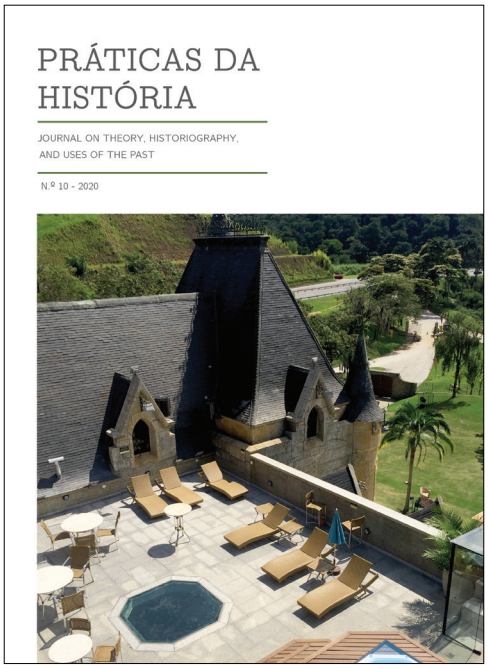

The Medieval Brazil of *Sertão*: The Escapist Utopia of the Country of Saint Saruê

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The close observation of a Brazilian popular pamphlet from the mid-20th century unveils mythic themes that cannot be credited to the Portuguese colonizers. In searching for its origins, the so-called regressive historiographic method allows us to identify five cultural layers whose features are interweaved in the text. At its deepest level lie unsounded medieval roots that permeated the Brazilian Northeast during the Dutch occupation. With these new colonizers came the mythical-literary motifs of the land of Cockaigne, whose dreamlike and cathartic function endured in that region of archaic features, later to be glossed by popular poets.
Keywords: Literatura de cordel, string literature; archaism; escapism; Cockaigne.

O Brasil medieval do *sertão*: A utopia escapista do país de São Saruê

A observação atenta de um folheto de cordel brasileiro de meados do século XX revela a presença de temas míticos que não podem ser creditados aos colonizadores portugueses. Na busca de suas origens, o método historiográfico dito regressivo permite identificar a sobreposição de cinco camadas culturais cujos materiais entraram na composição do texto. No nível mais profundo, estão insuspeitas raízes medievais que penetraram no Nordeste brasileiro durante a ocupação holandesa. Com esses novos colonizadores chegaram os motivos mítico-literários do país da Cocanha, cuja função onírica e catártica manteve-se naquela região de características arcaizantes, podendo assim ser reelaborados séculos depois pelo poeta popular.
Palavras-chave: Literatura de cordel; arcaísmo; escapismo; Cocanha.

The Medieval Brazil of *Sertão*: the Escapist Utopia of the Land of Saint Saurê

Hilário Franco Júnior*

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality[1]

Brazilian society and culture are clearly the outcome of a crossbreeding in which the relative weight of each of its components varies according to the time, place and the specific phenomenon being observed. However, a careful analysis should not be restricted to pointing out the indigenous, African and European contributions, but should rather differentiate the role of the subgroups in each particular circumstance, regardless of the important traits shared among those ethnic and cultural universes. Be that as it may, historiography has always been inclined to credit the Portuguese colonization for all the European influence in the formation of Brazil, before the migration currents of the late 19th century and the first decades of the 20th.

This is what Gilberto Freyre and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda[2] did – to mention only the most influential "interpreters of Brazil". Although generally consistent, these analyses leave aside important aspects of the

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1 Thomas S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, I, 44-45 (London: Faber and Faber, 1941), 10.

2 Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, [1933] 1996); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, [1936] 1995).

matter, in as much as they overlook the contribution of other historical periods besides modernity and other European peoples besides the Portuguese.We have already suggested, in a previous work of a more essaystic nature, that medievality was not missing in the elements that shaped the country and should, therefore, be taken into account[3]. Now, employing a more monographical approach, we will try to demonstrate the medieval and non Lusitanian origin, namely French and Dutch, of a short Brazilian narrative from the mid-20th century[4].

It is a piece of popular literature based on *topoi* rewritten according to the local context and constantly repeated by travelling poets and by circulating pamphlets (usually eight-page booklets printed on 11 by 16cm newsprint paper), called *de cordel* (meaning, literally, "of string" or "of twine") owing to the fact that they were displayed hanging from strings or threads in markets and squares. This literary production has features and functions similar to those of the oral literature of the European Middle Ages, as its audience accepts a degree of innovation but not dispense with familiar aspects and recognizable motifs[5]. To a certain extent, string literature continues the century-long situation of the Portuguese colonization (1500-1808), a period when the press was forbidden and all printed texts came directly from the mother country[6], which contributed, along with other factors, to keep the vast majority of the population in illiteracy.

3 Hilário Franco Júnior, "Raízes Medievais do Brasil", in *Interdisciplinares*, ed. Francisco Bosco, Eduardo Socha and Joselia Aguiar (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2016), 293-334.

4 We made a first and brief presentation of this hypothesis in our *Cocanha. A História de um País Imaginário* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998), 220-26, French translation, *Cocagne. Histoire d'un pays imaginaire* (Paris: Arkhê, 2013), 349-57.

5 "Motif is the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition", according to Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York: Dryden, 1946), 415.

6 "Dom João por graça de Deus rei de Portugal [...] faço saber a vós governador e capitão geral da capitania do Rio de Janeiro, que [...] mandareis notificar aos donos das mesmas letras e aos officiaes da imprensa que ouver, para que não imprimão nem consintão, que se imprimão livros, obras, ou papeis alguns avulsos, sem embargo de quaesquer licenças que tenhão para a dita impressão, cominando-lhe a pena, de que, fazendo o contrario, serão remettidos presos para este reino à ordem de meu Conselho Ultramarino, para se lhes imporem as penas, em que tiverem incorridos, na conformidade das leis e ordens minhas, e aos ouvidores e ministros, mandarei intimar da minha parte esta mesma ordem para que lhe dem a sua devida execução e a fação registrar nas suas ouvidorias. [...] Lisboa a 6 de julho de 1747": "Prohibição do uso da imprensa no Brazil nos tempos coloniaes". *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 47, n^{o} 1 (1884): 167-68.

In fact, from the end of the 16th century to the end of the 19th century, popular Brazilian literature was almost exclusively oral and, though from that time on it started being printed, at least until the 1950s it did not drop its oral leanings and was regularly read out for illiterate audiences. When typographies were set up, they were concentrated in the rich Southeast part of the country and only in the third quarter of the 19th century did they appear in the vast and poor Northeast. From then on the folk singers (*cantadores*), popular poets who publicly recited their own or someone else's work, started dictating those stories to the printers. As time went by not only did the number of the poets who could have their creations written down increase, but also the number of the listeners who became readers. A creative process not so different from the one witnessed in medieval Europe, when mythical, religious, epic, amorous and current topics were orally reworked by travelling poets.

Even the 20th century changes to the making, graphic production, marketing and circulation of literature did not erase the outmoded features of Brazilian chapbook fiction. There one still finds several of the heavenly motifs present in the early times of the colonization and preserved in the archaic nature of the Northeast. There is evidence of this in the text we are now analysing, a poem composed of 32 sextains and 2 tenths, published in 1947 by the popular poet and leaflet editor Manoel Camilo dos Santos (1905-1988), born in a small place in the interior of Paraíba, over two thousand kilometers away from Rio de Janeiro, the capital city at that time. The 8-page and 212-verse long pamphlet, the traditional length of this genre, is called *Viagem a São Saruê* (Journey to Saint Saruê), a story about a fantasy land based on the medieval land of Cockaigne[7].

