order to accept mindlessly the rigidly conservative ideology espoused by the group itself.

By the late 1920s, the intensity and pertinacity of the nationalist debate was bringing a negative reaction from some writers, such as those associated with the Festa group (1927). Retreating into intense subjectivity, they advocated that poetry should return to the spiritual, the mysterious and the sublime. (48) None of these groups was capable of undertaking the deeper analysis of Brazilian society

that was required if an understanding of its underlying dynamics was to be reached. Instead, they expended their energies devising impressive sounding formulas that too often offered a diversion from fundamental problems rather than a constructive contribution towards their exposure and examination. Essentially, this situation can be seen as the result of what Bosi has described as:

(...)as fatais limitações de um grupo nascido e crescido em determinados estratos da sociedade paulista e carioca numa fase de transição da República Velha para o Brasil contemporâneo. (49)

Nevertheless, it will be seen that the delineation of basic ideological lines that emerged with the various modernist groups affirmed a number of concepts and positions on the question of cultural identity that are still discernible in much contemporary Brazilian literature.

In conclusion, bringing the writer into more direct interaction with forms of popular culture, which were studied and assimilated into erudite works, and breaking down many restrictive conventions of literary form and style in order to create space for a freer expression, were major achievements of the modernists. However, some of the key problems they set out to tackle remained unresolved, notably those arising from the issue of cultural nationalism. Though the discussion on national culture produced many original ideas, the concept itself was viewed as essentially unproblematical by most modernists of the 1920s, so that its political and social connotations remained unchallenged. The result was revealed in a tendency towards the exotic in some modernist art. In attempting to nationalize

Brazilian literature by refashioning manifestations of popular culture, the writer carried the risk of producing a picturesque abstraction of the reality underlying that culture, a process that could reinforce rather than question the ideology of a harmonious national culture. As seen in chapter 1, Antônio Cândido has warned against such forms of nativism, which

(...)reducen los problemas humanos a elemento pintoresco, transformando la pasión y el sufrimiento del hombre rural o de las poblaciones *de color* en un equivalente de la piña tropical y del mango. Esta actitud puede no sólo equivaler a la primera, [la imitación servil de los estilos] sino también combinarse con ella, una vez que redundaba en servir a un lector urbano europeo, o artificialmente europeizado, la realidad casi turística que le gustaría ver en América. Sin darse cuenta, el nativismo más sincero corre el riesgo de convertirse en manifestación ideológica del mismo colonialismo cultural(...) (50)

In 1942, Mário de Andrade looked back on the work produced by himself and his fellow modernists twenty years before in a remarkable essay of self criticism, which Carlos Guilherme Mota considers to be 'um dos limites mais avançados de consciência política do momento'. (51) The poet criticized himself for being too blinded as a young writer by his privileged social position, his aristocracismo, to recognize the ideological dimensions of his work, and saw now that the discussions on cultural nationalism in which the Modernists became embroiled were never able to provide a penetrating analysis of the nature of Brazilian society nor of the social and political roots of that cultural nationalism. He wrote:

Francos, dirigidos, muitos de nós demos às nossas obras uma caducidade de combate. Estava certo, em princípio. O engano é que nos pusemos combatendo

lençóis superficiais de fantasmas. Deveríamos ter inundado a caducidade utilitária do nosso discurso, de maior angústia do tempo, de maior revolta contra a vida como está. Em vez: fomos quebrar vidros de janelas, discutir modas de passeio, ou cutucar os valores eternos, ou saciar nossa curiosidade na cultura. E se agora percorro a minha obra já numerosa e que representa uma vida trabalhada, não me vejo uma só vez pegar a máscara do tempo e esbofeteá-la como merece. (52)

The modernist movement nevertheless constituted a vital phase in the whole debate on erudite and popular culture and many of the ideas that resulted, radical and conservative, would be developed by others in the following decades.

Gilberto Freyre and the Movimento Regionalista of 1926.

As Mário da Silva Brito has indicated, the initial phase of the modernist movement was very much a São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro phenomenon. (53) It was only in the atmosphere of those two rapidly developing and cosmopolitan cities that middle class intellectuals were in a position to launch a concerted attack on the cultural establishment and propose alternative ideas. However, the movement rapidly radiated out to other urban centres, including those of the North East. Despite attempts by Gilberto Freyre and others to minimize the modernist influence in Recife in the 1920s, the subsequent writings of Joaquim Inojosa have convincingly demonstrated that the modernist presence in the city was in fact of considerable strength during the period, even leading Inojosa to assert that:

Foi Pernambuco, sem dúvida, depois de São Paulo e Rio, o Estado onde mais intensamente repercutiu êsse clamor de renovação, essa 'revolta contra o que era a Inteligência nacional'. (54)

Exaggeration or not, an active modernist group was founded in Recife in October 1922 by Austo-Costa, Durán Miranda, Raul Machado, Ascenso Ferreira and Inojosa himself, who had just returned from São Paulo, having participated enthusiastically in modernist activities there. There is no doubt that this group did have an influence on artistic circles throughout the North East through their dissemination of modernist trends and innovations.

Parallel to these developments, Gilberto Freyre (b. 1900) launched his Regionalist Movement at a specially organized congress in Recife in February 1926, with the objective of affirming and promoting the cultural values of the North East. There has been much heated discussion on the relative dependence or relative autonomy of Freyre's movement vis-à-vis the wider modernist movement. Whereas some critics have stressed its strong modernist influence, Freyre himself has always strongly denied this:

O Movimento regionalista e tradicionalista do Recife de modo nenhum se deve confundir com o modernismo do Rio ou São Paulo. (55)

Hardly anything constructive has emerged from this debate, too often concerned with matters of personal prestige rather than objective analysis. In fact, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, there was a close interaction between modernist and regionalist ideas in Pernambuco. It is true that some modernists condemned regionalist tendencies as narrow and restrictive, and that Gilberto Freyre expressed equally strong reservations about the cosmopolitanism of the modernist movement. (56) Yet the two tendencies were not so incompatible as such

declarations appeared to suggest. Both emerged in response to the growing pressure for artistic renovation and, as such, searched for an expression that could contribute to a more *nationally representative* art and literature, often intertwining in the process. Indeed, much of the creative force of the North Eastern writers who developed their work in the subsequent years, such as Manuel Bandeira, Jorge de Lima and the social novelists of the so called Geração de trinta derived from their ability to fuse the two trends, combining the formalistic innovations of the Modernists with the regionalist impulse for sociological inquiry into North Eastern life and values.

So Freyre's movement may therefore be seen as part by-product of, and part reaction to, the modernist movement of the Centre-South. The active participation of the regionalists in the general movement demanding cultural reassessment and artistic renovation meant that certain affinities were inevitable. Yet, at a time when the regional oligarchies who had long monopolised political power were facing increasing pressure from the centralising, industrial bourgeoisie based in the Centre-South, a process that culminated in 1930, when the latter would assume power and begin to establish a centralised state apparatus, the emphasis that the North Eastern intellectual elite placed on regional traditions is easily explained. For the likes of Freyre, Lins do Rego and José Américo de Almeida, major figures in the Movimento Regionalista, modernism also represented an affirmation of the hegemony of the dynamic Rio-São Paulo axis over the formal cultural life of the nation. Hence Freyre's constant references to the need to protect regional traditions against the surge of

modernization and cosmopolitanism, and his description of the regionalist movement in its manifesto:

é todo o conjunto da cultura regional que precisa de ser defendido e desenvolvido. (57)

The retrograde nature of the regionalist movement is thus clearly revealed. Freyre saw the popular culture of the North East, embracing living conditions, diet and art forms, as being in a state of steady decline, even extinction, suffocated by a relentless process of cultural massification, and thus in need of protection by those with the necessary intellectual and financial resources. For this purpose, Freyre proposed regional museums, craft shops and folkloric festivals. His elitist paternalism reaches the point of absurdity when he deals with the disappearing culinary tradition of the North East, of which he states:

Toda essa tradição está em declínio ou, pelo menos, em crise, no Nordeste. E uma cozinha em crise significa uma civilização inteira em perigo: o perigo de descaracterizar-se. (58)

His answer is to establish a restaurant in Recife specializing in local dishes and complete with appropriate regional décor:

(...)umas palmeiras, umas gaiolas de papagaios, um caritó de guaiamum à porta e uma preta de fogareiro, fazendo grude ou tapioca. (59)

When it is remembered that the North East has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the whole of Latin America, the true depth of Freyre's conservatism is clearly exposed.

Despite such evident detachment from the underprivileged mass of the population, Freyre reiterates the by now well established view that it is precisely with those sectors that authentic Brazilian culture rests, and that to affirm a national cultural identity, artists and intellectuals must work for greater approximation to them. This, he believes, constitutes the greatest motivating force for artistic and intellectual creativity in Brazil:

De modo que, no Nordeste, quem se aproxima do povo desce a raízes e a fontes de vida, de cultura e de arte regionais. Quem chega ao povo está entre mestres e se torna aprendiz, por mais bacharel em artes que seja ou por mais doutor em medicina. A força de Joaquim Nabuco, de Sílvio Romero, de José de Alencar, de Floriano, do Padre Ibiapina, de Telles Júnior, de Capistrano, de Augusto dos Anjos, de Rosalvo Ribeiro, de Augusto Severo, de Auta de Sousa, de outras grandes expressões nordestinas da cultura ou do espírito brasileiro, veio principalmente do contacto que tiveram, quando meninos de engenho ou de cidade, com as tradições populares, com a plebe regional (...) (60)

In many ways, Freyre's regionalist philosophy highlights the contradictions plaguing the alienated Brazilian intellectual. Striving desperately to elaborate a national cultural identity, and recognising the poverty stricken masses as the only possible supplier of the necessary materials, Freyre remains totally incapable of extricating himself from the restrictive ideology of his social class in order to come to a deeper understanding of the conditions of life experienced by those masses. The result is a detached, patronising vision of the people, whom he views as ingenuous and compliant.

Dante Moreira Leite and Carlos Guilherme Mota have shown how Freyre's conservatism is equally discernible in his major work, Casa Grande e Senzala, published in 1933. Freyre's objective was to

reinterpret Brazil's social and cultural formation, ostensibly through a detailed study of social history, highlighting the vital and positive role miscegenation played in the process. Brazil is shown to have benefited considerably from the contribution of the three formative races, whose attributes have blended together to form a distinct, and favourable, Brazilian character. It was this optimistic interpretation, involving the rejection of any notion of the inferiority of certain races on the one hand, and the appreciation of the contribution of the previously denigrated negro on the other, that led to the book being hailed as innovative, and even radical, in the 1930s, a period when fascist doctrine was extremely influential. More recent criticism has undermined such appraisals. Carlos Guilherme Mota points out that Freyre's apparently benevolent view of the negro is decidedly one-dimensional, concentrated on a figure of subservience and acquiescence, and that, more significantly, each race is still perceived as having distinct, innate psychological traits, that help explain its patterns of behaviour. (61) This means that Freyre, who, like other intellectuals before him, made no distinction between race and nationality, conceived national identity to be formed essentially by psychological characteristics which he himself distinguished by his own intuition, but which were scientifically unverifiable. Dante Moreira Leite has further shown how, around this intensely subjective interpretation, Freyre attempted to mould his documentary evidence, employing it in such a way as to completely undermine its objective value. (62)

Freyre's assertion that the cultural behaviour of Brazilians is determined fundamentally by inherent psychological qualities, rather

than by socio-economic realities, permitted him to mask the question of class divisions within Brazil, and to perpetuate and reinforce the mythology of an all inclusive national culture. The theme of a common psyche, developing through the process of miscegenation, to unify the race, and hence the nation, is constantly repeated throughout Casa

Grande e Senzala:

Hereditariamente predisposta à vida nos trópicos por um longo habitat tropical, o elemento semita, móvel e adaptável como nenhum outro, terá dado ao colonizador português do Brasil algumas das suas principais condições físicas e psíquicas de êxito e de resistência. (63)

Todo brasileiro, mesmo o alvo, de cabelo louro, traz na alma, quando não no corpo(...)a sombra, ou pelo menos a pinta, do indígena ou do negro. (64)

For Freyre, this basic psychological unity has been reinforced by certain objective factors that have further contributed to cultural homogeneity, namely the Catholic church and the patriarchal family. (65) It is this overall vision of unity, the harmonious formation of a national culture, that enabled Freyre to universalize his interpretation of Brazilian development, and present it, not as the perception one particular social class has of its own history, but as an objective study of the Brazilian population as a whole.

Carlos Guilherme Mota has lucidly explained the precise social roots of Freyre's ideological approach, which he describes as the visão senhorial. (66) Attached to the old rural aristocracy being edged from power by new social forces, Freyre's work can be interpreted as a reaction to the decline of his social class, and an attempt to redeem

it through a favourable reinterpretation of Brazil's social history. It is in this context that Freyre exalted the role of the traditional rural oligarchy in the process of national development, stating at one point:

Nas casas grandes foi até hoje onde melhor se exprime o caráter brasileiro. (67)

Freyre saw the old patriarchal plantation regime, based on slave labour, as having been an essentially positive force in Brazil's socio-economic history, laying down the foundation for national identity and the development of a unique *racial democracy*, by creating an atmosphere that encouraged miscegenation rather than racial segregation. The contribution of the rural elites is thereby projected into the future, linking them positively to the modernizing capitalist development that was then, in the 1920s and 30s, reshaping the social and economic structures of the nation. Historical evidence that is incompatible with this vision of harmonious social evolution, such as social uprisings, class antagonism and the brutality of the slave system, is either ignored or incorporated in an appropriately attenuated form. As already stated, Freyre's interpretation, embodying the world-view of a particular privileged social class, is presented as universal and objective, the evidence being manipulated for the purpose, in the manner indicated by Dante Moreira Leite.

Freyre's interests always focused on the North East, with the bulk of his research and published work based on that region. Yet he and other regionalists could not simply isolate themselves from national political realities, particularly with the process of

centralization exposing ever more clearly the decline and dependence of the North East. Ultimately, they had to express themselves within a national context, and it is not surprising that Freyre, having so strongly emphasised the distinctive characteristics of his native region, should still refer to a *national character* and *national culture*. The apparent paradox is explained in terms of the dilemma facing a social class whose regionally based power was being eroded by national political centralization. Freyre however, was unable to reach any understanding of the process of articulation between the regional and the national, tending to simply extend his conclusions on the North East to the national level. Moreira Leite observes that Freyre

Acusado de empregar, quase exclusivamente, material referente ao Nordeste açucareiro, e depois generalizar suas conclusões para o resto do Brasil, responde que suas viagens por outras regiões confirmam suas interpretações. (68)

This inevitably resulted in contradictions in Freyre's work. Having, for example, argued that different regions produce different psychological types, he still tried to define the typical national character. The problem is that the ideological restrictions of his class prevented Freyre from understanding the significance of North Eastern socio-economic development within a more global context. His vision remained essentially parochial.

Despite the obvious limitations of Freyre's work, it is only comparatively recently that it has been seriously challenged by critics. Even today, many of his ideas are still widely accepted and respected, especially in the North East, where few other intellectuals this century have enjoyed such influence. In part, this testifies to

the skill with which his argument is compiled and presented. It is also an indication of the highly conservative and elitist nature of the academic establishment in the North East. Referring to Freyre's enduring prestige in that region, Carlos Guilherme Mota stresses that the particular social conditions of the region have been a major factor, since the slow pace of the industrialization and modernization process has delayed a radical revision of such past ideas. (69)

What Freyre's ideas, and his regionalist movement, did undoubtedly achieve, however, was the establishment of a firm basis for the sociological study of North East life and culture in the following years. His regionalism was symptomatic of the developing consciousness of local intellectuals of the accelerating decline of the North East within the context of overall national development. The disintegration of traditional regional structures was accompanied by little compensatory modernization or development, and the continuing stagnancy and poverty of the region was increasingly highlighted by the rapid expansion of the industrializing centres of the South. Against such a background, local writers and artists felt an increasing inclination to regenerate the deep rooted regionalist tradition, now provided with a new rationale by Freyre's regionalist doctrine. This sharpened social consciousness with regard to regional problems was reinforced by the gains now consolidated by modernism: the propensity for national introspection, presaged in the North East by Euclides da Cunha, and the new aesthetic values established, which would open up new possibilities for literary expression. (70)

Literature of the North East, 1930s-1970s.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the North East proved to be one of the most richly productive regions for the Brazilian novel. A whole series of social realist works appeared in various North Eastern states. Their authors became known collectively as the Geração de Trinta, though in truth, the only common factor that linked them together was their overriding preoccupation with living conditions and social relations within the North East, viewed with a varying degree of criticism.

José Américo de Almeida (born 1887) and José Lins do Rego (1901-1957) were both born in Paraíba. They participated actively in the regionalist movement and their work was undoubtedly influenced directly by its ideas. These helped to orientate their work very productively, but also imposed clear limitations. Almeida's A Bagaceira (1928), for example, shows a strong inclination for the sociological study of local life, and its broadly realist treatment of distinctive North Eastern themes, such as the drought, plantation life and rural migration, established the pattern for the regionalist social novels that emerged in the following years. Also typically, A Bagaceira exposes and condemns the poverty and injustice plaguing the majority of the region's population. Yet its failure to penetrate to the socio-economic mechanisms underlying such conditions diminishes the potential dramatic tension of the thematic material, where a family of drought victims, retirantes, flee from the misery of the sertão and seek refuge on the sugar estate of a wealthy landowner, only to suffer even greater degradation once immersed in the

dehumanizing life of the plantation. The adverse social conditions of the region's rural life are attributed to society's negligence and disorganization, which is particularly exposed in the face of a natural disaster like drought, and which blunts the sensibility of those in a position of power. The fundamental structures and processes of that society remain unquestioned. It falls to Lúcio, the landowner's progressive, university-educated son, to condemn society's shortcomings, and seek his own personal solution by taking over the plantation upon the death of his father and initiating a series of reforms and technical innovations, which happily combine improved efficiency with the advancement of the welfare of the workers.

On the new, model plantation, Lúcio not only improves the material conditions of the labourers, but also offers incentives to encourage them to take an active interest in the production process, and thereby break out of their previous state of inertia and apathy. It was this vision of an enlightened, benevolent capitalism that orientated Almeida's own liberal, reformist politics as a minister and presidential candidate in the 1930s. (71) The result of this essentially superficial social criticism can be seen in the tendency towards the picturesque, complemented by a very florid, lyrical prose style, and a somewhat sentimental treatment of the characters, who are generally presented as hapless, passive victims of the vicissitudes of the natural and social environment, a tendency that reduces the sense of conflict and tension. Wilson Martins touches upon this when he writes:

'A Bagaceira', a pesar do drama das sêcas que lhe serve de fundo (e que, de resto, está praticamente ausente do romance), é uma história dominada pelo pitoresco, que é

aspecto epidérmico das pessoas e das coisas. Partindo do princípio de que "a paixão so é romântica quando é falsa", José Américo de Almeida pretende descrever uma paixão, ou várias paixões, como se elas se resumissem nos movimentos exteriores dos figurantes. O resultado é que, por paradoxal que pareça, não há humanidade nos personagens de 'A Bagaceira': todos vivem e agem vegetativamente, como seres conduzidos unicamente pelo instinto e incapazes sequer de compreender o sentido mesmo dos seus atos. (72)

Almeida's treatment of the rural poor is essentially paternalistic, a tendency shared by many of the North Eastern novelists who emerged at the same era. Overwhelmed by the hostile natural and social forces around them, the sertanejos and plantation workers alike are presented as stoic and fatalistic, devoid of the necessary initiative to alter their situation in any significant way. This image is reinforced by the intense mistrust and rivalry that is shown to exist between the workers of the sertão and those of the plantation. It is up to the more progressive and charitable members of the dominant classes to undertake the reforms needed to relieve their plight, like Lúcio, who, spiritually regenerated through the improvements made on his plantation, seeks to instill the same moral conscience in his workers:

Pretendia dosar o espírito de sua gente com esse sentimento da vida. Modelava as almas simples. Saneava o grau de moralidade de um povo que chegava a ter cachaça no sangue e estopim nos instintos. (73)

This patronizing approach would be even more evident in the populist novels of Raquel de Queiroz and Jorge Amado. Almeida, however, draws a distinction between the courageous, independent and honourable sertanejos, and the brutalised, degenerate sugar plantation workers,

described variously as 'camumbembe', 'vedóias', and at one point, resurrecting old racist dogma:

Não era a negrelhada das senzalas, mas o recruzamento arbitrário, as escórias da mestiçagem, como uma balbúrdia de pigmentos. (74)

Violent and callous, dehumanized by the work and conditions of the plantation, their periodic displays of gaiety on festive occasions are explained chiefly by their ignorance, their apparent inability to even conceptualize their suffering:

Sem os fermentos da ambição que atormentam a natureza humana; sem os cuidados da providência, numa vida da cada dia; sem imaginação que elaborasse pressentimentos mofinos; sobretudo, sem tempo para pensar em ser triste -essa gente tinha a fortuna de não se conhecer. As própria dores físicas eram discretas, sem choro alto. (75)

In contrast, the sertão is idealized, so that its own conditions of poverty and exploitation are covered by an abstract, bucolic vision of a haven, potentially self sufficient if it were not for the periodic droughts, where man can live freely and independently, according to a strict code of honour. The degraded lives of the sugar workers are constantly contrasted with the purity and dignity of the sertaneiros. This contrast between the two ways of life is epitomized in the figure of Soledad, the sertaneja, who arrives at the plantation innocent and dignified, to be corrupted by the depravity of plantation life. This utopian, pastoral vision, constructing a mythical realm uncontaminated by man, is a legacy of romanticism that recurs frequently in Brazilian regionalist literature, not least in that of the North East. In fact, Almeida's eulogy of the traditional cultural values of the sertão,

threatened perhaps, but still surviving, reveals the influence of the regionalist thought of the time, with its sense of nostalgic longing for a past era. In A Bagaceira, this idea is conveyed through the character of Lúcio, who, coming to appreciate the attributes of the sertanejos, refers to them at one point by declaring:

Reservas da dignidade antiga! Resistência granítica,
como os afloramentos do Nordeste! Solidificação da
família! Tesouro das virtudes primitivas! (76)

The work of José Lins do Rego is even more strongly marked by nostalgia, and he himself emphasised the impact that Freyre's ideas had on his literary career. (77) There is clearly a strong philosophical affinity between the two. Lins do Rego was also the descendant of a traditional, plantation owning family, and had to face the same reality of social and economic decline in the North East, with the disintegration of the traditional patterns of life which revolved around the casa grande of the plantation owner. Lins do Rego's response to the decadence of his social class, and of the whole way of life it determined, is to retreat into a past era, reconstructing with consuming nostalgia the semi-feudal rural society of the family owned mill and tenant farmers. His early novels, written between 1932 and 1936 and referred to collectively as the ciclo da cana de açúcar, are therefore strongly autobiographical, broadly tracing his own childhood and adolescence against the background of the profound transformations that were occurring in the sugar zone of the North East in the early part of the present century. (78) The mechanised production of the factory mills, controlled by large corporations, steadily eroded the social relations associated with traditional sugar production,

dominated by long established families, thereby leading to the establishment of new patterns of life, and new values.

In his first novel, Menino de Engenho (1932), the author's lost childhood is linked with the disappearing world about him, with the loss of his boyhood innocence on the plantation running parallel to the decay of traditional rural life. The sense of melancholy, of time remorselessly destroying everything, pervades the entire novel:

Perdera a inocência, perdera a grande felicidade de olhar o mundo como um brinquedo maior que os outros(...) Menino perdido, menino de engenho. (79)

This nostalgia becomes more obsessive in the following novels, as the boy, passing through school and university, becomes increasingly urbanised and detached from rural life, and the plantation itself, a microcosm of the whole traditional sugar plantation system, falls into accelerating decline. With Banguê (1934), another element is added to reinforce this overwhelming sense of irretrievable loss, as the boy's grandfather, Zé Paulino, in many ways the archetypal patriarchal senhor de engenho, steadily loses his strength and dies, symbolizing the end of a whole era. The boy spiritually succumbs to the decay all around him, becoming morose and introverted, with melancholy suffocating everything:

Tudo triste como se não existesse alegria daquela manhã magnífica lá fora. Dentro da casa grande de Santa Rosa todas as horas eram de crepúsculo. (80)

Fogo Morto, Lins do Rego's most powerful novel, published in 1944, synthesises these recollections of the rural past, to present a compact review of the region's decline. Through the characters, that

past is idealized, as with the old woman Adriana, who recalls the sugar plantation as it was when she arrived as a young retirante from the 1877 drought in the sertão:

Tudo era bem diferente do que via hoje. Tudo era tão mais cheio de alegria. O coronel era moço bonito, com a barbicha preta, todo bem vestido. (81)

The stronger characters in Fogo Morto permit Lins do Rego to expose much more forcefully the human conflict emerging from such a social background. The main example is that of Capitão Vitorino Carneiro, whose insistence on maintaining his aristocratic airs despite his now poverty stricken and bedraggled state, introduces an element of pathos that highlights the conflict. Yet through Vitorino, defiant to the end, vigorously upholding his code of honour and justice against the corruption and violence around him, Lins do Rego is able to redeem the disappearing patriarchal values he evidently so much admires, in an effort, like Freyre, to salvage something from the lost past.

Along with his admiration for the old landed aristocrats, Lins do Rego also reveals his sympathy for the rural workers and peasants in Fogo Morto, with Vitorino, of aristocratic background but now reduced to poverty, able to function as a bridge between the worlds of both classes. Abused and wretched, the poor nonetheless retain their creativity and intuitive wisdom, revealed, for example, in the ballads constantly sung by the negro, José Passarinho, which, by narrating traditional stories, captivate and move the others on the plantation, like José Amaro, the saddler:

Nunca pensara que áquele negro imundo, de cara de cachaceiro, tivesse tanta coisa dentro de si, aquela história, aqueles amôres, (...) (82)

It can be seen that Lins do Rego's vision of the past is deeply romantic, with the harsher aspects of the family plantation and slavery eradicated to present an overall picture of tranquility and harmony, now seen as being destroyed by the encroaching modernized forms of agricultural production. In Banguê, a string of similes equate the factory mill with a ruthless monster, devouring the land and impassively destroying the close, personal relationships that characterized the traditional sugar plantation. As already seen however, in condemning present developments, Lins do Rego idealises the past. Thus, workers, despite their abject poverty are seen to be essentially content on the plantation, as in Menino de Engenho:

E eram abençoados por Deus, porque não morriam de fome e tinham o sol, a lua, o rio, a chuva e as estrelas para brinquedos que não se quebravam. (83)

In the same novel, even slavery is painted in a new light, with the old negress, Velha Galgina, nostalgically recalling her abduction from Africa:

Contava a sua viagem de muitos dias: os negros amarrados e os meninos soltos; de dia botavam todos para tomar sol onde o céu e o mar. Já estava contente com aquela vida de navio. (84)

Again this image coincides with Freyre's theories on the essential harmony of plantation life in the North East, centred on a more benign treatment of slaves. Clearly, no objective evidence can be produced to support such a view. On the contrary, what accounts and statistics are

available, generally testify to the overriding cruelty of slavery, and the misery and exploitation suffered by agricultural workers.

Lins do Rego undeniably attempts to evade that reality through withdrawal into an idealised past, where the maladies that existed were made tolerable by the compensatory advantages of plantation life. Those maladies were not due to inherent characteristics structured into the way of life itself, but were rather a question of fortune, such as the resources of a particular plantation and the disposition of its owner. The plantation of Santa Rosa, prosperous and efficiently run by the compassionate Zé Paulino, stands as an example of how agreeable life could be under such conditions.

Such evasion cannot be total however. His reconstruction of the social history of the North East sugar belt forces Lins do Rego to confront the real conditions of poverty and inequality of the region, for these are so evident as to make denial of their existence impossible. Generally however, they appear in his novels as documented observations, which dutifully record a sad fact of life, whilst tending to avoid any critical position. In the ciclo da cana de açúcar novels, the background of unremitting social decay against which Carlos de Melo grows up is compounded by the boy's own morbid fear of death, which, seen to develop during his school days, in Doidinho, never completely leaves him. Everything is presented as doomed, inevitably permeating the books with a profound sense of fatalism, leading Wilson Martins to write:

Assim se explica que tóda a obra de José Lins do Rego se desenvolva sob o signo da morte. (85)

Such a negative perspective means that Lins do Rego, though conscious of the misery afflicting a large part of the region's population, is unable to confront it in a critical light. Social injustice is described in various forms, but only occasionally, in his strongest novels, like Fogo Morto, does he delve beneath surface appearances to expose the network of human relations that underlie it.

Within this determinist framework, the rural poor appear as helpless victims of the environment around them. Again, humanitarian paternalism on the part of the property owner is seen as the most viable solution to the situation. In Banguê, Carlos, inheriting the Santa Rosa plantation on the death of his grandfather, Zé Paulino, dreams of initiating a series of changes that will increase falling productivity and, at the same time, ameliorate the living conditions of his workers. The development of this paternalist attitude within Carlos can be traced throughout the ciclo da cana de açúcar novels. As a boy growing up on the plantation, strong ties of friendship are forged between himself and the sons of the workers with whom he plays. In time however, the demands of their different social status forces them apart and, in Doidinho, Carlos sadly recognizes the impossibility of maintaining their childhood affinity. Recognition is thus made of the deep social divisions underlying regional society, although this rarely goes beyond simple allusion. Carlos is unable to break from the demands of his social position, and his compassion for his former childhood friends ends in a vague, patronizing desire to alleviate their afflictions.

Lins do Rego's own contact with the masses of the rural North East led him to appreciate the popular culture of the region, and like

Freyre, advocate it as a major source of material for Brazilian artists. He claimed that his approach to writing, instinctive rather than rationalised, and based largely on the spontaneous recollection of events from memory, was influenced above all by the blind popular poets he had seen in fairs throughout the North East. In Poesia e Vida he writes:

(...) quando imagino meus romances, tomo sempre como modo de orientação o dizer as coisas como elas surgem na memória, com o jeito e as maneiras simples de cegos poetas.

Por conseguinte, o romance brasileiro não terá em absoluto que vir procurar os Charles Morgan ou os Joyce para ter existência real. Os cegos da feira lhe servirão muito mais como a Rabelais serviram os menestres vagabundos da França. (86)

Certainly his prose style frequently reveals this influence, seemingly written in haste without revision, so that refined literary style is sacrificed in an effort to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity. Nevertheless, the type of empathy to which Lins do Rego alludes was obviously impossible, and the results were limited to a stylistic imitation of popular forms, used to recreate his own highly personal vision of the rural North East.

Where his colloquial narrative is arguably most effective is in his works based more directly on regional popular culture, such as Pedra Bonita (1938), focusing on the theme of messianism, and characterized by the simplicity and directness of its narrative, a mixture of chronicle and folk tale. The novel reworks real events that took place in 1837 in the Serra Talhada in the sertão of Pernambuco, where, at a site dominated by large, towering rocks - Pedra Bonita - a messianic community carried out ceremonies of human sacrifice in

order to release Dom Sebastião from his state of enchantment so that he could lead them to redemption. The community was eventually massacred by a locally raised army. It is these same events which feature, in a strikingly different form, in Suassuna's A Pedra do Reino. In Pedra Bonita, Lins do Rego develops the theme in a modern fictitious context, which centres on the deep rooted hatred existing between the inhabitants of the traditional backlands communities in the vicinity of Pedra Bonita, and those of the small town of Assu, who dream of modernization and development. The two communities fought in 1837, and the conflict between them has continued ever since. The priest of Assu, Padre Amâncio, recalling the events of 1837, sees society's neglect of the inhabitants of the sertão and the violent treatment against them, as the chief cause of the conflict:

Naquele tempo não apareceu um homem de juízo que tivesse força de levar os pobres pelo bom caminho. Foram a ferro e a fogo, destruindo, matando. E o ódio ficou. (87)

The novel's central character, Antônio Bento, is caught between the two communities, having his roots in the backlands, where he was born and brought up, and where his family still lives, but then, following a drought, taken in and looked after by Padre Amâncio in the town, despite opposition from all the other townsfolk. The tension finally breaks into violence again, when another messiah appears at Pedra Bonita, organizing another religious community and promising redemption. The response of the townsfolk, as in the previous century, is to call for armed action, and an army is duly sent. In the last

pages of the book, as the army sets off on its mission to destroy Pedra Bonita, Antônio is faced with a decision. Padre Amâncio is dying and sends him to fetch a priest to hear his final confession. Antônio can either fulfil the dying wish of the priest, his padrino, to whom he owes so much, or go to Pedro Bonito to warn his people of the approaching army. He chooses the latter course of action. His padrino is too pure and honourable to require the blessing from anyone in a society that is so corrupt and debased. The theme of opposition between civilization and barbarism is raised once again, with Antônio deciding that it is modern society, represented by the authorities, the army and the townsfolk, that is the true embodiment of barbarity:

Era um mundo furioso que vinha para Pedra Bonita. Um mundo de assassinos, de perversos. Ele estava ouvindo os passos das alpercatas estalando na caatinga, a marcha dos matadores. Vinham vindo para acabar com tudo. (88)

The novel therefore reworks some of the key issues raised by da Cunha in Os Sertões over thirty years before, emphasising the continued tension in the North East between traditional patterns of life and the forces of modernization, once again seen as essentially dehumanizing by Lins do Rego. Banditry, popular poetry and above all messianism are employed by the author to reinforce that central theme, emphasising the distinct traits of life in the sertão and the distinct world view of its inhabitants, for whom, starving and sickly, fanatical sebastianism offers the only hope of change:

E estavam todos esperando de Deus, do santo, qualquer coisa. Todos que estavam ali tinham uma fé, uma grande esperança. Os restos de gente do sertão, cegos, feridentos, famintos, tudo esperando o grito que abalasse a formação do mundo. Os ricos e os pobres, os

sadios e os doentes, tudo ficaria a mesma coisa, o mesmo homem, a mesma mulher. (89)

In a later work, Cangaceiros, published in 1953, when Ariano Suassuna was producing his early plays also composed from popular sources, Lins do Rego used features of popular poetry to the full, employing colloquialisms, refrains and extracts from popular songs to create an oral, lyrical style, indicative of an increasing inclination among North East writers to assimilate the actual forms, styles and techniques of popular literature into their work.

This interest in assimilating constituent elements of popular culture into the erudite novel is also evident in the work of Rachel de Queiroz (born 1910), from Ceará. Her initial preoccupation with documenting the life of the poorest sectors of North East society, in her social realist novels of the 1930s, gradually gave way to an increasing attraction towards the colourful and folkloric manifestations of regional culture, which overlay the harsher realities that had provided early inspiration. The novels which she wrote between 1930 and 1937 - O Quinze (1930), João Miguel (1934) and Caminho de Pedras (1937) - very clearly embody the influential literary tendencies prevalent in Brazil at the time, synthesising the propensity for a declared social and political commitment, the preference for a freer and more colloquial language, as advocated by the modernists, and an interest in regional life and culture. The resulting focus on the struggle of the underprivileged social sectors of Ceará gained her a reputation for political radicalism, but in fact, from the very beginning, her attitude towards the poor of the North East was essentially paternalistic and philanthropic. In

O Quinze, Chico Bento, the cowhand forced to migrate from the sertão because of the drought, and undergo every conceivable deprivation as a result, is presented as totally crushed and dehumanized by the circumstances around him, a helpless victim of cruel fate:

(...) numa indiferença de macaco pensativo que se agacha num encontra de galhos e ali fica, deixando que o vento o empurre e sacuda à vontade. (90)

The hero and heroine of the novel, Vicente and Conceição, both from progressive landowning families, respond to this suffering around them with acts of charity, which often benefit themselves as much as the recipients. When the impoverished Chico has to move on, Vicente agrees to buy his cattle, arguing that this is a happy combination of magnanimity and good business, and Conceição's offer to adopt Chico's baby son, Duquinho, ostensibly to relieve him of another mouth to feed, appears to be equally motivated by a need to satisfy her own personal desires. Indeed, the love affair between Vicente and Conceição, and their personal dilemmas in the face of the problems posed by the environment around them, become dominant in the novel, tending to limit the dramatic potential of the tragic deprivation of the poor, which becomes increasingly subordinated as a backcloth to the personal predicaments of the main characters. Overall, the human tragedy of the North East is attributed more to fate than to objective, man-made conditions, and in seeking a solution to the problem, the emphasis is placed, not so much on social and political change, as on the need for change within the individual's own philosophy towards life, so that each may find his or her own way of confronting its problems and conflicts. Focusing a profound social

tragedy through this intensely personalised perspective necessarily limits the novel's potential, as suggested by Fred Ellison in an otherwise eulogistic essay on her work:

The most striking defect of the novel is the author's restricted view. The reader is regrettably left with the impression that the drought was a personal affliction wreaked upon the poor cowherd by Heaven, for Rachel never quite manages to convey the extent of the disaster that drought brings to hundreds of thousands of sertanejos. (91)

João Miguel presents another microcosm of the world of oppression, poverty, violence and prostitution suffered by the poor of the North East. Against this background, clear social protest is occasionally voiced, but again, it chiefly takes the form of cries of frustration, soon stifled by the hostile environment. Once more the victims are seen as totally submissive and fatalistic, lending a sense of inevitability and permanence to the situation, so that when the main character, João Miguel, finally gains his freedom from prison, his return to a life of hunger and exploitation appears as preordained and inescapable. Political content is further developed in Caminho de Pedras, written in 1937 at a time of considerable political tension in Brazil, but again, the labour unrest depicted in the work does not provide the pivotal point of the novel, but rather the backcloth for the psychological conflicts of the main characters. Noemi, the heroine, although politically active, is basically preoccupied with coming to terms personally with the problems posed for her by society, rather than seeking a radical political transformation. This emphasis is repeated often enough in the works of Rachel de Queiroz to suggest that it corresponds very closely to her own attitude. In her fourth

novel, As Tres Marias, written in 1939, the North Eastern masses disappear altogether, and the psychological dilemmas of the three female characters monopolise the content of the entire work. According to the authoress' own words, this gradual shedding of social commitment represented a maturing towards her natural vocation as a writer:

Em "João Miguel" talvez tenha tentado acompanhar um pouco os modelos em voga, mas não o consegui, e a meio caminho vi que o melhor era seguir mesmo a minha tendência natural de mera contadora de histórias, sem mensagem, nem comentário filosófico, ostensivo ou subentendido(...) Em "Tres Marias" voltei a ser a contadora de histórias - a minha vocação. (92)

After As Tres Marias, Rachel de Queiroz passed through a long spell without publishing, returning in the 1950's with two plays based on aspects of North East popular culture, Lampião (1953), dealing with social banditry, and A Beata Maria do Egito (1958), on messianism. In both cases, these tragic and romantic themes are developed to considerable dramatic effect through a terse, colloquial language, yet her main concern is not so much to reach an understanding of the popular material she employs, but to reconstruct it into an erudite form in order to convey her own perspectives and preoccupations, seen in her use of the main female protagonists of the two plays, Maria Bonita and the Beata respectively, in order to study the particular psychological conflicts affecting women in North East society. Part of the tension in Lampião, for example, derives from Maria Bonita's conflict between her desires for a new life, free from the danger and bloodshed of cangaço, and her love and loyalty for Lampião, which in

the end costs her her life. As Adonias Filho shows, on the one hand the work examines the strict code of honour, liberty and justice which binds the cangaceiros together, and on the other, highlights the problems of Maria Bonita in adapting to that code:

Revelando o drama, Rachel de Queiroz não treme a mão. Sabe que o cangaceiro existe em razão daquele código e tanto o sabe que, na evolução do drama, isola no grupo a mulher. Não a isola, porém, porque seja mulher. Ingressando no grupo por motivos que não estão no código, Maria Bonita permanece em conflito, a adaptação incompleta, a afinidade sendo maior entre o cangaceiro e os cangaceiros que entre o homem e sua mulher. A variação não é biológica. É sociológica. O código é que a impõe. (93)

From the original sources therefore, Rachel de Queiroz extracts aspects which afford her the opportunity of developing and dramatising her own areas of concern.

Of the Geração de Trinta, it is the Bahian novelist, Jorge Amado (born 1912) who has made greatest use of popular culture in his work. He established his career in the 1930s, with the development of his so called *proletarian novel*, dealing essentially with the development of political consciousness among the poorest working sectors of Bahian society, rural in the case of Cacau (1933), and urban in Suor (1934). In these novels, Amado, armed with an extremely simplified breakdown of Soviet ideology of the time, employs a very stark, simple documentary style in an attempt to convey the misery and exploitation of the working poor and their struggle to free themselves from those circumstances. In its compilation of snippets of descriptive detail, this realist style does succeed in providing some earthy images of the squalid living conditions of the poor. Yet even here there are signs

of the sentimentality and romanticism that became so prevalent in Amado's later works. In Suor, for example, the austere description of the impoverished lives of the inhabitants of a slum dwelling in Salvador occasionally lapses into sentimental digression, with the dreams and ambitions of the characters contrasted with the sordid reality of the objective conditions around them. Thus, an unemployed violinist is made to escape into a fantasy world of famous concerts and world tours, whilst an ex-circus clown locks himself in his room at night, dons his costume and performs his act to an imaginary audience, only to weep afterwards as realisation of reality returns.

Similar tendencies can be detected in Cacau, which is given a romantic, almost fairy tale ending when the hero, a young plantation worker who gradually develops his sense of solidarity fellow workers, finally renounces the opportunity of marrying the landowners daughter and becoming a plantation owner himself, and sets off to join the class struggle in Rio:

O amor pela minha classe, pelos trabalhadores e operários, amor humano e grande, mataria o amor mesquinho pela filha do patrão(...)Eu partia para a luta de coração limpa e feliz. (94)

Amado does attempt to avoid the sense of fatalism detectable in other social novelists of the North East, and lend a more optimistic note to the class struggle in Brazil. Yet his tendency to reduce his social criticism to a framework of simplistic dogmatic formulas tends to dissipate the potential power of the content of his work.

Escaping from those restrictions enabled him to write his best work, notably Terras do Sem Fim(1942), documenting the struggle that

developed between rival planters in Bahia in an effort to secure themselves a privileged position in the increasingly prosperous cacao trade. Cacao determines the life of everybody in the region, and they are all dehumanized by the values and conflicts it generates:

E éles todos, trabalhadores, jagunços, coroneis, advogados, médicos, comerciantes e exportadores, tinham o visgo do cacau prêso na alma, lá dentro, no mais profundo do coração. Não havia educação, cultura e sentimento que o lavassem. Cacao era dinheiro, era poder, era a vida toda, estava dentro deles(...) (95)

Popular songs are occasionally incorporated into the work to give the struggle taking place an epic, legendary quality, and to emphasize the suffering of the poor, exploited workers, who, with no practical possibility of changing their condition, are shown to lament their anguish through song and retain vague hopes for an alternative existence in their dreams:

-Minha sina é esperança...
é trabalhar noite e dia...
(...)
-Minha vida é de penado
Cheguei e fui amarrado
nas grilhetas do cacau... (96)

In earlier works of the 1930s, however, Amado had already developed the use of regional popular culture. Jubiabá, for example, published in 1935, examines the Afro-Brazilian culture of Bahia, focusing on the character of Antônio Balduino, a negro whose aimless life of debauchery is finally given new purpose when he obtains work and organizes his fellow labourers to fight for their rights, an effort which culminates in a successful strike. Popular poetry and stories play a crucial part in Balduino's development of political

consciousness, as, through them, he learns about the rebellious heroes, such as Lucas de Feira, the cangaceiro, and Zumbi, leader of Palmares, the community of escaped slaves who resisted all attempts to recapture them. Balduino even dreams of a popular poem, an *ABC*, a biographical form of poem detailing the adventures and deeds of popular heroes, being composed by the people in his honour, eulogizing his own contribution to their struggle. Recalling the cantador who composes such verses, he thinks:

(...)um dia aquêlê homem iria escrever o ABC de Antônio Balduino, um ABC heróico, onde cantaria as aventuras de um negro livre, alegre, brigão, valente como sete. (97)

At the end of the work, Balduino realises that the strike has served as his *ABC*, linking him to his people and their continual struggle, and affirming the positive part he has played in it:

Agora sabe lutar. A greve foi o seu ABC. (98)

However, the tension generated by the political theme, continued from his earlier proletarian novels, tends to be diluted by sentimentality in the way that the lives of the poor, especially that of Balduino, are narrated, and by the manner in which popular cultural expressions are frequently described, which, although attempting to demonstrate the creativity and rebelliousness of the poor, often result in exoticism, seen, for example, in the vivid and colourful depiction of candomblé ritual:

Cantavam em côro outra canção de macumba:

-ê ôlô biri ô b'ajá kó a péhindá

e estavam dizendo "o cachorro quando anda mostra o

rabo". Também Oxossi, o deus da caça, veio para a festa da macumba do pai Jubiabá. Vestia de branco, verde e um pouco de vermelho, um arco distendido com a sua flecha pendurado de um lado do cinto. Do outro lado conduzia uma aljava. Trazia daquela vez, além do capacete de metal com casco de pano verde, um espanador de fios grossos.

Os pés descalços das mulheres batiam no chão de barro, dançando. Requebravam o corpo ritualmente, mas esse requêbro era sensual e dengoso como corpo quente de negra, como música dengosa de negro. O suor corria e todos estavam tomados pela música e pela dança. O Gordo tremia e não via mais nada senão figuras confusas de mulheres e santos, deuses caprichosos da floresta distante. (99)

His next works, Mar Morto(1936) and Capitães da Areia(1937)

follow a similar pattern, with colourful stories developed from popular materials. Mar Morto lyrically narrates the lives of Guma, one of the poor Bahian sailors who ekes out a living from the sea, only to eventually be drowned, and his wife, Lívia, left to continue the daily fight for survival. Again, the poor fishing community articulates that struggle through traditional songs, picturesquely presented by the author:

(...)Depois Maria Clara cantou. A sua voz penetrou pela noite, como voz do mar, harmoniosa e profunda. Cantava:

"A noite que éle não veio
foi de tristeza pra mim...".

Sua voz era doce. Vinha do mais profundo do mar, tinha como seu corpo um cheiro de beira de cais, de peixe salgado. Agora a sala ouvia atenta. A canção que ela cantava era bem deles, era do mar.

"Éle ficou nas ondas
éle se foi a afogar".

Velha *moda* do mar. Porque só falam em morte, em tristeza essas canções? No entanto o mar é belo, a água é azul e a lua é amarela. Mas as cantigas, as modas do mar são assim tristes, dão vontade de chorar, matam a alegria de todos. (100)

The spirits from the Afro-Brazilian cults worshipped by the members of the community are frequently referred to throughout the novel. Livia is afraid of the Goddess of the sea, Janáina, but after the death of Guma she expresses her defiance, symbolically the defiance of the whole community, by venturing out into the sea, merging herself with that Goddess of popular belief:

(...)E o velho Francisco grita para os outros no cais:
 -Vejam! Vejam! é Janáina.
 Olharam e viram. Dona Dulce olhou também da janela da escola. Viu uma mulher forte que lutava. A luta era seu milagre. Começava a se realizar. (101)

This sentimentalized view of the struggle of the poor finds its extreme expression in Capitães da Areia, where the narration of the lives of a group of poor, homeless boys, led by Pedro Bala, who live on the beach and exist through stealing, at times resorts to pathos, and the ending, where the boys discover purpose in life through participation in a strike, is highly romanticized:

(...)Agora o destino deles mudou. A voz do negro no mar canta o samba de Boa-Vida:
 Companheiros, vamos pra luta...
 De punhos levantados, as crianças saúdam Pedro Bala, que parte para mudar o destino de outras crianças.
 Barandão grita na frente de todos, ele agora é o novo chefe.
 De longe, Pedro Bala ainda vê os Capitães da Areia.
 Sob a lua, num velho trapiche abandonado, eles levantam os braços. Estão em pé, o destino mudou. (102)

Once again, the familiar elements of popular culture used by Amado - candomblé ritual and popular song- are employed to reinforce his idealized, sentimental vision. In his subsequent novels, the overt social content virtually disappears, resulting in works such as

Gabriela, Cravo e Canela (1958) and Dona Flor e seus Dois Maridos

(1967), picturesque tales and anecdotes of regional life, without any of the ideological orientation so evident in his earlier writing. This emphasis on regional colour and the sentimental view of the poor that runs through most of Amado's work leads Alfredo Bosi to describe it as a form of literary populism:

Ao leitor curioso e glutão a sua obra tem dado de tudo um pouco: pieguice e volúpia em vez de paixão, estereótipos em vez de trato orgânico dos conflitos sociais, pitoresco em vez de captação estética do meio, tipos "folclóricos" em vez de pessoas, descuido formal a pretexto de oralidade... Além do uso às vezes imotivado do calão: o que é, na cabeça do intelectual burguês, a imagem do eros do povo. O populismo deu uma mistura de equívocos, e o maior deles será por certo o de passar por arte revolucionária. (103)

Amado developed his work with popular culture even further in the 1960s and 1970s, publishing novels that made much more direct use of the thematic and stylistic conventions of North East popular literature. Through such works he aimed to express his solidarity with the struggle of the poor and oppressed by highlighting the strength, defiance and creativity embodied in their various forms of cultural expression. Amado has continually declared that his sympathy for the poor has always been the major motivation for his work:

All my work, from the first book to the most recent, deals with this theme, with the life of the ordinary people. The only hero of my books is the people of Brazil, and in particular the people of Bahia, whom I know best, because I have lived there most of my life. Whatever changes have occurred in style, my work has always been marked, above all, by its stance together with the people against their enemies. (104)

He claims that his whole approach to writing, and the forms that he has developed on the basis of popular sources, have resulted from his ability to identify with the poor and share their experiences and aspirations:

(...)se uma virtude possuí, foi a de me acercar do povo, de misturar-me com ele, viver sua vida, integrar-me em sua realidade. (105)

Amado argues that his increasing use of popular literature has enabled him to achieve a greater insight into Brazil's social problems and a closer identification with the struggle of the oppressed, since recreating popular literary forms that recount the experience of the poor permits him to analyse that experience from the inside, rather than observing and documenting it from afar and making his own condemnations, as in his earlier political novels. In all the resulting works, however, Amado's own idealised vision of a pure and gallant people heroically battling against adverse social conditions is strongly conveyed. In the romanticised atmosphere created in the novels, the creativity of the people is ingenuously, and at times sentimentally, extolled.

In Os Pastores da Noite (1964), for example, he adopts some of the tone of popular poetry, attempting to capture in his prose the simple, oral style employed by the poets, by avoiding formal literary devices and language and following a colloquial, conversational method of narration. At the very beginning, the narrator introduces himself as a simple story teller, whose style contrasts sharply with that of the professional novel writer:

Abram a garrafa de cachaça e me dêem um trago para compor a voz. (...) Quem não quiser ouvir pode ir embora, minha fala é simples e sem pretensão. (106)

Through the central event of the novel, a land invasion and the establishment of a favela by the homeless of Salvador, Amado conveys his condemnation of the squalor and poverty experienced by the poor, though again, the social criticism is undermined by romantic or comic subplots and a tendency towards the picturesque:

Foi uma animação, todo mundo a construir barracos nos terrenos do Mata Gato, colina bonita, de onde se tinha vista magnífica do mar, e a brisa constante, jamais se sentia calor. (107)

Two novels written by Amado in the early 1970s - Tenda dos Milagres (1970) and Tereza Batista Cansada de Guerra (1972) - follow a similar pattern. The small workshop referred to in Tenda dos Milagres is the focal point for a wide range of popular arts and cultural practices, including the printing of pamphlets or folhetos of popular verse. Within this setting, amid vivid description of popular music, dance and ritual, Amado attempts to trace the struggle of the people of Bahia through the life of the main character, Pedro Arcanjo, who begins writing popular poetry and then progresses to erudite literature, but always uses his literary skills and intellectual abilities to defend the rights of the poor against the oppressive authorities, and to extol their culture. He becomes a popular hero, about whom songs and poems are composed by cantadores. The result is a romantic view of the writer at one with the people, sharing their vision of the world and serving their interests.

