

© Copyright by Paula Priscila Braga, 2001

HÉLIO OITICICA: NIETZSCHE'S ÜBERMENSCH IN THE BRAZILIAN SLUMS

BY

PAULA PRISCILA BRAGA

B.F.A., University of Illinois, 1999

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Art History
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001

Urbana, Illinois

To Fabio, super-companheiro.

Acknowledgments

Most of this text was written during the last semester of my five-year stay in the United States. This circumstance certainly affected a text that tried to reflect on culture and national identity. Reading about Carnival during the Midwestern Winter and telling my incredible friends what Nietzsche had to do with samba are delightful memories that remind me of how privileged I am for having studied art among so many special people from all over the planet.

I am very grateful to my advisor, Professor Jonathan Fineberg, who has always inspired me with his constant support and motivating words, from my years in the undergraduate college to the recent discussions about Oiticica's art and plans for future works. I could also count on insightful and thorough comments from Professor Jordana Mendelson, which always came allied with the warmest encouragement.

Fabio was the best companion and contributor I could have had during the writing of this text and of much longer ones. I also want to thank all the friends who brightened my life in Champaign. Several of them helped at different points in my Oiticica-Nietzsche project. Special thanks go to Larry and Don for revising the translation of *What I do is Music*, Flávia and Beto for getting me translations of Nietzsche into Portuguese when I was in Champaign and into English when I was in São Paulo, respectively, and to Mario, Apu and Prasad, who kindly offered their computer skills and time to make this text travel from Brazil to Champaign in a few hours.

While I read about Oiticica and Carnival I could not help remembering the years when my father experienced the joys of music and dance and promoted samba sessions at home. Even before writing the first word of this work, I already thought about mentioning this fact in the acknowledgement section and thanking my parents for my musical education.

All the images used in this text come from the publications listed in the References section and were included in this thesis for educational purposes only.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Modernist Beginnings	7
3. Neo-Concretism and the Body	11
4. Mangueira and Parangolés	18
5. Violence and Marginality	32
6. Tropicalia, Tropicalism, Television	35
7. <i>Übermensch</i> in New York	40
8. The Anticritic: On Exhibiting the <i>Übermensch</i>	50
9. In the Grand Labyrinth of Cultural Construction	56
Appendix A	58
References	61

List of Figures

1	Mosquito of Mangueira with <i>Parangolé P4 Cape 1</i> (1964) opening <i>Plastic Bolide 1</i> , 1966. Photo by Hélio Oiticica.	1
2	Mosquito of Mangueira contemplates <i>Spatial relief</i> , a work from 1959. The picture is from c.1964.	2
3	Mosquito of Mangueira dancing with <i>Parangolé P10 Cape 6</i> , 1965, and <i>Bólido 5 (Homage to Mondrian)</i> , 1965.	2
4	<i>Spatial Relief</i> , oil on wood, 1959.	12
5	Hélio Oiticica with <i>Nucleus 6</i> , 1960-63.	13
6	Various views of <i>Penetrable PN 1</i> , oil on wood, 1960.	14
7	Various bolides, 1963-64.	15
8	<i>Bolide Glass 4</i> , earth, glass, gauze, 1964.	16
9	View of Mangueira, Rio de Janeiro.	18
10	Mangueira parade, carnival 2000.	19
11	Oiticica rehearsing at Mangueira, 1965.	20
12	Maquette from <i>Hunting Dogs Project</i> , 1961, composed of 5 <i>Penetrables</i> , <i>Buried Poem</i> by Ferreira Gullar, <i>Integral Theater</i> by Reinaldo Jardim.	22
13	Nildo of Mangueira with <i>Parangolé P15 Cape 11</i> , <i>I embody Revolt</i> , 1967.	27
14	Nildo of Mangueira with <i>Parangolé P17, Cape 13</i> , <i>I am Possessed</i> , 1967.	28
15	Nildo of Mangueira with <i>Parangolé P4 Cape 1</i> , 1964.	29
16	Hélio Oiticica with <i>Box Bolide 18 Poem Box 2</i> , <i>Homage to Cara de Cavalo</i> , 1966.	32
17	Banner <i>Be a Marginal, Be a Hero</i> , 1968.	34
18	<i>Tropicália</i> , installed at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1967.	36
19	Detail of <i>Eden</i> , installed at Whitechapel Gallery, 1969.	38
20	Omar Salomão with <i>Parangolé</i> , New York City, 1971.	41
21	Romero with <i>Parangolé Cape 26</i> at the World Trade Center Building, New York City, 1972.	42
22	Romero with <i>Parangolé Cape 25</i> , New York City, 1972.	43
23	Luis Fernando Guimarães with <i>Parangolé Cape 23</i> , <i>M'Way Ke</i> , New York City, 1972.	44
24	<i>Quasi-cinema, Block Experiments in Cosmococa, CC5 Hendrix-War</i> , in collaboration with Neville d'Almeida, New York City, 1973.	45
25	<i>Quasi-cinema, Block-Experiments in Cosmococa, CC3</i> , 1973.	45
26	<i>Parangolé Somethin' Fa' the Head 2</i> , New York City, 1974.	46
27	Hélio Oiticica installing a head <i>Parangolé</i> in Wally Salomão, 1979.	48
28	Wim Beeren shouting at dancers wearing <i>Parangóles</i> , October 13th, 1994.	52
29	Hélio Oiticica (left) with Counter-Bolide <i>To Return Earth unto the Earth</i> , during the urban-poetic event <i>Kleemania</i> at Cajú (Rio de Janeiro), 1979.	54

1. Introduction

[W]hat can the child do that even the lion could not do? [...] The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes'. For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world. - Nietzsche.¹



Figure 1: Mosquito of Mangueira with *Parangolé P4 Cape 1* (1964) opening *Plastic Bolide 1*, 1966. Photo by Hélio Oiticica.

In 1966, Hélio Oiticica took a photograph of Mosquito of Mangueira wearing the *Parangolé P4 Cape P1* while attentively examining another work, the *Plastic Bolide 1* (Figure 1). A resident of one of the several slums in Rio de Janeiro and a samba dancer, Mosquito of Mangueira appears in a number of photographs carefully planned to show his interaction with Oiticica's works (Figures 2 and 3). The image of a child wearing a cape entices the association with comic strips and super-heroes, but Mosquitos's quiet, reverential exploration of the pigment inside the bottle diverts such associations. In this text I want to highlight the connection between Oiticica's works and

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 139.

Nietzsche's concept of the superman (*Übermensch*), revealing the philosophical background of an oeuvre concerned with the creation of new moral values through an intriguing juxtaposition of social criticism, samba, and super-heroes.



Figure 2: Mosquito of Mangueira contemplates *Spatial relief*, a work from 1959. The picture is from c.1964.



Figure 3: Mosquito of Mangueira dancing with *Parangolé P10 Cape 6*, 1965, and *Bólido 5 (Homage to Mondrian)*, 1965.

In the book Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o Parangolé, the poet Wally Salomão recalls Oiticica's pleasure in explaining his intellectual genealogy: "I am Nietzsche's son and Artaud's stepson. I read

Nietzsche since I was 13 years-old.”² Born in 1937, Oiticica was the grandson of a philologist and anarchist, and the son of an entomologist, photographer, and painter. Coming from a well-to-do family that rejected the traditional educational system, Oiticica was educated at home until 1947, when his father received a Guggenheim fellowship and the family moved to Washington D.C., where Hélio Oiticica was exposed to formal education for the first time.³ Before that experience, his education came from his mother and his highly intellectual anarchist grandfather,⁴ to whom Oiticica credited his fluency in several languages.⁵ According to Oiticica’s statement about his first contacts with Nietzsche, he might have started reading his works in 1950, the date when the family returned to Rio de Janeiro. Oiticica remained in Rio until 1969 when, at the summit of the violent and repressive military dictatorship, he left Brazil for London, and after a brief return, moved to New York, where he resided from 1970 to 1978.⁶

Several authors have associated Oiticica’s *Parangolé* capes with freedom. The Brazilian critic Mario Pedrosa created an expression that became almost mandatory in any text that attempts to interpret Oiticica’s work: “the experimental exercise of liberty.”⁷ One finds in Oiticica’s oeuvre a constant concern with freedom, from his early formal attempts to liberate painting from the frame to his revolt against social disparities. Freedom is invoked when he proposes the creation of anti-art works that would undermine the commodity-oriented art market, as well as in his defense of outlaws who, marginalized and excluded from society, rely on crime as a vehicle for happiness. The appearance of the capes, moreover, coincides with the military coup of 1964 that had a catastrophic impact on civil liberties during the three subsequent decades in Brazil.

The parallel reading of Nietzsche’s and Oiticica’s works highlights an even more primordial concern with freedom, that of liberating oneself from the mainstream modes of thinking about

²Wally Salomão, *Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o Parangolé* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 1996), 96.

³Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 209.

⁴Among other works, José Oiticica, Hélio Oiticica’s grandfather, wrote *A Doutrina Anarquista ao Alcance de Todos* (The Anarchist Doctrine at the Reach of Everyone) and, in 1946 founded the anarchist journal *Ação Direta* (Direct Action).

⁵Wally Salomão, *Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o Parangolé* (Rio de Janeiro, Relume Dumará, 1996), 11.

⁶Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 209.

⁷This expression appears, for instance, in a text by Oiticica himself: “Art is not an instrument of intellectual control anymore, it cannot be used as something ‘supreme’, unattainable, pleasure of the whisky-drinking bourgeois or of the speculative intellectual [...] the search for the supra-sensorial, for life-experiences of man, is the *discovery of the will* through ‘the experimental exercise of liberty’ (Pedrosa), by the individual that opens himself to them.” (1967) In Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 105. My translation.

and understanding life. As discussed by the critic Frederico Morais, Oiticica's work proposes "a program, a vision of the world, an ethic."⁸ Oiticica did not attempt merely to translate Nietzsche's ideas to a visual language, but had them embedded in his own mode of thinking, and from there developed works that, fluctuating between art and philosophy, proposed artistic solutions for the ills of his society. As the main remedy for the Brazilian social disparities – and a radical aesthetic idea connected to some of the most ground-breaking developments in the art of the 1960s – Oiticica proposed audience participation in the work of art. In 1966 he articulated these ideas in his definition of anti-art:

Anti-art – understanding the artist and [his] reason for being not anymore a creator of contemplation but a motivator for creation. The creation as such is completed by the dynamic engagement of the "spectator," now considered a "participator." Anti-art would be a completion of the latent collective necessity for creative activity, which would be motivated in a certain way by the artist. That invalidates, therefore, any metaphysical, intellectualist, or aesthetic tendencies. This is not a proposal to "elevate the spectator to a creative level" [...] but to give him a simple opportunity to participate, so that he will find something that he wants to create. It is, therefore, a "creative fulfillment" [...] devoid of any moral, intellectual or aesthetic premises [...], it is man's simple stance within himself and his vital creative potentialities. The 'not-finding' is also an important participation because it defines the opportunity for choice offered to whomever the participation is proposed [...]⁹ (1966)

In this passage, Oiticica acknowledges a collective, albeit hidden, impulse and vital necessity for self-fulfillment through artistic creation, and redefines the artist as someone who will facilitate the audience self-realization. His understanding of a refusal to participate restates, under an approach of tolerance and respect for choice, Nietzsche's assumption that a creative attitude was not within the reach of every man, but reserved for the exceptional individuals. The language that Nietzsche used to differentiate the group of enlightened individuals who freed themselves from the constraints of religion, morality, and political values (the masters) from the individuals still attached to rules

⁸Guy Brett, "Hélio Oiticica: Reverie and Revolt," *Art in America* 77, (January 1989), 116.