If it is easy to understand *why* that story appeared in the Brazilian northeastern context – the literary topic of an upside-down world

7 Manoel Camilo dos Santos, *Viagem a São Saruê*, n/c [Campina Grande]: A Estrella da Poesia, n/d [1947]. This pamphlet was collected in several anthologies, like Manoel Cavalcanti Proença, *Literatura Popular em Verso: Antologia* (Rio de Janeiro: MEC/Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1964), 555-58, and sites like, amongst others, <https://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/931.pdf>.

has the basic function of channelling potentially rebellious imaginations into situations in which they become therapeutic[8] – the same cannot be said of the *how*. Which paths could that mid-13th European narrative have taken to then emerge in adapted form, in the mid-20th century in Brazil? The question becomes even more difficult in the face of the inexistence of a Portuguese model that the popular poet could have used. Besides the fact that a Portuguese literary version of Cockaigne is not known, the word was only mentioned for the first time in 1526, used by Gil Vicente (spelt *cucanha,* which hints at its Italian origin) in the traditional sense of a fantasy land[9]. However, all this is secondary: contrarily to what was claimed for a long time, northeastern twine literature owes little to Portuguese literature, as Márcia Abreu has demonstrated[10].

As any version of whatever origin from which Manoel Camilo dos Santos may have borrowed is unknown, the scholar should try to rebuild the path of the medieval myth back to the Brazilian Northeast by means of the so-called regressive method. That is to say, the method that for the Portuguese Oliveira Martins implies making "history backwards: to think from today to yesterday, to infer from the present to the past"; for the English Maitland, it is about casting a chronologically reversed look at the historical fact, which helps to understand it better; for the French Bloch, it means to go from the more to the less known, from the present to the past, step by step, as in a film of which we know only the last scenes, projected backwards, in search of the first frames[11]. It is therefore, not so dissimilar from the archaeological method that examines its material from the most superficial and recent layers to the deepest and

8 Helen F. Grant, "The World Upside-Down", in *Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age, Presented to Edward M. Wilson*, ed. Roy O. Jones (London: Tamesis, 1973), 113.

9 *Farsa dos Almocreves*, ed. José Camões, in *As Obras de Gil Vicente* (Lisbon: INCM, 2002), vol. II, 342.

10 Márcia Abreu, *Histórias de Cordéis e Folhetos* (Campinas: Mercado de Letras, 1999), 125-36.

11 Joaquim Pedro Oliveira Martins, *História de Portugal*, ed. Isabel de Faria e Albuquerque (Lisbon: INCM, [1879] 1988), 5; Frederic Maitland, "England before the Conquest", in *Domesday Book and Beyond. Three Essays in the Early History of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), 225-26; Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (Paris: Armand Colin, [1931] 1976), XIV; Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien*, ed. Étienne Bloch (Paris: Armand Colin, [1949] 1995), 96-97.

earliest ones. Thus, tracking back the possible sources of the pamphlet here examinated, we discern five historical-cultural beddings of whose convergence came the material used by the northeastern popular poet.

*

In the pamphleteer's journey from the present to the past that nurtured their text, the first point to consider is the conditions of the Brazilian Northeast, poor yet prodigal, exposed to long drought periods, subject to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few landowners since the republican period (*coronéis*) all the way to their ancestors in the colonial period (*senhores de engenho*). This meant poverty and dependence for the majority of the population, an archaic situation verging on vassalage in social relations and servitude in productive relations.

Such a natural and social environment was at the root of a strong messianic-millenialist mentality that surfaced on several occasions and places. This was the case of Canudos, a city in the Bahian wilderness, built on a collective effort and having reached an estimated population of 25.000 souls. Re-founded in 1893 by António Vicente Mendes Maciel, known as Counsellor (1828-1897), a charismatic preacher and mystic, the city attracted a large number of people from the region's impoverished countryside. As labour was pushed away from the large properties and the believers broke away from the catholic cult (the Church had forbidden the Counsellor's preaching since 1877), Canudos started being seen as a State within the State. The opposition of the big land owners and, in particular,of the Church led the young Republic (the Brazilian monarchy had been abolished in 1889) to step in violently with the Army, dynamiting and setting fire to the fragile mud-wall city, which resulted in a slaughter of nearly 15.000 people.

The fierceness of the oficial repression targeted the social rebellion contrary to reforms, such as civil marriage and new taxes, as much as the potential danger of the collective dream that promised the return to the Golden Age, with sexual freedom, collective property and effort-

less abundance. According to its main chronicler, in Canudos it was believed that "it is not even necessary to work, it is the promised land where a river of milk flows", which is very close to the dream of Saint Saruê, where everything is in the image and likeness of "the old promised land", where "rivers of milk flow", where people live "with no need to work"[12]. While the first two ideas are clearly of biblical influence, the absence of work might have been borrowed from the painting created by Bruegel and engraved by Van der Heyden (Fig. 1), whose legend tells that in Cockaigne people "do not work" (*sonder werken*), echoing a Dutch poem on the same topic (*sonder arbeit*) from a century before, influenced by the *Fabliau de Cocagne* dated from the mid-13th century (*qui plus idort, plus igaaigne*)[13].

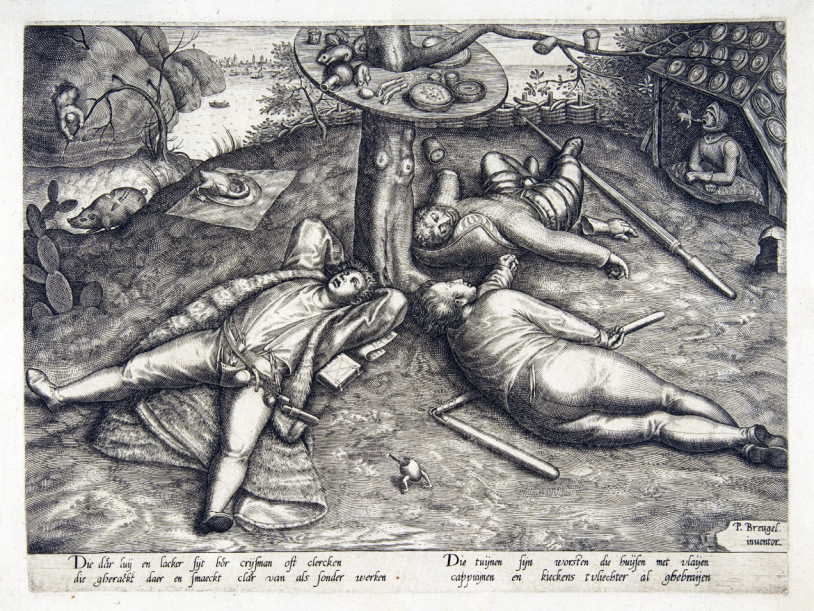

Figure 1. Peeter Bruegel and Peeter Van der Heyden. *Luilekkerland.* Antwerp: Hieronymus Cock, 1567, 20,8 x 27,6 cm. Exemplar of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1926, 26.72.44, available at<https:// images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/dp/original/DP818319.jpg>.

12 Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, ed. Leopoldo M. Bernucci (São Paulo: Ateliê, [1902] 2004), 276, 301, 735 (free love), 299 (tribal collectivism), 308 (abundance); *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 192, p. 8, v. 85, p. 4, v. 120, p. 5.

13 Peeter Bruegel and Peeter van der Heyden, *Luilekkerland* (Antwerp: Hieronymus Cock, 1567), v. 2; *Ditis van datedele van Cockaengen*, v. 10, ed. Herman Pleij, in *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life*, trans. Diane Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 431; *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 28, ed. Veikko Väänanen, in *Recherches et récréations latino-romanes* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1981), 393.

