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CORRESPONDENTE**

**REPRESENTATIONS OF BRAZIL IN THE
WRITINGS OF P. K. PAGE**

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ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATIONS OF BRAZIL IN
THE WRITINGS OF P. K. PAGE

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2011

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This thesis analyzes Patricia Kathleen Page's writings about Brazil. Page, a known Canadian poet, lived in Brazil from 1957 to 1959, during her husband's posting as Canadian Ambassador. In such years, Page had the opportunity to travel to different regions of Brazil; hence, she gained great knowledge and experience of the diversified culture in the country. Because of her problems with the Portuguese language, and also for not being able to translate in written words what her eyes were witnessing, the poet started to draw and paint. While in Brazil, she wrote a diary which, thirty years later, was turned into the autobiographical book *Brazilian Journal* (1987). Also, she wrote the poems "Brazilian House," "Macumba: Brazil," "Brazilian Fazenda," and the book *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* (2006). In those works, Page portrays significant features of Brazilian culture and history. As a foreigner who belonged to a high social class, Page's position predominantly reveals the detachment of an outsider.

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RESUMO

REPRESENTAÇÕES DO BRAZIL NAS
OBRAS LITERÁRIAS DE P. K. PAGE

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Esta dissertação analisa as obras literárias de Patrícia Kathleen Page em relação ao Brasil. Page, poeta canadense conhecida, morou no Brasil de 1957 a 1959, durante o exercício de seu esposo como Embaixador Canadense. Nestes anos, Page teve a oportunidade de viajar em diferentes regiões do Brasil, adquirindo, assim, grande conhecimento e experiência da cultura diversificada presente nesse país. Encontrando problemas com o idioma Português, e também por não conseguir traduzir em palavras escritas o que seus olhos testemunhavam; a poeta começou a desenhar e a pintar. Enquanto esteve no Brasil, a única coisa que escreveu foi um diário que, trinta anos mais tarde, transformou-se em seu livro autobiográfico *Brazilian Journal* (1987). Também escreveu os poemas “Brazilian House,” “Macumba: Brazil,” “Brazilian Fazenda,” e o seu livro de memórias *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* (2006). Nestes trabalhos, Page retrata feições significativas da cultura e história brasileira. Como estrangeira pertencente a uma classe social alta, a posição de Page predominantemente revela o distanciamento de alguém do lado de fora.

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INTRODUCTION

Patricia Kathleen Page is a Canadian poet who had the opportunity to travel to different countries, such as Australia, Brazil, and Mexico, due to the postings of her husband, Arthur Irwin, as a Canadian Ambassador. Through such journeys, Page acquired a wide range of knowledge and experience in relation to history, culture, and language. In Brazil it was not different. During Page's permanence in Brazil from 1957 to 1959, the writer had the possibility to visit various regions around the country. Consequently, through her observations of the country's nature, animals, architecture, and people, Page developed a broad perception of the Brazilian flora and fauna, culture and history. The poet wrote such observations in the autobiographical book *Brazilian Journal* (1987); the poems "Brazilian House," "Macumba: Brazil," and "Brazilian Fazenda;" and the memoir book *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* (2006).

In *Brazilian Journal*, Page shows her subjective view of the country, right in the beginning of the book, in which she draws a map of Brazil. Instead of using the standard geographic map, the drawing particularly shows the places Page visited in Brazil, representing her perspective in relation to the country. Interestingly, Page introduces the map under the title "The Brazil of P. K. Page," indicating it is "a subjective mural, rather than a precise map of the country." As Sandra Regina Goulart de Almeida affirms,

The outline and the flag of the country in Page's mural are faithfully portrayed while inside the map Page inscribes not the Brazil described by cartographical marks, but rather "her" Brazil, that is, the territories that her foreign "eye/I" captures and reflects in a specular movement that creates other spaces and distorts proportions. ("The Politics and poetics of Travel: The Brazil of Elizabeth Bishop and P. K. Page" 107)

In his turn, Miguel Nenevé claims that *Brazilian Journal* is about the author's experience in Brazil and an attempt to translate the country for her Canadian audience; Page "converts Brazilian geography into Canadian comprehension" (159-60). Hence, as in the map, Page reports in *Brazilian Journal*, perceptions created from the residence she was living in Rio de Janeiro to the trips to different places in Brazil, such as São Paulo, Salvador, Manaus, Ouro Preto, and others, having then the

opportunity to learn about the variety of culture existing in this country. However, Almeida points out that “A viagem de Page, seu deslocamento constante e sua posição de viajante, e muitas vezes turista, permeiam o *Brazilian Journal* recontando, de maneira ambígua e contraditória, esse encontro entre culturas distintas e díspares” (“O Brasil de P. K. Page” 105). It is observed in the *Journal* that, even though Page has a great admiration for Brazilian people, it is extremely difficult for her to develop a closer contact with them (Almeida 112). Furthermore, Page demonstrates her concerns in relation to race:

A preocupação de Page com relação à questão de raça é aparente em *Brazilian Journal*. Há uma constante necessidade de se explicitar a cor, a raça dos brasileiros através de campos semânticos variados, mas que no contexto de uma análise pós-colonial, descortinam uma dinâmica oposicional entre o negro e o branco. (Almeida 114)

Also in her *Journal*, Page reveals that, as she did not know the Portuguese language very well, she many times felt incapable of communicating her thoughts and experience. Another difficulty during her residence in Brazil was that writing poetry became impossible. In fact, the only thing the author was writing in such period was a diary, from which Page, thirty years later, created *Brazilian Journal* (1987). Suffocated, then, by the lack of ‘words,’ the author suddenly discovered another art: drawing and painting. This was the way Page found out to translate to the world what her eyes were witnessing.

[Brazil] was [. . .] my first immersion in the baroque – its architecture, its vegetation, its people. I fell in love with it totally. But it took away my tongue. I had no matching vocabulary. It was painful for me to be unable to write, but by some alchemy the pen that had written, began to draw. *It drew everything I saw.* (Page 2007: 14)

Being able to express her views of Brazil through painting, Page feels more and more affected by the new culture. Before departing for Canada, the poet confesses: “Sorry, [. . .], to leave my Brazilian self, so different from my Canadian self – freer, more demonstrative” (*Brazilian Journal*: 238).

The poems “Brazilian House,” “Macumba: Brazil,” and “Brazilian Fazenda,” from the book *Hidden Room: Collected Poems*, were developed from the depictions she had already explored in *Brazilian Journal*. In those poems, Page depicts social class differences in Brazil in regard to her own social position, and manifests her curiosity about Brazilian history and traditions. In “Brazilian House,” she not only describes her feelings as a complete stranger among the Brazilian servants, but also renders her observations of ‘the other.’ In the words of Sigrid Renaux:

Page’s “Brazilian House” [. . .] not only reflects her sense of displacement in relation to her Canadian self, as she confronts the new physical space she is going to inhabit in Rio, and her sense of estrangement as she confront the other – the intriguing staff of servants she is going to interact with. (“Place as displacement in P. K. Page’s Brazilian House”: 264)

In its turn, “Macumba: Brazil” renders Page’s cultural knowledge about African-Brazilian religion. The writer depicts in detail the way Afro-Brazilians act in a Macumba ritual, reviving the tradition inherited by their ancestors. Renaux declares that “o poema torna-se [. . .] emblemático de nossa história cultural, ao expressar a dimensão espiritual dos negros, em seu esforço coletivo em reaver sua individualidade perdida e manter sua herança cultural e religiosa” (“Da repressão à resistência cultural em “Macumba: Brasil”, de P. K. Page”: 194). Finally, in “Brazilian Fazenda,” Page describes facts of the history of Brazil, as for instance the abolition of slavery, and coffee plantation; nevertheless, her depictions of such facts and others present in the poem are developed as a form of paintings; that is, Page frames ‘Brazil’ in this poem.

Page’s *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* is a poetic account of the poet’s life experience from her childhood to her marriage to the Canadian Ambassador Arthur Irwin. In addition, the writer depicts the trips she made to Australia, Brazil, and Mexico, ending in Canada, where she lived until the end of her life. In relation to Brazil, Page recalls many facts she narrated in her book *Brazilian Journal* and in the poems mentioned above. Albert Braz observes that in *Hand Luggage*, “as in *Brazilian Journal*, [Page] underscores how utterly unprepared she and her husband were for their move to Rio de Janeiro, given their lack

of knowledge of both the country's language and culture" (3). Braz also points out regarding *Hand Luggage* that "race remains a major challenge for Page" (3). Also, Page depicts people's behaviour and the art of Brazil.

The purpose of the present research is then to analyze the aforementioned works related to Brazil. In this analysis, I will discuss Page's representations of Brazil, in terms of cultural, social, historical, and racial issues. The research questions for the present investigation are: How does Page position herself in relation to the 'other'? What changes in Page's perspective of Brazil along her writings in terms of cultural, social, historical, and racial issues? What remains unaltered in regard to such issues? In order to analyze Page's points of view in relation to 'Brazil,' I will first discuss some theoretical notions of 'representation,' and the issue of agency involved in the act of representing.

Therefore, in order to understand such depictions, I present in the first chapter, different discourses on representation, such as the critical essay entitled "Whose Gaze, and Who Speaks for Whom," by Dionne Brand, which is part of her collection *Bread Out of Stone*, and *The Concept of Representation*, by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, among others. In Brand's essay, she discusses that, when representing others, one should have a deep knowledge to truly understand the culture, tradition, language, and other issues that make part of the identity construction of those who are represented (119). Pitkin claims that "a representation is never a replica; [for], even where accurate rendering is the goal, the very standards of what counts as accurate rendering vary with time and place" (66). In the same chapter, I will then explore the issue of language; for, it is through language that one can represent the other. Furthermore, I discuss the meaning of representation and its constituents: the observer, the gaze, and the audience. In addition, it is crucial to observe what the position of the agent of representation is, since as Hall says: "the subject always speaks from a specific cultural and historical position" (qtd. in Silva 27, my translation). Finally, as the focus of the present thesis is analyzing the renderings from the gaze of a Canadian writer, as a traveler and observer in a foreign country, such as Brazil, I will also discuss travel writing and implications of the contemporary traveler's gaze.

As the analysis of my dissertation is Page's representations of Brazil, it is important to know: Who is the observer? Where does she come from? Through the answers of such questions, one can learn what the position of the author is. For this reason, I dedicate the second

chapter to a contextualization of the poet's life and work. In such chapter, I write a brief biography of the author in order to investigate her identity formation. Even though Page started publishing her works only in the forties, poetry had already been in her veins since she was a young girl. The poet says that she "grew up in a very word-conscious family" and that for her family "the sound of words was important" (Wachtel, qtd in Sperling 187). Page's creativity and imagination developed in her writings throughout her life had its roots in the experience of listening to fairy tales in her childhood. It is also observed that Page had "multiple selves," that is, she had the positive quality of perception of the different 'worlds' that surrounded her, for this reason, the poet could write in different perspectives. Also, I will comment on the poet initial difficulty in depicting Brazil in her poetry, leading her to frame the country through 'painting.' Finally, one perceives Page as a constant writer, and a constant explorer of an "unknown territory."

In the third chapter, I analyze Page's representations of Brazil in the poems "Brazilian House," "Macumba: Brazil," and "Brazilian Fazenda." As such poems render some facts present in her book "*Brazilian Journal*", my analysis of the poems will be in dialogue with the *Journal*. In "Brazilian House," Page mentions about the residence where she lived in Rio de Janeiro with her husband, the Canadian Ambassador in Brazil. Then, in "Macumba: Brazil," Page describes the worshippers' transition of macumba guided by the beats of the drums. After that, "Brazilian Fazenda" gives an account of fragments of the history of Brazil, as if painted in pictures.

Even though *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* and Page's *Brazilian Journal* recall the same experiences Page lived in Brazil, they were written in different times of Page's life. This means that the author may have altered some of her perspectives in relation to the country. Thus, in the fourth chapter, I analyze the poet's perspectives of Brazil in her book *Hand Luggage*, observing what changed and what remained similar to her observations in the *Journal* (1987). Also, I will be comparing the former book with the poems analyzed in Chapter 3. Therefore, the topics I found relevant to explore in this chapter are Page's depictions of Brazil, the marvellous country; the official residence and its code; verbal language and painting; multiracial Brazil; Brazilian's noise and the *favelas*; Brazilian's way of living, art, and the Golden Brazil.

CHAPTER 1

“WHOSE GAZE AND WHO SPEAKS FOR WHOM”

As this work is about *Representations of Brazil in the Writings of P. K. Page*, it is essential to consider what the word ‘representation’ means, how it can be applied, and whose agency is involved in the act of representing. In addition, in order to comprehend how the writer, Patricia Kathleen Page, ‘represents’ Brazil in her writings, it is important to know the different kinds of representation.

1.1 Observation, Language, Meaning, and Representation

One of the issues that are discussed regarding representation is language; in fact, the only path that one is able to take to represent the other is through language, which can be words, gestures, or other means of depiction¹. If language had not been developed, representation would not exist; and as a consequence, the ‘other’ could not be re-constructed. “Representation,” says Stuart Hall, “is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language” (17). In relation to words, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, in *The Concept of Representation* (1967), mentions that “our words define and delimit our world in important ways.” She says that

as human beings are [. . .] language-using animals, their behavior is shaped by their ideas. What they do and how they do it depends upon how they see themselves and their world, and this in turn depends upon the concepts through which they see. (1)

Therefore, we, as subjects, are able to express our points of view, in relation to the social and historical place we are embedded in, through the power of words. Furthermore, every human being has a life history, and an individual background, which delineate his/her way of thinking about the world. Moreover, in order to represent the other, one has to

¹ Stuart Hall explains that language is not only the written or spoken system, but also language can be any kind of visual images, facial expressions or gestures. He adds that “even music is a ‘language’, with complex relations between different sounds and chords. [. . .] Any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning is, from this point of view, ‘a language’”(18-9).

understand, to comprehend the other's individuality. Pitkin adds that "learning what 'representation' means and learning how to represent are intimately connected", and that "the observation always presupposes at least a rudimentary conception of what representation (or power or interest) is" (1-2). In her turn, Magali Sperling concludes (in relation the poet Elizabeth Bishop) that "representation and observation form an inseparable pair in the creation of new perspectives into the material world" (37). Considering these allegations, one can also affirm that, as the action of observation comes before the act of representation, it is in the first act the individual, while an observer, reflects about the new concepts he starts creating in relation to the observed object. Such concepts the observer imagines and creates are influenced by his/her beliefs and values which were constructed throughout his/her life. As the agent of representation, she or he produces through meaningful words the discourse of representation. In this way, one must take it for granted that,

The observer's interpretation of the real world will vary in relation to his/her experiences of life, habits, and beliefs, and the codes created by his/her community as well. Hence, the same object can be observed by two or more individuals with completely different points of view. (my translation)²

Stuart Hall points out that Representation is the medium or channel through which meaning production happens. He says that objects, people, etc do not have stable meanings, but rather that the meanings are produced by human beings, participants in a culture, who have the power to make things mean or signify something (paraphrased by Vukcevic)³. "Representation," adds Hall, "means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people" (15). That is, what ones utters has to be understandable to the other's ears; in other words, one has to be capable

² "A interpretação da realidade vai variar de acordo com o observador, suas experiências de vida, hábitos, crenças e até mesmo códigos elaborados pela sua própria comunidade. Sendo assim uma mesma figura pode ser observada por duas ou mais pessoas sob pontos de vista completamente diferentes." Citation taken from http://www.geocities.com/liparreiras/teoria_da_representacao.htm#TEORIADAREPRESEN TACA O under the title *Teoria da Representação*.

³ <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/representation.htm>

to comprehend ‘the code’⁴ of the observed object, to be able to transmit it to the other, in a way the latter assimilates ones ‘language.’