In Tereza Batista Cansada de Guerra, the structure, tone and characterization are all drawn from popular poetry. The five sections of the work are presented as folhetos, which trace the life of the heroine, Tereza, a prostitute, in her battle to overcome hardship and adversity. Her victory symbolizes the courage and unbreakable resolution of the people, but again it is expressed in highly romanticised terms, with Tereza marrying an ideal partner in the final part of the novel. Popular material is adapted to convey the author's personal vision of Bahian society and culture.

For many critics, the work of Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953), from Alagoas, represents the high point of the social realist novel that emerged in the North East in the 1930s. More than any other writer of the so called Geração de Trinta, Ramos was able to transcend the simple external documentation of events, figures and regional customs in order to expose the underlying social processes. At the core of all his novels is the tension and conflict generated by man's inability to fulfil himself in the oppressive environment of the North East, and torment and anguish is the fundamental quality of all his characters. None escape degradation and demoralization in the struggle against the conditions around them. In São Bernardo (1934), the main character, Paulo Honório, a landowner who has ruthlessly crushed everyone around him in his fight for power, and driven his wife to suicide, is finally forced to reflect on his depravity:

Foi este modo de vida que me inutilizou. Sou um aleijado. Devo ter um coração miúdo, lacunas no cérebro, nervos diferentes dos outros homens. E um nariz enorme, uma boca enorme, dedos enormes. (108)

In Angústia (1936), Luís da Silva, a petty government official, frustrated in all his desires and ambitions, is eventually driven to madness, whilst Vidas Secas (1938) shows how a peasant family of the North East interior is crushed by the hostile natural and social environment. It is his single minded determination to expose the nature of social conflict, and his refusal to mitigate this with regional colour or romance, that largely explains why the social criticism of Ramos is far more acute than that of other writers of the Geração de Trinta.

Ramos therefore achieves much of his impact through his succinct and sober style, devoid of any embellishment or levity that might diminish the high level of tension maintained throughout his novels. An austere and sparse prose is employed throughout, constantly emphasising the extremely basic struggle for existence experienced by his characters. The peasants in his work are simply and starkly portrayed in their desperate, daily fight, and no space at all is permitted for the picturesque or the folkloric. In this way, Ramos' novels contrast sharply with the works of Jorge Amado. For Ramos' literary purposes, popular culture is not mere diversion or creativity that demonstrates the ingenuity of the people, but rather an integrated complex of behavioural responses and forms of social action, inseparable from the struggle that dominates and determines the course of their lives.

Brought up in the North East sertão, Ramos always showed an interest in the cultural activities of the inhabitants of the region, and revealed this in certain articles he wrote on such topics as the cantadores in Alagoas. (109) In his novels however, such popular

expressions as song, poetry and dance are excluded, considered unnecessary elements that could divert the narrative from its essential task of exposing the mechanics of an unjust, exploitative society. On the few occasions that cultural activities are incorporated into his work, they themselves serve to further that task by acting as focuses for social contradiction and tension. In Vidas Secas, for example, Fabiano and his family go to the Christmas festival in the nearest city, but none of the colour or appeal of the event is conveyed. The occasion just serves as another backcloth to highlight the perpetual friction between the peasant family and the surrounding environment. The city in celebration engenders fears and suspicion within them.

Ramos' option for starkness enables him to vividly convey the exploitation and oppression suffered by the poor of the North East, but added to this sociological study of objective living conditions in the region is a penetrating psychological insight into those who endure them. An unobtrusive third person narrative is employed in Vidas Secas, which still enables the anguished thoughts of Fabiano, inarticulate and marginalised within mainstream society, to be powerfully conveyed. Unjustly imprisoned, he sees his inability to express himself in the terms demanded by modern society as a major cause for his misfortune:

(...)Era bruto, sim senhor, nunca havia aprendido, não sabia explicar-se. Estava prêso por isso? Como era? Então mete-se um homem na cadeia porque êle não sabe falar direito? Qual mal fazia a brutalidade dêle?
 (...)Dificil pensar. Vivia tão agarrado aos bichos. Nunca vira uma escola. Por isso não consegui defender-se, botar as coisas nos seus lugares. O demônio

daquela história entrava-lhe na cabeça e saía. Era para um cristão endoidecer. Se lhe tivessem dado ensino, encontraria meio de entendê-la. Impossível, só sabia lidar com bichos. (110)

In the end, unable to resist the overwhelming forces waged against him, or even to seize the opportunity of avenging himself for the humiliation inflicted by a soldier, Fabiano is forced to move on again by the drought, in the vain hope of finding a better life elsewhere. He therefore appears totally impotent, submissive before his fate, suggesting little hope for change in the future. Pessimism characterizes much of Ramos' writing.

Nevertheless, the simplicity of structure and plot of Ramos's work, its condensed prose, attempting to steer a middle course between formal literary language and contrived colloquial speech, and its determination to deal with the most basic aspects of human existence in the North East, provides the most powerful and convincing presentation of the world view of the region's inhabitants attained by the regionalist literature of the period.

In recent decades, the major North East poet to have employed popular literary forms in his work is João Cabral de Melo Neto (born 1920), from Recife. His poems of the 1950s, attempting to examine the social and natural reality of the North East, frequently reveal the strong influence of popular speech and oral poetry. *O Rio*, for example, published in 1953, follows the course of the Rio Capibaribe from its source to the city of Recife, commenting on the geographical environment and the lives of the local inhabitants along the way:

Meu caminho divide,
de nome, as terras que desço.
Entretanto, a paisagem,

com tantos nomes, é quaes a mesma.
 A mesma dor calada,
 o mesmo soluço sêco,
 mesma morte de coisa
 que não apodrece mas seca.

(...)

Ao entrar no Recife
 não pensem que entro só.
 Entra comigo a gente
 que comigo baixou
 por essa velha estrada
 que vem do interior;
 entram comigo rios
 a quem o mar chamou,
 entra comigo a gente
 que com o mar sonhou,
 e também retirantes
 em quem só o suor não secou;
 e entra essa gente triste,
 a mais triste que já baixou,
 a gente que a usina,
 depois de mastigar, largou. (111)

The simple patterns of metre and rhyme, and the note of protest and satire contained within them, recall the popular verse of the North East, as indicated by Benedito Nunes:

A estrutura de *O Rio* é a de um poema construído sob ditado, que conserva, na linguagem escrita, a mobilidade, a incompletude, os rodeios e as redundâncias da linguagem oral. Até mesmo nas variações da métrica, estampa-se algo de um improviso, de um momentâneo ditado. Temos assim, à primeira vista, uma mimese do estilo oral dos cantadores, senão daquele romancero popular do Nordeste, de que *O Rio* recebe o tom e o metro do verso. É desse estilo que o poema apreende os aspectos mais característicos, induzindo-os no grosso tecido de seu texto. São as repetições, o ritmo monocórdio, o emprêgo constante do participio presente(...) (112)

Here, however, the use of such popular forms tends to avoid the picturesque, for it is the images of poverty and death interwoven

within the verse that are emphasised, as the river makes its journey,
as when it passes through the poor slum areas of Recife:

é cidade sem ruas
e sem casas que se diga.
De outra qualquer cidade
possui apenas polícia.
Desta capital podre
só as estatísticas dão notícia,
ao medir sua morte,
pois não há o que medir em sua vida. (113)

Similar themes dominate Morte e Vida Severina (1956), the work in which Cabral probably makes most direct use of North East popular poetry. The journey of Severino, a poor retirante escaping from the drought ridden sertão, is followed until he reaches Recife. He symbolizes the whole mass of poverty stricken sertanejos whose lives are permeated by the constant presence of death:

Somos muitos Severinos
iguais em tudo na vida:
na mesma cabeça grande
que a custo é que se equilibra,
no mesmo ventre crescido
sobre as mesmas pernas finas,
e iguais também porque o sangue
que usamos tem pouca tinta.
E se somos Severinos
iguais em tudo na vida,
morremos de morte igual,
mesma morte severina. (114)

Severino confronts death at every stage of his journey, including upon arriving in Recife, where his hopes for better conditions of existence are shattered when he learns that scores of rural immigrants die in the slums of the city each week and are condemned to a pauper's burial. Believing escape from death to be impossible and in the depths of despair, Severino thinks about suicide, until the cry of a new born

child from a nearby slum brings the realization that human life is constantly regenerated and reaffirmed in the midst of death:

E não há melhor reposta
 que o espetáculo da vida:
 vê-la desfiar seu fio,
 que também se chama vida,
 ver a fábrica que ela mesma,
 teimosamente, se fabrica,
 vê-la brotar como há pouco
 em nova vida explodida;
 mesmo quando é assim pequena
 a explosão, como a ocorrida;
 mesmo quando é uma explosão
 como a de há pouco, franzina;
 mesmo quando é a explosão
 de uma vida severina. (115)

The verse forms, the subtitles which divide the poem and the colloquial language used are all modelled on popular poetic tradition, recreated, however, to present Cabral's own vision of the world. The forces of fate appear to be almost overwhelming, with Severino essentially impotent against them, and the reaffirmation of life at the end of the poem, the human will to live in the face of the most adverse conditions and refusal to be crushed completely, carries with it romantic overtones in its presentation. The shift of emphasis from the overriding misery of sertanejo life, its reduction to a mere battle of survival, to an assertion of the sanctity and miraculousness of life, creates a certain ambiguity which to some extent undermines the power of the poem.

Conclusions.

The socially committed novel of the 1930s and 40s was an important phase in the development of Brazilian literature. It

signified the consolidation of, on the one hand, the desire on the part of the writer to look inwards and examine and analyse national problems, and, on the other, the formal innovations established by the Modernists. To this extent at least, the basis for a more nationally orientated literature was laid, with the narrow isolation of the erudite writer sufficiently broken to allow him a far greater understanding of other sectors of the population. This whole process, a constant interplay between national and cosmopolitan perspectives, was made possible by objective social and economic changes which altered the position of the writer, and his own conception of his role. The breaking down of colonial structures, the expansion and modernization of economic production and the increasing social complexity of the nation, all contributed to the opening up of new possibilities for the writer.

However, the entire issue has been confused by the frequent attempts to conceive this process of literary development as simply an integral part of the steady evolution of a distinctly Brazilian cultural identity, stimulated by the gradual emergence of a national consciousness among the mass of the population. To this day, Brazil remains a country of acute social, and hence cultural, divisions. The notion of the development of a national culture has been a cornerstone of the ideological system constructed by the hegemonic classes in order to conceal those divisions under a façade of unity, and hence justify the socio-economic status quo that privileges them. The affirmation of a national identity must therefore be seen in ideological terms and not as the natural, cohesive process it is frequently claimed to be.

Many writers who have sought to contribute to shaping Brazilian identity through the development of a national literature, have often unwittingly, merely reinforced that dominant ideology. Attempts to enhance the national flavour of literary work by selecting symbols that can be identified as distinctly Brazilian, has often resulted in artificiality and distortion. Popular culture is one of those elements that has been most abused, with numerous of its manifestations recast to suit the tastes of other classes. At worst, this has led to a literary populism, a colourful abstraction which claims to truly reflect the lives and aspirations of the exploited masses, and defend their interests, when in fact paternalism frequently predominates. Many critics have unfortunately reinforced this deception by exaggerating the proximation that has developed between the writer and the masses, like José Osório de Oliveira, who writes of the modernists:

O homem de letras no Brasil (que se libertou do preconceito intelectual europeu) está, de certo modo, em pé de igualdade com o povo; compartilha, muitas vezes, dos mesmos gostos, sentimentos e ideias; tem ou adota muitos de seus usos e costumes. Isso é simplesmente porque a cultura social é, no Brasil, mais forte do que a cultura a que chamamos intelectual, para a distinguir da cultura viva do povo, a cultura sinônimo de experiência humana. (116)

Such interpretations naively imply that, in a highly stratified society, the writer has completely broken through class barriers and been able to accurately capture and convey the lived experience of the poor masses. It must always be remembered that even the most sincere and dedicated writer can never document social reality with total

objectivity, as observed by Rubén Bareiro Saguier, commenting on the socially committed novel in Latin American:

En síntesis, la búsqueda de la identidad literaria mediante el cultivo de una novela social y comprometida representa una etapa importante en el proceso de identificación de la realidad social misma. Pero fue una búsqueda en cierta medida falsa. El mismo criterio de "veracidad documental" adoptado engañó, porque presentaba una superficie deformada por la intención redencionista que cada autor puso. En este sentido, es dudoso también el carácter de literatura "sociológica" que se le atribuyó. (117)

This point is clearly illustrated by the many twentieth century novelists of North East Brazil who have attempted to document the lives and struggles of the underprivileged masses of the region. Courageous and fearful in Euclides da Cunha, helpless victims in Rachel de Queiroz and Graciliano Ramos, picturesque and inventive in Jorge Amado, the poor of the North East have appeared in the erudite novel in a variety of guises.

As has been seen, a crucial part of the development of the ideology of national identity has been the interpretation and assimilation of popular culture by the intelligentsia of the dominant class. Over the decades, new concepts and viewpoints have contributed to this process, constantly providing new interpretations of popular culture. Many of the attitudes involved have been discredited and superceded in the course of time, as with the ambiguous racial theory so evident in the work of Euclides da Cunha. Other notions, however, have lingered on to influence contemporary writers. It will be seen that all the basic ideas underlying Ariano Suassuna's Movimento Armorial can be traced back through that developing process which aims

to assert national identity through the promotion and manipulation of popular culture.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2.

(1) See Celso Furtado, Economic Development of Latin America (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970), pp.35-36. There Furtado writes of Brazil: 'Between 1880 and 1910, the total length of railways increased from 3.4 to 21.3 thousand kilometres. Coffee exports, which amounted to around 4 million 60 kilogram bags in 1880, rose to almost 10 million in 1900 and to over 16 million on the eve of the First World War, a total seldom surpassed in later years. In the same period, exports of cacao rose from 6,000 to 40,000 tons, and rubber exports from 7,000 to 40,000 tons'.

(2) Many writers have dealt with this contradiction. In Jacques Lambert, Os Dois Brasis (Comp. Ed. Nacional, São Paulo, 2nd. ed., 1967), pp.101-126, the author writes of Brazil in terms of a dualist society divided between the modern, epitomized by the South, and the traditional, typified in the North East. Other writers have rejected this view however, and have argued for the existence of a system of internal colonialism in Brazil, with the North East subordinated to the role of a supplier of primary products for the industrialized South.

(3) R. Magalhães Júnior, Rui, o Homem e o Mito (Editôra Civilização Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1965), pp.447-448.

(4) *Ibid*, p.121.

(5) Joaquim Nabuco, Minha Formação (Instituto Progresso Editorial, São Paulo, undated), p.35.

(6) Antônio Cândido, Literatura e Sociedade (Editora Nacional, São Paulo, 1980), p.113.

(7) The *Parnassians* took their name from the French group they followed which, formed in the 1860s, rejected the lyrical effusions of decadent romanticism and demanded a more controlled, classical treatment of poetry, based on erudition and technical perfection. The *Symbolists* also named themselves after the corresponding French group. Their poetry tended towards escapism, orientated towards the exploration of the inner self. Symbolist groups were founded in many parts of the North East, including Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão and Rio Grande do Norte.

(8) Alfredo Bosi, História Concisa, p. 193.

(9) It is in fact Tristão de Ataíde who first employs the term Pré-modernismo as a broad chronological classification for the literature of the period 1900-1920 which preceeded the Modernist Movement in Brazil. Bosi however gives the term a more precise definition: 'Redefinindo um

térmo bivalente, pré-modernismo, diria que é efetiva e orgânicamente pre-modernista tudo o que rompe, de algum modo, com essa cultura oficial, alienada e verbalista, e abre caminho para sondagens sociais e estéticas retomadas a partir de 22'. He goes on to list the major pre-modernist writers as Euclides da Cunha, Lima Barreto, Graça Aranha, Oliveira Vianna and Monteiro Lobato. Alfredo Bosi, O Pré-Modernismo, vol.5 of A Literatura Brasileira (Editora Cultrix, São Paulo, 1968), p.10.

(10) José Pereira da Graça Aranha, Canaã (Livraria Garnier, Rio de Janeiro, 8th edition, undated), p.61.

(11) Thomas Skidmore, Black into White. Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought (Oxford University Press, New York, 1974), p.109.

(12) See Dante Moreira Leite, O Caráter, pp.203-211, for a critique of da Cunha's thoughts regarding race and nationality.

(13) Euclides da Cunha, Os Sertões, in Obras Completas, vol.2 (José Aguilar Editora, Rio de Janeiro, 1966), p.141.

(14) Olavo Bilac quoted in Thomas Skidmore, Black into White, p.97.

(15) Euclides da Cunha, Os Sertões, p.167.

(16) Ibid, p.170.

(17) Ibid, p.479.

(18) Ibid, p.175.

(19) Ibid, p.231.

(20) Ibid, p.431

(21) Alfredo Bosi, O Pré-Modernismo, p.12.

(22) See Sílvio Romero, A América Latina: Análise do Livro de Igual Título do Manuel Bonfim (Chandrar, Oporto, 1906), passim.

(23) See, for example, Sânzio de Azevedo, Literatura Cearense, pp.365-377, and Apontamentos de Literatura Maranhense, by various authors (Edições Sioge, São Luis, 1977), pp.163-166.

(24) Cecília de Lara, Nova Cruzada: Contribuição para o Estudo do Pré-Modernismo (Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros, São Paulo, 1971), passim.

(25) Mário de Andrade, 'O Movimento Modernista' in Obras Completas, Vol.X (Livraria Martins Editora, Brasília, 1972), p.235.

- (26) Menotti del Picchia, Seleta em prosa e Verso (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1972), p.48.
- (27) Menotti del Picchia, Seleta, p.49.
- (28) Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, quoted in Mário da Silva Brito, História do Modernismo Brasileiro (Editora Civilização Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1964), p.176.
- (29) Mário de Andrade, in Manuel Bandeira, Apresentação da Poesia Brasileira (Casa do Estudante do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, 1972), p.17.
- (30) See, for example, Oswald de Andrade, Poesias Reunidas de Oswald de Andrade (Gaveta, São Paulo, 1945); Ribeiro Couto, Poesias Reunidas (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1960); Menotti del Picchia, Poesias (Martins, São Paulo, 1958).
- (31) Manuel Bandeira, Brief History of Brazilian Literature, translated by Ralph Edward Dimmick (Pan American Union, Washington, 1958), p.144.
- (32) Telê Porto Ancona Lopez, 'Um Projeto de Mário de Andrade', in Arte Em Revista, Ano 2, Número 3, (Kairós, São Paulo, March 1980), p.52.
- (33) Mário de Andrade, 'Na Pancada do Ganzá', (prefácio), in Arte Em Revista, Ano 2, Número 3, p.56.
- (34) Mário de Andrade, 'Toada do Pai-do-Mato', (extract), from Clã do Jabuti, in Poesias Completas (Martins, São Paulo, 1955), p.177.
- (35) Jorge de Lima, 'Xangô', (extract), from Poemas, in Obra Completa, vol.1 (José Aguilar, Rio de Janeiro, 1958), pp.249-251.
- (36) See Jorge de Lima, 'Essa Negra Fulô', from Novos Poemas, in Obra Completa, vol.1., pp.291-291.
- (37) Mário de Andrade, Macunaíma (Livraria Martins Editôra, São Paulo, 1965), p.228.
- (38) Mário de Andrade, 'Acalanto do Seringueiro', in Obras Completas, vol.4 (Livraria Martins Editôra, Brasília, 1972), p.150-153.
- (39) See Raul Bopp, Poesias (Ariel, Rio de Janeiro, 1972).
- (40) Manuel Bandeira, 'Poética', from Libertinagem, in Poesia Completa e Prosa (José Aguilar, Rio de Janeiro, 1967), p.247.
- (41) Manuel Bandeira, 'Evocação do Recife', from Libertinagem, in Poesia Completa, p.255.
- (42) Mário de Andrade, Obras Completas, vol.10, pp.244-245.

- (43) Peregrino Júnior, 'Modernismo', in Tres Ensaios(Livraria São José, Rio de Janeiro, 1969), p.48.
- (44) Mário da Silva Brito, 'Metamorfoses de Oswald de Andrade', In Revista Civilização Brasileira, AnoIV, Número 17,(Jan-Feb 1968, Rio de Janeiro), p.210.
- (45) 'Manifesto do Verde-Amarelismo ou da Escola da Anta', in Gilberto Mendonça Teles, Vanguardia Européia e Modernismo Brasileiro(Editora Vozes, Rio de Janeiro, 1972), pp. 233-240.
- (46) Ibid.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Manifesto of 'Festa', in Gilberto Mendonça Teles, Vanguardia, pp.219-222.
- (49) Alfredo Bosi, História Concisa, p.387.
- (50) Antônio Cândido, 'Literatura y Subdesarrollo', p.181.
- (51) Carlos Guilherme Mota, Ideologia, p.109.
- (52) Mário de Andrade, in Carlos Guilherme Mota, Ideologia, pp.107-108, from the original Testamento de uma geração(Globo, Porto Alegre, 1944).
- (53) Mário da Silva Brito, História do Modernismo Brasileiro(Editora Civilização Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 1964), p.178.
- (54) Joaquim Inojosa, O Movimento Modernista em Pernambuco(Tupy, Rio de Janeiro, 1972), p.32.
- (55) Gilberto Freyre, Região e Tradição(José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1943), p.61.
- (56) Examples of this discord can be found in John Nist, The Modernist Movement in Brazil(University of Texas Press, Austin, 1967), which records that Mário de Andrade once wrote, 'Regionalism is poverty without humility(...)It is a poverty that comes from so few means of expression and from narrow concepts',(p.104) whilst Gilberto Freyre stated that modernism '(...)sacrificed regionalism and traditionalism for the sake of cosmopolitanism'.(p.110)
- (57) Gilberto Freyre, Manifesto Regionalista(Instituto Joaquim Nabuco, Recife, 3rd.edition, 1979), p.17.
- (58) Ibid, p.12.
- (59) Ibid, p.12.

- (60) Ibid, p.15.
- (61) Carlos Guilherme Mota, Ideologia, pp.69-72.
- (62) Dante Moreira Leite, O Caráter, pp.270-275. There the author describes Casa Grande e Senzala as '(...)ostensivamente apresentado como de historia ou de interpretação geral do Brasil, vale provavelmente como reconstrução literária', and goes on to state that 'Os estudos de Gilberto Freyre parecem utilizar o método histórico, isto é, a reconstrução de uma época através de documentos primários: cartas, livros, anotações pessoais, anúncios de jornais etc. No entanto, como estudos históricos, os trabalhos de Gilberto Freyre têm uma deficiência fundamental: o desprezo total pela cronologia e pelo espaço geográfico dos fatos descritos'.
- (63) Gilberto Freyre, Casa Grande e Senzala (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1943), p.85.
- (64) Ibid, p.486.
- (65) Ibid. p.67 and 69 respectively.
- (66) Carlos Guilherme Mota, Ideologia, pp.58-59.
- (67) Gilberto Freyre, Casa Grande, p.62.
- (68) Dante Moreira Leite, O Caráter, p.275.
- (69) Carlos Guilherme Mota, Ideologia, pp.54-55.
- (70) See Souza Barros, A Década 20 em Pernambuco (Gráfica Editora Acadêmica, Rio de Janeiro, 1972) for details of the impact of modernist and regionalist ideas in Pernambuco in the 1920's. The Recife born poet Joaquim Cardozo writes, for example, 'O movimento da Semana de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, como o Manifesto Regionalista de Gilberto Freyre, no Recife, produziram, no entanto, em nosso modesto e tranqüilo trabalho de renovação literária, um impacto que, confesso, foi decisivo e salutar'. (p.160) Likewise, Luís Jardim states, 'Não se pode negar a influência extraordinária que Gilberto Freyre exerceu em meio mundo. Em Pernambuco e por toda a parte. Felizmente, as idéias dele coincidiam com o pernambucanismo do nosso grupo'. (p.162)
- (71) José Américo de Almeida served as a government minister from 1928 to 1934. As a presidential candidate for the 1938 election, he proposed a broadly populist programme with considerable emphasis on social reform. The Vargas coup of 1937, and the installation of the Estado Novo dictatorship, prevented the elections from taking place. Almeida retreated from politics, but remained a staunch opponent of the dictatorship.
- (72) Wilson Martins, O Modernismo, vol. VI of A literatura Brasileira (Editora Cultrix, São Paulo, 1969), pp.263-264.

- (73) José Américo de Almeida, A Bagaceira (União Editora, Paraíba, 1969), p.46.
- (74) Ibid, p.62.
- (75) Ibid, p.31.
- (76) Ibid, p.26.
- (77) See the preface of Gilberto Freyre, Região e Tradição (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1943), page 16, where José Lins do Rego, writing about Freyre, states: 'Escrevo sobre ele, e quasi falo de mim mesmo, tanto me sinto obra sua, tanta influência exerceu sobre a minha pobre natureza.'
- (78) The ciclo de açúcar comprises five novels: Menino de Engenho (1932), Doidinho (1933), Banguê (1934), O Moleque Ricardo (1935), and Usina (1936).
- (79) José Lins do Rego, Menino de Engenho (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 28th edition, 1980), pp.118 and 122
- (80) José Lins do Rego, Banguê (Livros do Brasil, Lisbon, undated), p.48.
- (81) José Lins do Rego, Fogo Morto (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 6th edition, 1965), p.34.
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CHAPTER 3.POPULAR LITERATURE IN NORTH EAST BRAZIL: THE FOLHETO.

Origins: the romanceiro tradition and the emergence of the folheto.

The popular poetry, legends, tales and songs of North East Brazil are essentially the product of a centuries old oral tradition, still maintained in the region today. Since the late nineteenth century however, popular ballads have been printed in the form of chapbooks, or folhetos, and it is this form that will be the main object of study in this chapter. There are several obvious reasons for singling out the folheto for analysis. Firstly, its accessibility, as one of the few printed forms of an essentially oral tradition, readily available and easily collected, gives it clear advantages for the practical purposes of study. Secondly, since the whole process of production, distribution and consumption of the folheto has long been an integral part of the social life of the poorest sectors of North Eastern society, particularly the rural communities of the interior, it offers a penetrating insight into the perceptions and social experience of those sectors, through an interweaving of myth, fable, popular history, anecdote and critical commentary. The dynamism that this process of production had attained by the 1950s, clearly shown by the number of professional poets and printshops in the North East, and the volume of folheto sales, demonstrates its success as a means of popular expression. Thirdly, and most importantly for the purposes of this study, the above reasons have meant that the folheto has

attracted increasing attention from erudite writers, serving as a tangible link between their own formal, literary culture and the rich popular culture of the rural and urban masses.

The origins of the poetic tradition embodied in the folheto can be traced right back to the epic poetry that was common in many parts of Medieval Europe. Known as cantares de gesta in Spain, this was a poetry essentially aristocratic in character, consisting of long, narrative eulogies to the exploits of chivalrous heroes. Menéndez Pidal argues that, with the decay of feudalism in Spain, and emergence of the mercantilistic nation state, this increasingly anachronistic heroic poetry declined, leaving behind certain formal traditions and thematic fragments which were incorporated into the newly developing ballads. Shorter, more immediate and tailored for a wider audience, these ballads were passed on orally, constantly refashioned through a process of addition and omission, to suit the purposes of more extensive sectors of the population. (1) There thus evolved a popular poetic tradition, looked upon by the masses as their common property; their own system of communication through which to express their perception of the world around them, and debate the problems it posed for them. C.C. Smith notes how, through popularization, the Iberian ballad developed a critical quality, often expressing dissent against the established moral and social order in a cynical or satirical tone. (2) By the sixteenth century, this popular poetry was being transcribed into simple printed leaflets in many parts of Europe - pliegos sueltos (Spain), Litterature de colportage (France) and Literatura de cego (Portugal)- establishing a dynamic and enduring popular tradition, easily adapted in Brazil during the nineteenth

century. Whilst popular memory and oral transmission preserved this poetic tradition for the poor, the sixteenth century also saw many attempts by erudite writers to imitate the popular ballad, often so studiously that their poems, in the words of J.G. Cummins:

(...)are in some cases indistinguishable in form, theme and style from the lyrics which they consciously emulate. (3)

So, although the ballad, or romanceiro, tradition is essentially of anonymous, folk origin, the interweaving of the erudite with the popular has been a recurring feature of its development through the centuries. This situation obviously makes the usage of the term *popular* semantically problematical at times, and highlights the inadequacy of relying on a purely intrinsic study of such texts in order to arrive at an interpretation of their significance. Only by studying them in their social context, with particular attention to production, distribution and consumption, can one reach the wider understanding necessary to draw fundamental distinctions between popular and erudite literature, and recognise their conflicting qualities.

Carried to the New World by the Spanish and Portuguese colonists, the popular ballad tradition began a new phase in its process of development and diffusion, undergoing modifications appropriate to the new environment. Different regions produced new variations, such as the varieties of the corrido found in Argentina, Mexico and Nicaragua, and fusion of the European inheritance with local themes and perspectives. Once again, such ballads, passed on orally among the populace, either through song or verse recitation, and thus

continually being altered in the process, inspired a number of erudite literary works, such as Martin Fierro (1872), by José Hernández, based on the anonymous oral poetry of the Argentinian gaucho.

It is the work of Luis da Câmara Cascudo that provides the most thorough documentation of how this development of a popular literary tradition proceeded in Brazil. Although other scholars have pointed out the links between Brazil's folheto of popular verse and the earlier forms of pamphlet literature found in various parts of Europe (4), Câmara Cascudo rightly emphasises the Iberian roots of the tradition, tracing how stories such as Donzela Teodora and Roberto do Diabo, long popular in Spain and Portugal, were appropriated by Brazil's rural population, and modified through the years, in details of content, versification and dialect, in accordance with local taste. (5) Popular Brazilian versions eventually found their way into print with the folhetos of North Eastern poets like Leandro Gomes de Barros and João Martins de Athayde. (6) Alongside these traditional ballads imported from Europe, others of native creation emerged, some still borrowing heavily from the European sources, but others of much more independent creation, like the ballads composed by the vaqueiros, based on their experiences tending the herds. (7) In his Literatura Oral no Brasil, Câmara Cascudo shows how numerous different sources, both external and internal, provided elements that became fused over time, constantly reshaping existing popular stories and poems, and creating new ones. (8)

It was among Brazil's rural population that the popular poetic tradition took root. With the territory organised on the basis of a plantation system of agricultural production from the early days of

colonialism, the patterns of rural life that emerged as a result, with scattered, relatively isolated communities, close knit and existing on the basis of collective forms of work and social relations, embodied their own particular expressions of folk culture. Such expressions, therefore, developed as an integral and inseparable element of a particular way of life. Traditional crafts, today simply seen as quaint pastimes, were then natural work practices of the community, and their art forms were ritual celebrations, an affirmation of their vision of the world, and of their specific cultural identity. Numerous sources were assimilated by the collective mind, reshaped to its own needs, and handed on as part of the community's cultural patrimony, thereby serving to reinforce the values and customs held dear by its members.

As has been seen, the popular ballad, first oral, and then in the printed folheto form, was a dynamic element in that process. It constituted, not simply an instrument for entertainment, but a natural part of the daily, working life of the rural population, and a medium through which to affirm the values that underpinned it. In answering the question as to how so many traditional stories were able to live on generation after generation, Câmara Cascudo states that:

Traziam elas para o povo os sentimentos vivos de sua predileção espiritual. Reviviam nas páginas pobres o encanto da virtude e o castigo dos vícios detestados. Não havia outra literatura rival para disputar o monopólio. (9)

Life for the peasant population was undoubtedly oppressive. The suffocating socio-economic structure of rural Brazil was maintained by the brutal despotism of the landowners, and this, complimented by the

more specific abuse of power associated with the relations of dependency that characterized the patriarchal plantation system, severely limited the peasants' possibilities of instigating social action under their own initiative. Too often nostalgic romanticism has painted over the poverty and exploitation that was always part and parcel of traditional rural life in Brazil. Nevertheless, the nature of that life, and of the work practices at its centre, did allow the population a greater degree of control over its cultural behaviour and production than is the case with other subordinate social sectors. Furthermore, it might be argued that the difficulty in initiating concrete social action made autonomous cultural expression all the more important as a means for articulating protests, interests and aspirations. (10)

In rural Brazil, cultivating the fields or tending cattle, working solitarily or in small groups, relatively free of direct supervision, was conducive to the recitation of stories, poems and anecdotes, whilst the broader, communal way of life reinforced the significance of such cultural practices as an expression of collective perspectives and a collective identity. Work and cultural practice were inseparable, exemplified by the mutirão, when peasants, relying heavily on subsistence agriculture, would work collectively on one another's plots, and then celebrate the days work with with a night of song, dance, stories and poems. (11) Furthermore, for a long time this degree of autonomous cultural expression was relatively unhindered by direct intervention from state institutions and organizations, mainly because the state machinery remained too weak to exert its full authority in

the remoter rural areas, and was thus obliged to devolve its power to major local landowners, or coroneis.

The preservation for so long of that same basic socio-economic structure in the North East, and with it of many aspects of traditional rural life and work, largely explains how old forms of folk expression, like popular poetry, continued to flourish in the region, whilst declining in other areas of Brazil where the process of change was more rapid. For the rural inhabitants of the North East, illiterate, often isolated and lacking other means of communication, the recital of poems, stories and news became a vital aspect of life, interpreting their local environment and linking it to the wider world. As Câmara Cascudo asserts, anonymity was always a crucial characteristic of this oral literature, with any traces of individual authorship being eliminated in the course of transmission, so that it was regarded as collective property, created and propagated by everyone, and not the personal work of one individual. (12)

Nevertheless, many popular poets or cantadores did achieve fame in the North East, mainly through their skill and virtuosity in composing improvised verses in duels, or desafios, with other poets. Such poets travelled round the plantations and villages of the rural interior of the North East, singing and challenging rivals to duels. Monetary reward was rare, and they continued to rely on work on the land or with cattle for their sustenance. Robert Rowland has traced how this situation began to change at the end of the nineteenth century, with the gradual emergence of fully professional poets and cantadores, and sees it as a consequence of the social dislocation in the rural North East that was induced by external economic changes. Pressure to meet

the increasing demand of the growing industrial centres led landowners to increase productivity by taking over more land for crops or pasture, at the expense of subsistence plots for the peasantry, and by demanding more labour from the peasant families living on their land. The result was a decline in the living standard of the peasant, for any increase in money income derived from his extra paid labour was swallowed up by price rises, and his access to the traditional outlet of subsistence farming became increasingly limited. (13) Under such pressures, more and more peasants began to seek other forms of livelihood, some emigrating to the towns in search of work, and others turning to banditry or messianism. Poetry and cantoria provided another alternative, as poets began to discover that the donations they could collect at a desafio, or the income received from the sale of cheap folhetos of their poems, could compete very favourably with a living scraped from the land. This is a significant point, showing that for the rural poor of the North East popular poetry is not just an amusing pastime, but rather a craft or profession, as valid as any other, or as Antônio Arantes describes:

(...)um ofício que nessa área é socialmente reconhecido, sendo objeto de expectativas, sanções e representações específicas. (14)

The date of the publication of the first folheto of popular literature in Brazil is disputed. It is probable that they were produced occasionally in newspaper printshops from the mid nineteenth century onwards. However, it was in the context of this process of professionalization of the peasant-poet that the folheto became firmly established as a popular art form in the North East, and there is general agreement that by the last few decades of the nineteenth

century poets like Leandro Gomes de Barros and Silvino Pirauá de Lima were producing pamphlets of their work in small printshops in the region, and making a living by travelling around towns and villages selling them.

Obviously, the transcription into print of an oral tradition did imply certain changes in the development of popular literature concerned. The process of communication itself increased in complexity with the introduction of the printed word to complement and reinforce the traditional oral transmission by recitation or song. More significantly, printing obviously entailed a far more sophisticated procedure of production. The need for capital to pay for printouts, and for a more efficient process of distribution and commercialization as the popularity of the folheto grew throughout the North East, led to the emergence of specialised publishers (editores) and travelling salesmen (folheteiros), both deriving their livelihood largely from popular poetry. Nevertheless, this was an expansion and a development of the existing popular literary tradition, rather than a radical break. Essentially, printing merely complemented the oral tradition underlying it, rather than replaced it. Although Câmara Cascudo states that the folheto gradually drew away from oral literature, because printing gave the material concerned a fixed, static form that contrasted with the everchanging versions resulting from oral transmission, (15) there is considerable evidence to show that, in fact, the printed pamphlet developed in close, constant interaction with popular oral tradition. Orally transmitted stories, poems, anecdotes and news items continued to be a major source of inspiration for folhetos, which, being destined for rural communities where the

majority were still illiterate, were still written for the purpose of being read out aloud. The traditional rhyme and metre patterns of oral verse were retained in the folheto with that intention in mind. The poet or folheteiro would recite his folheto aloud in the market place, crucial for stimulating interest and attracting potential customers, and the peasants who purchased a copy would take it back to their villages for communal, rather than private, reading. Manuel Diégues Júnior describes this procedure:

Em torno de um candeeiro, depois do jantar(...) reuniam-se os membros da família. A falta de electricidade, fazia do candeeiro o ponto de convergência dos familiares: pais, filhos, irmãos, primos etc. E a leitura de novelas, de histórias, de poesias, se tornava o motivo do encontro familiar. O alfabetizado da família era o leitor. E assim a história se divulgava. (16)

In fact, these readings did not just involve members of the family, but included other members of the community as well.

Its close proximity to the oral tradition was thus a vital factor in the development of the folheto as a communal art, belonging to the culture of a whole, and extensive, sector of the Brazilian population. Although to some extent enjoying special prestige in their community on account of their wider knowledge and literacy, or semi literacy, the peasant poet remains very much an integral member of it, sharing common origins, experience and economic and social position. Even today the vast majority of poets in the North East originate from peasant communities of the rural interior. (17) In fact, in marked contrast to the erudite writer, his role of poet reinforces his position and participation in in the community rather than distances him from it,

For, as will be seen, the thematic content of his work, and its process of diffusion among its public, reemphasises the common pattern and experience of life that links him with others of his social class.

The development of the folheto tradition and the traditional folheto.

If the poet is to sell his work to his traditional public, mainly low paid workers and subsistence farmers of the same background as himself, he must remain keenly responsive to their perceptions, tastes and aspirations. The oral tradition of such communities is vital for this purpose, as a means for communicating the common attitudes and problems of its members within a shared, instantly recognised system of language and symbols. Thus, even in folheto form, popular literature in the Brazilian North East continues to be held, not as the product of individual creativity, but rather as a common property, a common inheritance open to the participation of all, that reaffirms the values and identity of the sectors concerned. The emergence of the folheto did not automatically bring with it a new concept of personal, individualised creativity. It is true that poets often complain of plagiarism and abuse of their rights of authorship by unscrupulous editores, (18) but this is generally motivated by the need to secure and protect the income from their work, rather than by a desire for public recognition for their artistic achievements. In fact, as one source affirms, it is quite common practice for a poet to sell his rights of authorship outright to an editor, losing with the

transaction any rights to have his name on the cover of the resulting folheto:

A maioria dos nossos poetas populares parece nunca ter dado importância maior ao fato de os folhetos estarem ou não devidamente identificados com seus nomes. Alguns tinham este hábito, a maioria não. Seu nome vinha impresso somente na capa, quando este comprava a edição. Em caso de venda dos direitos autorais, geralmente seu nome desaparecia, permanecendo somente o do editor. Este fato não o perturbava muito, pois o mais importante para ele era que seus livros circulassem e que rendessem o seu sustento. Não parecia estar muito presente em sua consciência nem na dos leitores o fato de ser ele o criador único daquela obra literária. (19)

The same source goes on to suggest that it has been the growing interest shown by scholars and erudite writers in popular literature, analysing it according to formal literary values of individual style and sensibility, that has stimulated an increasing preoccupation over authorship on the part of some popular poets. (20)

Some poets have been able to save enough capital to invest in a small handpress with which to print their own work, plus the folhetos of other poets, thus becoming editores. A few, like João Martins de Athayde and José Bernardo da Silva, were even able to eventually establish quite large printshops, employing a few hands, which became the centre of publication for scores of other poets. These crude workshops, technically very simple, long dominated the production of cheap folhetos of popular verse in the North East. The vast majority of poets are unable to own their own means of publication however, and so have to rely on the editores, who, as has been seen, were generally other poets of greater resources. Those able to afford it might pay a lump sum to have a pre-determined number of copies printed, usually a

few thousand. Most poets however are unable to pay such sums, and so have to come to an alternative arrangement with the editor, usually what is referred to as payment by conga. The poet will hand over his poem to the editor to publish, receiving as payment a fixed number of copies, or conga, usually about 10% of the first printout, which he can sell himself. In this transaction, generally a simple verbal agreement, the poet frequently loses all rights of authorship to the editor, who is free to sell the bulk of the printout himself, and run off subsequent copies for sale as he pleases. The transaction strongly favours the editor and, inevitably, the poets do quite frequently complain of exploitation. Nonetheless, the significant fact is that this traditional system of folheto production has always been, and still is today, essentially a local process, centred in workshops owned and controlled by members of the same social origins as the poet and his public. The same social class directs publication, controlling decisions such as how many copies to print and what format and design to use, even though external constraints, such as limitation of resources and censorship by the authorities, might considerably influence these. Generally working on a tight budget, editores have always attempted to ensure that they only print folhetos that will receive the approval of the traditional public, and so register good sales, sometimes testing out the market first by printing a small number of copies of a folheto and seeing how well they sold in the market, before risking a larger printout. (21) This acts as another mechanism for keeping folheto production responsive to the tastes and needs of its intended public.

Likewise, the process of distribution of the folheto has also long been controlled by the same sectors. Folheteiros or resellers, very often also poets, buy folhetos in bulk from a printshop (folhetaria), and travel around markets and towns in the North East selling them at a small profit. Most poets are, or have been, folheteiros at some stage, particularly early on, and this experience of direct contact with the public, reading out folhetos aloud and encouraging sales, keeps him in close touch with his customers, maintaining the immediate rapport that is a crucial characteristic of his art, and enables him to develop his skill with the popular dialect, metre and rhyme patterns that it entails. Typically, the folheteiro, having attracted an audience will recite a poem, adding comments, jokes and gestures to heighten interest and tension, and stop a few verses from the end, calling upon people to buy a copy to discover how the story ends. Public performance has therefore traditionally been a crucial aspect of folheto poetry. The whole act of recital and selling depends on an affirmation of the fellow feeling existing between the folheteiro and the audience, and of their common identity with the values and experiences expounded by the poem.

Antônio Arantes emphasises this point:

(...) não é suficiente ser alfabetizado para ser capaz de cantar folheto. É preciso que se saiba como fazê-lo, e fazê-lo com graça. Assim é importante, senão essencial, que o leitor e público possuam o mesmo "senso de humor", o mesmo lastro social e visões de mundo semelhantes, o que também é válido para os folheteiros e poetas. (22)

Unlike the erudite writer, therefore, the popular poeta-folheteiro is not a special individual separated from the rest by his particular

skill and creativity, but on the contrary, depends for his success on his ability to reaffirm his links with his public, forged by shared experience and perception. In this sense, such orality continues to be a vital aspect of popular poetry, even in the form of a printed pamphlet. This whole process of direct communication is reinforced by the frequent participation of the audience, making comments and jokes, cheering and requesting particular themes. Like the cantador, the poeta-folheteiro is an integral part of the typical open market of the North East town, where the lower income sectors of the population purchase most of their necessities. The sale of the folheto is thus a social activity, intimately linked to other aspects of the daily life of the poor.

It is significant to note that, in further contrast with the case of erudite literature, the production of the folheto is not divided into a series of highly specialised and clearly differentiated activities. Most editores are also poets, and most poets are folheteiros. Quite a few individuals have worked at all three tasks at different stages of their lives, like Leandro Gomes de Barros and Francisco Chagas Batista. (23) Family labour is frequently used to help with the tasks of printing, folding the folhetos together and selling. A poet is therefore quite likely to participate in the whole production process of a folheto, from its writing, through its printing, right up to its culmination, promotion and sale in the market place. (24) To repeat, this whole process has traditionally been organised and controlled by the same social class. At the height in the 1940s and 1950s it achieved considerable dynamism. There were scores of printshops of varying size throughout the North East,

a complex network of resellers, numbering hundreds, and sales far exceeding those of erudite novels. To quote one source:

Nessa mesma década [1940-50], a tipografia de José Bernardo da Silva tirava um mínimo de 12,000 folhetos por dia. São números espantosos se comparados às tiragens dos livros da "literatura culta". (25)

The traditional public for the folheto is still the poorest sectors of North East society, from which the poet himself originates, comprising agricultural labourers, subsistence farmers, vaqueiros, and low paid urban workers, usually of rural origin. As will be seen, this pattern is now changing, with the increasing participation of middle class consumers. For the traditional public, the folheto is very often the only form of literature with which he or she has contact, and, particularly before the spread of radio and television throughout the North East, was probably the most vital medium between their own immediate world and the wider world outside. It is in this sense that the folheto has frequently been described as a form of popular journalism, reinterpreting external events according to the peasants world view. Some poets specialize in this type of journalistic poetry, like José Soares (1914-1981), from Paraíba, who called himself the poeta-repórter, and who produced numerous folhetos based on news items, such as A Cheia do Capibaribe, relating the effects of floods in Recife in 1977, and Acabou a Gasolina? Ou a Gasolina Acabou?, about the shortage of petrol in Brazil the same year. He sold 60,000 copies of a folheto on the resignation of President Quadros in 1961, and another 40,000 of a folheto on the assassination of President Kennedy

in 1963. (26) The best selling folhetos were apparently those dealing with the death of Getúlio Vargas, one, written by Francisco Sales Areda, reputedly selling over 300,000. (27) Even with the radio and television, however, folhetos of such events have sold rapidly and in quantity, demonstrating that it is not merely news of the event that attracts the public, but rather the way in which the news is conveyed, written within a literary tradition and interpreted according to a world view with which it identifies. As one poet asserts, the folheto is the peasant's own system of communication:

O sertanejo sabe pelo rádio ou por ouvir dizer os acontecimentos importantes. Mas só acredita quando sai no folheto(...)Se o folheto confirma, aconteceu. (28)

Consequently, alongside this mediatory role, the folheto also serves to confirm and reemphasise shared experience and perceptions of daily community life, through the repetition of commonly known and instantly recognisable conventions of theme, language, symbol and metaphor. All these can be endlessly repeated in rearranged forms to confirm the group's cultural identity and values. The public thus recognises the folheto as something related intimately to their concrete lives, helping them to define them in terms of their past and present, and debating the problems that affect them daily. It is in this sense that it can be described as a communal rather than an individual product. Having purchased the folheto, the consumer will take it back home, where it will normally be read collectively, and then kept for future readings. Often, members of the community will memorize it, at least in part, and a process of oral transmission will start again.

The folheto is therefore a pole of identity for the dispersed rural poor of the North East, and its content expresses first and foremost collective attitudes towards their physical and social environment, and the problems it poses for them at all levels. Entertainment is certainly one of its key attributes, but its significance for its public goes far deeper than this. An infinite array of sources are used by the poet, borrowing from the traditional stories and legends of oral literature, seen in such folhetos as A História de Carlos Magno e Os Doze Pares de França by João Lopes Freire, and Roldão no Leão de Ouro by João Martins de Athayde, and from the endless stream of contemporary news, tales and anecdotes, national and international. All such material is refashioned by the poet to give it direct significance for his public. As Ariano Suassuna states:

(...)ao mesmo tempo que mantêm a raiz brasileira, os folhetos não se fecham ao que vem de fora: pelo contrário, acolhem tudo, desde os contos da tradição oral até as peças representadas nos circos ou filmes exibidos nos cinemas, fitas a que os poetas assistem por acaso e que aparecem recriadas com a mesma força e a mesma peculiaridade das história mais tradicionais.
(29)

Some scholars analysing the thematic content of folheto verse have established a basic distinction between traditional themes, most of which can be traced back to the Iberian romance, and contemporary themes concerned with events and personalities that have captured the imagination of the mass of the North East population, or with issues and problems that it confronts in daily life. The work of Manuel Diégues Júnior serves as an example:

(...)podemos desde logo evidenciar a existência, no romanceiro e hoje na literatura de cordel, de dois tipos fundamentais da temática: os temas tradicionais, vindos através do romanceiro, conservados inicialmente na memória e hoje transmitidos pelos próprios folhetos e aí se situam as narrativas de Carlos Magno, dos Doze Pares de França, de Oliveiros, de Joana d'Arc, de Malasartes, etc; e os temas circunstâncias, os acontecimentos contemporâneos ocorridos em dado instante, e que tiveram repercussão na população respectiva(...), são também hoje, com a facilidade das comunicações, certos fatos de repercussão internacional. (30)

It will be argued later that the dynamism of the folheto as a form of expression and of communication is demonstrated in its ability to respond to new problems affecting the poet's community, making use of new sources and assimilating new themes. There is an abundance of folhetos dealing with contemporary issues such as the exploitation of rural workers, inflation, migration from the countryside to the cities and the difficulties of urban life. However, as will be seen in chapters 5 and 6, Suassuna tends to ignore such contemporary social themes and concentrate his attention either on popular poetry linked directly to the medieval European romance, or that which recalls earlier periods of sertão history, such as the numerous folhetos dealing with cangaço and messianism.

Of particular interest to Suassuna is the popular verse of religious content, that with the longest tradition of all. Ballads and stories relating the lives of Christ, the Virgin and the Saints, recounting miracles and narrating tales of moral example flourished in Medieval Europe, and such themes constantly recurred in new forms, written and oral, for centuries afterwards, and became firmly established in Brazil during the colonial period. Despite their

differing content, all such work served to extol Christian faith and values and condemn what was perceived as immoral behaviour and profanity. Many folhetos in North East Brazil still develop this theme, often recreating biblical material. Manuel Caboclo e Silva, for example, a poet from Pernambuco, (b. 1916), opens his folheto entitled A Sentença de Jesus e A Morte dos Apóstolos, instructing the reader in the example of Christ and his twelve apostles, with the following verses:

Olhai as aves do céu
 pela janela da vida
 tanta maldade dos homens
 tanta fúria desmedida!
 Açoiaram o Bom Jesus
 morreu cravado na cruz
 com tão grande sofrimento
 depois subiu para o céu
 coberto com um fino véu
 diz o Novo Testamento.

A sentença de Jesus
 já estava preparada
 escrita em letras de arame
 com testemunha assinada
 quando reinava o Império
 do governo de Tibério
 fez Herodes o movimento
 da fonte do paganismo
 sofrendo o cristianismo
 diz o Novo Testamento. (31)

In similar vein, another Pernambuco poet, José Pacheco da Rocha, (no details), opens his poem, Os Sofrimentos de Cristo, with a request for Divine inspiration to help him convey in his work the example of Christ:

Oh! Jesus meu Redentor
 dos altos Céus infinitos
 abençoai meus escritos
 por vosso divino amor
 leciona um trovador

com divina inspiração
 para que vossa paixão
 seja descrita em clamores
 desde o princípio das dôres
 até a ressurreição.

Dentro do livro sagrado
 São Marcos com perfeição
 nos faz a revelação
 de Jesus crucificado
 foi prêso e foi arrastado
 cuspidos pelos judeus
 por um apóstolo dos seus
 covardemente vendido
 viu-se amarrado e ferido
 nas cordas dos fariseus. (32)

The betrayal, trial and execution of Christ are described in the verses that follow, ending with the resurrection.