The second stratigraphic level of the chronological regression that allows us to understand the sources of *Viagem a Saint Saruê* is the "string literature" genre previous to the printing of the pamphlet. In particular, the output of the Paraíba native Leandro Gomes de Barros (†1918), unanimously considered the first great Brazilian chapbook writer and in whom his countryman Camilo found a host of cockainien motifs, mainly in *Uma Viagem ao Céu*. In this poem, the main character goes to heaven "in a wind automobile", in the same way the Saint Saruê's traveller takes "the breeze automobile" (in fact, the wood engraving by Camilo himself, which is the cover of the pamphlet, shows a car on a rising, winding road). In St. Peter's vegetable garden, there are plantations loaded with sterling pounds, just like in Saint Saruê there are "bushes of money/ [...] clusters of high-value notes". In Leandro's imagination, the sky has "a lake of curd / a puddle of butter / woods of stewed meat / streams of Port wine". In Camilo's land there are "walls of roast meat/ lakes of bee honey / bog of curd / dikes of quinine wine, / hills of stewed meat". When the sky voyager leaves that place, they get "ten stems of money / some wanting to grow"; in the same situation, Saint Saruê's traveller gets packs of "money in bundles / notes of thousands"[14].

However, the acknowledgement of these common points does not establish a genealogy, since the repetition of what has been already written is a characteristic of the history of literature[15], and more so of popular or folk literature. In the latter, adaptations and recreations, appropriation and transition of the oral to the written are the rule, and the capitalist notion of authorship is very relative in such a sociocultural context. The literary heavenly and cockainien topic is neither Camilo's nor Leandro's, but rather archetypal. It was adopted and kept by the popular culture in which the poet's function is not to change

14 *Uma Viagem ao Céu*, n/c, Typ. Moderna, n/d, reissue Juazeiro, Filhas de José Bernardo da Silva, 1976 (available at <http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/jn000024.pdf>), v. 50, p. 3, v. 97-101, p. 5, v. 104-07, p. 5, v. 121-22, p. 5; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 15, p. 1, v. 139-41, p. 6, v. 87-90, p. 4, v. 183-84, p. 7.

15 Michel Schneider, *Voleurs de mots. Essai sur le plagiat, la psychanalyse et la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

the environment where they live, but, on the contrary, to recover the cultural values of the community at risk of being discarded or superseded by the global society. In the latter, literature belongs, to use the Saussurean linguistic term, to the field of *parole* (speech or utterance, i.e. an individual act of variable ressonance within the collective, while the first, the community, it lies rather in the field of the *langue* (language), the series the underlying system or set conventions necessary for individuals to use the language. Such interpretation by Jakobson and Bogatyrëv is endorsed in the interview in which Camilo admits that "my verse is the people's verse" and that he cherishes mythology[16].

The third stage of the reversed analytical path is the French-Dutch influence in the region.The Union of the Iberian Crowns (1580-1640) is known to have led the Dutch, enemies of Spain, to occupy the Brazilian Northeast on two occasions, 1624-1625 and 1630-1654. This second and longer presence occurred in Pernambuco and in a part of Paraíba, where it is plausible that some popular cockainien traditions that had been circulating in their country for a long time in oral, literary and iconographic form, might have arrived to the colony with the invaders. The same happened with the French soldiers and merchants who went along with the Dutch and formed a "rather numerous" community in Pernambuco, in Mello's view[17]. It is not unreasonable to assume that some of those French knew the *fabliau,* in fact, it is rather likely, considering the success of various reprinted and adapted medieval texts in the famous Bibliothèque Bleue, published in Troyes, enjoyed throughout the 17th century. It is also very probable that the French colonizers had had access to printed images of these themes. These were widely used in household decoration, and some of the colonizers would have likely owned them.

16 Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrëv, "Le folklore, forme spécifique de création", trans. Jean-Claude Duport, in Jakobson, *Questions de poétique*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Seuil, [1929] 1973), 64-65; Orígenes Lessa, "Primeira Visita a Manoel Camilo", in *A Voz dos Poetas* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Casa de Ruy Barbosa, 1984), 58-59.

17 José António Gonsalves de Mello, *Tempo dos Flamengos. Influência da Ocupação Holandesa na Vida e na Cultura do Norte do Brasil* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Massangana, [1947] 1987), 115.

As an example, *Il y a vn pays par de la l'Allemaigne, abondant en tous biens qu'on appelle Cucaigne* (Fig. 2), published in 1629. The first verses reinforce that work there is needless ("*chacun sans rien faire en tout temps vivre peut*"), just like in Saint Saruê, where people "don't have to work" (*não precisa trabalhar*). In Cockaigne everything one wants is obtainable without any effort ("*sans suer n'y peiner on a ce qu'on souhaitte*"), while in Saint Saruê "all is good and easy" (*tudo é bom e fácil*). One of the small illustrations (second row, fifth scene) of the French print shows that in the Cockaigne lagoons (*estangs*) one can easily catch fish which, according to the legend, are already prepared "in different ways" to be eaten, while the northeastern Brazilian pamphlet says that in Saint Saruê the fish jump out of the sea by themselves, already cooked, and go to people's houses on their own initiative. In the first flyer there is a large bathtub that "gives youth back to old people", in the second, "a river called / the youth bath" (*um rio chamado / o banho da mocidade*) does the same. If Saint Saruê appears to poet, as already mentioned, as "the ancient promised land", it might have been partly due to the influence of the French flyer that sees Cockaigne as the "earthly Paradise".[18]

A similar historical movement was carried out by colonizers, sailors, soldiers and even Dutch men of letters that settled in the Brazilian Northeast, all of which were more or less acquantined with some version of Cockaignefrom their native country. Amongst them, the previously mentioned poem *Dit is van dat edele lant van Cockaengen* (second half of the 15th century) and the prose text *Luyeleckerlant*[19] (1546) that inspired Peeter Baltens's print (c.1560), which in turn was the source for the already quoted oil painting on wood by Bruegel, engraved by Van der Heyden (both in 1567). It would seem a few copies of those cheap and popular pictures travelled with the immigrants, as the one

18In the sequence of the quotations, *Il y a vn pays* (Paris: Jacques Honervogt, n/d [1629]), v. 3; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 77, p. 3, v. 120, p. 5; *Il y a vn pays*, v. 5; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 115, p. 5; *Il y a vn pays*, v. 33-34; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 109-114, p. 5; *Il y a vn pays*, v. 42; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 163-164, p. 7; *Il y a vn pays*, v. 9; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 192, p. 8; *Il y a vn pays*, v. 9.