As Hall explained in his chapter “The Work of Representation,” by code, one wants to mean not the structure of the language, but the culture that surrounds the gaze of the beholder, the “translator.” Therefore, it is through codes that one can recognize the other’s culture; for this, one must be able to know such codes, in order to recognize them and understand the other’s culture. According to Hall, “[r]epresentation is [. . .] central to the process by which meaning is produced” and that “[m]eaning is constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction in which we take part” (Qtd. in Sperling 6). Therefore, the way an individual represents the other, can be different from or similar to the way another individual, in a different historical and/or social context, reconstructs the same “other.” In other words, what the former agent of representation sees can be different from what the later witnesses, for they have different concepts of life; as Hall mentions, “each of us [. . .] understands and interprets the world in a unique and individual way” (18). Or, despite individual and contextual distinctions, one may find correspondences between such representations.

According to Hall, there are three approaches to representation: the *reflective*, *intentional*, and *constructionist* approaches. In the first, “language functions like a mirror”; for, it represents “the true meaning as it already exists in the world” (24). In this kind of representation the object is translated literally; that is, the beholder does not construct new meanings about his/her object. In the intentional approach, it is “the speaker [. . .] who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language” (25). Nevertheless, the constructionist approach “acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don’t *mean*: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs.” Hall still adds that “It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others” (25).

⁴ In “The Work of Representation” chapter, Stuart Hall explains that ‘signs’ (which can be words, sounds and/or images), and their concepts carry a code which indicates, accuses the culture of people; hence, he says that “the relation between things, concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call ‘representation’” (18-9).

1.2 Re-presentation: the observer's depictions, the gaze, and the audience's interpretations

What is 'Representation'? Who are its constituents? "The Romans", from the word *repraesentare*, which means 'representation', "used it to mean the literal bringing into presence of something previously absent, or the embodiment of an abstraction in an object," for instance, "the embodiment of courage in a human face or in a piece of sculpture" (Pitkin 3). Pitkin also mentions that "representation means, as the word's etymological origins indicate, *re-presentation*, a making present again [. . .] of something [or someone] which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact" (8-9). In its turn, 'Representation', in the *Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary* (1984), signifies "an act of representing or the state of being represented" (593). Representation is thus composed by at least, two elements: the one that is representing (the agent of representation), and the other that is represented. But also, there is a third element to take into account: the audience, who is the one that receives the interpretation transmitted from the agent of representation about his/her object of observation.

Considering those issues, one thinks: "How can an agent of representation represent his/her object of observation to the audience?" Does the agent of representation have to be precise in his/her object depictions in order not to be misunderstood by the audience? Pitkin answers that "a representation is never a replica"; because, "even where accurate [literal] rendering is the goal, the very standards of what counts as accurate rendering vary with time and place" (66). "Some paintings"; for instance, "give more accurate information than others, [they] are more like photographs; but there is always a notation to be read, and even a photograph can be misread" (Pitkin 67). That is, a person can be smiling in a picture, but, such individual may not be necessarily happy on the moment of the shot; or, as Maria Teresa Cruz exemplifies, a simple photograph of a young man standing on a wall, may represent the fall of Berlin's wall (64 my translation)⁵, and that, "it will depend on the concepts, and beliefs of the person who is 'reading' the picture" (quotations mine).

Therefore, the task of the reader is to interpret the renderings of a representation taking into account not only the object depicted but the positioning of the agent of representation, considering what defines himself/herself in relation to his/her gaze. As Dionne Brand mentions,

⁵ <http://historiadaarte.no.sapo.pt/tir.doc>

the reader must analyze a representation critically, for s/he has to “[look] at the location of the text, and the author, in the world at specific historical moments.” She adds that such critical analysis “questions the author’s ‘interests’ in the text” (127).

On her turn, Smaro Kamboureli, in the Preface to the anthology *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literatures in English*, says that:

[W]e represent ourselves through language and through our bodies, but we also see ourselves represented by others. No image, no story, no anthology can represent us or others without bringing into play – serious play – differing contexts, places, or people. (xix)

In her anthology of Canadian Literature, Kamboureli includes not only authors who are British and French descendents, but also those from First Nations communities, and immigrants; for all of them are not only representatives of cultural groups; but also, of Canada as a multicultural nation (xx). Often, minority writers are labeled according to the community group they belong to, not taking into account their individuality. “First Nations cultures” claims Jeannette Armstrong, “have unique sensibilities which shape the voices coming forward into written English Literature” (Qtd. in Kamboureli xxi). That is, “even when a community claims a writer as its spokesperson, [. . .], she or he must write out of a space of difference” (Kamboureli xxi).

This applies to the issue of representation. Even though an individual comes from the same group s/he is representing, such agent of representation has a unique view, and not a universal one; for, depending on the cultural, social, and historical context the agent of representation is inserted in, his/her representation of the ‘other’ will vary, and this alterity is also found in variations of interpretations made by different audiences. Following this line of thought, I can say that representations are shaped – through the power of language – by the individuality of the agent of representation.

Therefore, when depicting a group of people that belong to the same social and cultural background, the agent of representation should analyze first the individuality of the human being from such group, and not utter general thoughts, for everyone is unique, has a different story of life. For instance, even when the individual is raised in the same house with his/her brothers and sisters, such person will develop a

different identity from the others in the family; because, the individual will absorb different concepts of life according to the social and cultural context experienced throughout life. For this reason, even though the individuals in a family have the same ‘last name’, they have different biographies. That is why, every individual from a group has to be heard, read and interpreted individually, for everyone has his/her own voice.

1.3 The position of the author: the agent of representation

Each of us stands at a unique place with our own particular view of this world, and that each of us tells the story of what we see with the only language we have. (Lev 473).

Stuart Hall argues that “the subject always speaks from a specific cultural and historical position” (qtd. in Silva 27, my translation). Hence, while interpreting a representation, one must look with critical eyes to the position of the author in representing his/her object; that is, the position of the author comes before, for his/her background experience has resonances on his/her thoughts, and consequently on the words s/he will use to translate his/her gaze. In relation to anthologies, Kamboureli claims that,

[they] are marked by the complex ways in which they operate as cultural instruments. Not only do they frame [. . .] what they represent, but by virtue of their strategies of restraint they inadvertently manipulate what they contain. They can function then, as instruments of power. (xix)

One perceives then, that language is a powerful instrument for representation in the sense that the agent of representation has the power to control his/her words in the text, be it in what is said, restrained or silenced. For this reason, we as critical readers have to analyze the position of the author; hence, we will be able to consider its implications in choices of words or frames regarding his/her object.

Dionne Brand, in her essay “Whose Gaze, and Who Speaks for Whom,”⁶ which is part of her collection *Bread Out of Stone* (1994), also affirms that:

⁶ Brand wrote the essay “Whose Gaze and Who Speaks for Whom” for a panel on cultural appropriation she was invited to participate at the University of Toronto.

Notions of voice, representation, theme, style, imagination are charged with [. . .] historical locations and require rigorous examination rather than liberal assumptions of universal subjectivity or the downright denial of such locations. (119)

Representations are not mere literal depictions. Therefore, one should not ignore the historical and social context the agent of representation comes from; moreover, one should analyze the power-relations the agent of representation has in relation to his/her target object.

In the same essay, Brand goes further in the issue of representation. For Brand, “representation” is “deeply ideological” for it implies “ways of thinking about people and the world.” She adds that it is not a “mere notion of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ representation”; instead “it is more concerned with how we see, enact and re-enact, make, define and redefine, vision how we lived and how we are going to live” (128). Therefore, representation has to be analyzed critically. It is not only a matter of observing how the other is depicted but also, and mainly, it is a matter of analyzing the implications of the observer in appropriating the other’s voice, the other’s culture. Contesting Neil Bissoondath’s ⁷ statement, who says that he “has the right to write in the voice of a woman [. . .] if he wants” (127), Brand argues that he “may write in any voice he pleases”; however, “his attempt to write in the voice of a young Japanese woman fails”, for

his portrayal gives us no sense of her interior life, her own sense of her life, of her female body, given the particular set of historical, social, personal and emotional circumstances under which she lived. Bissoondath only revalidates the myth of the ‘Oriental’ woman in Euro-centric discourse. [. . .] The authorial voice is intrusive and manipulative in the story, so it is difficult to gauge the character in terms of her agency or lack of it. (128)

Brand mentions another example regarding representation, voice and cultural appropriation right in the beginning of her essay, which is about a film she watched. Such film is about Gordon, a black male saxophonist, whose life is exposed to the audience through the white

⁷ Neil Bissoondath is a Canadian writer.

man's voice. Actually, the audience is predominantly composed by white people. Then, Gordon, even though the story is about his life, is switched from a subject to an object position regarding his own life and identity, by the white man. Brand reflects on this:

We are made to watch Gordon through the white man. [. . .] [H]e is nevertheless our gaze, our way to understand Gordon's character who never speaks to us directly but only through the suffused benevolent light of the white man's eyes. Only through this intervention into representation, a screen decentering Gordon as the subject of his life, are we allowed to identify Gordon, and we can only identify him as an approximation and not an actuality of the human presence. The human presence is the white benevolent, universal eye, and Gordon is the object of his arbitrary and unending verification and correction for human similitude. [. . .] They construct Gordon as an object of pity and doom. (113-4)

In addition, Brand perceives that the target public is white; that is, such movie is adapted to the expectations of a white audience. Brand disappointed concludes, "I feel dissolute myself under the gaze of the audience as I leave the theater" (114). Then, as part of the black community, Brand herself experiences the effects of this "white" gaze. In order to understand what cultural appropriation is, Brand explains that it "is a critical category," for

it looks at the location of the text, and the author, in the world at specific historical moments: moments that give rise to gender, race-, class-making, 'othering'; moments rooted in colonial conquest, in slavery and in economic exploitation. It investigates the positioning of the author within and apart from the text; [. . .] it argues that the author is not 'innocent' of the relations of race, gender, sexuality and class. And it locates the production of the text and the production of the author within practices that give

rise to gender, race, class subordination and colonial subjugation. (127-8)

Observing the aforementioned examples, and the explanations given by Brand about representation and appropriation, one concludes that it is crucial to observe and analyze critically how the agent of representation is depicting his/her gaze. It is important to observe if, by appropriating the voice of the other, the agent of representation is not practicing racial prejudice, is not subjugating the other, being sexist, or applying a colonial discourse. In relation to representation, Ella Shohat agrees with Brand that an “academic utterance must be analyzed not only in terms of who represents but also in terms of who is being represented for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which location, using which strategies, and in what tone of address” (173).

George Elliot Clarke, an African-Canadian writer, also writes about an experience he lived in relation to how the voice of the ‘other’ can be suppressed and erased by another person. This story happened in a city in Canada, while Clarke was on a bus, and he was the only black passenger among white Canadian ones. One of the passengers was an old white lady wearing old clothes, who, when entering the bus, starts “speaking loudly, with an Eastern European accent, about the presence of an ape and a baboon and a nigger on the bus. Realizing that those words were target to him, before he had the chance to defend himself, “a well-dressed, white, professional man [. . .] says loudly, [. . .], ‘This is Canada. We don’t tolerate that sort of thing here.’” Then, the lady is invited by the bus driver to leave the bus, with the agreement of the others present in the scene (207). Through such experience, Clarke then concludes:

In effect, the anti-racist intervention of my ‘defenders’ suppressed my own voice, suffocated my own self-assertion, shut-down any further inquiry into the causes of and instance of white *politesse*, that is to say, as a moment when *native* Canadian whiteness showed off how much more white – fair – it was than that represented by the lower-class, ‘ethnicized’ immigrant woman. (208)

What Clarke wants to say is that the white Canadian man, while speaking loudly to the old lady immigrant, is, at the same time, making

the black man submissive by not allowing him to use his own voice, thereby, he is unconsciously confirming his superiority as a white person. Therefore, the position of the agent of representation in this case then is purely racial.

1.4 Travel Representations⁸

I am a traveler. I have a destination but no maps.
[. . .] One's route is one's own. One's journey
unique." (Patricia Kathleen Page, "Traveler,
Conjuror, Journeyman" 36)

The discourse of representation can be found in different types of written texts: "literary texts, travel writings, memoirs and academic studies" (Young 159). As the focus of the present thesis is the analyses of the written depictions from the gaze of a Canadian writer, as a traveler and observer in a foreign country, such as Brazil, I will briefly discuss travel writing and the implications of the contemporary traveler's gaze. One must remember that travel representations developed through different times, places, and historical contexts. Also, such representations were narrated by different foreign gazes; positioning themselves according to their life experiences and beliefs. Furthermore, "[t]hinking historically is a process of locating oneself in space and time" (Clifford 11). In short, "New World otherness is not fixed [. . .] but looks different to different viewers and to different periods of time" (Wasserman qtd. in Sperling 25).

The world is plural, constituted by different cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions. That is why "everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel" (Clifford 2), with the goal to increase his/her knowledge about this magnificent planet, and to learn more about him/herself. In addition, James Clifford states, "many different kinds of people travel, acquiring complex knowledges, stories, political and intercultural understandings" (34). But, one must take into account that "roots always precede routes" (Clifford 3); considering that,

⁸ Travel writing started to be explored between the nineteenth and twentieth century, as Paul Fussler explains: "It was the Bourgeois Age that defined the classic modern idea of travel as an excitement and a treat and that established the literary genre of the 'travel book.' For the first time in history travel was convenient, and ships and trains took you where you wanted to go. [. . .] The Bourgeois Age was [. . .] the great moment for travel books" (273). Nevertheless, in this part of the chapter, I will be talking about travel representation in general and exploring some of the contemporary travel writer characteristics.

a traveler is already formed by his/her own beliefs, values, and concepts of life, before taking the first step to begin the journey. As Rosemary George claims, a traveler will always bring along his/her luggage, “both in literal and metaphorical senses – to the new destination” (qtd. in Almeida 107). Moreover, one is able to learn about a place, their people and culture through the written representations a traveler transfers from his/her singular observations. Representations in traveling, as other representations, deal with “class, gender, race, cultural/historical location and privilege” (Clifford 31). By privilege, Clifford wants to mean that the traveler, as an observer, will often position him/herself in a privileged site in relation to the ‘other’. Also, it is from such issues one can analyze the position of the traveler in relation to his/her object of observation; it is “not where you are or what you have, but where you come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there” (Clifford 17). Moreover, one has to observe ‘who’ the traveler’s gaze is. Henceforward, one can learn what kind of power-relations the ‘seer’ is constructing over the ‘seen’ while representing the later.

Clifford considers “‘travel’ as a translation term;” for “[t]ravel’ has an inextinguishable taint of location by class, gender, race, and a certain literariness” (39). I agree with Clifford that travel is a translation term, and this is because when a travel writer accounts his/her thoughts about “peoples, cultures, and histories different from [his/her] own” (39), such writer is in fact interpreting his/her object of observation, in relation to his/her own life perspectives. Therefore, ‘to represent’ means ‘to translate’. When representing the object of his/her gaze, a travel writer is actually rendering what he/she has learned, and has understood regarding the target object. One must not forget that such ‘translations’ or ‘representations’ are constructed according to the point of view, the individuality, and the singularity of the traveler.

An important issue that is part of the traveler’s experience is ‘language.’ According to Clifford,

The anthropologist’s field [for instance] is defined as a site of displaced dwelling and productive work. [. . .] The fieldworker is “adopted,” “learns” the culture and the language. [. . .] The field is also a set of discursive practices. Dwelling implies real communicative competence. (22)

Clifford’s affirmation about the anthropologist applies also to other travelers that, when arriving in his/her place of destination, have not

only to study and comprehend the other's culture, but also, in order to be able to translate his/her gaze, to understand the local language. However, "a language is a diverging, contesting, dialoguing set of discourses that no "native" – let alone visitor – can ever control. An ethnographer [and travelers] thus works in or learns some *part* of "the language" (Bakhtin, paraphrased in Clifford 22).