In addition to such traditional religious material, local sources have increasingly been employed by poets to convey the same simple Christian messages. New examples are found within Brazil itself to promote the values of Christian life and the comfort and strength of religious faith, the most notable being Padre Cícero Romão Batista, (1844-1934). A priest from Ceará who became renowned in the region for his miraculous powers and divine prophesies, and who developed a fanatical following, Padre Cícero has become the subject of scores of folhetos, in which he is represented as the protector of the poor of the North East interior. In Nascimento, Vida e Morte do Padre Cícero, Apolônio Alves Dos Santos, born in Paraíba in 1926, describes the help and comfort the priest offered to the sick, poor and destitute who sought his assistance at his church in Joazeiro do Norte, in Ceará. Faith in Padre Cícero can ward off adversity, the poet asserts, mentioning certain miracles to illustrate his point:

Dizem que um certo dia
 uma onça no caminho
 emboscou um velho e ele
 valeu-se do meu padrinho
 e a onça transformou-se
 em um simples cabritinho. (33)

Several miracles performed by Padre Cícero are described in subsequent verses, demonstrating how the priest put his divine power at the service of the most vulnerable sectors of the population, who constantly faced hunger, drought and disease. The death of Padre Cícero has not diminished his influence, argues the poet, for he still remains a source of strength and protection for all, including the poet himself:

Agora canonisou-se
 quebrando todos encantos
 está na corte divina
 rogando por nossos prantos
 e protegendo o poeta
 Apolônio Alves dos Santos. (34)

Images throughout these folhetos reinforce the notion of Padre Cícero as the embodiment of divine power, as seen in A Voz do Padre Cícero by Enoque José de Maria, (no details):

O Padre Cícero virá
 para todo mundo ver
 o seu manto cor do céu
 chegará resplandecer
 de cada lado uma luz
 vê-se o manto Jesus
 nessa hora aparecer (35)

The prophecies of the priest are detailed in the following verses, recalling again religious literature of previous centuries. The corrupt, godless behaviour of humankind will bring havoc and disaster

on earth, and only turning to God and repenting can bring the hope of salvation:

Meu Padrinho nos avisava
 à noite no seu sermão
 dizendo para os romeiros
 da Virgem da Conceição:
 -Meus filhos cuidem de rezar
 que não tardará chegar
 os anjos da perdição

São os anjos do diabo
 que chegam no fim da era
 fazendo tanto milagre
 que todo mundo os venera
 semeando fome e sede
 são iguais os capa verde
 correios da besta fera (36)

Appeals to Padre Cícero for absolution and protection are at times coupled with others to the Virgin, requesting compassion, as in A Morte de Meu Padrinho Cícero by Manoel Rodrigues Tenório, (no details), who, having described the death of the priest and the impact of the event on the local population, ends his poem with the following verses:

Adeus meu padrinho Cícero
 dai-no a santa benção
 perdoai nossos pecados
 dai-nos força, amor e calma
 proteção a nossa alma
 no reino da salvação

Adeus meu padrinho Cícero
 Adeus querido pastor
 Adeus Juazeiro de graça
 que nos dê força e valor
 Adeus varão predileto
 vinde, vinde ao deserto
 sêde nosso defensor

(...)

Vou terminar meu trabalho
 pedindo a Virgem das Dores

que nos livre dos castigos
 como mãe dos pecadores
 dos males que vem a terra
 da fome, da peste e guerra
 dos demônios traidores. (37)

The back cover of the folheto contains a prayer underlying the theme of the need for faith, allegedly written by Padre Cícero in 1925 and entitled Oração Milagrosa de Nossa Senhora de Monserrate. It gives the assurance that anyone using the prayer will receive protection from misfortune and states:

é necessário ter fé, porque não havendo fé não ha
 milagre nem salvação. (38)

The devil frequently appears in these folhetos of religious theme, attempting to win over souls through trickery or force, only to be defeated by divine intervention, often from the Virgin herself. In A Surra que o Padre Cícero deu no Diabo by Antônio Caetano, (no details), it is Padre Cícero under instruction from the Virgin who thwarts the devil's attempt to carry off a young girl, the folheto ending with the following verses:

Nossa Senhora pediu
 pelo seu Divino Manto
 -Cícero livra aquela moça
 que a salvação eu garanto
 leve consigo a verdade
 da Santíssima Trindade
 e o Divino Espirito Santo

A moça agradeceu
 a Jesus crucificado
 viva Nossa Mãe das Dores
 Mãe do Verbo Encarnado
 viva a voz do Padre Eterno
 que me tirou do inferno
 por ser Divino e Sagrado

Viva o Menino Jesus
 que foi nascido em Belém
 viva o senhor São José
 viva os Santos também
 viva o Padre Cícero Romão
 que me deu a proteção
 para todo sempre. Amen. (39)

The poor are often praised in the folhetos for retaining their faith despite all the suffering they endure, whilst those guilty of blasphemy or profane behaviour are punished. In recent years, Frei Damião, still preaching in the North East sertão, has become a popular figure in folheto poetry, fulfilling a similar role to that of Padre Cícero, as the embodiment of divine power and protector of the poor. Those doubting the word of Frei Damião are shown to suffer punishment and humiliation until they repent, as in folhetos such as Estória de um Crente que Foi Castigado por Frei Damião, by Amaro Cordeiro, (no details), in which a man who derides the alleged powers of Frei Damião finds that he suddenly loses control of the lorry which he is driving. It swerves off the road and turns over. The experience leads him to find Frei Damião and beg forgiveness, and the folheto ends with the familiar message of many such poems:

Vemos cada qual rezar
 pedindo ao Pai da nação
 que ampare os católicos
 que mendigam o pobre pão
 não desampare os fiéis
 que crer em Frei Damião

Frei Damião diz ao povo
 que procure se afastar
 das ilusões infernais
 cada qual cuide em rezar
 porque está muito perto
 deste mundo se acabar (40)

Similar examples are given in other folhetos, such as O Homem que Atirou em Frei Damião e Virou num Urubú, by Manoel Seráfim, (no details), and O Exemplo da Crente que Profanou de Frei Damião e Virou Macaca, By Olegário Fernandes, in which a woman who claims that Frei Damião is a false prophet is converted into an ape and is only returned to her normal state after repenting in front of the friar.

Many folhetos relate miracles in order to warn the reader to seek forgiveness for their sins and find salvation in God. A typical example is A Santa que Falou Profetizando, by José Costa Leite, born in Paraíba in 1927, which tells of a statue of the Virgin in a church in a town near Belo Horizonte which miraculously spoke to a priest. The Virgin prophesised that the rest of the present century would see hunger and disease increase as a punishment for man's rejection of God:

No ano 86
a crise é de fazer dó
para castigar o povo
que só vive no forró
a pobreza com fadiga
aperta tanto a barriga
qua as tripas chegam dá nó

No ano 87
fica tudo diferente
ninguém se lembra de Deus
só se fala em matar gente
do povo se acaba a fé
tem gente que zomba até
de Deus Pai Onipotente (41)

1999 will bring judgement from God, and the Virgin demands that all should repeat the Oração de São Jorge to reaffirm their faith and beg salvation. Again, the prayer is included on the back cover of the folheto. Other poems tell of miracles that have taken place as a

result of such faith, such as Os Milagres da Virgem da Conceição, by José Soares, already mentioned, which lists the miracles, such as the curing of illnesses, conceded by the Virgin to believers. New material is constantly being incorporated into the tradition of religious folheto verse, such as the visit of Pope John Paul II to Brazil in 1980, but the same fundamental message constantly recurs: the search for divine protection against hardship and suffering in life, and ultimately for salvation, through the rejection of sin and confirmation of faith. A few poets specialize in religious folhetos of this type, such as João de Cristo Rei, born in 1900 in Paraíba, who assumed his new name in fulfilment of a promise he made when praying to be cured of a serious illness. He became personally acquainted with Padre Cícero in the early 1930s and dedicated himself to composing poems through which to convey the teaching of the priest.

Most of the chivalric romances still found in folheto form in the Brazilian North East, extolling the valour and loyalty of medieval knights, are linked to this tradition of religious teaching. Tales of Charlemagne and his twelve peers are the most popular examples in Brazilian popular verse. Their military campaigns, described in the poems, are motivated by the desire to spread the Catholic faith, and the Virgin constantly protects the knights in their efforts. In one version of A História da Carlos Magno e Os Doze Pares, by João Lopes Freire, (no details), the poet writes:

Carlos Magno prontificou
a trabalhar para Deus
mostrando sua coragem
combatendo os ateus

por isto era inspirado
para defesa dos seus

Lutava contra os pagãos
que em Deus não acreditava
e seu poder tão fecundo
cada dia aumentava
ele só queria com ele
quem primeiro se batizava (42)

There are many popular poems dealing with the life of Charlemagne, as noted by Câmara Cascudo (43), and one is quoted by Suassuna in his novel, A Pedra do Reino, where the narrator, Quaderna, recalls how it fired his imagination when he heard it for the first time as a young boy, and how he related it to his dreams of the North East sertão as an enchanted kingdom of chivalrous values. (44) Several scholars of popular literature have commented on the ways in which the folheto poet links the material of such ancient romances to sertão society, the most notable being the work of Jerusa Pires Ferreira, showing how in many folhetos the medieval world of kingdoms, kings and vassals becomes associated with the relations of domination and subordination in the rural North East. The traditional ethos epitomized by the good knight battling against, and eventually overcoming the forces of darkness and evil, is similarly linked to the activities of the popular bandits, the cangaceiros, who raided the large fazendas of the North East in the early decades of the present century. This process of affinity is achieved by the poet's manipulation of the original theme, virtually recreating it within a new language and symbolic system proper to the culture of the rural poor of the North East. (45) Câmara Casacudo notes the same process in his comparisons of early European versions of popular stories,

such as História do Roberto do Diabo and A Nova História da Princesa Magalona, with twentieth century Brazilian versions. He refers to significant changes that have occurred in the narrative, writing of História do Roberto do Diabo, for example:

Muitos episódios, postos pelo redator castelhano de 1509, foram eliminados na sucessão das edições. Respondiam ao gosto local, antipatias ou amizades, costumes ou hábitos normais que ficavam registrados como gestos do herói, numa coincidência agradável ao ambiente. (46)

The picaresque tradition of sixteenth century Iberian literature is another source that has been adapted over the centuries by the popular poet of Brazil. Many pícaros, often referred to as quengos or amarelos, have become popular figures of folheto literature, triumphing over adversity and enemies through cunning and trickery. The oldest of these characters, still found in Brazilian popular verse, is undoubtedly Pedro Malzartes, who featured in many traditional stories of the Iberian Peninsula. (47) One such folheto is As Diabruras de Pedro Malazartes, by Expedito Sebastião da Silva, born in Ceará in 1928, narrating how Malazartes avoids work and relies on his wits to get what he wants:

O Pedro enquanto criança
foi cheio de diabruras
devido a isso tornou-se
campeão das travesuras
foi um ente absoluto
entre todas criaturas

(...)

Quando tornou-se rapaz
só vivia a vadiar
de deitava numa rede
se balançando a cantar

dizendo: não sou jumento
pra morrer de trabalhar (48)

As in other poems of this type, the artfulness of the pícaro eventually enables him to win status and power. In this case, Malazartes deceives a king in order to win his jealously guarded daughter. In an ending typical of such folhetos, he finally marries the princess and inherits the kingdom. Other pícaros, distinctly Brazilian, have emerged in folheto literature of the North East over time, the best known being Canção de Fogo and João Grilo. (49) Typically, these characters are poor, weak and sickly, but survive, and even prosper, in a hostile world through their cunning. The first verses of Proezas de João Grilo, by João Martins de Athayde (Paraíba, 1880- 1959), serve as an example:

João Grilo foi um cristão
que nasceu antes do dia
criou-se sem formosura
mas tinha sabedoria
e morreu depois da hora
pelas artes que fazia

(...)

Porem João Grilo criou-se
pequeno, magro e sambudo
as pernas tortas e finas
a boca grande e beiçudo
no sitio onde morava
dava notícia de tudo (50)

The triumph of the pícaro, invariably over those of greater wealth or social status, avenges the poor for abuses suffered, and their deception is seen as a justifiable strategy for those who have no other means to defend their dignity in a world of greed and dishonesty. In A Vida de Canção de Fogo e o seu Testamento, by

Leandro Gomes de Barros (Paraíba, 1865-1918), *Canção de Fogo* says to a new acquaintance:

Quer ir comigo, acompanhe-me
faço-lhe observação
e nem há de ser ladrão
ser esperto nos negócios
isso é uma obrigação (51)

God will understand their need and forgive their actions, *Canção de Fogo* goes on to explain. In similar fashion, the Christian faith of João Grilo is emphasised in the *folheto* by Athayde already cited, as when the character gives a demonstration of his sharp thinking by outwitting his teacher at school through a series of questions relating to religious belief:

Um dia perguntou ao mestre:
o que é que Deus não vê
o homem vê qualquer hora?
diz ele: não pode ser
pois Deus vê tudo no mundo
em menos de um segundo
de tudo pode saber

João Grilo disse: qual nada
quêde os elementos seus?
abra os olhos, mestre velho
que vou-lhe mostrar os meus
seus estudos se consomem
um homem ver outro homem
só Deus não ver outro Deus (52)

The triumph of the *pícaro* in a trial of questions and answers is a device commonly employed in such *folhetos*, and has a long tradition in popular stories and legends. Of all the figures of *folheto* poetic tradition, it is the *pícaro* that Ariano Suassuna has most utilized in his work, with, for example, João Grilo serving as the main protagonist in his best known play, *Auto da Compadecida*. It will be

seen in the next chapter how Suassuna contrasts the simple faith of João with the hypocrisy of other characters of greater social status within the play, in order to develop the Christian message of the work.

Another figure of popular literature employed by Suassuna and other Armorial writers is that of the cangaceiro, the popular bandit. The theme of popular banditry in the North East dates from the nineteenth century, and although the last bands of cangaceiros had by and large disappeared from the sertão by the 1940s, folhetos of their adventures, especially of Lampião and Antônio Silvino, still abound. Silvino is generally presented as a very romantic and sympathetic character, who assisted the poor and later repented of his life as a bandit. Lampião appears more ruthless and violent in most folhetos, with numerous verses relating torture, rapes and murders committed by him. At times he appears as a sadist who enjoys violence for its own sake, and who appears to have forgotten the ideals of honour and justice which originally motivated his actions. Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcanti, a poet born in Alagoas in 1917, writes in Lampião- O Terror do Nordeste:

Lampião nunca sorriu
 Para os seus dentes mostrar
 Quando sorria era o ódio
 Sua senha de matar
 Nasceu para ser carnicheiro
 Foi o Nero brasileiro
 Que se pode registrar (53)

Nevertheless, the bandits are rarely condemned outright by the poet. As in the case of the pícaro, their actions are understood within the context of an unjust and corrupt society. Lampião and Silvino are

seen as having been forced into banditry by the need to avenge a crime committed against their families. In Lampeão, O Rei do Cangaco by Antônio Teodoro do Santos, born in Bahia in 1916, the verses begin with a description of the persecution suffered by Lampeão's family and the murder of his parents, which Lampeão sets out to avenge. Deeply religious, he visits Padre Cícero in Juazeiro do Norte to beg forgiveness and ask for protection:

Viajou pra o Ceará
 Foi até o Juazeiro
 Aonde estava o Padre Cícero
 Pregando a todo romeiro
 E disse assim -meu padrinho
 Vim pedir vosso carinho
 Pois tornei-me bandoleiro! (54)

Several folhetos deal with the judgement of Lampeão after his death, such as A Chegada de Lampeão no Céu, by a poet already mentioned, Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcanti. The first part of the poem sees the bandit condemned by Christ, despite his claims that the crimes of others explain his own misdeeds:

Disse o bravo Virgulino
 Senhor não fui culpado
 Me tornei um cangaceiro
 Porque me vi obrigado
 Assassinaram meu pai
 Minha mãe quase que vai
 Inclusive eu coitado

Os seus pecados são tantos
 Que nada posso fazer
 Alma desta natureza
 Aqui não pode viver
 Pois dentro do Paraíso
 É o reinado do riso
 Onde só existe prazer (55)

Finally, Lampião repents of his sins and the Virgin intercedes and forgives him:

Aglomerada de Anjos
 Todos cantando louvores
 Lampeão disse: Meu Deus
 Perdaí os meus horrores
 Dos meus crimes tão cruéis
 Arrependeu-se através
 Da Virgem seus esplendores (56)

In the final verses Lampião is sent to purgatory to await further judgement.

Another traditional theme within the folheto is the recording of desafios or pelajas fought between cantadores. These are poetic duels, where the poets sing alternate verses, improvising as they go along, testing their rival's skill with rhyme and metre and his knowledge of traditional themes, such as astrology, biblical material and the life of Charlemagne. When one is unable to continue, the other is declared the winner. Many such contests have been written down later in folheto form, either by one of the contestants who took part or by a third poet. They are obviously not accurate transcriptions of the verses improvised, but recreations of the contest as recalled later. The most celebrated desafio of all was one held between Ignácio da Catingueira and Francisco Romano, two of the most famous cantadores of their day, in Paraíba in 1870, which, according to some sources, lasted several days. Leandro Gomes de Barros later wrote a folheto about the event entitled Romano e Ignácio da Catingueira, which opens with the each of the competitors acclaiming their superior skills:

Romano:
 Ignácio tu me conheces
 E sabes bem eu quem sou,
 Que à Catingueira inda vou,
 Vou derribar teu castello,
 Que nunca se derribou

Ignácio:
 É mais facil um boi voar,
 O cúrurú ficar bello,
 Arurá jogar cacête,
 E cobra calçar chinello,
 Do que haver um barbado
 Que derribe meu castello (57)

Verses from the duel are included in Suassuna's A Pedra do Reino, with Quaderna recalling his fascination at the idea of constructing a literary castle and defending it against rivals. It inspires him to use literature to build his own realm where he can fulfil his personal ambitions, and restore the lost glory of his family, without endangering his own life. (58)

Today, desafios of the type mentioned rarely take place. Cantadores do frequently sing in pairs at markets and fairs, alternating improvised verses as before, but the element of competition has disappeared. Generally, the cantadores sing about members of the public listening to them, encouraging them to donate money to them, and all donations received are divided between the singers at the end. Furthermore, some of the desafios which appear in folhetos today never in fact took place at all, and are pure inventions of the poet concerned.

Although these traditional themes have now been joined by contemporary ones taken from modern urban life and mass industrial culture, it is clear that to the poets and their public the original sources themselves are of little importance. It is the recreation of

the material by the poet, reinterpreting it according to his public's world view and employing a system of language and symbols specific to them, that is the crucial process that gives the content special significance for the reader. Any subject, no matter how alien to rural life in the North East it may appear, can thus be made to strike a chord of recognition and identity with the folheto public. It has already been seen how the chivalrous knights of traditional romances are linked to the life of the cangaceiro. The same process occurs with contemporary sources. Robert Rowland, for example, refers to a folheto based on a newspaper item about Sacco and Vanzetti, two poor Italian immigrants in the United States, who, after a considerable struggle to find work and establish themselves, became involved in the anarchist movement, were arrested by the authorities, charged with murder during a post office raid, and eventually tried and executed, despite their claims of innocence. Again, the poet presents the material in such a way as to link the theme to the fortunes of the North Eastern emigrants who travel to the south of Brazil, only to join the ranks of the unemployed and the favelados. The original source is refashioned in order to confirm the poet's vision of the world. (59)

Despite the vast range of subject matter covered by the folhetos, they are really rearrangements of a limited number of fairly set plots. These are constantly repeated in varied forms, within the conventions associated with the popular literary tradition, to deepen and strengthen the common perspectives of the poet and public. Working in such familiar patterns, the folheto reinforces its role as a communal form of expression.

The folheto as a field of ideological debate.

Many scholars have argued that the peasant is unable to form his own coherent world view because he is tied to an individualistic and fragmented social environment, and that this lack of class consciousness is evident in the popular poetry of the North East. According to this view, the thematic content of the folheto shows no real awareness of a body of workers, who, despite their differences, share a collective interest that differentiates them from, and places them in conflict with, the interests of opposing social classes. It is argued that, as a consequence, there are few explicit references in folheto poetry to a specific socio-economic structure, and what criticism that is conveyed is only expressed as a generalised discontent with social injustice and the abuse of power in the North East. Instead of presenting a radical response to the problems of the North East poor, the folheto is a literature that provides the consolation of fantasy, humour or melodrama, its major themes essentially eternal and unchanging. The work of Renato Carneiro Campos, studying the ideological content of popular poetry, serves as an example of such a view:

Não nos apercebemos de uma verdadeira ideologia política bem definida por parte dos poetas populares, que são geralmente individualistas: sempre observam a situação do indivíduo, poucas vezes a da coletividade e da humanidade. Surgem com frequência registros de acontecimentos políticos passados na região, ou em outra parte do país, mas sem comentários mais profundos que possam indicar quais as suas verdadeiras tendências em matéria política. Se criticam alguma atitude governamental quase sempre não indicam o que deveria ser, não mostram o certo no lugar do errado. Admiram a valentia; a valentia individual da pessoa sozinha adquirir prestígio e fortuna, os motivos coletivos da heroísmo político ou social não os atingem. (60)

Here, the Brazilian peasant is presented as conservative and individualistic, stoical and righteous in the face of poverty. Thus, Carneiro Campos can praise the folheto as a worthy instrument for what he perceives as the moral values and good sense of the peasant, a good means of teaching him sound standards and behaviour. He goes on to write:

(...)os folhetos populares, obedecendo a inteligente orientação didática, poderiam-se tornar veículos de inestimável valor para levar ao trabalhador ensinamentos, advertí-los sobre problemas de higiene, orientá-los sobre assuntos de suas profissões, falar e enaltecer os filhos da região que tivessem trabalhado para o seu engrandecimento. (61)

Such views provide the basis for the constant repetition of the stereotyped characteristics so commonly associated with the Brazilian peasant -fatalism, conservatism, superstition, resignation, individualism- and his forms of expression are readily exploited to verify this image. Popular poetry is therefore commonly seen as repository of traditional values, essentially acritical and non-political, as shown by the statement of one of the major scholars of the field:

(...)no Brasil não há poetas populares contestadores. As raríssimas exceções são inteiramente artificiais. (62)

These views reveal more about the ideological position of the erudite scholars concerned than about Brazilian popular literature. As Mauro W.B. de Almeida observes, it is no coincidence that such studies first emerged in the late 1950s and early 60s, at a time of peasant

mobilization in the North East under the Ligas Camponêses, and when the effectiveness of the folheto as a system of communication among the rural communities of the region had long been established. (63) For decades before, rural popular poetry, or literatura de cordel, had been generally disdained in erudite literary circles, to the point of being defined in many Portuguese dictionaries as a literature

(...)de pouco ou nenhum valor, como a das brochuras penduradas em cordel nas bancas dos jornaleiros(...)
(64)

Now, at a crucial juncture in the social history of the rural North East, such cultural phenomena could no longer be ignored. Traditional values associated with the rural poor, like acquiescence, conservatism, passivity and *good sense*, needed to be reaffirmed, and the image of an essentially compliant peasant was reinforced, harmonising conveniently with both the dominant structures of the rural North East and Brazil's overall pattern of development, and minimising the significance of the contradictions resulting from the conflict between the two.

The folheto therefore, along with other forms of popular expression, became an important arena of ideological conflict. Its importance lay not only in the fact that it represented a dynamic communications network controlled almost exclusively by the peasants themselves, but also precisely because it was not so apolitical as many erudite sources suggested. Mauro W.B. Almeida emphasises the significant role played by popular poetry in the mobilization process of the Peasant Leagues, where it served as a means of stimulating awareness and solidarity, a role recognised by Francisco Julião, one of the leaders of the Leagues. (65) Some politically radical folhetos

have in fact been produced, as will be seen later. Their scarcity is hardly surprising given the strict censorship imposed by the military government following the coup of 1964. Many poets recall cases of printshops being closed, folhetos confiscated and poets arrested, a phenomenon verified by other researchers. (66) Almost inevitably, most poets avoided openly political themes during the years of military rule for fear of reprisal, and folheteiros were extremely reluctant to sell any such political poetry in public. In a newspaper interview, Edson Pinto da Silva, who sells folhetos in the large market of São José in Recife, stated in 1978:

Hoje, se um poeta publicar um folheto de críticas ao governo, fica atrapalhado. Vai pra' inferno, desaparece. Antes da Revolução de 64, não. Os poetas criticavam, podiam até se dar mal, mas havia algum amparo. Um deputado na Assembléia falava em sua defesa, uma associação se movimentava para ajudá-lo, muita gente graúda até dizia que ele tinha razão. (67)

So external restraint greatly helps to explain the lack of overt political content in the folhetos, rather than apathy towards the subject on the part of the poet. If such apathy really existed, why should censorship against the poets and their associates be necessary in the first place? More significant than the oppressive activities of the authorities is the self censorship that the poets impose on themselves. Antônio Arantes quotes the example of one poem that was substantially altered by the poet, with a number of highly political statements deleted an account of fear of the consequences that would arise if it were published. (68) The few folhetos openly criticising the authorities that do get printed are invariably under a pseudonym, or with no name at all.

Crucial to the understanding of the folheto therefore, with all its contradictions and limitations of expression, is the ideological dialectic at its very centre, created by the constant tension between the intervention of dominant class values and popular resistance to such intervention. It is in this context of this ideological conflict that the growing interest in popular literature shown by erudite writers will have to be considered. Certainly, there appears to be little coherence to the peasants' perception of the world about them. Their vision is fragmented, laden with concepts and attitudes passed on by other social sectors and eras. This lack of a global view of society, and consequently of a clear appreciation of their position within it, largely explains the limitations of the philosophical content of the folhetos.

However, if the peasants' structural position in society -the nature of their productive activities and the pattern of life resulting from it- hinders the development of a coherent world view, the poor communities scattered around the vast rural interior of the North East still share the same basic economic and social realities, and this necessarily generates broadly common patterns of thought, perception and behaviour. For Maria Ignez S. Paulilo, the most fundamental aspect of this common experience is that of dependency or subjeição. (69) With the traditional latifundio structure still prevailing in the rural North East, the vast majority of the region's population is heavily dependent upon the landowning class for their means of support, virtually forced to enter into clientelistic relationships in order to ensure their survival. They depend on the landowner or patrão for all their basic necessities of life: access to

the land, paid work when necessary, housing, advancements of seed and money during unpaid periods, and general support during periods of need or difficulty. This situation signifies immense power for the patrão, and nearly total subordination from the peasant, explaining the prime desire of the latter to free himself from sujeição and establish an alternative pattern of life, as well as his limited capacity to transform that desire into concrete social action, or even a clear conception of a radically different, alternative structure. For many peasants the alternative is limited to the idea of owning lands and so joining the propertied classes themselves, rather than progressing to any real reordering of society. To this basic vision, Alda Britto da Motta adds other characteristics. Firstly, he notes the tendency of the peasant to fuse the natural with the supernatural through ritual, articulated by the linking of religious practice with the agricultural cycle, so that the mystical and the real are not automatically conceived of as two clearly separated universes. Secondly, the peasant's world is essentially one of use values, where activities of immediate utility are given greatest priority and appreciation. Thirdly, and largely resulting from the previous two, the peasant views his creative activities as inseparable from his daily routine of work and ritual; as an integral and necessary part of his whole rhythm of life. (70) This, of course, gives popular poetry a character that distinguishes it fundamentally from erudite literature.

It has already been seen that the creation, production and dissemination of the folheto is a socially derived process that reinforces the collective attitudes and common experiences of the rural poor of North East Brazil, and those are naturally embodied in

the content of the work itself. In this way, the folhetos do exhibit a clear ideological content, by making certain affirmations about all the basic problems shared by the social class concerned, and attempting to resolve those problems metaphorically in their poetry. The concrete conditions of life of the peasant are reproduced in a symbolic language, recognised by the rural poor, and regarded as their common property, through the manipulation of which the poor agricultural labourer, generally symbolised by a popular hero, can overcome the difficulties that burden him through his qualities of courage, audacity, inventiveness or astuteness. As suggested previously, the poetry does not directly confront the socio-economic order as a whole, but rather deals with the problems it creates in a fragmentary and localised manner, concentrating on specific aspects like hunger, inflation, exploitation, injustice and social and sexual relations.

Protest, therefore, both explicit and implicit, is a common characteristic in the folheto poetry, directed at all aspects of life. Frequently it amounts to a simple lament; a crying out against the oppressive conditions of life. Typical is A Dor qui mais Doi no Pobre é a Dor da Umilhação, by Jota Rodrigues, who, writing of his move from the North East to a favela in Rio de Janeiro, contrasts the sense of solidarity among his fellow favelados with the scorn directed against him by the society outside.

E pelos irmãos da favela
 Zé Rodrigue é estimulado
 Porem saindo na rua
 Quaze sempre é umilhado
 Nas calçadas que Zé paça
 O povo dis cheio de graça
 La vai o velho favelado

Aquilo pra Zé Rodrigue
 Fera le o coração
 Vendo o povo le encarar
 Com odio e umilhação
 Desprezos por todo lado
 E a pobre Zé favelado
 Ninguém le tem afeição.

So os vizinhos da favela
 E quem le da atenção
 Reconhecendo no Zé
 Homem de bom coração
 Tratando o com respeito
 Por ver seu sistema e geito
 De um sofrido cidadão. (71)

The poet's social protest is implicit rather than explicit however, for he appears to accept the actual social division between rich and poor as the natural order of things, albeit regrettable. It is the disdainful attitude of the rich towards the poor that he protests against, as he sadly relates the humiliation he suffers in the shops and the streets, yet the final plea for change amounts only to a request that everyone should show more respect for the poor:

E para quem le este livro
 Faço recomendação
 Lembre si qui os favelado
 Mereci voça atenção
 São pobres mais são vivente
 São jenti umildi qui senti
 A dor da umilhação. (72)

Another popular poet, Flavio Fernandes, does identify the suffering of the poor with the lust for profits of the rich. In História do Feijão Preto e o Sofrimento do Pobre he writes:

Ganância de tubarão
 É quem faz esta anarquia
 Para explorar o povo
 Esconde mercadoria

O pobre necessitando
Enfrenta esta tirania.

Todos viram que o Papa
No Brasil pediu a paz
Para defender o povo
Do laço dos maiores
E o rico ganancioso
Com nada se satisfaz.

Em toda nossa cidade
Existe esta ingratidão
Existem muitas crianças
Que vivem em desnutrição
Por falta de vitamina
Que existe no Feijão. (73)

Again, however, no radical solution is offered. Assuring he has no interest in political activity, the poet simply pleads that the government should be more attentive to the needs of the poor:

Não faço verso agitando
Não suporto agitação
Sendo pra fazer o certo
Não me falta inspiração
Sei que muitos vão dizer
Que o poeta tem razão.

(...)

é preciso que os homens
Que estejam no poder
Olhem bem para a pobreza
E procurem entender
Que pobre também é gente
E nasceu para viver. (74)

Most folhetos dichotomise the world in this way, into *them* (the rich, the foreign interests, the landowners and the bosses) against *us* (the poor). At times, the poet transcends the simple protest against injustice, and achieves a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of exploitation directed against his social class. In a folheto entitled

A Pobreza morrendo a Fome no Golpe da Carestia, José Costa Leite, for example, sees the poor agricultural worker as producing everything and receiving nothing, whilst the parasitical rich collect the best produce and sell it to the multinational companies, to their mutual advantage:

Rico não vai limpar cana
e nem vai fazer levada
não planta milho, feijão
e o pobre torna chegada
planta inhame, macaxeira
para a nação brasileira
e no fim não vale nada.

(...)

Se o pobre não plantasse
rico o que ia fazer?
tem o dinheiro no bolso
mas não presta pra comer
o homem de pé no chão
é quem faz a produção
pra ver o Brasil crescer!

Café na terra do café
a preço de ouro é vendido
o matuto bebe aguado
bem fraco e desenchavido
quem ganha com isso, leitor
só é o cafeicultor
com um lucro garantido.

Porque o cafeicultor
com astúcia se aproveita
recebe dinheiro do banco
muito antes da colheita
o governo paga bem
mas café bom ninguém tem
pois o bom ninguém enjeita.

Não paga aos apanhadores
é esta a pura verdade
escolhe o café bichado
de inferioridade
vende caro aos brasileiros
e vende a estrangeiros
o de melhor qualidade. (75)

The Brazilian Government generally remains in the background in such folhetos, sometimes chastised for its apparent reluctance to act positively for the benefit of the poor, but only rarely openly condemned. In one such example, entitled O Brasil Prometido aos Pobres na época de Eleição ou os Amigos do Voto e Inimigos dos Eleitores, José Saldanha Menezes makes an onslaught on the politics of the dominant classes, warning his readers of their complete untrustworthiness, and their interest in only using the poor for for their own ends:

Eu como pobre poeta
 Vivo no mundo esquecido
 Só em época de eleição
 Dos tubarões sou querido
 Embora depois do voto
 Por nem um sou conhecido.

Os políticos com promessas
 Tem arranjado o mundo
 Prometendo bom emprego
 Até mesmo ao vagabundo
 Depois da política ganha
 Fica o pobre moribundo.

(...)

Pobre é jumento do rico
 Escravo sem liberdade
 Cão sem dono abandonado
 Cego sem sociedade
 O rico surra e espanca-se
 E o obriga a ter-lhe amizade.

Por aí nova política
 Vão novamente exercer
 Já estão prometendo o mundo
 Para o pobre se intreter
 Vem recurso é para os ricos
 Porém o pobre não vê. (76)

So folhetos expressing a radical political message do exist. Eduardo Diatachy B. de Menezes verifies this in his own research, quoting the example of A Sujeição dos Brejos da Parahyba do Norte, a folheto

written by José Camello de Melo Rezende, protesting at the exploitation of agricultural workers in the North East. The poet, like many others, starts with a series of verses describing the misery of these labourers, condemning it as a form of slavery. He goes on, however, to trace the causes of the problem to the conflict between the greed for profits of commercial agriculture and the real needs of the peasants, as represented by subsistence farming. He writes:

Porque os homens do Brejo
 Tangidos pela ambição
 Plantaram canas nas terras
 Que se plantava algodão
 Cafés nas terras que se davam
 Milho, arroz, fuma e feijão. (77)

He also criticizes the use of religion, falso cristianismo, as he calls it, by the dominant classes as a means to control the exploited, calls upon the landowners to repent and improve their treatment of their workers and asks God to punish those who abuse their power by sending plagues across their properties. Yet at the same time he recognizes the need for social and economic change, which he implies will be implemented by the poor themselves:

Ninguem não pense qu' assim
 Se acabará com certeza
 Dos brejos da Parahyba
 Toda fonte de riqueza:
 Isto não, pois virá outra
 Trazida pela pobreza. (78)

In the new order that will be established, the peasant, free from sujeição, will grow staple crops like beans, rice, potatoes and cassava. The poet ends by admitting his fear of the power of the rich,

but reaffirming his sympathy and sense of identity with the labourers concerned. The poet himself was a carpenter from a rural town in Pernambuco. Diatahy de Menezes claims that there are in fact many folhetos making equally penetrating criticisms of the dominant social and economic order. (79)

However, the new order envisaged by such folhetos is never precisely defined. Essentially, it appears as a distant, dreamlike utopia, vaguely glimpsed. As in the last example, freedom for the peasant and an abundance of food stuffs are its major characteristics, hardly surprising in an environment dominated by dependency and hunger. Manoel Camilo dos Santos, a popular poet from Paraíba, typifies this in a folheto entitled Viagem a São Saruê. São Saruê is a mythical paradise in which existing conditions and practices that oppress the rural poor of the North East disappear, substituted by a new vision of the world:

Tudo lá é bom e facil
 não precisa se comprar
 não há fome nem doença
 o povo vive a gozar
 tem tudo e não falta nada
 sem precisar trabalhar.
 (80)

Man is freed completely from the necessity to work for a livelihood, which for the majority of the rural poor of the North East signifies either the harsh drudgery of the fields or exploitative unskilled labour in the cities. Instead, nature provides everything in São Saruê. Trees produce ready made clothes, hats and shoes. Cruzeiro notes grow in clusters on the ground, whilst gold and silver coins grow on bushes like cotton. Such imagery strikes an immediate chord of

recognition with a public used to work in the fields. The whole natural environment in São Saruê is converted into food, eliminating all hunger:

Lá eu vi rios de leite
barreira de carne assada
lagoa de mel de abelhas
atoleiro de coalhada
açude de vinho quinado
monte de carne guisada.

As pedras de São Saruê
são de queijo e rapadura
as cacimbas são café
já coado e com quentura
de tudo assim por diante
existe grande fartura. (81)

These are all the familiar foodstuffs the peasant families are constantly struggling to obtain. So, although the new world created is magical and mystical, it is composed of elements and images that form a basic and essential part of the everyday life of the rural poor in the North East, and is expressed in a language specific to that group. In this way, the poem reinforces their common values and perceptions. It is a utopia created specifically for the North East peasant, built with the objects and substances he best knows and most values, and according to his particular priorities, with work eliminated and food provided in abundance.

The poetry of the folheto, therefore, makes clear statements about the social structure of the rural North East, and the patterns of life generated by it, rooted in the common experience of the region's poorest social sectors. Commonly implicit in such statements is a desire for change, despite ambiguity regarding the means to achieve it, and the new order that is to result. As already seen there

are numerous folhetos narrating stories of popular heroes who, either through acts of courage, as in the case of cangaceiros such as Lampião or Antônio Silvino, or through trickery, as with pícaros like João Grilo, avenge the abuses committed against the poor by the rich and powerful.

In one of the most perceptive studies produced on North East popular poetry, Antônio Arantes notes that the plot of most narrative folhetos is structured on the basis of a series of transformations that unfold in the course of the poem. (82) He looks mainly at the wide range of folhetos de valentia, which deal with the daring exploits of a popular hero, usually a peasant from the interior. Essentially, these are all variations of one basic plot: a landowner abuses his immense power by brutally exploiting and generally mistreating his workers. The hero arrives and obtains work on the plantation, but refuses to submit himself to the whims of the fazendeiro. He then demonstrates his bravery by overcoming the landowner's animals and bodyguards, and finally successfully challenges the landowner himself. In the course of the poem therefore, the power of the fazendeiro is gradually undermined, through the destruction of the symbols that represent it, whilst the potential force of the peasants, subservient at the beginning, is gradually realised through the action of the popular hero. So class conflict is implied in most poems of this sort, with the peasantry eventually avenging itself metaphorically through the hero's victory over the perverse landowner.

However, these transformations narrated by the poem are limited by contradictions. They obviously imply radical social change, with the existing social structure symbolically subverted through the

triumph of the peasant hero over the fazendeiro. In the end though, no such revolutionary transformation of society is proposed, for such poems typically finish with the victorious hero paid off by the defeated landowner with land, money and his daughter's hand in marriage, thus enabling him to become a fazendeiro himself. So the solution to the peasants' problems is sought within the existing system of dominant class values, with private property, wealth, paid labour and social status simply rearranged slightly to favour the peasant. Individualism and private initiative still appear to dominate, for it is the strong peasant hero who reaps the reward, and though he commonly pledges to treat his newly acquired workers with greater respect, there is no suggestion that a fundamental change in their social and economic position will occur.

Within this basic thematic framework however, considerable variation of plot can be noted, corresponding to the different viewpoint of each individual poet. As Arantes argues, in some poems the transformation implied is far more radical than in others. Some examples will serve to illustrate this point. In A Morte de Carneiro e a Vitória de Arranca Vêu, by Antônio Batista Romão, the popular hero, Arranca Vêu, overpowers a ruthless landowner to win the hand of his daughter:

Arranca Vêu se achava
com o velho subjugado
se não quizer ser meu sogro
me diga velho danado
a velha gritou: minha filha
abranda este estorpedo

Arranca Vêu se mordendo
gritou eu vou te dar fim
o velho disse: meu Deus
tenha compaixão de mim

botou a língua pra fora
um pedaço bem assim (83)

In this case, the enemy of the peasants is not seen as the landowning class as a whole, but simply certain individuals within it, seen as cruel, exploitative and perverse. Though fazendeiros who abuse their power can be fought and overcome by the peasants, their actual right to that power, rooted in the highly stratified social system of the North East, remains unquestioned. The differences between landowner and peasant are finally reconciled, symbolized by the marriage between the landowner's daughter and Arranca Vêu. The popular hero does not challenge the dominant social stratum as a whole, and is eventually integrated into it by his marriage.

Another folheto, O Heroísmo de João Canguçu no Engenho Gameleira, by a poet from Paraíba, Apolônio Alves dos Santos, presents a rather more radical view of such conflict. The hero, João Canguçu, finds work on a sugar plantation where the fazendeiro refuses to pay his workers the wages owed to them, and has them killed when they complain:

Ali os trabalhadores
não viam nunca um tostão
tudo quanto precisavam
compravam no barracão
desde do calçado a roupa
a toda alimentação

Mas se um pedisse a conta
dizendo que ia embora
ele mandava matá-lo
oculto fora de hora
depois queimar o cadáver
na caldeira sem demora (84)

Witnessing these abuses, João Canguçu avenges the workers by overpowering the landowner, coronel Edmundo, and forcing him to divide

all his money among them. Again, the plot rests on the individual action of the hero, contrasted with the submissiveness of the majority of the rural workers, and no change in the existing order is proposed. In the end, the authorities reward João Canguçu for exposing the crimes of the fazendeiro, and the plantation is taken over by a new, benevolent owner, who treats his workers with fairness and respect:

Depois as autoridades
procuraram o Canguçu
logo o gratificaram
com patente e com tuto
por ter quebrado a panela
e derramado o angu

Isto apenas por ter sido
ele o denunciante
daquela grande tragédia
do Edmundo pedante
lhe deram de detetive
uma medalha importante

O novo proprietário
do Engenho Gamaleira
decretou novo regime
agindo em boa maneira
hoje os seus moradores
vivem alegre a vida inteira (85)

Nevertheless, in this poem the conflict between landowner and peasant is more clearly drawn in class terms. João Canguçu's action is motivated not by total self interest, but by his desire to avenge the mistreated workers on the plantation. Challenging the landowner, he demands retribution for them all:

O senhor vivia aqui
oprimindo os sofredores
propondo seus obstáculos
com planos exploradores
roubando suor e sangue
dos pobres trabalhadores

Há duas coisas previstas

portanto velho decida
 pague já todos nós
 para fazermos partida
 das duas pode escolher
 ou a dinheiro ou a vida (86)

The third example, referred to by Arantes himself, is a folheto by another poet from Paraíba, Francisco Sales Areda, entitled Q Coronel Mangangá e o Seringueiro do Norte. This offers the most radical ending to the plot, with the perverse landowner finally killed by the peasant hero, who then seizes his daughter and marries her, thereby inheriting his lands. These he then divides up among all the workers living on it. (87) Outright victory for the peasants is therefore achieved, the power of the landlord destroyed by their force, and the division of the land at least suggests the possibility of a new order to replace the existing latifundia.

In fact, the death of a fazendeiro at the hands of a peasant is rare in the folhetos. Most commonly, the hero, acting as a mediator between the landowner and the peasants, uses his special attributes to reach the position of being able to negotiate with the landowner in order to improve his economic and social position. No new order of society based on an alternative system of values is coherently expressed. At best it is only glimpsed. Generally, the dominant order continues intact, and the basic contradiction between the peasants desire for change and a socio-economic system that frustrates that desire, remains unresolved.

As already stated, these limitations of the content of the folhetos are understandable given the internal constraints on the peasant world view, rooted in the nature of his social existence, and

the external constraints on his expression, with dominant class hostility to anything considered offensive to the prevailing political, social and moral order. Furthermore, the variations of a simple plot show that dissenting voices do exist within a broadly common set of values and a common poetic tradition. It must be repeated, however, that such limitations and contradictions do not in any way invalidate folhetos as a popular means of expression. On the contrary, they are the key to its understanding, reproducing the tension that characterizes the peasant relationship with the social and physical world around him. That tension provides the originality of the folheto expression, and at the same time demarcates its conceptual parameters. Those parameters are not static however. It has already been seen that some popular poetry does incorporate a new vision of society, and there is no denying that the folheto does embody a conflictive quality, questioning and challenging the world about it, and, as suggested by its role during the time of the peasant leagues, that potential can be realised under specific historical circumstances.

The fact that the folheto relates directly to the concrete conditions of existence of the rural poor of the North East explains the dynamism of its production and consumption. Those conditions, and the wider historical processes that shape them, are reduced to an abstraction of reality, with a symbolic language discussing, and attempting to overcome metaphorically, the social tensions that daily affect the North Eastern poor. All aspects of life are dealt with. The *corruption* of modern living, with the erosion of traditional family life, is another common theme. In a folheto entitled O Povo

Desembestado, Chico Ramalho, from Paraíba, compares the old pattern of family life with the changes occurring today:

Filhos respeitavam os pais
Irmão respeitava irmã
Respeitavam até os velhos
Tomavam até a benção
Hoje estão dando valor
A revista e televisão

Escola de caratê
Ensina o povo a brigar
A televisão ensina
Até a criança a furtar
Mulher deixa a igreja
O marido abandona o lar

Vai ouvir filmes impróprio
Nos domingos no cinema
Vai tomar banho na praia
Marca o passo da ema
Nos clubes sem respeito
Ou no Changô da Jurema. (88)

There is sadness in the poet's verses as he calls upon his readers to resist moral decay, and save their souls before it is too late. The acceleration of the process of integration of the rural communities of the interior into the national economy, and the consequent dissolution of the old rythmn of rural life, has created acute social problems for the inhabitants of those communities. Traditional moral and cultural values are brought increasingly into direct confrontation with new ones emanating from modern, urban, industrial life. Many folhetos nostalgically retreat into earlier eras in the North East, romantically recreating a golden age, sadly lost. Others, dealing with modern life, evoke a sense of being stranded, deploring and resisting the imposition of new ways, but finding traditional patterns of organization of life disintegrating all around. In O Tempo Bom Foi Embora, Francisco de Souza Campos, a poet from Pernambuco, writes:

Há trinta anos atrás
 Se via qualquer rapaz
 Ser obediente aos pais
 Mas isto era em outrora
 Hoje o respeito acabou-se
 A bandalheira avançou-se
 O povo desmantelou-se
 O tempo bom foi embora.

O mundo está em esconbro
 Rapaz de cabelos ao ombro
 Servindo até de assombro
 Parecendo uma senhora
 Sai na rua de calção
 É a maior confusão
 Se isto é evolução!
 O tempo bom foi embora. (89)

The changes in sexual relations is another problem area dealt with frequently by the poets. In Os Namorados de Hoje, José João dos Santos, a poet from Paraíba better known by his pen name, Azulão, writes about young women in present day Brazil:

Lê revista escandalosa
 Sexo, nudismo, ilusão
 Quer ser artista de rádio
 Cantar em televisão
 Ganhando em troca de honra
 Boémia e perdição.

Moça pobre de favela
 Só quer ser americana
 Pinta cabelo de loiro
 Tira onda de bacana
 Ainda diz ao namorado
 Eu sou de copacabana.

Só veste calça comprida
 Querendo falar inglês
 Dar bola a qualquer pilantra
 Namora dez duma vez
 Não faz parada em emprego
 Quatro, cinco em cada mês. (90)

Behind the humour of the verses, concerns of real significance to the folheto readers are being aired. Two worlds are seen in conflict: the

harsh reality of the favela, with its daily struggle for a basic existence, and the mass, industrial culture of modern, urban Brazil, with its image of opulence and liberty. The poet recognizes that image as mere illusion, and warns his readers not to be tempted:

Cuidada com vigarismo
Fingimento e fantasia
(...)

Eu sou um homem vivido
Que dos vícios me governo
Não me iludo com charmes
Mulher do mundo moderno
Por mim elas morrem e vão
Se estourar no inferno. (91)

Most folhetos paint a similarly negative picture of the modern culture that is encroaching, and call upon their public to resist its false values.

The dynamism of folheto verse is therefore demonstrated in the way that it constantly incorporates new themes. Throughout the 1970s, for example, as the economic policies of the military government led to increasing hardship for the poorest sectors of Brazilian society, folhetos decrying the high cost of living and unscrupulous profiteering of the business community abounded. Most emphasise the widening gap between rich and poor, demonstrated particularly by their different eating habits. Verses from O Clamor da Carístia, by João Vicente Molia (no details) state, for example:

A carístia de hoje
Não tem jeito que dê jeito
O escândalo tomou conta
Já acabou-se o respeito
O tempo está muito ingrato
Pois o jeito é comer rato
Enfiado num espeto

O rico come churrasco
 Galinha e carne de galo
 E o pobre fica olhando
 Chega sente aquele abalo
 Dizendo o tempo ruim
 Ah se chegasse pra mim
 Mesmo a carne de cavalo (92)

The same theme is developed in a folheto of similar title, Os Clamores da Carestia, by Expedito F. Silva, originally from Pernambuco, now resident in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. The poet condemns the plight of the poor, among whom he includes himself, and calls for change:

A fome já tomou conta
 Da norte sul e sertão
 Cada dia o pobre fica
 Apertando o cinturão
 Vai dormir lhe falta o sono
 Vai comer não tem feijão

Se morrer vai dar trabalho
 Se viver vai passar fome
 Se trabalhar não tem nada
 E se trabalhar não come
 Porque a mercadoria
 No estrangeiro se some

Vamos cultivar lavouras
 Pra ser mais estimulada
 Dando o direito a todos
 Que trabalham na enxada
 Lhes dando terra e semente
 E uma vida adequada

Nunca eu tive pretensão
 De ofender a ninguém
 Sou Expedito F. Silva
 Que escreve e nada tem
 Porque a minha barriga
 De fome ronca também (93)

All contemporary social problems affecting the lives of the poor are dealt with in folheto verse, the poet often writing from personal

experience. In O Brasil e o Estudante Pobre, Jota Rodrigues, already mentioned, complains of the difficulties faced by the poor in educating their children and alludes to the problems low educational standards will create nationally:

Hoje o Brasil somos nós
 Amanhã é nossos filhos
 Quem hoje não tem diploma
 Morre apagado sem brilhos
 E um Brasil analfabeto
 E um trem fora dos trilhos

(...)

O governo da escola
 Colégios e faculdades
 Mantendo os professores
 Nos municípios e cidades
 Merenda e material
 Em pequenas quantidades

Porém os materiais
 Tomam rumos diferente
 Por gente inescrupulozas
 Soçaites encociente
 Qui da pra o estudante rico
 O qui e do estudante carente

E o ponto básico qui tenho
 Como a justificação
 São os meus próprios filhinhos
 Qui sofrem a umilhação
 Sem pasta livro ou caderno
 Remendado e os pés no chão (94)

The persecution of street vendors by the authorities in Recife is the theme of O Problema do Camelô no Recife, a poem by Bernardino de Sena, from Pernambuco. Many poets, often combining the sale of folhetos with that of other cheap articles, such as combs, pens and key rings, have complained of such problems:

O vendedor ambulante
 é um sujeito sofrido
 Corre daqui, vai pra li

Lhes chamam de atrevido
 Vendendo o que é seu
 Mas mesmo assim, perseguido

(...)

Devido ao tão grande número
 De homens necessitados
 Que vivem assim, pelas ruas
 Até marginalizados
 Os homens sentem o problema
 Bem sério, e complexado (95)

Apolônio Alves dos Santos, another poet already referred to, has produced folhetos on many contemporary issues, such as O Divórcio, arguing in favour of divorce, O ABC do Feijão e os Tumultos nas Filas, describing the queues which developed when there was a shortage of beans, and Os Nordestinos no Rio e O Nordeste Abandonado, dealing with the theme of emigration from the North East to the big industrial centres of the Brazilian South. The poet, himself an emigrant from Paraíba living in Rio de Janeiro, laments the fact that so many North Easterners have been driven out of their native region by the need to find employment:

Assim passa toda vida
 o pobre na quebradeira
 com fome e sacrificado
 trabalha semana inteira
 por fim o saldo que tira
 não dar para ir a feira.

Eis aí qual o motivo
 que obriga o nordestino
 deixar seu torrão amado
 e sair sem ter destino
 pelo mundo foragido
 feito mesmo um peregrino. (96)

The poet complains of the exploitation suffered by North Easterners in factories and on building sites in Rio de Janeiro, but states that it

is still preferable to agricultural labour in the North East.