⁹Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 77). All quotations from *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto* are my translations from the Portuguese text unless otherwise noted.

and dogmas (the slaves), and the very concept of the *superman* have been, as is well known, misappropriated and infamously abused in out of context quotations to suggest racial superiority, despite his affirmation in *The Antichrist* that this higher man could appear in “the most widely different places and cultures.”¹⁰

Hélio Oiticica found traces of the superman in the most marginalized and stigmatized segment of Brazilian society, the communities that live in the slums and organize the quintessential Brazilian, and certainly Dionysiac, artistic manifestation, the annual Carnival parades. Among the so-called high art producers, Oiticica distinguished some not “all-too-human” individuals as well, to whom he dedicated *Parangolé* capes. As we will see later, Oiticica shared with Nietzsche an outrage with mediocrity and fiercely attacked the weakness of Brazilian art criticism: “bourgeois, sub intellectuals, idiots of all sorts proclaiming the Tropicalism, the Tropicália (now fashionable!) - in short, transforming into a consumer product something of which they don’t even know the meaning.”¹¹ (1968)

Embodying the figure of “the anticritic,” Oiticica challenged preconditioned ways of thinking and the whole project of making art history and art criticism. He never had a dealer, rejected the art market system, and during his lifetime, participated in few exhibitions. In 1981, one year after Oiticica’s death, his family and friends founded his estate, entitled “Project Hélio Oiticica”, in Rio, an institution that, avoiding the label of “museum” or “foundation,” manages Oiticica’s work under a name that implies the idea of something under construction, always in development, still in progress.¹²

Despite his pioneering contributions, his work remained, until recently, almost unknown in academic circles, a condition that started to change in the end of the 1980s thanks to the prolific

¹⁰Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Antichrist,” in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 571. In fact, some of Nietzsche’s writings sound absurdly discriminatory concerning intellectual abilities (for example when in *Human, All too Human* he confesses his utopia of a world where “hard labor and the troubles of life will be meted out to those who suffer least from them; hence to the most obtuse[. . .]”) but he did not use race as a point of pejorative difference. He clearly stated his disgust with his sister’s alignment with anti-Semitism in a letter to her: “...You have committed one of the greatest stupidities - for yourself and for me! Your association with an anti-Semitic chief expresses a foreignness to my whole way of life which fills me again and again with ire or melancholy... It is a matter of honor with me to be absolutely clean and unequivocal in relation to anti-Semitism, namely, *opposed* to it, as I am in my writings[...] my disgust with this party (which would like the benefit of my name only too well!) is as pronounced as possible[...] that the name of Zarathustra is used in every *Anti-Semitic Correspondence Sheet*, has almost made me sick several times...” (in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 457.)

¹¹Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 108.

¹²Luciano Figueiredo, “The Other Malady,” *Third Text* 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994), 111.

writings of the British critic Guy Brett, who followed Oiticica's career since 1965, when he saw Oiticica's pieces for the first time in the São Paulo Biennial.¹³ Brett has also been an ardent advocate for the art produced "outside the cultures of plenty."¹⁴ In opposition to the art world tendency to squeeze rich and conceptual works like Oiticica's and Lygia Clark's into "Latin American Art," Brett belongs to a group of writers who seek to highlight the universal qualities of works produced on the margins of the materially abundant countries.

Oiticica's art is certainly connected to Brazilian local culture and Carnival, which exposes him even more directly to a categorization as typically Latin American. However, it is important to stress that, beyond localisms, universal philosophical questions inform his oeuvre and issue from it. Oiticica's rejection of social class distinctions and of the divine role of the artist as creator, his mocking of the art market system, the statements on artistic creation as choice, and his comfortable blending into the marginal world of the slums can be interpreted not only in terms of a Nietzschean perspective, but also in broader terms as an existentialist stance. Robert Solomon describes the existentialist attitude as one "that recognizes the unresolvable confusion of the human world, yet resists the all-too-human temptation to resolve the confusion by grasping toward whatever appears or can be made to appear firm or familiar – reason, God, nation, authority, history, work, tradition, or the 'other-worldly', whether of Plato, Christianity, or utopian fantasy."¹⁵

Discussing a Brazilian artist's existentialist strategy functions as a counter-argument to the prevalent view of Latin American art as a category separated from international developments in advanced "art" and, worse, still culturally immature. Countless catalogs and exhibitions of works by artists who were born in Latin American countries explore the by now ludicrous cliché of the "search for identity," confining Latin American Art to a perpetual adolescence of endless excavations for its true, still undefined personality. The connections between Oiticica and Nietzsche argue against such a colonialist approach. Oiticica, like all artists, was informed both by local experience (Brazil and samba) and by the same global body of philosophical thought that impacted most of the rest of the artistic production in the twentieth century.

¹³Guy Brett, "Hélio Oiticica: Reverie and Revolt," *Art in America* 77, (January 1989), 114.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁵Robert Solomon, *Existentialism* (New York: The Modern Library, 1974), ix.

2. Modernist Beginnings

The unexpected joining of Nietzsche and samba is by no means surprising in the context of Brazilian culture. Since the early twentieth century, Brazilian artists have been exposed to a rich cultural mix of European, African, and indigenous elements. The first modernist ideas appeared in Brazilian art in the 1920s, in a series of exhibitions, avant-garde magazines and manifestos that sought to apply international artistic developments to Brazilian subject matter. In 1928, the poet Oswald de Andrade issued the *Anthropophagite Manifesto* and the *Anthropophagite Magazine*, employing the metaphor of the cannibal to develop a theory about the ambiguous relationship between Brazilian native culture and international influences. The cannibal eats the powerful opponent not out of revenge or out of hunger, but as a ceremonial act of absorbing the force of the admired enemy, and as homage to the defeated individual.¹⁶ Andrade's bodily metaphor was, therefore, not one of destruction but that of a dialectic process. Andrade's writings include in the artistic discourse a segment of the Brazilian society then ignored and oppressed, the Indian. However, he does not focus on the well-behaved, noble, idealized Indian that abounds in the Brazilian literature of the nineteenth century, but on the cannibal, rescuing the illogical, the irrational mentality repressed by Western civilization.

Cultural cannibalism became a key idea for the next artistic developments in Brazil. The concept attaches a note of irreverence to the whole colonial heritage, a trademark in the relationship between Brazilians and their Portuguese colonizers. In one of Andrade's texts, mockery sprinkles a sad reality with laughter:

We imported in the cargo and slave ships of yesterday and in the steamships of today all the wrong science and culture that European civilization created... they came here to divert us from our natural path with indigestible and false books. What have we done?

¹⁶Maltz and others, Antropofagia e Tropicalismo (Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade/UFRGS, 1993), 11.

What should we have done? Eaten them all. Yes, while the missionaries were speaking, preaching about their civilized beliefs, of a tired and sad civilization, we should have eaten them and continued our happy lives [...] We should assimilate all the European aesthetic tendencies, elaborate them in our unconscious and produce something new, something ours.¹⁷

The poet Haroldo de Campos detects Nietzsche's thought behind the concept of cultural cannibalism:

Anthropophagy is the idea of the critical swallowing up of the universal cultural heritage, elaborated not from the submissive, reconciliant perspective of the 'good savage' but from the disillusioned viewpoint of the 'bad savage,' the white-man eater, the cannibal. It involves not submission (catechization) but transculturation, or better still, 'transvaluation': a critical view of History as a negative function (in Nietzsche's sense), as well-suited to appropriation as to expropriation, dis-hierarchization, or deconstruction.¹⁸

Andrade's concept of cultural cannibalism and the mockery of the colonial heritage echoes Nietzsche's words in Toward a Genealogy of Morals:

...To be unable to take one's own enemies, accidents, and misdeeds seriously for long - that is the sign of strong and rich natures... Such a man simply shakes off with one shrug much vermin that would have buried itself deep in others; here alone it is also possible - assuming that it is possible at all on earth - that there be real 'love of one's enemies.' How much respect has a noble person for his enemies! And such respect is always a bridge to love. After all, he demands his enemy for himself, as his distinction; he can stand no enemy but one in whom there is nothing to be despised and much to be honored.¹⁹

¹⁷Oswald de Andrade cited in *Ibid.*, 12. My translation from the Portuguese text.

¹⁸quoted in Catherine David, "The Great Labyrinth," in Guy Brett and others, eds., Hélio Oiticica (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 252.

¹⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, "Toward a Genealogy of Morals," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 451-2.

One also finds in Andrade's *Pau-Brasil Poetry Manifesto*, which precedes the *Anthropophagite Manifesto* by four years, the appreciation for carnival and the slums as sources of genuine artistic production and as an equivalent to the European music-drama Nietzsche praised so much:

Poetry exists in facts. The shacks of saffron and ochre among the greens of the hillside favelas [slums], under cabraline blue, are aesthetic facts. The Carnival in Rio is the religious outpouring of our race. Pau-Brasil.²⁰ Wagner yields to the samba schools of Botafogo.²¹ Barbaric, but ours. Rich ethnic mix. Richness of vegetation. Minerals. Casserole of vatapá.²² Gold and dance.²³

Andrade's discourse in favor of the amalgamation of native and international trends produced important results in the visual arts of the 1920s, mainly in the work of Tarsila do Amaral. However, it was eventually supplanted by figurative painting that explored local themes, until the 1950s, when a new generation of Brazilian artists, connected with the international art scene, revived Andrade's oeuvre and formed a body of revolutionary works deeply aware of global trends and in tune with their national culture.

Concrete poetry, the cinematographic innovations of the *Cinema Novo*, a sophisticated production of popular music, Neo-concrete art and the subsequent development of conceptual works would culminate in a new cultural environment generally known as *Tropicalismo*, a term indebted to Hélio Oiticica. The poets wrote about art, musicians dressed in Oiticica's capes, and Andrade's theme of cultural encounters would be expanded to incorporate not only transnational issues but also the encounter of different forms of art and different segments of Brazilian society.

In the meantime, Brazilian culture reached international audiences through a French film-maker, Marcel Camus. His *Black Orpheus* from 1959 won the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes and the Oscar for best foreign language film.²⁴ The film fostered the still prevalent stereotypical perception of Brazilian culture as exotic and naïve, and established an idyllic view of the favelas as the dwellings of sensual samba performers who carry out all daily activities while singing and dancing. Camus's film is based

²⁰Brazil-wood.

²¹Neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro.

²²Typical dish in Brazil, of African origin.

²³"Pau-Brasil Manifesto," in Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America: the Modern Era, 1820-1980* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 310.

²⁴Caetano Veloso, "Orpheus Rising from Caricature," *New York Times*, 20 August 2000.

on the play by the poet Vinicius de Moraes *Orfeu da Conceição: uma tragédia carioca* (Orpheus of Conceição: a tragedy from Rio). Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* was certainly in Moraes's mind when he mixed Brazilian Carnival and Greek tragedy. The musician Caetano Veloso, who like Oiticica was a key figure in the cultural revolution of the 1960s and who continues to be one of the most expressive voices in the Brazilian cultural scene, recalls the relevance of the play and the disappointment with the film:

[E]nthusiastic audiences [...] filled every theater in the country in which the play was staged [...] for the first time in Brazil a stage play had an all-black cast; and the play itself by transposing to Rio's slums at Carnival time the Orpheus myth of a musician who loses his great love, was a defining moment in the very Brazilian project of making samba the medium of choice for expressing national identity [...] To say that [Camus's] film was received without enthusiasm in Brazil is an understatement.²⁵

While samba and carnival were certainly important sociological manifestations in Brazil, Camus's tragic film exoticised the harsh reality of the favelas. Some four years later, Oiticica would correct this distortion by praising the artistic culture of the favelas without veiling its marginal aspects. While Nietzsche sought a purely aesthetic culture in the tragedies and Olympian realms of the Greeks, Oiticica detected art making as an existential strategy in tropical hills, the slums where carnivalesque culture functions as aesthetic justification for an otherwise unbearable state of being.

²⁵Ibid.

3. Neo-Concretism and the Body

But the awakening and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.²⁶

There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom. And who knows why your body needs precisely your best wisdom?²⁷

I shall not go your way, O despisers of the body! You are no bridge to the overman!²⁸

In the visual arts, the late 1950s produced two groups of artists in Brazil that were following constructivist European tendencies, the Concrete art group in São Paulo and the Neo-Concrete group in Rio de Janeiro. The constructivist trend parallels the economic and political circumstances of the decade. Tax exemptions stimulated foreign companies to bring new machines to the national industry. Reaching industrial modernity on a fast track was the main concern of President Juscelino Kubitschek, elected in 1955, who launched developmentalist policies under the slogan “to grow fifty years in five.”²⁹ The economic optimism and the emphasis on industrialization match the leap taken by Brazilian art in the 1950s, from figurative works with social themes (by Portinari and Di Cavalcanti, for example) to enthusiasm for the works of Malevitch, Mondrian, and Max Bill. Already in the beginning of the decade, the São Paulo Biennial of 1951 anticipated this radical move by conferring the bi-annual prize on Max Bill’s *Tripartite Unit*.

Hélio Oiticica’s art production of the late 1950s is aligned with the Neo-Concrete movement, which rejected the mathematical and optical goals of the Concrete group of São Paulo and its

²⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 146.

²⁷Ibid., 146-147.

²⁸Ibid., 147.

²⁹Raymundo Campos, História do Brasil (São Paulo: Atual, 1983), 218. Oscar Niemeyer’s architectural project for a new capital, Brasília, is one of the by-products of the developmentalist project.