As Clifford concludes, when reading the traveler's analyses in relation to 'the other', it is crucial to pose the questions: "Who, exactly, is being observed? [. . .] What are the political locations involved? [. . .] What are the relations of power? What reverse appropriations may be going on? All of these are 'postcolonial' questions" (20). In relation to contemporary travel accounts, it has become common to see an interesting behavior the traveler started to incorporate: in order to write about his/her observations of 'the other', the traveler has been taking notes from his/her 'foreign' home. As Mary Louise Pratt mentions,

In contemporary travel accounts, the monarch-of-all-I-survey scene⁹ gets repeated, only now from the balconies of hotels in big third-world cities. Here, like their explorer forbears, postcolonial adventurers perch themselves to paint the significance and value of what they see. (216)

When the travel writer is a woman, one can observe that she not only depicts things she sees outside her window, but she is also interested in rendering the inside of her new dwelling, for such writer tends to value domesticity. Pratt points out that:

[t]he predictable fact that domestic settings have a much more prominent presence in the women's travel accounts than in the men's [. . .] is a matter not just of differing spheres of interest or expertise, then, but of modes of constituting knowledge and subjectivity. (159)

Considering "travel representations," Sperling observes that "[t]ravel is not seen as a mere space for the celebration of destabilized identities, frontiers, or boundaries, but as a space for the consideration of questions

⁹ "The monarch-of-all-I-survey scene [. . .] would seem to involve particularly explicit interaction between esthetics and ideology, in what one might call a rhetoric of presence" (Pratt 205).

about ‘re-presentations’ and ‘re-constructions’ of historical movements and encounters” (14). As it was said before, the world is plural, for every place is constituted by its own features, and behaviors, formed by a different culture, language, beliefs, and traditions; hence, ‘travel’ is an encounter of heterogeneity. It is the encounter of “old and new maps and histories of people in transit,” and, it is “concerned with human difference articulated in displacement, tangled cultural experiences, structures and possibilities of an increasingly connected, but not homogeneous world” (Clifford 2). Almeida, paraphrasing Caren Kaplan, says:

The concept of travel in the twentieth century cannot be disconnected from the historical legacy of the development of capitalism and the expansion of imperialism that have fostered cultural, social and economic inequalities. [. . .], [T]his figure [the traveler], [. . .], is an agent of modernity that confirms and legitimizes the social reality of dichotomous constructions such as First / Third Worlds, developed / underdeveloped, center / periphery. (“The Politics and Poetics of Travel” 110)

What was discussed will serve as basis for the analysis of how Page translates Brazil in her works, and how she positions herself in her writing. In order to do so, it is crucial to consider where she comes from, and what the purpose of her journey to Brazil is. This is a relevant contextual element to the reading of Page’s views of Brazil.

CHAPTER 2

P. K. PAGE AND HER WRITINGS ABOUT BRAZIL

2.1 Patricia Kathleen Page

The poet Patricia Kathleen Page, best known as P. K. Page, was born in England in 1916 and was brought up in Calgary, Canada. Page then moved to Montreal in 1941 where she worked for the magazine *Preview* from 1942 to 1945¹⁰. After that, in the same decade, she worked as a scriptwriter for the National Film Board of Canada where she met William Arthur Irwin, whom she married in 1950. Later, Page traveled with her husband to his posting as Canadian high commissioner to Australia (1953-1956), then, as Canadian Ambassador, to Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala from the year of 1957 to 1964.

Page came from a family of a high cultural level. Her parents were writers and poets; hence, Page grew up inserted in a privileged environment, as she mentions: “I had little to suffer about. [. . .] unlike many of my writing friends, I had no reason to complain about my parents. They both came from families that had produced artists and writers and they, themselves, were artists manqués” (*The Filled Pen* 7). Among the Canadian cities she lived in, when she was a child, Page comments about Alberta in her book *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse*, where there were no black people at the time (61). She affirms this after experiencing life in Brazil from 1957 to 1959, when the predominance of black skin color calls her attention.

As a wife of the Canadian Ambassador, Arthur Irwin, Page belonged to a high social-class; in addition, she was a white Canadian citizen. That means that Page came from a country which had a better development than Brazil. Even though both countries are multicultural, and they have similar histories, for they were colonized by European countries, Canada and Brazil have different cultural and social developments. Nevertheless, with due differences, both countries have social problems. Page observes this about Brazil from her early writings; while about Canada only in her last book.

¹⁰ The *Preview* group was formed by the poets Patrick Anderson, Bruce Ruddick, Neufville Shaw, Margaret Day, F. R. Scott, A. M. Klein and others. The poets, on this time, which was in World War II, “were just emerging from their closets. [. . .] Naturally there was no money for anything unrelated to the war effort.” (Page in *The Filled Pen* 12)

Curiously, when Page moves to Brazil, the main target of her gaze are the African descendents, and not to the descendents of the Brazilian colonizers, who, in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil, are the German and the Italian, and who are mostly tall, and have white skin color and blue eyes. In her writings about Brazil, Page mentions that Brazilian people are multiracial, constituted by different physical characteristics, social and cultural backgrounds; however, what actually calls her attention are the black people, their culture, tradition, and the poor from the slums. Also, her first impressions are similar to the ones of other travelers, for she depicts the exuberant side of Brazil, its marvellous and colourful nature, and the diversity of animals and plants, renderings present in travel writings about this land since its discovery.

2.2 Page, the plural poet

In relation to Page's writings, most of her books were poetry, but she also wrote novels, children's literature, essays, and autobiographies¹¹. Among such writings, there are some about Brazil: her poems "Macumba Brazil," "Brazilian House," and Brazilian Fazenda," from the book *The Hidden Room: Collected Poems* (1997), the autobiographical *Brazilian Journal* (1987), and *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* (2006).¹²

Even though Page started publishing her works only in the forties, poetry had already been in her veins since she was a young girl. She says that she "grew up in a very word-conscious family" and that for her family "the sound of words was important" (Wachtel, qtd in Sperling 187). Such influence of words that Page had absorbed from her parents made her grow with an "artistic creation and imagination [. . .] present" in her life, which "was a great stimulus for Page's interest in writing poetry in her teenage years" (Sperling 187)¹³. In addition, Page's

¹¹ Page started writing by the 1930s, but her first youthful novel book *The Sun and The Moon* was published in 1944 under the pseudonym Judith Cape. Page then published the following books signing her real name.

¹² During her career as a writer Page won four prizes: two Governor General's Literary Awards – for the poetry book *The Metal and the Flower* (1954), and for the autobiographical *Brazilian Journal* (1987); one Griffin Poetry Prize for the poem *Planet Earth* (2002), and one ReLit Awards for her short Fiction *Up on the Roof* (2007). Besides such prizes she was also named Officer, and Companion of the Order of Canada.

¹³ Page's parents encouraged her "to send poems to whatever magazines might print them." When one of her poems was accepted, 'Current Events', she "took refuge in the initials P. K. for fear [her] school friends would recognize [her]." The purpose was not to hide her gender (most of the writers on that time were man), she just thought her poems were bad. Her poems

creativity and imagination developed in her writings throughout her life are due to the contact she had to, and influence she had from, a diversified set of fairy tales in her childhood, as Page mentions:

I am grateful to have grown up in an age when Grimm, Andersen, Perrault and the Arabian Nights were not considered too frightening for children. These tales must have laid a basis for my continuing acceptance of worlds other than this immediately tangible one – worlds where anything is possible – where one can defy gravity, become invisible, pass through brick walls. What appear as surrealist images in my work may stem from listening to such tales. (*The Filled Pen* 5)

When Page affirms that the tales were the basis for her acceptance of new worlds, it is possible to read this in relation to Brazil, when she says that “new worlds” are magic and surreal. And Brazil is literally *a* new world for her, an ‘unknown’ world, considering Page’s point of view as a traveler or discoverer of a new land.

Another fact that happened to Page, and influenced her in the way of writing her poems, was when she was introduced to contemporary writing; for instance, writings by Virginia Woolf, and Edith Sitwell, while she was living in England at the age of seventeen. This is the time when Page “fells in love with words,” and discovers the appeal of images, sounds and rhythm of words. Actually, she considered her writing style Romantic, for, as she herself mentions: “I was more eyes than brains; a dreamer rather than a planner” (*The Filled Pen* 10). More realistic during World War II, when she was working in an office, Page wrote poems about stenographers and typists, which were poems of social criticism. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned before, her career as a writer in fact starts in the mid-40s. From this moment on, she does not stop using her pen, which helps her to develop different styles she learned from her mentors. While Page worked with the group from the magazine *Preview*, which she helped to found, she was influenced by the modernist, symbolist, and metaphysical writers, as Vivian Zenari observes:

on that time were “mainly about suffering”, even though she “had little to suffer about”; as she says: “I had no reason to complain about my parents” (*The Filled Pen* 7-8).

Throughout her long career Page has maintained a style of poetry in keeping with the modernist influences developed during her association with the Montreal group of poets in the 1940s. Among these influences are T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Elizabeth Bishop, Wallace Stevens, and D.H. Lawrence, as well as the symbolist and metaphysical poets (such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Gerard Manley Hopkins and George Herbert) that the modernists admired.¹⁴

In addition, because of such influences, “a greater sense of distancing and impersonality can be felt in Page’s poetics at this time.” However, Page was not only influenced by objective writings; there was a poet from the same group who would motivate Page to use her subjective voice: “Crawley, who, unlike the members of Preview, would stimulate Page’s use of personal voice and experience” (Sperling 189-90). This is present in her works regarding Brazil, for Page depicts in words and in drawings the objects of her observations, demonstrating her thoughts in relation to the unknown, and trying to comprehend ‘the other’ according to her individuality.

As a result, one can perceive that Page acquires different styles of writing: first, she starts writing with an impersonal voice; then, she discovers she can be more subjective, that she can use more her own experience of life. Moreover, Page and her writings are depicted by several critics with different views, for instance, she is said to be a “poet-visionary” (Orange), “mystical” (Bashford and Ruzesky), “ecocritical” (Kelly), “exotic storyteller” (Rogers), or “metaphysician” (Peace and Parsons) (qtd in Sperling 194). Thus one can observe that Page has “multiple selves,” that is, she has the positive quality of perception of the different ‘worlds’ that surround her, and she can write with different points of view, using her imagination. Page says:

I am aware of the fact that we are multiple. [...] I now think there are many I’s in us [...] For instance, let us say I decide to go on a diet. The I that gets up in the morning full of resolve is not the I that goes out to dinner and has a drink and finds the food awfully good, and goes to bed full

¹⁴ [Http://www.athabasca.ca/writers/pkpage.html](http://www.athabasca.ca/writers/pkpage.html)

of remorse. Somehow we are deluded into thinking that all these I's are one, but I don't think they are. Perhaps if we could see them all and let them act out their little lives they might ultimately fuse. But in the unregenerate state [...] we can't bring them all together. (Wiesenthal, qtd in Zenari)¹⁵

Page's affirmation makes us aware that we do not have only one identity, but several, multiple identities, which we discover, build, and develop according to what we live, according to the experience we are inserted in, and to the context we are living at the moment; and that we use the identity that fits better in relation to the contextual moment. In order to explain how different identities of a person are manifested, Kathryn Woodward says that:

The social context can engage us in different social meanings. Consider the different 'identities' involved in different occasions, such as attending a job interview or a parents' evening, going to a party or a football match, or visiting a shopping mall. In all these situations we may feel literally, like the same person, but we are differently positioned by the social expectations and constraints and we represent ourselves to others differently in each context. In a sense, we are positioned – and we also position ourselves – according to the 'fields' in which we are acting. (22)

Analyzing such explanation, one can understand Page's definition about her "multiple selves," her discovery of her new identities, and how she felt about such discoveries. Furthermore, through Woodward's quotation, one is able to understand how representation functions; for this reason, it is crucial to observe which identity Page is 'wearing' in order to position herself in the context she is surrounded while rendering her gaze in the works about Brazil. In doing so, it will be possible to analyze Page's representations in relation to 'the other'.

¹⁵ <http://www.athabascau.ca/writers/pkpage.html>

2.3 Brazil in Page's life: her difficulties in writing Brazil and discovery of a new art

Since the forties until her stay in Australia in 1955, Page was still writing. There she wrote the book of poems *The Metal and the Flower* in 1954, which was one of the works that gave her a Governor General's Award. However, during the years of permanence in other countries (1957 to 1964) – Brazil, Guatemala, and Mexico – Page stopped writing poems. In fact, when Page lived in Brazil, instead of writing poems, she wrote a journal in which she would register what she experienced throughout the years of 1957 to 1959. Moreover, besides writing her experiences lived in Brazil in her journal, she developed the art of painting. As she could not translate into poetry what her eyes observed, Page then started drawing and painting in order to express her feelings, and experiences she was living at the moment. As a result, after taking art classes in Brazil, and later in New York, Page had her paintings exhibited in different galleries in Mexico, and in Canada. In addition, she transformed her journal in a book, which was published only in 1987 under the title of *Brazilian Journal*.

As Page has “always been a nature buff [. . .], Brazil [. . .] fascinated” her. But she was not only fascinated by the diverse colors and shapes of Brazilian's fauna and flora, but also by its architecture and people. Page confesses she “fell in love with it totally.” Nevertheless, she says that every image in Brazil that her eyes were catching “took away [her] tongue.” Furthermore, she says: “I had no matching vocabulary. It was painful for me to be unable to write, but by some alchemy the pen that had written, began to draw. It drew everything I saw” (*The Filled Pen* 14). It is worth mentioning that the experience in Brazil had a great impact on Page's behavior, provoking different feelings and perceptions she had not felt before. In an interview she gave in 1983 to Peter Gzowski about her journal, Page reveals:

I'm a Brazilian. / And I love Brazilian people. They are surrealist people [. . .]. They do something that I value very much, they act very uninhibited when they first meet you, and they enjoy immensely the time they are with you [. . .] so, you can be totally loving, and spontaneous, and opened. / When I came back [to Canada] I brought with me Brazilian space [. . .]. I was touching everybody, and putting my arms around them, and kissing them, and they found that very

difficult. / I had to relearn. (“Interview”)¹⁶

One can perceive Page’s difficulty of having to behave as a Canadian again, for she had to “relearn” the way Canadians acted, and behaved socially.

Moreover, in the same interview, she tries to describe her difficulties with the language, leading her then to painting instead of writing.

I drew all the time when I was in Brazil, because I couldn't write. I kept the journal because I couldn't write. / I was [. . .] working very hard on learning Portuguese and I think the Portuguese vocabulary did something funny to my English vocabulary. / [. . .] I didn't seem to have the vocabulary for a baroque word, [. . .]. And, there was jamming words into myself and another language all the time. I really had tried to learn Portuguese.¹⁷

In such interview, one can notice that she is still concerned about the difficulties she had with the Portuguese language, which blocked her poetry writing. Page’s affirmations also demonstrate that, after so many years of her returning to Canada (Page and her husband settled in Victoria in 1964), Brazil was still in her mind.

2.4 P. K. Page: the constant writer-explorer of unknown territories

The experiences she witnessed in her journeys were very meaningful for the development of her writings. As mentioned, during her stay in Brazil, Page was unable to write poems, for she could not find the right word to use in her language for what her eyes and ears were witnessing. She felt the ‘need to get things off her chest’, and transfer to the paper her feelings, and impressions about such new world. As Page was having difficulties of translating Brazil through her pen, instead of writing, her hand suddenly started drawing and painting what her eyes could see. This other art was the way she found to depict Brazil. Thus, Page remained without writing any poem during her permanence in Brazil, and later in Mexico (1960), dedicating herself to

¹⁶ http://archives.cbc.ca/arts_entertainment/literature/clips/17382/

¹⁷ http://archives.cbc.ca/arts_entertainment/literature/clips/17382/

painting. After discovering the art of drawing and painting in Brazil, Page points out:

I drew as if my life depended on it – each tile of each house, each leaf of each tree [. . .] – all things bright and beautiful. [. . .] And in drawing them all I seemed to make them mine, or make peace with them, or they with me. And then, having drawn everything – each drop of water and grain of sand – the pen began dreaming. It began a life of its own. (“Questions and Images” 37)

After being only “a mute observer, an inarticulate listener,” as Page describes herself, she finally wrote her first work—*Cry Ararat!*—which was published in 1967 (she arrived in Victoria in 1964). It is worth noting that, only after arriving home in Canada, when Page starts writing is when she can recreate the images she saw during the years in Brazil, which were kept “behind the eyes,” in her subconscious. Page could not see what was behind the filters at that time:

My subconscious evidently knew something about the tyranny of subjectivity years ago when it desired to go ‘through to the area behind the eyes / where silent, unrefractive whiteness lies.’ I didn’t understand the image then but it arrived complete. It was not to be denied even though only half-glimpsed, enigmatic. It is pleasant now to know what I was talking about! (“Questions and Images” 41-2)

Then she adds: “writing has started again, [. . .]. For the time being my primary concern is to remove the filters” (“Questions and Images” 42).