Highlighting the contrast between North and South, the poem ends with reference to the continual suffering of emigrants from the North East, forced by necessity to move to the South, but constantly yearning to return home:

Enquanto o Sul do Pais
de mais a mais engrandece
nosso Nordeste coitado
de dia a dia enfraquece
enquanto o sulista engorda
o nordestino emagrece.

Enquanto o sulista canta
e sorrir alegremente
o nordestino coitado
chora copiosamente
por se achar desterrado
da sua terra ausente. (97)

As was seen earlier, there are many other themes besides social problems covered by the folhetos. In addition to the poetry recreating traditional materials that have already been referred to, there is a wide variety of folheto verse which simply aims to entertain, and which relies entirely on humour, with such titles as O Rapaz que Casou com uma Porca no Estado de Alagoas, by José Soares, and A Mulher que rasgou o Travesseiro e mordeu o Marido sonhando com Roberto Carlos, By Apolônio Alves dos Santos, and there are also folhetos of pornographic verse, termed folhetos de safadeza or folhetos de Putaria, which have at times brought the poets responsible into conflict with the authorities.

Regardless of the theme, however, all folheto poetry is expressed in a language specific to the social group concerned, contrasting sharply with the more formal Portuguese employed traditionally by the

erudite writer. Grammatical rules are ignored, new words invented and a rich array of colloquialisms incorporated. It is a popular language with which the rural poor in the North East immediately identify. More importantly, words can have specific meanings for the group that differ from their formal, dictionary defined meaning. The poets reappropriate the language and use it for their own purposes. For example, words and terms which formally have a pejorative sense can be given a positive value in the folheto poetry. This can be seen, for example, in the numerous folhetos about the cangaceiros, where terms referring to robbery and violence -such as ladrao and bandido- are often redefined in a positive light, legitimizing, even eulogizing, the actions of the popular bandits. Similarly, the folhetos employ a system of symbols with set meanings for the North Eastern poor. Mário Pontes, for example, has examined the various uses made of the images of the Devil and of Hell in popular poetry, which frequently come to symbolize the hostile natural and social forces confronted by the peasant. (98)

Sometimes the symbols used embody an abstract concept for the reader. The Casa Grande, for example, frequently symbolizes the whole power of the landowning class, and whereas the coastal plantation is commonly associated with confinement, the sertão often represents freedom. It is invariably the sertão which produces the courageous popular heroes, valentes or cangaceiros, of folheto poetry.

In a number of different ways therefore, the folheto can be seen as a product, not so much of an individual author, but of the social class to which it belongs: the poor of the rural North East. In

summary, it is a form of expression that serves to strengthen the bonds linking that class, defining it, separating it from the rest of society, which it generally regards with suspicion, sometimes even clear hostility. The activity of the poet is regarded as a legitimate trade by his public, and the production, distribution, sale and reading of the folheto is part of their daily lives, inseparable from other activities in which they engage. The content of the poetry, though varying with each individual author, adheres essentially to a broad, traditional framework, which reinforces collective attitudes and concerns, emanating from common social and economic experience. Likewise, the language and symbolism used in the folheto is specific to that group, being part of a popular literary tradition handed down among them from generation to generation, and innovations in style are not readily accepted. New themes, however, are readily incorporated. So, rooted in its own particular social context, as an integral part of the social life of a particular sector of the Brazilian population, it is important to see the folheto as constituting a form of literature that is radically different from the erudite literature produced by other social sectors, in the perceptions it conveys, the way it is produced and the way it relates to the community which it serves.

We have seen that in many ways folheto poetry can be considered a socially integrated literature, an intimate part of the life of a large social class. Here, a clear contrast can be drawn with erudite literature, most of which has always been confined to a narrow educated elite, separate from other forms of social activity, with the idea of writing viewed as an essentially private activity, closed off from society as a whole. Obviously, this conclusion raises many questions

about the legitimacy of the approach taken by contemporary Brazilian writers such as Ariano Suassuna, based on the idea of fusing popular and erudite literature in an attempt to create some form of nationally representative literature.

The development of the folheto in recent decades.

By the 1960s, the process of folheto production was showing clear signs of decline. The social tension embodied in the centre of popular poetry, stemming from the decay of traditional patterns of life in the rural North East as the region was steadily integrated into the broad process of national economic development, eventually came to undermine the production of the folheto, along with other aspects of traditional rural community life. With inflation increasing the costs of printing and reducing even further the spending power of the rural poor, the number of poets and resellers gradually declined, and printshops closed down. One of the most famous of these, the Tipografia José Bernado da Silva, which in healthier times used to print around 100,000 folhetos a week, found its output reduced to between 1,000 and 2,500 each week, with several machines non operational. (99) Only a handful of these traditional printshops specializing in the production of folhetos exist today in the North East. The expansion of urban, industrialized society has brought with it a new life style, with the mass media penetrating the sertão, offering alternative sources of information to the inhabitants. One observer has even commented that the increasing

consumption of American style comics in the North East has been in detriment to folheto sales. (100)

This process of decline has itself become a theme developed by the poet, as seen in Literatura de Cordel (O Prenúncio do Fim), a folheto written in 1980 by Marcelo Soares, from Pernambuco, describing the problems confronting popular poetry in Brazil:

A nossa Literatura
de Cordel, tão popular
de cantada em verso e prosa
começa a agonizar
por isso falo das causas
que lhe ameaçam acabar

Primeiro que tudo mostra
que uma dessas razões
são sem sombras de dúvida
os Meios de Comunicações
Radios, TV, Jornais
e outras publicações

(...)

Cobram alto ao poeta
para fazer um Cordel
reclamam que todo mês
sobe o preço o papel
e que além dos empregados
têm água, luz e aluguel

Sendo Xilogravador
e Poeta Popular
sinto ser meu o dever
de a todos alertar:
A Literatura de Cordel
está para se acabar! (101)

This decline has been used by academic institutions, government bodies and individuals to justify the extension of their interests in popular literature, to the point of intervening directly in the process of production, distribution and consumption, in an effort to protect it, and ensure its survival. A number of universities have taken on the

task of printing works that the poets themselves cannot afford to publish, and have launched projects to extend research on popular poetry, and devise other methods of supporting it. Some State Governments have played a similar role through Departments of Education or Culture. A new, middle class public has emerged for the folheto, with salons putting on recitals of popular song, and bookshops and craftshops selling folhetos as a curiosity. One source notes:

O novo público emergente tem procurado o cordel, quase sempre, como elemento folclórico, no sentido vulgar de sua compreensão, isto é, de coisa arcaica, tradicional e exótica. Poucas vezes procura o cordel como elemento vivo de nossa cultura, que reflete um pensamento popular e atual sobre a realidade. (102)

Most poets still selling folhetos in public places confirm this change in the composition of their consumers, with students, academics and tourists accounting for an increasing percentage of sales. Clearly, such a change will have a profound impact on the content of the work itself, with an increasing number of folhetos produced for new tastes and perceptions.

A whole new industry for popular poetry has now emerged, with record companies recording poets and cantadores, radio stations emitting broadcasts, and an array of books, magazine articles and films appearing on the subject, all of which are well beyond the access of the traditional folheto public. With this situation, a new type of popular poet has emerged, more commercially minded, orientated towards a new, more affluent audience, like Pedro Bandeira, cantador of Joazeiro, who runs a new car, regularly signs contracts with record companies and radio stations and only appears at highly paid

concerts. (103) Examples of such financial success are few however, and by all accounts most poets are exploited in deals made with agencies and companies. (104) As one journalist writes:

(...)ao passo que os cineastas, teatrólogos, jornalistas e escritores transformaram a literatura de cordel em prato suculento, enchendo páginas inteiras de elogios, os poetas estão tendo que abandonar a profissão porque não conseguem mais sustentar as famílias(...)Com salas repletas e noites de autógrafos regados e uísque importado, chegam à impudicícia de deslocar essas artistas de seu ambiente para virem a essas salas luxosas de espetáculos exibir o pitoresco ato de pedir esmolas. (105)

The production of folhetos, therefore, is now much more complicated and divided. On the one hand, the traditional sector continues, declining perhaps, but still resisting and stubbornly preserving its independence of production and content. Poets and folheteiros still go to the market places in the North East in search of their traditional customers, whilst in other areas the folhetos, as a popular means of expression, are adapted to meet new circumstances. Joseph M. Luyten, for example, has produced a study showing how new, highly political folhetos are now circulating among workers and trade unionists in São Paulo, recounting strikes and criticising government policies. He cites the example of Rafael de Carvalho, originally from Paraíba, Toni de Lima, born in Alagoas, and Pedro Macambira, whose origins are unknown, but who has produced a considerable quantity of poetry on labour struggles in São Paulo, including A Luta da Oposição Metalúrgica Contra a Besta-Fera da Inflação:

Tudo mundo bem sabe,
Vivemos em sociedade

Que está dividida em classes
Com gente de toda idade.

Uma coisa eu lhes garanto
Os filósofos estão analisando,
Porém, são muito poucos,
Os que o mundo estão mudando.

Do bolo que estão comendo
Não permitem a divisão.
Se não puder viver: -MORRA!
Esta é a sua canção. (106)

On the other hand, there is another sphere of production, where folhetos are sponsored by dominant class institutions and organizations. As would be expected, protest is more muted in poetry of this kind. The most blatant examples of this type of production are the folhetos de encomenda, poems commissioned by companies or politicians for propaganda purposes, demonstrating that the folheto is recognised as an extremely effective way of conveying information to large sectors of the Brazilian working class and rural masses. During state elections, for example, the poet Joeé Francisco da Silva was commissioned to write a folheto for Gilberto Santana, an MDB candidate standing for election as a State Deputy for São Paulo:

Atenção Trabalhadores
Contaremos com vocês
As eleições vem aí
Força coragem altivez
E para um Brasil melhor
Agora chegou a vêz.

A união faz a força
Unidos vamos lutar
Dr. Gilberto Santana
Pronto para trabalhar
Votar em Dr. Gilberto
É garantir seu lugar. (107)

In recent years, therefore, a widening division has appeared between a dependent, patronised and compromised poetry and the more autonomous folhetos, still produced by the poorer sectors of the population for their own consumption, and underlying these different patterns of production are the conflicting ideological approaches to popular poetry referred to earlier. As already stated, it is in the context of this conflict that writers like Ariano Suassuna have developed their ideas for a fusion between popular and erudite literature.

The poet closely observes the changes and conflict occurring around him. Some, through financial need, turn to the organizations of patronage in search of support. Others complain bitterly of the exploitation and interference of outsiders. And, inevitably, they write folhetos on the subject. In O Artista Injustiçado, Azulão pours scorn on the false poets who sell themselves to patrons, and condemns the hypocrisy and paternalism of the whole patronage system:

Os falços são preferidos
 Porque são bajuladores
 Insistentes e egoistas
 Da mentira, pregadores
 Tem astúcias de macaco
 E vivem puchando o saco
 De todos seus protetores.

(...)

Só querem nosso folhetos
 E gravar o cantador
 Dar parabens, bater palmas
 Porem não dão o valor
 Fazem proveito do dom
 Mas o dinheiro que é bom
 Poeta nem vê a côr.

(...)

Sei que muita gente vai

Achar ruim os versos meus
 Porque a verdade fere
 Esses pensamentos seus
 Querem fazer do poeta
 Uma bagagem completa
 Para enfeitar os museus. (108)

Conclusions.

Folheto poetry must be understood first and foremost as a cultural process; a form of expression which continually responds to the changing social environment within which it is produced. It has been seen in this chapter how patterns of production, distribution and reception have changed over the years. Much argument among scholars has ensued over this issue. Arguing that the popular poetry tradition of the North East needs to be protected and preserved, some have participated in projects to support poets and their work, which, as already mentioned, are frequently sponsored by government institutions or universities. Other scholars have condemned such activities as interference which only serves to corrode the folheto tradition, arguing that, uprooted from its original sphere of production and separated from its traditional public, the poetry concerned will assume such radically different characteristics that it will no longer be recognisable as popular verse. One of the most outspoken of these critics is Liêdo Maranhão, who summarized his views in a newspaper interview in 1979, in which he condemned all those responsible for such interference:

Eles vêm de toda parte. Até Universidades americanas e francesas estão dando em cima, insinuando, dando temas. É o perigo de a cultura popular sair das mãos do povo e ganhar *status universitário*(...)O problema da poesia popular é voltar a sua interiorização, que

está desaparecendo, de nossas feiras, praças,
sítios de fazendas. (109)

At times however, such views also develop into arguments for the preservation of popular forms of expression; arguments which fail to give recognition to the dynamism of popular culture, and conceive of popular poetry as essentially static, a form of folklore, associated with, as the above quotation suggests, disappearing patterns of social life, focused on the old open markets and town fairs long held throughout the North East, and the traditional life of the fazenda. From such a viewpoint, new material and themes which the poet himself chooses to incorporate into folheto verse are frequently condemned as further evidence of distortion.

Ariano Suassuna has been one of the most prominent participants in this debate on popular literature in the North East. He has voiced his concern about the decline in the production of folhetos, and in the early 1970s, through the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, provided production facilities to poets lacking resources to print their work. He acknowledges the development of new themes within folheto verse, but it is noticeable that in selecting sources for his plays and novels he chooses a particular type of folheto poetry with which to work: that with the oldest tradition, discussed earlier in this chapter, with clear and direct links with European medieval romances and frequently religious in theme. It is through this poetry that he attempts to recreate the sertão of his childhood in the 1930s, and discuss within his work questions which are of personal concern to him. As mentioned in this chapter, it is the more traditional poetry that captivates Quaderna, the protagonist of A Pedra do Reino, helping

him construct in his imagination an alternative world. Thus, a folheto by Leandro Gomes de Barros, O Reino da Pedra Fina, relating the story of an enchanted kingdom dominated by large rocks, is quoted with enthusiasm by Quaderna, who immediately relates it to his native sertão, and his family history within it. (110) Quaderna's alternative realm is largely built on values he detects in such traditional poetry: the confirmation of religious faith as the hope for man's salvation and the magical recreation of the world into a realm where beauty and harmony prevail, and humans are exalted, imbued with courage and pride. Quaderna is enthralled with tales of heroic deeds and strength of faith, as conveyed in the poem A Nau Catarineta, which he recites at one point. Of Portuguese origin, but with various Brazilian versions as well, it narrates the shipwreck suffered by a famous nobleman, Jorge de Albuquerque Coelho, in 1565, during a voyage from Brazil to Portugal. Albuquerque discovers that one of his sailors is the devil who offers to save him from drowning in exchange for his soul. Albuquerque refuses, declaring that he would rather die and give his soul to God. Casting himself into the sea, he is saved by an angel:

- Que queres então, Gajeiro?
 Que alvissaras hei de dar?
 - Capitão, eu sou o Diabo
 e aqui vim pra vos tentar!
 O que eu quero, é vossa Alma
 para comigo a levar!
 Só assim chegais a porto,
 Só assim vos vou salvar!
 - Renego de ti, Demônio,
 que estavas a me tentar!
 A minha Alma, eu dou a Deus,
 e o meu corpo eu dou a mar!

E logo salta nas águas
 O Capitão-General!

Um Anjo o tomou nos braços,
não o deixou se afogar! (111)

The need for faith and the hope of human redemption is the most fundamental theme running through Suassuna's work, and it is to develop that theme that many of the folhetos are used within it. It is, for example, a popular poem dealing with the intervention of the Virgin Mary to save a condemned soul that forms a central part of his major play, Auto da Compadecida. Suassuna's work shows, therefore, a very selective use of popular literature to fulfil the specific objectives of the author, as will be seen in the next two chapters dealing with Suassuna's plays and novels. In the process however, the dynamism of folheto poetry as a form of social expression and communication, which this chapter has emphasised, is lost. Ultimately, it is not popular poetry as a cultural process that is of concern to Suassuna, but popular poetry as a repository of universal and eternal values.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3.

- (1) Ramón Menendez Pidal, Estudios sobre el romancero (Espasa Calpe S.A., Madrid, 1973), passim.
- (2) C.C. Smith, 'On the Ethos of the Romancero Viejo', in N.D. Shergold (ed), Studies of the Spanish and Portuguese Ballad (Tamesis books, London, 1972), passim.
- (3) J.G. Cummings, The Spanish traditional lyric (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1977), p.1.
- (4) Veríssimo de Melo, 'Origenes da Literatura de Cordel', in Tempo Universitário, vol.1, no.1, Natal, 1976, points out German and Dutch influences, whilst Roberto Benjamim, 'Breve Notícia de Antecedentes Franceses e Ingleses da Literatura de Cordel Nordestino', Tempo Universitário, vol.6, No.1, Natal, 1980, refers to the influences of French and English pamphlet literature.
- (5) Luis da Câmara Cascudo, Cinco Livros do Povo (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1953), passim.
- (6) Leandro Gomes de Barros (1865-1918), from Pernambuco, is believed to have been one of the first fully professional folheto poets. His output was prolific, and though no precise figures are available, some sources claim he produced over a thousand folhetos during his career. João Martins de Athayde (1880-1959), born in Paraíba, was not only a well known author of popular poetry, but also one of the first major publishers of folhetos, responsible for the printing of thousands between the 1920s and the 1950s.
- (7) Luis da Câmara Cascudo, Vaqueiros e Cantadores (Ouro, Rio de Janeiro, 1968), pp.15-23.
- (8) Luis da Câmara Cascudo, Literatura Oral no Brasil (Coleção Documentos Brasileiros, José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1978), passim.
- (9) Luis da Câmara Cascudo, Cinco Livros, p.30.
- (10) Colin Henfrey, 'The Hungry Imagination: Social Formation, Popular Culture and Ideology in Bahia', in S. Mitchell, The Logic of Poverty (Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1981), p.77.
- (11) Luiz Beltrão, Folcomunicação: a Comunicação dos Marginalizados (Cortez Editora, São Paulo, 1980), pp.51-52.
- (12) Luis da Câmara Cascudo, Literatura Oral, pp.23-24.
- (13) Robert Rowland, 'Cantadores del Nordeste brasileño: Estructura y cambio social en el Nordeste del Brasil', in Aportes, No.3, January 1967, Paris, p.133.

- (14) Antônio Arantes, O Trabalho e a Fala (Editora Kairós, São Paulo, 1982), pp.15-16.
- (15) Luis da Câmara Cascudo, Cinco Livros, p.30.
- (16) Manuel Diegues Júnior, 'Ciclos Temáticos na Literatura de Cordel', in Literatura Popular em Verso, Tomo 1, (Casa de Rui Barbosa, Rio de Janeiro, 1973), p.15.
- (17) Mark Curran, A Literatura de Cordel (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 1971), p.11.
- (18) Franklin Maxado, O que é a Literatura de Cordel? (Editora Codecri, Rio de Janeiro, 1980), p.52.
- (19) Antologia da Literatura de Cordel, Vol.1, (Secretaria de Cultura, Desporte e Promoção Social de Ceará, Fortaleza, 1978), p.35.
- (20) Ibid, p.35.
- (21) Roberto Benjamin, Literatura de Cordel: Produção e Edição (Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, Recife, 1979), p.7.
- (22) Antônio Arantes, O Trabalho, p.37.
- (23) Roberto Benjamin, Literatura de Cordel: Produção e Edição, pp.9-10.
- (24) Mark Curran, A literatura de Cordel, p.11.
- (25) Marlyse Meyer (ed), Autores de Cordel (Abril Educação, São Paulo, 1980), p.91.
- (26) Maria Edileuza Baptista, 'A História do Poeta-Reórter que Não Foi Agricultor, Não Deu Para Pedreiro e Vive Feliz Escrevendo Cordel', in Jornal do Comércio, Recife, February 1st, 1978, part C, p.8.
- (27) Ricardo Noblat, 'A Literatura de Cordel', Fatos e Fotos, Gente, Rio de Janeiro, January 1971.
- (28) Rodolfo Cavalcanti (popular poet), quoted in Orígenes Lessa, Getúlio Vargas na Literatura de Cordel (Documenário, Rio de Janeiro, 1973), p.56.
- (29) Ariano Suassuna, quoted in Ricardo Noblat, 'A Literatura de Cordel'.
- (30) Manuel Diégues Júnior, 'Ciclos', p.25.
- (31) Manuel Caboclo e Silva, A Sentença de Jesus e A Morte dos Apóstolos, folheto, Joazeiro do Norte, Ceará, undated, verses 1 and 2.
- (32) José Pacheco, Os Sofrimentos de Cristo, folheto, no details, verses 1 and 2.

- (33) Apolônio Alves dos Santos, Nascimento, Vida e Morte do Padre Cícero Romão, folheto, Guarabira, Paraíba, undated, verse 47.
- (34) Ibid, verse 59.
- (35) Enoque José de Maria, A Voz do Padre Cícero, folheto, Joazeiro do Norte, Ceará, undated, verse 4.
- (36) Ibid, verses 5 and 6.
- (37) Manoel Rodrigues Tenório, A Morte de Meu Padrinho Cícero, folheto, Joazeiro do Norte, undated, verses 61, 62 and 64.
- (38) Ibid, back cover.
- (39) Antônio Caetano, A Surra que o Padre Cícero Deu no Diabo, folheto, no details, verses 30, 31 and 32.
- (40) Amaro Cordeiro, Estória de um Crente que Foi Castigado por Frei Damião, folheto, Joazeiro do Norte, undated, verses 77 and 78.
- (41) José Costa Leite, A Santa que falou profetizando, folheto, no details, verses 22 and 23.
- (42) João Lopes Freire, A História de Carlos Magno e os Doze Pares de França, folheto, Rio de Janeiro, undated, verses 25 and 26.
- (43) Luís da Câmara Cascudo, Cinco Livros. On page 448, the author writes: "A História do Imperador Carlos Magno e Os Doze Pares de França continua sendo reeditada em Portugal e Brasil mas em edições resumidas, 'adaptadas' à rapidez da leitura contemporânea. Os reformadores eliminaram muitas cenas, aligeirando a compridão dos períodos e modernizando a linguagem dos diálogos, num resumo possível nos olhos atuais(...)"
- (44) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'A Pedra do Reino (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1976), p.56. Later, on pages 280-281, Quaderna also quotes verses from A História de Roberto do Diabo by the Paraíba poet João Martins de Athayde, one of the many recreations of a traditional ballad about Robert the Duke of Normandy. Quaderna notes that the verses describe the Duke as a cangaceiro, thus confirming his opinion that, "(...)os fidalgos normandos eram cangaceiros e que tanto vale um cangaceiro quanto um cavaleiro medieval". (p.281)
- (45) Jerusa Pires Ferreira, Cavalaria em Cordel (Hucitec, São Paulo, 1979), passim.
- (46) Luís da Câmara Cascudo, Cinco Livros, p.186.
- (47) See Luís da Câmara Cascudo, Vaqueiros. On page 189 of the work, Câmara Cascudo writes, "Malzarte é o que nos veio da península, urdindo intrigas e sabendo-se delas livrar sem consequências(...)O Mala-Artes português, atoleimado e sorna, viria dum confusão verbal de 'maas- artes', Malasarte, mal-avisado, pacóvio".

- (48) Expedito Sebastião da Silva, As Diabruras de Pedro Malazartes, folheto, Joazeiro do Norte, Ceará, undated, verses 2 and 4.
- (49) In fact, João Grilo has a counterpart in Spanish America: Juan Grillo, another typical pícaro, frequently appears in popular literature in Argentina and Uruguay from the late nineteenth century onwards.
- (50) João Martins de Athayde, Proezas de João Grilo, folheto, Joazeiro do Norte, undated, verses 1 and 4.
- (51) Leandro Gomes de Barros, A Vida de Canção de Fogo e o seu Testamento, folheto, no details, verse 15.
- (52) João Martins de Athayde, Proezas, verses 35 and 36.
- (53) Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcanti, Lampião -Terror do Nordeste, folheto, Salvador, undated, verse 28.
- (54) Antônio Teodoro dos Santos, Lampião, o Rei do Cangaço, folheto, Luzeiro, São Paulo, undated, verse 30.
- (55) Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcanti, A Chegada de Lampeão no Céu, folheto, no details, verses 13 and 14.
- (56) *Ibid*, verse 16.
- (57) Leandro Gomes de Barros, Romão e Ignácio da Catingueira, folheto, in Literatura popular em verso, Antologia, tomo 3: Leandro Gomes de Barros 2 (Universidade Federal de Paraíba, João Pessoa, 1977), pp.216-217
- (58) Ariano Suassuna, A Pedra do Reino, p.68.
- (59) Robert Rowland, 'Cantadores', p. 144.
- (60) Renato Carneiro Campos, Ideologia dos Poetas Populares (Funarte, IJNPS, Recife, 1977), p.35.
- (61) *Ibid*, p.67.
- (62) Raymond Cantel, interview in Veja, April 7th, 1976.
- (63) Mauro W.B. de Almeida, 'Leituras do Cordel', in Arte em Revista, No.3, p.35.
- (64) From the Dicionário de Antônio Moraes e Silva, 10th edition, Lisbon, quoted by Dr. Silveira Bueno, in 'Literatura de Cordel', in the Jornal do Comércio, Recife, November 9th, 1982.
- (65) Mauro W.B. de Almeida, 'Leituras', p.38.
- (66) See, for example, Antônio Arantes, O Trabalho, p.44, and Mauro W.B. de Almeida, 'Leituras', p.35.

(67) Edson Pinto da Silva, 'Cordel Político: Irônica, Sensível e Censurada, a Voz do Povo', interview with Luzanira Rêgo in Diário de Pernambuco, Recife, June 16th, 1978.

(68) Antônio Arantes, O Trabalho, p.44.

(69) Maria Ignez S. Paulilo, 'A Parceira no Sertão Paraibano: Uma Análise de Ideologia', in Boletim de Ciências Sociais, No 24, Universidade de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Jan-March 1982, passim.

(70) Alda Britto da Motta, 'Notas sobre a Visão de Mundo do Camponês Brasileiro', in Revista de Ciências Sociais, vol X, nos 1 & 2, Universidade Federal de Ceará, Fortaleza, 1979.

(71) Jota Rodrigues, A Dor qui doi no Pobre é a Dor da Umilhação, folheto, no details, verses 13, 14 and 15.

(72) Ibid, verse 29.

(73) Flávio Fernandes Moreira, História do Feijão Preto e o Sofrimento do Pobre, folheto, no details, verses 9, 10 and 11.

(74) Ibid, verses 36 and 38.

(75) José Costa Leite, A Pobreza morrendo a Fome no Golpe da Carestia, folheto, Casa das Crianças, Olinda, undated, verses 26, 30, 31, 32 and 33.

(76) José Saldanha Menezes, O Brasil Prometido aos Pobres na época de Eleição ou os Amigos do Voto e Inimigos dos Eleitores, folheto, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, 1981, verses 3, 4, 33 and 34.

(77) José Camello de Mello Rezende, A Sujeição dos Brejos da Parahyba do Norte, folheto, verse 27, quoted by Eduardo Diatahy B. de Menezes, 'Estrutura Agrária: Protesto e Alternativas na Poesia Popular no Nordeste', in Revista de Ciências Sociais, vol XI, nos 1 & 2, Universidade Federal de Ceará, Fortaleza, 1980, p.39.

(78) Ibid, verse 33.

(79) Eduardo Diatahy B. de Menezes, 'Estrutura Agrária', p.32.

(80) Manoel Camilo dos Santos, Viagem a São Saruê, folheto reproduced in Antologia da Literatura de Cordel, vol 2, pp.329-335, verse 20.

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(83) Antônio Batista Romão, A Morte de Carneiro e a Vitória de Arranca Yêu, folheto reproduced in Liédo Maranhão de Souza, Classificação Popular da Literatura de Cordel (Vozes, Petrópolis, 1976), verses 33 & 34.

- (84) Apolônio Alves dos Santos, O Heroísmo de João Canguçu no Engenho Gameleira, folheto reproduced in Antologia da Literatura de Cordel, pp.86-96, verses 6 & 7.
- (85) Ibid, verses 120-122.
- (86) Ibid, verses 102 & 103.
- (87) Francisco Sales Areda, O Coronel Mangangã e o Sertanejo do Norte, folheto reproduced in Antônio Arantes, O Trabalho, pp.127-133.
- (88) Chico Ramalho, O Povo Desembestado, folheto, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, 1980, verses 7-9.
- (89) Francisco de Souza Campos, O Tempo Bom foi Embora, folheto, Casa das Crianças, Olinda, undated, verses 6 & 7.
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- (91) Ibid, verses 36 & 39.
- (92) João Vicente Molia, O Clamor da Carístia, folheto, no details, verses 2 & 3.
- (93) Expedito F. Silva, Os Clamores da Carestia, folheto, Rio de Janeiro, undated, verses 29-32.
- (94) Jota Rodrigues, O Brasil e o Estudante Pobre, folheto, no details, verses 2, 8, 9 & 10.
- (95) Bernardino de Sena, O problema do Camelô no Recife, folheto, Casa das Criaças, Olinda, undated, verses 7 & 22.
- (96) Apolônio Alves dos Santos, Os Nordestinos no Rio e o Nordeste Abandonado, folheto, no details, verses 10 & 11.
- (97) Ibid, verses 33 & 34.
- (98) Mário Pontes, Doce como O Diabo(Editora Codercrí, Rio de Janeiro, 1979), passim.
- (99) Marlyse Meyer(ed), Autores, p.91.
- (100) Sebastião Vila Nova, in 'Professor vê fim da Literatura de Cordel', in the Diário de Natal, Natal, November 13th, 1975.
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- (102) Antologia da Literatura de Cordel, vol 1, p.22.

- (103) Vanderley Pereira, 'Cantadores: Do Alpendre das Fazendas às Agências de Turismo', in the Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, September 28th, 1974.
- (104) See Marcos Cirano and Ricardo de Almeida, Arte Popular e Dominação (Editora Alternativa, Recife, 1978), pp.68-69.
- (105) Leo Ramos, 'Cultura Popular: Cordel e os Poetas Famintos', in the Tribuna da Imprensa, Rio de Janeiro, December 29th, 1975.
- (106) Pedro Macambira, A Luta da Oposição Metalúrgica contra a Besta-Fera da Inflação, folheto, quoted in Joseph M. Luyten, A Literatura de Cordel em São Paulo (Edições Loyola, São Paulo, 1981), pp.100-101.
- (107) José Francisco da Silva, Gilberto Santana é o nosso Candidato, folheto, no details, verses 1 & 2.
- (108) José João dos Santos, O Artista Injustiçado, folheto, 1979, verses 15, 20 & 24.
- (109) Liêdo Maranhão, 'Declaração de Guerra aos Invasores do Cordel', Diário de Pernambuco, Recife, January 21st, 1979, p.D-4.
- (110) Ariano Suassuna, A Pedra do Reino, pp.256-257.
- (111) Ariano Suassuna, A Pedra do Reino, p.168. An almost identical Portuguese version is included in A.C. Pires de Lima and A. Lima Carneiro, Romanceiro Popular Português (Domingos Barreira, Porto, 1984), pp.97-98:

- Que queres tu, meu gajeiro?
 Que alvissaras te hei-de dar?
 - Capitão, quero a tua alma
 Para comigo a levar.
 - Renego de ti, demónio,
 A minha alma é só de Deus,
 O corpo dou eu ao mar.

Tomou-o um anjo nos braços,
 Não o deixou afogar;
 Deu um esteiro o demónio,
 Acalmaram vento e mar;

CHAPTER 4.ARIANO SUASSUNA: ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE MOVIMENTO ARMORIAL.The early years of Ariano Suassuna and his vision of sertão culture.

Ariano Suassuna has been a prominent figure of North Eastern literature during the last three and a half decades. During that period he has gradually clarified and developed his theories on art, and in particular on literature, formulating his thoughts in movements in which he has participated and attempting to put them into practice in all the poems, plays and novels which he has written, a process which culminated with the crystallization of his ideas in the Movimento Armorial, which he launched in Recife in 1970. He has constantly argued for the further development of distinctly North Eastern erudite art forms based on the utilization of the popular artistic expressions of the region. He sees his work as part of a long tradition of regionalist art movements, and even claims to have timed the inauguration of the Movimento Armorial to coincide with the centenary of the Escola de Recife in recognition of this relationship. (1)

Certainly, his fundamental ideas on art are not original, but rather developments of the broad arguments and objectives expressed by earlier North Eastern writers and intellectuals already mentioned, such as Freyre and Lins do Rego. However, Suassuna has given those basic ideas a new interpretation, and argues for a different approach and method in putting them into practice in artistic production. He is

therefore keen to differentiate his writing from that of earlier poets and novelists, to the point of giving it a distinct title: arte armorial.

Meu teatro e meu romance não são modernistas como "Macunaíma" e os contos de Mário de Andrade, nem regionalistas como os romances de José Lins do Rego: são armoriais, isto é, devem algo a todo mundo, mas não se confundem com nenhum deles. (2)

Ariano Suassuna was born in the capital of the state of Paraíba, then called Cidade de Nossa Senhora das Neves, on June 16th, 1927. The Suassunas were one of the powerful traditional families which comprised the landowning oligarchy that for decades had dominated regional political life, and at the time of Ariano's birth his father, João, was Governor of the State of Paraíba. It was a period of mounting political tension and violence in the North East, as in other regions of the nation, and it is important to outline the developments that took place, since these would deeply mark the work later produced by Ariano Suassuna.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, until the 1930s Brazilian political life was characterized by the predominance of locally based political power and decision making, with the central authority relatively weak and detached. As elsewhere in Latin America, a small number of powerful families dominated social and political life in the North East of Brazil, to such a degree that the central government was obliged to negotiate with them in order to reach agreement about political control at the local level.

The Empire (1822-1889) maintained a precarious balance between provincial interests and those of central government, and when it did

attempt to centralize authority to a greater degree, it met with strong resistance from the regional elites. The Republic, established in 1889, attempted to decentralize power further with a new constitution in 1891, and the problems arising from a low level of national integration and weak central government remained unresolved. Political power at local, state and national level was decided by arrangement, through a system of patron-client relationships, the basis of which was a network of kinship ties in each region -the extended family and the compadrio system- which established a chain of loyalties through all levels of the political machinery. These were the politics of the elite and involved the participation of only a small percentage of the national population. The land tenure system ensured the dependence of the mass of the rural populace on the large landowning families, and, as already noted, the problems of that dependence have been constantly expressed in the popular poetry of the peasant communities concerned. At times the local landowning families feuded in order to settle rivalries; at others, they formed alliances and organized even broader power blocks to extend their influence. These regional elites negotiated between themselves to determine the nature of national government, with those of the economically dominant states inevitably fulfilling the deciding role. For years the oligarchies of São Paulo, based on coffee production, and of Minas Gerais, based on cattle, alternated the Presidency, an arrangement popularly known as the politics of café com leite. North Eastern states were among those which complained about these monopolistic politics of the Centre-South interests, which excluded them from the central control of the system.

The delicate and uneasy balance between the regional oligarchies finally split altogether in 1930. The outgoing President, Washington Luis, broke agreed convention by choosing a fellow paulista to succeed him, instead of a candidate from Minas Gerais, in the hope of perpetuating his policies and style of government. Various states launched a successful uprising against the São Paulo faction led by Washington Luis, and, backed by the military high command, managed to get their appointed leader, Getulio Vargas, from Rio Grande do Sul, installed as President. (3)

This conflict at the national level was paralleled by provincial conflicts. In Paraíba in the North East, the landowning elite, the Suassuna family among them, had been facing increasing pressure from other social groups, especially the urban bourgeoisie, in the early part of the present century. Large rival power blocks formed and the conflict between them grew increasingly bitter. João Suassuna gave up the office of Governor in 1928 to be replaced by João Pessoa, who represented rival, essentially urban based interests, and was soon invited to be Vargas' Vice-President in the new Administration to be established once the national power struggle had been resolved. However, the struggle at the national level further compounded the local tensions and strife within Paraíba, where family feuds became fused with political conflict. Finally, violence erupted. In July 1930 a relative of the Suassuna family assassinated João Pessoa, essentially to avenge a personal affront, and a few months later, on October 9th, João Suassuna was killed in revenge by Pessoa supporters. Barely a week before his death, on October 3rd, the forces led by Vargas launched their Revolution against the Old Republic.

As mentioned, this history of political strife, with national conflict interweaving with regional conflict in the North East, and which led to the death of his father, had a profound and lasting impact on Ariano Suassuna, and has played its part in shaping his view of the world and in the construction of his novels published in the 1970s, as will be seen in the next chapter. Broadly, the violence, the 1930 Revolution and the gradual construction of a centralized bourgeois state apparatus that followed, with new economic and political objectives, more orientated towards industrialization and accelerated capital accumulation, signified another phase, perhaps the vital, final phase, in the decline of the traditional landowning aristocracy, their regional power and the traditional, patriarchal patterns of life they determined. This sense of fragmentation of a whole way of life, and the loss of the security and framework of reference it seemed to provide, was compounded for Suassuna by the death of his father, inevitably giving the whole historical process outlined here a deep, personal significance for him. As in the work of Freyre and Lins do Rego before him, his novels register a profound sense of loss and of nostalgia.

His attachment to the life of the rural interior of the North East can be traced to his childhood there, for, though born in the town, he was still at an early age when his family decided to leave Nossa Senhora das Neves and move to the family estates in the sertão. The effects of the political hostility and turbulence of the late 1920s were in a large part responsible for that decision. In the sertão, Ariano would have first hand experience of the patterns of life and cultural expressions that he would later recall in his work.

The songs, poetry, puppet shows (mamulengo) and popular festivals of his childhood years were to provide the raw material of his writing, interwoven into his own particular reconstruction of sertão history and legend, to form what he describes as:

(...)meu mundo mítico do Sertão. (4)

This childhood experience underlies his personal affiliation to regional popular art forms, for he considers them to be integral parts of his own philosophical development and formation. Explaining the principles behind his approach to literature, he will invariably turn to popular art and artists as examples to illustrate and support his arguments. This is the basis of his mission to bridge cultural divisions and develop what he perceives as

(...)uma Arte e uma Literatura eruditas nacionais, com base nas raízes populares da cultura popular nordestina. (5)

He has grown up with and assimilated the basic elements of popular culture which his formal literary training and experience is to refashion into an erudite art form, and he urges his fellow artists to embark on the same course and thereby consolidate an authentically Brazilian literature. The practical problems which this process of *assimilation* entails are never expounded by Suassuna, who generally confines himself to the same abstract notion of the artist developing a spiritual empathy for popular expressions to which other North Eastern writers already mentioned have alluded. For Suassuna, it is that empathy that opens the way for outstanding North Eastern

literature. A purely rational, intellectual response to popular culture, he believes, leads the writer into sterile academicalism and erudition:

O melhor, porém, é que essa literatura erudita de raízes populares não vai sendo imposta por teorias, programas ou ideologias: surge naturalmente, por amor e identificação. (6)

With regard to his own work, the question of assimilation appears to be almost irrelevant for Suassuna, for he sees his own linkage with popular culture in terms of an intuitive understanding and empathy forged during his childhood.

Within such a perspective, the relationship between cultural expression and social class becomes extremely tenuous, and Suassuna's allusions to the question are ambiguous. He does frequently employ the term povo when referring to the popular culture of the North East, and appears to reaffirm it as an expression of the poorest sectors of the population. It is in this sense that he views it as an *authentically Brazilian* expression, which contrasts with the more cosmopolitan, imitative cultural patterns discernible among other social groups:

Só o povo é que mantém, até os dias de hoje, essas características brasileiras, que nós, atualmente, procuramos defender e recriar(...) (7)

At other times however, he emphasises the unity of traditional North East rural culture, under such terms as civilização de couro, embodying the notion of a large cultural block in which the different social sectors appear congealed into a whole, integrated way of life. (8) The cultural divisions which he perceives in Brazil are

usually expressed as contrasts between these *ways of life* which transcend class differences. He starts with the conflicting cultures of the Europeans, native Indians and Africans who constituted the basic ethnic elements of Brazilian society:

O Brasil sofre de uma divisão, de um dilaceramento cultural que é resultante das condições em que se formou. Por um lado, nascemos no século XVI, para a cultura mediterrânea e ibérica, herdando o patrimônio cultural que nos veio com a língua e os costumes portugueses. Por outro lado, herdamos fortes elementos da cultura negra e da cultura vermelha, cujos descendentes mestiços começaram, também, logo, a recriar e reinterpretar os elementos culturais ibéricos que aqui chegaram com os conquistadores. (9)

The Portuguese brought a cultural tradition, he argues, composed of both erudite and popular elements. These coexisted, often intermingled, in the European forms of expression transplanted in Brazil:

(...)somos herdeiros da tradição mediterrânea, com suas raízes cortesãs, eruditas, renascentistas, e também com suas raízes populares, pelo menos tão vigorosas e importantes quanto as outras. (10)

So, although Suassuna does make a distinction between erudite and popular forms of expression, he continually shifts from that premise of cultural division to the notion of one monolithic cultural block where the two become merged, suggesting homogeneity rather than heterogeneity. This tendency is particularly evident when he contrasts the traditions of the North East sertão with cultural forms emanating from elsewhere. In this way, he conceives of the conflict between sertanejo interests headed by his father and urban interests led by

João Pessoa as to a large extent a clash between two different ways of life:

(...)o confronto inevitável de duas culturas diferentes. (11)

He sees that conflict culminating in the Revolution of 1930, which he clarifies as a struggle between rival elites within Brazil:

(...)era a consequência natural de um confronto entre a Burguesia urbana de comerciantes e funcionários públicos, representada pela família Pessoa, e os senhores rurais, representados por Suassuna, por José Pereira e por famílias, como a sertaneja dos Dantas, ou como a Cunha Lima, do Brejo. (12)

This view is not particularly controversial, for many political scientists and historians have interpreted the 1930 Revolution as essentially a power struggle for hegemony within the ranks of the dominant classes. It shows, however, Suassuna's inclination to conceive of sertão culture as a way of life fusing together diverse social sectors, a tendency which blurs the significance of class conflict in the North East. Instead, he prefers to stress the idea of alliance between peasant and landowner. An example can be seen in the way he vigorously rejects the claim by Rui Facó that the revolutionary army organized by Luis Carlos Prestes in the early 1920s was not only supported by sections of urban middle classes and working classes, but by the peasantry of the sertão as well, who identified Prestes as an ally in their fight against the latifundistas. Instead, Suassuna argues:

(...)que os Sertanejos, ricos ou pobres, têm antipatia aos comunistas e que, toda vez que os marxistas ou progressistas vão lá, para o que julgam ser uma luta a

favor do Povo, têm a surpresa de verem seu amor mal correspondido: os Sertanejos pobres aliam-se aos "senhores feudais" e mandam bala nos comunistas, com luta de classe e tudo. (13)

Later in the same article he summarizes what he sees as the main flaw in Facó's argument:

Ora, acontece que esses teóricos abstratos, obrigados ideologicamente a dar preeminência exclusiva ao fator econômico nas relações humanas, teimam em ignorar a importância de outros, como afetivo, por um lado, ou como o sentimento de amor à terra, por outro. E foi assim que a Coluna Prestes passou pelo dissabor de ver o Povo sertanejo, os "camponeses", se aliarem aos senhores feudais, latifundiários que, segundo as teorias, eles deviam odiar, mas que eram seus compadres, seus amigos, padrinhos de seus filhos, que compartilhavam com eles a mesma cultura, a dureza da mesma luta na terra que, para todos, era sua pátria, o Sertão(...) (14)

Ideological dogma has blinded Facó from reality, Suassuna concludes. Obviously, it is not the purpose of this study to debate the degree of support Prestes received from the peasantry. The irony, however, is that Suassuna's own ideological bias makes him overlook the not infrequent clashes between landowners and peasants in the history of the North East. Suassuna wrote the quoted passages in 1973, when the military authorities made any type of organized rebellion extremely difficult, but it had been little more than ten years before, for example, that large scale peasant mobilization had taken place in the region, through the already mentioned Ligas Camponeses, in an effort to impress peasant demands on the landowners. About that process, Josué de Castro writes:

The leagues arose spontaneously from the peasant mass, a natural consequence to the unequal struggle to

realise minimum aspirations against maximum resistance on the part of feudal oppressors. (15)

This differs sharply from Suassuna's picture of social relations in the sertão. It is true that the relationship between landowner and peasant has traditionally been highly personalised, almost semi-feudal in nature, in contrast to the far more impersonalised relations between employer and employee in more modern sectors of the economy, but this cannot disguise the social, economic and political gulf between those who own the land and those who own nothing, which is necessarily paralleled by a marked contrast in world views and hence in cultural expression.

Referring to Brazil's present stage of development, Suassuna frequently speaks of the danger posed by the influx of mass culture through powerful mass media such as television, radio, cinema and the Portuguese translations of North American popular comics, all of which have spread steadily throughout the North East in recent decades. Whereas the middle and dominant classes of the country have simply aped those models, he sees the poorer social classes, particularly the peasantry, as having preserved their own particular cultural identity:

As correntes mais "estranjeiras" e "cosmopolitas" querem obrigar os brasileiros a se envergonharem de suas peculiaridades, de suas singularidades. Só o Povo é que mantém, até os dias de hoje, essas características brasileiras, que nós, atualmente, procuramos defender e recriar, contra a corrente "europeizante e cosmopolita", o que fazemos procurando ligar nosso trabalho de escritores e artistas criadores à Arte, à Literatura e aos Espetáculos populares. (16)

Such statements, however, reveal but a vague linkage between class and cultural expression, recognized in passing and viewed as a mere detail rather than a dynamic relationship central to the understanding of the forms of expression that result. His refusal to give full consideration to the social and economic bases of cultural behaviour leads him to speak of the assimilation of the principles underlying popular art in the North East by the region's erudite artists, relegating to a secondary plane the fundamental difference in production, distribution and reception inherent in the distinct social bases of popular and erudite art. In this way, Suassuna can separate the *roots* of popular culture from the environment which created them, nurture them elsewhere, reshape them to meet the needs of a different milieu, a different public and a different vision, and, above all, blend them into the hegemonic cultural system - *national culture* or cultura brasileira - in an effort to reinforce its defining characteristics, and safeguard its distinct identity against what he sees as

(...)a descaracterização imposta, não pela cultura estrangeira, mas pela cultura de massa que é uma caricatura da cultura estrangeira nivelada por baixo pelas meios de comunicação. (17)

Preferring to concentrate on the formal aspects of cultural expression rather than its social dimension, Suassuna tends to argue against a rigorous separation of popular and erudite literature. He believes that this type of separation has led to a general disdain for popular forms among erudite artists and critics, who consider them to be crude, primitive and plainly inferior. Such an attitude has, he

argues, led too many Brazilian artists to copy European models, instead of seeking inspiration in the creativity of the Brazilian people. Instead, Suassuna continually emphasises the idea of fluidity between erudite and popular forms, the on-going process of interchange between them, showing that much of what is commonly regarded as great literary work has its origins in popular creation, and that much popular literature shows the clear influence of erudite work:

(...)os cantadores e poetas populares nordestinos têm uma forma própria de cultura, forma que inclui elementos primitivos, é certo, mas também elementos herdados da cultura européia -inclusive da cultura "cortesã e erudita", digamos assim. (18)

As already argued, such a preoccupation with formal aspects tends to distract him from the fundamental issues that underlie them: the particular social conditions of origin, production and consumption of cultural expression, and the specific world view it embodies. Yet it is the contrasts in those conditions which provide the foundation for the differentiation between the erudite and the popular. A tendency to disregard those differences is a necessary part of Suassuna's aim of fusing the erudite with the popular to create *national art*. He frequently stresses the universality of popular art. The most popular art is the most universal, he argues, since it is rooted in profound and eternal human problems and emotions:

(...)as histórias mais populares e nacionais são realmente as mais universais, as mais vigorosas porque expressam exatamente o que o homem do Povo, em todos os lugares, tem de mais primordial e profundo, o que, nas pessoas do Povo, é mais característico do humano. (19)

More contradictions arise here however, for Suassuna makes clear his rejection of most modern popular art forms, such as the internationally popular music produced by British pop groups in the 1960s and 70s. He ridicules the suggestion that such music might also embody certain universal values, and argues that the young musicians concerned were so lacking in originality that they finally had to turn to popular Indian music in the 1960s for inspiration. Contemptuously, he describes how British popular music of the period,

(...)estava causando tanto barulho no mundo. Inclusive entre os cabeludos brasileiros da "guitarra", que chamavam a música inglesa assim surgida de "universal", e queriam que nós a imitássemos aqui. Finalmente eu dizia a esse pessoal: "Notem que a Europa está tão esgotada, que os jovens músicos ingleses tiveram que imitar a música exótica de um país asiático para tentar algo novo". (20)

The development of a dramatist.

The basic attitudes outlined above would gradually be elaborated and substantiated over many years to form Suassuna's concept of arte armorial. In the 1940s, 50s and 60s he attempted to put them into practice in a series of literary works. In 1942 the Suassuna family moved to Recife, where Ariano, then aged fifteen, studied at the Ginásio Pernambucano. He entered Law School in 1946, and soon published his first poems in Recife literary supplements. These poems are notable for their use of rhythms and metres traditional to the popular oral poetry of the sertão, as shown in their titles, such as Galope à Beira-Mar and A Morte do Touro Mão-de-Pau. However, relatively few of the poems Suassuna wrote were published. By 1947 he

was already writing plays, and it would be as a dramatist and novelist that he would become best known. He has never abandoned poetry however, but sees it as a basic constituent of all his writing, as he confirmed in an interview with José Augusto Guerra:

En verdad, mi comienzo fue la poesía. Todavía hoy escribo poesía y considero mi poesía como la fuente profunda de todo lo que escribo. (21)

He sees poetry as the most spontaneous and primordial of literary genres, and the vital link between his work and the popular culture of the sertão. Poetry is therefore fundamental to all his writing. One of the main attractions he sees in the novel is that it permits the interweaving of elements of various different genres:

O romance na época moderna é talvez o género literário que mais permite a junção de poesia, ensaio e ficção. Então, você veja, na própria "Pedra do Reino" existe uma presença muito forte da poesia, que é, e sempre foi a minha preocupação, e do ensaio também. Existe uma tentativa de interpretação de certas coisas, na linha do ensaio. E existe a ficção. (22)

For Suassuna, poetry is the form that enables him to return to the realm of imagination and spontaneity that he believes was neglected by the literature of the 1930s and 40s. When he started writing in the mid 1940s, the social documentary literature of regionalist novelists such as Ramos and Lins do Rego still predominated in the North East, as was seen in chapter 2. Concerned as they were with the particular life and culture of the region, these writers undoubtedly had some influence on Suassuna, but he rejected their approach to content and form, which he describes as *neo-naturalism*, essentially a development of the naturalism that dominated

North East literary circles in the late nineteenth century:

O romance cearense de Rodolfo Teófilo e de Manuel de Oliveira Paiva é naturalista mesmo. O regionalismo de José Lins do Rego ou Jorge Amado é neo-naturalista, mas, em ambos os casos, não existe muita diferença entre eles e as teorias de Zola, por exemplo, coisa que Jorge Amado já confessou certa vez. Ambos pretendem se acercar da realidade nordestina através de uma visão científica e sociológica, se bem a análise regionalista, ligada a uma sociologia mais profunda - a sociologia que se fez no Brasil a partir de "Os Sertões" e de "Casa Grande e Senzala" - seja bastante mais avançada e livre do que aquela que se encontra por trás do romance cearense. (23)

He sees naturalist writing as closely linked to sociology, and dislikes them both. In their attempt to identify with and document the concrete, everyday social world, such writers stifled their imagination and limited their creative possibilities, according to Suassuna. It is in this sense that he speaks of their work as revealing the limitations imposed by sociological thought. Of the Geração de Trinta, the writers he most appreciates are Lins do Rego and Amado:

(...)exatamente porque são os dois que deixam mais a imaginação correr... (24)

In opposition to the social realist approach to literature, Suassuna speaks of returning to what he perceives of as a freer, more imaginative recreation of reality, using popular poetry, myth and legend to find

(...)um espírito mágico...um teatro de invenção poética maior...uma recriação maior da realidade... (25)

He argues that most great playwrights, like Shakespeare, Gil Vicente and Federico García Lorca have used popular or folkloric forms to create a theatre of rich poetic invention, which stresses imaginative recreation rather than the realist documentation found in naturalism. Of García Lorca he comments:

A influência de Lorca foi decisiva para mim, exatamente porque, na minha opinião, apontava um caminho que me libertava dos caminhos estreitamente sociológicos do Regionalismo dos anos trinta. (26)

Also of special interest to Suassuna is the long tradition of popular poetry of religious content, discussed in the previous chapter. Born a protestant, but converted to catholicism in 1951, at the age of 24, religion has played a decisive role in his life and his literary career. His friend Hermilo Borba Filho once wrote of him:

Gostaria de crer em Deus como as crianças crêem, mas creê com angústia, fervor e perguntas(...)A arte e a religião são por ele encaradas de maneira fundamental. (27)

It is the problems of religious faith- the role of Christian values in an increasingly materialistic and competitive society, for example, and the retention of faith in a world he perceives to be pervaded with tragedy and anguish -that form the most fundamental themes of his work. In a newspaper interview in 1972 he stated:

(...)acho que o problema fundamental da vida é esse, o problema de Deus. Quer a pessoa aceite a existência dele, ou não. Todos os outros problemas são dependentes desse. (28)

He employs many folhetos of religious content to discuss such problems within his work, as clearly seen in the series of plays he wrote between 1948 and 1960.