19 *Luyeleckerlant*, ed. Pleij, in *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, 438-42.

by Bruegel and Van der Heyden was reprinted in the mid 17th century, the exact time of the Dutch occupation.[20]

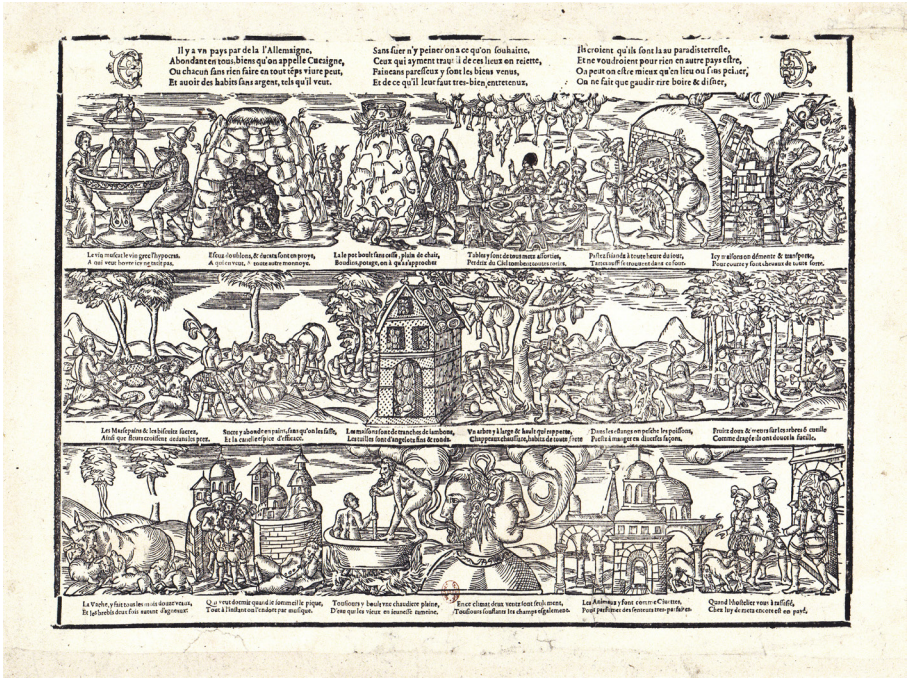

Figure 2. *Il y a vn pays par de la l'Allemaigne, abondant en tous biens qu'on appelle Cucaigne.* Paris: Jacques Honervogt, [1629], 39 x 50 cm. Exemplar of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Collection Hennin, vol. 26, nº 2258, p.25, available at<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8402150x>.

It is a reasonable hypothesis, considering the scenario of "insignificant, useless people, men too lazy to devote themselves to work in their homelands", as an official Dutch report from 1637-1638 phrases it.[21] Such a sociological context nurtured the dream of finding the ideal land (*lant*) for the lazy (*luye*) lover of fine eating (*lecker*) in the Portuguese America. That identification of Luyeleckerlant with America was not new, dating at least from the mid-16th century, in an anonymous Italian writing about Cockaigne.[22] In the case of the Dutch, from 1635 the

20 During Bruegel's life (deceased in 1569) that picture had two prints, in the turn of the XVIIth century another two – cf. Ross H. Frank, "An Interpretation of *Land of Cockaigne* (1567) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 328 – and in the middle of the century another edition, still in Antwerp, by the printer and editor Johannes Galle.

21 Quoted by Mello, *Tempo dos Flamengos*, 133.

22 *Capitolo qual narra l'essere di un mondo novo trovato nel Mar Oceano*, ed. Piero Camporesi, in *La maschera di Bertoldo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1993), 342-44.

number of them who headed to the Portuguese colony believing that "milk and honey pour there in abundance" increased greatly, people for whom Brazil was "an alluring Paradise"[23].

If at the beginning the literary and visual accounts of Cockaigne must have encouraged many Dutch to move to the Northeast in search for the mythical *edelelant*, the wonder land, this oniric function quickly progressed from hopeful to compensatory. In fact, hunger in Dutch Brazil was always unrelenting, causing diseases related to malnutrition and even death by starvation. The sugar cane monoculture created scarcity of almost all other foodstuffs. Despite the delay and the cost involved, dried meat, bacon, ham, dried fish, codfish, herring, salmon, butter, cheese, wheat flour, beans, peas, olive oil, wine, beer, figs, raisins, almonds, besides fabrics of different kinds, particularly linen, appropriate to the tropical heat, had to be imported from the mother country[24]. Therefore, it is not by chance that several products that were scarce in the Dutch Brazil abounded in Saint Saruê, like meat, fish, wheat, beans, cheese, butter, and assorted clothing.

Apparently, the traditions about Cockaigne, either in the French or Dutch versions, did not have a short-lived presence in the Northeast. They took roots owing to the miscegenation of the new invaders with the local population. In Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte and in Ceará, unions between the indigenous and the French people were frequent in the second half of the 17th century, a fact that left traces in the biotype of many inhabitants of that area "up to today", as Capistrano de Abreu put it in the beginning of the 20th century[25]. It was no different with the Dutch: for a quarter century they married and cohabitated with native women (Lusitanian, Indian and Black) and many remained in

23 Hermann Wätjen, *O Domínio Colonial Holandês no Brasil*, trans. Pedro Celso Uchôa Cavalcanti (São Paulo: Nacional, [1921] 1938), 379.

24 Joan Nieuhof, *Memorável Viagem Marítima e Terrestre ao Brasil*, trans. Moacir N. Vasconcelos (São Paulo: Martins, [1682] 1951), 255; Mello, *Tempo dos Flamengos*, 41-42, 123-24, 150, 156-60.

25 Capistrano de Abreu, *Capítulos de História Colonial* (São Paulo: Publifolha, [1907] 2000), 87.

the colony even after the Lusitanian reconquest[26]. Hence, at the end of the 19th century Euclides da Cunha could see in the middle of the Bahian wilderness (*sertão*) a gunman (*jagunço*) named Carvalho "who was of the Flemish type, a reminder, maybe, without exaggeration, of the ancestry of the Dutch who dealt with the natives for so many years in those lands"[27].

The fourth stratigraphic layer to take into account is a particular mythical native tales prior to the arrival of the Europeans and well known by the Tupinamba populations that occupied the major part of the North-Northeastern Brazilian coastal strip. Defeated in Bahia by the Portuguese in 1555 and 1558, many native groups withdrew to the backland, where they would mingle and merge with the Dutch and the French. So, it is no wonder that a certain confluence of cockainien motifs both in the Tupinamba culture and the French-Flemish culture occurred. At least that is what three chroniclers of different nationalities suggest in identifying these motifs among the Americans natives.

In 1578 the French Jean de Léry reports that the natives live for a hundred or 120 years because "*tous beuuans vrayement à la fontaine de Iouence*". Over a century later, the Dutch Joan Nieuhof still swears that thanks to the climate "aboriginals live until their late years in perfect health" and even the European living in Brazil get to be one hundred or 120 years old[28]. The Portuguese, Pero de Magalhães de Gândavo, son of a Flemish, states in 1576 that "they all live very relaxed lives with no other concerns except to eat and drink", just like in Cockaigne "where one can eat and drink/ whatever one wants free of danger" (*S'i puent et boivre et mangier / Tuit cil qui vuelent sanz dangier*), according to the *fabliau.* The American natives live "without a king and no other kind of justice", "not having anyone superior to

26 Mello, *Tempo dos Flamengos*, 141-42. Also mentions the weddings of the Dutch with Brazilian women, Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, 256. The concubinage with Black and Indian women seems to have been bigger than showed in the official documentation, which rejected it, Mello states, 194 e 210-11.

27 Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 773.