While in Brazil, Page kept writing a journal and a number of letters to her mother. From such texts, Page created the book *Brazilian Journal*, which was published in 1987, and gave her the prize of Governor General’s Literary Awards. When Page was beginning to use the language of drawing and painting, she was literally transferring the object from her gaze to the paper, “using representational conventions.” For this reason, her models were generally the vegetation, animals and/or the architecture; “her subjects were rarely people” (Cynthia Messenger 111). However, in *Brazilian Journal* (1987), her renderings were not only about colorful animals, exuberant plants, the sidewalks of

Copacabana or architecture of old churches; but also about people and the way they lived. Vivian Zenari notices that “her interest in painting and drawing is seen in her willingness to combine text and image as in *Cry Ararat!* (1967) and the autobiographical travelogue *Brazilian Journal* (1987).” In addition, she mentions that “the influence of [Page’s] visual arts is also seen in her poetry’s interest in light, sight, and the nature of representation.”¹⁸

After the publication of *Cry Ararat!*, Page did not stop using her imagination, and creativity anymore, publishing several books almost every year. Actually, the last decade of her life, she published books every year, sometimes two books a year. One of the poems among her works, “Planet Earth,” was selected by the United Nations in 2001 to be read in various locations in celebration of the program Dialogue Among Civilizations. Such poem “turned her into something of a hero and a pioneering environmentalist. It is a long, elegant piece; its message is that we can only save the planet by thinking of it as a living organism” (Rosemary Sullivan)¹⁹

Page lived her life to write. “To keep living,” she said, “I need to write.” Her writings have been praised by several critics, and admired by various poets in Canada, and other countries. Rosemary Sullivan, a writer who has known Page since the 70s, and considered the poet as her mentor, affirms that Page “understood that the rhythm of poetry was profoundly tied to the rhythms of the human brain, touching something archaic, something primordial in us that we connect with only rarely”.²⁰ Page’s last two books were published just two months before her death: the long poem *Cullen*, and *The Sky Tree*, for children’s literature. After such publications, according to Sullivan, even though she would act vividly among society, the next day she would remember nothing of the last event – she was starting to have some collapses of amnesia. In a letter to Sullivan, Page shows that she is aware of being sick and reflects on death in a poetic way:

Thank you for the dreams and for your willingness to come at the drop of a tear if I start breaking up – which I am doing, of course, but undramatically and slowly. Quite weird, the end

18 <http://www.athabascau.ca/writers/pkpage.html>

19 <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/books/story/2010/01/15/f-pk-page-remembered-rosemary-sullivan.html>

20 <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/books/story/2010/01/15/f-pk-page-remembered-rosemary-sullivan.html>

of life. Never knowing if you are going to wake up dead. Unknown territory.

Analyzing Page's words, Sullivan concludes: "[t]he point is she meant it: the waking up. The chance that the journey has only just begun."

In relation to representation, every traveler in every journey has a unique vision, and a singular thought, and Page, confirming that she is a constant searcher of the unknown, explains that she is a traveler, and has a "destination but no maps. [. . .] One's route is one's own. One's journey unique. What I will find at the end I can barely guess. What lies in the way is unknown" ("Traveler, Conjuror, Journeyman" 36).

In an interview made in Page's house in her death-watch, a friend of hers, and one of her admirers, the poet and literature teacher Lorna Crozier affirms that Page "was one of our early explorers in poetry;" in addition, she says that Page

was such an intelligent poet. I can think of no one in literature — Canadian and worldwide — who had such an impeccable ear and such a marvelous sense of choosing the absolute, precise, exact word for what she wanted to say. There was a kind of marvelous sharpness of diction used to describe very mysterious, very ephemeral things. No one did that better than P. K. Page.²¹

Furthermore, the writer Patrick Lane, who was also present in the same interview, considers Page "one of the Gods" of poetry from her generation. Lane adds that Page "encouraged many younger writers," and that for him, she was "an inspired presence."

21 <http://www.cbc.ca/arts/books/story/2010/01/14/obit-page-pk.html>

2.5 P. K. Page's works about Brazil

During her three years of permanence in Brazil (1957 to 1959), with her husband, Page had the opportunity to travel and visit different regions and learn about the country. As a consequence, she acquired experience in Brazil through the observation of nature, animals, people's habits, and language, all with the attentive eyes of the poet.

Brazilian Journal, as I said before, was created from a diary that Page wrote while living in Brazil. In such book, Page depicts in detail her observations of the Brazilian culture, traditional celebrations such as Carnival and samba, and people and places from different parts of Brazil such as Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. In the following passage, Page describes and demonstrates her point of view about Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, observing the differences of such celebration by the poor people who lived in the slums and by the rich ones who celebrated in fancy balls:

All of Rio is sleeping off the orgy of Carnaval. Nothing now but hangovers and fatigue—hospitals and prisons bulging. For the rich there was a series of balls, all fancy dress—a ball a night, we are told. The Municipal Ball had a mere 7,400 attend! Many thousands of *cruzeiros* are spent on costumes and the dancing goes on all night. For the poor in the *favelas*, this is the event of the year. Months in advance they join “samba schools” and practice night after night. Just what they practice I am not sure, because their “dances” to the samba beat are a kind of mass walk, arms in the air. Each school has its own group attire—one group of about forty were all in diapers and bonnets, and sucking bottles. (19)

In the poems “Brazilian House,” “Macumba Brazil,” and “Brazilian Fazenda,” Page depicts social class differences in Brazil in regard to her own social position, and manifests her curiosity about Brazilian history and traditions. In the first poem, she describes the activities and routine of the Brazilian servants in the house and also her feelings as a foreigner living in such Brazilian residence; in the second one, she depicts the rituals in a “Macumba,” describing in detail the way the African-Brazilian act in such ritual. Page explores a rhythmical pattern that resembles the drums of Macumba. In the third poem, the

writer goes back to the past, to the history of Brazil, and writes about the day slaves were freed. Page's *Hand Luggage: a Memoir in Verse* (2006) describes experiences in the countries she has visited, such as Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, and Australia. In such book, I will be analyzing the part about Brazil, and comparing Page's representations regarding 'Brazil' with her book *Brazilian Journal* (1987) and the poems aforementioned. Unlike *Brazilian Journal*, in which Page writes from the perspective of an Ambassador's wife, in *Hand Luggage*, the writer "perceives herself, not as an aristocrat, but as peripheral and anti-establishment" (Albert Braz 329). Hence, one notices that, after returning to Canada, and observing how life changed in the country, she perceived that Canada has similar problems to Brazil's, especially regarding poverty, and racial issues. However, Page still cannot understand the complexities of color present in Brazil. She continues to refer to racial prejudice as dictated by social codes that she had to follow.

My challenge and aim in this dissertation is then to analyze how Page represented Brazil in the writings I just mentioned above. In order to do so, in the next chapter, I will be observing Page's point of view, her gaze in the book *Brazilian Journal* (1987), and the poems "Brazilian House," "Macumba Brazil," and "Brazilian Fazenda."

CHAPTER 3

P. K. PAGE'S REPRESENTATIONS OF BRAZIL

In order to observe Page's perspectives in relation to Brazil, I will analyze her poems "Brazilian House," "Macumba: Brazil," and "Brazilian Fazenda"²² in dialogue with *Brazilian Journal*. Written from diary notes and letters to the family Page wrote while living in Brazil between the years of 1957 and 1959, the journal as well as the poems were published after her return to Canada. Hence, I agree with Sigrd Renaux who claims that "besides being documents of the cultural contacts established between Page and her new environment, the poems also furnish the reader with other possibilities of interpretation, while the *Journal* continues to be the best key to contextualize them" (264). Considering that, it will be possible to understand Page's position regarding social, cultural, racial, and historical issues of Brazil present in her poems.

3.1 "Brazilian House":

[À] sombra da casa-grande se apinhava a escravaria nas senzalas. "A mansão reproduzia deliberadamente, como assinalou *Pedro Calmon*, a hierarquia social: no andar nobre morava o senhor, e ao nível ou abaixo a sua escravatura." (Fernando de Azevedo 170)

In "Brazilian House," the house mentioned corresponds to the official residence where Page and her husband Arthur Irwin lived during his posting as Canadian Ambassador in Brazil. The house was precisely placed on "Estrada da Gávea," in Rio de Janeiro. As Page arrives in the residence, she starts describing (in the *Journal*) the tropical garden, "the lotus pond and a stretch of quite extraordinary lawn" that surrounds the "equally extraordinary house" (5). Furthermore, the Canadian poet adds it is "[a] long three-storey house" (18). Then, as she enters the house, she depicts the parts of it in every floor: "the kitchens, cloakrooms, storage rooms, and servants' bedrooms," are located downstairs; "the main reception room," "sitting-room," "dining-room," "[a] library, two washrooms, a pantry, and a butler's pantry complete this floor;" and

²² See the complete poems in Appendixes.

upstairs are the guests' and Arthur and Page's bedrooms, making six bedrooms in total, "four bathrooms, a linen room, an enormous family sitting-room, a pantry, and back stairs" (6-7). Of course, in this part of the *Journal*, Page renders every part of the house in detail, mentioning the objects and colors present in the official residence.

I will start my analysis from the title of the poem; for, "Brazilian House" implies Page is in another territory, evoking differences. As the poet is Canadian, this signals differences between Brazil and Canada, starting with language and economic position, Canada as a developed country, Brazil still belonging to the third world. Moreover, even though they are colonized countries, Canada's history and culture developed in a different manner from the place in which she encounters herself at this moment. And there is another factor: Page is the wife of the Canadian Ambassador, which means she belongs to a high social status. Thus, by mentioning that the house is Brazilian, Page anticipates her feeling of displacement. Even though she is the owner of the house, she feels like an outsider, a complete stranger, a foreign, "like a fish out of water."

"Brazilian House" is written in free verse, divided in three stanzas, which have six, seven, and eight lines respectively. The first stanza represents the upstairs of the house, where Page encounters herself, solitary in her bedroom:

In this great house white
As a public urinal
I pass my echoing days.
Only the elephant ear leaves
Listen outside my window
To the tap of my heels. (1-6)

In the first line of this stanza, Page qualifies the house as a "great house"; in addition, she renders the house as "white." According to Page's *Journal*, the house had been built "by a wealthy Portuguese and modeled on his *palacete* in Portugal" (2). Through such information, one can also link it to the use of "great house" in the poem. It was in the "great house" or "casa-grande" that the Portuguese colonizers lived, enriching their houses through the slave work. Fernando de Azevedo points out that "[a] habitação rural dos senhores de engenho é a 'casa-grande', expressão típica [. . .] da monocultura escravocrata" (91); Azevedo still adds: "é a casa que revela o homem" (90).²³

²³ "É com a formação patriarcal e a economia escravocrata que o conquistador se transforma de traficante em colonizador, realizando a posse do meio geográfico, e surge, [. . .] ao longo do

In the second line of the same stanza, Page compares the house to “a public urinal,” which “ironically deconstructs the previous idea of the house as something grandiose” (Maria Lúcia M. Martins in discussions). Also, in writing that the house is public, the poet reveals that the house is full of people, which may be a reference to what Page mentions in her *Journal*, after more than a month living in the house, under the date of February 27th, 1957: “Today the house is full of painters, electricians, and plumbers. [. . .] This is a very public house – in part because we are over-run with workmen, but it is also something to do with Brazilian life, I think.” (18). When Page finds herself in such a “public house,” she does not feel comfortable in being there; for, as a Canadian, she is used to quiet and private places, as Renaux claims: “‘public urinal’ [. . .] removes any quality of privacy and individuality” (269).

“Echoing days” evokes solitude; as her husband is out working, and she does not understand the language the servants speak, Page feels lonely in this *palacete*. She writes in her *Journal*: “[C]uriously, even though I speak of the house as public, at the same time I wonder about its ‘emptiness’. For it *is* empty, psychologically” (18). As she says that only the leaves outside of her window can listen to the tap of her heels, that means that the author only has the leaves to interact with, only the leaves from outside of the house can hear her ‘noise’; nobody is there to communicate with her, or better saying, she feels the need of communication, but there is no individual in the house capable of understanding her, due to language constraints. Also, such emptiness shows Page’s displacement in regard to the culture of the other. For this reason, she finds herself lost in this new ‘contact zone’ she is now. Renaux points out that

Page’s “Brazilian House” [. . .] reflects her sense of displacement in relation to her Canadian self, as she confronts the new physical space she is going to inhabit in Rio, and her sense of estrangement as she confronts the other – the intriguing staff of servants she is going to interact with. (264)

litoral, como modificador da paisagem, violentando a natureza, para sobrepor às regiões naturais uma paisagem cultural, fortemente caracterizada pela ‘casa-grande’ (é a casa que revela o homem), pela senzala, pelos engenhos e canaviais e por toda essa floração magnífica da arquitetura colonial das fortalezas, das igrejas e dos conventos” (90-1).

The second stanza moves to downstairs, depicting the servants who work in this part of the residence:

Downstairs the laundress
 With elephantiasis
 Sings like an angel
 Her brown wrists cuffed with suds
 And the skinny little black girl
 Polishing silver laughs to see
 Her face appear in a tray. (7-13)

I will start my analysis from the word “downstairs”. Using such word, Page is not only indicating literally that she is rendering the servants that work downstairs; but also, and more significantly, the connotation of “downstairs” as the lower level. Page mentions in her book *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* (2006) that as she grew up in a city where there were a couple of black people, “in Brazil, as a guest, [she]’d no choice but to learn / the ways of the country” (61). Thus, in relation to the employers in a “great house,” Page, in order to follow “the rules of employment” understood that “upstairs maids / *must* be white; and *copeiros* who served us; [while] the rest – / the cook and the laundress and cleaners could be / black, white or whatever” (61). The poet then describes “the laundress with elephantiasis,” and suggests, through the words “brown wrists,” that the servant is probably a mulata; for, “brown” contrasts with “suds.” Not just the color of the servant calls Page’s attention, but her grotesque appearance. However, the impact of this negative view is contrasted in the third line to a positive quality of “[singing] like an angel.”

Another important fact to mention is that Page does not reveal the names of the laundress and the little black girl, while, in the beginning of the third stanza, she does reveal the name of another character, Ricardo, who, one learns through her *Journal*, is the gardener of the house. Curiously, this also happens in the *Journal* (January 21st, 1957), when Page describes the residence and introduces the servants present in the house at this moment. Page first mentions servants through their names and/or nationalities, as for instance: “a German housekeeper who speaks seven languages [. . .]; [a] Spanish couple, Guilhermo and Maria, [the cleaners], who speak a little Portuguese; [and] [. . .] a Portuguese gardener, Ricardo.” However, she does not mention the names of the cook, her assistant, and the laundress: “a cook from Bahía and her coal-

black assistant; and a laundress who has elephantiasis;" (*Brazilian Journal* 7) who are the last in the sequence, introduced through negative qualities. One can observe that the author gives importance to the European servants; for Page makes a point of introducing everyone through their names and/or nationalities; except the ones who work downstairs. It is worth noting that the reason why Page does not mention the names of the latter servants is that their place of work, the kitchen and the laundry, is downstairs, a place she rarely goes to, and from where such servants do not dislocate themselves. In this manner, as it was mentioned before, Page has contacts with the servants who work upstairs, and happen to be from European countries; but, she will seldom keep in touch with the African descent servants who work in the lowest level of the house. In this way, the two first stanzas in the poem reveal the poet's superiority over such servants.