His interest in the theatre really developed as a result of contacts he established whilst a law student in the mid 1940s. Most influential of all was Borba Filho, who, along with Suassuna and other students founded the Teatro do Estudante de Pernambuco in 1946. As well as staging plays, the group provided a forum for discussion on philosophy and art, especially drama. Borba Filho was the dominant figure of the group, being the member with most experience in the theatre and the clearest ideas on the type of drama required in the North East. His two basic tenets were the need to redemocratize Brazilian theatre, and the need to recognize its political implications. He argued these points in a conference paper given at the Law Faculty in April 1946 to launch the new theatre group, and it is interesting to note the difference in emphasis between his view of the popular theatre and that later developed by Ariano Suassuna:

O que o Teatro do Estudante pretende realizar é a redemocratização da arte cênica brasileira, partindo do princípio de que, sendo o teatro uma arte do povo, deve aproximar-se mais dos habitantes dos subúrbios, da população que não pode pagar uma entrada cara nas casas de espetáculos e que é apática por natureza, de onde se deduz que os proveitos em benefício da arte dramática serão maiores levando-se o teatro ao povo em vez de trazer o povo ao teatro. (29)

The theatre was popular in origin, Borba Filho argued, and had to be relinked with its popular roots. The group therefore avoided traditional theatres and salons at the beginning, and chose to perform in squares, parks, working class bairros and workers' centres, in an

attempt to break out of the confinements of elitist art and reintegrate drama into the lives, problems and aspirations of the wider population. The theatre, Borba Filho claimed, had become too narrow, confined and self indulgent:

(...)uma arte dramática que não reflete o pensamento do povo, que continua negando os desejos do povo, sem procurar resolver os seus problemas, apresentando pequenos casos sentimentais burgueses, manifestações anti-sociais que não representam as aspirações do povo. (30)

Perhaps most significant was Borba Filho's recognition of the political implications of breaking out of the traditional mould:

O Teatro do Estudante terá uma função revolucionária, lutando contra a mercantilização e o aburguesamento da arte(...) (31)

A popular theatre therefore necessarily meant a politically committed theatre:

Já não mais estamos na época da "torre-de-marfim", na qual prevalecia a concepção da arte pela arte. O artista não pode ficar indiferente às aspirações da humanidade, às lutas, ao sofrimento. Não pode ficar apático, fechado em sua arte, burilando palavras e publicando coisas apenas eruditas, sem finalidade. A função do artista, na hora que passa, é despertar nacionalidades, lutar pelos oprimidos, amenizar o sofrimento, expondo-o sem subterfúgios para que mais facilmente sejam encontrados os remédios. (32)

Borba Filho announced the the Teatro do Estudante was to democratize content as well as the process of production, by moving away from traditional, erudite themes and basing its plays on popular concerns, to be expressed in appropriate popular form:

O teatro brasileiro deve atuar sobre o público com a exaltação do carnaval e do futebol. É preciso que lutarmos para que o teatro se torne também profundamente popular. (33)

Borba Filho could be criticized for being too idealistic, simplistic and even patronizing in his perception of the povo, but his ideas are interesting for the political terms in which they are couched, and the basic assertion that any attempt to link erudite expression with popular expression is in effect a political act. This concept of a politically committed theatre has been developed in different directions by other Brazilian directors, including Augusto Boal, in recent decades. (34)

The Teatro do Estudante operated for six years. Although it did attempt to put into practice the ideas advocated by Borba Filho, there was not a consensus of opinion within the group. As financial problems mounted, the radical proposals became increasingly diluted, and they did eventually stage plays in the Santa Isabel Theatre in Recife, often reverting to erudite material, and charging for admission. Joel Pontes has commented on the predominantly transitory and fluid nature of the group's activities, partly due to practical problems like finance, but also because of the differing lines of thought of the participants:

Cruzavam-se as ideologias, misturavam-se das mais estranhas maneiras, e só baseados na ação -fosse qual fosse- é que os estudantes se organizavam, em frentes únicas, de manutenção precária, ameaçadas a qualquer guinada mais forte num sentido de afirmação filosófica. Por isso, não houve no Teatro do Estudante um princípio geral, um ponto de partida doutrinário capaz de acolher todos os seus integrantes. (35)

Suassuna was among the most active participants of the group throughout its existence, though his later writings would show significant differences of thought from Borba Filho. In launching the theatre group in 1946, the latter had stressed the idea of the end of the war and the defeat of fascism signifying the beginning of a new era, with the arts fully participating in the next phase of the struggle for social change. Pontes has also commented on the effect the end of the war had on the students of the group, suggesting that all of them, despite their ideological differences and the general lack of clarity of their ideas, were at least united in their desire to debate possible new directions for artistic activity and to find a role in the new developments that would occur in the arts in the coming years:

Os estudantes estavam especialmente comprometidos por serem jovens, e se sentirem de certo modo fraudulados na parte que lhes devia caber na construção do futuro. Vinha da Europa o pensamento filosófico e dos Estados Unidos o encaminhamento político, não sendo fácil nem pacífica a simbiose que parecia destinada ao povo brasileiro. (36)

In the late 1940s the group staged some plays written by its own members, namely José de Morães Pinho and Suassuna himself, who thus began his career as a playwright producing work specifically for the group. His first play, Uma Mulher Vestida de Sol, written in 1947, earned him the Nicolau Carlos Magno prize of 4,000 cruzeiros, and was followed by a series of others in the following years - O Desertor de Princesa (1948), Os Homens de Barro (1949), Auto de João da Cruz (1950) and O Arco Desolado (1954) - all employing elements of North East popular culture, fused with influences from the classic works of

Iberian theatrical tradition. José Laurêncio de Melo, another member of the group, writes of these plays:

No plano artístico caracteriza esse período a preocupação de conciliar a influência dos clássicos ibéricos, sobretudo Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca e Gil Vicente, com os temas e formas hauridos no romanceiro popular nordestino. (37)

For Suassuna, this fusion of the erudite and the popular to create new plays is not problematic, for he stresses the connections between classic Iberian drama and popular forms of drama and literature in North East Brazil. He argues that the same influences -such as autos, morality plays and various religious rituals- can be seen in both, testifying to their common origins and to the constant interaction of erudite and popular forms over many centuries, as seen in the work of classic playwrights like Gil Vicente and Lope de Vega, and in the poetry of the cantadores of North East Brazil. It is in this sense that he sees a regionally based literature and drama -that is, incorporating locations, situations, representative types and action characteristic of the North East- as having a universal quality, for many of its themes, arguments and dramatic forms go back to fundamental emotions, dilemmas and concerns that are basic to all humans, transcending time and space. In this way he establishes the links between the regional, the national and the universal, and emphasises the relationship between North East popular literature and other literary forms, constantly speaking in terms of common origins, common bonds and common emotions:

Toda a literatura e todas as literaturas têm um começo oral, mítico, rapsódico, carregado de sentidos ocultos, símbolos, signos e insígnias, um começo de extremos marcantes e cortes rasgados onde tudo aparece com nitidez, onde a sangue é a sangue e o riso é riso, como o épico, a sátira, a moralidade, o trágico, o cómico, tudo bem definido e claro. Assim foi o começo da literatura mediterrânea -seja na vertente grega, seja na vertente árabe, norteafricana- assim foi o começo da literatura medieval ibérica, assim é a literatura dos "povos" chamados "primitivos", assim é a nossa literatura popular nordestina. (38)

In his plays, Suassuna emphasises these links between classical Iberian theatre and the popular dramatic representations of the North East by drawing upon many formal similarities which they share. The figure of the Virgin Mary which appears in some of his early plays, for example, is taken from the Marian tradition -tradição mariana- the cult of the Virgin Mary found in both classic Iberian drama and in popular plays in the North East. Yet the perception of such elements and symbols must necessarily differ from one social group to another. It is not the particular perception which the poor of the rural North East have of those symbols which is of major concern to Suassuna, however, but rather the value he considers them holding as embodiments of universal concerns, needs and aspirations.

Suassuna himself emphasised this point in an interview given to a Recife newspaper, Folha da Manhã, in 1948, when commenting on his first play, A Mulher Vestida de Sol:

Procurei conservar, na minha peça, que há de eterno, de universal e de poético no nosso riquíssimo Romanceiro (...). (39)

Not completely satisfied with the original version of the play, Suassuna rewrote it in 1958. The work centres on the tragic feud

between families that results from a land dispute fought by the two landowners, Joaquim Maranhão and Antônio Rodrigues. The son of Rodrigues, Francisco, and the daughter of Maranhão, Rosa, fall in love, and their relationship heightens the tension between their fathers. For a while an uneasy peace reigns, with both landowners giving their word not to set foot on their rivals land. Maranhão breaks his oath however, in order to have Francisco killed. The play ends with Maranhão being caught and killed in turn for his treachery, and Rosa, heartbroken at the death of Francisco, committing suicide. The fundamental themes of the work -the attachment of the sertaneiros to their land, honour betrayed and then avenged, the role of fate and the importance of religious faith- are all common to traditional popular poetry of the North East. The centre of interest of the work, however, is not the peasants but the landowners, and the land on which they fight serves as a microcosm for a world in which human pride and greed constantly lead to tragedy. At one point the judge who visits the scene of the dispute to investigate the case comments:

Pobreza, fome, seca fadiga, o amor e o sangue, a
 possessão das terras, as lutas pelas cabras e
 carneiros, a guerra e a morte, tudo o que é elementar
 ao homem está presente nesta terra perdida. (40)

Many of the techniques of composition which Suassuna developed in his plays would provide the essential formula for his later novels. His best known work, Auto da Compadecida (1955), typifies his style. It is in effect a type of collage, drawing together the content of three popular folhetos which are fused together into one basic plot. To unify the diverse elements, Suassuna uses a clown to present each

piece of action of the play and comment upon it, partly in the style of a circus ringmaster, and partly like the popular poet reading his work, stopping periodically to comment and test audience reaction. In his opening stage instructions, Suassuna states:

(...)o autor gostaria de deixar claro que seu teatro é mais aproximado dos espetáculos de circo e da tradição popular do que do teatro moderno. (41)

As in Suassuna's other plays, the atmosphere of the sertão, which provides the setting for the work, the language and songs used and the characterization -employing types typical of the North East romanceiro tradition- all help to reinforce the regionalist character of the work.

Mark Curran has identified the three folhetos employed by Suassuna in the play. (42) The first, O Entêrro do Cachorro, of which various versions have been produced by different poets in the sertão, satirizes the mercenary attitudes of certain sectors of the church by relating the tale of a priest who refuses to give a Englishman's dog a church burial until hearing that he will benefit from the dog's will, which brings about a sudden change of heart. Suassuna uses this plot in the first main action of his play, which centres on a baker, rich and mean, and his attractive wife, who is regularly unfaithful to him. When her beloved dog dies she asks the priest to give it an orthodox Catholic burial, but the priest rejects the request as preposterous. The popular hero, João Grilo, then appears, modelled on the pícaro typical of much folheto literature, a poor, weak and downtrodden character who survives through wit and cunning. He tricks the priest, verger and the bishop into giving the dog the burial requested,

mentioning that it has left a large sum of money to the church in its will, from which each of them will benefit. The basic plot of the original folheto is thus developed, expanded through the addition of details, to create a popular farce, employing characterization and language conventional to regional popular literary tradition.

For the central part of the play, Suassuna draws upon another popular poem, História do Cavalo que Defecava Dinheiro, which, according to Enrique Martínez-López, has a long tradition, with at least 105 different versions existing, 27 of which are Hispanic, 62 from other European countries and 16 Oriental or African. (43) It deals with a peasant who tricks the landowner by selling him a horse which he claims is capable of defecating money. In the play, João Grilo gains revenge on the baker and his wife, who have frequently abused him, by selling them a cat with the same miraculous ability. Finally, the last action of the work is based on a folheto entitled O Castigo da Soberba, in which a condemned soul is saved by the compassionate intervention of the Virgin Mary. All the characters in Suassuna's play, including João Grilo, are killed by cangaceiros and then reappear in the after life for judgement, with Christ as judge and the Devil prosecuting them. One by one they are all found guilty -the baker of greed, the wife of adultery, the members of the church of hypocrisy and dishonesty, and João Grilo for all the tricks he has used to deceive others. Suddenly however, João Grilo invokes the Compadecida, the Virgin Mary, full of pity and compassion, whom he describes as:

Gente como eu, pobre, filha de Joaquim e de Ana, casada com um carpinteiro, tudo gente boa. (44)

The Virgin duly argues the defence of all the condemned characters, declaring that their actions are to be explained and excused by their fear of suffering, hunger, solitude and of death itself. All are then sent to purgatory, with the exception of João Grilo. He attempts to persuade the Virgin to grant him direct salvation instead, and she reaches the compromise of returning him to earth to allow him another chance to live a righteous life. The same broad development of events as in the original folheto is used, the same arguments and the same style of language, though the verse of the folheto is converted into prose by Suassuna. He still uses the last verse of the folheto to close the play however, with the clown returning once more to say;

A história da Compadecida termina aqui. Para encerrá-la, nada melhor do que o verso com que acaba um dos romances populares em que ela se baseou:

Meu verso acabou-se agora,
 Minha história verdadeira.
 Toda vez que eu canto ele,
 Vêm dez mil-réis pra a algibeira.
 Hoje estou dando por cinco,
 Talvez não ache quem queira. (45)

In both form and content, the play appears strongly regionalist, but as Angel Rama has argued, Suassuna uses the popular material concerned to return to the medieval farce and early Latin drama. (46) The most basic themes of the play can in fact be traced back many centuries through Iberian dramatic and literary tradition. In an article on Q Auto da Compadecida, Enrique Martínez López highlights the two most striking of these traditional elements. The first is the Marian tradition already mentioned. Autos narrating acts of mercy and compassion by the Virgin Mary were performed in the Iberian

peninsula as far back as the twelfth century. The second is the trickery of the central character, João Grilo, which is rooted very firmly in the Iberian picaresque tradition, typified by Lazarillo de Tormes. Many well known pícaros, often popularly referred to as amarelinhos in the North East, are found in the popular poetry of the region. João Grilo is one of the most popular, with numerous folhetos narrating his cunning exploits composed by many different poets. Martínez-López describes this fusion of ancient forms with current popular Brazilian forms as neopopularismo:

Suassuna, en modo semejante a Gil Vicente, Lope de Vega y el García Lorca de las farsas, parte de una fórmula dramática neopopularista cuyos resultados entretienen tanto a nobles como a villanos. Neopopularismo que para él consiste no en una imitación o transposición de lo popular, sino en una superior fase de recreación de ello, en la cual se evitarán cuidadosamente los peligros de un localismo pintoresco y patriotero o los de un arte deshumanizado y falto de la savia del pueblo. (47)

Martínez-López goes on to speak of the moralizing and satirical tone of Auto da Compadecida. Just as in popular literature, he argues, João Grilo, the pícaro, redeems and avenges the poor, exploited classes he represents from the more powerful sectors of society. This leads him to speak of the subversive quality of the play, in which the poor and down trodden are the real heroes:

(...)son los únicos que representan la verdad esencial, no la aparente, en un mundo de mentirosos. Esto significa nada menos que derribar a la verdad y a la virtud de sus elevados puestos oficiales. No son los grandes, ni los sabios, ni los dignatarios de la moral, los que poseen la verdad, nos viene a decir Suassuna, sino los necios, los mínimos y los despreciados. (48)

It is true that Suassuna has developed a typical popular theme that is in essence a metaphorical expression of the poor avenging themselves against the rich and powerful, but this is incidental to Suassuna's work, rather than a major concern within it. It is quite clear from Suassuna's statements elsewhere on politics and culture that his views are far from radical. His major concern in the work is to convey a basic Christian message: the need to recognise one's sins, consider those of others with tolerance and always retain faith. Ultimately, faith will be rewarded with compassion in the final judgement. However, though João Grilo is in the end returned to earth, he is at first condemned by Christ, for showing racial prejudice, deceiving others and, above all, expressing class hatred by cursing his bosses who have exploited him, the baker and his wife, and attempting to avenge himself against them, which, Christ reminds him, is a grave sin:

O caso é duro. Compreendo as circunstâncias em que João viveu, mas isso também tem um limite. Afinal das contas, o mandamento existe e foi transgredido. Acho que não posso salvá-lo. (49)

The emphasis of the play is on forbearance and forgiveness, rather than the subversion which Martínez-López highlights.

Although Suassuna appears to be incorporating the peasant world view into this and other plays, Suassuna is filtering the popular materials he employs, refocusing them according to his own vision of the sertão and its culture, to end up with a recreation of the popular, or what Martínez-López terms a neopopularismo, that is

significantly different from the real peasant world and culture where the original material was created. Suassuna has selected specific elements and themes of popular culture, and reconstructed them in a particular way, so as to compose his own, personal *mythical world of the sertão*. It is a vision that emphasises Christian morality, and is essentially nostalgic, deliberately seeking to reconstruct a mythical past of the sertão, rather than dealing with the contemporary problems of tension and transformation affecting life throughout the North East in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, when Suassuna was producing most of his writing. Hence his predilection for the traditional themes of popular religious belief, catolicismo sertanejo as he calls it, and of cangaço, the popular banditry rife in the sertão until the late 1930s. These are indeed two major themes of folheto literature, on the one hand recording a collective history and on the other often making certain statements about present conditions and the desire for change. In the work of Suassuna, however, it is their legendary, folkloric qualities that are developed, to recreate the past and express the particular concerns of the playwright himself.

Suassuna appears to recognize this process of refocusing of perspective, referring to the sertão as his *mythical world* and speaking of the need for other writers to *recreate* elements of popular culture according to their own individual temperament and skills. Yet he then appears to contradict himself by declaring that the erudite literature which results is *popular*, somehow created and nurtured within the spirit and vision of the North East peasantry. Auto da Compadecida received considerable acclaim in the 1950s and is still widely read today. Its popularity is largely explained by the way it

skillfully blends satire, farce and moral teaching in a form that is both inventive and entertaining. This is what Suassuna sees as a return to a more magical, poetical theatre, which emphasises the imaginative recreation of reality rather than the attempt to document that reality as accurately as possible. However, it is illogical to then proceed to rationalize this form of writing in terms of an attempt to produce a literature that is truly *national* in the sense of emanating from the collective vision and experience of the rural poor.

In another play, O Santo e a Porca, written in 1957, Suassuna uses elements of popular farce, commonly found in folhetos, to give voice to his concerns. The major character is Euricão Arábe, intensely avaricious and miserly, who jealously guards his life savings in a wooden pig, which he worships and calls upon his patron saint, Santo Antônio, to guard. Throughout the play he wrestles with the problem of dividing his devotions between the pig and the saint; a conflict between material and spiritual values. At one point, believing the pig to be stolen, he fears Santo Antônio has become jealous of his divided loyalties and has abandoned him, but then, finding the money safe, feels reassured that he can have both money and saint, without having to choose between them. He praises Santo Antônio for helping him, only to discover that all the money in the pig is old currency that is no longer valid. He concludes that Santo Antônio has taught him a lesson:

Foi uma cilada de Santo Antônio, para eu ficar novamente com ele. Vou então ficar aqui: Trancarei a porta e não a abrirei mais para ninguém. Porque não quero mais ficar num mundo em que acontecem estas coisas impossíveis de prever. (50)

The plays action, characterization and humour, again making use of the pícaro tradition, are based on North East popular poetic tradition, but Suassuna, in the introduction to the play, emphasises its universal dimension. Again, he is preoccupied above all with the question of religious faith. If man, through his obsession with material concerns, abandons God, his world will become absurd, devoid of all meaning. Only by returning to faith in God will he find the strength to face the chaos of life. In the words of Suassuna:

(...)o que Euricão descobre, de repente, esmagado, é que, se Deus não existe, tudo é absurdo. E, com esta descoberta, volta-se novamente para a única saída existente em seu impasse, a humilde crença de sua mocidade, o caminho do santo, Deus, que ele seguira num primeiro impulso, mas do qual fora desviado aos poucos, inteiramente, pela idolatria do dinheiro, da segurança, do poder, do mundo. (51)

The same basic message, the corrupting effect of worldly concerns and the need to turn to faith in God, is repeated in O Casamento Suspeitoso, also written in 1957. Another farce, the action of the play relies heavily of the character of Canção, based on Canção de Fogo, the pícaro of folheto literature referred to in the previous chapter. Lúcia, encouraged by her mother and her lover, attempts to trick a wealthy young man, Geraldo, into marrying her in order to gain access to his inheritance. Geraldo is fooled and agrees, but the trickery of Canção, who disguises himself as a priest and conducts a sham ceremony, saves him from disaster. The tricksters are exposed, and leave defeated. All the characters return to the stage at the end however, to summarize the moral of the work. One by one they confess their sins, including Canção, who admits that he lusted after both

Geraldo's money and Lúcia. All humans are sinners, and the only hope is God. Geraldo brings the play to a close:

GERALDO- Por isso lanço um olhar melancólico a nosso conjunto e convido todos a um apelo. É uma invocação humilde e confiante, a única que pode brotar sem hipocrisia desse pobre rebanho que é o nosso. E assim, juntando-me aos aoutros atores e ao autor, peço que digam comigo:

TODOS- Que o Cordeiro de Deus, que tira o pecado do mundo, tenha misericórdia de todos nós. (52)

A Pena e a Lei, (1959), introduces further elements of popular culture into Suassuna's work, most notably mamulengo, the popular theatre tradition of the North East. The puppeteer, Cheiroso, fulfils a similar function to that of the clown in Auto da Compadecida, introducing and commenting upon the action of the play, reminiscent of the popular poet reciting his verses in the market place. The character Benedito is another pícaro, using tricks and deception to rectify injustices and humiliate those who abuse their wealth and power. The final message of the work, however, echoes that of the previous plays. In the final act, all the characters meet up again after death and await judgement. When Christ appears, they cast blame on God for creating a world and a race that are so defective. Finally, however, under questioning from Christ, they all admit that, despite the anguish and suffering that life entails, they would accept God's world and live again if they had the choice. Their faith redeems them, and Christ, acted by Cheiroso, emphasises the moral:

Pois, uma vez que julgaram favoravelmente a Deus, assim também ele julga vocês. Erros, cegueiras, embustes enganos, traições, mesquinhasias, tudo o que foi a trama de suas vidas, perde a importância de repente, diante do fato de que vocês acreditaram finalmente em

mim e diante da esperança que acabam de manifestar.
(53)

Suassuna's final play was Farça da Boa Preguiça, completed in 1960. As he explains in the work, the three acts are modelled on a traditional plot from mamulengo, a popular poem and a traditional story. The play contrasts a hard working and wealthy businessman, Aderaldo Catacão, and a poverty stricken, indolent popular poet, Joaquim Simão. Despite his prestige and power on earth, Aderaldo is condemned to purgatory at the end of the play, on account of his greed and profanity. He has been totally corrupted by worldly concerns. Joaquim Simão, however, though criticized, is saved, because his faith remained unbroken throughout his life. Though laziness is sinful, the poet has at least used his time to fulfil himself spiritually, creating beauty and expressing the enjoyment of life when supported by faith in God. Suassuna states in the introduction:

Pode haver nobreza e criação na preguiça, pode haver feiura e roubalheira no trabalho. (54)

It can be seen that the same vision of Christian morality is repeated throughout Suassuna's plays, and all the popular materials he employs are used to serve that end. It is religion that is seen to provide the only real solution to man's existential anguish. It is true that some popular poets discuss such questions in their work, but many others concern themselves with different issues, and seek answers outside religious belief, analysing the social conditions within which they live and work. Suassuna selects those folhetos which can be most readily adapted to his own view of the world.

It is not only through the content and form that Suassuna attempted to link his plays with popular culture. He also experimented with the actual process of theatrical production. With other members of the Teatro do Estudante in the late 1940s, he took productions into working class urban districts and workers' centres, following Borba Filho's aim of taking art to the people. The group was eventually presented with a truck to assist them. Significantly, they called it the barraca, after Lorca's travelling theatre, and which they inaugurated with a work in homage to the murdered Spanish playwright. Lorca, writer of poems and plays based in the folkloric traditions of Southern Spain, organizer of a travelling theatre and the victim of fascism, seemed to symbolize many of the ideals motivating the group. Even after the group disbanded, overwhelmed by financial problems, and its leader Borba Filho had left for the South, Suassuna continued to try to organize similar activities. In the mid 1950s he formed theatrical groups of workers and students to present plays by Sophocles, Plato and Molière, supported by two local academics interested in the notion of democratising cultural activity, Murilo Guimarães and Paulo Freire. Workers and students also composed the audiences for those works.

Suassuna's participation in such radical artistic experiments with clear political implications at first seems incongruous in the light of his later extremely conservative statements about culture and art, but it is important to bear in mind the cultural atmosphere in the North East at the time. Popular organization -of students, workers and peasants- was gaining momentum steadily throughout the 1950s, and

artists and intellectuals were obliged to respond to the situation.

Joaquim Quartim writes of these developments:

The popular forces had begun to escape the control of the populist politicians. In the late fifties the forty-year quiescence of the peasantry was ended by the Peasant Leagues founded by Francisco Julião, which were particularly strong in Pernambuco and the North East. The last year of Kubitschek's presidency also saw a break-through towards a real autonomy for the working-class movement(...)By the time Goulart took office in 1961 the Cuban revolution had already renewed the strength of popular forces all over Latin America. In Brazil, the impact of Cuba drew the embryonic Peasant Leagues into an unprecedented mass movement for agrarian reform, strengthened the radical forces within the working class, and inspired a new wave of nationalism among the intelligentsia and sections of the army -junior officers, NCO's and lower ranks. (55)

Much artistic activity in the North East in the fifties and early sixties reflected the highly charged political atmosphere of the region. Corresponding to the growth of popular forces at the national level, Miguel Arraes was elected State Governor of Pernambuco in 1960, signifying the establishment of one of the most radical governments seen in the North East for many years. Within its programme of substantial reform, cultural development played a key role. A broad educational and artistic movement was founded, the Movimento de Cultura Popular (MCP), promoted and funded by the State Government, in order to carry out a broad programme of cultural and artistic activities. The ideological basis of the movement was largely formed by the educational theories of Paulo Freire, according to which educational and cultural activity at all levels was to be conducted with the expressed aim of stimulating the social consciousness of the masses, in order to politicize them and enable them to develop their

own political options in the struggle for change. A series of education programmes, from basic literacy upwards, were established on this basis, and 'educate for liberty' became one of the main slogans of the movement. A wide range of artistic activities were also promoted, including music, crafts and theatre groups, with middle class artists participating alongside workers and peasants. It was to be a process of mutual learning. At one level the activities aimed to break the alienation of many intellectuals and artists, their condition of being isolated from the sectors of the population that most interested them, essentially the urban working classes and the peasantry, and at another it was hoped that it would help integrate poorer sectors of the population into mainstream cultural activity, giving them the means to organize themselves and engage in new areas of cultural production. In this way it was hoped to develop confidence in the belief in self determination and in the respect for the popular cultural traditions of the North East. Although it denied being a political movement, the MCP clearly emerged in response to the growing organization of peasants, workers and students already in progress, and was essentially an attempt to link the work of radical artists and intellectuals to that broad process.

Four theatre groups were created under the auspices of the MCP, the Teatro de Cultura Popular being the most productive. Through a process of gradual experiment, performing in working class urban and among rural communities, it encouraged those living in such areas to participate actively in the productions. From the beginning, a process of dialogue was established between the artists and the audience of

workers and peasants, so that responses and suggestions could be incorporated into future works, and gradually the composition of the group was altered to actively incorporate workers and peasants as actors or assistants. There was a deliberate attempt therefore to move away from the concept of individual creativity, and develop instead the notion of collective creativity, so that forms of dramatic representation might eventually evolve that were to a large extent the creation of the people themselves. The group put on a series of successful productions, until the military coup of March 1964 abruptly ended the whole MCP programme. Years later, Luís Mendonça, director of the Teatro de Cultura Popular, wrote about the whole experience, concluding that for a truly popular theatre to succeed official support from a sympathetic government organization was necessary, that theatre had to be taken out to the people, and that it must respond to the needs of the popular audience:

A temática que mais atinge é a circunstancial. é preciso partir da própria realidade concreta em que se movem, não no sentido de que lhes sejam mostradas no palco suas próprias experiências ou vivência, mas no sentido de que os personagens lhes tragam algo capaz de "convencê-los", i.e: "mover com" eles o espectador. (...)O importante é assinalar que é preciso partir de suas circunstâncias, descer até ele para fazê-lo subir, gradativamente, até a assimilação do que lhe quisermos dar. E dar "como teatro", como diversão, como espetáculo; do contrário, engajado ou não, mesmo que fale de coisas que lhe digam respeito, ele não o aceita. (56)

The MCP brought together many intellectuals and artists, including Suassuna, who declared his broad support for it and participated in some of its events. By maintaining a wide range of activities, free from rigid doctrines, the movement was able to

attract participants of differing political persuasions who were nonetheless stimulated by the atmosphere of inquiry and experimentation being generated. Thus the late fifties and early sixties created the conditions that brought together many contrasting attitudes, enabling them to work together and interrelate. The coup and its aftermath dispersed the participants in different directions and clearly exposed the differences in their thinking and political persuasions.

Even during the years of MCP activity however, there was evidence of Suassuna's differences with other participants. In 1959 he and Hermilo Borba Filho founded another theatre group, O Teatro Popular do Nordeste, and Suassuna eventually wrote its manifesto, the emphasis of which contrasts in significant ways from Borba Filho's earlier writing on drama, and from the declarations from other supporters of the MCP, such as Paulo Freire, Germano Coelho and Luis Mendonça. The manifesto also sketches out the basic ideas that Suassuna would repeat when launching the Movimento Armorial in 1971. Firstly, Suassuna demands a complete break with academic art, which he sees as essentially sterile and imitative. Popular sources must provide artistic inspiration, he argues:

(...)rompendo, para sempre, no Nordeste, as ligações de nossa arte com os acadêmicos de toda espécie. (57)

More significant is his refutation of the notion of popular theatre as necessarily a political activity. The commitment of the artist using popular forms is not essentially political, he argues. In fact, work

that is clearly shaped by a particular political ideology is a degraded form of art:

(...)repelimos também a arte alistada, demagógica, que só quer ver um lado do problema do homem, uma arte deturpada por motivos políticos, arte de propaganda, arte que agrega ao universo da obra o corpo estranho de tese, para fazer do espetáculo um libelo interessado. Acreditamos que a arte não deve ser gratuita nem alistada(...)Por isso, nosso compromisso não é assumido, interessadamente, apenas com o lado político da realidade: pelo contrário, é feito com o total do mundo, do que tem de mais cotidiano ao que possui de mais sagrado e transcendente. (58)

For Suassuna, political and social questions are not the most striking aspects of popular cultural expression. Instead he emphasises what he perceives as its more eternal, universal themes:

(...)ao contrário do grupo de arte alistada, não nos negamos a ver que a toda a tradição da arte popular nordestina e brasileira é religiosa, trágica, cômica, de moralidade, de mistério, de metamorfose, de milagre. (59)

This view implies a rejection of the argument that religious, moral and mystical aspects of popular art are all interrelating components of a world view that is shaped by social existence, and which therefore cannot be considered independently of crucial political questions concerning class relations and the role of ideology. Instead, Suassuna implies that religious, tragic, moral and mystical aspects of popular art are not so much socially formed, but emanate from a deeper, spiritual realm within humankind. Politics are to be transcended for that realm to be reached; a realm which he perceives as the essence of human emotions and responses, but which can only be referred to in obscure, abstract terms such as espírito and sangue:

(...)a arte não deve ser nem gratuita nem alistada: ela deve ser comprometida, isto é, deve manter um fecundo intercâmbio com a realidade, ser porta-voz da coletividade e do indivíduo, em consonância com o espírito profundo de nosso povo. Fazer teatro popular não significa impor ao povo uma visão predeterminada do mundo, mas pulsar com a carne e o sangue de nosso povo de modo que, insensivelmente, naturalmente, aquilo que nosso teatro transfigure e clame em seu mistério seja o que o povo murmura em sua seiva(...) (60)

Other problems arise here. Firstly, although he rejects the approach of others on the grounds that they work with popular art on the basis of preestablished formulas, his own work and writings on popular culture are clearly determined by conceptions of that culture, and of those who give it expression, which are established a priori.

Secondly, although he sees the vital link between the erudite artist and popular culture being forged by emotional empathy, Suassuna never elucidates this point in order to explain how the process might work, preferring instead to refer to it in a language that is almost mystical.

In the end, Suassuna's concept of the popular theatre appears extremely vague, as he attempts in his manifesto to fuse together contradictory notions -that of individual creativity with an expression of collective experience and vision; that of an essentially non political theatre with an expression of the collective aspirations of the rural poor of the North East; that of a theatre that is distinctly popular and North Eastern yet which still performs the works of Greek tragedy, Shakespeare or Ibsen. The term *popular* is stretched by Suassuna to cover a vast array of drama of extremely varied nature:

Nosso teatro é popular. Mas, popular, para nós não significa de maneira nenhuma, nem fácil nem meramente político. Incluem-se aí os trágicos gregos, a comédia latina, o teatro religioso medieval, o renascimento italiano, o elizabetano, a tragédia francesa, o mundo de Molière e Gil Vicente, o século de ouro espanhol, o teatro de Goldoni, o drama romântico francês, Goethe e Schiller, Anchieta, Antônio José, Martins Pena e todos aqueles que, no Brasil, e principalmente no Nordeste, vêm procurando e realizando um teatro dentro da seiva popular coletiva(...) (61)

It is clear therefore that whilst Suassuna agrees with many other Brazilian artists on the need to develop popular drama, and though the aims of his work appear at times to coincide with those of others, like Borba Filho or Mendonça, his conception of popular culture and how it can and should be assimilated by the erudite artist is different in significant ways.

One of the clearest illustrations of this point can be seen by comparing his views of popular theatre with those of another dramatist active during the same period, Augusto Boal, who in the late fifties and early sixties was developing his own ideas on Brazilian theatre with experimental groups in the south, notably Teatro Arena, founded in São Paulo in 1958. Boal, strongly influenced by radical cultural theorists like Paulo Freire, would develop a very distinct theory and praxis of popular theatre through continual experiment with a wide range of techniques, which generally evolved as a series of responses to changing political conditions, particularly the mounting oppression which followed the military coup of 1964. Boal sees the theatre as primarily an instrument for transforming society, and the first step to be taken is that of removing it from the control of those dominant classes which had appropriated it and reshaped it as an instrument to

suit their own needs, and returning it to the mass of the population for its own use. Only with this democratization of the means of artistic production could the theatre become an instrument for change:

(...)o primeiro dever da esquerda é o de incluir o povo como interlocutor do diálogo teatral(...)Se um teatro propõe a transformação da sociedade deve propô-lo a quem possa transformá-la: ao contrário será hipocrisia ou gigolagem. (62)

All Boal's techniques were developed with the aim of breaking down the barriers he saw as restricting theatrical production, and changing passive spectators into active participants in the creative process. Formal theatres were rejected in favour of the streets and squares, and a popular dramatic language developed, involving admonition, bold, simple characterization, simplified plots and manichaeian techniques presenting the conflicts between the forces of good and the forces of evil. For Boal, the popular theatre can only be a politically committed theatre. It must address itself first and foremost to Brazilian reality, which for Boal is characterized above all else by a conflict of opposing social forces which is too stark to be blurred or ignored. The popular theatre has to adopt a clear position with regard to that conflict if it is to become a truly popular form of expression with real capacity to stimulate change:

Os repetidos ataques ao maniqueísmo partem sempre de visões direitistas que desejam, a qualquer preço, instituir a possibilidade de uma terceira posição, da neutralidade, da isenção, da equidistância, ou de qualquer outro conceito mistificador. Na verdade, sabemos que existe o bem e o mal, a revolução e a reação, a esquerda e a direita, os explorados e os exploradores. (63)

Boal's uncompromising views stand in stark contrast to Suassuna's rejection of a purely political theatre, his emphasis on a spiritual universe rather than the social, and his vision of an all embracing theatre which attempts to bring together different tendencies, options and attitudes, rather than choosing between them. Such ideas would be rejected as mystification by Boal. For him, perhaps the most vital aim of the popular theatre is to change the relationship between artist and spectator, and he has particularly worked on techniques where the traditional roles of the two are interchanged, with the spectator taking the place of the actor to improvise an alternative action he or she considers preferable to that originally presented. In this way, developing participation and improvisation, Boal's theatre aims to convert all into protagonists in the transformation of society, and, by breaking down passivity and experimenting with alternative courses of action, serve as a rehearsal for social change. (64)

Whatever criticisms may be made of Boal's ideas, they have the advantage of providing a clear method of how the artist is to interact with popular cultural forms, a clear vision of what is to be the nature of the artistic expression which results and, in particular, clarification of the sense in which it can be regarded as *popular art*. With regard to this last point, it is interesting to note that whilst for Boal art is only *popular* in the sense that it evolves in direct interaction with the peasants, workers and favela dwellers who comprise the mass of the Brazilian population, stimulating their participation until they can take control of the whole productive process themselves. Suassuna moved away from attempts to establish direct contact with a popular audience in the years which followed his theatrical experiments

of the early 1960s, and has since produced work that is directed almost exclusively towards an educated middle class public. For him therefore, *popular* refers essentially to the assimilation of material of popular origin into the erudite work concerned, rather than to the way the creative process is organised or to the audience for which it is intended - questions which are of vital concern for Boal.

The Movimento Armorial.

The 1964 coup and the installation of a military dictatorship dramatically changed the conditions for artistic production in Brazil. The radical cultural programmes which had achieved considerable dynamism in the preceding years, such as that of the MCP, were rapidly suppressed, and artistic activity in most fields strictly circumscribed. Yan Michalski refers to the effect this had on the theatre:

Sofisticado sistema de censura, que incidía tanto sobre los textos como las representaciones escénicas, fue instalado para impedir de forma cada vez más radical la presentación de todo cuanto pudiera ser interpretado como una visión crítica de la actualidad o como una transmisión de ideas contrarias a la filosofía del régimen, o como postura incompatible con el conservador código moral que las autoridades adoptaron como un axioma. Esta situación, que se agravó mucho desde 1968, transformó el teatro durante una buena década en un campo de batalla entre los deseos de libertad de expresión de los artistas y el espíritu represivo del régimen. (65)

The whole question of popular culture was regarded with suspicion by the new authorities, and it became impossible in the 1960s to follow the radical direction proposed by the likes of Freire or Boal. In

fact, both men were among the many artists and intellectuals eventually forced into exile. Those who remained to continue working in the field of popular culture could only do so within certain defined parameters

Suassuna's work, however, had already begun to move in a different direction, simply reflecting the development of his own artistic interests and ideas. In 1960 he had completed his last major play, Farça da Boa Preguiça, and then concentrated on his plan to write a trilogy of novels, on which he had begun to work two years earlier. More and more of his time was spent on this project and his activities in the theatre virtually ceased. However, he did continue his efforts to increase recognition of, and support for, the popular artistic expression which he saw as the foundation for a truly national art. Although no sympathizer of the military regime, he did work with state institutions which he believed could help promote that basic aim. In 1967 he became a founder member of the Conselho Federal de Cultura, leaving in 1973, and in 1975 became Secretary of Education and Culture for Recife. His collaboration with these bodies met with criticism from many quarters, the issue made even more sensitive by the fact that the last years of the 1960s and early 1970s saw repression on the part of the military regime reach an unprecedented level, heightening the problem of the relationship between intellectuals and the state or state related institutions.

Suassuna also worked closely with the Federal University of Pernambuco in Recife during this time, serving as Director of the Departamento de Extensão Cultural from 1969 to 1974, which provided him with the necessary platform for promoting traditional North East

art. He brought together a large number of local artists -musicians, painters, sculptors, writers- all of whom were strongly influenced by North East popular art forms, in order to coordinate their activities. A Quintet and an Orchestra were formed to develop a programme of music based on popular North East traditions, an exhibition of regional art organised and the writers encouraged to produce works recreating the the local romanceiro. Though Suassuna also arranged finance for the publication of a number of folhetos by popular poets unable to print their work themselves, virtually all the activities he organized in his capacity of Director of the Department fell very definitely into the category of erudite or high art, intended for a middle class audience. The work produced was collectively named arte armorial by Suassuna, and in Recife on October 18th, 1970, with a concert entitled Tres séculos de Música Nordestina -do Barroco ao Armorial, by the Orquestra Armorial de Câmara, together with an exhibition of North East art, the programme officially became a movement, the Movimento Armorial, representing the culmination for Suassuna of over twenty years work with popular art of the North East. When Suassuna relinquished the Directorship of the university department in 1974, new support for his movement came from the State Government of Pernambuco when he became its Secretary of Education and Culture.

During the course of its development through the 1970s therefore, the Movimento Armorial received significant assistance from official institutions. In reply to criticism made of this, Suassuna rejected the argument that political implications were involved, arguing that his interest in promoting Brazilian Culture did not necessarily demand

any political options, but was rather a question of opening up as many avenues for cultural activity as possible:

Em primeiro lugar, nenhuma das pessoas que me apoiaram cobrou qualquer posição ou opção política de minha parte - o que se refere especialmente ao Professor Murilo Guimarães e ao Prefeito Antônio Farias; em segundo lugar, as proposições do Movimento Armorial são muito mais amplas do que as simplesmente políticas: a maioria das pessoas que julga tudo pelo critério apenas político é composta de maniqueístas de visão estreita e simplista, cuja opinião não me interessa; em terceiro lugar, os cargos que me desempenho ou desempenhei não são políticos(...)Tenho espírito público: gostaria de fazer pela cultura brasileira, mais ainda do que faço, porque, sem julgar que todo mundo deva ser como eu, acho que tenho obrigação de indicar caminhos brasileiros no maior número de campos artísticos e literários que me seja possível. (66)

Though already dealt with, the problem of separation between cultural activity and political options is clearly exposed here. There is the assumption that simply through an intuitive sympathy for popular art, the artist can capture and reproduce a spiritual essence embodied in that art -an essence which expresses Brazilian nationality. The artist, therefore, simply has to create intuitively, without need to consider how exactly his work relates to society at large or to the popular culture he is seeking to assimilate.

Suassuna did not necessarily approve of the regime's cultural policy of the 1970s, but a document published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1975 outlining that policy presents a number of concepts, arguments and propositions which overlap in significant ways with those of Suassuna. Certainly, the terms of the document reveal no real major conflict of perspective or ideas, and this common ground helps explain how Suassuna was able to launch a movement

promoting popular cultural expression, with official backing, at a time of strict censorship and considerable oppression in Brazil, whilst others dealing with similar questions had left for exile. Since these concepts referred to are vital for an understanding of Suassuna's movement, his own work and, indeed, a lot of other art inspired by popular artistic expression, they need to be examined in greater detail. Sections of that 1975 cultural policy document were reproduced in a Brazilian periodical in 1980, together with a perceptive criticism of it by Renato de Silveira. The document defines national culture in the following way:

A Política Nacional de Cultura procura compreender a cultura brasileira dentro de suas peculiaridades, notadamente as que decorrem do sincretismo alcançado no Brasil a partir das fontes principais de nossa civilização -a indígena, a europeia e a negra(...)Compreende-se como cultura brasileira aquela criada ou resultante da aculturação, partilhada e difundida pela comunidade nacional. (67)

National Culture has evolved from a unique process of syncretism and acculturation between the different cultural systems of the major ethnic groupings in Brazil. Once again, the emphasis is placed on the notion of harmonization between the different cultures to form a unified whole -the comunidade nacional- unified by a common essence:

(...)a primeira ação deve ser de revelação do que constitui o âmago do homem brasileiro e o teor de sua vida. Antes de qualquer medida, precisamos verificar a própria essência da nossa cultura. (68)

It is the duty of the state, the document continues, to formulate cultural objectives on the basis of interpretation of national aspirations, and to maintain levels of quality of cultural production

and protect it from excessive innovation, which might threaten its specifically national characteristics:

(...)para que haja qualidade, é necessário precaver-se contra certos males, como o culto à novidade, característica de país em desenvolvimento, devido à comunicação de massa e à imitação dos povos desenvolvidos, a qualidade é frequentemente desvirtuada pela vontade de inovar. (69)

The dangers of a State under the control of military authoritarianism assuming the right and the duty to define national aspirations, the quality of artistic production and the authenticity of national art are clear. As Renato de Silveira argues, such statements simply function to justify the government's aim of centralizing control over artistic production, ensuring that it conforms to preestablished criteria, and necessarily restricting free artistic creation as a result. (70)

The policy document also raises once again the problematic question of preservation of culture, which, as has already been seen, is a central idea in much thinking on popular culture and national culture:

A preservação dos bens de valor cultural tem por meta conservar o acervo constituído e manter viva a memória nacional, assegurando a perenidade da cultura brasileira. (71)

The paper ends with a series of propositions for government action for supporting cultural activity in Brazil for the rest of the 1970s. This involves support not only for the erudite or mainstream art forms, such as literature, theatre, cinema, music and dance, but also for

folkloric manifestations, including popular dance, music, customs and folheto literature. In general terms, these practical objectives do not differ greatly from those which Suassuna was already attempting to realise through the Movimento Armorial in Recife.

Indeed, perhaps the most interesting point made by Renato de Silveira is that the basic concepts underlying the document are by no means specific to the government of 1975. They are simply variations of deeply engrained notions of culture which have recurred time and time again throughout the present century among Brazilian artists and intellectuals of the most diverse political persuasions. Suassuna is certainly a case in point: the same basic ideas can be seen in all his explanations of the thinking behind the Movimento Armorial, even though they are naturally expressed in his own particular form and language.

To begin with, he frequently employs the same abstract notion of national unity. The term povo is often used to convey this, used on the one hand as a synonym for *nation*, and on the other to allude to the poorest sectors of society, workers and peasants, which he sees as forming the basis of that unified nation, thereby echoing da Cunha's vision of the poor sertanejos of the North East as the bedrock of the Brazilian race, referred to in chapter 2. Launching the Movimento Armorial, Suassuna writes:

A unidade nacional brasileira vem do Povo(...) (72)

In similar vein, he writes of one of the artists involved in the movement, Fernando Lopes da Paz, a sculptor:

Fernando Lopes da Paz é um homem do Povo, e traz em suas veias essa forte seiva do sangue nacional brasileiro. (73)

It is significant that this sense of the *nation* is only referred to in abstract terms, as can be seen in the way he describes the naming of the Armorial orchestra, the Orquestra Romançal Brasileira, emphasising that the word romançal should not suggest an essentially European basis to its music:

(...)se a Orquestra se chama Romançal, chama-se também Brasileira -e aí estão incluídos necessariamente o elemento mouro-africano e o indígena, tudo formando o castanho, a Onça-castanhado Povo Brasileiro(...) (74)

Concomitant with the idea of the nation, therefore, is that of a basic Brazilian Culture which has resulted from a syncretism of inputs from different sources; roots which have merged together to form new, distinctly Brazilian forms of expression and behaviour. In another reference to Armorial music he writes:

Em algumas das músicas que tocamos -como o "Romance de Bela Infanta", por exemplo-está mais presente a raiz ibérica da nossa Cultura. Noutras, como "Toré", a raiz indígena. Finalmente, em músicas como "Lancinante", "Aralume" e "Guerreiro" não se distinguem mais, separadas, a raiz ibérica, ou a africana, ou a indígena, pois são elas, já músicas inteiramente castanhas e brasileiras. (75)

If the povo form the basis of the Brazilian nation, so their culture forms the basis of national culture. That is the basic argument for using its varied manifestations -popular literature, tapestry, engraving and music- as the foundation for a truly national artistic

expression, as opposed to art that is simply a poor imitation of foreign forms:

As correntes mais "estrangeiras" e "cosmopolitas" querem obrigar os brasileiros a se envergonharem de suas peculiaridades, de suas singularidades. Só o Povo é que mantém até os dias de hoje, essas características brasileiras, que nós, atualmente, procuramos defender e recriar, contra a corrente "europeizante e cosmopolita", o que fazemos procurando ligar nosso trabalho de escritores e artistas criadores à Arte, à Literatura e aos Espetáculos populares. (76)

Popular culture therefore is to be valued because it embodies the essence of Brazilian nationality, another concept which can only be expressed through abstract terms, with, as has already be seen, metaphors like sangue, espírito and seiva being used interchangeably.

O que procuramos é mergulhar nessa fonte inesgotável, em busca das raízes, para unir nosso trabalho aos anseios e ao espírito do nosso Povo, fazendo nosso sangue pulsar em consonância com o dele. (77)

For Suassuna, the major contribution of Armorial art lies in its ability to capture and reproduce this essential Brazilian quality - espírito mágico- embodied in popular art of the North East, such as the folheto.