28 Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (Geneva: Droz, 1975), 95; Nieuhof, *MemorávelViagem*, 310.

obey or fear", in the same way that in the mythical region "no one dares forbid anything" (*nus desfendre ne lor ose*). The land of the Indians "does not have a faith", they "do not worship anything" just like in the European imaginary land there are no Church, dogmas or priests. Amongst the Indians "what belongs to one belongs to all [...] because all are equal", like in the French (*Ainz en prent tout a son voloir*) and Dutch (*Soe wat men daer in 't lantvintlegghen, / Datneemt men sonder wederseghen*) Cockaigne. For the Tupinamba, "neither gold nor silver nor precious stones have any value at all", for the Cockainiens "bags full of money / lie on the ground, / [...] useless" (*les borsees de deniers n/ I gisent contrval les chanz; /* [...] *per neent*).[29]

If, contrarily to Cockaigne, the native economy based on the extensive planting of cassava did not allow stocking, creating cyclical food crises and low life expectancy, this shortcoming and others were imaginatively confronted by a myth of cockainien resonance, that of the Land-Without-Evil. On the material level, "all live on little work", Gândavo points out,[30]and dream of eliminating it. So, the *pajé* ("wizard", as the jesuit Manuel da Nóbrega mentions in a letter from August of 1549), encourages the Indians not to work because "nourishment will grow by itself and they shall never lack food [...] and promise them a long life and that the old women will become young again"[31].

The "Land-Without-Evil is the active refusal of society", states Hélène Clastres, as much as the European Cockaigne, a land without rules or laws, political or familiar bonds, a rejection of the customary social life[32]. For the natives, itis an earthly, real place attainable in body and soul during one's lifetime, even if a difficult one to reach. The Guarani-Mbya tribe believes that the journey from the Evil Land to

29 Pero de Magalhães de Gândavo, *A Primeira História do Brasil. História da Província Santa Cruz a que vulgarmente chamamos Brasil*, ed. Sheila Moura Hueand Ronaldo Menegaz (Lisbon: Assírio & Alvim, 2004), 97-103. The quotes from *Fabliau de Cocagne* are of the verses 47-48, p. 393, v. 94, p. 395, v. 101-102, p. 395, v. 104-105, 107, p. 395-96, from *Dit is van dat edele van Cockaengen*, v. 71-72, p. 433.

30 Gândavo, *A Primeira História*, 102.

31 *Cartas dos Primeiros Jesuítas*, ed. Serafim Leite (São Paulo: Comissão do IV Centenário da Cidade de São Paulo, 1956), 151.

32 Hélène Clastres, *La Terre Sans Mal: le prophétisme tupi-guarani* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 84.

the Land-Without-Evil takes place "without going through the death proof", as with the medievals when they leave their familiar world and reach the land of Cockaigne. The Land-Without-Evil is a refuge or, more literally, a hideaway, a place to hide from the evil of the world, so the Guarani-nhandéva tribe calls it *yvy-nomimbyré,* "the land in which to hide".

To reach it, one must know the way, the Kaiwoás explain. For that reason, unlike the Cockaigne described by the Europeans, the Land-Without-Evil has a messianic nature without political implications, which implies a religious leader to lead the people there. Over time, however, knowledge of the way was lost even among the great shamans, this being the reason why the Guarani call themselves *tapédja,* "people of pilgrims and travellers"[33]. They are, therefore, people in an ongoing and unsuccessful quest, like the medieval French poet's for Cockaigne: "The way I had followed, / Neither the track, nor the road / Never could I find them". It was a sacred search for the French description (*penitance*), the Dutch poem (*lant van den Heiligen Gheest*), the Brazilian pamphlet (*terra da promissão*)[34].

The fifth and last step of the regressive method takes us to the deepest cultural layer that composes the Brazilian Cockaigne, the medieval substratum. As the Arthurian literature had come into the medieval Iberian Peninsula (the *Quête du Saint Graal* was translated into Portuguese at the end of the 13th century), the same might have occurred with tales, although unknown in our days, akin to the *Fabliau de Cocagne.* As that is merely a hypothesis, and the presence of the cockainien imagination in the Brazilian Northeast of the first half of the 20th century is unquestionable, the sources likely to have penetrated the region should be investigated. We cannot know if the northeastern

33 Clastres, *La Terre Sans Mal*, 102-03; Egon Schaden, *Aspectos Fundamentais da Cultura Guarani* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, 1954), 185-204; Alfred Métraux, *La religion des Tupinamba et ses rapports avec celle des autres tribos Tupi-Guarani* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1928), 201-24; Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, *O Messianismo no Brasil e no Mundo* (São Paulo: Alfa-Omega, 1977), 183-96.

34 *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 175-177, p. 399, v. 19, p. 393; *Dit is van dat edele van Cockaengen*, v. 17, p. 431; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 192, p. 8.

cantador was in direct or indirect contact with the Cockaigne motif through any kind of French or Dutch version, but the various and obvious correspondences between the medieval French writing, the 15th century Dutch poem and *Viagem a São Saruê* can not be seen merely as an array of coincidences.

Sometimes the wording is so similar that the texts seem to be translations. For example, there one can eat and drink and pay nothing: "*n'i paieront escot*"; "*nyemant gheven ghelach*"; "é só *pegar e comer*"[35]. In that land everything can be done freely, unrestrictedly: "*sanz contredit et sanz desfensse*"; "*sonder arbeitende sonder pijn*"; "*não há contrariedade*"[36]. In certain passages, the Brazilian popular singer seems to be closer to the medieval French author – in Cockaigne hot puddings rain, in Saint Saruê, butter; in one place coins lie on the ground, available to everyone, in another there are "stems of money" of which "one can help oneself at pleasure", because there is no trade ("*nus n'i achate ne ne vent*"; "*não precisa se comprar*")[37]. In other verses, the northeastern poet may be closer to the Dutch – the "river of youth" keeps the residents at twenty years of age, as does the river Jordan in the Dutch Cockaigne, while in the French the "fountain of youth" keeps everyone at thirty years of age[38].

The points common to the three poets cover almost a fifth of all the verses, including eighteen different topics, of which only a few can be brought up here. The land of which the French poet speaks is blessed more than any other (*mieux qu'une autre*), is blessed and happy (*beneüree*), wealthy (*pleniers*). For the Dutch, there is no better land because it is blessed (*wesen*), nothing lacks there (*daer en mach nyemant yet gheborsten*). For the Brazilian, it is superior to any other

35 *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 56, p. 394; *Dit is van dat edele van Cockaengen*, v. 56, p. 432; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 113, p. 5.

36 *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 49, p. 393; *Dit is van dat edele van Cockaengen*, v. 10, p. 431; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 76, p. 3.

37 *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 99, p. 395, *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 107, p. 5; *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 104-105, p. 394, *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 139 and 147, p. 6; *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 108, p. 396, *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 116, p. 5.

38 *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 163-164, p. 7; *Ditis van datedele van Cockaengen*, v. 93, p. 433; *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 160, p. 398.

(*o lugar melhor / que neste mundo se vê*), it is a sublime place (*santo e bendito*). Being men, those three poets imagine a land where "the women are so beautiful" (*les fames i par sont tant beles*), there are "beautiful women" (*schonen vrouwen*) everywhere, beauty is a feature common to all of them (*lá não se vê mulher feia / toda moça é formosa*). In Cockaigne, the *fabliau* tells us, everyday is holiday and Sunday, to the sound of trumpets and shawms there are endless dances and serenaders, the Dutch poet reports, and in Saint Saruê "all is feasting", the Brazilian poet sings.

There the walls of the houses are made of fish, the French poet suggests, of sausages, the Dutch poet prefers, of crystal and ivory, the northeastern imagines.The roofs are made of bacon for the first, of pies for the second, of gold leaves for the third. None of this wealth demands any effort: "there, who sleeps the most, gains the most", say the French, the Dutch and the Brazilian poems. Commodities are always available: "one picks what one's heart wishes", the first poet says; all "can be taken at will", the second states; in that land "there are no poor", the third assures us. In conclusion, the three texts describe a land full of wonders (*merveille*; *wonder / goet*; *lugar magnífico*) and happiness (*bonté*; *vroechden sonder ghetal*; *tudo tem felicidade*). Not knowing whether it is the cause or result of the circumstances described, the people are virtuous, kind and gentle, the French poet praises; there is no hate or envy in them, they are gifted with endless joy, the Dutch imagines; they are joyous, civilized, friendly and generous, the Brazilian dreams.