More interesting is that, Page just reveals, in the *Journal* the name of the laundress, (and perhaps the writer had just learned it on this moment), when the author dismisses such worker from her services after less than a month working in the residence, because of suspicion of stealing. On February 18th 1957, Page dedicates a complete paragraph to the laundress:

Today I fired the laundress with elephantiasis. Hated doing it but she was not a very good laundress and eighteen sugar bananas and five kilos of beef unaccountably disappeared on Saturday. Unfairly, perhaps, I suspect her. [. . .] It is unlikely I shall ever again employ a grotesque: elephantiasis of the legs and breasts and a strange little beard which hangs straight down under her chin and curls only at the end. [. . .] Baudelaire was the poet of the Brazilian jungle... and certainly Lourdes, for that is her name, is pure Baudelaire. Ready for the clothes-line, her great brown arms full of white sheets, rows of clothes pegs clipped to her dress like rows of nipples on some gargantuan sow, she was a truly awesome figure. (14)

Regarding the depiction of the laundress, Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida points out that "as Baudelaire and its representation of the exotic, exuberant, and not less grotesque, 'Black Venus', Page reproduces, once more, a perspective of cultural superiority, which

reveals her discomfort with the other that is different from the pre-established rules” (My translation, “O Brasil de P. K. Page” 114). When talking about the women from London and Paris, Baudelaire says that one can find all kinds of women in the life of galleries of such cities, starting from the young woman who arrogantly and proudly has aristocratic airs, and shows off all the beauty she possesses, revealing who she is through her beautiful silk dress and ornamented shoes; then, he affirms:

seguindo a escala, descemos até as escravas, que são confinadas em pocilgas frequentemente decoradas como bares; desditadas, mantidas sob a mais severa tutela, e que não possuem nada de seu, nem mesmo o excêntrico adorno que lhes serve de condimento à beleza. (65)

Analyzing Baudelaire’s claims, one can link them to Page’s position as an aristocrat woman, and to her points of view in relation to the laundress, who is confined downstairs possessing nothing but her voice, which is sublime.

The other character Page depicts is “the skinny little black girl” who, while “polishing silver laughs to see her face appear in a tray.” In this part, as with the laundress, Page also does not introduce such character by her name, but through a negative view – skinny and black. By using the adjective skinny, the writer is indicating the lack of food the little girl may have, representing again poverty. Moreover, when the girl looks at herself on the tray and laughs, Page is observing the girl’s naiveté. Almeida points out that Page consciously recognizes her stereotyped perspective about the racial issue, due to her cultural and social position, as she quotes Page:

They say that Brazilians have no colour prejudice, even as they say they have found the way to solve the colour problem: intermarriage will produce a white race. When you suggest that their whole argument could indicate they are prejudiced, you feel uncharitable, knowing that they are so much less prejudiced than we, and why are we wanting to find them prejudiced anyway? Does it save us, in some way? (“O Brasil de P. K. Page” 114).

In the third stanza, Page introduces another character, Ricardo; also, the poet includes herself in the poem:

Ricardo, stealthy
Lowers his sweating body
Into the stream
My car will cross when I
Forced by the white porcelain
Yammering silence drive
Into the hot gold gong
Of noonday. (14-21)

In the second line, through the use of “sweating body,” Page is suggesting the tropical sensuality present in Brazil. In her *Journal*, she mentions how the heat influences in the senses of an individual:

How could I have imagined so surrealist and seductive a world? One does not *like* the heat, yet its constancy, its all-surroundingness, is as fascinating as the smell of musk. Every moment is slow, as if under warm greenish water. The flavour is beyond my ability to catch. The senses are sharpened by *that* smell. [. . .] [O]n the street everyone is paired – in love, embracing of half-embracing, whatever the heat” (*Brazilian Journal* 9).

So, by gazing at Ricardo’s sweating body, the author’s senses are sharpened by the current tropical heat that surrounds her at this moment. A heat she was not used to, and the behavior of people she was not used to see: more sensual, more seductive, and more passionate. “Although subtle in the poem, tropical sensuality has caused a great impact on Page, be it in nature (the heat, exuberant vegetation) or in the revelation of bodies” (Milléo in discussions). Miguel Nenevé confirms that because of the heat of Brazil, Page reveals herself more sensual (167), as the poet confesses in her *Journal*: “Sitting naked, immediately following a cold shower, I am covered with a profusion of valueless pearls of my own manufacture, cascading down my neck, breasts, and kegs” (211). It is curious that, even though Page had already lived in a hot place like New Guinea, in Brazil she says she witnessed and experienced a more abundant “marvelous fret of tropical vegetation, [. . .] [and] hot air. She

adds, “all of these were [. . .] given to us even more abundantly in Brazil. All these and heaven too” (*Brazilian Journal* 2).

When the poet gazes at Ricardo, she is already outside the house. Nevertheless, she is still closed in a sort of a box as in her bedroom, since she is inside her car. This gives her a certain detachment from the surrounding world. “The hot gold gong of noonday” means the noise exists outside her house; for ‘noonday’ implies rush hour. However, Page is still in “silence”; she cannot interact with this ‘other’ world, which means she is still displaced and feeling solitary. Regarding to the use of the color “white” in the poem, it refers to the house and porcelain, which are components of Page’s world, in contrast to the black bodies, which stand for what is different from the world of the poet.

In conclusion, the poet P. K. Page is not only representing her racial perspective, her privileged position over the ‘other’, and her feeling of displacement, as she does not understand the culture and the language of the other; but also evoking the colonial history of Brazil. The poem reminds us of the time of colonization when the great houses (as *casas-grandes de engenho*) were built and lodged enriched owners (*senhores do engenho*), as described by Gilberto Freire in *Casa-Grande e Senzala*. The poet’s self representation would correspond to the one of “a *senhora da casa-grande*”, when she is positioned upstairs in the first stanza, in contrast with the servants downstairs, whose skin color and work reminds us of slavery. Thus the poem makes us consider that, three centuries after slave abolition, Brazilian’s social codes have not changed much. Even though African descendants are not slaves anymore, they are still discriminated, belonging to a lower level class, working for the similar employers of centuries ago who have been keeping their *palacetes*.

3.2 “Macumba: Brazil”: culture and religion

I would love to go back [to Salvador]. [. . .] –
 anciente/modern, Portuguese/African,
 Catholic/*candomblé*. (*Brazilian Journal* 137)

In “Macumba: Brazil,” Page explores her cultural knowledge about Brazilian tradition. The author depicts in detail the way African descendents act in a Macumba ritual in Brazil, reviving their tradition inherited by their ancestors. Before starting the analysis of the poem itself, it is crucial to know what ‘Macumba’ represents. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Macumba is an “Afro-Brazilian religion that is

characterized by a marked syncretism of traditional African religions, European culture, Brazilian Spiritualism, and Roman Catholicism.” The dictionary still informs that “African elements in Macumba rituals include an outdoor ceremonial site, the sacrifice of animals (such as cocks), spirit offerings (such as candles, cigars, and flowers), and ritual dances.” Also, “Roman Catholic elements include use of the cross and the worship of saints, who are given African names such as Ogum (St. George), Xangô (St. Jerome), and Iemanjá (the Virgin Mary).” There are several Macumba sects in Brazil, being the most important ones *Candomblé*, set in Bahia, and *Umbanda*, set in Rio de Janeiro (Encyclopedia Britannica).²⁴

Macumba is derived from the word “*Ma’kuba* – a musical instrument played during the rituals” (“Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page.” 172). The worshipers summon their Gods, who are called *Orishas*, with their drums. For this reason, Page intelligently incorporated the drum rhythm in her poem. While reading the poem, one can hear the beats of the drum as the worshipers are practicing the Macumba ritual in devotion to their *Orisha*. In this case, the *Orisha* is Iemanjá, the Goddess (or Queen) of the Ocean, who is mainly represented by “Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes” in the catholic religion. Although Iemanjá is the mother of many *Orishas*, she is said to be virgin, as the *Virgin Mary*. Every deity has his/her day of devotion, as well as the colors and offers vary according to the *Orisha* who is being devoted. The day of devotion to the Queen of the Ocean is on Saturdays; some of the devotions consist of lamb, chicken, ducks, and rice. In addition, Iemanjá’s worshipers wear blue and white clothes, and her favorite objects are starfish, shells, fish representations, mirrors, soaps, and combs (René Ribeiro 49).

The reason Page chose such ritual and deity is that she said to have witnessed many times the Macumba ritual in devotion to Iemanjá, on the Copacabana beach, in Rio de Janeiro, as she reveals to Renaux, in a letter dated 12 September 2002:

As to “Macumba,” there was no specific experience. But I learned early about macumba and some of its rites and I went many times to

²⁴ <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/355524/Macumba>>.

Copacabana to watch from the sideline as was much intrigued. The house in the poem was the official residence, which was equipped with marble floors, golden faucets, etc. etc. And the beach was Copacabana – mainly. That is to say the celebration for Iamanjá on New Year’s Eve I saw there, although I suppose I saw other rites enacted at many of the Rio Beaches and Bahia [. . .]. The drums from the favela nearby in Gávea were central to the whole experience of Brazil. (Qtd. in “Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page” 173).

One can also perceive Page’s interest in the history of the African religion in her *Journal*: “Salvador is Brazil’s oldest city [. . .]. It was also first landfall for Portugal’s royal family [. . .]. And the port where tens of thousands of African slaves were landed to work the early sugar plantations, bringing with them the religion which was to become *candomblé*” (*Brazilian Journal* 127).

In relation to the title of the poem, it contextualizes the ritual in Brazil. In the *Journal*, Page, affirms that Macumba was “brought from Africa by the slaves.” She also describes that,

[macumba] has appropriated many of the symbols and artifacts of the Catholic Church – that Church having permitted and even, I believe, initially encouraged it as a way of bringing the Negroes into the “true faith” by easy stages. But the fact is, it is *macumba* that holds them – and steals from Catholicism to enrich itself. Most of the dancing women the other night wore crucifixes. (193).

Page’s poem is divided in eight stanzas. In the first stanza, she writes:

they are cleaning the chandeliers.
 they are waxing the marble floors
 they are rubbing the golden faucets
 they are burnishing brazen doors
 they are polishing forks in the *copa*
 they are praising the silver trays (1-6)

Here as in the rest of the poem, Page uses the pronoun *they* to refer to the characters of “Macumba: Brazil,” the worshipers of Iemanjá. In addition, the verbs in the present tense give the immediacy of the action. Also, the rhythm of the poem is developed by the device of repetition, and the use of the formal pattern of the “trimeter,” leading the readers to hear ‘as batucadas’ of the drums.

When reading the first stanza, one does not know who *they* are, but as the characters are doing house work, one deduces that *they* can be maids, servants of the house. Also, by using *they*, the author is delimiting, and positioning herself in a higher level than the characters in the poem. The house where the servants are working belongs to a high social level person, for the objects they are cleaning, burnishing, praising, etc., are of worth value, as for instance: golden faucets, and silver trays. Thus, it is possible to assume that the poet is the owner. This is confirmed in Page’s letter to Renaux: “The house in the poem was the official residence, which was equipped with marble floors, golden faucets, etc. etc.” (qtd. in “Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page” 173). Considering this, it is worth remembering that, as in “Brazilian House,” not all of the servants that work in the official residence are African-Brazilian. That is, the ones who work downstairs, as the cook, and the laundress, are African descendents, but the servants who work upstairs, as the maids, and the butlers, should be white.

Page depicts the characters doing their daily labors in her own house, as part of the Macumba ritual. Of course, Page’s residence was neither a worship house, nor an African-Brazilian residence. Ironically, the official residence “becomes the site of the Macumba ritual, since the poet suspects all the action is part of it” (Milléo in discussions). While the worshipers clean, rub, polish, etc., Page interprets they are already practicing the sect.

In the *Journal*, Page writes about visiting an antique shop in Salvador, Bahia:

[w]as fascinated by the religious artifacts – altar candlesticks, and carved and painted saints always [. . .] with their hands broken off; and the sometimes more sinister objects associated with *macumba*, or *candomblé* as it is called in the north [of Brazil]. The most exotic and elegant of these are gold or silver *balangadãs*, made in the form of large oval keyrings, from which hang a variety of

amulets: pomegranates, bunches of grapes, fish, parrots, drums, keys, *figas* – fetish objects from eastern and western magic – executed with great mastery. Imagining a day when I should have to do the polishing myself, much as they fascinated me, I was not tempted. But I nearly bought [an old, black, wooden *candomblé* figure. (131-2)

Page’s decision of including words such as “silver,” “golden” and “polishing” in her poem probably comes from such description. There are two connotations for the use of these words in the poem. First, it suggests the owner of the residence belongs to a high social status, second, it implies that, while the servants are doing their jobs, they are already practicing the ritual. Even though the things the servants are cleaning belong to the house, being gold and silver as the *balangadã*, they evoke Macumba objects. About “polishing,” Renaux points out:

[O] próprio ato de esfregar é transformado num ato mágico, pois os escravos estão não apenas fazendo os objetos luzir, mas também recebendo energia deles, uma energia que prenuncia a força espiritual que vai impregnar os escravos durante o ritual religioso. (“Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page.” 175)

As the worshippers belong to a lower social class position, consequently they generally have to face not only discrimination from the higher class, but also other problems from everyday life. For this reason, the religion gives them psychological support to face such problems. (Ribeiro 143).

In the second stanza, Page writes: “their jerkins are striped like hornets / their eyes are like black wax” (7, 8). The description of jerkins resembles clothes prisoners wear in jail. Also, as hornets are hardworking insects, it implies the hard job the servants are doing. Furthermore, the description of the servants’ eyes along the poem shows the progression of the ritual, suggesting that they are gradually being possessed by the macumba spirits.

Then, in the following stanza, the servants move to the outside of the house, gathering things they need for the ritual, at this point more explicitly related to macumba offerings. That is, the servants are doing things worshippers usually devote their African Gods.

they are changing the salt in the cupboards
 they are cooking *feijão* in the kitchen
 they are cutting tropical flowers
 they are buying herbs at the market
 they are stealing a white rooster
 they are bargaining for a goat (7-12)

Every deity has his/her food, and color preferences, as well as day of devotion. For instance, some *Orishas* have aversion to salt, which is extremely offensive to them, for the salt provokes their rage (Ribeiro 44). However, it is not the case of Iemanjá, who is conceived as a mermaid, and who reigns over the seas and the salty water. Then, the act of changing the salt in the poem may be related to an act of purification, as it is of white color. The salt is also related symbolically to protection against bad spirits (Renaux “Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page.” 178-9). It is common to see people throwing salt around the places, who say it is to keep “olho grande” away. Thus, the salt is an element used to absorb the bad spirits present in the place; for this reason, it needs to be changed by a new and ‘pure’ one, in order to keep the place purified, which also means renovation.

Concerning the reference to cooking *feijão*, besides being a Brazilian traditional food originated from the African slaves, it is symbolically associated with reincarnation and fertility (Renaux “Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page” 179). *Feijão* is also one of the foods prepared to be offered to some of the *Orishas*.²⁵ The tropical flowers they are cutting will be used later to offer to Yemanjá. As for buying herbs, they are used to purify the soul of the believer. “Banhos e infusões de determinadas ervas e o uso de vestes limpas [. . .] são também requeridos para participação em qualquer cerimônia, o mais importante, porém, sendo estar igualmente ‘limpo de corpo e de pensamentos’” (Ribeiro 112).