“dangerously acute rationalism.” According to the Neo-concrete manifesto,

it does not matter what mathematical equations are at the root of a piece of sculpture or a painting by Vantongerloo. It is only when someone sees the work of art, that its rhythms and colors have meaning [...] We do not conceive of a work of art as a ‘machine’ or as an ‘object’ but as a ‘quasi-corpus’ (quasi-body)[...] something that analysis may break down into various elements but which can only be understood phenomenologically.³⁰ (1959)

Oiticica’s early works sustain the constructivist goal of dissolution of art into life and try to incorporate expression into geometric compositions. His writings of the late 1950s praise the “transcendent, lyric geometry” in the works of Mondrian, Sophie Tauber-Arp, Malevitch, Tatlin and Kandinsky³¹ and establish color as a fundamental preoccupation. One way in which the unity between art and life appears in Oiticica’s Neo-concrete paintings is through a concern with the “life” of the color, and with the work of art as the body of the color.³²

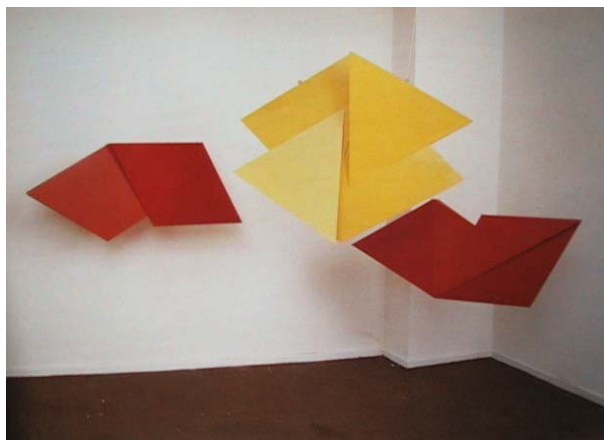


Figure 4: Spatial Relief, oil on wood, 1959.

In 1961 his journal recorded the death of the frame:

the framed painting is saturated. But, far from being the death of painting, this is its salvation, since death would be its continuation as it is [...]. It is clear now that

³⁰Neo-concrete Manifesto, in Dawn Ades, Art in Latin America: the Modern Era, 1820-1980 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 335.

³¹Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto,(Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 20.

³²Ibid., 23.

painting has to expand itself in space [. . .]. Only these new elements [ideas] will be able to continue the work of the great constructivists of the early twentieth century.³³

In fact, Oiticica had begun to articulate this rupture in 1959 with two of his inventions, the *spatial relief* (Figure 4) and the *nucleus* (Figure 5), colorful panels hanging from the ceiling, which would be the first proposals toward audience participation. The *nuclei* demanded that the viewer share the space with the work, an idea that would be further explored in the *penetráveis* (penetrables). The *penetrables* are colorful environments (Figure 6), some with sliding panels, that emphasize the spirituality of the artistic experience as it transforms color perception into something less immediate or banal, changing the regular way of seeing and feeling, and opening new paths for the contemporary sensibility.³⁴



Figure 5: Hélio Oiticica with Nucleus 6, 1960-63.

This progression from a theoretical approach to color toward art environments that would require the viewer's participation announces Oiticica's rejection of art as a finished product ready for the market. The work is not complete without the experience of the viewer, the body that will penetrate the colorful space. Moreover, the installation of his panels in a three-dimensional fashion suggest Oiticica's project of liberating art from the realm of vision and transforming it into an experience that encompasses the whole body and senses.

The next formal invention, the *bólides* (meteoric fireballs), from 1963, came from Oiticica's

³³Ibid., 27

³⁴Ibid., 55.



Figure 6: Various views of *Penetrable PN 1*, oil on wood, 1960.

“need to give a new structure to color, to give it a ‘body’,”³⁵ advancing the proposals of a whole sensorial experience (Figure 7). The *bolides* are small boxes with drawers and hidden compartments, bottles, or any other kind of vessel. Instead of surrounding the body with a visual field of color like the *penetrables*, the *bolides* offer color as a tactile experience. Powdered color pigment, red and black earth, or color-saturated pieces of gauze rest inside their containers. The audience not only contemplates the color but also literally immerses their hands in it, feeling its weight and texture. He called the *bolides* “trans-objects,” to distinguish them from “found-objects.” He stated that making a *bolide* was not “simply to make the object ‘lyrical,’ or to place it outside the everyday, but to incorporate it into an aesthetic idea, making it part of the genesis of the work” so that it would “assume a transcendental character, participating in a universal idea without losing its previous structure.”³⁶ (1963)

³⁵Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 63

³⁶Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 63 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Con-



Figure 7: Various bolides, 1963-64.

From 1963 until 1969, Oiticica created approximately 50 bolides,³⁷ using a large variety of bottles and materials that he declared being the “only possible choice to give form to a creative idea realized *a priori*,” found materials which are not chosen casually but after an “obstinate search.”³⁸ The anti-art statement embodied in the materials would be extended to the appropriation of entire *bolides* that could be found in the world. Cans or boxes found near construction areas would, through appropriation, be transformed into *bolides* in their own sites, defiantly rendering galleries and museums useless. He recalled in 1966 the *bolide* made of a wire basket of eggs:

Perishable (real eggs), which therefore have to be consumed and new ones substituted
 [...] a mockery of the so called art market created by the galleries: here, the element
 that makes up the work is sold at cost, a price accessible to anybody (there is even the

temporary Art, 1993), 66.

³⁷Simone Osthoff, “Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica: a Legacy of Interactivity and Participation for a Telematic Future,” *Leonardo* 30, no.4,(1997), 284.

³⁸Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 64.

delightful possibility of stealing one or more eggs furtively, which makes the mockery even greater).³⁹ (1966)

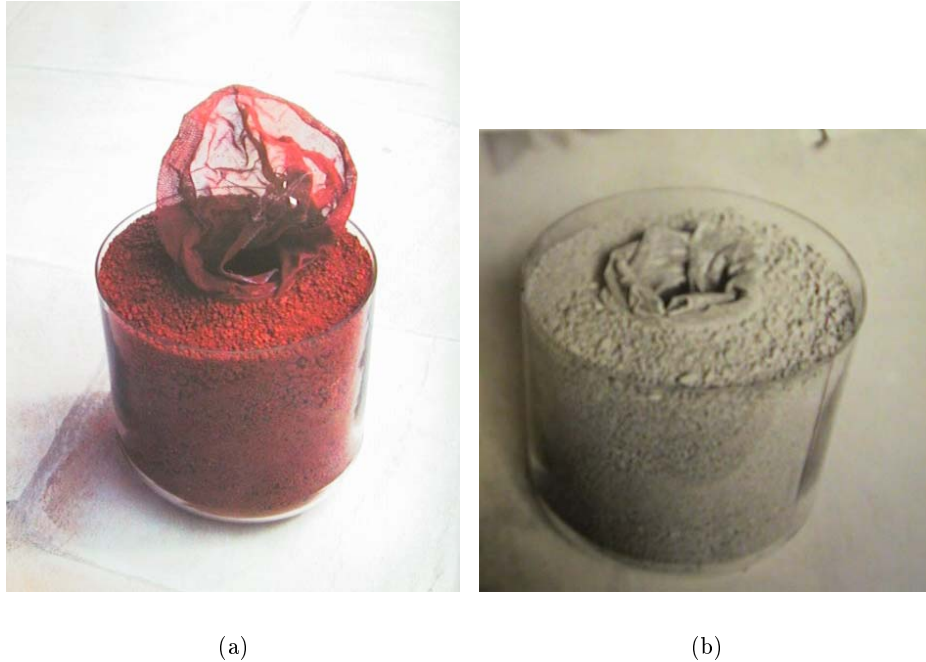


Figure 8: Bolide Glass 4, earth, glass, gauze, 1964.

Indeed, the defiance of the *bolide* goes beyond its anti-gallery aspects. The word “bolide” means literally a meteoric fireball, both in Portuguese and English, and several of them incorporate formal characteristics that suggest the idea of explosion. In one picture of *Bolide Glass 4*, from 1964, a piece of gauze bursts out of the glass bottle that contains red soil, like a flame fueled by the red color underneath or a wick, ready to be lit and to detonate the whole piece (Figure 8(a)). Indeed, Brett refers to the *bolides* as “‘energy-centers’ to which the psyche and the body of the human beings immediately feel attracted – ‘like a fire’ as Hélió once remarked.”⁴⁰ In a second picture of the same *bolide* (Figure 8(b)), the gauze is quietly buried in the earth, and the juxtaposition of both states transform the piece into something very similar to the ideal Neo-concrete work, a living organism, sometimes dormant, sometimes bursting with inventive power. The idea of energy and

³⁹Hélió Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 80 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélió Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 104.

⁴⁰Guy Brett, “Hélió Oiticica: Reverie and Revolt,” *Art in America* 77, (January 1989), 112

fire appears explicitly in *Can Bolide*, from 1966, a can with oil on fire, used to light the roads at night in Rio, appropriated by the artist and declared a *bolide*:

singled out for the anonymity of its origin – it exists around as a sort of communal property: whomever has seen the fire-tin singled out as work cannot help remembering having seen, also as a ‘work’, in the dead of the night, others scattered about the city like cosmic, symbolic signals. Nothing could be more moving than these lonely tins lit up at night (the fire in it never goes out) – they are an illustration of life: the fire lasts and suddenly one day it goes out, but while it lasts, it is eternal.⁴¹ (1966)

⁴¹Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 80 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 104.

4. Mangueira and Parangolés

Never again shall I speak to the people: for the last time I have spoken to the dead. I shall join the creators, the harvesters, the celebrants: I shall show them the rainbow and the steps to the overman.⁴²

I would believe only a god who could dance.⁴³



Figure 9: View of Mangueira, Rio de Janeiro.

In 1964, the year of the military coup that established a twenty-five-year dictatorship in Brazil, Oiticica became involved with the community of the Mangueira slums. Mangueira is one of the most traditional schools of samba⁴⁴ of Rio de Janeiro (Figure 10) and *Morro da Mangueira* (Mangueira's

⁴²Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 136.

⁴³Ibid., 153.

⁴⁴A school of samba is not, as the name might suggest, an educational institution, but an organization that

Hill) one of the various clusters of houses that form unofficial and marginalized neighborhoods, the *favelas*, an urban housing system present in all large Brazilian cities.



Figure 10: Mangueira parade, carnival 2000.

While the favelas are huge and visually remarkable, their presence is almost ignored by the works during the year in the preparations of a show to be performed during Carnival. Such preparations involve internal competitions for the choice of theme for that year's show, composition of music and lyrics, design and production of plots, floats, and costumes, and yearlong music and dance practice in rehearsals. The official rules of the parades determine that the theme chosen by the schools of samba must be of national character and without commercial aims. Usually the subject is historic, folkloric, or homage to cultural figures (Caetano Veloso, Tom Jobim, Heitor Villa-Lobos have been samba themes in past years). Each school has a main designer, known as "the carnivalesque", who conceives all the visual aspects of the show, from clothes to luxurious float decorations. A typical school of samba has several sections, each comprising hundreds of people. The percussion sector includes around 300 musicians, playing in impressive synchronization and virtuosity. In 1999, the parade rules defined the duration of each school of samba performance as 70 minutes and a minimum of 1,200 participants on each school of samba (<http://www.rioarte.com/aescrj/regul99a.htm>, 02/25/2001). Several schools perform during two carnival nights, and a jury chooses the year's winning school, a decision that is frequently followed by heated debate, lamentation, and an enthusiastic celebration at the rehearsal site of the winner. There are many academic studies on the sociological aspects of schools of samba, and their changes over time. The bibliography of this paper mentions three studies developed in the late sixties and early seventies. Oiticica performed with the Mangueira school of samba in the years when he resided in Rio.



Figure 11: Oiticica rehearsing at Mangueira, 1965.

rest of the society (Figure 9). The huts in the slums often times receive electrical power and water through clandestine and dangerous wire and pipe systems, and live in constant risk of being dismantled by the rains. In Rio, the houses – improvised out of found, discarded materials – are agglomerated upwards on the hillsides that surround the city. At night the contours of the mountains dissolve in the dark sky, leaving the lights from the houses floating in the void. Some unspoken social code determines that non-residents should not approach the favelas. They are the local “other” and their harsh reality has been systematically omitted in sentimental works of art, song lyrics, and movies.