The variances of the three poems are cultural, rather than structural. From a historical point of view, this is explained, Jacques Le Goff points out, because "when the deepest layers of history, are reached continuity is what is seen". From an anthropological point of view, Claude Lévi-Strauss's says, the essential is the story that is told, and the differences in the various versions of a myth are insignificant[39]. In

39 Jacques Le Goff, "Entretien avec Claude Mettra", in Johan Huizinga, *L'automne du Moyen Âge*, trans. Julia Bastin (Paris: Payot, 1975), VIII; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques. L'homme nu* (Paris: Plon, 1973), 565 and 577. Marcel Mauss had already called attention to the need of the investigator of myths, legends and tales to consider all the known versions: *Manuel d'ethnographie* (Paris: Payot, 1967), 252.

the cases considered here, the details reflect the particular conditions of each place and time. For example, in the French Cockaigne, a river flows half with red wine and half with white, whereas in the Dutch version the river is made of wine and beer, and in the northeastern of milk. In the first text the wheat field fences are made of roast meat, in the second the seats and the chairs, in the third the boundaries. Amongst the meats for consumption, the *fabliau* mentions geese, the Dutch poem, rabbits and hares, boars and deer, the Brazilian pamphlet, turkeys (an American bird unknown in medieval Europe). The European poems mention sausages, ham, wheat, stags; the Brazilian, rice, beans, *rapadura* (lump of hard brown sugar), *pamonha* (green corn paste), coffee.

Whereas the French and the Dutch poets take issue with their tales being described as a mere joke (*gas*; *struven*), in the legend of his picture Baltenssays that Cockaigne refers to a dream (*droom*) and Camilo suggests the same about Saint Saruê: "by order of the mind / I went to know the place. / I started the journey / at two o'clock in the morning"[40]. In the three poems considered here (and in several other textual and iconographic versions of the land of Cockaigne) as much as social criticism, there is a purpose of evasion, or escapism. It is this function of "escape valve" that Carnival, the Feast of Fools and Cockaigne – related sociocultural manifestations – fulfilled in the medieval civilization in which, according to Aubailly, laughing was a cathartic ritual, a kind of exorcism of archaic anguishes, of the fears linked to the mystery of life. Because, in Lüthi's assessment, "the *homo narrans* is often [...] also a *homo ludens*", and Cockaigne could work as "a social placebo", in Milne's words.[41]

However, although they are the distant sources of *Viagem a Saint Saruê*, the *Fabliau de Cocagne* and the *Dit is van dat edele lant van Cock-*

40 *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 11-14, p. 1 ("*com ordem do pensamento / fui conhecer o lugar. / Iniciei a viagem / às duas da madrugada*").

41 Jean-Claude Aubailly, "Le fabliau et les sources inconscientes du rire médiéval", *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 30 (1987): 105-17; Max Lüthi, *Das Volksmärchenals Dichtung.* Ästhetikund Anthropologie (Düsseldorf/Kholn: Eugen Diederichs, 1975), 90; Louise S. Milne, *Carnivals and Dreams. Peeter Bruegel and the History of the Imagination* (London: Mutus Liber, 2007), 336.

aengen do not exhaust the mythical motifs used by the literary pamphleteer. It is necessary to consider other sources that – besides having possibly served as a vehicle for some of the elements of the two medieval poems reused by Camilo – may explain some cockainien motifs absent from those texts and present in the pamphlet. The Dutch narrative from 1546 provides interesting clues, for example when it states that in the wondrous land "cheese is as common as stones", foreseeing Saint Saruê, where "the stones are made of cheese".Or when it says that the fish "swim so near the coast that they can be caught by hand" (they "leave the rivers and come to the man's hand", Baltens's legend repeats), an idea reverberated by the northeastern poet for whom they "leave the sea and come to the houses / [...] it is just to take and eat". The fish get to people already "boiled, baked, grilled", fantasizes the Dutch author, they "live stewed", replies the pamphleteer.

For geocultural reasons, the notes of the anonymous Dutch had to be adapted by the northeastern poet four centuries later. *Luyeleckerlant* refers to springs of liqueur wine, *Viagem a São Saruê* to dikes of quinine wine. In the first the trees produce pies and omelettes, in the second the jungle offers boiled beans and the floodplain rice ready for consumption. The rivers of sweet milk in one are rivers of simple milk in the other. In the Dutch text (inspired in the German Hans Sachs, a few years before) the horses defecate eggs, in the Northeastern, the hens lay roosters. In the first, the hail is sweet drops and the snow is sweet breadcrumbs, in the second butter falls from the sky. In one there are trees where coins bloom, in the other, paper money[42].

In an interesting passage the pamphlet says that in Saint Saruê the children are born mature, which is not found in the medieval poems nor in *Luyeleckerlant*. Its origin seems to lie in Sachs' chapbook, in which "the trees produce peasants", a sentence that was made into a picture in Erhard Schön's[43] wood engraving in the same year. Neverthe-

42 *Luyeleckerlant*, p. 439-41; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 89, 97-100, 85, 103-104 p. 4; v. 107, p. 5; v. 139-142, p.6; Hans Sachs, *Das Schlauraffenland*, v. 47-48, ed. Edmund Goetze, in *Sämtliche Fabeln und Schwänke* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1893), 9.

43 Sachs, *Das Schlauraffenland*, v. 43, p. 9; Erhard Schön, *Das Schlauraffenland* (Nuremberg: Wolfgang Strauch, n/d [1530]).

less, for historical and cultural reasons it is not very likely that German material had passed directly into the Brazilian Northeast. It must have been conveyed by the French, whose engraving *Familiere description du royaume panigonnois* (c.1560) shows the tree of men in the image while the text explains that when they are ripe they fall on their feet and "start jumping, swallowing, leading a merry life". Similarly, the Brazilian poet imagines that every child is born already speaking and knowing how "to read, write and count / [he] sings, runs, leaps"[44]. Just like in the kingdom of Panigon ("glutton") "to sleep well, there the nights are long" (*pour bien dormir là sont les longues nuits*), in Saint Saruê "the hours went by slowly" (*as horas passavam lentas*)[45]. The formulas "miracle of nature" to describe the imaginary French kingdom and "garden of divine nature" to name the country of the Brazilian pamphlet are also comparable.

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From what was shown above, motivated by the conditions of the Brazilian Northeast, Saint Saruê returns to the folkloric motif – that is, superstition, stories and ideas "which are in our times but not of it", to reuse a classical definition[46] – of the world upside down. This age-old historical concept had existed since the Greek *adynata* (*ἀδύνατα*, impossible things), past the medieval *mundus inversus* that gained a new dimension from the 13th century with the profound changes in western Europe and would continue to generate a vast literary and iconographic material in the following centuries. Such popularity was based on the feeling that to imagine an upside world would be in fact to straighten it up, to go back to an early, supposedly perfect, situation. In other words, the upside-down world is a mockery that denies the

44 *Familiere description du tresvinoporratimalvoise et tresenvitaillegoulemente royaume panigonnois, mystiquement interpretel'isle de Crevepance* (Lyon: Pierre de La Maison Neuve, n/d [c.1560]), v. 138-140; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 160-161, p. 6-7.

45 *Familieredescription*, v. 37; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 27, p. 2.