In the next lines, the act of “stealing” and “bargaining” confirms the economic/social level of the worshipers, which is the lower class; for, as they do not have financial conditions to buy such animals, they are induced to steal them or try to get them in a lower price. Ribeiro informs that “[l]ocalizam-se êles [sic], [os grupos de cultos afrobrasileiros], de preferência nos subúrbios da cidade, principalmente naqueles ocupados pela nossa população de nível econômico e social

²⁵ “As oferendas a esta divindade [Yansan] são feitas tôda quinta-feira, consistindo essencialmente de galinhas pretas, cabra e porco, *acarajé* (um prato africano feito de feijão cozinhado, ralado e frito sob a forma de pequenos bolos em azeite de dendê)” (Ribeiro 45).

mais baixo” (37). The purpose of acquiring a white rooster and a goat is in order to sacrifice them and offer such sacrifices to their *Orishas*. To Yemanjá, the faithful generally offer ducks, goats, and roosters, all of them white; for such color means peace, and purification. During the ritual, before the worshipers kill the animals, they, repeatedly, pass the animals over the head of the faithful presents in the ceremony aiming to transfer the possible impurities from the believers to the animals (Ribeiro 67). In her *Journal*, Page observes such ritual sacrifices: “a book about *candomblé* initiation in Bahía shows a clearly marked ceremonial pattern – more revolting (living sacrifice of animals) but also more decorous than the examples we have witnessed [in Rio de Janeiro]” (*Brazilian Journal* 194). As she notes, in Rio de Janeiro most of the worshipers who practice Macumba do not follow the ritual of sacrificing animals, as “Bahianos” do, who faithfully preserve the ritual their African ancestors used to practice.

The fourth stanza says: “they are dressed in white for macumba / their eyes are like black coals” (13-14). From this part now, one receives the information that the characters are not with their uniforms of servants anymore. The changing of their clothes reveals an act of liberation, from the condition of servants to the status of macumba practitioners. Mentioning that the characters’ eyes “are like black coals,” Page is informing us that there is a transition from “black wax” to “black coal” suggesting that the eyes are lighting up (like coal used for fire).

While the previous stanzas focus on preparation, the fifth stanza depicts the Macumba ritual in progress:

they are making a doll of wax
 they are sticking her full of pins
 they are dancing to the drums
 they are bathed in the blood of the rooster
 they are lighting the beach with candles
 they are wading into the ocean
 with presents for Iamanjá [sic] (15-21)

The two first lines depict a ritual of black magic which is not common in the ritual of macumba in Brazil. Page mixes macumba with magic and witchcraft. Perhaps she thought it was part of the cult; for the author says in her *Journal* “I wish I knew more about *macumba*. It is a form of voodoo, of course, brought from Africa by the slaves” (193). In regard to “dancing to the drums,” it is worth remembering that, to

develop their religion, the African slaves needed the beat of the drums which induced them to dance to summon their Gods. The sounds of such instrument have echoed throughout the centuries, from the time of colonization until the present days, surviving and fixing the African roots in Brazil; and becoming part of the Brazilian culture. Fernando de Azevedo points out that,

a fonte principal das melodias de nosso folclore de real beleza, na opinião de *Mário de Andrade*, é a dos escravos negros em cujo contato a nossa rítmica “alcançou a variedade que tem, – uma das nossas riquezas musicais”. A penetração das danças africanas, religiosas ou guerreiras ou suas sobrevivências nas danças populares do Brasil, com toda a espécie de batuques, – samba, candomblés, maracatus, e cana-verde acompanhados de vários instrumentos entre os quais predominam os de percussão (ganzá, puíta, atabaque), mostram, de fato, como foi decisiva na formação de nossa música popular a influência africana. (449)

Moreover, Ribeiro points out that “No setor religioso, especialmente, é que se tem revelado de modo mais flagrante a tenacidade dos elementos integrantes das culturas africanas assim transmitidas ao Novo Mundo Português” (23).

The sound of the drums is one of the first things that call the tourist’s attention and impresses them when they visit Brazil. For Page it was not different, as she confirms in the last sentence of the letter quoted in Renaux, when she says “the drums [. . .] were central to the whole experience in Brazil” (“Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page.” 173). One observes that such instruments were really present in her everyday life in Brazil when she mentions in her *Journal* that, when in bed with her husband, they listened to the sounds of the insects and animals outside, and when those sounds stopped, she said “as if obeying a conductor – one hear[d] the [. . .] drums and the weird singing from the *favela*” (10). This might have contributed to Page’s use of the beat of the African drums in the poem.

Such rhythm one hears in the poem is as if Page played the drums of her lines for the worshipers to dance and summon their *Orishas*.²⁶

The line “they are bathed in the blood of the rooster” indicates that the sacrifice for purification was already done, since the rooster is a sacred bird offered to Iemanjá (Renaux “Da repressão à resistência cultural em ‘Macumba: Brazil’, de P. K. Page” 180). The act of bathing with the blood of the rooster means the worshipers’ faith and devotion to the deity. Also, it implies that they can be cured from bad spirits with the sacred blood of such bird; that is, the impurities of the soul are cleansed through the bird’s blood, as with the holy water in the catholic religion. In the following line, *they* use candles to light the beach. The purpose of the candles is to light, to give illumination, in the sense of spiritualism; their souls are lighted, and illuminated. The ritual of the candles also has similarities with Catholicism, demonstrating the presence o syncretism in macumba rituals.

In the next stanza, the author says: “they are dressed in the salt of the ocean / their eyes are like bright flames” (22-3). Once more, Page mentions the word salt, which was said to mean purification, and also protection against bad spirits. This time, the worshipers are bathed by the salt of the ocean, the place their Goddess reigns, signifying their spirits are being touched by their deity. For this reason now “their eyes are like bright flames,” which means they are being possessed by the divine spirit of the goddess Iemanjá.

Then, the next stanza renders the offerings to Iemanjá:

they are giving her gifts of flowers
 they are throwing her tubes of lipsticks
 they are offering shoes and scarves
 brassieres and sanitary napkins
 whatever a woman needs
 they are flinging themselves on the waters
 and singing to Iamanjá [sic] (24-30)

In such stanza, Page describes the presents Iemanjá’s believers throw to her into the sea. All the gifts are related to femininity, vanity, and beauty

²⁶ Ribeiro accounts the way a ritual to an Orisha happens in the moment the worshipers are dancing in the rhythm of the drums: “À medida em que se sucedem os cânticos para Ogun vão-se animando progressivamente os fiéis, move-se a ‘roda’, ou círculo de dançarinos, mais ativamente, alteia-se o côro enquanto os tambores batem mais depressa. Alguns iniciados, fiéis desse deus [. . .] começam a ficar com o olhar parado, a face imóvel, os ombros sacudidos por abalos intermitentes, até que são tomados de sobressaltos intermitentes, terminando por saltarem para o meio da ‘roda’, dançando freneticamente em possessão” (77).

or “whatever a woman needs.” However, one of the gifts included in the offerings – the sanitary napkins – has a restriction in the African ritual, which says that “[às] mulheres menstruadas, [. . .] é vedada a participação em todos os rituais e cerimônias.” Nevertheless, “[elas] têm [sic] aqui o privilégio da exceção, si confrontadas com algum problema premente” (Ribeiro 64). Therefore, the use of ‘sanitary napkins’ as a gift to Iemanjá not only indicates it is an object women need (as the deity is a woman), but also implies urgency.²⁷ Finally, the author depicts the cultists entering into the waters; and emerging from them “singing to I[e]manjá.” As in the ritual of Baptism of the Catholic religion, “das águas do Batismo santificadas pelo Espírito Santo emerge uma nova criatura” (*Símbolos e Sinais do Batismo*).²⁸ From the waters, then, emerge purified individuals, freed from the bad spirits, who celebrate as *they* receive from Iemanjá the Divine Spirit.²⁹

In the last stanza of the poem, when Page says “they are drenched and white for macumba” (31), it means that *they* finally received the “Saint Spirit.” The white color implies that the faithful souls are cleaned, purified, and in peace now. One observes *they* are finally possessed by the Spirit of their *Orisha* Iemanjá, through the last line of the poem: “their eyes are doused and out” (32). As Ribeiro explains, some of the cultists in trance have “o olhar parado, a face imóvel, os ombros sacudidos por abalos intermitentes, até que são tomados de sobressaltos intermitentes, teminando por saltarem para o meio da ‘roda’, dançando em possessão” (77).

In her *Journal*, Page renders the Macumba ritual observed from an apartment in Rio where she and her husband were celebrating New Year’s Eve:

[We] went to the British embassy to a buffet supper and dance, and afterwards to a party on

²⁷ Although Page mentions the use of sanitary napkins in “Macumba: Brazil,” there is no evidence of the use of such feminine object in any of her writings.

²⁸ <http://apostoladosagradoscoracoes.angelfire.com/simsina.html>

²⁹ “A imagem do dilúvio e do Mar Vermelho confere outro significado à água do Batismo: a água destrói, mata, mas ao mesmo tempo é meio de salvação. Como as águas do dilúvio submergiram um mundo pecador, e como as águas do Mar Vermelho afogaram a cavalaria do Faraó que perseguia o povo que fugia da escravidão, assim também as águas batismais destroem o pecado, afogam o inimigo, exterminam e cancela o mal. A destruição por sua vez é via para a libertação. No dilúvio foram poupados os justos; e das águas do Mar Vermelho saiu um povo livre e em festa. Da mesma forma, das águas do Batismo sai uma pessoa purificada das culpas, libertada da escravidão do pecado e do demônio” (*Símbolos e Sinais do Batismo*).

Avenida Atlântica from which we saw the enormous curve of Copacabana beach alight with a million candles in honour of Iamanjá [sic], Queen of the Sea. / On New year's Eve all the *macumbeiros* swarm to the beaches around Rio, the women in white skirts with ankle-length trousers beneath them (I am told this is the old slave dress), white flowers, white candles [. . .], and the men and women – in their white clothes – dance. At midnight they all wade into the sea, offering Iamanjá [sic] drinks, cosmetics, flowers – whatever she might want. An abundance of gifts is thrown onto the waves. (192)

Such affirmation implies that the poet does not participate in such ritual; she is only an observer gazing at the 'other' from far. Such position demonstrates that Page does not really comprehend what is happening down the beach, that is, a complex practice of an alien culture. Ironically, in the poem, the speaker is an omniscient witness, implying an imaginary closeness. Nevertheless, the use of the pronoun *they* in both, poem and in the quotation above from the *Journal*, suggests the poet's detachment from the servants. In the poem, Page shows such distance by using the subject pronoun *they* to refer to her subordinates. In this way, Page interestingly reveals a similar view to the Portuguese colonizers' while observing a ritual done by the African slaves by the time of slavery and colonization. Ribeiro quotes two accounts from such beholders in the seventeen and eighteen centuries respectively. The first account is as follows:

Quando os escravos tem executado, durante a semana inteira a sua penozíssima tarefa, lhes é concedido o Domingo como melhor lhes apraz, de ordinário se reúnem em certos lugares e, ao som de pífanos e tambores, levam todo o dia a dançar desordenadamente entre si, homens e mulheres, crianças e velhos, em meio de freqüentes libações duma bebida muito assucarada [sic], e que chamam Grape (Garapa); consomem assim todo o santo dia dançando sem cessar, a ponto de muitas vezes não se reconhecerem, tão surdos e ébrios ficam. (27)

The next account says that

os Pretos divididos em Naçoens [sic] e com instrumentos de cada huma [sic] dança [sic] e fazem voltas como Harlequins, e outros dança [sic] como diversos movimentos do Corpo, que ainda que não sejam os mais innocentes são como os fandangos de Castella e fofas de Portugal [. . .]; os Bailes que entendo serem de huma total reprovação são aqueles que os Pretos da Costa da Mina fazem ás escondidas, ou em Cazas, ou Roças com huma [sic] Preta Mestra com Altar de ídolos adorando bodes vivos, e outros feitos de Barro, untando seus corpos com diversos Óleos, Sangue de Gallo, dando a comer Bolos de milho depois de diversas Bêncãos superticiozas. (28)

Observing such accounts, one can compare to Page's "Macumba: Brazil," which positions the gazer, in this case the writer, as one of the beholders from the accounts that have just been quoted above: superior; but unable to perceive the ritual's complexity. Page, confirms such incomprehension when, after observing the ritual on New Year's Eve from the apartment, she decides to go down and walk among the cultists on the beach, where she has a bad impression from the ritual, and interestingly, as the account quoted above, she says to be an innocent cult:

Even closer up, there was a strange kind of innocence – the white candles, white dahlias, white calla lilies, white daisies, 'growing' in a sandy garden. But once we were really among the celebrants, among the priests and priestesses blessing their flock – and every half-inch *is* blessed! – seeing the black cigars and smelling their pungent smoke, observing the deliriums which, to me, seem self-induced, and in no way convince me of the "entry of saint" – then the whole performance is not beautiful or moving or awe-inspiring, but disordered, ugly. (*Brazilian Journal* 193)

Curiously, Page is "translating" the ritual by using terms from Catholicism: "the priests and priestesses blessing their flock." Even

though Page encounters herself among the cultists now, and perceives the ‘celebration’ with different eyes than when she was farther; she still does not comprehend the other’s code. The distance between *I* and *they* remains.

3.3. “Brazilian Fazenda”: History of Brazil

As Page lived for three years in Brazil (1957-1959), she had the opportunity to visit many places along with her husband Arthur. Some of these places were the ‘fazendas’ in São Paulo. As the ‘drums of the macumba ritual’, and the ‘official residence’ were central to the depiction of her experience in Brazil, the ‘fazendas’ also added some knowledge about the country. This resulted in the poem “Brazilian Fazenda” and a section in *Brazilian Journal*, revealing significant features of the Brazilian culture and history. In the *Journal*, Page writes:

Sunday was the best day of all. We visited two early nineteenth-century *fazendas*. The first, a colonial house, light pink with white pillars, and lacy black grilles on the windows. Its present owners have modernized the plumbing but left everything as much as possible in its original state. [. . .]. Off the hall, a room full of trophies and slave relics, and off that, the slaves’ room. / [. . .] The second *fazenda*, smaller than the first, was equally old. The house was slave-built, of adobe. The material is still in use today – bamboo canes are placed horizontally, about a brick-depth apart, and the spaces between packed with the red earth. (43-4)

Knowing the “fazendas” were built in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Page was aware that such constructions came from the time of slavery, as one can observe from the citation the presence of slaves’ objects in the farm houses. Such ‘Fazendas’ are also depicted in detail in the *Journal* by the author, from the color of the houses, and the objects inside them, to the coffee plantations, and livestock (1987: 43-5).

“Brazilian Fazenda” is divided in seven stanzas. Through them the writer depicts relevant events in the history of Brazil which are not chronologically described. In doing so, she includes herself in the poem, as part of the current history. In the first stanza, Page recalls the abolition of slavery as follows:

That day all the slaves were freed
 their manacles, anklets
 left on the window ledge to rust in the moist air
 (1-3)

According to the time of history, “that day” is in the nineteenth century, on May thirteenth of 1888, the day slaves conquered their emancipation. From the demonstrative pronoun ‘that’, and from the rusty slaves’ objects placed on the window, the author is also positioning the time context of the rendering in the present moment, which is in May of 1957, when she visited the “fazendas”. Observing the renderings of the first ‘Fazenda’ in relation to the slave relics, and room, Page is recalling the day of the abolition of slavery, through the “slave relics” she saw as a decoration (or as trophies) in one of the rooms of the ‘fazenda’.

It is worth remembering that, by the time of slavery, which was from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the slaves were traded to work in sugar cane plantations, whose owners lived in the called great-houses, in the Northeast of Brazil, and in the coffee plantation of the ‘fazendas’, which were placed in the states of Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. During this time, Brazil economically benefited because of slaves’ work in a patriarchal regime of land exploration, up to the end of imperialism, in the eighteenth century. (My translation, Fernando de Azevedo 103).³⁰ However, after the abolition of slavery, all the richness that the owners of the coffee plantations in the “fazendas” were accumulating declined. Nevertheless, because of such situation, the European immigrants dislocated themselves to the plateau of São Paulo, which surprisingly became the biggest coffee producer in the world,³¹ as Page depicts it in her next stanza:

and all the coffee ripened
 like beads on a bush or balls of fire
 as merry as Christmas (4-6)

³⁰ “Nesse largo período que se estende por três séculos e meio, da Colônia aos fins do Império, toda a atividade econômica, com exceção da criação pastoril, se desenvolveu segundo um regime essencialmente patriarcal de exploração da terra, nas duas grandes culturas (açúcar e café), [. . .], apoiadas, [. . .], no braço escravo”.