For Oiticica, the favela was not only a source of carnivalesque dance and collective art making, but mainly an environment that incited creative changes. Since his *Hunting Dogs Project*, from 1961, he stressed the importance of environments that could offer sensorial encounters with new materials. The *Hunting Dogs Project* was realized only as a maquette (Figure 12), a labyrinth where the participator would encounter several works of art, like buried poems to be found and read. The idea of the labyrinth is crucial in Oiticica’s architectural works and in his experiments with space. For him, the labyrinth transforms the real space into something magical, virtual, an aesthetic experience. Interestingly, his statement on the labyrinth contrasts his concept of architecture with

that of Greek architecture:

Space is crucial in the contemporary conception of architecture. The architecture tends to dissolve into space and, at the same time, integrate space as an element. It is not “plastic” anymore as mass, as Worringer would say. For Worringer⁴⁵, Greek architecture is “organic” because it is naturalistic, it is the perfect balance between the idea and the organic flow of its elements. It is, therefore, fundamentally “plastic,” meaning here non-spatial, or anti-spatial. However, as architecture becomes non-objective, “abstract,” the space becomes more important [...] I want the architectural structure to re-create and incorporate the real space into a virtual space that is aesthetic, and into a time that is also aesthetic. It would be an attempt to confer on real space a time, an aesthetic life-experience (*vivência*), approaching, therefore, the magic, given its vital character. The first signs of this idea is the labyrinth, which tends to make the space organic in an abstract way, destroying it, and giving it a new character, one of internal tension. The labyrinth [...] would be the bridge to a spatial architecture, active, or spatial-temporal.⁴⁶ (1961)

This entry in Oiticica’s journal, from February 16, 1961, was written a month and a day after a single and mysterious sentence in the same journal: “I ASPIRE TO THE GRAND LABYRINTH.”⁴⁷ Such aspiration, although sounding at first as some sort of metaphysical search, in fact refutes any other-worldly solution and is resolved in the labyrinthine space he described later, in its virtual, aesthetic component.

Oiticica explained in 1967 that the architecture and outdoor environments of the favela, with its twisting, narrow, labyrinthine streets, supplied him with a sensation of “stepping on the ground for the first time.”⁴⁸ Many of his subsequent works, like the installation *Tropicália*, explored the creation of “environments for behavior,” i.e, environments that would incite a different moral attitude,

⁴⁵In this passage, Oiticica is probably referring to Wilhelm Worringer’s book *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, from 1908, where Worringer defines the “will to art,” a latent interior demand that manifests itself as a will to form, and examines the history of art as the history of this will. The idea of a latent interior need to create is central in Oiticica’s work.

⁴⁶Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 29

⁴⁷Ibid., 26.

⁴⁸Ibid., 99.

an “ethical-social” behavior that would “bring to the individual a new meaning for things.”⁴⁹

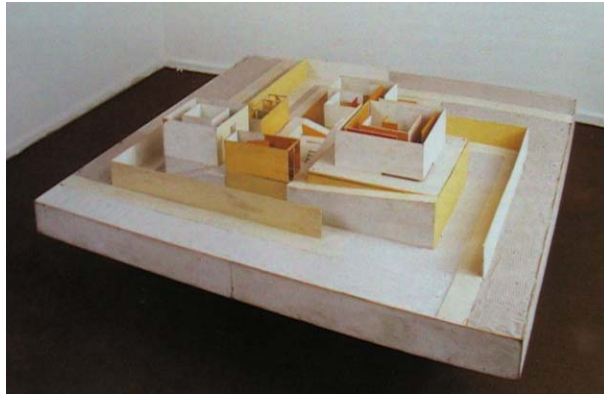


Figure 12: Maquette from *Hunting Dogs Project*, 1961, composed of 5 *Penetrables*, *Buried Poem* by Ferreira Gullar, *Integral Theater* by Reinaldo Jardim.

Oiticica’s ideas in relation to environments that incite change unite art, architecture, politics, and philosophy. He called this concept an “Environmental Program”:

This is a social manifestation, incorporating an ethical (as well as political) position which come together as manifestations of individual behavior [...] such a position can only be a totally anarchic position, such is the degree of liberty implicit in it [...] The ‘socio-environmental’ position is the starting point of all social and political changes, or the fermenting of them at least – it is incompatible with any law which is not determined by a defined interior need, laws being constantly remade – it is the retaking of confidence by the individual in his or her intuitions and most precious aspirations. Politically this position is that of all the genuine lefts of this world – not of course the oppressive lefts [...] For me the most complete expression of this ‘environmentation’ was the formulation of what I called *Parangolé*.⁵⁰ (1966)

Parangolé, therefore, is not a cape, but an environmental structure that stimulates one to take a different ethical and social stance, a structure similar to a house in a favela without rigid divisions between kitchen and living-room, or a narrow street paved with pebbles, anything that has a clear

⁴⁹Ibid.,100.

⁵⁰Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 78 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 103.

structural organicity.⁵¹ Oiticica found *Parangolé* elements in “all these popular cubbyholes and constructions, generally improvised, which we see every day, also, fairs, beggar’s homes, popular decorations of traditional, religious, and carnival feasts. . . There is another point which emerges too: the occurrence of a true return, through the *Parangolé*, to a mythical, primordial structure of art.”⁵² (1964)

As Oiticica explained, the word *Parangolé* “assumed the same character as the word *Merz* and its derivatives (*Merz-bau*, etc.) did for Schwitters, for example; it is the definition of a specific experimental position, essential both for the theoretical and physical understanding of his work.”⁵³ (1964)

In 1980, Oiticica revealed in an interview that the word *Parangolé*, which is not a Portuguese word, came from the letters he could distinguish in a sign on a beggar’s home that impressed him:

This magical word, I found it in the street. One day I was riding the bus. . . and there was a beggar that made a kind of most beautiful thing in the world: a kind of construction. On the day after, it had disappeared. Four posts, made of wood, around 2 meters high, that he made as if they were vertices of a rectangle on the ground. . . and put walls made of strings running from the top to the bottom. Extremely well assembled. And there was a piece of rough fabric hanging from one of the strings saying “Here is. . .”, and the only thing I understood, from what was written, was the word “Parangolé.” Then I said: This is the word.⁵⁴ (1980)

The favela and samba performances were for Oiticica the best venues for the environmental ethical experience and the return to a primordial state of art-making, to the production of an artistic outpouring with the power of establishing a new vision of the world, one that renders useless “any law which is not determined by a defined interior need” and substitutes dogmatic institutions by intuition. Favela and samba performed, therefore, an ethical function similar to

⁵¹Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 68.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 68 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 87-88.

⁵³Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 65

⁵⁴Hélio Oiticica, Interview to Jorge Guinle Filho (1980). “A Última Entrevista de Hélio Oiticica,” *Interview*, April 1980, as quoted in Celso Favaretto, *A Invenção de Hélio Oiticica*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2000), 117. My translation to English.

that which Nietzsche ascribed to Greek tragedy, an aesthetic substitute for metaphysical solace. Indeed, on the power of the environmental anti-art Oiticica stated:

Anti-art is the true, definitive link between creativity and collectivity – there is an exploration of something unknown: ‘things’ are found, which are seen everyday but which one never thought to look for. It is the search for oneself in the ‘thing’ – a kind of communion with the environment (ah! How well dance achieves this! – the Mangueira [samba] rehearsal grounds and the legendary ‘Só para quem pode’[Only for those who can] bar⁵⁵ were, for me, the greatest revelations of this communion between accessibility and environment, catalyzed here by the samba: those who live there will know what I am talking about!).⁵⁶ (1966)

Catherine David points out the difference between Oiticica’s “emancipatory project” and other Brazilian contemporary currents of thought and action that proposed political revolution as a liberating strategy.⁵⁷ She states that Oiticica’s project is

based on phenomenological thinking (Merleau-Ponty, Schlegel, Sartre) and Nietzschean philosophy, and that it emphasizes the role of the individual and of real life experience. The whole of Oiticica’s work tells the story of an awakening, of a personal liberation, of an initiative journey and of a parallel and simultaneous search for the self and the other [...]⁵⁸

Oiticica explained his experience at the Mangueira Hill as a voluntary “self-marginalization” that went beyond the natural marginalization of artists in society and created in his life a fundamental “lack of social place,” that led him to the discovery of his individual place as a total human being free from the social class system.⁵⁹ Also, he mentioned that his interest in samba and dance came out of an inner need to get away from intellectualization:

⁵⁵In this passage Oiticica is referring to a bar where people of the Mangueira community would gather to drink, play billiards, or play samba.

⁵⁶Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 80 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., Hélio Oiticica (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 105.

⁵⁷She compares Oiticica’s work to the proposals for active and violent revolution of the cinematographer Glauber Rocha. See Catherine David, *The Great Labyrinth* in Guy Brett and others, eds., Hélio Oiticica (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 255.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 255.

⁵⁹Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 74.

[...] I was feeling threatened by an excessive intellectualization. [Dance] would be the definite step in search of the myth, a reintroduction of myth in my art [...] It is therefore for me, an experience loaded with vitality, crucial, mainly as a demolisher of prejudices, stereotypes, etc... [...] There was a convergence of this experience with the form that my art undertook, the *Parangolé* [...] Also, it was the beginning of a fundamental social experience [...] Dance is the search for the expressive act, for the immanence of this act; not the ballet, which is excessively intellectualized by the existence of a choreography [...] but the Dionysiac dance, which comes from a collective inner rhythm [...] there is some sort of immersion in the rhythm [...] a fluency where the intellect remains obscured by an internal mythical force which is individual and collective (actually it is not possible to establish such a distinction). The images are mobile, fast, fleeting [...] the immersion in the rhythm is a purely creative act, an art [...] it is also, like all acts of expressive creativity, a creator of images [...] ⁶⁰ (1965)

This passage recalls Nietzsche's concept of the merging of the Apollonian force – an individual creative energy that reveals itself in images as pleasurable as dreamed images – and its Dionysiac counterpart – the collective delight of intoxication also achieved through music and dance. For Nietzsche, there is no justification for life except as aesthetic phenomena.⁶¹ One knows that existence is unjustifiable and hopeless but in a tragic culture - and maybe that is also valid for a carnivalesque culture - one tolerates this knowledge.

For Oiticica, the collective character of dance invalidates social distinctions and destroys social prejudices, while revealing the “total expression of the self.”⁶² One is, through dance, a “social being,” an expression that for Oiticica implies the freedom of participating in a “total” society, as opposed to the constricting social class system.⁶³ Likewise, for Nietzsche, when the Dionysian forces awake,

and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness

[...] the union between man and man is reaffirmed [...] Now the slave is a free man;

⁶⁰Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 73

⁶¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 35-36.

⁶²Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 74.

⁶³Ibid., 74.

now all the rigid, hostile barriers [...] between man and man are broken [...] In song and dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is on the way toward flying into the air, dancing.[...] He is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art [...]⁶⁴

Dance and creative experiences are, therefore, means of transformation through which the individual reaffirms her or himself in a higher, collective self. As Nietzsche's "Dionysiac monster who bears the name of Zarathustra"⁶⁵ spoke:

Creation – that is the best redemption from suffering, and life's growing light. But that the creator may be, suffering is needed and much change... To be the child who is newly born, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth-giver.⁶⁶

The creative stance proposed by Oiticica is not, as carnival is often seen, an opium for the people, or distraction from misery, but a vehicle for change. Some of the *Parangolé* capes play with the awareness of suffering and simultaneous aesthetic joy, including verses like "I embody revolt," "I am possessed," "We live of adversity," "Cape of Freedom," "We are hungry."

The pictures of Nildo of Mangueira with *P15 cape 11, I embody Revolt* (Figure 13) suggest the dancer's movements with the heavy, burdensome cape. With pillows hanging on his chest and back Nildo both moves and is moved by the cape. If worn in a static way, the cape is weighty and constricting, but as one dances its weight adds energy to the movement and launches the performer further up, revealing the red pillow with the verse "I embody revolt" below. In Portuguese, and especially in the context of Brazilian *candomblé*, to embody (*incorporar*) conveys spiritual aspects, to embody a super-natural entity. Oiticica's cape substitutes the metaphysical entity with a political stance, Nildo's body being guided not by a *candomblé* spirit, but by social revolt and by the weight of the cape he wears, a phenomenological and artistic guidance.

In another picture, Nildo dresses in a black toga, *Parangolé P17 Cape 13, I am Possessed* from 1967 (Figure 14), and in this more Dionysiac instance he is "possessed" by the intoxicating spirit

⁶⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 36-37

⁶⁵*An Attempt at Self Criticism*, in *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 199.



Figure 13: Nildo of Mangueira with *Parangolé P15 Cape 11, I embody Revolt*, 1967.

of dance, as demonstrated by his ample movement and the ballet-like gesture of his left hand. The semi-transparent attachment ends on a stuffed bag, again provoking sensorial interaction and extra impetus to his action. The sentence “I am possessed” works also as a warning, an announcement that he is in a change-making, impulsive state, ready to be propelled by the weight of the cape.

Dance, laughter, and flight are recurrent metaphors in Nietzsche’s writings. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* flying and defying gravity are examples of liberation from rules and dogmas, and the ecstatic states Nietzsche describes are very similar to Oiticica’s joyful accounts of samba and dance:

I would believe only a god who could dance... Now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a god dances through me.⁶⁷

And we should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 153.