(...)posso dar uma definição geral da nossa Arte, dizendo: "A Arte Armorial Brasileira é aquela que tem como traço comum principal a ligação com o espírito mágico da Poesia dos folhetos do Romanceiro Popular do Nordeste, e com a xilogravura que ilustra suas capas, assim como com o espírito e as formas das artes e espectáculos populares com esse mesmo Romanceiro relacionados". (78)

Just as the Ministry of Education and Culture assumed the government's ability to interpret the aspirations of the population as a whole, so Suassuna assumes the artist's ability to accurately interpret the *magic spirit* of North East popular art -in other words, the world view and aspirations of the sertão peasantry- and then assimilate it into his or her work. Clearly, what this *magic spirit* really refers to is Suassuna's own preconceived notions of the nature of the popular culture of the sertão, and of the sertanejos themselves, whose perception of the world he typically describes in such terms as:

(...)visão tragicamente fatalista, cruelmente alegre e miticamente verdadeiro que o Povo Brasileiro tem do real. (79)

Adjectives such as *epic*, *magic* and *picaresque* are consistently used by Suassuna to describe sertão popular art, terms which would mean little to the sertanejos themselves. They simply denote his particular reading of the form and symbolic language of the popular arts which provide the sources for armorial work, and which express, above all for Suassuna, the dreams of the sertanejos. His is a highly romanticized view of the rural population, creative and imaginative in spite of their poverty, and it is noticeable that his descriptions of popular expression tend to emphasise the colourful, the fantastic, the flamboyant; in other words, the formal aspects of that expression. Referring to one of the painters involved in the movement he writes:

Lourdes Magalhães sempre foi atraída por essa grandeza do Povo nordestino, esse Povo que, dentro de sua pobreza, organiza cortejos e espetáculos em que estandartes e chapéus de Príncipes populares parecem verdadeiros templos asiáticos(...) (80)

This raises the basic problem of the relationship between form and content. Suassuna gives vivid descriptions of popular forms and techniques, but, as has been seen, no real interpretation of the content of popular art is ever offered, beyond the abstractions mentioned. He concentrates on the formal attributes which characterize armorial painting, for example, such as lack of orthodox perspective and relief, rough, striking design and preference for pure colours, all identified as major features of popular *sertão* painting. Likewise, he explains armorial music as that which uses traditional instruments, played with traditional techniques to recreate the simple, unpolished rhythms and melodies that typify amateur bands of the rural interior. They are the forms, representing the most authentic expression of *national culture*, that armorial artists are to use as raw material, refashioning it into an erudite form:

(...)estamos conscientes de que a Arte armorial, partindo das raízes populares da nossa cultura, não pode nem deve se limitar a repeti-las; tem de recriá-las e transformá-las de acordo com o temperamento e o universo particular de cada um de nós. (81)

A contradiction arises here. Suassuna suggests that popular North East art is one of the few authentic expressions of national culture left, and then speaks of the need to redevelop it to create an equally authentically national erudite art. Any refashioning of the original forms under entirely different conditions of production and reception must necessarily result in an entirely new artistic expression. As has been seen, a vital part of popular art is the interaction between the artist and his community in the process of production, but all

armorial art has been created in virtual separation from the rural communities that produced the original material, and has been produced for a totally different audience with very different responses and perceptions. Improvisation, another important aspect in popular art, with musicians and poets frequently changing and developing their performance in response to audience reaction, is precluded in the case of armorial art, where musicians present a preestablished repertoire and poets prepare work for publication rather than performance, to be read in silence rather than declaimed aloud. The crucial attributes which distinguished those popular forms -the dynamism, popular participation and improvisation, in other words, the social process that explains the particular nature of those forms- are lost, and only the formal trappings are left, frozen in the form of folkloric artefacts. Suassuna writes in a newspaper article:

A arte é o canto que vem do povo e que volta ao povo
melhor do que veio. (82)

He apparently sees no contradiction in speaking of the authenticity of popular art on the one hand, and of *refining* it on the other. The implication is that popular forms can be projected into the sphere of high art without any significant transmutation taking place; the forms may be refined a little, but the essential *spirit* remains intact. The quality of the work produced by the Armorial Movement is a separate issue. As will be seen, it did in fact produce some highly imaginative and original art. The essential point here is that the rationale behind the movement is fraught with contradictions, largely because the concepts around which it has developed are so problematic.

The difficult question of authenticity of national art highlights those problems. In his attacks on Brazilian artists who utilize foreign models -the Europeanizing, cosmopolitan current, as he calls it- and who thereby fail to conserve and strengthen the peculiarities of Brazilian culture, Suassuna comes close to the warning against excessive innovation contained in the government's cultural policy for the 1970s:

(...)deveríamos fazer o contrário de tudo isso que anda por aí com o nome de "moderno" ou de "funcional" e que resulta, simplesmente, de falta de imaginação criadora, da mania de imitação do que vem de fora, da falta de coragem para lutar contra as idéias estabelecidas. (83)

He opposes any experiment or innovation that appears to be introduced from abroad. In music, for example, he argues vehemently against the use of electronic instruments and vanguard forms which some Brazilian musicians have employed in their work. There was even some disagreement between himself and some members of the Quinteto Armorial over this question, when he wanted them to revert to old style instruments of the sertão, such as the pifano and the rabeca, instead of their modern equivalents, the flute and the violin. Though he argued that this would produce a harsher, stronger, more authentically regional sound, the musicians declined, arguing that the quality of sound of the modern instruments was far preferable. Later, one member of the original quintet, Cussy de Almeida, proposed that the movement should form an orchestra to help promote armorial music. Suassuna had strong reservations, principally because the orchestra was not a traditional formation in sertão music:

(...)no caso da Orquestra, eu tinha, ainda, outro receio: era o de que, com a fundação de uma Orquestra tradicional européia, a Música armorial perdesse aquela "garra" brasileira que me tinha custado tanto esforço, entre outras coisas para convencer músicos de formação européia de sua importância. (84)

In the end, Suassuna compromised, agreeing to the establishment of the orchestra on the understanding that the instruments used in the quintet, such as the flutes and the percussion, should be incorporated into it, in order to help maintain some of the traditional character of the music. These disagreements were minor incidents, and there is no indication of real conflict between members of the movement, but they do highlight the problems resulting from the contradiction between preservation of traditional, popular forms on one hand, and refinement into erudite forms on the other.

It has been argued in this work that culture can only be understood as a constantly changing process, where innovation is consistently producing new forms. This obviously makes the concept of *cultural authenticity* very problematical. In his view of the historical development of Brazilian culture, Suassuna appears to accept this basic idea of culture as a process, recognising the inputs from outside that have contributed to the popular arts of the sertão, for example. It has already been seen how he detects a wide variety of influences in popular music of the region;

(...)a música sertaneja, que eu ligava à música indígena (meio asiática), à música ibérico-árabe (ou ibérico-mourisca...), e à gregoriana, tudo contribuindo para ligar a Música sertaneja ao espírito primitivo e classicizante, pré-clássico, digamos assim, dos motetos medievais ou da Música renascentista menos cortesã. (85)

The importance of European influence in the past is duly recognized therefore, so that the objectives of the Quinteto Armorial are described as:

(...) a procura de uma composição nordestina, de uma música erudita brasileira de raízes populares, de um "som" brasileiro, num conjunto de câmara apto a tocar a Música européia (principalmente a mais antiga, tão importante para nós, brasileiros), mas também a expressar o que a cultura brasileira tem de extra-europeu. (86)

However, though he accepts the process of assimilation of European forms in the past, and expresses, for example, a particular liking for folhetos based on European romance themes, such as the adventures of Charlemagne and Roland, he then appears to argue for the process to be frozen and further European cultural influences resisted. Therefore, a major aim of returning to traditional forms, techniques and instruments is to:

(...)reeducar os nossos músicos, encaminhando-os a um despojamento, a uma pureza e a uma estrutura musical brasileira que os afastassem dos padrões convencionais europeus. (87)

This is a fundamental aspect in Suassuna's thinking. He appears to argue for a cut-off point in the cultural process, a point where acculturation has enabled the development of *authentic national art*, but where further acculturation will distort and corrupt that art, making it standardized, uniform and cosmopolitan. That cut-off point represents his personal conception of an ideal, authentically Brazilian cultural expression. Objectively, it makes little sense to explain the differences between traditional music of the sertão and

modern popular music of other contemporary Brazilian musicians in terms of one being more *Brazilian* than the other. Clearly, those differences can only be explained by the fact that they are products of different social conditions, different perceptions and differences in production and consumption. Just as it was seen in the previous chapter how the content and presentation of the folheto has developed, with medieval heroes gradually giving way to modern equivalents, so erudite art will continue to assimilate themes, techniques and forms from abroad.

In his writing on armorial art, however, Suassuna persistently attempts to argue that what distinguishes it from other art is that it manages to break free from foreign models and suggestions, by rooting itself in the pure cultural expression of the sertão. He therefore makes a distinction between great artists from Brazil and great producers of Brazilian art, and of the composer Villa-Lobos and painter Portinari writes:

Villa-Lobos se manteve sempre dentro das concepções orquestrais européias e mesmo quando compunha "música brasileira" fazia isso tendo os olhos postos em modelos europeus, como Debussy e Stravinsky. Por outro lado, Villa-Lobos era um homem urbano e desconhecia quase por completo a música sertaneja, por exemplo. A maior parte de sua obra é composta de Músicas européias nas quais foram introduzidos elementos afro-brasileiros ou romantizantes, superpostos às estruturas européias. Coisa semelhante pode-se dizer de Portinari, na pintura: foi um grande pintor do Brasil, mas não um grande pintor brasileiro. Aqui e ali, nota-se o desejo, a intenção brasileira de Portinari; mas quase sempre ele fica somente nisso, numa espécie de tentativa de abrasileirar Picasso.

(88)

In fact, armorial art itself reveals a mixture of influences, including European, as will be seen in the techniques employed by Suassuna in his own novels. All Brazilian artistic expression has been shaped by the interaction between local and cosmopolitan concerns and interests, and in that sense there are no autonomous, *purely Brazilian* cultural structures. What armorial art essentially expresses is an idealised vision on the part of a group of North East artists, most with personal links with the sertão, of the cultural expression of their region. It is a vision rooted in the past, in terms of time, and in the North East sertão, in terms of space. Suassuna and the other participants in the movement deny that their work reveals a nostalgia for the past, yet there is a clear tendency to link the concept of authenticity to a notion of the traditional, the antique, thereby evoking a bygone era, before patriarchal, semi-feudal structures and patterns of life were radically changed by the expansion of the capitalist economy. Cussy de Almeida says of armorial music, for example:

É uma realização cultural nova marcada pela busca quase apaixonada de algumas constantes musicais brasileiras mais autênticas e, por isso mesmo, mais antigas. Essa busca tem conduzido o movimento diretamente às fontes de música da Europa renascentista da época do descobrimento do Brasil.
(89)

Suassuna often echoes these sentiments. Popular art of the sertão may have developed through the decades, but its value lies in the fact that it has developed within the clearly marked parameters of local tradition. Patterns and forms that have disappeared elsewhere have been preserved in the specific conditions of the North East interior.

It is this that gives the region its unique cultural manifestations. Although they do recognise the popular arts of other regions, and have encouraged, with limited success, movements similar to their own to develop elsewhere in the country, armorial artists never completely escape from the notion of the North East sertão culture as somehow special, more authentic because its traditions have been less disfigured by the expansion of mass society, as shown in these words of Suassuna:

Nos centros mais populosos do litoral, é difícil observar os requícios da música primitiva. É importante este fato, porque essa música primitiva será o futuro ponto de partida para uma música erudita nordestina(...)No sertão é fácil, porém, estudá-la, pois ali a tradição é mais severamente conservada. A música sertaneja se desenvolve em torno dos ritmos que a tradição guardou. Não é ela penetrada de influências externas posteriores ao período do pastoreiro, continuando como uma sobrevivência arcaica coletiva que o povo mantém heroicamente. (90)

It is true that the popular forms used by armorial artists are not dead folklore, but manifestations that still endure in parts of the sertão. The folheto is an obvious example. However, as was seen in the previous chapter, such expressions do not endure in a static form, but undergo constant change and development, corresponding to new circumstances at all levels of life, and that sense of movement is not conveyed in armorial art. The artists have been selective in deciding exactly what examples of popular expression to use, and they show a marked predilection for the more archaic forms and the traditional themes of rural life in the backlands, such as messianism, cangaço, family feuds and traditional codes of honour, all recalling an earlier period of sertão history rather than more recent decades. The more

contemporary themes increasingly dealt with by the folhetos of the present day, referred to in the last chapter, are generally ignored.

It is significant, for example, that many armorial artists make frequent mention of Brazilian baroque art, which flourished between 1650 and 1800 approximately. Suassuna himself regards it as the most creative and imaginative art yet produced in the country. It is not difficult to see why the attitudes it embodies and techniques and forms it employs should appeal to him. The emphasis it places on intuition rather than reason, its strong elements of myth and mysticism, its flamboyant and exuberant style and free use and adaptation of a whole variety of artistic sources all find their echo in Suassuna's own writing, and in his conception of armorial art. As already mentioned, Suassuna distinguishes between the contribution the baroque has made to the popular art of the sertão, and the present day external influences on Brazilian culture, which, he argues, propagated by the powerful machinery of the mass media, threaten to completely swamp Brazilian cultural expression, destroy its distinguishing characteristics and peculiarities, and lead to a standardised, uniform culture. The baroque, he states, came from Europe and was reformed, recreated within the new environment to become a distinctly new form, a national form, which Suassuna describes as;

(...) não o barroco europeizado e europeizante, mas
aquele primitivizado e acerado pela raça e pela garra
da Onça castanha, do Povo brasileiro. (91)

This quotation raises once again the problem of Suassuna's differentiation between positive cultural interaction in the past and

what he perceives as the negative cultural interaction of the present. It also demonstrates his almost mystical view of the Brazilian people.

The Movimento Armorial began with nineteen artists in 1970, and this expanded quite rapidly in the following years, reaching approximately eighty by the latter years of the decade. Music, literature and the plastic and graphic arts have been the major activities of the group, though other areas, such as tapestry and dance were soon incorporated as well. The support from official institutions already mentioned was vital for the movement's dynamism, ensuring that performances and exhibitions could be organized and literature and works of art produced. The name *Armorial* was selected by Suassuna himself, very much the inspiration behind the whole movement. The choice of the word, which refers to the book used to register the coat-of-arms of noble families, may seem inapt for a movement working so closely with popular culture, but it is in fact a further indication of Suassuna's own perception of that culture. It emphasises the links with the feudal past, recalling the traditional rural world of great landowning families and peasant masses. For Suassuna, heraldry symbolizes the unity of that world, representing the aristocracy on one hand, but also the masses on the other, for it evokes all the emblems and insignia created by the popular artists of the sertão, comprising not just the coat-of-arms of the nobility, but also extended to include church carving, carnival decorations and football club emblems. It thus becomes an all embracing term, linking the popular with the aristocratic and the past with the present. He states:

Acontece que, sendo "armorial" o conjunto de insígnias, brasões, estandartes e bandeiras de um Povo, no Brasil a Heráldica é uma Arte muito mais popular do que qualquer outra coisa. (92)

The movement has never produced a formal manifesto detailing the theories the underlie it. For Suassuna, this would imply a restriction of individual creativity, by suggesting that all artists involved should work according to a recipe or programme. In an interview he states:

Não quero que o Movimento Armorial seja uma receita o uma programação que vai tolher a liberdade criadora de cada um. Cada um deve pegar o patrimonio comum da cultura popular brasileira, e recriá-lo a sua maneira de expressar o seu universo particular. (93)

What unites the movement are broadly common attitudes: an interest in the popular culture of the sertão; an understanding of that culture as the expression of deeply rooted beliefs and aspirations of the mass of the population, and therefore as an authentic national expression; a belief in the need of erudite art to assimilate that popular culture in order to create a truly national art, able to resist the degrading and standardizing effect of mass culture. Certainly, free interpretation of popular sources has produced some very imaginative music, literature and art work, but the lack of theoretical clarity means that certain problems basic to the group's work remain unresolved. Suassuna's references to the *empathy* that the armorial artist has for the popular culture of the sertão is inadequate for explaining exactly how -by what means or mechanisms- that artist, living in a very different social environment and working in a very

different sphere of artistic production, is able to assimilate sertão popular expressions into his or her own work whilst still preserving its fundamental significance and form. The concepts of *national expression* and *authentic expression* which are persistently used are extremely problematical. Sertão popular culture is considered to be an authentic national expression by the armorial artists precisely because it is rooted in the daily life of the mass of the North East population, but how that authenticity can be retained when the material concerned is refined or reconstituted, with the objective of creating a truly national erudite art, remains unexplained.

The differences between armorial art and the popular art upon which it is based are generally immediately obvious. More refined and polished, the work of the armorial artists does not aim to simply reproduce popular art forms, but recreate them for a different public. The armorial musicians, for example, will remodel traditional rhythms of the sertão, such as a galope or a dobrado, into more sophisticated melodies. Much of the primitive, raucous sound Suassuna so much admires is necessarily eliminated. This process will be examined later in the analysis of armorial literature, but for now an interesting example concerning woodcuts, studied by Candace Slater in one of the few articles written on the Movimento Armorial, will suffice as an example. Woodcuts, or xilogravuras are a traditional art form in the North East sertão, often used to decorate the covers of folhetos, and they too have been used as a source for some armorial artists. Slater compares one woodcut by a popular artist, Dila, with another by armorial artist Gilvan Samico. Both works are similar in depicting a rider on a rearing horse, and in utilizing similar formal techniques,

but, Slater points out, the perceptions and intentions underlying each are different, and those differences are reflected in differences in details of style. Dila's woodcut was ordered by a poet as a cover for his latest folheto. It was produced quickly, in the simple and stark design conventional to such work, with the prime objective of attracting the attention of potential customers to the theme of the folheto in order to encourage sales. Samico, on the other hand, has spent much longer producing a more polished, stylish design with added detail, which attempts to convey the atmosphere of mystery and magic identified with an age-old rural culture. Slater comments:

While for Dila the portrait of horse and rider is first and foremost the illustration of a particular story, for Samico it is a symbol of a whole, magic universe(...)At heart, Samico is less concerned with the protagonist than with a culture capable of producing virtuous heroes and Birds of Fire(...)Playing up the static quality already present in his model, Samico freezes his subject in an attempt to draw the viewer with him into another, more timeless universe(...)Shying away from those humorous and journalistic elements common in contemporary folhetos, he devotes himself to older, fairy tale like themes inviting a more meditative treatment which lends itself to allegory. (94)

As has been seen, Suassuna sees such differences as a necessary part of the process of recreation of raw popular material into erudite art. The important point, he argues, is that the artist retains the atmosphere and the quintessence of sertão popular culture, what he generally refers to as its *spirit*. The problem is defining exactly what that spirit is, and how it should be interpreted. Deliberate concentration on the reproduction of magical or fairy tale elements and the attempt to create an atmosphere of mystery and timelessness

carries with it the danger of producing an exoticism which reinforces the stereotyped vision other social sectors have of traditional rural culture as quaint and naive. A major problem with armorial art is that it interprets and utilizes the magical and metaphorical symbols employed in popular cultural expression in such a way that the vital relationship between those symbols and the concrete social existence of the communities which create them is obscured. It was seen in the previous chapter how the magical figures of the folhetos, for example, often have metaphorical value, being instruments for conceptualising the community's interaction with the wider world, and thereby for understanding and seeking solutions to basic problems faced. In their attempts to capture the *spirit* of popular culture -what they see as magical, mystical and eternal values above all else- armorial artists are in danger of neutralising that crucial dynamism of popular expression, which, instead of being presented as a means for understanding the lives and struggles of the rural masses, appears more mysterious and distant than ever.

In her article, Candace Slater concludes that the Movimento Armorial represents a form of pastoralism, but one of unusual force and dynamism, which she explains mainly through the social background of its members. Firstly, she argues that though all the artists concerned now live in the city, the fact that the vast majority of them have close family links with the sertão gives them a particular capacity to support their vision of a more wholesome, creative rural culture with works of concrete force, rooted in a living culture, as opposed to the romantic abstractions associated with much pastoral art. Secondly, Slater suggests that the fact that the movement

essentially comprises a mixture of artists from wealthy landowning families on the one hand, and from poor family backgrounds on the other, all from the same rural environment, helps to explain both the contradictions within it, and its particular variety and dynamism, which results in good measure from the the unity of purpose of those different artists in reaffirming the value of popular sertão culture.

Despite their rejection of the qualification of pastoral artists, there is no doubt that characteristics of arcadianism are strongly present in their work. They exalt the simplicity of traditional rural life, and the code of values it embodies, whilst cultivating allegorical associations to give it greater moral, even religious, significance. Using elements of sertão culture, they create a fictitious world, a *mythical world* in Suassuna's own words, and the elements they choose are more often than not associated with patterns of life which, whilst not dead, are certainly undergoing radical transformation in the wake of economic and social development. Many of those elements may therefore be seen as vestiges of an old social order, the patriarchal, semi-feudal society of the sertão, so that armorial art never completely sheds itself of the air of nostalgia traditionally associated with pastoralism. Suassuna's public statements give evidence of this. Berating what he sees as the degrading materialism and pettiness of modern urban life, he frequently confesses his attraction for the traditional sertão life of his boyhood. Of patriarchal society, he says, for example:

(...)algumas das melhores coisas que eu tenho são herdadas do patriarcalismo(...)Eu fui criado numa casa, com uma mesa bem grande onde os trabalhadores comiam com a gente. E talvez essa convivência

fraternal tenha me dado condições para resistir a
tragicidade da vida (95)

The magical, mythical world recreated by Suassuna and the other armorial artists on the basis of popular beliefs is one which seeks an essential harmony, unity and sense of purpose to life, which contrasts to what is perceived as the divisive aggression and cheap commercial values of modern urban living. For Suassuna, modern life is pervaded with tragedy and sadness. He claims, however, that armorial art does not represent an escape into an idyllic past, but rather a positive response to the problems of modern life. Firstly, he states that his work, by converting the sertão into a microcosm of the world, debates not just local problems, as earlier regionalist fiction tended to do, but rather the major universal problems of oppression, justice, war, love, hate and jealousy, still as vital today as ever. Secondly, the mythical world he creates is a way of facing the world, he maintains, confronting its problems by building a dream to counterpose against present reality in order to show alternative possibilities for humankind. In this regard, the comments he makes on the comparisons which many critics have made between his major work, A Pedra do Reino, and Don Quijote, are revealing. Whilst he admits the influence of Cervantes in his writing, Suassuna claims that the central protagonists of the two works are significantly different in the way in which they confront the world. Don Quijote loses his reason and tries to live out the values of a code of chivalry in an age where they are increasingly anachronistic, whilst Suassuna's protagonist, Quaderna, reads folhetos from the Brazilian North East as a way of

avoiding madness and facing the sad, debased world he finds around

him. Suassuna writes:

Nos tempos que correm, só entendo os poetas que sonham com o passado ou com o futuro: o que eu não aceito é que alguém se conforme com o presente. Dom Quijote enloquece lendo romances de cavalaria e julga verdadeiras todas as lutas e aventuras em que se extravia, pois vive meio enceguecido pela insânia. Quaderna lê folhetos da literatura de cordel, esse é o motivo de, dentro de suas medidas menores, ter sido ele comparado com Dom Quijote. Mas Quaderna, ao contrário de Quijote, sabe que a realidade é feia, triste, injusta, cruel e mesquinha. A leitura dos folhetos não o enloquece. Pelo contrário: ela é, para ele, não um motivo de perda da razão, mas um elemento de saúde moral, de equilíbrio, de recuperação de juízo, uma possibilidade de aceitação da realidade através do sonho. Na minha opinião, ou o homem se detém um pouco nessa mania de comércio, riqueza e indústria, para voltar ao despojamento, à pobreza, à comunhão com as cabras, os bois, a terra, as pedras, as pastagens, ou enloquece e se perde de vez - e é isso que venho tentando dizer no meu romance. Não para voltarmos saudosamente ao passado, mas para colocarmos no futuro um sonho mais puro e mais alto do que o triste e terrível presente que estamos vivendo. (96)

Whereas Cervantes ridiculed dreams, Suassuna states, his own novel values them as a way of envisaging a better future and building hope in a world of frustration and despair. One obvious difficulty here is that the poets who dream of the past or the future, lauded by Suassuna, could be interpreted as avoiding engagement with the present and its immediate problems. Such emphasis on *dream* invites criticism, for it could be argued that it is an approach which, rather than exposing concrete problems and injustices and demanding solutions for them, mystifies them, and rather than confrontation suggests interior retreat.

The composition of the Movimento Armorial is undoubtedly significant. Slater suggests that the fact that so many of the artists have roots in the traditional culture of the sertão, now changing so rapidly, yet presently live distant from it, in the city, free from its constraints, enables them to 'reflect constructively' on it, but it might also be argued that that distance stimulates a tendency to romanticize, imbuing the sertão with mystery and excitement, which detracts attention from the chronic human problems of the region. (97)

It is also interesting that the vast majority of the artists come from either privileged landowning families or poor families of the sertão. This certainly helps explain contrasts in the work of its members, though not necessarily the fundamental contradictions of the movement, as Slater suggests. Rather, such contradictions are inherent in the concepts underlying the movement's work, the problems of which this chapter has attempted to highlight; the concepts of a *national culture* and *authentic national expression*, and the notion of apprehending the quintessential spirit of popular culture and transferring it into erudite art.

Armorial literature.

To end this chapter, it is profitable to examine more closely some of the literature of the Movimento Armorial in order to, firstly, illustrate some of the points made in this chapter, and, secondly, to serve as an introduction for the analysis of Suassuna's own novels in the final chapter. Initially, the movement comprised seven writers: four poets, one short story writer and two novelists, including Suassuna himself. Between them they produced a wide range of work,

some of it via commercial publishers, and some published by the Federal University of Pernambuco whilst Suassuna was Director of the Departamento de Extensão Cultural in the early 70s.

Obviously, all these writers have their own individual styles, but what links their work together is its employment of the thematic and formal conventions of the romanceiro tradition of the North East sertão. This can be seen most strikingly in the work of the poets, who, as Suassuna points out, rely heavily on imagery, rhyming schemes and rhythmical patterns traditional to popular sertão poetry. Marcus Accioly, for example, employs forms like the quadrão and the martelo, and devices such as patterns of enumeration, which are all commonly used by the cantadores:

Um revólver-parabelo
dois rifles papo amarelo
três jagunços no duelo
quatro disparos do cão
cinco soldados no chão
seis punhais desembainhados
sete pescoços sangrados
oito mortos no quadrão. (98)

Emphasis is on creating an atmosphere of mystery, at times of almost cloak-and-dagger romance, with many armorial poems describing action which recalls the tales of adventure and heroic deeds typical of much popular narrative poetry. In Poema, for example, Janice Japiassu describes a knife fight in the sertão in the six line form, the sextilha, which is that most commonly used today in folheto verse:

A terra gemeu com o trote
secaram-se os olhos-d'agua
cantou a rasga-mortalha
grito de coruja amarga
o cavalo rompe o tempo
atrás da hora aprazada.

As oito horas da noite
 a hora encontra o local
 dois dragões silenciosos
 regem a dança do punhal
 e o ferro encontrou o sangue
 que esperava -principal.

A aurora estendeu os corpos
 lavou-os com os dedos frios
 molhou-os com o olhar de relva
 guardou o eco de seu brio
 - diamantes da madrugada
 que não hei de repeti-los. (99)

The build up of tension as the story is narrated through the verse is very common in popular poetry. In fact, the above verses contain most of Suassuna's classic ingredients for armorial poetry. The narrative form and the tone echo that of certain folhetos. An aura of mystery is retained throughout, which on the one hand embodies a sense of fate, with the repetition of hora, and the references to the rasga-mortalha and the coruja, two birds which, according to popular belief, bring warning of death, (100) and on the other a notion of power and mystery with regard to the natural world, with the references to the land, the night and the dawn. Typically, the action itself remains enigmatic, with few details given regarding its cause or the precise course it took. Dois dragões silenciosos, and the dedos frios, olhar de relva and diamantes attached to the dawn give the poem a magical air, and there is a sense of tragedy in the final verse. All these elements are found in popular North East poetry, and the resemblance is reinforced by the use of sextilhas and the absence of punctuation. The selection of such elements is significant. Popular poetry dealing with present day themes and problems is ignored in favour of more traditional

romances created around such universal themes as love, hate, honour, betrayal and vengeance.

If there are many armorial poems narrating dramatic action, most commonly a life and death struggle, there are others which, devoid of action altogether, aim to convey the atmosphere of the sertão through simple but striking images. The overall vision conveyed by the descriptive poems of Janice Japiassu is that of a harsh, forgotten land, pervaded with sadness and a sense of desolation, where heat, dust and barren soil condemns animals and humans alike, wretched and sickly, to a never ending struggle for survival, and where death always haunts. Again, the air of lament commonly running through these poems evokes the mournful verses of many popular songs and poems of the romanceiro tradition. At times the sertão stimulates an almost religious contemplation of life in the poet:

Tempo de tempo despido
 Punhais luzentes de prata
 Terra de terra sòmente
 Sem largos acontecidos
 Pérolas, sonhos sem data.

Pedras fechadas, enigma
 Que se propõe ao poeta
 Canto de rio contente
 E essa estrada consumida
 No rumo da tarde quieta.

Sereno de chão aguado
 E essa flor, rosa sangrenta
 Suspiro de amor doente
 E éssas amanhãs minguados
 Nas cordas da noite tensa. (101)

Though in its melancholic tone, its simplicity and imagery such as 'Punhais luzentes de prata', the poem resembles certain traditional

popular ballads of the North East, it could certainly not be mistaken for the work of a poet of the peasant communities of the sertão. Written to be read and meditated upon, it does not have the same oral quality demanding immediate response that is common to most of the region's popular verse, and phrases such as 'enigma que se propõe ao poeta' and 'E esses amanhã minguaados/Nas cordas da noite tensa' clearly reveal the language of the erudite writer rather than that of the peasant poet. For Suassuna, what this armorial poetry embodies is, above all, the unbreakable spiritual bond between the poet and the sertão and its culture, which enables Japiassu and the other armorial writers to capture the essential qualities of both. Speaking of Japiassu's birthplace, the sertão of Paraíba, he writes:

Terra encantada que ela carrega dentro de seu sangue
por onde que caminhe e que só não morrerá com ela
porque permanecerá viva para sempre, imune ao Tempo e
ao Estrago nos versos de fogo que ela cria. (102)

It is as if the sertão imbues all who live of have lived there with a common spirit. Little consideration is given to differences in perception according to social class, enabling armorial art and popular sertão art to be linked together, united by that common spirit, the one essentially an exalted variety of the other.

The emblematic quality of armorial writing is conveyed very clearly in these descriptive poems of the sertão. Allegorical images, frequently taken from popular literary tradition, are strung together to create the familiar atmosphere of mystery, almost reverence, as seen in Poema do Sertão by Deborah Brennand:

Quando a serpente de ouro agonizar nas pedras
e o cardo do tempo agreste, longe, muito longe

writing, but the mystical view of the sertão which prevails in most of it does allow them any prominence. In marked contrast to earlier North East literature, social criticism is minimal.

In O Bordado, a Pantera Negra, published in 1974, Raimundo Carrero reworks popular legend and superstition to create a short story which reads like a fairy tale. The use of extremely short sentences and simple but vivid language, narrating the story in the present tense, attempts to capture some of the oral quality and improvisation of a popular narrative. Simão Bugre, a demonic figure, is said to have emerged from a bottle. A woman, Conceição, was washing clothes at a weir when she discovered the bottle, which broke, exploding to reveal Simão Bugre. Conceição's husband, Elesbão, saw them together and in a fit of jealousy dragged his wife away by the hair. Bugre hunts and kills Elesbão and then, whilst Conceição is finishing a tapestry, enters her house and kills her too. A dragon on the tapestry comes to life -her never to be born son- and fights Bugre, joined by the horse of the dead Elesbão. The house trembles with the fighting, and the story ends enigmatically:

A noite esconde esses mistérios no seu ventre escuro -a pantera negra. (104)

The jealous rage punished by tragedy echoes the moralizing narratives of some folhetos, particularly the folhetos de exemplos referred to in the previous chapter, where examples are given of the suffering of individuals, seen as Divine punishment for sins committed. In the story, the forces of fate directing events are mentioned several times. More striking, however, is the atmosphere built up throughout

the story. Bugre stalks at night through wild undergrowth in a desolate, isolated land, the traditional territory of an ancient Indian tribe of Pernambuco, the Umãs:

Perdido entre o silêncio e as trevas está o Mundo Santo dos Umãs. (105)

It is a night of rain and thunder, populated by mythical beings: the ghosts of horses of warriors killed in ambush, souls in torment and the Devil in various assumed forms, all taken from folkloric tradition. Simple, strong descriptive phrases are used to create a powerful visual impact, with striking metaphors and emphasis on colour and the contrast between light and dark. Numerous verbs of motion maintain the pace of the action throughout, aided by the brevity of the sentences, with words frequently combined in poetic style, as in the description of the fight at the end:

Feras. Força na força. Fogo. Fumaça saindo das ventas do animal bordado. Lutam. (106)

The story is certainly striking and vivid, with its bright images and mysterious action. Technically simple and presenting a naive vision of an enchanted world, it clearly shows the primitivist traits of much armorial art. Popular North East mythology and lore are employed to create a world of pure fantasy, far removed from the social reality of the region. The dynamic relationship between popular beliefs and that social reality, with legends and fantasy explained largely as ways of conceptualizing and confronting that reality, is lost. Severed from their context, there is always the danger of such mythological expressions becoming static emblems, picturesque folklore which

captivates the reader rather than stimulating him or her to think critically about the real world.

Suassuna has at times used the term *magical realism* to refer to armorial literature. He argues that the realist writing of the 1930s was too limited, concerning itself only with documenting and denouncing immediately visible social reality, and ignoring the myths, dreams and fantasies which constitute an equally valid dimension of human reality and experience. He therefore sees armorial literature as offering a more poetic, epic writing which supersedes the mimetic realism of earlier North East work. In contrast to the realism of Graciliano Ramos, for example, he extols the writing of Guimarães Rosa, with its employment of poetic language, the language of myth:

Graciliano Ramos, realista, cético, contido, espécie de Machado de Assis das caatingas sertanejas, jamais poderia abrir o universo de seus romances no sentido épico, largo e poético do 'Grande Sertão' de Guimarães Rosa. (107)

Suassuna denies that his *magical realism* is influenced by that of French or Spanish American literature. Any similarities are coincidental, he argues, for the magical elements in his work come partly from what he perceives as the espírito mágico of Brazilian popular poetry, and partly from early Iberian literature. The problem with Spanish American magical realism, he claims, is that it is always in danger of becoming pure fantasy, a fairy story. It is more magical than real, while armorial writing attempts to be more real than magical, paying attention to dreams and myths but not being so absorbed into the realm of fantasy that reality is lost sight of

altogether. One significant indication of this, he continues, is the preference of many Brazilian writers, like Guimarães Rosa, for using a character as narrator, rather than narrating events themselves, as García Márquez does in Cien años de soledad. For Suassuna, this permits the author to assume greater distance from the magical events within the novel:

Se quem faz a narração é o autor, ele assume todas as 'mágicas' surgidas no livro como reais. Agora, se a narração é feita por um personagem, o romance permanece sempre com um pé na terra: as mágicas que aparecem podem ser alucinações ou sonhos do personagem. (108)

This discussion of magical realism by Suassuna in his weekly newspaper column was prompted by a disagreement over a work by another armorial writer. Maximiano Campos published As Sentenças do Tempo, a collection of short stories, in 1973. One of the stories, entitled O Grande Pássaro, deals with the vision of a young man, Felipe, whilst at the old sugar plantation of his family. Once prosperous, the property of his grandparents, it is now decayed, almost in ruins. Whilst there, Felipe has a vision. He imagines a tranquil day at the plantation during the height of its prosperity, an idyllic scene. Suddenly however, it is shattered by a strong wind. The fields are reduced to waste and animals and humans to corpses, picked at by the birds. It is however a brief vision, for Felipe rapidly recovers his senses and returns to the everyday world of the present:

Depois, ele acordaria e talvez não se lembrasse mais do avô que aparecera naquele cavalo negro, nem da prima que, há tantos anos, fora alguns das melhores instantes da sua passada meninice. (109)

It is a well written story, showing the nostalgia for the peace and harmony of a rural past common to much armorial literature, the longing for something irretrievably lost. It can be read as a lament for the passing of a whole way of life. Hermilo Borba Filho praised the story, but criticised the ending, where, in his opinion, the dream like atmosphere is brusquely shattered by a too rapid return to reality, thereby undermining the beauty of the poetic vision, the impact of which is diminished by being shown to be a simple daydream. Suassuna disagreed, arguing that this was precisely the strength of armorial *magical realism*:

No conto de Maximiano Campos é exatamente o final que nos mostra o autor com os pés na terra. A cabeça e o coração podem andar nas estrelas, como os de Dom Quixote, mas os pés e o olhar vivo continuam no chão e despertados como os de Sancho, para ver que os exércitos com bandeiras emxergados pelo Fidalgo são, na verdade do real, rebanhos de carneiros. (110)

The difficulty with this approach is that if the elements of fantasy are strictly ascribed to individual characters they simply become private dreams and fantasies, thereby undermining their broader significance as the collective expression of a whole community, integral parts of a shared world view which helps that community interact in unity with the world around. If, furthermore, the author establishes such a rigorous division between the fantastic and the real, divorcing the one from the other, he is in danger of presenting the elements of fantasy as little more than tricks of the imagination, or temporary release. It is interesting to contrast this with one of the major works of Spanish American magical realism, El reino de este mundo, where Alejo Carpentier attempts to show how myth and voodoo

practices have a vital social function for the exploited negro masses of Haiti, serving to confirm their common identity and organise them for the struggle against oppression. Likewise, Miguel Angel Asturias shows in his Indianist stories, Leyendas de Guatemala, how, in the world view of the Mayan Indians, myth and reality are fused, inseparable, to form a unified vision of the world. What appears to be *magical* to the outsider is completely logical and rational within the terms of Indian perception and social practice. This is one of the senses in which the two opposing terms of *magical* and *realism* are linked together. Suassuna does speak of the imaginative, mythical perception of reality of the sertanejos, and the way it is embodied in popular literature of the North East, but when referring to erudite literature he argues for a much greater degree of separation between the real and the fantastic. The problem remains as to how the writer can assimilate the magical perceptions of the sertão population in his work and yet still retain a distance from them, 'com os pés no chão', as he terms it. There is the danger in Suassuna's approach that myth or dream become either the property of the inner world of the individual or simply irrational flights of fantasy, beautiful perhaps, but more of an escape from, rather than confrontation of, reality.

Maximiano Campos published his first novel, Sem Lei nem Rei in 1968, shortly before the formal foundation of the Movimento Armorial, but it nonetheless contains many of the broad characteristics common to the group, and is a work much admired by Ariano Suassuna. The plot develops many themes found in folheto poetry. It centres on the feud between two landowners in the sertão, Coronel Juvêncio Teixeira, ruthlessly oppressive, who hails from the sertão itself, and Coronel

Joaquim Wanderley, benevolent and honourable, who has moved into the backlands from the coast. They struggle for local political power, the whole area divided between them. The major character, however, is the cangaceiro, Antônio Braúna, out to avenge the death of his brother, killed by Coronel Teixeira. Allying himself to Coronel Wanderley, he joins in the struggle against Teixeira. Wanderley and many of his men are eventually killed by the opposing faction, but the novel ends with Antônio Braúna and his band avenging all the past crimes by killing Teixeira and his gunmen, and the last scene is of Braúna disappearing into the sertão with Rita, God daughter of his former protector Wanderley, whose love he has won and who decides to marry him and share his destiny.

The language is simple and direct, imitating in some measure the style of the popular story teller. Verses of popular ballads are included in parts as well. Describing Campos' style, Suassuna writes:

(...)sua sóbria prosa de narrador, e seu diálogo puro e forte, bebido na língua do Povo recriado artisticamente
 (...) (111)

Avoiding pedantry, the armorial writer is to seek inspiration in the forms of language used by the rural communities of the North East. Again however, the problem arises as to how such language may be incorporated into the erudite work and *refined* at the same time. Armorial prose does show the influence of popular language in its dialogue, vocabulary and colloquial phraseology, but, as has been seen in the case of poetry, it could not be mistaken for that naturally employed by the popular poet himself. The production of an erudite

novel necessitates considerable restructuring and refinement of the language used.

The characterization used in the novel also recalls that found in popular literature. The contrast drawn between the two opposing landowners, for example, one cruel and ruthless and the other considerate and honest, a *man of the people*, is similar to that found in many folhetos, and Suassuna himself has remarked how another of the novel's characters, Negro Tibiu, has many traits of the popular pícaro, remaining loyal to his master, Coronel Wanderley, while using trickery to ensure his own safety amid the increasing violence. Above all, however, it is the depiction of the cangaceiro, Antônio Braúna, embodying all the attributes of the popular hero, which emphasises the influence of folheto tradition. He commits innumerable crimes of violence, but justifies them on the grounds that in such an unjust society the poor have no recourse other than violence to retain their self respect as human beings. His crimes simply attempt to redress those committed everyday by the rich and powerful, and to speak in terms of legality is meaningless to him, for the law only functions to serve the interests of the wealthy and privileged. Broadly the same attitude is found in many folhetos on cangaceiros and valentes, who frequently emerge victorious at the end to win the hand of a landowner's daughter, as occurs in the novel when Rita, Wanderley's god daughter, pledges herself to Braúna. The cangaceiro is not presented as a common outlaw, but as a man with a destiny: that of avenging the poor and oppressed, and dying at least in freedom and

dignity. At one point Braúna echoes the words of countless folhetos when he calls to his men:

Vamos minha gente... vamos que nós temos um destino, o destino de morrer como homem, morrer em campo aberto, lavando as afrontas do mundo. (112)

The book also reveals much about rural life in the North East, with its rigorous code of honour, battles for power by local landowners apparently beyond the control of any central authorities, the political and legal corruption that results and the almost feudal relationships existing between rich and poor. Some social criticism is made through this content. The rich jealously and ruthlessly protect their privileges, manipulating all institutions to that end, so that no matter which faction of the elite holds power, the wretched position of the poor remains the same. Braúna likes and admires Coronel Wanderley, but deep down he feels that all wealthy landowners are essentially the same:

Era tudo uma cambada só, pensando somente em esmagar os pobres de Deus. (113)

This is the same rudimentary awareness of class differentiation that is frequently expressed in folheto poetry. Such a perspective is not commonly conveyed in the literature of the armorial writers, however. As has been seen, Suassuna tends to speak of conflict in the sertão in terms of individual or family rivalry, with traditional, feudal type bonds of loyalty transcending class divisions. What characterizes sertão culture, he argues, is the lack of a notable bourgeoisie, so that the major cultural expressions emanate either from the landed

aristocracy or the rural poor, or sometimes as a fusion from both. It is interesting that, speaking of Campos' work, Suassuna makes a distinction between the romance (novel), of bourgeois origin, and the much older novela (short, more traditional prose narrative), which he identifies with traditional, rural societies, as found in the North East:

(...)no Brasil, o romance é muito mais característico dos meios urbanos e burgueses; e a novela, épica ou satírica, é ligada ao Povo e às comunidades mais arcaicas, como o Sertão, a Mata, o Agreste e o Mar, comunidades onde só existem rudimentos de uma Burguesia, sendo os elementos dominantes os do Povo, em ligação direta com os Senhores-de-Terras, como sucedia também nas comunidades européias medievais. é por isso que, na obra de Maximiano Campos, o Espírito do romance é muito menos presente do que da novela. (114)

Particularly noticeable is Suassuna's emphasis on ancient and traditional forms of expression, and the notion of a common rural culture forged between the landowning elite and the peasantry in a patriarchal society. Although he speaks constantly in terms of popular culture, associated essentially with the rural masses, he sees this as being intimately bound to the culture of the aristocracy, both bonded together in a common, mutually dependent way of life. Hence the fusion of heraldry and popular art in his arte armorial-popular.

For Suassuna, Campos' novel has the merit of avoiding the generalised, stereotyped characterization that he finds in much North East fiction, particularly that of overt social criticism, which, he claims, simplistically depicts the poor as angelic and the rich as villanous. Morality and immorality are found at all levels of society, and have little to do with class divisions. He admires the portrayal

of Antônio Braúna, therefore, because the cangaceiro is shown to be a contradictory mixture of honour, loyalty and consideration on one hand, and violence and sadism on the other. Likewise, if Coronel Teixeira is shown to be brutal and totally self interested, Coronel Wanderley is portrayed as a sympathetic and popular local figure, with strong bonds of loyalty to his people:

Um defeito comum e irritante nos escritores que acentuam o caráter social, seja no Romance, seja no ensaio nordestino, é a generalização, a tipificação excessiva, ambas causadas, na maioria das vezes, por preconceitos ideológicos. Diferentemente deles, Maximiano Campos mostra, por exemplo, em certa cena, separados por tantos preconceitos quantos os existentes numa corte florentina, elementos pertencentes a vários e diversificados grupos do Povo(...)Por motivos semelhantes, dos dois coronéis que aparecem em 'Sem Lei nem Rei', um é bondoso e com rompantes generosos de cavaleiro. O padre, sempre tão maltratado nos romances nordestinos excessivamente generalizados, se põe ao lado desse coronel cavalheiresco e ao lado do Povo.
(115)

In fact, as has been seen, there are allusions in the novel to class divisions, with the suggestion that formal politics are little more than the self interested feuds between dominant landowners. It is striking how sharply Suassuna's view contrasts with that of Boal, who identified manichaeian processes as a vital characteristic of popular art which needed to be developed by artists as a way of stimulating the political consciousness of the masses, sharpening their awareness of their relationship with other classes. Suassuna regards such a vision as too simplistic, and claims that because Campos avoids this:

(...)seu pensamento social é muito mais eficaz do que o desses romances e peças de teatro que não encontram outro caminho senão a estrada primória e batida de esquematizar o Bem e o Mal através de personagens pobres e ricos, numa espécie de soma de Literatura

negra e Literatura côr-de-rosa, povoada de Anjos pobres e Vilões ricos, e onde a gente, cansada de ver Senhores de Engenho e Fazendeiros truculentos, assassinos, Ladrões, violadores das moças do Povo, fica com tanta antipatia ao pensamento social que engendrou aquêles abortos, que termina por simpatizar com a 'injustiça medieval e reaccionária' que, pelo menos, deu obras da qualidade das novelas de cavalharia. (116)

Tired of simple, archetypal characters, the reader will seek quality literature regardless of the political ideology it appears to embody. Nonetheless, simplified characterization in the form of generalised representative types is a common trait of popular folheto literature, as was seen in the previous chapter. Again, Suassuna appears to be adapting his sources to suit his own particular vision of the sertão.

There are two other striking features of Sem Lei nem Rei that need to be mentioned. The first is the sadness that pervades the whole book, the feeling of saudade -yearning or longing- that afflicts many of the characters. Lamparina, one of the cangaceiros in Braúna's band, constantly recalls the green coastal region from where he originates, yearning to return, which he finally does at the end of the work. Antônio Braúna himself is continually remembering his childhood, his dead parents and murdered brother, and, above all, the elderly Coronel Wanderley can never free himself from the memories that haunt him of prosperous and peaceful days lost forever:

De repente veio-lhe uma tristeza imensa. Onde estavam as antigas carruagens paradas na porta? Onde estavam as damas vestidas de renda? E foi-lhe chegando uma imensa frustração, frustração de quem representava mal a sua alegria, esforço para esconder uma grande tristeza. (117)

It is the need to escape the grief which the irretrievable past causes him that, as much as anything else, explains his political feuding:

Sentia que tinha que acabar com aquela tristeza. Não podia admitir esmorecimentos. Por isso, tal vez se dedicasse tanto à política, era uma maneira de se atordoar. Não se desejava aumentar as riquezas, comprar mais terras, desenvolver a criação. Pouco gastava. Com êle próprio, gastava pouquíssimo. Tentou afastar a saudade que o vinha perseguindo. (118)

Two rural societies are thus presented in the novel -the coastal sugar producing zone and the cattle producing sertão. Contrasts are drawn between them, but both are characterized by decline. It is significant that the sense of yearning for a whole way of life now lost is conveyed in so much armorial writing, which, against the background of industrialization, increasing urbanisation and an expanding mass culture, deliberately seeks out the alternative values and patterns of conduct identified with the traditional communities of the rural backlands.

A second notable feature of the novel is the idea of an individual being bound to his or her region of origin with strong psychological and emotional bonds. Wanderley likens his homesickness to that of the sertanejos who, though driven out of the backlands at time of drought, invariably return afterwards, despite the suffering and anguish endured there:

Sentiu que o homem, além do ventre, é parido pelas primeiras coisas que vê e sente, os olhos do menino. Assim como êle não esquece a mãe que o trouxe à vida, também não esquece a paisagem que em criança pensava ser o mundo. (119)

Again, this sense of empathy with the rural North East is a vital feature of armorial art, echoing sentiments of many earlier regionalist writers and artists.

Some absorbing literature was produced by the Movimento Armorial. Its use of rich, popular material endows it with originality and vibrancy, but also creates certain contradictions which, though most clearly evident in the attempts made by the participants to rationalise the fusion of the popular and the erudite in order to create a national art, can also be detected in many of the works themselves. Despite the writer's protestations that they are working with cultural values and expressions which still exist in the North East, and which still retain considerable dynamism, the nature of their work makes it difficult to avoid a tendency towards the picturesque and the mystical, and a strong air of nostalgia for a whole way of life felt to be under threat of extinction. Seeking to extol that way of life and the cultural expressions it generates, the writers select elements from it in order to elaborate their own particular vision of the rural North East, not necessarily a purely idyllic vision, but certainly one which attempts to offer an alternative to what are perceived as the superficial, transitory and demeaning values of modern urban living. The notion of a popular and national literature, which Suassuna claims to be the prime objective of armorial writing, is therefore extremely problematical, for the vast gamut of popular themes, forms and symbols reworked by the writer clearly reveal far more about the personal vision and world of the writer himself than about the communities and culture which produced the original material.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4.

- (1) Ariano Suassuna in an interview given to the author in Recife, May 29th, 1981.
- (2) Ariano Suassuna, 'Almanaque Armorial do Nordeste', in Jornal da Semana, Ano 1, No.20, Recife, April 29th, 1973.
- (3) Many different interpretations of the 1930 Revolution exist among political scientists and historians, and an evaluation of these is obviously beyond the scope of this work. For a debate on the subject see Movimento, Edição Semanal 277, Rio de Janeiro, October 29th, 1980. It is generally accepted however, that the movement led by Vargas signified the end of the political and economic dominance of the coffee producing rural proprietors, and opened the way for the development of a new power structure involving new economic groups, which would lead in turn to significant changes in political and economic policies.
- (4) Ariano Suassuna, dedication in Romance d'a Pedra do Reino (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1976).
- (5) Ariano Suassuna, O Movimento Armorial (Dept. de Extensão Cultural, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Editora Universitária, Recife, 1974), p.69.
- (6) Ariano Suassuna, 'Notas sobre o Romancero Popular', in Seleção em Prosa e Verso (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1974), p.163.
- (7) Ariano Suassuna, O Movimento Armorial, p.68.
- (8) The term Civilização do Couro has been employed by many Brazilian historians, e.g. Erani Silva Bruno, História do Brasil, Geral e Regional. 2: O Nordeste (Cultrix, São Paulo, 1967), to refer to the particular patterns of social life that developed as a result of the expansion of cattle production in the North East sertão from the eighteenth century onwards, to provide meat and work animals for other regions of the country. It was based on a very simple social structure, with a small number of families owning vast latifúndios for pasture, and crop production where possible, whilst the majority worked as cattle hands or agricultural workers and owned no land at all.
- (9) Ariano Suassuna, 'Notas', p.162.
- (10) Ibid, p.165.
- (11) Ariano Suassuna, 'Almanaque Armorial do Nordeste', in Jornal da Semana, Ano 2, No 1, Recife, December 16th, 1973.

- (12) Ariano Suassuna, 'Almanaque Armorial do Nordeste', in Jornal da Semana, Ano 1, No 52, Recife, December 9th, 1973, p.15.
- (13) Ariano Suassuna, 'Almanaque Armorial do Nordeste', in Jornal da Semana, Ano 1, No 46, Recife, October 28th, 1973, p.15.
- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Josué de Castro, Death in the North East (Vintage Books, New York, 1969), p.21.
- (16) Ariano Suassuna, O Movimento Armorial, p.68.
- (17) Ariano Suassuna in interview given to the author, Recife, May 29th, 1981.
- (18) Ariano Suassuna, 'Notas', p.172.
- (19) Ibid, p.172.
- (20) Ariano Suassuna, 'Almanaque Armorial do Nordeste', in Jornal da Semana, Ano 1, No.23, Recife, May 20th, 1973.
- (21) Ariano Suassuna, quoted in José Augusto Guerra, 'El mundo mágico y poético de Ariano Suassuna', in Revista de Cultura Brasileña, May 1973, p.59.
- (22) Ariano Suassuna in interview with the author, Recife, May 29th, 1981.
- (23) Ariano Suassuna, 'Almanaque Armorial do Nordeste', in Jornal da Semana, Ano 1, No 31, Recife, July 15th, 1973, p.15.
- (24) Ariano Suassuna in interview with the author, Recife, May 29th, 1981.
- (25) Ariano Suassuna in interview with the author, Recife, May 29th, 1981.
- (26) Ariano Suassuna in interview with the author, Recife, May 29th, 1981.
- (27) Hermilo Borba filho, quoted in José Laurêncio de Melo, 'Nota Bibliográfica', in Ariano Suassuna, O Santo e a Porca/O Casamento Suspeitoso (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1976), p.xiv.
- (28) Ariano Suassuna, in interview with Gilse Campos, 'As Aventuras de um Cavaleiro do Sertão', Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, September 9th, 1972.
- (29) Hermilo Borba Filho, 'Teatro, arte do povo' (April 13th, 1946) in Arte em Revista, Ano 2, Número 3, p.60.
- (30) Ibid, p.60.