³¹ À organização latifundiária e escravocrata, alicerçada sobre o instituto social da escravidão [. . .], sucedeu um sistema capitalista de exploração agrícola, fundada sobre o trabalho livre e duplamente desenvolvida pela aplicação à cultura do café. [. . .]. A descoberta, em São Paulo [. . .] da terra roxa, [. . .] tão propícia ao café, como foi, no norte, o massapê, para o açúcar, [. . .] impeliram para o interior e sobretudo para o oeste de São Paulo o oceano verde dos cafezais” (Azevedo 103).

When Page physically describes the owner of the first farm in the *Journal*, one links him to the European immigrants who moved to São Paulo to produce coffee, as she says he is a rich blond, blue-eyed farmer (44). In the poem, Page portrays the coffee plantation of the “fazenda,” evoking the success of the coffee business, giving richness to its owner. This stanza can be contextualized with the rendering Page wrote in her *Journal* about the first “fazenda” she visited:

After luncheon we saw the coffee plantation.
Bright, shiny green bushes with scarlet berries –
birds in a bush, beads of fire. As far as the eye
could see, coffee bushes stippled the lovely,
undulating land. And the coffee courtyard floors
where the beans were dried.

Page observes the abundance of coffee the farms in São Paulo possess, which Azevedo depicts as “o oceano verde dos cafezais” (103).

Then, the writer continues the description of the same farm, this time about the cattle rearing:

In the dairy we visited the calves, which sucked
your fingers as if they were udders when you put
your hand out to stroke them, and saw the
elaborate forecasting, month by month, of the
number of calves to be born. (*Brazilian Journal*
44)

From such account, one observes the intertextuality in the third stanza of “Brazilian Fazenda: “and the cows all calved and the calves all lived / such a moo” (7-8). In the sixteenth-century, cattle raising was, in the beginning, limited to the necessities of the sugar plantation owners, and to feed the population. However, cattle raising spread throughout Brazil, promoting their multiplication; consequently, promoting economy growth. Such period was called “o ciclo do couro,” or, the leather cycle (Azevedo 95). The leather cycle also had a great influence in the formation of the population in Brazil. Because of the herd multiplication and the meat trade, migration and exploration of the regions in Brazil developed significantly, which contributed to the unification of a Nation (Azevedo 96).

In the next stanza , Page paints herself resting on a hammock on a veranda:

On the wide veranda where birds in cages
sang among the bell flowers
I in a bridal hammock
white and tasseled
whistled (9-13)

According to Page's *Journal*, the place where she is resting is the first "fazenda" she visited. When describing every room of the farm, she writes: "On a deep veranda, dark from creepers with pink bells, were birds in cages and a white tasseled bridal hammock" (43). The act of resting "on the wide veranda" in a bridal hammock," it resembles, on the period of colonization; the inactivity of the owners of the farms. Such behavior was considered as a signal of class, a distinctive of the nobility.

The fifth and sixth stanzas correspond to Page's descriptions in the *Journal* about the second "fazenda": "the chapel, with a beautiful Nossa Senhora, and on the altar, as in the house, the same child's tight fistful of flowers – marigolds this time, against the red velvet backcloth" (45). In the poem she writes:

and bits fell out of the sky near Nossa Senhora
who had walked all the way in bare feet from
Bahia

and the chapel was lit by a child's
fistful of marigolds on the red velvet altar
thrown like a golden ball. (14-18)

In the fifth stanza, Page depicts Brazilians faith to one of the Saints of the Catholic religion. Moreover; although, it is common to see pilgrims walking in bare feet while they are paying their promise, the connotation of "walking in bare feet" in the current stanza is of poverty, consequently, belonging to a lower social class.

By the time of colonization, every great-house and farm had its chapel, and Christianity was also introduced in the "senzalas." Actually, the Jesuits tried to convert first the slaves, then entered the great-houses and farms to evangelized the owners and their family. Azevedo points out that "A capela, a mansão e a senzala – elementos fundamentais de tôdas [sic] as casas-grandes – constituíam o triângulo em que se encerrava o regime de economia patriarcal: a Igreja, a família e a

escravidão.” In addition, “[e]m quase todas as grandes residências [. . .] no canto das varandas, ao fundo, deitando porta para o salão de jantar havia (escreve Augusto de Lima Júnior) a capela onde, no altar de cedro, além do [. . .] Cristo [. . .] sôbre [sic] a cruz, encontravam-se imagens de vulto de Nossa Senhora” (515). Page confirms such information, as she mentions that the official residence she was living in, had a “private chapel [which] had been deconsecrated with the intention of leaving it empty” (*Brazilian Journal* 2). Furthermore, the farms she visits in São Paulo also had their private chapels.

In the *Journal*, Page also talks about other churches in Brazil, as she had the opportunity to visit some of them in Minas Gerais. She writes:

Our first church, Nossa Senhora de Conceição, built about 1710, was to me the most beautiful of all the churches we have so far seen here. [. . .]. In this church I saw my first black Nossa Senhora – and swallows flying in and out as if they were darning the threadbare air. (86)

Furthermore, Page introduces the town of Ouro Preto to the reader: “This small town, once the capital of Minas Gerais and now protected as a national monument, dates back to the early eighteenth century and the gold rush” (*Brazilian Journal* 90). The author adds: “I was taken on a tour of the city. Mainly churches. So much gold, such beautiful ceilings, so much imitation marble and fabulous silver” (*Brazilian Journal* 91).

In the last stanza, Page writes:

Oh, let me come back on a day
when nothing extraordinary happens
so I can stare
at the sugar-white pillars
And black lace grills
of this pink house. (19-24)

Once more the description corresponds to Page’s notes in her *Journal*. About the first “fazenda” visited she writes: “a colonial house, light pink with white pillars, and lacy black grilles on the windows” (*Brazilian Journal* 43). Page includes herself in the recreation of this landscape in the poem. When mentioning that she wants to “come back on a day / when nothing extraordinary happens,” the author means she would like to return to this place only for aesthetic contemplation. Ironically, at the

same time that the poet introduces objects in the poem, which evoke the history of Brazil, she desires an emptied place of history.

In conclusion, the three analyzed poems depict historical facts of Brazil, along with cultural, social, and economic issues. In “Brazilian House,” Page portrays the feeling of displacement due to the lack of knowledge of the other’s code; also, historically, Page recalls the ‘great-houses’ in the period of colonization, from which the rules of employment remain the same in the actuality. Then, in “Macumba: Brazil,” the author depicts the Afro-Brazilian religion present in Brazil, brought from the African slaves, who introduced their dance and music strongly present in Brazilian culture. Finally, the writer gives an account of the history of Brazil, from the abolition of slavery to the present day in the poem “Brazilian Fazenda.” In the three poems, Page’s perspective is of an individual, who belongs to a high social status, and comes from European descendents. Perhaps, for this reason, Page’s distance and strangeness from the other is marked in her poems.

In “Brazilian House” and “Macumba: Brazil,” Page depicts herself and the servants, with a delimited position between the observer and the other. Also, in the latter it is present an ironically proximity between the author and the employers of the house. In “Brazilian Fazenda,” besides the writer’s distant position, it is present the aesthetic appeal in the entire poem. Almeida, in her article “The Poetics of Travel” points out that Page’s “experience in the country [Brazil] is often described as an aesthetic experience” (112); hence, “[u]nder this anaesthetic of art for art’s sake, she hardly enters the political and socioeconomic ‘events’ of Brazil” (Heaps qtd in Almeida “The Poetics of Travel” 113).

Even though Page’s characteristic of her writings regardless Brazil is of a distant site, and with a predominance of the aesthetic; interestingly, in her unpublished poem “Some Paintings by Portinari,” she places herself as part of the painting by Portinari:

With the first lot flat
it was as if he’d cut off my breasts
and leveled my nose
like the side of a barn
I walked
And met them flat
flat on and one
up-tilted my chin.

with the others lord all the colours gone
 strange but I wore
 red when I came and green
 and he made them grey
 And painted the grey all over my skin
 and the pain
 pulled all the muscles and cords.

One of Portinari's characteristics is to use "tons terrosos e cinza" featuring the drama of the workers who belong to lower levels.³² By knowing this, one can perceive that Page, in this poem, portrays herself as being one of the characters of Portinari's painting, having the same sufferings Portinari usually paints regardless the lower social levels. Messenger says:

The pain Portinari portrays in his visual art becomes the poet's pain: the "I's" colours turn to grey; even her skin absorbs the grey of anguish, and her 'muscles and cords' pull taut in sympathy with the pain of the portrait. Portinari paints *her*. (113)

However, although Page experiments the pain of the 'other,' she experiences such feeling, depicting the poem above, once more, in an aesthetic manner.

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CHAPTER 4

P. K. PAGE'S *HAND LUGGAGE: A MEMOIR IN VERSE*

Page's *Hand Luggage: a Memoir in Verse* (2006) gives a poetic account of the author's life from her childhood, in the twenties, to 2005. Page portrays the town she was raised in the twenties, in the country of Canada, Calgary, "[t]he land that Ontario / looked down its nose at"; for, "it was the wilderness: western Canada" (9). In such town, Page describes her adventures as a happy child surrounded by her family; also, as an early adolescent, the author renders the beginning of her interest in poetry. Then, Page describes her experience in London in the thirties, where she was introduced to different arts: ballet, paintings, theatre, and literature, and discovers "a nineteen-year-old with a passion for art" (12). After this, the poet dedicates some lines to her parents: "They were funny, encouraging, crazy a bit, / free-thinkers, both. A high-spirited pair" (13). Moreover, Page writes about the war and the difficulties her family and she had to go through because of the war. Then, with the consent of her parents, Page moves to Montreal to live by herself. This was in the forties, the part Page renders her experience with the poets from the *Preview*, a literary magazine in Montreal, and with whom she "argued and criticized, crossed out, rewrote. / Talked of Rilke and Kafka. Of Cummings and Stein. / Of syntax, [and] orthography" (18). Page also informs about the publications of her poems, starting then a career as a writer. In addition, Page gives an account of her marriage to the Canadian ambassador Arthur Irwin. After this, the author renders her experiences as a traveler and observer in the countries her husband was posted to in the fifties: Australia, Brazil, and Mexico. Finally, as her husband finishes his posting, they return to Canada.

After this brief summary of Page's *Hand Luggage*, what interests me is the analysis of the part Page writes about Brazil where she recalls her writings from *Brazilian Journal*. Even though both books depict the same experiences Page lived in the country, they were written at different times of Page's life; this means that the author might have created new perspectives in relation to these experiences. Henceforth, the purpose of the current chapter is to analyze the poet's perspectives of Brazil in *Hand Luggage*, observing similarities and differences in regard to the writings in *Brazilian Journal*. Also, I will be comparing the former book with the poems that were analyzed in Chapter 3: "Brazilian House," "Macumba: Brazil," and "Brazilian Fazenda."

4.1 Brazil: The marvellous country

While packing her things to leave New Guinea, Page heard from her husband they were posted to Brazil. The poet received the news with apprehension, surprise, and disappointment, for she had only vague notions about Brazil. In *Hand Luggage* she writes:

once we had learned
we were bound to Brazil, my thoughts flew ahead
imagining – what? I knew nothing beyond
Brazil nuts and coffee (though somewhere I'd
read
Of Carmen Miranda with fruit on her head!) (42)

Page's feelings about Brazil, before arriving in the country, is also expressed, in the *Journal*, during a conversation with her husband, in which she is more specific about the reason she did not want to travel to such country:

“Brazil?” I said, unbelieving.
“Brazil,” A. repeated.
“Oh, no,” I said. I wonder why it seemed so
impossible?
[. . .]
“Tropics,” I said. “Like this?” (1-2)

And she adds: “I find it hard now to remember why Brazil fell on my heart with so heavy a thud. [. . .] Perhaps an unformulated wish for a European post after Australia” (2). So, in *Brazilian Journal* she reveals her secret wish of going to a place which will not be the tropics again. Europe, the old world, but developed, civilized; Brazil, a new world, literally for Page, undeveloped and unknown.

However, in both books, Page confesses she was wrong, as Brazil fell on her heart deeply. Nevertheless, in her *Journal*, she talks about such love mentioning only

the marvellous fret of tropical vegetation, and the moist, hot air, the extraordinary brilliance of bougainvillea and hibiscus against the rank and thrusting green – all these were to be given to us even more abundantly in Brazil. All these and heaven too (2).

That is, Page introduces Brazil to the reader with one of the things she loved most in the country: the flora. Actually, the author makes use of long depictions about Brazilian fauna and flora in her *Journal* while, in *Hand Luggage*, in 64 stanzas written about Brazil, Page only makes brief references to these issues. The only animals Page mentions in such book are the ones she shared her life with in the official residence: the dog 'Duke,' the macaw, and the marmoset 'Benjamina.' This means that the author mainly describes subjects that marked her life sentimentally: the house, her pets, and Brazilian friends in Brazil; as well as those topics that added knowledge and experience to her life, such as Brazilians' behaviour, baroque constructions, *favelas'* drums, African religion, farms, and churches. In addition she wrote about the great Brazilian painters and poets, and the problems Page had with the Portuguese language, leading her to discover another art: painting. It is also important to say that Page does not depict her high social life with balls, and dinners with the Ambassadors and their wives, in *Hand Luggage*, as she does in many occasions in her *Journal*; but the author makes the readers aware of the glamour present in her life through the objects present in the official house. In addition, Page's concerns in relation to racial problems still remain in *Hand Luggage*.

Then, in *Hand Luggage*, instead of starting talking about the tropical vegetation, she informs the reader about the great influence Brazil had on her behaviour, and life: "Three years in Brazil / and I was a Brazilian." Page adds: "Culture shock is expected when travelling, but / culture shock coming home is a multiple shock. / [. . .] / what I found hard / was I wasn't unchanged. An invisible ink / had written strange script on the page of my heart" (46). In these lines, before recreating her memories of Brazil, Page informs the reader how this country had deeply captivated her, making her feel a complete stranger in her own hometown. In this sense, on the contrary of her *Journal*, Page does not see Brazil with the eyes of a discoverer, and explorer of a vast, colorful, and tropical land. This time, Page is a more selective observer of the things that impressed her most.

While recreating the trip preparation as in the *Journal*, Page makes evident her condition of belonging to a high social status: "*Giant* cruise ships today take the *rich* to the south / so shops are well-stocked. You can buy when you wish" (*Hand Luggage* 46 italics mine). She also informs that the house, her husband and Page will live in Brazil, is "huge," "a Portuguese *palace* requiring a team / to polish its marble" (47-8 italics mine). "Giant," "rich," "huge," and "palace," are signals of her privileged position as a wife of an ambassador, which she also

indicates in the next line: “We lived *high* on the hog, but we worked for our bread” (48 italics mine). One observes other evidences of Page’s high social class while she is furnishing the house: “Then the inventory – [. . .] – those pages of lists / of *silver* and *crystal* and china, things shipped / to furnish this residence. [. . .] / *Fruit knives* and *fish forks* / and *finger bowls* – mercy!” (54 italics mine).

4.2 The Official Residence: a different ‘code’

As in “Brazilian House,” Page depicts her displacement in *Hand Luggage*, when she arrives in the official residence; for, she did not know how to manage it, because of the differences of customs and language: “The tongue, Portuguese! / And as for the customs – we hadn’t a clue” (48). In this part of the poem is when Page meets the ‘other’, in what Mary Louise Pratt calls ‘contact zone’³³. Furthermore, even though Page depicts the house as being full of richness, “grey marble bathrooms with fittings of gold,” the feelings of displacement and solitude prevail in *Hand Luggage*: “the house / was [. . .] cold as a tomb;” “How give the place life?” (52). The same feelings are highlighted in “Brazilian House”: “Only the elephant ear leaves / listen outside my window / to the tap of my heels” (120). In addition, Page says in *Hand Luggage*: “Arthur went to the office and I prowled about / in my cage. I was captive. [. . .] / I couldn’t escape.” (53). As in “Brazilian House,” Page feels captive in her bedroom, as she does not understand the ‘codes’ of the house; that is the language, and the customs. For this reason, she feels unable to move around, even though she is the patroness of the house.