⁶⁸Ibid.,322.



Figure 14: Nildo of Mangureira with *Parangolé P17, Cape 13, I am Possessed*, 1967.

Haroldo de Campos has interpreted the *Parangolés* as “a sort of winged project [...] a hang-glider to ecstasy.”⁶⁹ Guy Brett also proposes many interpretations of the *Parangolés* centered on the idea of freedom.⁷⁰ He connects the capes to the neo-concrete rejection of the constricting machine aesthetic, pointing out that their form and fluidity resembles more a living organism than a machine, an idea closely related to the neo-concrete conception of the work of art “not as a ‘machine’ or as an object but as a ‘quasi-corpus’ (quasi-bodies).”⁷¹

In *Notes about the Parangolé*, Oiticica brings back his neo-concrete concerns with space, color, and time, stating that the capes would provide for the spectator a magical experience of these elements: the “magical incorporation of the elements of the art work into a total creative experience [vivência] of the spectator, who I now call the participator.”⁷² The body is not merely the support of the work, but part of it. *Cape 1* (Figure 15), for example, maintains the colors of the first nuclei and, flowing around the dancer, demands that he improvises a choreography incorporating the two organisms, his body and the *Parangolé*. Similarly to the transformation described by Nietzsche on

⁶⁹Haroldo de Campos, “Hang-Glider of Ecstasy” in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 217.

⁷⁰Guy Brett, “Fait sur les Corps: Le Parangolé de Hélio Oiticica,” *Cahiers du Musée National d’Art Moderne* 51 (Spring/1995), 34.

⁷¹Neo-concrete Manifesto, in Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America: the Modern Era, 1820-1980* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 336.

⁷²Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 71.

the passage about the awakening of the Dionysiac force, the performer becomes a kinetic work of art, in symbiosis with the cape, “‘shifting’ the environmental space of the obvious, already known, relationships between things.”⁷³

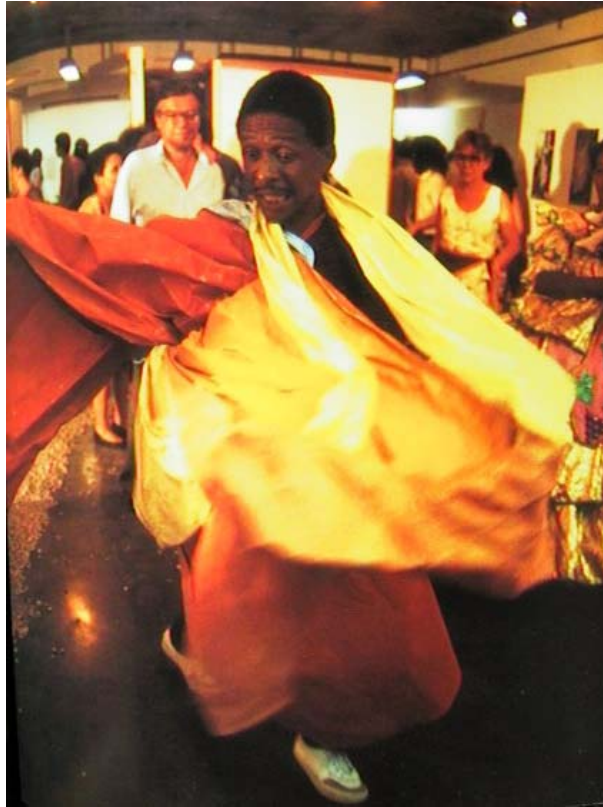


Figure 15: Nildo of Mangueira with *Parangolé P4 Cape 1*, 1964.

The colors and constructivist vocabulary of Oiticica’s earlier production returns in the *Parangolé* as a transformative tool. While Nietzsche’s aspiration for a better, unconditioned society culminated in the concept of the superman (*Übermensch*), Oiticica aspired to a super-culture, coming out of a super-anthropophagy and constructivist will, as he described in 1967 in the catalogue for the exhibition “Brazilian New Objectivity”:

In Brazil, innovative movements demonstrate, in general, this unique characteristic - a striking constructivist will - in quite a specific way. This could be found even in the Movement of ‘22,’ it being, in my view, the reason which led Oswald de Andrade to the celebrated conclusion that our culture would be Anthropophagic, that is, an imme-

⁷³Ibid., 76.

mediate reduction of all external influences to national models. This would not happen were there not, latent in our way of apprehending such influences, something special, characteristic of us, which would be this general constructive will [...] Furthermore, we would like to believe that the governing social conditions, still formative here, in a way, have contributed towards objectifying this factor even more: we are a people in search of cultural characterization; in this we differ from the European, with his millenary cultural concentration, and the North-American, with his super-productive demands. Both export their cultures in a compulsive manner, actually needing to do so, because their sheer volume makes them overflow compulsively. Here, social underdevelopment signifies, culturally, the search for national characterization, which specifically translates itself in this first premise, constructive will [...] Anthropophagy would be the defense which we possess against such external dominance, and this constructive will, our main creative weapon. These did not however in any way prevent a kind of cultural colonialism, which we wish today to objectively abolish, absorbing it definitively into a Super-Anthropophagy [...] In this task, this general constructive will appears as the principal item, its spiritual mover. ⁷⁴ (1967)

The acknowledgement that Brazilian culture was a culture in formation does not mean, for Oiticica, a lack of identity but a non-oppressive state of experimentalism and innovation, as clarified in a later text:

I say culture in formation as an open possibility, in opposition to the character usually employed to designate something cultural - in a strong way it is anti-cultural because it proposes the destruction of what is oppressive: the culture, for being artificially established, is oppressive, it is a non-creative force that comes with the glorification of what has already been created [...] all the cultural-patriotic-folkloric-national paraphernalia is oppressive [...] ⁷⁵

Super-Anthropophagy, therefore, would lead to a cultural state that is beyond a fixed charac-

⁷⁴Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 85 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., Hélio Oiticica(Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 110-111.

⁷⁵Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 116.

terization, to a super-culture that comes out of a conscious process of digesting external influences and revising what is considered local, this openness being a positive, creative attitude, as opposed to a victimized, derivative condition.

5. Violence and Marginality

Anyone who approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart and proceeds to look for signs of moral loftiness in them, or indeed holiness, or incorporeal spirituality, or a loving gaze filled with compassion, will soon be forced to turn his back on them in dismay and disappointment.⁷⁶



Figure 16: Hélio Oiticica with *Box Bolide 18 Poem Box 2, Homage to Cara de Cavallo*, 1966.

For international audiences, Brazil in the 1960s was the exotic land of dancers described in works like Marcel Camus's *Black Orpheus* and reinforced by a local invention, the simultaneously sensual and nonchalant *Bossa Nova* music, with its girls from Ipanema who walk “like a samba that

⁷⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Richard Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22.

swings so cool and sways so gentle.”⁷⁷ The reality of the mid and late sixties, however, was one of oppression of civil rights and torture of both political and common prisoners – the latter a still prevalent practice. In a time when the definition of criminal included university students fighting against the military dictatorship, Oiticica reviewed the ethical values of the common outlaw:

My environmental program [...] does not intend to establish a ‘new moral’, but to ‘destroy all morals,’ since those have a tendency to create a stagnating conformism, to stereotype opinions, and to create non-creative concepts. Moral freedom is not a new moral but an anti-moral [...] it gives to each one his individual responsibility; it is beyond good and evil, etc. Therefore, all the individual revolts against established values are justified: from the more socially organized (revolution, for example) to the more visceral and individual ones (that of the so-called criminal, who rebels, steals, kills). In fact, crime is the desperate search for authentic happiness, in contrast to the established false and stagnating social values that claim “well-being,” “family values,” concepts that only work for a restricted minority [...] The aim of the *Parangolé* program is to give a strong hand to these manifestations [of revolt]. I know this is a dangerous statement [...] but it is merited [...] Change (and it ought to change!) or we will continue the war. I am not for peace – I think it is cold and useless – how can there be peace when there are still masters and slaves?⁷⁸ (1966)

The Nietzschean concept of masters and slaves is here employed with a double meaning. There cannot be peace and master-slave oppression simultaneously. But to achieve a non-oppressive social state, one must fight to be a “master” and follow one’s own individual responsibility, as opposed to accepting the slave (weak) morality of the herd.

Oiticica’s rapport with marginality went beyond the theoretical field since he had friends who were common criminals.⁷⁹ In the same way that Oswald de Andrade paid homage to the cannibal Indian, as opposed to the noble savage, Oiticica mentions in his work not the sensual samba dancer but his friend, the criminal Cara de Cavalo.

⁷⁷ *The Girl from Ipanema*, music by Tom Jobim, lyrics in Portuguese by Vinícius de Moraes.

⁷⁸ Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 82

⁷⁹ Wally Salomão provides a vigorous insider’s account of Oiticica’s rapport with the world of the outlaws. See Wally Salomão, Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o Parangolé (Rio de Janeiro, Relume Dumará, 1996).

The bolide *Cara de Cavalo* (1964-65) marks these reflections on the violence of the social disparities of Brazilian society. The inside walls of the box shows his friend dead, brutally shot by a police death squad (Figure 16).⁸⁰ The photographs from a local newspaper are covered by red gauze and a plastic bag filled with red earth. The spectator unlayers these materials to reach the photographs, a process that inspires reverence and horror. According to Oiticica, this bolide had an “anarchist attitude, against all sorts of armed forces: police, army, etc.”⁸¹

The paradoxes of criminality are highlighted in the verse written in a banner *Parangolé* from 1968: “Be a marginal, be a hero” (*Seja marginal, seja herói*) (Figure 17). The banner also reproduces the image of *Cara de Cavalo* dead. The choice of the word, “marginal,” merges artistic marginality with criminal marginality, and works as a plea for action.



Figure 17: Banner *Be a Marginal, Be a Hero*, 1968.

⁸⁰According to Wally Salomão, *Cara de Cavalo* was executed by policemen for having killed another killer/policeman, who by his turn had been hired by another outlaw to take measures against *Cara de Cavalo*'s extortions. The account describes a circle in which law and criminality are indistinguishable. See Wally Salomão, Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o Parangolé (Rio de Janeiro, Relume Dumará, 1996), 35.

⁸¹Oiticica, in the fac-simile of the Whitechapel exhibition catalogue, reproduced in Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986).

6. Tropicalia, Tropicalism, Television

Oiticica attempted to create a national artistic language with two penetrables installed in 1967 at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, which he entitled *Tropicália* (Figure 18). The main penetrable of *Tropicália* was an environment made of cheap curtains, with tropical plants, living macaws, and objects and materials that the viewer steps on or touches (little stones, sand, carpet. . .). At the end of the labyrinth, the participant encountered a dark room with a TV set switched on that, in contrast to the previous environments and tactile experiences, provoked a cultural and sensorial rupture. With *Tropicália*, Oiticica was not defending the narrow view that foreign elements would destroy the local culture – actually he praised and paid homage to foreign artists throughout his life – but rejecting what he called the unacceptable arianism of Brazilian culture, proposing that an authentic Brazilian culture would only be born from the anthropophagic absorption of North American and European cultures by the Indian and African cultures of Brazil.⁸²

With its tropical plants and macaws, *Tropicalia* intended to counter the folklorization of these elements. Oiticica declared that he used the same materials usually employed in the cultural camouflage and folkloric characterizations of Brazil to propose the search for a “structural-root” and not a mere image of the country.⁸³ The word “root” was problematic for Oiticica and entered his text as “structure” and not “origin”:

There are people who spend the whole day looking for roots, which is what one should extract, it's a very dangerous thing. It's incestuous to look for roots, it's like searching for the uterus again. Why search for the uterus again? When it is enough to have been born, to be out of the uterus, why wish a return to the uterus.⁸⁴

⁸²Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 108.

⁸³Ibid., 116.

⁸⁴Hélio Oiticica, cited in Carlos Zilio, *Da Antropofagia à Tropicalia* in *O Nacional e o Popular na Cultura Brasileira*, ed. Adauto Novaes (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982), 40. My translation from Portuguese.



Figure 18: *Tropicália*, installed at Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1967.