46 Andrew Lang, *Custom and Myth* (London: Routledge, [1884] 1997), 11.

real world and conceives another in an unknown, actually nonexistent, place where all the fantasies of that same social imagination can flourish. In short, it is utopia.

More precisely, it is a utopia of the kind Lewis Mumford named "escape utopias", those that belong in "the department of pure literature" and so leave the real world untouched[47]. In fact, Manoel Camilo dos Santos admits from the beginning that his journey to Saint Saruê is a fiction, a product of his imagination: "doctor master thought / told me once [...] / to visit / the land 'Saint Saruê' ". Significantly, he places the name of the country between inverted commas. Now, the fictional intention is denied – even if for mere fictional play's sake – by the author of the *fabliau*, whose description he swears to be "pure and verified truth", "I know because I saw" and he insists that "I tell you the truth". The Dutch poet also underlines the truth of what he tells[48]. Unlike his French predecessor who regrets having left Cockaigne (as only "*fols et naïs*" would) or the Dutch who hopes to stay there forever (*ewelicduren*), the northeastern popular singer simply claims throughout the pamphlet that "whoever visits this land is happy" (*é feliz quem visita este país*)[49]. The author admits that his fabulous story is a conscious choice to entertain listeners and readers, though not dismissing that it was also a reflection of *Luyeleckerlant*.

This narration does not hide its satirical intentions from the start, saying that the wondrous land was "discovered in the year one thousand sugar cakes, five hundred custard tartlets, and forty-six roast chickens", that is, 1546, the publication date of the text. It is obvious that "discovered" here means "invented", according to the etymology of the word used, *ghevonden* (modern *gevonden*, past participle of *vinden*), find,

47 Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 10 and 13.

48 *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 1-4, p. 1 (*doutor mestre pensamento / me disse um dia* [...] */ vá visitar / o país 'São Saruê'*); *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 59, p. 394 (*c'est fine veritez provee*), v. 101, p. 395 (*jelsai de voir*), v. 123, p. 396 (*vous di par verité*); *Dit is van datedele van Cockaengen*, v. 99-100, p. 434 (*Soewiedatdaer comet in Gods namen, / Die machvoerwaerwelsegghen, Amen*).

49 *Fabliau de Cocagne*, v. 164-170, p. 398; *Dit is van datedele van Cockaengen*, v. 98, p. 434; *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 206-212, p. 8.

invent, create, imagine[50]. The hypothesis of the influence of this text on Camilo is reinforced by the fact that in *Viagem de um Trovador* (1954) he applies the same fictional resource in the first two verses, and in the poem's ending he makes clear the dreamlike nature of the journey he has finished putting into verse: "I walked without moving / catching sight of the intangible / equipped with the thought[51].

In the cockainien textual family the recognition of its illusory character is common. The subtitle "So are the lies" (*So istdiz von Lügenen*) was added a little later to the anonymous German poem from the late 13th century or the early 14th century. In 1343, Juan Ruiz uses *cucaña* as a synonym of *engaño* (deception). In the mid-14th century, one of Boccaccio's tales ironizes the naivety of those who believe the lie of a land where there are mountains of grated Parmesan cheese on whose top are manufactured macaroni and ravioli boiled in rooster broth. In 1530, Sachs calls Schlaraffenland, "land of the mad and the lazy", to the fable country where each lie is rewarded with a coin. The 1546 Dutch text states that in the land of lazyness and gluttony, the more one lies, the more one earns. A short Spanish tale written approximately at the same time, insists the ones who believe in such stories are idiots (*nescio*), silly (*bovazo*)[52].

In the mid-16th century, an Italian poem describes a wonderful new world that can be accessed "sailing on a sea of lies" (*navicando per mar di bugia*). The text of the French picture about the kingdom of Panigon claims that there each person gets more than one coin for each lie told. And it qualifies those who dream of a land of plenty

50 *Luyeleckerlant*, 438 (*ghevonden in 't jaer* [...] *duysendt suyckerkoecken, vijhondert eyervladen ende seenveertich gebraeden hoenderen*); Marlies Philippa, *Etymologisch woordenboek van het Nederlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), vol. IV, p. 528.

51 *Viagem de um trovador* (Campina Grande: A Estrella da Poesia, 1954), v. 1-2, p. 1 (*Em novecentos e nada / há trinta de fevereiro*), v. 437-439, p. 15 (*Caminhei sem me mover / avistando o abstrato / muaido* [munido] *do pensamento*).

52 *Vom Schlaraffenland*, ed. Moriz Haupt and Heinrich Hoffman, in *Autdeutsche Blätter* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1836), 163; Juan Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, v. 122a, ed. Nicasio Salvador Miguel (Madrid: Magisterio, 1972), 79; Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, VIII, 3, ed. Mario Marti (Milan: Rizzoli, 1992), vol. II, 522-25; Sachs, *Das Schlauraffenland*, v. 76, p. 10; *Luyeleckerlant*, 438; Lope de Rueda, *Pasos*, 3, ed. Vicente Tusón and Fernando González Ollé (Madrid: Cátedra, 1992), 163.

without working, as sluggard, dozy, idle, troublemakers, gluttonous, rude, drunkards, liars, beasts. The small poem in a 17th-century Roman engraving also warns the observer: all that wondrous geography is a lie (*bugia*). In the same lineage is *Viagem a Saint Saruê*, which Braulio Nascimento rightly included among the "tales of lies". But it must be added, as in the *Capitolo di Cuccagna* published in Siena in 1581, that being "a big lie" made "for laughter" can also be a way to "push away the bad fantasy" (*spassar la mala fantasia*)[53].

However, the interpretation of these texts is not as obvious as it seems at first sight. One must not forget that the poet arrived in São Saruê offers his thanks to "doctor and master thought" because all utopia springs from desire, "father of thought", in the famous definition of Ernst Bloch[54]. If the intention of those cockainien versions really was to besmirch the popular fantasy, it is because they appealed to a lot of people in need of escape valves in the face of the difficulties of the daily life, so that those collective dreams revealed social tensions that threatened the powers that be, which explains the sarcasm they were the object of. In 1615, soon after he referred to the abundance of Maranhão, so big "*qu'il n'est pas possible de le croire*", the Capuchin Yves d'Evreux made a point to demystify it, mocking the descriptions of Cockaigne without quoting them: "one would be well mistaken" to think there are trees with roast birds or bushes with crates of lamb[55].

Bruegel's painting turned into a print (Fig. 1) poses the same problem. At first sight, it describes a land of abundance at any one's disposal: the house roof is covered with tarts; a roast pig strolls around with a knife stuck in its back in case someone might want to eat it; for

53 *Capitolo qual narra l'essere di un mondo novo*, v. 102, p. 344;*Familiere description du royaume panigonnois*, v. 170-171 and 7, 8, 36, 116, 163, 169, 197; *La Cvccagna. Descrittione del gran paese di Cvccagna dove chi piv dorme piv gvadagna* (Rome: Giacomo de Rossi, n/d), v. 17; Bráulio Nascimento, *Catálogo do Conto Popular Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Brasileiro de Educação, Ciência e Cultura/Tempo Brasileiro, 2005), 169; *Capitolo di Cuccagna*, v. 170-172, ed. Albino Zenatti, in *Storia del Campriano contadino* (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1884), 61.

54 Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, [1959] 1963), 1018 (*Vater des Gedankens*).