- (31) Ibid, p.62.
- (32) Ibid, p.61.
- (33) Ibid, p.61.
- (34) See Augusto Boal, Documentos on the theatre of the oppressed (Red Letters, London, 1984).
- (35) Joel Pontes, O Teatro Moderno em Pernambuco (Coleção Buriti, DESA, São Paulo, 1966), p.37.
- (36) Ibid, p.37.
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CHAPTER 5.

ARIANO SUASSUNA AND THE ARMORIAL NOVEL.The emergence of a novelist.

In 1958, Ariano Suassuna began work on his ambitious project to produce a trilogy of novels, to be collectively entitled A Maravilhosa Desventura de Quaderna, O Decifrador. The first volume, O Romance d'A Pedro do Reino e o Príncipe do Sangue do Vai-e-Volta, was published in 1971, a mammoth work of over six hundred pages, divided into five books and subdivided into eighty-five chapters. Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, the first part, or book, of the second volume, to be called História d'O Rei Degolado nas Caatingas do Sertão, was published in 1976, though it had already been produced in weekly instalments in the Diário de Pernambuco, reviving the folhetim tradition -the practice of publishing literary works in serial form in newspapers- common in the nineteenth century.

It now appears that the projected trilogy will never be realised, for in 1981 Suassuna publicly announced that, disillusioned, he was abandoning his writing and his efforts to promote North East culture. As will be seen, this decision and Suassuna's explanation for it, further highlight the intransigent problems inherent in his theory of the development of a national, popular art, and in his attempts to give that theory tangible artistic expression.

Before looking at the novels themselves, two general points should be made. Firstly, although these novels can be read as independent,

individual works, and an analysis of them can provide a good understanding of Suassuna's ideas and style, it is important to bear in mind that they were originally conceived of as component parts of a greater work, a trilogy. The fact that little over a third of that complete work is available for study makes it more difficult to come to firm conclusions about certain aspects of structure, plot and technique, aspects which would doubtless have assumed greater clarity and validation had they been fully developed in the context of the complete trilogy. The second point, much more complex, concerns Suassuna's decision to turn his attention from drama to the novel. His own explanation is straightforward. In interviews he has emphasised his involvement for many years with a variety of literary forms, including poetry, drama and the essay, and has argued that the novel is the only genre that permits a synthesis of all those forms within a single work. Poetry, essay and fiction are all incorporated in A Pedra do Reino in a way that was impossible in his plays:

O romance na época moderna é talvez o gênero literário que mais permite uma junção de poesia, ensaio e ficção. Então, você vê que no próprio 'A Pedra do Reino' existe uma presença muito forte de poesia que é, e sempre foi, a minha preocupação, e do ensaio também, não é? Existe uma tentativa de interpretação de certas coisas, na linha do ensaio. E existe a ficção. Então, era isso que estava-me fazendo falta no teatro, e que o romance me deu a oportunidade de, bem ou mal, tentar expressar.

(1)

The critical acclaim achieved by A Pedra do Reino upon its publication in 1971, the national prize for fiction conferred upon it the following year by the Instituto Nacional do Livro and the fact that by 1976 it was in its fourth edition, all testify to the impact the work made on

the Brazilian reading public. Yet it is interesting, and significant, that Suassuna should turn to the novel just as his ideas on a national, popular art were crystallizing, and he began to formulate them into a programme of action. Many other Latin American writers, including Brazilians, some of them mentioned in earlier chapters, had of course struggled with the problem of a national, popular literature, but when the debate on the issue of popular culture reached such intensity in the Brazilian North East in the late 50s and early 60s, the novel was not in the forefront of the discussion. The political circumstances of the time favoured practical cultural activity which combined the participation of intellectuals and rural and urban workers. The MCP, as mentioned in the previous chapter, selected as the arena of those activities education classes teaching basic literacy and a wide range of domestic and professional skills, art and handicraft courses and various forms of theatre.

Such activities were clearly impossible after the 1964 coup, but beyond the question of practical circumstances there remains the more complex problem of the novel itself as a form, and in what way it can really be developed as an instrument for forging a national, popular art. The popular dramatist, for example, finds in the Brazilian North East a wealth of expressive forms and symbolic language readily at his disposal. The sertão population has a strong tradition of theatrical forms, such as religious Autos, puppet theatre (mamulengo) and bumba-meu-boi, a fantasy drama often performed throughout the night, not to mention popular dance and carnival, which provide playwrights with rich raw materials, constituent elements which require little modification for the development of popular drama, serving as links of communication

between artist and audience. Added to this are the obvious advantages in production which the theatre has as a popular form, being highly mobile, adaptable and participatory, as discovered by Suassuna himself, and other participants of the Teatro do Estudante de Pernambuco with the barraca which aimed to carry theatre to new sectors of the population.

In the case of verse, the tradition of popular poetry in the North East has produced a wide range of rhythmic, metric and linguistic schemes to which the erudite poet can relate directly, employing them as the basic structures of his work if he so wishes. The adaptability of poetic form and language, and the practicability of the act of composition, appear to give poetry possibilities for expansion among different social sectors when the circumstances are favourable, as seen in Nicaragua in recent years, with the Talleres de Poesía, poetry workshops organized for peasants, children, workers and others, largely under the direction of Ernesto Cardenal.

The novel presents more difficult problems. An alien art form to the mass of the sertão population, it marks more clearly than any other literary genre the divide between popular and erudite expression. Though the exact details concerning the emergence of the novel form may still be disputed, a general consensus has long accepted the broad arguments of Ian Watt, linking the genre to the development of bourgeois consciousness, particularly its emphasis on individualism, which accompanied the rise of new middle classes as the market economy expanded. (2) If it is the classic bourgeois art form, as Watt has termed it, can the novel really be adapted to assimilate the perceptions and experience of other classes? This is a particularly

problematical question for the Latin American writer, aware that the region's uneven, contradictory pattern of development has exacerbated the divisions between himself and the rural and urban masses.

Suassuna's response to the problem, like that of other writers, is to attempt to construct a new type of novel, formally and stylistically distinct. His method, however, is unusual. As seen in the previous chapter, he rejects the experimentalism of other writers as simply *Europeanization*. For him, European innovations offer no hope of affirming a distinctly Brazilian literature. Even more controversial is his rejection of the notion of a politically committed literature as being necessary to link the writer to the lived experience of the masses. Instead, he persists in his arguments for a literature based upon popular forms of artistic expression in the sertão, above all the folheto tradition. He terms his novels *popular*, not in the sense of a widening of readership, for the public for his work remains essentially the urban, middle classes, the traditional novel reading public in Brazil, but in the sense that it embodies the vision and experience of the rural communities of the sertão, rather than the particular concerns of the cosmopolitan, urban intellectual. For Suassuna, employing popular cultural expression of the sertão means, above all, returning to traditional, ancient forms of literature and drama; forms that can be traced back into antiquity, but which have been perpetuated, with modifications, by the specific historical conditions of the North East interior. Such forms provide him with the basis for his distinct form of novel. He classifies A Pedra do Reino as a romance armorial-popular brasileiro, and his planned second volume, História Do Rei Degolado, as a romance armorial e novela romanesca brasileira, with

both classifications appearing prominently on the title page of each work. Suassuna has spent much time explaining the significance of such terms. Basically, they demonstrate his preference for seeing his work as being closer to the old epic and romance forms, than to the modern novel, an approximation permitted by his assimilation of popular North East literature. On his use of romance armorial and novela romançal, Idelette Muzart Fonseca Dos Santos comments:

O duplo rótulo permite lembrar que, para o autor, a palavra 'romance' conserva seu perfume e sentido primitivo, designando a obra escrita em língua popular e vulgar, opondo-se, de tal modo, ao latim, língua dos intelectuais. Mas significa também que Suassuna recusa de antemão as classificações atuais, colocando-se voluntariamente no terreno da novela hispânica, de Dom Quixote e das novelas de cavalaria, formas diversas da epopéia moderna. (3)

Suassuna's emphasis on the traditional aspects of North East rural culture, seen as conserving old forms of artistic expression sadly extinct elsewhere, comes through clearly in his novels. Avoiding recent economic and social changes which have significantly affected patterns of life in the sertão, they constantly look back, evoking the sertão life of the author's childhood, creating a literary universe which relies heavily on memories and vestiges of the past.

The result of Suassuna's approach is a unique and highly original work. Yet in creating his own vision of the sertão, his mundo mítico, he also debates questions of crucial personal interest: questions of art, history, religious faith and intimate dilemmas and conflicts. He states:

A literatura também é uma forma de solucionar o meu conflito com o mundo, porque isso, a meu ver, é outra coisa que o escritor busca fundamentalmente. (4)

Such a wide range of objectives in one work requires a complexity of structure that perhaps only the novel can provide, and, as has already been seen, it is the novel's all encompassing quality that particularly attracts Suassuna. The contradictions, however, are plain. Firstly, in order to accommodate so many aims and interests, Suassuna has created a work of vast scope and considerable structural and technical complexity which, in the end, is far closer to the modern novels from which it attempts to distance itself than to the popular literary forms which provided much of its inspiration. Secondly, there is the question as to what extent a novel can embody both the world view of the rural masses and the private vision of the author at the same time. If the writer is to attempt to solve his existential problems through his writing, can this be reconciled with the objective of developing a national and popular literature? Suassuna's decision to turn to the novel highlights in itself the problems which his project for fusing popular and erudite art entails.

The structure of Suassuna's novels.

Several critics have already studied the structure employed in A Pedra do Reino, which, it would appear, establishes the fundamental structure for the whole projected trilogy, since the first section or book of the second novel, Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, follows the broad model of the first. As mentioned, A Pedra do Reino is divided into five parts or livros, each of which is subdivided into numbered

chapters, designated folhetos by Suassuna. Totalling eighty five in all, the titles of these folhetos, such as A Aventura de Rosa e a Condessa, As Desaventuras de um Corno Desambicioso and A Cachorra Cantadeira e o Angel Misterioso typically recall the titles of the folhetos of popular poetry sold in the streets and markets. This resemblance is reinforced by the themes and episodes contained in each folheto, the illustrations in the style of traditional woodcuts which are scattered throughout the work and the narrative style of the narrator, Quaderna, who, in the manner of the popular poet, calls to the muse for inspiration, addresses himself directly to his readers, encouraging their attention and sympathy, and employs some of the antiquated phraseology conventional to traditional sertão poetry. In this way, the immediate presentation and style of the work consciously seeks to capture the tone and atmosphere of popular folheto verse.

Looking at the work's structure at the broad, superficial level, George Rudolf Lind first divides it into two basic parts: firstly, folhetos 1-36, which correspond essentially to autobiographical details of the narrator and main protagonist, Quaderna, and secondly, folhetos 37-85, dealing with events building up to and connected with Quaderna's testimony before the Corregedor, visiting the town, Taperoá, to investigate certain criminal events that have occurred in the area in recent years. Lind detects a disparity between the two parts, with notable differences in the composition of the narrative, which he explains largely by the length of time -nearly twelve years- over which the work was written. Within this framework, Lind breaks up the novel into eleven basic macro-units which correspond to essential elements of the content. (5) They are worth detailing here because,

although the scheme only provides a superficial analysis of the work's structure, it affords the opportunity of sketching out the plot and, consequently, the development of the narrative.

Lind's division details the work's content in the following way:

[1] Folheto 1: the narrator introduces himself as Dom Pedro Dinis Ferreira-Quaderna, king, prophet and poet, aged 41. It is October 9th, 1938, and Quaderna is in prison in Taperoá, Paraíba. He announces to his readers that he is composing his literary work in order to make his story public and affirm his innocence. [2] Folhetos 2-3: Quaderna describes the entrance of a cavalcade into Taperoá three years earlier, on June 1st, 1935, headed by a mysterious boy on a white horse. [3] Folhetos 5-10: Quaderna relates the story of his paternal ancestors, who, between 1835 and 1838, established a number of messianic communities in the sertão, eventually destroyed in military conflict with the authorities, in the so called Guerra do Reino. [4] Folhetos 11-15: Quaderna gives details of his childhood in the sertão, and especially his developing fascination for the popular cultural expressions of the region, particularly the poetry and stories of the romanceiro tradition. [5] Folhetos 16-22: Quaderna resolves to visit Pedra Bonita, scene of the messianic movements of his ancestors a century before. After various adventures, he reaches the two stones which marked the centre of the sacred kingdom, and secretly crowns himself king of the sertão, thereby reviving the family dynasty. [6] Folheto 23: Quaderna gives details of his maternal family, the Garcia Barretos, culminating with the mysterious murder of his step father, Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia Barreto in 1930. [7] Folhetos 24 and 25: Quaderna introduces the two scholars who were employed by his

stepfather to educate him, Clemente Hará de Ravasco Anvérsio, linked to the Communist Party, and Samuel Wandernes, involved with the Integralistas, the Brazilian fascist movement. [8] Folhetos 26-36: Quaderna relates how he and his two mentors founded their literary society, the Academia de Letras dos Emparedados do Sertão de Paraíba, and records his discussions on literary theory with them, secretly planning to write the ultimate masterpiece of Brazilian literature that will crown him as Gênio da Raça Brasileira. [9] Folhetos 37-48: the events leading up to Quaderna's appearance before the Corregedor in Taperoá are described, in particular the denunciation made against him by enemies in the town, the culmination of the ideological differences of his two mentors in the form of a duel fought between them, the growing political violence in the region in the 1930s and Quaderna's vision of Moça Caetana, symbol of death, shortly before he leaves to appear before the Corregedor. [10] Folhetos 49-84: Quaderna recalls his interview with the Corregedor on April 13th, 1938, part of the latter's investigation into the political uprisings of recent years and the still unsolved murder of Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia Barreto in 1930, during which Quaderna gives details of various events that took place in Taperoá during those years. He announces that the notes taken of his evidence will form part of his planned literary masterpiece, the Obra da Raça, a work which will be the most complete embodiment of the spirit of the Brazilian people yet produced. This leads him to talk about matters of literary style with the Corregedor. [11] Folheto 85: The enquiry finishes for the day, and Quaderna goes home. At night, under the influence of wine, he dreams that his masterpiece is complete and that, in a special

ceremony organized by the Brazilian Academy of Letters, amid the great figures of North East literature, such as Euclides da Cunha, José de Alencar and Joaquim Nabuco, he is finally crowned Gênio da Raça Brasileira.

Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, (1977), continues the style and basic structure of A Pedra do Reino. Constituting Book 1 of the five books of the second volume of the trilogy, it consists of twenty three folhetos, and can be divided into three broad parts in accordance with Lind's scheme: [1] Folhetos 1-7: Quaderna recalls the day of December 8th, 1911, when, in a climate of growing political conflict, the major families of Paraíba, formed into two main rival groups, gathered together at one of his stepfather's fazendas, mainly in an attempt to negotiate a political settlement. The attempt is shown to be doomed to failure, with the Villar family ambushed by gunmen on their way to the gathering. [2] Folhetos 8-11: Quaderna returns to April 13th, 1938, and gives details of the victory celebrations of Clemente after his triumph in the duel over his rival, Samuel Wandernes. [3] Folhetos 12-23: Quaderna narrates how on April 14th, 1938, he returned to appear before the Corregedor for the second day. At the Corregedor's insistence, Quaderna fills in details of his upbringing with his father, stepfather and brothers.

The major unifying element within the structure of both works is the narrator and main protagonist, Quaderna. Through his personal experiences, family connections and his own thoughts and aspirations, diffuse historical events, characters and intellectual arguments are linked up into a coherent whole. Lots of loose ends remain, with

mysterious events unexplained and problems unresolved, a deliberate technique for establishing themes to be developed in the succeeding volumes, and thereby providing continuity between them, but the use of the first person narrator, serving as a focal point for all the events and ideas as he develops a literary work that will recount his and his family's life in the sertão, and hopefully be the most complete Brazilian work of fiction of all time, enables a vast range of themes and arguments to be dealt with without the narrative becoming too fragmentary. This is really a development of the technique used by Suassuna in many of his plays, referred to in the previous chapter, where a character not only plays a role in the dramatic action but also comments on it, addressing himself to the audience to clarify points and summarize ideas and provide cohesion to the whole work. Quaderna plays essentially the same role in Suassuna's novels.

Looking in greater depth at the structure of the work, Maria-Odilia Leal McBride detects the characteristics of the following five narrative structures, all interrelated and pieced together in the form of a collage to construct a multidimensional novel: (I) that of the formation novel, or bildungsroman, focussing on the development of the protagonist, Quaderna, and composed of both a realist side, influenced by aspects of the picaresque novel, and an idealized side, with strong influence from the chivalric romance; (II) that of the detective or crime novel, with murders, abductions and political intrigue creating an atmosphere of mystery and suspense; (III) that of a narrative of discussion, to which McBride refers under the classification of *anatomy*, as used by Northrop Frye to refer to a form of fiction where ideas are debated in order to present a satirical study of human

beliefs and behaviour. Long sections in A Pedra do Reino are devoted to theoretical discussions between characters on aesthetics, literature and politics. (IV) That of metafiction, with Quaderna constantly discussing with the reader the process of composition of his own planned masterpiece of Brazilian literature, his Obra Nacional da Raça Brasileira. (V) That of a mythical-symbolic narrative, with Quaderna using popular beliefs and myths of the sertão to transform reality and create an idealized vision of the world. These different substructures are united into a coherent totality by Quaderna's autobiography, for McBride shows how his life and ambitions provide the focal point for all of them, and the motivation for their development. (6)

McBride's work shows the vast array of influences that Suassuna has assimilated into his work and, in particular, the importance of old Iberian forms like the picaresque and the chivalric romance, and of traditional popular beliefs and myths, all of which still find expression in the sertão today, in the poetry of the folheto and the cantador. The employment of all these sources, recreated and interwoven through the life of the complex figure of Quaderna, give the work its formal originality and its vast thematic range, discussing not only issues of North East history, but also numerous broader political, social, cultural and metaphysical problems.

Few would disagree with McBride's extolment of the novel's originality and dynamism. More controversial, however, is the conclusion she draws concerning the way the work relates to popular culture, for she ends her study by stating that, through the

interweaving of different narrative structures and the employment of popular expressions and beliefs,

(...)Suassuna cria uma obra em concordância com o espírito do povo brasileiro(...) (7)

Once again, the notion of a national spirit is taken for granted, but McBride also fails to give due consideration to the changes the popular material concerned has undergone as it has been reworked by the author. Suassuna is attracted to the peasant culture of the sertão, but he does not, and cannot, share the perceptions and assumptions that it embodies. Instead, he looks upon them from a distance, sometimes with admiration, sometimes with humour, and at others with irony. Quaderna, the main narrator, is never entirely integrated into the peasant world. He has points of contact with it, but always stands slightly apart, assessing and appraising its system of beliefs and values, but never able to accept them completely. It is clearly not the peasant world view that is presented to the reader, but Suassuna's critical interpretation of it, and the difference is crucial for an understanding of the novel.

The manner in which Pedro Dinis Ferreira-Quaderna carries out his function of narrator mimics the style of the popular poet in many ways, as he constantly addresses himself directly to his readers, inserting his own comments on the events he is narrating, and encouraging the reader's sympathy and attention. His introduction to his story in the very first folheto of A Pedra do Reino echoes the call of the poet in the market place as he attempts to gather an audience for the narrative poem he is about to declaim:

Escutem, pois nobres Senhores e belas Damas de peitos brandos, minha terrível história de amor e de culpa; de sangue e de justia; de sensualidade e violência; de enigma, de morte e disparate; de lutas nas estradas e combates nas Catingas(...) (8)

These direct references to the readers, often respectfully addressed as Vossas Excelências, the narrator's oratorical style and his inclusion of numerous poems and popular songs, all attempt to create a strong impression of oral narration, which is reinforced by long sections of dialogue and Quaderna's interviews with the Corregedor which occupy approximately fifty percent of both novels. The same technique is repeated in Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, with Quaderna often emphasising his role as story teller and explaining to his readers, or *listeners*, as he prefers to call them, the method of his narrative. At one point in this second novel, for example, he interrupts the narration of the ambush of the Villar family in the sertão in 1911 to recall other events in Taperoá in 1938, with the explanation that:

(...)uma das características principais dos Romances aventurecos, bandeirosos e cavalarianos como este meu Castelo da Raça Brasileira, é deixar uma cena assim interrompida, com as belas Damas, que me ouvem, de peito opresso e coração suspenso esperando o resultado. Por isso, só depois é que retomarei, ao som da Viola, o fio desse rouco e castanho Cantar que é meu. Assim, perdoem-me esta pequena astúcia retórica. Tenham paciência, entrem com gana e garra nos meandros labirínticos do meu Castelo subterrâneo e vamos adiante porque, neste século de eficientes, eu sou apenas um Cantador arcaico que, em seu novelário de malassombros, tem mil e uma histórias para contar. (9)

The result is a meandering narrative style, constantly breaking off from one plot to pick up another, and thereby reinforcing the atmosphere of mystery and suspense, or to discuss the various

alternatives available in narrative style and technique, or the merits of different political options. As already stated, this complex structure of interrelated subplots and the debate on literary style and practice within it, clearly differentiates the form of Suassuna's work from that employed by the popular poets themselves, though by adopting the guise of the cantador or popular poet, parodying traditional aspects of his mode of expression, Quaderna gives that form some of the tone, atmosphere and oral quality of folheto literature. He is active throughout the two novels, participating in the events being narrated or discussing the development of the literary texts themselves, recreating the almost theatrical performance carried out by the cantador in the declamation of his work. It is essentially an illusion created by Suassuna to help conceal some of the obvious contrasts between the form of the folheto and that of his novels, in particular between poetic form and prose form, and between oral and written literary tradition. Quaderna, a cantador and a prisoner writing memoirs that he hopes will both prove his innocence and confirm him as the Gênio da Raça, is seen attempting to adapt the traditional poetry of the folheto to the prose conventional to the novel. In effect, this is a projection into the work of fiction of the role of Suassuna himself.

The popular poet in Suassuna's novels.

Examples of folheto verse, with their strict metrical and rhythmical conventions, are scattered liberally throughout the novels. This, Quaderna explains, is all part of the development of his poetic

prose style, rooted in the influence of the popular romanceiro tradition which has engrossed his imagination since childhood. It is his identification with popular verse, and with the muses who, according to popular belief, infuse inspiration into the cantadores, that makes him adopt the same style for his own work:

Assim, Vossas Excelências já entendem porque segui esse mesmo estilo, no meu Memorial: pretendia e pretendo, com isso, predispor favoravelmente a mim não só os ânimos de Vossas Excelências como "o Povo em geral" e até as divindades divino-diabólicas que protegem os Poetas nascidos e criados no Sertão de Paraíba. (10)

Through Quaderna, Suassuna really produces a parody of the style of the popular poet, seen in the employment the narrator makes of antiquated turns of speech still found in some folhetos, as when he describes the arrival of the cavalcade into Taperoá:

Era, talvez, a mais estranha Cavalgada que já foi vista no Sertão por homem nascido de mulher. (11)

and even in the grandiose title which Quaderna gives himself:

(...)o modesto Cronista-Fidalgo, Rapsodo-Acadêmico e Poeta-Escrivão(...) (12)

There is considerable humour in the way Suassuna exposes Quaderna's delusions about his literary abilities. Feeling himself to be weak, cowardly and mediocre, he is tormented by the problem of how to live up to what he perceives as the glorious past of his ancestors: on the paternal side, the Ferreira-Quadernas, who a century earlier established the messianic communities which ended in bloodshed, and on the maternal side, the aristocratic Garcia-Barrettos, with their own

heroic but tragic history, deeply marked by the political strife between rival families of the oligarchy. Quaderna has witnessed the decline of his family's fortunes, but is himself completely devoid of the courage or skills that would be required to restore its power and prestige, and his conscience is afflicted by a sense of failure. As a result, literature becomes a substitute for political or military action. Having been introduced as a child to popular poetry and song by his father and Tia Felipa, both knowledgeable enthusiasts of the tradition, Quaderna learns the skills of the cantador from João Melchiádes, his Godfather and himself a famous cantador. (13)

Melchiádes tells Quaderna's father that the stars indicate that his son is destined to become a fine poet if he dedicates himself to the art. Quaderna is not only genuinely enthused by the sertão ballads, but also by the explanations Melchiádes gives of poetic practice. Referring particularly to the desafios between cantadores, Melchiádes describes how the poet builds himself a literary fortress which rivals have to challenge and overcome:

(...)os Cantadores, assim como faziam Fortalezas para os Cangaceiros, construíam também, com palavras e a golpe de versos, Castelos para eles próprios, uns lugares pedregosos, belos, inacessíveis, amuralhados, onde os donos se isolavam orgulhosamente, coroando-se Reis, e que outros Cantadores, nos "desafios", tinham obrigação de assediar, tentando destruí-los palmo a palmo, à força de audácia e de fogo poético. (14)

Such ideas provide Quaderna with the solution to his dilemma. Through literary creation he can fulfil the responsibilities his family lineage entails, and even overcome his mediocrity by being consecrated as the Gênio da Raça or even the Gênio Máximo da Humanidade:

Foi um grande momento em minha vida. Era a solução para o beco sem saída em que me via! Era me tornando Cantador que eu poderia reerguer, na pedra do verso, o Castelo do meu Reino, reinstalando os Quadernas no Trono do Brasil, sem arriscar a garganta e sem me meter em cavalarias, para as quais não tinha nem tempo nem disposição, montando mal como monto e atirando pior ainda! (15)

A major part of the irony in Suassuna's novels derives from the contrast between Quaderna's boundless ambitions and his limited abilities. He, like all the other characters with intellectual pretensions, frequently appears ridiculous when confidently asserting his beliefs, for the author shows how sharply such beliefs contrast with reality. Quaderna, a man of very modest literary ability, who earns his living working in a minor public position, as a clerk running a small library in Taperoá, convinces himself that he can become the supreme genius of the Brazilian race. He accepts the assertion by one of his mentors, Samuel Wandernes, that:

O Gênio da Raça é um escritor que escreve uma Obra considerado decisiva para a consciência da sua Raça!
(16)

Yet, confessing that he lacks creative imagination, Quaderna decides that he must borrow ideas from others, and even passages from other writers' work, modified as necessary, in order to create the obra nacional da Raça Brasileira that will confirm his genius. For the popular poet, Melchiades has informed him, plagiarism does not exist. Rather, it is a question of *skilful adaptation*, another crucial element in the poet's art. The two novels therefore, supposedly written by Quaderna himself, are full of quotations from other writers, some popular and some erudite, some inventions of Suassuna's

imagination and others real, including Antônio Gonçalves Dias, Raymundo Corrêa and the popular poet Leandro Gomes de Barros, all providing additional material of varied style which is employed to reinforce the themes and arguments of the work. Quaderna believes that, as an amalgamation of contributions by many of Brazil's finest writers, the novel will epitomize the national creative imagination. At times, however, delusions of grandeur make him lose sight of his limitations, a major source of humour in the novels. Explaining to the corregedor at one point how popular poets are traditionally classified into six categories, he states that he is really exceptional because he has the qualities of all six types:

(...)somente os maiores de todos, os grandes, os "raros do Povo" pertencem, ao mesmo tempo, às seis categorias! Meu Pai, que Deus guarde, era Poeta de sangue e de ciência. Mas eu, modéstia à parte, sou dos poucos, dos raros, dos grandes, porque sou, ao mesmo tempo, poeta de cavalgação, a reinação, Poeta de sangue, Poeta de Ciência, Poeta de Pacto, de estradas e encruzilhadas, Poeta de Memória e Poeta de planeta! (17)

The humour of Quaderna's pomposity is reinforced by the contrast drawn between his passionate promotion of such ideas and the scathing derision which the Corregedor shows towards them, frequently replying in a mocking tone. If on the one hand this humour and irony makes a crucial contribution to the novels' quality and originality, on the other it distances them further from the original folhetos. Comic themes certainly are abundant in popular poetry, but the role of the poet himself is not treated humorously, being seen, as was shown in chapter 3, as a serious profession within the community, with a definite social function. Suassuna develops much of his humour from

the contrast between the popular and erudite, and, more specifically, between the magical, mystical world view of the popular poet and the rational, scientific outlook of the intelligentsia and the Corregedor. Quaderna is caught between those two contrasting visions, his education having been provided in part by the two egotistical professors, Clemente and Samuel, who become his mentors, and in part by popular poets and mystics like João Melchiades. In formation and outlook therefore, Quaderna is significantly different from the poor poets with whom he associates and sympathises so much, and he constantly steps back to view them from a critical distance, within the light of the alternative set of criteria and values provided by his more formal education and reading.

Trying to live in both the world of the popular poets and in that of the more privileged classes, represented by his maternal family, the Garcia Barrettos, and his two mentors, proves to be exceedingly problematical for Quaderna. He is captivated by the creative imagination of the cantador and the world of popular myth and legend he represents, but does not find it easy to reconcile that with the more formal scholarship he learns from other associates, particularly the influential professors, Samuel and Clemente. For the right wing Samuel, the cantadores represent the barbarous, rebellious plebs and to the communist Clemente they embody the superstitious, reactionary mentality which for so long has been perpetuated by the position of servitude and exploitation of their class, and served as an obstacle to their liberation. From their different ideological positions, therefore, both professors deride Quaderna's fascination for popular

poetry. Moreover, such fascination proves to be politically dangerous. During their interview, the Corregedor reveals to Quaderna that certain unknown testifiers from the town have reported their suspicions about his political and moral behaviour, based on his association with undesirable social elements:

Consta que o senhor, um funcionário, um homem de certa categoria, vive na mais vergonhosa promiscuidade com as mulheres de má-vida e com o que existe de pior na ralé daqui -os bêbedos, os doidos, os ladrões de cavalo, os contrabandistas de cachaça, os cantadores, cavalarianos e vagabundos de toda espécie! (18)

Quaderna decides to resolve the contradiction of his position by fusing together the two vastly different sets of perceptions and values in his literary work, to be based therefore on both formal, scholarly writing and popular poetry, blended together to form the most complete and representative work of Brazilian literature ever written. Not only will the work restore some of his family's past glory and fulfil his major personal ambitions, but also, through it Quaderna will recover some of the harmony which for so long has been missing in the strife torn sertão society within which he has spent his life. These wildly ambitious aims, and the seriousness with which Quaderna undertakes them, produce further comedy, but through them Suassuna also appears to mock the whole process of literary criticism, particularly the establishment of value judgements. In accordance with his dislike of the separate classifications used for erudite and popular literature, which he sees as invariably resulting from a patronising or disparaging view of the *popular*, Suassuna mocks such distinctions between the two in his novels. Samuel and Clemente appear

ridiculous in their conceit and the adulation which they pour on their preferred scholars and writers. Dogmatic in their opinions, they vastly exaggerate their own academic and creative abilities at the same time as they arrogantly dismiss the poetry of the cantadores as puerile.

Quaderna himself makes little real distinction between the popular and erudite sources of his own literary work. Instead, he extols the virtues and reliability of both in grandiloquent terms, describing some of the erudite writers who have influenced him as men so noble, learned and distinguished that their word cannot possibly be doubted, whilst arguing that much of the wisdom of the popular poets is beyond question too, for it is ultimately the product of divine or mysterious astrological forces. He considers himself to be both a cantador, who has studied and trained in the craft, and also a disciple of the great figures who have contributed to erudite literature of the North East, such as Alencar and da Cunha. His dream which ends A Pedra do Reino finally sees him crowned genius of the Brazilian race in a bizarre ceremony, a mixture of popular ritual and official pageantry, with the participation of popular poets and some of the consecrated writers of North East literary history.

As will be seen, however, part of Quaderna's tragedy is that he is never able to fully accept at face value the cantador's magical vision of the world. He is particularly attracted to it because it enables him to transform at the level of his imagination the harsh and hostile environment around him. He learns early on the power of the popular imagination in recreating reality. In Folheto XIV of A Pedra do Reino, Quaderna asks João Melchiades to write a folheto in

dedication to his relatives, the Ferreira-Quadernas, and the founding of their messianic kingdom. He likes the verses which result, but points out to Melchiades that certain details differ from the official historical accounts of the events produced earlier by learned scholars. Embellishments have been added. In reply, Melchiades informs him that:

(...)a rima e a Poesia obrigavam a gente a fazer
essas mudanças de glória filosófica e beleza
litúrgica. (19)

Poetry, Quaderna decides, can enable him to recreate the sertão into a glorious, heroic realm where humans are redeemed from the squalor and fragmentation of their real existences. He spends part of his life living in this dream world of his imagination, created with the myths and images of popular literature, which is why so many critics have commented on the similarities between A Pedra do Reino and Don Quijote, and like Don Quijote, Quaderna appears a tragicomical figure at the end, for his illusions are constantly shattered. Much as he is attracted to the magical transformation of the world, a more rational perception constantly breaks through. Quaderna, therefore, is never a real cantador. Both his position within sertão society and his world view are significantly different.

The major popular poets who participate in A Pedra do Reino are Melchiades and Lino Pedra Verde, and both are viewed critically from the outside. Just as Quaderna's attempts to magically recreate the sertão are contrasted with the cold, derisive rationality of the corregedor, so the perceptions of the two poets are constantly contrasted with those of the two scholars, Clemente and Samuel. In

Folheto XXX of A Pedra do Reino, Quaderna, Clemente and Samuel lose their way whilst riding, but meet Melchiades who guides them back to the main road. Quaderna takes the opportunity to ask him his opinion on certain literary ideas, regarding him as a master of the craft of poetry. Melchiades draws contemptuous laughter from Clemente and Samuel as he explains:

(...)Eu, Dinis, considero-me um "raro do Povo"! O Povo me considera um filho das Musas, e, por isso, me entende, me crê, me aplaude, me escuta e me atende, desde que comecei a escrever, no ano em que você nasceu, 1897. Meus versos são terrenos explorados nos campos dos Sonhos, eu versejo por guia de Deus e por inspiração do Altro, por influxo do sol e de Vênus!

Clemente e Samuel estouraram na gargalhada. João Melchiades riu também, e eu nunca sabia ao certo se ele notava ou não a zombaria do dois grandes homens(...) (20)

Later, in Folheto LXXXII of the same work, Lino Pedra Verde's vision of the world is similarly contrasted with that of Samuel, to considerable comic effect. Explaining a song he has just composed, Lino confuses historical figures and events. The result is that São Sebastião, Dom Sebastião, São Jorge and Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia Barretto, Quaderna's murdered godfather are merged into one single person, essentially that of Sinésio, Quaderna's half brother who, having been abducted many years before, has now returned to redeem his people, and disparate historical episodes are fused together in time and space, all concentrated into the recent struggles of the sertão:

(...)no Sertão é que está enterrada a Monarquia do Brasil! é por isso que eu estava dizendo: tudo isso é uma coisa só, é a Monarquia de Dom Sebastião, do Brasil, do Sertão, de Portugal, da África e do Império da Pedra do Reino! (21)

In this way, past events and names from varied places are converted into the present day sertão. For Lind, this destruction of the divisions of time and space to form one unified vision is the major artistic achievement of Suassuna's work, recreating the timelessness of the sertão, where past traditions long extinct elsewhere are perpetuated, and showing how the eternal hope for change and justice continues to live on in the region to the present day. (22) This is a significant point, but also significant is the way in which Lino's explanations are comically contrasted with the scholarly reasoning of Samuel, who, exasperated by such total confusion, exclaims;

Olhe, Lino, tudo isso que você está dizendo é uma confusão terrível, que só podia partir, mesmo, da cabeça de um cantador sertanejo instruído por Quaderna, como você! Não nego que, de certa forma, até simpatizo, em bloco, com o que você diz, mas é preciso esclarecer tudo bem direitinho, senão o resultado é péssimo! (23)

The comedy develops as Samuel vainly remonstrates against Lino's arguments, his counter explanations only being instantly reinterpreted by the poet in further support of his own view. For Lino, formal education can be a barrier to true, intuitive understanding, and he says to Samuel:

O Senhor é homem formado e fica com vergonha de acreditar em certas coisas. Mas eu, que sou homem ignaro, tenho direito de não ter vergonha de acreditar na verdade. (24)

Suassuna therefore plays with the two different perceptions of the world, the intuition of the popular poet as opposed to the formal

erudition of the scholar, with Quaderna caught between the two, attempting to establish some sort of balance between them. The emphasis of Suassuna's novels is not so much on the vision of the popular poet itself, seen within its own terms and within the specific conditions that have produced it, but rather on a critical comparison between popular and erudite art and the differing perceptions that underlie each. The reader views the cantador and his work from outside, evaluating at a distance, in the light of other criteria and values. This is a crucial point, emphasised by Angel Rama in a short article on the work of Suassuna, where he argues that although the novelist appears to have incorporated elements of the peasant world view into his work, he has in fact filtered them through his own humorous, critical perspective which distances him from the universe within which those elements were created. (25)

Suassuna has built his own, highly personal vision of the sertão, and indeed of life itself, into his novels, and uses Quaderna to give it expression. It is a vision which sees humans as tragic but heroic, as, alone, they struggle against the suffering and anguish of life, never giving up but always doomed to defeat. Quaderna seeks a solution through the popular myths and legends of the sertão, which seem able to recreate the world in a new light, restoring harmony, dignity and purpose. Although, therefore, he is a writer attempting to interpret the popular imagination, which partly explains his self proclaimed title of O Decifrador, for he believes he has the capacity to understand and express the desires and vision of his people, Quaderna, like Suassuna himself, is really attempting to adapt popular materials to give concrete form to his own view of the world and debate his own

problems. It is significant that a first person narrative, with Quaderna speaking, dominates large sections of A Pedra do Reino, whereas folheto narrative verse, apart from the frequent use of lines of introduction by the poet, conventionally use the third person. In her comprehensive study of the structure of A Pedra do Reino, McBride argues that the first person narrative of Quaderna is counterbalanced by other narrators offering other points of view. In the interview between the Corregedor and Quaderna, the Corregedor effectively becomes another narrator as he confronts Quaderna with the testimonies obtained from other witnesses and with his own theories, whilst Quaderna, pressurised to give as much information about life in Taperoá as possible, tells of events which he did not witness himself, but which were described to him by other characters, and thereby converts himself into a spokesman for many other points of view. This is compounded by the inclusion of the numerous extracts of other writers which Quaderna quotes. McBride concludes that the role Quaderna plays in mediating other, at times contradictory, voices and points of view, makes his own point of view virtually neutral, what she describes as the *camera point of view* as conceptualised by Friedman, one which registers what occurs in front of it without selection or arrangement in order to record and transmit, without thinking, the slice of life passing before it. This neutrality enables Quaderna to reveal other aspects of sertão life, above all collective desires and myths, and thereby counterbalances the distance created by his own individual vision. (26)

It is true that the multi-dimensional structure of the work, operating at different narrative levels, provides various angles of

vision, so that Suassuna's novels are far from conventional first person narratives, with the limitations in point of view which that entails. At times Quaderna is in the foreground narrating to the reader directly; at others he recedes into the background, allowing other narrative voices to take over. Nonetheless, there is nothing that occurs in the book that is not ultimately channelled through him, and, as already indicated, it is he who gives overall coherence to the work, for it is his construction, his testimony, which will in the end constitute his literary masterpiece. He wants to include as many different styles and views as possible, but he has the crucial task of deciding how to arrange those different materials into one single composition. We only ever see the popular cultural expressions, collective myths and aspirations that appear in the novels through Quaderna's eyes, so they can never be separated from his own private vision of the world, and viewed through his eyes, those expressions of the popular imagination acquire new, significantly different connotations.

If Quaderna is caught between the worlds of popular and erudite literature, he is also stranded between the realms of reality and fantasy. His apparent mediocrity depresses him, for he sees himself as cowardly and devoid of talent. He was initially sent by his family to a seminary to train as a priest, but failed miserably and was expelled. Now he has a minor public office, obtained for him through his family connections, running a small library in Taperoá, and spends the rest of his time writing trivia for a local paper, studying astrology and the art of poetry and running a consultancy to advise people on their romantic affairs and a club for gentlemen, which is

essentially a gambling den and brothel. His imagination exaggerates the importance of all these pursuits, so that there seems no limit to his egocentricity. In introducing himself to the Corregedor at the beginning of their interview in A Pedra do Reino, Quaderna confirms his name and then states:

(...)sou ainda redator da Gazeta de Taperoá, jornal conservador e noticioso no qual me encarrego da página literária, enigmática, charadística e zodiacal. Posso dizer, assim, que além de Poeta-escrivão e bibliotecário, sou jornalista, Astrólogo, literato oficial de banca aberta, consultor sentimental, Rapsodo de diascevista do Brasil! (27)

The disdainful reaction of the Corregedor sets the pattern for the comic contrast between the two characters, with the Corregedor continually deflating Quaderna's pompous claims. Imagination alone is not enough for Quaderna, however, for in this hard, macho environment, where the values of physical toughness and bravado are extolled, he feels himself to be pitifully unable to compete:

Eu, que nascera e me criara admirando as caçadas, as cavalgadas, os tiroteios, as brigas de faca e outras cavalarias e heroísmos sertanejos, tinha a desgraça de ser mau cavaleiro, mau caçador e mau brigador. (28)

He learns to survive, and even prosper at times, in such an environment by using his cunning, imitating the pícaros that he has learnt to admire through his reading of folhetos. Thus, in A Pedra do Reino, when he and his brother, Malaquias, are out riding and hunting with members of another local family, the Pereiras, Quaderna covers up for his lack of skill in such pursuits, and preserves his and his family's honour in the face of the old macho rivalry between the

Garcia Barrettos and the Pereiros, through a series of tricks and by manipulating language in order to ingratiate himself with others. Finally, In Folheto XX, he even claims the ultimate trophy of huntsmanship when he shoots a puma, completely by accident. Later in the novel, during his interview with the Corregedor, he attempts to use the same conversational skills, albeit with little success, to evade the questions and accusations of the Corregedor. For Suassuna, This element of the picaresque is a crucial ingredient of his work, and Rachel de Queiroz recalls how at one point he described the book on which he was working to her -A Pedra do Reino- as a *picaresque novel*, though, after reading the book later, she herself rejected such a classification, stating that it was so complex and revealed so many influences that it defied categorization. (29) Wilson Martins notes that A Pedra do Reino has many of the characteristics which typify picaresque writing, such as its tone, its intrigue and its episodic composition, with each episode reinforcing the work's overall unity, but he notes that Suassuna's work breaks with many of the rigid and restrictive conventions of the picaresque. It is not the picaresque elements themselves that are significant, he concludes, but rather the way in which the work fuses the material and form of the picaresque novel with the material and form of the conventional novel. (30)

The picaresque aspects, strong as they are, are subsumed into the framework of a modern novel, into which are also incorporated sophisticated techniques and themes of vast scope, such as debates on political ideology and artistic creation, all of which are far beyond

the range of the traditional picaresque novel. Quaderna is far from the conventional pícaro of folheto literature, for we see many other dimensions of his character, including his feeling of guilt, his struggle against weakness and mediocrity, his dreams and his metaphysical anguish. He is a complex character, painfully aware of his failings and full of massive dreams that far exceed mere strategies for survival. His cunning enables him to survive certain difficult situations, but it is shown to be fundamentally inadequate in dealing with the deeper afflictions that trouble him. The picaresque is thus presented in a new context, viewed in a new critical light created by the other dimensions of the novel. The result is essentially a parody of picaresque literature.

Perhaps above all Quaderna is a dreamer. He dreams about the great mission he has embarked upon: to become King of Brazil, restoring the messianic dynasty of his ancestors and leading the country into a new glorious phase of its history, and to establish himself as the genius of the Brazilian race by writing the work that most embodies the spirit of the Brazilian people. It is not simply a question of egocentricity however, for his dreams function at various levels. Quaderna is deeply saddened by the decline of traditional patterns of life in the sertão, and the old social relations they embodied, which is epitomized for him by the decline in fortunes of his own family, the Garcia Barrettos, once among the most powerful landowners of the region. He is proud, for example, that he and all his brothers work in traditional activities, as cowhands, popular poets or artesans, partly because the family must not be besmirched by its members selling themselves on the labour market, but also because

of a deeper belief that such crafts are genuinely superior to the degrading and exploitative wage labour offered by the bourgeoisie.

Thus he explains to the Corregedor during their interview in A Pedra do Reino:

(...)nenhum Quaderna trabalha para filho-da-puta nenhum! Proibidos pelo consuetudinário-fidalgo da família, nenhum Quaderna tem patrão nenhum que exija de nós obrigações e os trabalhos que têm os industriais, os comerciantes e outros desgraçados e danados Burgueses com vocação de burro de carga! Todos nós só temos profissões livres, ociosas e marginais de Fidalgos! (31)

This point extends beyond the confines of the sertão, for it seems to Quaderna that human existence as a whole has lost its spirituality, dignity and nobility. Cold, calculating rationalism has stifled the creative imagination and utilitarianism dictates behaviour, and, through his dreams, Quaderna struggles to find the values lost in the process. As was seen in the previous chapter, this follows very closely Suassuna's own theories on art as embodied in the Movimento Armorial.

Essentially, Suassuna turns to popular culture to find those values, but it is above all the popular cultural expression of a past era. Stories and memories relayed in both novels, and especially the myths and legends that have been passed down through the years, recall distant periods of sertão history, helping to link the past with the present. It is this recreation of the popular memory and of a perception of the world which breaks down orthodox temporal divisions, which creates the sense of timelessness to which critics like Lind refer. Yet the main plot of the novels is focussed on the early part

of the present century. In A Pedra do Reino, the 1930s dominate. Quaderna, writing his work in prison in 1938, is concerned above all with recalling events from previous eight years, particularly the mysterious murder of his Godfather, Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia Barretto in 1930, the abduction of the latter's youngest son, Sinésio, on the same day, and the return to Taperoá of Sinésio five years later, like a new Dom Sebastião, a saviour come to redeem his people. Those events occur exactly one hundred years after the messianic movement of Quaderna's ancestors, the Ferreira-Quadernas, in the sertão da Pedra do Reino, between 1835 and 1838, which involved human sacrifice and led to armed conflict with the forces of the authorities. A baby which miraculously survived the massacre, and was then brought up by a priest, went on to become Quaderna's grandfather. The timing of the events in the 1930s is seen as of particular significance by Quaderna, reinforcing his belief in the power of astrological forces and the forces of destiny. As a child, his initial sense of shame at the atrocities committed by his ancestors gradually gives way to a feeling of pride, a feeling that his family is marked out for a glorious destiny, and he dedicates himself to a study of the family's past:

Tudo isso ia sendo pacientemente estudado e entendido por mim que, à medida que me punha adulto, ia guardando tudo isso em meu coração, para quando se completasse, de 1935 a 1938, a Século da Pedra do Reino, abrindo-se cominho para que um Ferreira-Quaderna se sentasse novamente no Trono do Sertão do Brasil. (32)

The 1930s was a period when feudal, or semi-feudal patterns of life still dominated large areas of the sertão, and the great struggle

between the landowning oligarchy and the new, urban based bourgeoisie was reaching its apogee. Popular poetry flourished without significant competition from the mass media, then in its infancy, and bands of cangaceiros roamed the region. Communications and transport systems in the backlands were still very primitive. This was the period in which Suassuna spent his childhood, and which, in his novels, he recalls with nostalgia. As Angel Rama remarks, for Suassuna the seduction of the past is more powerful than the mediation of the present (33) Now himself living in the city, Suassuna, like other armorial artists, evokes a way of life that has already undergone significant transformation. Chapter 3 of this study attempted to show how the folhetos of the market place cover all aspects of contemporary life, constantly incorporating new themes and issues. Such themes are notably absent from Suassuna's novels, however. The more traditional poetry, recreating old European romances, the adventures of cangaceiros and miraculous and mythical subjects, are chosen instead. This is clearly demonstrated by Suassuna's choice of folheto verses to quote in his work, A Pedra do Reino. In a study of the novel, Candace Slater identifies 24 genuine folheto poems cited in the work, the vast majority of them dealing with the adventures of popular heroes, religious or moral subjects or traditional satirical or picaresque themes, and eleven other ballads, presumably created by Suassuna himself, but attributed to characters in the novel, which deal mainly with mythical or mystical themes. (34) This presents a picture of the popular poet as generally conservative, essentially a conserver of tradition. In Folheto XXXVI of A Pedra do Reino, João Melchiades describes his art as a cantador in the following terms:

Gosto, também, de combater o Protestantismo e os novas-seitas, porque querem se afastar dos tracejados da luz da antigüidade católica! As coisas e histórias velhas influem muito para o progresso da Poesia: as histórias passadas recordam a memória imortal dos antístites e antepassados, revivendo na memória do Poeta, que depois, faz chegar ao ouvido do mais rude o toque da Memória dos tempos idos! (35)

There is no denying that popular poets do preserve age old stories and myths, constantly developing them and presenting them in modified forms, but also striking is the capacity of popular poetry to adapt and address itself to new circumstances, problems and themes. That dynamism is nullified in Suassuna's novels.

Quaderna's vision of the world.

To a large extent the conservative view of popular culture presented in the novels can be explained by Quaderna's, and Suassuna's, strong nostalgia for past days in the sertão. As has already been argued, the mythical vision of the sertão created in the works is composed, above all, of elements, materials and symbols from the past. Quaderna seems to fear losing touch with that past. In Folheto XLV of A Pedra do Reino, Pedro Beato, an old mystic, tells Quaderna that part of his trouble is that he is constantly struggling to recuperate the power and prestige of his family, the Garcia-Barrettos, and, in particular, As Maravilhas, one of their former estates, on which Quaderna grew up. Quaderna replies that that land has special significance for him, embodying the innocence and happiness of his childhood. His struggle to recuperate it therefore symbolizes his broader struggle for peace of mind, dignity and contentment:

Ali foi o começo da minha vida, Pedro, um começo puro, talvez o único tempo de inocência e felicidade que eu gozei, o tempo em que meu Pai, minha Mãe e meu Padrinho eram vivos e me apareciam como três imagens, aquelas imagens de São José, Nossa Senhora e São Joaquim que, existem na capela da "Onça Malhada"! (36)

Here one of the fundamental themes of Suassuna's novels emerges: the time old notion of humans doomed to betray God and fall from grace. Quaderna can never shed himself of his feelings of guilt, and an overwhelming sadness over the fate of all humans, born to suffer, separate from God, with death as the only certainty. Such feelings are reinforced in Quaderna by visions which he has, which he explains as partly Divine revelations and partly the product of his own prophetic and poetic powers. In Folheto LXXI of A Pedra do Reino he describes to the corregedor a vision he had of a huge puma, vile and mangey, which for him becomes the symbol of the whole cursed world on which man is condemned to live:

Era uma Onça enorme e mal definida, leprosa, desdentada, sarnenta e escarninha(...)Por entre os pelos e as chagas sarnentas dessa Onça-Parda, eu não via agora, mas sabia, com certeza, que errava a Raça piolhosa dos homens, raça também sarnenta e sem grandeza, coçando-se idiotamente como um bando de macacos diante da Ventania Crestadora, enquanto espera a Morte à qual está, de véspera, condenada! (37)

It is a vision which never leaves him. He continues:

(...)foi um acontecimento decisivo para mim, porque, a partir daí, nunca mais a imagem da Onça-Parda desligou, para mim, da imagem do mundo(...)aquela visagem me jogou, de uma vez para sempre, no buraco cheio de cinza, na descoberta de que de que o mundo era um Bicho sarnento e os homens os piolhos e carrapatos chupasangue que erram por entre seus pelos pardos, sobre seu corpo chagado, escarificado e ferido, marcado de cicatrizes e peladuras, e queimado a fogo

lento pelo Sol calcinante e pela ventania abrasadora do Sertão. (38)

Though some of the imagery employed resembles that found in some folheto verse, the concentration on the metaphysical anguish of the protagonist distances the work from the thematic content commonly found in popular poetry. There are many folhetos which deal with religious and moralising themes, but they are never expressed in the deeply personal manner of Quaderna.