About the presence of the television at the end of the labyrinth in *Tropicália*, Oiticica stated that it “devoured” the participant, who hitherto had created for himself images based on the tactile-sensorial experiences offered by the labyrinth. He said that with the TV set permanently switched on “it is the image which then devours the participant, because it is more active than his sensorial creating. Actually, this *Penetrable* gave me the powerful sensation of being devoured [...] – it is, in my opinion, the most anthropophagic work in Brazilian art.”⁸⁵ (1968)

To understand this complex statement one must consider the stark contrast between apprehending a “culture” through bodily experience in the labyrinth and the sensorial void of its vortex, the dark room. One would be able to keep an imagistic memory of the tactile experiences if the dark room were empty, but before such memories are processed, they are supplanted by the active presence of a new flow of visual information from the television (soap-operas? soccer games? American movies? talk shows?) with which the participant would have to negotiate his just acquired sensations, a fight between the “structure” and the “image.” The textures are not in the participant’s fingertips anymore, but projected onto anything in the TV image that resembles color or visual aspects experienced in the labyrinth. Oiticica stated that “the problem of the image is posed

⁸⁵Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 107 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 124-125.

here objectively – but since it is universal, I also propose this problem in a context that is typically national, tropical, Brazilian.”⁸⁶ The name *Tropicália* would be hesitantly appropriated by Caetano Veloso for the title of a song and, according to the musician, “received the inevitable *ism*” after appearing in the mass media,⁸⁷ which provoked Oiticica’s angry response in an article from 1968 about the emergence of

bourgeois, sub intellectuals, idiots of all sorts proclaiming the Tropicalism, the Tropicália (now fashionable!) - in short, transforming into a consumer product something of which they don’t even know the meaning. One thing, however, is certain: those who were making stars and stripes now are making macaws and banana trees, or are interested in favelas, schools of samba, anti-hero criminals (Cara de Cavalo has become fashionable). Very well, but don’t forget that there are elements in there that cannot be consumed with such bourgeois voracity: the immediate [mind-body] experience (*vivência*) that goes beyond the problem of the image. Those who speak of Tropicalism take the image directly for their consumption, ultra-superficially, but the existential experience escapes them, they cannot own it.⁸⁸ (1968)

The penetrable *Tropicália* is directly influenced by Oswald de Andrade’s Anthropophagic manifesto. Oiticica’s next experiment from the 1960s, the *Crelazer* (Creleisure) may also be connected to the lesser known books that Andrade published in the 1950s in which he describes a social utopia, using the advances of the technological civilization to reintegrate “idleness” into life,⁸⁹ an idea that, as Brett pointed out, had also appeared in the work of Mario de Andrade in the 1920s.⁹⁰ As stated by Osthoff, the “creative leisure” of *Crelazer* can also be associated with the 1960s revolt against the pleasure-denying productivist work ethic and is related to the concept of the “Supra-Sensorial,” “the expansion of the individual’s normal sensory capacities in order to discover his/her internal creative center.”⁹¹ The ideas behind *Crelazer* – joy, pleasure, and phenomenological knowl-

⁸⁶Ibid.,107

⁸⁷Caetano Veloso, *Verdade Tropical*, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997), 188, 192.

⁸⁸Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986),108-109.

⁸⁹Augusto de Campos, *Poesia, Antipoesia, Antropofagia* (São Paulo: Cortez&Moraes, 1978), 23.

⁹⁰Guy Brett, “The Experimental Exercise of Liberty,” in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 232.

⁹¹Simone Osthoff, “Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica: A Legacy of Interactivity and Participation for a Telematic Future,” *Leonardo* 30, n.4 (1997), 284.

edge – appear in the penetrable *Eden* (Figure 19), installed in 1969 at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. Its visual aspects were minimal in comparison to *Tropicália*. Areas of the floor covered by sand and water, to be experienced barefoot, beds, a black tent, a room flooded in red light, and strange smells, all forming “a kind of mythical place for feelings, for acting, for making things and constructing one’s own interior cosmos,”⁹² leisurely.



Figure 19: Detail of Eden, installed at Whitechapel Gallery, 1969.

The “Supra-Sensorial” and *Crelazer* were also solutions to avoid the object and therefore protect a work meant to cause transformation from the assimilation by mainstream modes of thinking:

The idea of *Creleisure* arises slowly with the Eden concept, in fact it is its profound sense: leisure in itself, an opened idea based in a ‘behavior state’ that, internally, will require a transformation or an identification of the ones who want to penetrate it, but this transformation would not be pre-dictated: ‘be that’, or ‘that’, no – you can’t buy the piece, because also the idea of a solid work to be bought is fake: the nests, or tents, or bed, etc. are *Nuclei* for leisure, for it, given in a specific context, but that must be different relating to each person’s internal feelings; no use having something as an object, distorted then to bourgeois structure, etc., because it relates to the idea of non-representative leisure, creative, it is not the place for divertive thoughts, but for the replacement of myth in our lives, the cresleep conscious of itself.⁹³ (1969)

⁹²Guy Brett, “Hélio Oiticica: Reverie and Revolt,” *Art in America* 77, (January 1989), 117.

⁹³Hélio Oiticica, in the catalogue of the exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery (1969), as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993),13.

Oiticica believed that Brazil was the ideal site to develop that state of behavior he named “Creleisure,” but he found in London a similar proposal in the works of the group Exploding Galaxy since “even the food, the act of eating, dressing, the environment itself, show that for them life and art cannot be separated – and actually there is no such distinction.”⁹⁴ After working as an artist in residence at Sussex University, in Brighton, Oiticica returned to Rio, only to leave again at the end of 1970, when he received a Guggenheim fellowship and moved to New York City.

⁹⁴Hélio Oiticica, Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986), 121.

7. *Übermensch* in New York

Se você tem uma idéia incrível, é melhor fazer uma canção. Está provado que só é possível filosofar em alemão.

If you have an incredible idea, you better write a song. It is proven it is only possible to philosophize in German.

Caetano Veloso⁹⁵

O q faço é música.

What I do is music.

Hélio Oiticica.⁹⁶

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche presents the idea of the overmen, or supermen, those who overcome conditioned, dogmatic behavior, “give themselves their own will and reject all resignation.”⁹⁷ These rare beings are most likely to be found near music, dance and laughter, and are Nietzsche’s hope to “redeem mankind’s existence.”⁹⁸

Translations of Nietzsche’s work to English tend to favor the term “overman,” to avoid an association between the anti-mainstream concept of the *Übermensch* and the flying super-hero of comic strips and cartoons. In Portuguese, the term used is *super-homem* (superman) or *além-do-homem* (beyond-the-man),⁹⁹ but no matter in which one of the two languages Oiticica read Nietzsche, the association between the *Übermensch* and the pop culture super-hero would be inevitable.

While living in New York, in the early seventies, Oiticica, an otherwise vehement critic of the use of North-American Pop Art themes and conventions,¹⁰⁰ played with the concept of the overman

⁹⁵Excerpt from the lyrics of *Língua*, in the album *Velô*, 1984.

⁹⁶Title of an essay written in November, 1979, reprinted in the catalogue of the exhibition *O q Faço é Musica*, Galeria São Paulo, Feb/March, 1986

⁹⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 283.

⁹⁸A.J. Hoover, *Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Thought* (Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 172.

⁹⁹*Friedrich Nietzsche: Obras Incompletas* ed. Gérard Lebrun, transl. Rubens Rodrigues Torres Filho (São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1983), xiv

¹⁰⁰In 1968, when discussing the goals of *Tropicália*, Oiticica stated: “why use ‘stars and stripes,’ elements of Pop Art, or dots and images from Lichtenstein and Warhol (serial repetition of figure, etc.) – or like the orthodox Paulistas [from São Paulo, tn.], ‘Op’ illusionism (which as a matter of fact could have roots here, much more so than Pop Art,

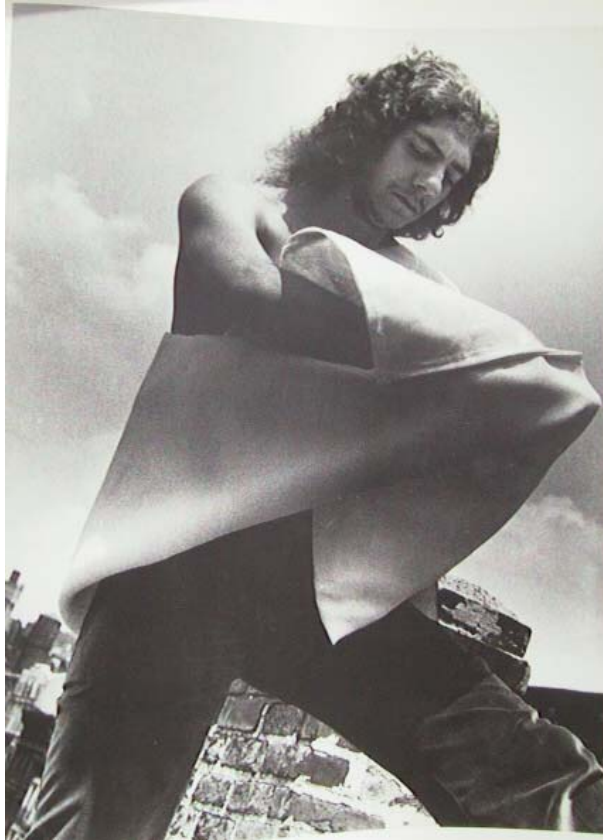


Figure 20: Omar Salomão with Parangolé, New York City, 1971.

and of the superman. In a photograph from 1972, his friend Romero stands, heroically, with his cape on plaza surrounding the World Trade Center Building, as if he had just landed on that spot (Figure 21). The *Parangolé Cape 26* still flows behind him and the angle of the picture confers upon him a super-human quality. In Figure 22, also from 1972, Romero is about to fly, one foot already on the rim of a building's roof and raised arms that transform the *Parangolé Cape 25* into wings. Tropical supermen in exile inhabit these deserted roofs with elegant, semi-transparent capes of a geometrism that recalls the Neo-concretist aspects of Oiticica's spatial reliefs and nuclei from the early 1960s, with the body this time wholly enveloped by the work. (Figure 23).

While the *Parangóles* from the sixties relate to magic and transformation through the metaphor of possession and of the Dionysian, these capes and photographs developed during his American

whose imagery is completely inadmissible to us.”(1968) Hélio Oiticica, *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986),108 as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 125.



Figure 21: Romero with *Parangolé Cape 26* at the World Trade Center Building, New York City, 1972.

exile suggest transformation through a connection to American cartoons. Likewise, during the early seventies, rock substituted samba in Oiticica's work, as he was very interested in the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix. Brett observes that "like samba, rock was euphoric dance."¹⁰¹ Oiticica's writings from this phase also became more chaotic, intense, bi-lingual, and neologicistic. The work of Nietzsche continues to appear in some of Oiticica's notes, side-by-side new influences and inventions.

The Dionysiac intoxication returns in the form of cocaine in a new kind of work that makes reference to Pop culture icons. In *Cosmococa, CC5 Hendrix-War*, from 1973, the face of the rock musician, associated with the concept of the hero in the original text that accompanied the picture, is outlined by cocaine (Figure 24). Also part of this series, the standard Pop art image, the face of Marilyn Monroe, receives a layer of cocaine above the mouth and eyes, areas usually offset in Warhol's works (Figure 25). The medium itself is intoxicating, and as pointed out by Brett the

¹⁰¹Guy Brett, "The Experimental Exercise of Liberty," in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 234.



Figure 22: Romero with *Parangolé Cape 25*, New York City, 1972.

work becomes the support both for the graphical manipulation and for the consumption of the substance.¹⁰² The images of the *Cosmococa* series were filmed and were supposed to be seen as a slide show in leisure-oriented environments. Neville d'Almeida, the film-maker who collaborated in this piece, acknowledged its unexhibitable aspects and stated that the piece was meant to be brought to public attention only ten years after its execution.¹⁰³

The faces covered by white lines recall, at once, Nietzsche's concept of the "mask" and, in its similarity to tribal face-painting, the warriors who, for Nietzsche, are those who fight against established values and overcome man. Brett informs us that Oiticica named these masks "man-coquilagens", "from Manco Capac, the Inca whose names incorporates COCA, and maquilagens, make-up."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²It is interesting to notice the existential and political character that Brazilian artists conferred on pop culture symbols during the years of the military dictatorship. To mention a few examples, Cildo Meireles stenciled bottles of coke with words teaching how to make bombs with them, and put the bottles back into circulation in 1970. Mauricio Nogueira Lima painted The Beatles shouting "Help" in 1965 in a simplified, graphic manner, a theme that was later explored in Caetano Veloso's extremely melancholic interpretation of that song in the album *Jóia* from 1975. Antonio Dias divided his compositions in squares that recall comic-strips to develop narratives of crude terror.

¹⁰³Guy Brett, "The Experimental Exercise of Liberty," in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 234-235.

¹⁰⁴Guy Brett, "The Experimental Exercise of Liberty," in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis,



Figure 23: Luis Fernando Guimarães with *Parangolé Cape 23, M'Way Ke*, New York City, 1972.