55 *Voyage au Nord du Brésil fait en 1613 et 1614*, ed. Hélène Clastres (Paris: Payot, 1985), 188.

the same reason, an egg walks by itself with its top part opened and a spoon diving into it; a roast chicken on a plate awaits whoever is going to eat it; another impatient bird flies towards the open mouth of the figure under the tart-roofed house; the country border is a mountain of porridge, its sea is made of milk. Still, a more careful observation reveals the author's pessimistic view of the world. The scene leans more towards prostation than towards pleasure.

The three figures in the foreground (representatives of the different estates, *ordines*, of the social tripartition still in vogue) are sprawling on the ground, supposedly satiated, but also unconscious. In the same way that gestuality is an important featurein the oral utterance of a tale[56], it has semantic value in a visual composition. In the case of Bruegel's painting, the figure from whom the greatest balance and critical spirit would be expected, the scholar recognizable by the clothes and especially by the book on his side, is lying on his back, legs apart, the eyes open in an empty stare, in a stateof lethargy; or of death.

Furthermore, while one would expect cockainien nature to be exuberant, springlike, as befits a land where the weather is always "fine like in May"[57], in Bruegel's image it is autumnal, the tree branches completely bare, and only the bushes bear a modest foliage, oppositely to Baltens's engraving. The ground is beaten earth, apparently dried out, as suggested by the cactus in a corner of the composition. There are no living animals, only roasted ones. The figures' apathy (except for the one that is coming out of the porridge hill and is yet to be contaminated by the surrounding lassitude) becomes even more noticeable when compared with the whole of Bruegel's work, marked by the vitality of the persons depicted, even when they are wretched and ill. In a drawing and sketch notebook in which the artist took down his observations, he wrote "*naer het leeven*", literally "following life closely", that is to say, "copying life", on several pages.

56 Geneviève Calame-Griaule, "Pour une étude des gestes narratifs", in *Langage et Cultures Africaines. Essais d'ethnolinguistique* (Paris: Maspero, 1977), 303-59.

57 *Fabliau de Cocagne*, ms. C., v. 105, p. 395 ("*Totjorz i fait bel comm'an mai*").

A similar theme to *Luyelekkerland* reinforces the hypothesis of the cockainien acedia. As a result of the excess of food, sex and alcohol and the absence of rules, in the various accounts that land is a Carnival-like place. But in *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*[58] (1559), Bruegel alegorises Carnival as a fat man riding a beer barrel, balancing a pie on his head and holding a skewer with a pig's head, a bird and different kinds of sausages, a situation he does not seem to be enjoying. Near him are masqueraded musicians, although not much in the Carnival spirit: a little behind them, to the right, the figure of an old woman, shrivelled, with cadaverous features, covered with a heavy cloak; further behind, on the left, a few lepers and crippled move with difficulty, intensifying the painting'sdevastating impression. This is to say that for Bruegel, the land of idleness and gluttony, more than a utopia, is a dystopia.

Despite the background common to the textual and visual descriptions of Cockaigne, the pathsfollowed by beliefs, traditions, customs and oral accounts are admittedly complex and difficult to discern. At any rate, what this folkloric tradition of the Northeast shows is a non-Lusitanian legacy, as the name given to the wondrous land suggests. According to Câmara Cascudo, "*saruê*" is a kind of dance that blends French and American features, whose name derives from *soirée*[59]. More consistent with the attributes of the country described, *saruê* – short for *sariguê*, a word derived from the tupi *sari'gwe*, this is, skunk – also has two other expressive senses.

On the one hand, it is the same as *sarará* (a word recorded since 1587), a gingery mulatto, which seems to suggest the miscigenation of the African slave with northern Europeans, French or Dutch. But the word could be stretched to include the "blond, snow-white skinned, freckled" Mamelukes, descendants of the Tupinambá commingled with the French, to whom a late 16th-century chronicler refers to[60]. In this

58 Vienna, Kunsthistoriches Museum, Inv. 1016, piece of 118 by 163,7 cm.

59 Luís da Câmara Cascudo, *Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, [1954] 1972), 698.

60 Gabriel Soares de Sousa, *Tratado Descriptivo do Brasil em 1587*, ed. Francisco A. Varnhagen (São Paulo: Nacional, 1938), 405.

sense, "country of Saint Saruê" would be the same as "country of sarará". That is to say, of people who might be familiar with the cockainien traditions by cultural legacy. Finally, *saruê* also stands for "corncob with little grain" and therefore figuratively for "scarcity", a symmetrical inversion of "Cockaigne", as a synonym for abundance.

In fact, the French word *cocagne* (c.1200) might have originated from the old Dutch *pancoca* (1187; middle Dutch *coeke*, modern *koek*), a small sweet given to children in certain celebration[61], echoed in the northeastern brazilian poem through the presence of *beiju* (word certified in 1576), a cake made with cassava flour and whose name comes from the tupi *mbe'yu*[62]. So, *saruê* proves to be a name suited to the northeastern farming of the arid and semi-arid areas, ironically pointing to a fantasy land of abundance. As stated by Manoel Camilo himself, the pamphlet would have sprung from the popular phrase, suggesting something impossible, "*só em São Saruê, onde feijão brota sem chovê*", that is, "only in Saint Saruê, where beans sprout with no need for rain". Or perhaps, if we are to trust an explanation he offered on another occasion, the leaflet came from the saying "it seems a thing from Saint Saruê", used by the people when referring to something good that happens unexpectedly[63].

The author concedes that the poem has been easily written in two hours, as a rhymed-verse version of a story known for a very long time – "since I was little / I was always hearing people speak / of that Saint Saruê" –, being less an original writing (a concept alien to "string literature") than a matter of unconscious remembrance[64]. In other words, a

61 Cf. Oscar Bloch and Walther von Wartburg, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française* (Paris: PUF, [1932] 2002), 138; Philippa, *Etymologisch woordenboek van het Nederlands*, vol. III, 98-99.

62 Antônio Houaiss, Mauro de Salles Villar and Francisco Manoel de Mello Franco, *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2015), vol. II, 584.

63 Respectively, Lessa, "Segunda Visita a Manoel Camilo", in *A Voz dos Poetas*, 70; Liêdo Maranhão, *Classificação Popular da Literatura de Cordel* (Recife: Cepe, 2015), available at <https://books.google.fr/books?redir_esc=y&hl=pt-BR&id=aYgBCwAAQBAJ&q=Camilo#v=snippet&q =Camilo&f=false>.

64 *Viagem a São Saruê*, v. 7-9, p. 1. In an interview the author stated it was a "simple pamphlet, a nothingness" (Lessa, "Primeira Visita a Manoel Camilo", 59) and in the following conversation with the same investigator he admitted how easily he had written it (Lessa, "Final Melhor para São Saruê", in *A Voz dos Poetas*, 78).

folkloric reworking only possible, according to Jakobson e Bogatyrëv, when folklore finds a functional place in the community, as folklore can be defined as a series of deeply-rooted archaisms (but not anachronisms) that manifest spontaneous lyand play a social role, clarifies Belmont. There is folklore every time a social group, regardless of its dimension, does not entirely share the dominant culture and produces another one withthe purpose of affirming the group's identity.[65]

Because folklore stands at the intersection of myth (that provides its content) and history (that justifies the reemergence of this content), in the Brazilian Northeast of the mid-20th century some European narrative motifs of the 13th-17th centuries were still current and made sense due to an enduring function, untouched by the substantial variation in the forms over time. Upon closer examination, this dynamic, yet to be examined in detail by historiography, helps to bring to light certain old cultural Brazilian manifestations.

65 Jakobson and Bogatyrëv, "Le folklore, forme spécifique de création", 60-61; Belmont, *Paroles païennes. Mythe et folklore* (Paris: Imago, 1986), 158 and 160.

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