Haunted by his thoughts of humankind condemned to suffering and death, Quaderna takes refuge in religious worship. Dissatisfied with the severe, traditional Catholicism with which he grew up, and anguished by his inability to live up to its dictates and strict moral code, Quaderna invents his own religion, which he calls catolicismo-sertanejo, a fusion of certain catholic beliefs and rites and others from the messianic traditions of his ancestors. Alone, he carries out his own rituals, in which he appeals to God for support, understanding and forgiveness, for his life of promiscuity and drunkenness fills him with guilt, and even fear. Thoughts of death torment him, and he begs God that he might be allowed to enjoy himself whilst he is still alive. In Folheto LXXII of A Pedra do Reino he describes one of his rituals to the Corregedor, in which he addresses God before he eats:

Minha cara, minha boca, meus cabelos, hão de cair aos pedaços. Meus olhos vão ser comidos pelos Gaviões! Meu corpo se tornará um esqueleto, a Principio fétido e medonho: depois, embranquecidos pelo Sol, meus ossos hão de separar-se um dos outros! (...) Assim, já que vou ser comido pelos Gaviões e Carrarás, pelos Urubus e cachorros-do-Mato errantes no Sertão, ó Senhor, não leveis a mal que agora, enquanto estou vivo, eu me deleite comendo a carne dos bichos que cacei e matei (...) (39)

He fears that all sensual pleasure might be a betrayal of God, and he is haunted by his tragic vision of all humans, wretched, weak and pathetic, condemned to death in a hostile, miserable world. His religion, however, provides some solace, and conveniently enables him to enjoy life without losing his soul:

Era, em suma, uma religião que me salvava a alma e, ao mesmo tempo, permitia que eu mantivesse meu bom comer, meu bom beber e meu bom fuder, coisas com as quais afastava a tentação da visagem da Onça e da Cinza. (40)

His personal catolicismo-sertaneio, however, relies in part on thought traditional to Brazilian messianism, calling on God to avenge the poor and punish the rich, for example, a notion which appears frequently in allegorical form in the folhetos. In his ritual, Quaderna calls out:

Cantemos ao Deus de Fogo do Sertão, porque ele manifestou gloriosamente seu poder, precipitando no mar as máquinas e as impresas, os engenhos infernais dos Estrangeiros e traidores, castigando a força e o opróbrio dos Poderosos que nos oprimiam e exaltando o Sertão, com sua coragem, suas pedras, seus espinhos, seus cavalos e seus Cavaleiros! (41)

Stronger than the appeal for help for the poor and oppressed, however, is Quaderna's concern for personal redemption. He asks God to give him the faith and strength that will give his own life meaning and enable him to accept his own mortality:

Só assim meu Reino será verdade, só assim meu sangue e meus ossos serão verdade, só assim será verdade a Furna do Mundo e a Furna Sagrada para onde todos nós caminhamos e que sagra a Onça da Morte, realizando sua união final com a Onça Sagrada do Senhor de Fogo! (42)

In this way, Quaderna borrows and adapts figures and images from North East mythology in order to express his own personal vision of the world, his anguish and his hopes. In Folheto LVI of A Pedra do Reino, for example, he describes the *Bicha Bruzacã* to the Corregedor. It is a huge, malicious monster, said to be responsible for the natural disasters inflicted on the inhabitants of the North East, such as drought and storms at sea. For Quaderna, it embodies all evil on earth, and one of his major aims is to find it, kill it and drink its blood, which will bring him redemption and make him immortal. In both novels the figure of *Morte Caetana* appears, the spirit of death according to popular belief. At the beginning of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, set in 1911, she stalks through the sertão in the form of a puma, watching the leading members of the major families of the Paraíba oligarchy making their way to the Onça Malhada ranch for a meeting aiming to settle their differences and reach a political agreement. She is the omen of death and destruction, and as she lies in wait one of the families, the Villars, is ambushed, signifying the frustration of attempts to end the political conflicts and violence that would deeply mark Quaderna's life. The *Bicha Bruzacã* and *Morte Caetana* are the creations of the popular imagination, but for Quaderna they come to serve as deeply personal symbols, through which he conceptualizes the tragic view of life, which, as will be seen, has largely resulted from his own experience.

At times however, his creative imagination and Divine vision combine to create an alternative, idealised view of the sertão and of life itself, which gives him some sense of inner peace and hope. In Folheto LXXIII of A Pedra do Reino he describes another of his visions

to the Corregedor, one in which his feelings of guilt, corruption and despair are overcome, temporarily at least, by a sense of redemption. Lost in the scrubland of the sertão one day, Quaderna fell asleep and saw an image of himself, repulsive and leprous, at the foot of a rock. Morte Caetana suddenly appeared before him and made him climb the rock, on the top of which he felt, briefly, cleansed, redeemed and unified with the Divine Spirit:

(...)consegua chegar ao cimo. E aí, milagre dos milagres! eu descobria, afinal, ou melhor, eu sentia com meu sangue, que *tudo* era divino: a Vida e a Morte, o sexo e a secura desértica, a podridão e o sangue. O lajedo parecia com a Pedra do Reino, a do chuveiro prateado, e eu sabia, com o sangue, que se conseguisse escalá-lo, experimentaria, no alto, de uma vez só, o gozo do Amor, o poder do Reino, a fruição da Beleza e a união com a Divinidade(...) (43)

Quaderna's search for redemption and dreams of an alternative, more fulfilling existence are intimately linked to the theme of Sebastianism that is a central part of A Pedra do Reino. In Folhetos XXXIV and XXXV of the novel, Samuel Wanderes tells the story of the disappearance of the Portuguese prince, Dom Sebastião, at the battle of Alcácer-Quibir in 1578, the event which provided the basis for the development of the myth of the Prince's eventual return in order to lead the poor and oppressed into a new age of freedom and prosperity. This popular belief took root in Brazil, and has played a significant role throughout Quaderna's family history. It was his ancestors who established the series of messianic communities at Pedra Bonita in the 1830s, and another of his relatives, Sinésio, who, having disappeared in 1930, apparently abducted and believed by many to have been killed,

returns to Taperoá in 1935, partly to lay claim to the inheritance of his murdered father, Dom Pedro Sebastião, but also to revive the same dreams of a new, more just society that inspired the Pedra Bonita movement a hundred earlier. Sinésio thus appears as the latest Redeemer of the sertão poor, given the title of O Alumiado by Quaderna. In introducing him in Folheto II of A Pedra do Reino, Quaderna states:

(...)para evocá-lo aqui talvez seja ainda mais necessário que eu me socorra das Musas(...) Cercava-o, efetivamente, uma atmosfera sobrenatural, uma espécie de "aura" que só mesmo o fogo da Poesia pode descrever e que, mesmo depois da sua chegada, ainda podia ser entrevista em torno da sua cabeça, pelo menos "por aqueles que tinham olhos para ver". (44)

Sinésio remains a mystical, almost supernatural figure throughout the novel. Much of the description associated with him, such as that of his entry into Taperoá with a cavalcade of imposing horsemen bearing flags with heraldic insignias, attempts to evoke the atmosphere of the old romances of chivalry.

The specific interests of Quaderna and his family are inseparable from the broader aims of establishing a realm of liberty and justice which underlie sertão Sebastianism. Sinésio's crusade, the Demanda Novelosa as Quaderna terms it, not only promises to bring justice for the poor, but also the restoration of some of the power and prestige of the Garcia-Barretto family. In the process, Quaderna will have new possibilities for achieving some of his own lofty ambitions. He thus links up all the major moments in his family's history -the 1830s messianic movement, the Princesa rebellion undertaken by some of his relatives against the authorities in 1930 and the Demanda Novelosa-

presenting them as proof of his glorious family background, and as the basis of his own claims to greatness. He says to the Corregedor in Folheto LXV of A Pedra do Reino:

Sr. Corregedor, o que eu queria mesmo, confesso, era ser Imperador do Sertão e do Brasil, para me tornar Gênio da Raça Brasileira. Agora, que para isso eu queria unir o movimento da Pedra do Reino com a Revolução de Princesa e a Demanda Novelosa que empreendemos com Sinésio, isso eu queria! (45)

Sinésio and his army will overthrow the Bourgeois Republic, Quaderna hopes, and establish a popular monarchy to govern Brazil. That monarchy will ensure the well being of the Brazilian People, whilst also offering Quaderna the opportunity of self fulfillment, for he sees his own family as the natural heirs to the throne. It is true that, ultimately, it is not the dream of power or prestige that attracts him to Sebastianism, but rather its vision of a different society where harmony and justice reign, and where he will be morally regenerated, free at last from the feelings of guilt and corruption that torment him. In the end, however, it is the personal affliction of the protagonist that is emphasised by the theme of Sebastianism in A Pedra do Reino, rather than the collective aspirations of the mass of sertanejos.

Although, therefore, the tone and the atmosphere of the popular romanceiro are retained throughout Suassuna's novels, it is the individual perceptions and concerns of the protagonist Quaderna, and of the author himself, which always prevail. The autobiographical element of the novels has been well documented, emphasised by Wilson Martins in his article on A Pedra do Reino, for example, and examined

in more detail by Candace Slater in her study of the same work. (46) As will be seen, some significant aspects of Quaderna's life and experiences coincide with those of Suassuna, and the protagonist clearly expresses many of the author's own views and concerns, as voiced in numerous articles and interviews, and in his writings on the Movimento Armorial to which reference has already been made. Though many of these autobiographical details can be found in A Pedra do Reino, they are even more evident in Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, for in this second novel Quaderna faces another interrogation from the Corregedor, during which he is asked to give information about his past life. As a result, he reveals his personal anguish and fears, and speaks of his attempts to confront them. His recollections of childhood are almost idyllic, evoking a time of peace and purity. The colours, sounds and aromas of those days are engraved in his mind, but the sweetness of the memories is intermingled with a powerful sadness. He recalls waking up alone in a hammock, and feeling for the first time the sense of abandonment and isolation that would frequently return to him in later life, but it is above all the violent deaths of his father and godfather that have marked him, shattering his world. All his activities since then, political, religious and literary, have in one way or another represented an attempt to reconstruct that broken world and recover some of the lost peace and harmony. In Folheto XVII of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, he sadly tells the Corregedor of the strange force, again conceived of as a puma, which destroyed his happiness:

(...)aquela Onça amarela e sangrenta que destroçou minha vida, criando em mim, ditada não sei por qual lei, Sina ou divindade cruel, a minha maldição, a

obrigação inútil e desesperada de tentar refazer, com os escombros e destroços do mundo, um novo Reino, reluzente e sagrado como o que existia "antes". (47)

Here is the strong sense of loss that pervades so much armorial art.

As he talks, Quaderna clearly links the tragic history of his family with the what he perceives as the tragic history of the sertão as a whole, the decline of one matching the decline of the other. Gradually coming to accept anguish as an inherent part of human existence, Quaderna searched for ways of confronting it and decided that the creativity of his imagination offered the best solution, capable of producing an alternative world through visions, dreams and literary work. He was particularly inspired by the creations of sertão popular culture, which seemed to him to be more intuitive and spontaneous than erudite literature. Thus, he suggests to the Corregedor during their second interview that his dreams, fantasies and writings might above all be an attempt at self understanding, and an effort to come to terms with the tragic and violent world he finds around him:

Talvez, aliás, Sr. Corregedor, meu depoimento se dirija somente a mim mesmo e à minha família, àqueles que foram atingidos, como eu, pela morte de meu Pai e pela degolação de meu Padrinho. E mais ainda, Sr. Corregedor: talvez tudo o que eu diga, tudo o que estou procurando alinhar aqui aos poucos, tenha validade somente para mim mesmo. Talvez tudo isso seja somente uma busca desesperada que eu empreendo sobre minha identidade, tentando dar algum sentido à sangrenta desordem que, desde minha infância, envolveu e despedaçou minha vida. (48)

Like all human beings, Quaderna is wretched, and, like all others, his fundamental problem is his daily betrayal of God:

(...)eu, mesquinho Decifrador de charadas, e
funcionário público semelhante àqueles a quem desprezo;
eu, cujo único problema, cujo único assunto é a traição
contínua e dilaceradora que faço cotidianamente a Deus
e a seu Reino. (49)

However, through the power of his imagination he can at least confront the sadness of life, if not actually change it. He denies that he is merely a romantic dreamer or a clown, for his imagination offers a positive response to the ugliness and sordidness of the real world. Laughter and fantasy not only help him survive and preserve his sanity, he claims, but also express his rebellion against the corruption of that world:

é o riso-a-cavalo, grosseiro e macho, que permite
reunir corajosamente as injustiças, as feiúras e os
destroços da vida real para, com eles, empreender o
galope do Sonho, e manter, assim, a chama da minha
Epopéia, da minha insurreição permanente, contra as
feiúras e injustiças do real. (50)

Quaderna's dreams are beautiful precisely because they contrast with the ugliness of the world about him, and they are given concrete expression through his poetry and religious practices. He regularly retreats to a high rock on the outskirts of Taperoá to carry out his rituals and induce visions with the help of a powerful and sacred wine whose secret recipe was concocted by his ancestors during the messianic movement at Pedra Bonita the previous century. In Folheto X of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, he describes one of his visions in which the sertão is transformed into a magical kingdom, again evoking the world of the ancient chivalric romances:

Uma sensação deliciosa me invadia. Abri os olhos, e o
Sertão me apareceu, todo, como o Reino que era para
mim, desde que eu passara a entender melhor os

fascínios e encantações que ele me dirigia por trás de sua aspereza, de sua pobreza dura, cruel e despedaçadora. O Sol dourava muralhas e castelos de pedra, (...)Povoavam-no astrosos desfiles de Cavaleiros e batalhas, de vinditas e emboscadas. Galopavam, em suas estradas e caatingas, Cangaceiros e Vaqueiros vestidos de couro castanho e empoeirado, trazendo aguilhadas ou compridos punhais na mão. (51)

Quaderna argues that such dreams and visions enable him to confront reality and visualize new possibilities, an attitude which simply follows the example of his people, the sertanejos, who relate to the world through myths and magic.

Quaderna's views echo statements by Suassuna himself. As was seen in the last chapter, he has constantly stated that literature should allow as free a rein as possible to the imagination, and be aesthetically pleasing, rather than attempt to document or record the world according to sociological formulae, and he has strongly denied that his approach to writing is a form of escape or an avoidance of social questions, arguing that it merely attempts to address those questions in a different way. He has also emphasised the role of humour in literature, saying of Don Quixote, for example:

Acho essa vitória sobre a tragicidade da vida, pelo riso, um ato de coragem. E a isso já tem chamado de otimismo trágico, e dentro disso aí posso me situar. (52)

Laughter is a vital way of confronting what Suassuna perceives as the essentially tragic nature of life. In the same interview he states:

Sou um sujeito perfeitamente consciente de que a própria condição humana tem em si um elemento da tragicidade. Bastaria a morte para isso. Você vê que, no fundo, a vida é um beco sem saída, porque faça o que fizer, você está condenado à morte. (53)

In the novels, therefore, Quaderna, in addition to the role of popular poet interpreting the collective perceptions and myths of the rural poor of the sertão, also wrestles with these major personal dilemmas of the author himself. In an interview with José Augusto Guerra, Suassuna confirms that another of the attractions which he saw in the novel was the opportunity it afforded him to deal with aspects of his personal experience, something he was not able to do as a dramatist:

Yo me volvi hacia la novela precisamente porque algunas de las cosas que tenía en mi mundo interior no cabían en la obra de teatro. Esas experiencias, por ejemplo, que yo tuve en mi infancia, las luchas de mi familia, todo eso no era a propósito para el teatro, sino tema para novela. (54)

Many details of Quaderna's upbringing correspond to Suassuna's own. Both have grown up on family plantations in the sertão and have become fascinated by the popular culture of the region, and the details of life in Taperoá that appear in the novels are based on the author's own recollections of the childhood years he spent in that town in the 1930s. Particularly vivid are Quaderna's memories of the political violence and persecution suffered by his family when he was still very young, which he recounts to the Corregedor in the final folhetos of Ao Sol da onça Caetana, and which are drawn from Suassuna's personal experience. The author and narrator share the same birthday, June 16th, Quaderna in 1897 and Suassuna in 1927. As a child, Suassuna received instruction from two uncles from opposing sides of the political spectrum, like the Professors Clemente and Samuel who

educate Quaderna. Quaderna's father is killed, and the murder of his godfather, Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia Barretto, occurs in the same year, 1930, in which Suassuna's own father was killed. Both author and narrator have been deeply marked by that violence and its effect on their families, and just as Quaderna, through his religious, political and literary practices, attempts to piece together his broken world and recover a sense of harmony, so does Suassuna through his writing, reconciling contradictions and creating an alternative universe with the symbols and images of the sertão culture of his childhood, as suggested by Maximiano Campos:

A infância marcada pelo assassinato do pai, um cavalheiro sertanejo que chegou á presidência da Paraíba, as lutas da sua família e as perseguições sofridas, lhe deram uma visão trágica do mundo. Visão esta que está carregada de símbolos e mitos, códigos de honra e disputas de vida e morte. Com essa visão é que Suassuna fez o seu castelo de sonho e beleza; é o menino, já adulto e feito escritor, que tenta interpretar e conviver com essa fera bravia, a sua terra. (55)

The novels certainly cannot be read as an autobiography of Ariano Suassuna, however. There are many significant differences between author and narrator. Throughout both works Quaderna is mocked, the ridiculousness of many of his attitudes and ideas fully exposed, but overall he is treated sympathetically. Through his dreams he yearns to construct something more fulfilling, beautiful and harmonious, but is constantly frustrated by a real world that does not understand, and operates according to different standards and values. It is an effort which is seen as tragically futile and yet heroic, full of both humour and sadness. It is this, Quaderna's personal struggle, which is of

central interest in the novels, and a wide range of popular forms are used to express it, necessarily adapted for the new context created.

Quaderna's search for harmony.

In Suassuna's novels, the principal social conflict that characterizes life in the sertão, and with which Quaderna struggles to come to terms, is not that between peasant and landowner, as in the case of the folheto poetry of the region, but rather that between the traditional landowning families of the interior, to whom the sertão peasantry is allied, and the rising bourgeoisie, whose power is based in the cities rather than on the land, and in industry rather than in agriculture and the raising of livestock. Sinésio symbolizes the alliance between aristocracy and peasant, being the son of Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia-Barretto, one of the most powerful landowners of the sertão, and yet also embodying the peasants' hopes for a new, more just social order, hopes which are given concrete expression in the political campaign organised around him, the Demanda Novelosa. In Folheto LXII of A Pedra do Reino, following the arrival of Sinésio's cavalcade into Taperoá, Dr. Pedro Gouveia, spokesman for the troop, calls to the people to support Sinésio in his attempt to regain his lost inheritance and family rights of which he has been deprived by his enemies:

Sozinho contra todos, raptado, perseguido, encarcerado, maltratado, órfão, agora ameaçado de morte, com quem poderia ele contar, senão com o Povo, esse Povo bom, sofredor e pobre, do Sertão? Foi sempre ao lado desse Povo que ele esteve, foi sempre a seu lado que ele apareceu, e é isso que os seus inimigos não perdoam!
(56)

Likewise. Quaderna frequently emphasises his own links with the poor. Unlike his mentors, Clemente and Samuel, who continually speak about the sertanejos but are incapable of understanding them or of communicating with them, Quaderna claims that he, who due his to family circumstances has never been integrated into the relatively privileged social circles into which he was born, has acquired a unique insight into the lives of the poor, and has shared their vision of the world and their forms of cultural expression. Despite their economic and social differences, Quaderna sees his family and the peasantry of the backlands united by a broad, common sertão culture, a common way of life. Describing his godfather, Dom Pedro Sebastião Garcia-Barretto, to the Corregedor in Folheto XVI of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, he says:

Era austero, tinha dignidade, compostura, coragem, devoção aos seus princípios ortodoxamente religiosos, a segurança e a sobriedade de maneiras com que executava seu código de honra, estreito mas firme. E, por paradoxal que isso possa parecer a Vossa Excelência, era, assim, muito mais aproximado do Povo e do Reino de fraternidade pobre e justiça com que sonho do que os Burgueses ricos e corrutos da Cidade. (57)

The common enemy is thus identified as the urban bourgeoisie which, extending its political and economic interests, threatens the traditional patterns of sertão life. Above all, it is the attachment to the land that links landowner and peasant. Thinking back through his childhood, Quaderna recalls moments when such feelings of fraternity found clear expression, as in Folheto XX of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, when he tells the Corregedor of one occasion when he and his

family, out hunting, stopped by a river to eat, and ended up sharing the meal with some peasants fishing nearby:

(...)meu Tio Alfredo pegou uma galinha assada, chamou os homens para perto de nós, e terminamos todos comendo juntos, fraternalmente, numa grande alegria e contentamento, os filhos do Sertão e da mesma terra sagrada da Bruna Castanha do Brasil, com um dia honesto de trabalho e de vida ganho para frente -os filhos do mesmo Deus. (58)

The new social order which Quaderna visualizes, particularly through his adherence to sebastianism, will reaffirm the unity of all the sertão population. He seeks harmony and human fulfilment through the traditional, rural patterns of life in the North East, which must resist the corrosive influence of expanding urbanization and industrialization. This is the area of conflict that is of paramount importance to Suassuna himself. As seen in chapter 3, the concerns of the popular poet lie elsewhere.

Also of interest to the author, and discussed within the novels, are the ideological divisions which polarized Brazilian politics in the 1930s, and which continue to do so today to a considerable degree. These are clearly represented in the frequently acrimonious arguments between Samuel and Clemente which regularly occur in A Pedra do Reino. Samuel, affiliated to the Integralistas, the Brazilian Fascist Movement, represents the extreme right, extolling the virtues of government by monarchy, with a traditional nobility in support. He constantly emphasises the Iberian roots of Brazilian culture, expressing contempt for the role played by Indians, negros and mestiços in its development. Clemente is the complete opposite. From a poor, black family, he holds communist sympathies, arguing for a

revolution that will see the oppressed sectors of society assume power. For him, the basis of authentic Brazilian culture is provided by the Indians and negros. The extreme arguments each adopts, and the dogmatism with which they express them, are satirized by Quaderna in the novels. In Folheto XXXIX of A Pedra do Reino, for example, he mentions how everything, including all forms of scholarship and artistic creativity, is automatically divided into right and left by the two men:

A sociologia era da Esquerda, e a Literatura fortemente suspeita de direitismo. O "riso satírico e a realidade" eram da Esquerda, a "seriedade monolítica e o sonho", da Direita. A prosa era da Esquerda e a Poesia, da Direita; mas, mesmo ainda dentro do campo da Poesia, tomavam partido, pois a lírica era considerada "pessoal e subjetiva, e portanto direitista e reacionária", enquanto que a satírica, "social e moralizante, didática", era progressista e da Esquerda. (59)

It is in this Folheto that the differences of opinion between the two professors reach their climax, with Samuel insulting Luís Carlos Prestes, a major figure of the Brazilian Communist Party and a national hero as far as Clemente is concerned, and refusing to retract his comments. They decide to settle their disagreement by fighting a duel. Again, this evokes the ancient romances of chivalry, but, typically, it is treated humorously by Suassuna. Elements of farce predominate in the description of the duel itself, fought by the two inept professors on old horses and with chamber pots as the weapons, and of Clemente's victory parade through the town afterwards. Inspired by his triumph, which he sees as a moral victory for the left, Clemente declares his house and garden to be a free territory, a popular socialist republic with its own flag and constitution, and

with Clemente himself as Head of State. Samuel and Quaderna quickly follow the example. Samuel declares his home to be a fascist republic, "uma República integralista, unitária e centralizada", and Quaderna establishes his home as the promised kingdom envisaged in Sebastianist belief, where, he imagines, all Brazilians will be united in fraternity. The three men thus live out their individual dreams, each creating his own imaginary, ideal society. Quaderna is enthralled by the idea, describing it in Folheto IX of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana as:

(...)aquela idéia maravilhosa de fundarmos, em nossas respectivas casas, *Reinos e territórios livres*, realizando nossos sonhos(...)Que outras alegrias, que outros sonhos poderíamos ter senão esses, com o Brasil e o mundo vivendo os tristes, miseráveis e inquietantes dias que estávamos vendo? Clemente tivera uma idéia genial! (60)

Again, Quaderna's imagination provides him with a palliative for his sadness and discontent.

Suassuna, therefore, uses his novels as a forum for discussion of a wide range of issues relative to twentieth century Brazilian politics, culture, society and art, developing themes which are extraneous to the popular literary tradition of the North East. In Folheto XXIX of A Pedra do Reino, for example, Samuel and Clemente present their differing views of literary production, with Samuel extolling the role of individual creativity, and Clemente arguing that the greatest literary works are essentially collective creations of the masses, stories and poems which have developed gradually as they have been passed down through the generations, before finally being appropriated by individual erudite writers. In Folheto LXXIX of the same novel, two other characters, Adalberto Coura, a political

activist who advocates revolutionary socialism, and Arésio, the violent, self seeking half brother of Sinésio, discuss possible ways for Brazil to confront the expanding imperialism of the United States, which, they both agree, is intent on imposing its materialistic values and narrow beliefs on the Brazilian people. However, the argument ends in violence when Arésio, having contemptuously rejected Adalberto's request for support for the revolutionary struggle, and declaring that the will and impulses of the individual will always be more powerful than the aspiration for liberty and the concern for the common good, strikes Adalberto to the ground and carries off his fiancée, Maria Inominata. As elsewhere in Suassuna's novels, dreams of a different social order are shown to be thwarted by destructive forces.

Facing conflict at all levels in the society around him, Quaderna desperately seeks to restore a sense of harmony. He attempts to fuse opposing attitudes and arguments in order to create an ideal synthesis, but his efforts continually result in absurdity. Because he remains politically in the centre, rejecting the arguments of both the left and the right, Clemente and Samuel nickname him "a Diana Indecisiva". Instead of aligning himself with either of the political camps, Quaderna selects those ideas from both which most attract him, and describes himself as a left-wing monarchist, persisting in his dreams of a Brazil that is socially, politically and culturally united. He declares in Folheto XL of A Pedra do Reino, for example:

Meu sonho é fundir os Fidalgos guerreiros e cangaceiros, como Sinhô Pereira e Jorge de Albuquerque Coelho, com os Fidalgos negros e vermelhos do Povo, fazendo uma Nação de guerreiros e Cavaleiros castanhos, e colocando esse povo da Onça-Castanha no poder! (61)

Deep down, Quaderna recognizes that his dream is impossible. He is unable to envisage any alternative way forward, however. As has already been seen, a powerful determinism underlies his view of life, and ultimately he sees humankind as helpless in the face of inexplicable hostile forces waged against it. In the final folhetos of Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, he recalls how, even as a young child, secure and content in the midst of his family, he felt a strong sense of foreboding, as if the happiness he experienced in those early years was inevitably doomed to destruction, and the same notion is frequently repeated in both novels.

It is the same desire for harmony which determines the nature of the work Quaderna is creating, his literary masterpiece. It has already been seen how he rejects the divisions commonly made between popular and erudite literary tradition, and merges together elements of both in order to relate his own story and convey his own concerns. He also attempts to develop his own literary style by combining what he describes as the oncismo advocated by Clemente, essentially a stark and realist style, with the tapirismo of Samuel, elaborate, exalted and romantic. This, he claims, enables him to present a more complete picture of the life and history of the sertão, revealing the harshness and poverty of the region, but also what he sees as its epic quality, namely the courage and creativity of its people. Thus, in Folheto III of A Pedra do Reino, he explains to his readers how his unique style permits him to give a full and vivid description of the entry of Sinésio's cavalcade into Taperoá, with the idealistic vision of his tapirismo magically embellishing reality:

(...)partí, uncisticamente, "da realidade raposa e afoscada do Sertão", com seus animais feios e plebeus, como o Urubu, o Sapo e a Lagartixa, e com os retirantes famintos, sujos, maltrapilhos e desdentados. Mas, por um artifício tapirista de estilo, pelo menos nessa primeira cena de estrada, só lembrei o que, da realidade pobre e uncista do Sertão, pudesse se combinar com os esmaltes e brasões tapiristas da Heráldica. Cuidei de só falar nas bandeiras que se usam realmente no Sertão para as procissões e para as Cavalhadas; nos gibões de honra, que são as armaduras de couro dos Sertanejos; (...)e em homens que, estando de gibão e montados a cavalo, não são homens sertanejos comuns, mas sim Cavaleiros à altura de uma história bandeirosa e cavalariana como a minha. (62)

The prime objective of Quaderna's work is not to convey the poverty and suffering of the sertão, but to imaginatively recreate the region into a new, idealised realm. It is the creative power of the popular poet, he believes, that can enable him to do this. Popular literary tradition provides him with the inspiration for his "estilo régio", an exuberant, exalted style with which he aims to give his narrative an heroic, epic tone. Exaggeration is a major characteristic of all great epic literature, he decides. However, just as Quaderna's ego is constantly deflated, so his imagination is frequently curbed by the impositions of the social world around him. His tendency to exaggerate and embellish events when giving his testimony, for example, brings sharp reproval from the Corregedor, who reminds him that he is participating in an official, legal investigation, and is therefore required to give his evidence as accurately as possible.

The most striking feature of Suassuna's novels, therefore, is the combination of so many diverse materials and influences found within them. Of particular importance is the popular poetic tradition of the North East, providing the novels with many of their major themes,

aspects of style and much of their tone. However, this chapter has attempted to show how such popular materials assume radically different meanings within the context of the novels, where they are refashioned in order to convey Suassuna's own vision of the world and debate the issues that are of chief concern to him.

Suassuna's abandonment of public life and of literature.

To conclude this chapter, mention must be made of Suassuna's decision, taken in 1981, to end his literary career and his involvement with popular culture.

Significant political developments occurred in Brazil in the late 1970s. There was a marked deterioration in the national economy, and a notable strengthening of the opposition to the military government. In 1978 and 1979, trades unions organised a series of strikes, which had long been suppressed by the dictatorship, and sectors of the middle classes voiced demands for political reform. In March 1979, General João Baptista Figueiredo became president, promising to carry out the process of abertura, the redemocratization of the political life of the nation. Political groups began to reorganize, and new discussions on social, economic, political and cultural issues gathered momentum.

The question of popular culture was also reviewed in the light of these changing circumstances, and increasingly bitter criticism was made of Suassuna by opponents of the dictatorship for his work with popular culture during the most severe years of military repression. The Movimento Armorial had lost much of its early dynamism, and some of the original participants had left the group or dissociated themselves from it.

On August 9th, 1981, in a brief article entitled Despedida in the Diário de Pernambuco, where he regularly wrote a weekly column, Suassuna announced his abandonment of public life and of his literary career. He admitted that he had made mistakes in his work, but above all expressed bitterness towards the political leaders who had expressed support for his project for a national, popular art, but who, he claimed, had finally shown they had no genuine interest in the Brazilian people or Brazilian culture:

Achava que a Cultura brasileira só podia se realizar como eu a sonhava dentro de uma Política que realmente se fundamentasse no Povo. Os líderes políticos da classe dirigente brasileira diziam concordar comigo. Depois, amargurado e perplexo, descobri aos poucos que, na verdade, eles não tinham nenhum apreço nem pela Cultura nem pelo Povo brasileiro. (63)

He expressed the hope that a new government would be able to initiate policies of real benefit to both national culture and the Brazilian people. Finally, he announced that he would no longer be available for public engagements or interviews, and would produce no more novels, for literature no longer held any purpose for him:

Sou um homem perturbado por sonhos, quimeras e visões às vezes até utópicas da vida e do real. Depois que escrevi certas partes do romance que deixo inconcluso, comecei a me libertar de alguns dos fantasmas que me perseguem; assim, talvez possa começar a sair, também, do caos trevoso e palavroso da maldita literatura - a minha e a dos outros. Não me cobrem mais livros que não estou mais escrevendo e pelos quais já perdi qualquer interesse - pois uma das coisas de que preciso me livrar é exatamente a monstruosa vaidade literária. (64)

His writing, it seems, had satisfied some of his personal needs, but all his efforts had achieved little with regard to the broader aim of

developing a national, popular artistic expression. The contradictions in the thought underlying armorial art were never resolved, and the problematical nature of the whole concept of *national culture*, which this study has attempted to highlight, was either never fully appreciated or never given sufficient attention. The political circumstances of the nation made Suassuna's involvement in Brazilian popular culture in the 1970s all the more controversial.

Suassuna clearly became increasingly aware of all these problems, and increasingly disillusioned. His Despedida, however, ends on a typically enigmatic note:

(...)o que eu tinha a dizer, escrever ou fazer em pública, já fiz. Basta de tanta grandeza. O resto é um segredo, um segredo entre mim e Deus. Ainda uma vez lanço mão ao gasto e confortável arsenal literário e despeço-me com uma citação: "O incidente está encerrado. Estou quite com a vida. é inútil passar em revistas os dores, os infortúnios e os erros reciprocos. Sejam felizes". (65)

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5.

- (1) Ariano Suassuna in interview given to the author, Recife, May 25th, 1981.
- (2) Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Pelican, London, 1979), passim.
- (3) Idelette Muzart Fonseca Dos Santos, 'Uma Epopéia do Sertão', preface to Ariano Suassuna, Ao Sol da Onça Caetana (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1977), p.xiii.
- (4) Ariano Suassuna, quoted in 'A Visão Mágica do Nordeste de Ariano Suassuna', in Correio da Manhã, Rio de Janeiro, September 8th, 1981.
- (5) George Rudolf Lind, 'Ariano Suassuna, Romancista', in Colóquio/Letras, Número 17, Lisbon, January 1974, p.32.
- (6) See Maria-Odila Leal McBride, A Multiplicidade Estrutural em "A Pedra do Reino" de Ariano Suassuna (Ph.D. for the University of Texas, Austin, 1981)
- (7) Ibid, p.233.
- (8) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino (José Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1976), p.6.
- (9) Ariano Suassuna, Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, pp.48-49.
- (10) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.65.
- (11) Ibid, p.7.
- (12) Ibid, p.6.
- (13) Quaderna's tutor in popular poetry is clearly based on a real poet of the same name, João Melquíades Ferreira Silva (1869-1933), from Paraíba, After a period in the army, during which he served in the Canudos campaign in 1897, he earned his living as a poet and cantador.
- (14) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.68.
- (15) Ibid, p.68.
- (16) Ibid, p.139.
- (17) Ibid, p.296-297.
- (18) Ibid, p.285.
- (19) Ibid, p.66.

- (20) Ibid, p.179.
- (21) Ibid, p.590.
- (22) George Rudolf Lind, 'Ariano Suassuna', p.34.
- (23) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.588.
- (24) Ibid, p.589.
- (25) Angel Rama, 'Ariano Suassuna: el teatro y la narrativa popular y nacional', in Literatura y clase social (Folios Ediciones, México D.F., 1983), p.78.
- (26) Maria Odila Leal McBride, A Multiplicidade, passim.
- (27) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.269.
- (28) Ibid, p.49.
- (29) Rachel de Queiroz, 'Um Romance Picaresco?', preface to Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.xi. Queiroz writes: 'Picaresco o livro é -ou antes, o elemento picaresco existe grandemente no romance, ou tratado, ou obra, ou simplesmente livro- sei lá como é que diga! Porque depois de pronto "A Pedra do Reino" transcende disso tudo, e é romance, é odisséia, é poema, é epopéia, é sátira, é apocalipse...'
- (30) Wilson Martins, 'Romance Pitoresco?', in O Estado de São Paulo, Suplemento literário, São Paulo, January 9th, 1972,
- (31) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.311.
- (32) Ibid, p.37.
- (33) Angel Rama, 'Ariano Suassuna', p.192.
- (34) Candace Slater, Ariano Suassuna's 'A Pedra do Reino': A Case Study in Cultural Nationalism (Ph.D. for Stanford University, August 1975), p.154.
- (35) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'a Pedra do Reino, p.179.
- (36) Ibid, p.246.
- (37) Ibid, p.443.
- (38) Ibid, pp.444-445.
- (39) Ibid, pp.455-456.
- (40) Ibid, pp.447-448.
- (41) Ibid, p.461.

- (42) Ibid, pp.461-462.
- (43) Ibid, pp.468-469.
- (44) Ibid, p.15.
- (45) Ibid, p.378.
- (46) See Wilson Martins, 'Romance Pitoresco', and Candace Slater, Ariano Suassuna's 'A Pedra do Reino'.
- (47) Ariano Suassuna, Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, p.94.
- (48) Ibid, p.85.
- (49) Ibid, p.68.
- (50) Ibid, p.67.
- (51) Ibid, pp.62-63.
- (52) Ariano Suassuna, in interview with Gilse Campos, 'As Aventuras de um Cavaleiro do sertão', Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, September 9th, 1972.
- (53) Ibid.
- (54) Ariano Suassuna, in interview with José Augusto Guerra, 'El mundo mágico y poético de Ariano Suassuna', Revista da Cultura Brasileña, No 35, Madrid, May 1973, p.68.
- (55) Maximiano Campos, 'A Pedra do Reino', postscript to Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'A Pedra do Reino, p.630.
- (56) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'A Pedra do Reino, p.358.
- (57) Ariano Suassuna, Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, p.88.
- (58) Ibid, p.107.
- (59) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'A Pedra do Reino, p.196.
- (60) Ariano Suassuna, Ao Sol da Onça Caetana, p.56.
- (61) Ariano Suassuna, Romance d'A Pedra do Reino, p.215.
- (62) Ibid, pp.19-20.
- (63) Ariano Suassuna, 'Despedida', in the Diário de Pernambuco, Recife, August 9th, 1981, p.A-13.
- (64) Ibid.
- (65) Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS.

The determined efforts made by erudite writers to assimilate expressions of popular culture and folklore into their work has long been, and continues to be today, a major dynamic force in the development of Brazilian literature. It is a process which can only be understood in the context of, firstly, the sustained employment of literature as an instrument for forging cultural nationalism, and, secondly, the continuance of regionalism as a vital factor in literary production in Brazil.

The concept of literature as a means of affirming national identity obviously has its roots in the experience of colonialism shared by all the nations of Latin America, but it retains its validity today on account of the region's persisting state of economic, political and cultural dependency. Hence many contemporary Brazilian writers still speak in terms of developing a distinctly national form of artistic expression to counteract the influence of foreign cultural models.

As regards regionalism in Brazilian literature, some critics have pointed to its decline as a force under the impact of social and economic transformation and modernization that has taken place during the course of the present century. However, regionalism has proved to be resilient in Brazil, capable of constantly adapting and reemerging in new forms. Just as Grande Sertão: Veredas, by Guimarães Rosa, was hailed by some as signifying the revitalization of Brazilian regionalist literature in the 1950s, so the work of Ariano Suassuna

and the other members of the Armorial Movement is commonly seen as representing a regeneration of North East regional artistic expression in the 1970s. These facts demonstrate the continued significance of acute regional disparities in Brazil's uneven pattern of development, even to the present day.

The constant process of reaffirmation of North East cultural values that has been traced through this study can be viewed as both a defensive and an offensive reaction to change at the national and international level. On the one hand, it expresses the desire to defend what are perceived as specifically North East cultural traditions and attributes which appear to be threatened by the increasing advance of cosmopolitan values, and, more recently, of the mass media. On the other, it demonstrates the need felt by successive generations of North Eastern artists and intellectuals to reassert the value of North East culture as the Centre-South of Brazil has consolidated its status as the cultural axis of the nation. It is these circumstances that provided the vital impetus for the regionalist thinking of both Gilberto Freyre and Ariano Suassuna, for example.

Popular literature in all its forms -oral or written, in prose or in verse, as story or song- has been a vital factor in this long process of regional affirmation. Numerous North Eastern artists and writers have perceived it as the embodiment of the experience and world view of the mass of the region's population, and hence of the distinctive qualities which characterize and differentiate the region.

However, though both cultural nationalism and regionalism have remained considerable forces in North East literature throughout the

present century, changing circumstances have considerably modified their forms of expression through the decades. In the 1930s, for example, the tension generated by accelerated economic and social change was expressed in conflict at numerous levels, between the traditional oligarchy and the rising bourgeoisie, between the town and the countryside, between traditional and modern patterns of life, and in the increasing political polarization between right and left, and such an atmosphere stimulated ideological debate and the critical study of social forces. Within this context, the Geração de Trinta produced their works of social realism and social protest, aiming to document the strife in the North East, especially in the rural interior, and expose the injustices and exploitation underlying it. The vision conveyed in many of the works that resulted is of a way of life in decline under the impact of changes that appear to aggravate rather than ameliorate injustice.

Conditions in the 1970s were very different. Social strife was suppressed by a military government, and under President Medici, between 1969 and 1974, oppression reached its height. During the early phase of the dictatorship, industrialization, economic modernization and foreign investment all registered accelerated, though extremely uneven, growth. An indication of this was the expansion of the mass media and culture industry throughout the North East, with an increase in television broadcasting, advertising propaganda, and even new types of popular literature in the form of American-style comics translated into Portuguese, whilst at the same time artistic expression, including literature, was censored, severely limiting its capacity to examine critically all the social, economic and cultural changes

occurring in the region. It was under these conditions that the Movimento Armorial was formed in 1970, essentially a group of urban based artists and writers who looked back with nostalgia at the rural North East where most of them had their roots. It was no longer critical realism like that of the 1930s that they advocated, but rather the free play of the literary imagination to recreate for an essentially urban public the traditional culture of the rural North East.

Through the movement, Ariano Suassuna, very much the motivating force behind it, aimed to reaffirm the values of that traditional culture within the context of accelerating change. In this, he followed a long line of North Eastern writers and artists who, in one form or another, have attempted to create in their work a rural arcadia. Their efforts must be understood essentially as the expression of the vision of that sector of the region's dominant classes linked to the old landowning aristocracy, responding to the advance of industrialization, modern work practices and the mass media, which have all played a part in accelerating the process of disintegration of the traditional patterns of rural life determined by patriarchal plantation or ranching society.

The Movimento Armorial also provided Suassuna with the opportunity of putting into practice some of his own theories on artistic production. In opposition to rationalism and academicism he emphasised the power of the creative imagination, and instead of the study of the concrete, social reality of the North East, concentrated on the popular mythology and legends associated with the region, what he termed its *magical reality*, which, he argued, expressed the

underlying *spirit* of its inhabitants. Earlier writers had documented the expressions of the region's popular culture, but the armorial artists used those expressions as their basic raw materials, the constituent elements for the creation of new erudite forms, and the products that resulted were often striking, inventive and highly original. Although strictly concerned with North East cultural expression, the movement combined regionalist objectives with those of cultural nationalism, arguing that in reaffirming regional culture they would reaffirm national culture, and that good regional art provided the basis for successful national, and even universal, art.

Many of the ideas embodied in the Movimento Armorial, which, as has been seen, were essentially those of Suassuna himself, were deeply conservative, and it is not surprising that the movement caused considerable controversy, and met with vitriolic criticism from some quarters, when the development of the debate on popular culture in the North East over the previous decades is examined. That debate reached a level of considerable intensity in the early 1960s, stimulated by the vibrant political atmosphere in the North East during those years, with the State Government of Pernambuco, under Miguel Arraes, attempting to launch a programme of radical reform, within which education and the arts were given a major role. The Movimento de Cultura Popular developed a whole series of cultural activities, encouraging the participation of the poorest sectors of society, aiming to politicize them, encourage them to develop initiatives for themselves and help prepare them for the fight for social change. Ariano Suassuna participated in some of the activities organized.

The 1964 military coup dramatically ended the MCP. Under the dictatorship that followed, popular culture became an extremely sensitive issue and virtually all cultural activity was depoliticized. In 1970, with political repression at its height, the Movimento Armorial was launched by Suassuna in Recife, turning the spotlight on to the issue of popular culture again, but now in significantly different terms. Whereas the MCP viewed popular culture as based on social class, rooted in the lives of the poorest sectors of North East Society, the Armorial Movement tended to merge popular culture into a broader concept of regional culture, a whole way of life, essentially rural, which transcended conditions of social class. The political implications of the artist's involvement with popular culture were cast aside by the armorial artists, who emphasised instead what they perceived as the fantastic and mystical qualities of regional popular expressions and folklore, which, they argued, were to be defended against cosmopolitan influences, and recreated into new erudite works as a contribution to the broader process of cultural nationalism. Many of Suassuna's contemporaries recalled the cultural activities of the early 1960s and resented his new movement, which to them seemed a betrayal of the principles and objectives established ten years before, a simple accommodation to new political circumstances.

Suassuna avoided political issues, arguing that he was only interested in promoting national culture. As was seen in chapter 4 however, his thought was fraught with contradictions, and those contradictions eventually overwhelmed him. He finally found himself stranded, on the one hand disowned by the more radical artists who

rejected his whole approach to popular culture, and, on the other, reaching the conclusion that those elements of the establishment who had supported his project in the early years had little genuine concern at all for the development of the truly national and popular art he envisaged. In August 1981 he announced the end of his literary career, expressing total disillusionment.

The Movimento Armorial represented another attempt to formulate a theory of national culture and suggest a way forward for achieving it. However, like others before it, that theory was unable to deal adequately with the reality of Brazil's pattern of development, with its extreme inequalities and the resulting divisions at all levels of society. It could not be said to offer any positive approach to the problem of how exactly the poor, still rurally dominated North East can fit into the nation's overall pattern of modernization and industrialization. Nor could it be said to deal convincingly with the problem of dependency and its cultural implications. In response to the propagation of cosmopolitan values, Suassuna and the other armorial artists searched for what they perceived to be *pure Brazilian forms of expression*, where in fact none exist. The very popular literature Suassuna has used in all his work has undergone significant changes through the present century, no longer monopolized by the traditional themes he prefers, but incorporating urban questions, international issues and material adapted from the mass culture industry which Suassuna rejects. Armorial art, conceiving popular culture as a repository of traditional values, can only understand such changes in terms of *distortion* or *corruption* of those values. Within such a view, freezing the process of cultural development, the

popular cultural material presented in armorial art frequently appears as folklore associated with a past age, rather than as a living, dynamic force.

This study has argued that it is within the context of such perceptions that the novels of Ariano Suassuna must be considered. Beginning as a poet and establishing himself as a major dramatist in the 1950s, Suassuna's decision to dedicate himself to the novel in the 1960s and 1970s, when his ideas on national and popular culture were crystallizing, highlights the problems inherent in his thinking. Of all genres, it is perhaps the novel which is the most alien to the poor masses of the Brazilian North East. The question as to whether it can ever break out of its exclusivism to really express popular perceptions and aspirations, rather than remaining the expression of the vision of a privileged sector of society and a reaffirmation of individualism, is never dealt with by Suassuna. It is a particularly problematical question in underdeveloped societies, where the gap between the erudite artist and the mass of the population appears particularly acute.

A Pedra do Reino, immensely ambitious and enormous in scope, has been rightly acclaimed as a major literary achievement. It is undoubtedly a novel of high quality and considerable originality. Most of that originality derives from the unique distillation Suassuna has achieved of so many varied sources and materials, particularly popular cultural expressions, in one novel. Yet merely employing popular forms does not mean that the resulting work embodies the popular perceptions and aspirations which created those forms in the first place. This is the major difficulty of Suassuna's objective of creating *erudite art*

from popular roots, an art that will be both national and popular, for no such grafting is possible without a radical change in significance in the original material. Cut away from the social environment which produced them, popular forms, reshaped according to Suassuna's own vision of the world, necessarily assume radically new meanings.

It is noticeable, for example, how selective Suassuna has been in his choice of popular material for his work. Set in the 1930s, when cangaço and messianism still flourished in the North East sertão, A Pedro do Reino looks back to a way of life that had changed significantly in the intervening decades. Contemporary issues frequently dealt with in the popular literature of the North East, such as the inflation, unemployment or labour problems which affect the daily lives of the poor, are avoided by Suassuna, who chooses instead the most traditional themes of popular poetry. It was argued in chapter 3 that, above all, the folheto narratives can be seen as symbolic expressions of the lived reality of those who produce and consume them, essentially the poorest sectors of North East society, and that the magical world they frequently present cannot be separated from the everyday social experience of those sectors. Through the magical universe of their poetry, the poor represent and discuss their daily struggles and conflicts. This vital significance of folheto verse, if not lost altogether, is considerably diminished when the original material is transplanted into Suassuna's writing, where it is used to emphasise universal themes, particularly man's eternal hope for redemption. It is the mystical aspects of popular literature that Suassuna develops, rather than its value as a symbolic expression of immediate, daily problems.

The result is that substantial sections of A Pedra do Reino give the reader an exotic, folkloric view of the North East, presented through Quaderna's magical recreation of the poverty stricken region. His flights of fantasy produce rich and colourful passages of description, as with the cavalcade that enters the town of Taperoá, examples of popular farce and visions of mythical beasts. The rich colours and elaborate designs of the emblems and symbols associated with the heraldry, pageantry and ritual of Quaderna's mythical sertão world are constantly emphasised throughout the work. It is a vivid and exuberant narrative style, which offers a striking contrast with the prose of the social realist writers of the 1930s, particularly that of Graciliano Ramos, in whose work the sertão is presented through such stark and brutal images that it is impossible to recognize it as the same region being dealt with by Suassuna.

What particularly attracts Suassuna, and his main character Quaderna, to folheto verse is its capacity to transform the world imaginatively, turning ugliness into beauty and banality into grandeur. In this sense, it offers a means of coming to terms with the world and its problems. More radical artists, as has been seen, emphasise instead the capacity of popular culture to express resistance to the dominant culture of society, questioning its basic assumptions and at least glimpsing alternatives.

However, if Suassuna is attracted to folheto literature, he is also distanced from it. He views it critically, never accepting it at face value. The seriousness and dedication with which Quaderna participates in popular traditions, including his involvement with popular poetry, is presented with irony by the author. The folhetos

bring temporary pleasure for Quaderna by offering him a fantasy, dreamlike world as an alternative to harsh reality, but he is aware of the illusion. His dreams cannot really change the world. Ultimately, he appears a tragicomical figure, hopelessly caught between the enchanting, magical realm he creates from traditional popular expressions and the objective environment within which he lives, torn by suffering and strife. Quaderna longs to restore harmony to the world about him and find some solution to his own existential problems, and the novel places as much emphasis on his personal search for redemption and release from anguish as it does on examining North East society or culture.

Suassuna claims that what distinguishes his work, and that of other armorial artists, is that it derives its inspiration from regional popular culture rather than from cosmopolitan artistic influences, yet, ironically, some of the most memorable aspects of his writing result from his use, perhaps unconscious, of forms and techniques characteristic of the modern novel, and which are not found in popular literature at all. Quaderna, though resembling a popular poet in his style of narration, and the popular anti-hero, or pícaro, common in folheto verse, in the trickery he uses to deal with difficult situations, is above all a problematical character in conflict with the world about him, the type of anguished protagonist common to many contemporary novels, but significantly different from the central characters of popular poetry. The irony with which Suassuna treats his character is also rarely found in folheto narratives, whilst the complexity of the work's form, particularly

with its constant changes in angle of vision, clearly distinguish it as a contemporary novel. As has been argued, it makes little sense to speak in terms of *pure Brazilian forms* and to deny the influence of external models and techniques in the development of Brazilian literature. On the contrary, the most powerful works of contemporary Brazilian fiction, perhaps typified by Grande Sertão: Veredas, by Guimarães Rosa, have derived much of their success from their free incorporation of cosmopolitan currents and vanguard forms, reworking them to provide new tools for analysing Brazilian reality through fiction.

None of the above detracts from Suassuna's literary achievement. Within the structure of the novel he has blended elements that typify popular literature, such as legend, farce and burlesque, to produce one of the most original works of Brazilian literature of recent years. What Suassuna's writing and literary theories fail to do, however, is provide convincing solutions to the questions which continue to be raised concerning the development of a national, popular literature in Brazil.

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