Oiticica's writings describing *Cosmococa* mention the mask as a tool to "scramble roles," with joy:

NEVILLE-I are not in favor of sweating: not even when constructing PENETRABLES and NUCLEUS did I sweat: but it really flowssss in JOY-DANCE:PENETRABLES were invitations au voyage to the bitchy pleasantries offered by EDEN... color..sound..languor inside tents.. straw..sand: ARTAUD's poetry without blood-... that which emerges lifting itself above the ground...singing: ZARATHUSTRIAN JOY of NIETZSCHE..... NEVILLE invents COSMOCOCA as a world-name proposing not a 'point of view' but a WORLD-INVENTION program [...]to open oneself to a superior experimentation.... to lead oneself BODYWISE instead of being led by the nose SPECTATOR.....VERGARA¹⁰⁵ ..mutant-skin... WITH JOY.. as with CACIQUE's CLOTHING SKIN¹⁰⁶... which is thrown upwards in dance at the WORLD-STREET..... YOKO ONO.. MASK... TO SCRAMBLE ROLES..SITUATIONS.. THE WORLD OF APPEARANCES..PSYCHES ¹⁰⁷ (1973)

MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 235.

¹⁰⁵Carlos Vergara, Brazilian artist

¹⁰⁶Cacique is the title of the chiefs of Brazilian indigenous tribes

¹⁰⁷Hélio Oiticica, *Block-experiments in Cosmococa* in Guy Brett and others, eds., Hélio Oiticica (Minneapolis, MN:



Figure 24: *Quasi-cinema, Block Experiments in Cosmococa, CC5 Hendrix-War*, in collaboration with Neville d'Almeida, New York City, 1973.

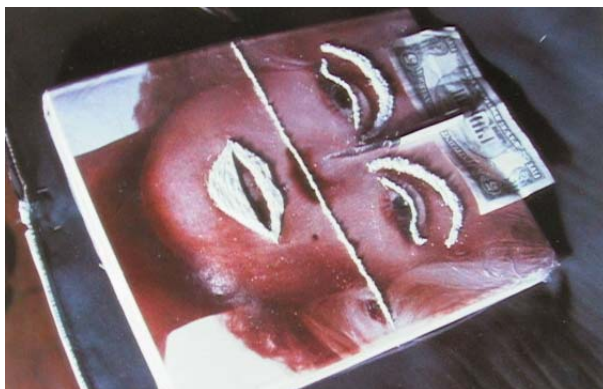


Figure 25: *Quasi-cinema, Block-Experiments in Cosmococa, CC3* , 1973.

Figure 26 shows the design from 1974 for a head *Parangolé*, and a description, in English, of a “photo-event” featuring a red head *Parangolé* that would mask the participants’ faces. Oiticica transcribed a text on the right of the drawing from Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power*, and included the reference to the excerpt:

Nietzsche states in “The Will to Power” (p. 412, Vintage Giant): (...) individualism is the most modest stage of the will to power. hum! yeah! necessary but yet modest!

Romero: listen: rise but listen!: victor you shall be! and further in Nietzsche (idem,

Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 181-182. The capital letters and ellipsis are transcribed as in the original.



Figure 26: Parangolé Somethin' Fa' the Head 2, New York City, 1974.

p. 451) (...) Those imposing artists who let a harmony sound forth from every conflict are those who bestow upon things their own power and self-redemption: they express their innermost experience in the symbolism of every work of art they produce – their creativity is gratitude for their existence. The profundity of the tragic artist lies in this, that his aesthetic instinct surveys the more remote consequences, that he does not halt shortsightedly at what is closely at hand, that he affirms the large scale economy which justifies the terrifying, the evil, the questionable – and more than merely justifies them.¹⁰⁸ (1974)

The mask is a concept that appears in several of Nietzsche's works. In The Birth of Tragedy the mask explains the appearance in Greek tragedy of several heroes who are actually masquerades of Dionysus. In the following passage, the hero, entangled in a net of individualism, recalls immediately

¹⁰⁸Guy Brett and others, eds., Hélio Oiticica (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 170-171.

the head *Parangolé* :

[...] Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus himself. But it may be claimed with equal confidence that until Euripides, Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero; that all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage – Prometheus, Oedipus, etc. – are masks of this original hero, Dionysus. [...] [T]he only truly Dionysus appears in a variety of forms, in the mask of a fighting hero, and entangled, as it were, in the net of the individual will.¹⁰⁹

For Nietzsche, the myth of Dionysus, who as a boy was torn to pieces by the Titans, symbolizes the dismemberment of the primal oneness in several individuals, which is for him the main cause of human suffering:

This view of things already provides us with all elements of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, together with the *mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness in everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness.¹¹⁰

The Dionysian is the symbol of Nietzsche's world view, a life-affirming force that will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction.

The word Dionysian is: an urge to unity, a reach out beyond personality, the everyday, society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, throughout all change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 73.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 74

¹¹¹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 539.



Figure 27: Hélio Oiticica installing a head *Parangolé* in Wally Salomão, 1979.

A text by Hélio Oiticica from November of 1979, entitled *What I do is music* and written when he was already back in Rio de Janeiro, seems to expand the concept of the primal oneness to the categories of art. Oiticica points out the senselessness of dividing the visual arts into categories (painting, sculpture,...), and more than that, of separating artistic manifestations into larger blocks (visual arts, music, dance,...). Therefore, he does music, for music is

the synthesis of the consequence of the discovery of the body [...] wouldn't experiences as diverse and radically rich in the art of the first half of the century as those of MALEVICH KLEE MONDRIAN BRANCUSI have been directed to this synthesis MUSIC-*plastic totality*?: and why is the experience of HENDRIX so close and why does it make one think so much of ARTAUD?: but this is left to a larger text somewhere else since the subject is very complex and points to what Nietzsche conceived as being the *tragic artist* (that, contrary to the general thought is not the "reassembling of the Greek Apollonian-Dionysiac artist" but something that did not exist before in its plenitude and only now starts to emerge in its entirety and totality)¹¹²

Since the sixties, Oiticica had already acknowledged the importance of music and dance as collective manifestations and catalyzers of the communion between the individual and the envi-

¹¹²Hélio Oiticica, *What I do is music*, November 1979, in the catalogue of the exhibition of same title, Galeria São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil, 1986. My translation from the Portuguese text. For a translation of the whole text, see Appendix A.

ronment. For Nietzsche, music is the quintessential Dionysiac art, a joyful self-overcoming, the annihilation of the individual, and the assertion of the “eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art”, which comforts us from the terrors of knowing about the inevitable end of individual existence.¹¹³

¹¹³Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1967),104.

8. The Anticritic: On Exhibiting the *Übermensch*

Little do people comprehend the great – that is the creating.
But they have a mind for all the showmen and actors of great
things [...] Far from the market place and from fame happens all
that is great: far from the market place and from fame the inventors
of new values have always dwelt.¹¹⁴

I walk among these people and I keep my eyes open: they
have become smaller, and they are becoming smaller and
smaller; but this is due to their doctrine of happiness and virtue.¹¹⁵

The 1970s and the experience of exile seem to have brought Nietzsche's thoughts to a more explicit level in Oiticica's work and writings, always in relation to the idea of overcoming mainstream ways of thinking. In 1974, in a letter to Lygia Clark he wrote:

The critic is either on the side of the artist or not: as Nietzsche said a hundred years ago: how can a Major thing be reduced to a Smaller. From the discovery/invention carried out by the artist to the minor idiosyncrasies of the spectator which no longer exists: whoever experiences that which you propose and give, either *lives* it or *not lives it* but never stays in the position of watching from outside! Voyeurs of art. . . it is worse than useless, you and the cousin have nothing to do with this! We belong to another race: You are another race!¹¹⁶

Clark's reply avoids the "race" terminology, but is also suspicious of traditional art criticism: "[...] the critic can only express himself via the dead culture where the art object still exists, but

¹¹⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 163-64.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 281.

¹¹⁶Hélio Oiticica to Lygia Clark, July 11, 1974, in Luciano Figueiredo, "The Other Malady", Third Text 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994), 110.

now it is impossible[...]"¹¹⁷

In the text *Brazil Diarrhea* Oiticica is as disillusioned with art institutions as Nietzsche was with Christianity. Whereas other texts exude his enthusiasm about participatory art, *Brazil Diarrhea* conveys his disgust in face of what he defined as a general mediocrity in Brazilian culture and character, cynicism, hypocrisy, and ignorance. For him, the healthy digesting of different cultural elements was being diluted by a weak art criticism and reactionary values. Going back to the physiological metaphors, he adds diarrhea to the already well established Anthropophagy.

Our greatest enemy: four centuries-old moralism (of white, Christian-Portuguese origin) - paternal Brazil - the cultivation of 'good habits' - the super self-consciousness - the 'national' constipation [...] the really effective, revolutionary, and constructive culture (I hate the term) would be one that would emerge like a SUBTERRANEAN (I wrote a text with this name, in September '69, in London): it assumes the entire underdevelopment condition (sub-sub), but not like a 'symposium on this underdevelopment,' but as a... "consciousness of overcoming the 'Brazilian' super paranoia, repression, impotence" [...] In Brazil, therefore, the experimental and a permanently critical and universal position are constructive elements. All else is dilution of the diarrhea.¹¹⁸
(1973)

Nietzsche too relied on digestive processes to convey disgust with uncritical modes of thinking. Zarathustra spends part of his narrative suffering from nausea and refuses food for seven days:

Naked I had once seen both, the greatest man and the smallest man: all-too-similar to each other, even the greatest all-too-human. All-too-small, the greatest! - that was my disgust with man. And the eternal recurrence of the smallest - that was my disgust with all existence. Alas! Nausea! Nausea! Nausea!¹¹⁹

Still in *Brazil Diarrhea*, Oiticica places discussions about the death or resurrection of painting as a deflection from the main problems of the art world: "everything is purposefully done as a

¹¹⁷Lygia Clark to Hélio Oiticica, November 6, 1974 in *ibid.*

¹¹⁸Hélio Oiticica, *Brazil Diarrhea*, as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 19-20.

¹¹⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 331.

defense of those institutions which shelter under the concept of ‘plastic arts’ and their paternalistic promotions: salons, biennials; principally that of São Paulo.”¹²⁰ (1973)



Figure 28: Wim Beeren shouting at dancers wearing *Parangolés*, October 13th, 1994.

Indeed, fourteen years after Oiticica’s death, the Biennial of São Paulo would host a scene that illustrates the conflict between Oiticica’s work and art institutions. A day after the opening of the 1994 Biennial, samba dancers performing with the *Parangolés* in the Malevitch room were expelled from the gallery by the curator Wim Beeren (Figure 28).¹²¹ In other attempts to exhibit Oiticica’s work, the Dutch curator’s commandment “Get Out” was matched by the equally authoritarian “Do Not Touch” sign next to pieces that without touch and without discussion are unlikely to interest the common person who Oiticica desired so much to awaken. Ironically, the spectator’s apathy is also a loss for the art institution, and the failure becomes self-condemning.¹²² One actually wonders whether the impossibility of being displayed in a museum environment was part of the conception of the pieces.

As pointed out by Figueiredo, Oiticica’s work redefines even the concept of conservation and

¹²⁰Hélio Oiticica, *Brazil Diarrhea* as translated in Guy Brett and others, eds., *Hélio Oiticica* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993), 17.

¹²¹Luciano Figueiredo, “The Other Malady”, *Third Text* 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994), 116.

¹²²On this paradox and challenges of exhibiting Oiticica’s work, see Guy Brett, “A Paradox of Containment,” in Richter Verlag, ed. *Witte de With Cahier n.2* (Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1994). The occasion of the international retrospective of Oiticica’s work that traveled through Rotterdam (Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art), Paris (Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume), Barcelona (Fundació Antoni Tàpies), Lisbon (Centro de Arte Moderna da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian) and Minneapolis (Walker Art Center) in 1992-3 provoked many interesting thoughts on the issue of exhibiting the Oiticica’s work. See also Luciano Figueiredo, “The Other Malady”, *Third Text* 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994).

preservation of the work of art. It does not suffice to protect the physical object. The ideas behind each project need to be preserved, so that *bolides* will not be shown on pedestals and *Parangolés* will not look like sad “empty, discarded cocoons,” as articulated by Susan Hiller.¹²³

The difficulty in presenting Oiticica’s pieces in a museum space emphasizes the importance of the art historical text and of a figure Oiticica condemned in *Brazil Diarrhea*, the art critic, in the discussion of his work. While attempts to exhibit the objects have in several occasions diluted the force of Oiticica’s ideas, written texts have brought his oeuvre to life, in part by providing a deeper examination and circulation of his own inspired writings.

Oiticica read avidly throughout his life and his texts reveal the presence of other writers, like Nietzsche, in a circle of appropriation that recalls Nietzsche’s terrifying and at the same time life-asserting concept of the Eternal Return of the Same. For Nietzsche, if there were a goal for existence, it would have already been achieved. Therefore, he refutes a linear and evolutionary world view and stresses the eternal return, the cyclical aspects of life, the Dionysus torn to pieces that is eternally reborn :

The new world-conception. - The world exists; it is not something that becomes, not something that passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away - it maintains itself in both. - it lives on itself: its excrements are its food.¹²⁴

A piece from 1980 creates a poetic environment for the discussion of the eternal return, appropriations and attempts at writing about art. *To Return Earth unto the Earth* (Figure 29) is an instance of Oiticica’s last invention, the *Counter-Bolide*. He explained the piece as a “poetic operation” and described it as follows:

In this Counter-Bolide operation I use a timber enclosure 80cm x 80 cm x 10cm and I fill it with black earth brought from another site: but instead of placing this earth in a container it is dumped inside this bottomless enclosure: its bottom is the ground itself where the timber fence has been placed: it is then taken off leaving EARTH OVER

¹²³cited in Luciano Figueiredo, “The Other Malady”, *Third Text* 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994), 112.

¹²⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 548

EARTH: the counter-bolide [...] can be repeated when the proper occasion or necessity for it appears [...] ¹²⁵ (1980)



Figure 29: Hélio Oiticica (left) with Counter-Bolide *To Return Earth unto the Earth*, during the urban-poetic event Kleemania at Cajú (Rio de Janeiro), 1979.

The process of reshaping earth from one site without enclosing it in the container subtly suggest a passage in which Nietzsche describes the eternal recurrence:

And do you know what “the world” is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by “nothingness” as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be “empty” here or there [...]; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing eternally flooding back,

¹²⁵Hélio Oiticica, “To Return Earth unto the Earth,” in Richter Verlag, ed. *Witte de With Cahier n.2* (Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1994), 9.

with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms;¹²⁶

In *To Return Earth unto the Earth* , Oiticica returns to Nietzsche's world view and to the intellectual difficulty in apprehending it, creating a poetic fourth-dimension that is corroborated by the resulting Malevitch-like black square on the ground. Everything returns and ideas are transported from their original grounds to new contexts. What Nietzsche called Dionysian, Oiticica named *bolides* and *Parangolés*, new ways of conceptualizing the world that need to return from time to time to reinforce the possibility of boundless thinking.

Writings about Oiticica are counter-bolides. Returning words and thoughts unto words and thoughts.

¹²⁶Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 550.

9. In the Grand Labyrinth of Cultural Construction

Studying Nietzsche's texts and Oiticica's work concomitantly reveals surprising confluences that have not been explored at length in the growing body of literature about the Brazilian artist. While several texts on Hélio Oiticica employ the term "Dionysiac" when analyzing the rapports between his work, intoxication, and dance, none dedicate more than a couple of sentences to Nietzsche.

This lack of deeper comparison between the two works might be purposeful. Nietzsche's existentialism provides a theoretical "category" in which to include Oiticica's work and it is an aim of the writers and artists who work with his oeuvre and of the Project Hélio Oiticica to avoid categorizations, to keep his work marginal in the sense of not fitting the established art historical canons. Yet, both Anthropophagy and Tropicalism, the two strongest cultural movements in twentieth century Brazilian art return to Nietzsche in their valuation of the body, the cannibalistic recycling of creative energy, and the rethinking of values.

One might imagine Oiticica, as easily as Nietzsche, describing:

The conditions under which I am understood, and then of *necessity* – I know them only too well. One must be honest in matters of the spirit to the point of hardness before one can even endure my seriousness and my passion. One must be skilled in living on mountains – seeing the wretched ephemeral babble of politics and national self-seeking *beneath* oneself. One must have become indifferent; one must never ask if the truth is useful or if it may prove our undoing. The predilection of strength for questions for which no one today has the courage; the courage for the *forbidden*; the predestination to the labyrinth. An experience of seven solitudes. New ears for new music. New eyes

for what is most distant. A new conscience for truths that have so far remained mute. And the will to the economy of the great style: keeping our strength, our *enthusiasm* in harness. Reverence for oneself; love of oneself; unconditional freedom before oneself.¹²⁷

¹²⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Antichrist," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 568.

Appendix A

What I do is music - Hélio Oiticica¹²⁸

ho

rio

ATAULFO

11 nov. 79

NIETZSCHE: Vontade de Domínio

(Will to Power -

Vintage Giant Edition - p. 431)



814 (Spring-Fall 1887;
revised Spr.-Fall 1888)

= Artists are *not* men of great passion, whatever they may like to tell us and themselves. And this for two reasons: they lack any sense of shame before themselves (they observe themselves *while they live*; they spy on themselves, they are too inquisitive) and they also lack any sense of shame before great passion (they exploit it as artists). Secondly, however, their vampire, their talent, grudges them as a rule that squandering of force which one calls passion.

— If one has a talent, one is also its victim: one lives under the vampirism of one's talent.=

¹²⁸translated by the author from Hélio Oiticica, *What I do is music*, November 1979, catalogue of the exhibition of same title, Galeria São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil, 1986. The typography and punctuation reproduce the format of Oiticica's original text.

for Nietzsche the discovery of art (or of what it is) is the discovery of something stronger than pessimism, of something “more divine” than truth:

but art not as a form of “cultural activity”: not art for the sake of art → Will to Power same edition p. 450 item 852:=(–“Love of Beauty” can therefore be something other than the *ability* to see the beautiful; it can be an expression of the very *inability* to do so) = :

that’s why, with the

discovery of the body that came to me as consequence of the disintegration of the old forms of artistic manifestation (as a recent consequence of MALEVITCH’s scream-program in the first half of the century: THAT THE REPUDIATION OF THE OLD WORLD OF ART BE INSCRIBED IN THE PALMS OF YOUR HAND) I came to the conclusion that not only the formal categories of plastic creation lost their frontiers and limitations (painting, sculpture, etc.), but so did the divisions of the so called arts:

I found

that what I do is MUSIC and that MUSIC is not “one of the arts” but the synthesis of the consequence of the discovery of the body: That’s why ROCK, for instance, became most important for my placing the key problems of creation in check (SAMBA in which I initiated myself came along with this discovery of the body in the early sixties: PARANGOLÉ and DANCE were born together, and it is impossible to separate one from the other): ROCK is the planetarian-phenomenal synthesis of this discovery of the body that synthesizes itself in a new concept of MUSIC as a creative world-totality in emergence nowadays: JIMI HENDRIX DYLAN and the STONES are more important for the plastic understanding of creation than any other painter after POLLOCK!: unless the so called plastic artists wish to continue to chew over the old solutions from the pre-discovery of the body infinitely: and isn’t it in a way what is happening?: wouldn’t experiences as diverse and radically rich in the art of the first half of the century as those of MALEVICH KLEE MONDRIAN BRANCUSI have been directed to this synthesis MUSIC-*plastic totality*?: and why is the experience of HENDRIX so close and why does it make one think so much of ARTAUD?: but this is left to a larger text somewhere else since the subject is very complex and points to what Nietzsche conceived as being the *tragic artist* (that, contrary to the general thought is not the “reassembling of the Greek Apollonian-Dionysiac artist” but

something that did not exist before in its plenitude and only now starts to emerge in its entirety and totality)

!:

It's MUSIC

because with the placing of the *work* and its reason in check, it was MUSIC that was the spinal conductor to the core of the problem (why the multiplication of works? instead of multiplying works, the conception that it is *unique*): there isn't that much said *evolution* from one work to the other: each one is a unique monument totally independent from the other: (what would have come "before" or "after"?: in fact there is such a simultaneity of roots and veins that raise themselves that it is not possible to know what came before or after: roots created *in the air*, from the INVENTION of the artist-creator, and never the much commented, unfortunate "roots", and that those themselves would be the very obstacle to CREATIVE INVENTION): to the INVENTOR artist it does not suit to add works:

there is no "style": with DUCHAMP all that had already reached the limit: and with ARTAUD?: and why do artists seek for *unity*?: coherence? unity? in summary wishing to reestablish the old "style"!: those who do not put the problem of the *work* in check will be stuck making works, mechanically: isn't that what is happening? (and they take DUCHAMP as the model!).

References

- Ades, Dawn. Art in Latin America: the Modern Era, 1820-1980. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Brett, Guy and others, eds. Hélio Oiticica, exh. cat. Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993.
- Brett, Guy. "Hélio Oiticica: Reverie and Revolt." Art in America 77, (January 1989): 111-121, 163, 165.
- _____. "The Experimental Exercise of Liberty," in Hélio Oiticica, exh. cat. Guy Brett and others, eds. Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993.
- _____. "A Paradox of Containment," in Witte de With Cahier n.2, Richter Verlag, ed. Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1994.
- _____. "Fait sur les Corps: Le Parangolé de Hélio Oiticica," Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne 51 (Spring/1995): 33-45
- _____. "Life strategies: overview and selection Buenos Aires-London-Rio de Janeiro-Santiago de Chile, 1960-1980", in Out of actions : between performance and the object. ed. Schimmel, Paul. Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art , New York : Thames and Hudson , 1998.

Brito, Ronaldo. NeoConcretismo: Vértice e Ruptura do Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE/Instituto Nacional de Artes Plásticas, 1985.

Campos, Augusto de. Poesia, Antipoesia, Antropofagia. São Paulo: Cortez&Moraes, 1978.

Campos, Haroldo de. "Hang-Glider of Ecstasy" in Hélio Oiticica, exh. cat. Guy Brett and others, eds. Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993.

Campos, Raymundo. História do Brasil. São Paulo: Atual, 1983.

Conceptual Art : a Critical Anthology. ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson. Published: Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999.

David, Catherine. "The Great Labyrinth," in Hélio Oiticica, exh. cat. Guy Brett and others, eds. Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, and Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1993.

Favaretto, Celso. A Invenção de Hélio Oiticica, 2nd ed. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2000.

Figueiredo, Luciano . "The Other Malady." Third Text 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994): 105-116.

Friedrich Nietzsche: Obras Incompletas. ed. Gérard Lebrun, trans. Rubens Rodrigues Torres Filho. São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1983.

Gardel, Luis Delgado. Escolas de Samba. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Kosmos Editora, 1967.

Goldwasser, Maria Julia. O Palácio do Samba: estudo antropológico da Escola de Samba Estação Primeira de Mangueira. Rio de Janeiro : Zahar Editores, 1975.

Hoover, A.J. Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Thought. Connecticut: Praeger, 1994.

Justino, Maria José. Seja Marginal, Seja Herói: Modernidade e Pós-Modernidade em Hélio Oiticica.
Curitiba: Editora da Universidade Federal do Paraná, 1998.

Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century., exh. cat. Waldo Rasmussen, ed. New York:
Museum of Modern Art, 1993.

Leopoldi, José Sávio. Escola de samba : Ritual e Sociedade. Petrópolis : Vozes, 1978.

Maltz, Bina and others. Antropofagia e Tropicalismo. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade/UFRGS, 1993.

Moraes, Vinicius de. Orfeu da Conceição: Tragédia Carioca, 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria São José, 1960.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner, trans. Walter Kauffman.
New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Will to Power, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1976.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Antichrist," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1976.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Toward a Genealogy of Morals," in The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1976.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy and other Writings, ed. Raymond Geuss and Richard Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- Oiticica, Hélio. Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986.
- Oiticica, Hélio. “O q Faço é Musica”, in O q Faço é Música, exh. cat. Galeria São Paulo, Feb/March, 1986.
- Oiticica, Hélio. “To Return Earth unto the Earth,” in Witte de With Cahier n.2, Richter Verlag, ed. Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 1994.
- Osthoff, Simone. “Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica: a Legacy of Interactivity and Participation for a Telematic Future,” Leonardo 30, no.4, (1997): 279-289.
- Peccinini, Daisy. Figurações: Brasil Anos 60. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1999.
- Salomão, Wally. Hélio Oiticica: Qual é o Parangolé. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 1996.
- Salzstein, Sônia. “Hélio Oiticica: Autonomy and the Limits of Subjectivity,” Third Text 28/29 (Autumn/Winter 1994): 129-134.
- Solomon, Robert. Existentialism. New York: The Modern Library, 1974.
- Stellweg, Carla. “Hélio Oiticica”, Art Nexus 12 (Apr/June 1994): 91-95.
- Veloso, Caetano. Verdade Tropical. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997.
- Veloso, Caetano. “Orpheus Rising from Caricature,” New York Times, 20 August 2000.
- Zilio, Carlos. “Da Antropofagia à Tropicalia” in O Nacional e o Popular na Cultura Brasileira, ed. Adauto Novaes. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982.