4.3 Brazilians’ noise and the *favelas*

In *Brazilian Journal* (1987) Page repeatedly portrays Brazilians as being noisy,

Our host, an energetic man, did handy-man jobs
about the place [. . .]. His *senhora* screamed in
that curious Brazilian voice. I am baffled by it.
Thought perhaps it was lack of discipline in

³³ “Contact zone” Mary Louise Pratt uses “to refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6).

childhood – and perhaps it is. Or is it part and parcel of the Brazilian’s love of noise? For they *do* love noise. (191)

Page explains that such behavior is in fact ‘irritating’ to the ears of a Canadian: “Cariocas are noisy, the racket they make / to Canadian ears is cacophonous – cries, / ghetto blasters and horns and loud laughter and shrieks – / like fire engines mating with monstrous machines” (*Hand Luggage* 51). This is one of the behaviours Page can not swallow from Brazilians.

In relation to the *favelas*, of Brazil, where the poverty is present, Page notes that things are changing and Canada is beginning to have similar problems:

(This is far from the truth. To forget
 Certain things is impossible, even today,
 Some fifty years later – *favelas* – in fact.
 A congenital blindness afflicted the rich.
 Those born to the purple had dye in their eye,
 Or so I concluded. How otherwise could
 they have lived with the poor in their faces and
paid
 so little attention? Regrettably, now
 I see in Canadian cities the same
 disregard for the down-and-out. We have caught
up!) (*Hand Luggage* 55)

In *Brazilian Journal* in different occasions, the writer talks about the slums in Brazil. However, although Page is conscious of the social problems, she is more concerned about the aesthetic appeal of the slums.

We drove today up over the hills and through the *favela*, which should make any sensitive, decent person devote his life to social reform, but I’m afraid my initial reaction was one of fierce pleasure in its beauty. [. . .]. [M]y eye operates separately from my heart or head – or at least in advance of them – and I saw, first, the beauty. (70)

“Page transforms even the most appalling event into an aesthetic experience of the sublime,” says Almeida, in relation to Page’s depiction above. (“The Politics and Poetics of Travel” 112).

memorable by the invocation of a painting; in this way Brazil is fictionalized. (111)

Such features can also be perceived in Page's poems about Brazil, which were analyzed in chapter three, in which Page frames the images in the poems as if they were paintings. One observes that the aesthetic appeal continues in Page's *Hand Luggage*. The quotation below shows this in a curious contrast: first the appeal of the primitive, underdeveloped, grotesque; then the appeal of nature as a Rembrandt canvas. This stanza gives an account of a trip by boat her husband and Page took in the Amazon. In the first lines, Page writes that in the same place where the dining room is, there were

washbasins all in a row / where faces were washed and false teeth taken out – / there were two sides of pork and a quarter of beef / that hung from iron hooks. [. . .] / [. . .] / There were also two pigs (for fresh meat, I supposed, / but preferred not to think about). (66)

Then, in the next lines of the same stanza, as they stop the boat in to shore, Page contrasts the image of the “primitive”, with the image of a painting: “It was beautiful, like an old painting – dark paint / with multiple glazes, astonishing depths / like the depths in a Rembrandt, the water with lights, / the skies overhead, the stars close, and the sweet / scent of cut grasses” (*Hand Luggage* 66). Page moves from the grotesque to the sublime, placing Brazil in a frame.

4.5 Multiracial Brazil:

Another subject that remained in Page's mind is the differences of skin color present in Brazil; actually, the people of dark color were the ones that call more the poet's attention. One can observe Page's concern in relation to race in several points in *Brazilian Journal* (1987), as Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida says:

A preocupação de Page com relação à questão de raça é aparente em *Brazilian Journal*. Há uma constante necessidade de se explicitar a cor, a raça dos brasileiros através de campos semânticos variados, mas que no contexto de uma análise

pós-colonial, descortinam uma dinâmica oposicional entre o negro e o branco. (114)

In *Hand Luggage*, Page describes her impression of the variety of skin color in Brazil, and the amount of black people, for in her country she grew up in a white society:

Skin colour. A subject I'd rarely addressed. No blacks in Alberta when I was a child.
 [. . .]
 [. . .] But now
 in Brazil, as a guest, I'd no choice but to learn the ways of the country. In Foreign Affairs there was nobody black. And Brazilians we met – all were white, everyone. But in staffing one's house
 The rules of employment were plain: upstairs maids
Must be white, and *copeiros* who served us; the rest –
 The cook and the laundress and cleaners could be Black, white or whatever – this way I found out
 I was colour-blind (61)

Page also recalls from her *Journal* the servants who worked in the official house. In the *Journal*, Page describes their origins and respectively duties in the residence; however the writer does not make any observation about the “rules of employment” according to the skin color, as she does in the lines above from *Hand Luggage*. Interestingly, Page italicizes “must,” pointing out to the reader that there is such rule, that the servants who were directly in contact with the owner of the residence, or the probable guests, had to be white. The other servants, who generally had dark skin, were usually placed downstairs, working in duties that did not imply the direct contact with their employers. When Page says she “*was* colour-blind” (italics mine), she is indicating *now* she is aware of the implications of color.

Even though the author says she does not understand the rules Brazilian people follow according to skin color, she chose to follow such rules. Page positions herself in the white group, justifying “[she had] no choice but to learn the ways of the country.” Page says that an individual

would have to be born in Brazil to decode the complexities of color presented. White skin, the whiter the better, was prized by the rich and so they avoided the beaches and bought pearls that were darker than those we would buy to make their skin lighter. Yet at the same time They were proud of their blood. (61)

Milléo claims that “the writer is talking about the contradictions in Brazil: on the one hand there were rules of employment according to skin color, and the fact that the rich prized white skin; on the other, white Brazilians were proud of having black ancestors” (in discussions).

In *Hand Luggage*, as in *Brazilian Journal*, Page also comments about the abundance of gold in the many churches from Ouro Preto. Nevertheless, the writer is more critical when she compares the servants, in the present time, who work hard to serve food for the guests, with the miners, by the time of colonization working hard to find gold for their masters. Page is aware of the repetition of history about class differences, the lower class having to be submissive. In this respect she writes:

[. . .]. And now we were dressed
and ready for coffee. The staircase that led
from the kitchen below to the dining room [. . .]
was a narrow and wrought iron and spiral and
steep.
There, one at a time, like a line of black ants
weary waiters with trays struggled upwards with
food,
[. . .]
like the miners before them who'd struggled with
gold
while their masters grew fat overhead. It repeats,
this image, as if it were programmed. Perhaps
on this planet, [Earth] has to repeat. (62-3)

While Page makes such comparison, she includes herself among the guests who are being served by the “weary waiters.” In addition, when Page writes: “black ants,” referring to the waiters, she is metaphorically indicating the color of the servants, as being black; like the slaves in the period of colonization working for their ‘white’ owners.

4.6 Brazilian way of living, art and the Golden Brazil

In relation to the poets from Brazil, Page claims in *Hand Luggage* they “were good / [. . .] de Andrade, Bandeira, Mereiles. (Unlike / Australian poets who’d somehow got stuck / with Georgian diction.” She also criticizes Canadian painters,

[. . .] I think back
to Canadian painters who painted like Brits.
Conditioned by Constable, how could they know
the width of our landscape, the height of our sky
or the colour, when they had been brainwashed to
see
a soft English landscape – grey, cloudy, with
sheep? (63).

Through those quotations, one understands that places such as Canada, England, and Australia, do not offer a wide range of landscapes to their poets and painters, so their objects of observation may be limited; while, artists who live in Brazil, for instance, have the opportunity to feed their eyes and souls with the variety of forms, colors, sounds, and tastes such place can offer. Hence, Brazilian artists acquire a great sense of knowledge and experience to develop their arts.

One of the Brazilian painters Page mentions in *Hand Luggage* is Candido Portinari, whom she affirms to admire, considering him a king (64). In *Brazilian Journal*, Page also shows her admiration for him: “What an extraordinary man!” (55). However, in such prose, Page describes Candido Portinari’s paintings as “large, strangely grey paintings full of pain” (49). Page’s point of view in relation to Portinari’s painting in her *Journal* is due to the subjects the painter chooses to focus in his art. Candido Portinari’s paintings “revela forte preocupação social, procurando captar tipos populares e enfatizar o papel dos trabalhadores.”³⁴ Differently from Portinari, Page’s first paintings are “exactly what she sees, using representational conventions; she works from models (of the landscape, that is, her subjects were rarely people)” (Messenger 111).

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In *Brazilian Journal*, and also in the poems “Macumba: Brazil,” and “Brazilian Fazenda,” Page depicts the African religion, and the farms present in Brazil. Such issues are also mentioned in *Hand Luggage* but briefly as she writes about the differences of cultures in different regions of Brazil: “In the south / bull’s semen and *maté* (sic); *fazendas* and art / in the State of São (sic) Paulo; while up in the north / *macumba* from Africa, brought by the slaves – / their Virgin, a sea goddess, Iemanjá” (64).

Besides the comments Page makes about Brazilians being noisy, another behavior that she recalls is that “no Brazilians is ever on time” (75). Such behavior is also mentioned in several occasions in Page’s *Journal*. But she also thinks they are “*Boa gente* – Brazilians. Their humour, absurd – surrealist, even” (*Hand Luggage* 63). In addition, the poet claims Brazilians have the art of friendship: “Instant friendships were made, / [. . .] / a Brazilian speciality, even an art. / They’d forget you tomorrow, perhaps, but today / you were kith if not kin – kissing uncles and aunts” (*Hand Luggage* 65). Almeida observes that, even though Page has a great admiration for Brazilian people, it is extremely difficult for her to lead and to maintain a closer contact with them. Almeida also points out that the adjectives Page used to describe Brazilians are very common in travel writings:

Os termos usados por Page para descrever os brasileiros são também lugares comuns nos estudos de relatos de viagem de estrangeiros ao Brasil, um eco fiel da carta de Caminha que já em 1500 comenta sobre a natureza dos nativos aqui encontrados como sendo dóceis, inocentes, amigáveis, alegres, mas também ariscos e preguiçosos. Da mesma forma, para Page os brasileiros são doces, alegres, gentis, calorosos, expansivos, amigáveis, mas também, como nos relatos de encontros culturais, são descritos antagonicamente como sendo barulhentos, ignorantes, dramáticos, preguiçosos, desorganizados e atrasados. (113)

When Page arrived in the official residence, in Brazil, she felt really displaced, and lost for not knowing the ‘rules’ of the house, and Brazilians. Nevertheless, the author ends the last lines about Brazil with the memory of the house, showing her desolation of having to leave it behind:

CONCLUSION

As observed here, Page experienced life in different countries, being one of them, Brazil. Although Page grew up getting used to different settings, which helped her to increase her knowledge of the world, Brazil was one of the places that touched the poet deeply, and taught her to experience different perceptions. When Page arrived in Brazil, she had the perception of a discoverer, who becomes astonished by the diversification of flora and fauna of tropical Brazil. Also, architecture, like the baroque constructions, and Brazilian people from different regions called the writer's attention. From such observation and from a diary she was writing while in Brazil, Page created thirty years later her autobiographical book *Brazilian Journal*.

In *Brazilian Journal*, Page not only depicts the exuberant landscape of Brazil, but also imprints her perceptions of the different regions of the country, as for instance: people's behaviour, the diversified races – mainly Afro-Brazilian – the mixture of modernity and baroque constructions, African and Catholic religions, differences of social class (poverty and richness), the slums and the drums, Brazilian traditions as carnival, and others. While exploring these issues of Brazil, as the wife of the Canadian ambassador, the writer also gives an account of the glamour she was involved within the most privileged social class. Being a European descendant and belonging to a high level status, Page's depictions of the other was predominantly detached. Also, in some of her portraits, Page renders 'Brazil' and Brazilians as "surreal." For Page, Brazil was a fantasy, and for this reason she had difficulty to find a matching vocabulary for such a 'magic world' which led her to literally paint Brazil when she was living here. Consequently, in *Brazilian Journal*, Page often closes her eyes to social problems, letting the beautifulness of 'Brazil' highlighted in her representations. Some of these features are also present in her poems "Brazilian House," "Macumba; Brazil," and "Brazilian Fazenda," which have an intertextual relation with the *Journal*.

In "Brazilian House," Page portrays the official residence she lived in as the wife of the Canadian ambassador of Brazil. In the poem, the author depicts herself feeling alone in the house, as her husband is out working. Although Page is the temporary owner of the house, she feels displaced. Page starts the poem informing the reader she is upstairs, in her bedroom, showing her solitude; then, she observes the Afro-Brazilian servants who are doing their housework downstairs; and finally, she depicts herself outside of the house, but still shut off in her

car, which keeps her separated from the ‘other.’ The poem also evokes representations of “casas-grandes” from the time of slavery in Brazil, showing the black servants downstairs.

Having witnessed the ritual of ‘Macumba’ in Bahia, and mainly in Rio de Janeiro, Page decides to write a poem about the African religion. As the ritual of Macumba is guided by the sound of the drums, Page wrote the eight stanzas of this poem with the rhythm of the beats of that instrument. Page starts describing the servants doing their house chores in the house; however, for her, the servants are already practicing the ritual, as they clean the rich objects present in the residence. Contextualizing with Page’s *Journal*, one learns that the residence where the servants are working is the official house where she lives. The objects of value are evidence of the high level status Page belongs to. Then, in the next stanzas, the author describes step by step, the Macumba ritual; from the kitchen, where the worshippers start preparing the food; to the beach, where the cultists offer their gifts to Iemanjá. As Page depicts the ritual of Macumba referring to the ‘worshippers’ as ‘they,’ she is once more positioning herself as one of the ‘colonizers,’ or the slaves’ traders who, in the period of slavery, used to ‘observe’ with curiosity the slaves’ ‘strange dances and beats’ when they were not working in the plantations.

In the *Brazilian Journal*, Page gives an account of the day she visited two farms in São Paulo. She says: “Sunday was the best day of all. We visited two early nineteenth-century *fazenda*” (43). Page perceived that there were several objects and features in those places that recalled parts of the history in Brazil. This was motivation for the poem “Brazilian Fazenda” which depicts the abolition of slavery, the abundance of coffee plantation, and the cattle in the farms, evoking the colonial economy of Brazil, “ciclo da cana-de-açúcar” and “ciclo do couro.” Surprisingly, Page ends the poem with the wish of emptying ‘Brazil;’ that is, the author seems to desire there was no history in this country, only the aesthetic appeal. Actually, Page framed ‘Brazil’ in the whole poem as it were a painting.

Page’s *Hand Luggage: A Memoir in Verse* gives an account of her life from childhood until the age of eighty nine years old. A significant portion of this memoir includes depictions of Brazil, which recalls some aspects she had rendered in her first autobiographical book *Brazilian Journal*. For this reason, I analyzed what I considered the most relevant portraits of Brazil; in order to observe what changed, and what remained in the author’s perspectives regarding such country.

I observed that, while in *Brazilian Journal* Page frequently portrays the marvellous tropical vegetation and animals present in Brazil, in *Hand Luggage*, fauna and flora were not the most important issues to mention about her experience in Brazil. The only animals Page mentions in this book are those she shared her life with in the official residence: the dog 'Duke,' the macaw, and the marmoset 'Benjamina.' This means that the author is describing subjects that marked her life sentimentally: the house, her pets, and Brazilian friends in Brazil. This is an indication that Page is not writing with the eyes of a discoverer, or a tourist anymore, but as someone who had really experienced life in Brazil, now part of her most significant memories. Another aspect that she avoided depicting in *Hand Luggage* was her condition as wife of an ambassador; that is, Page does not mention events such as the many official dinners and balls she participated, revealing her privileged social status. Her status is only visible when she describes the richness present in the official residence.

Some of the things that remain intriguing in Page's memory are Brazilians noise and issues of race. Page finds the noise Brazilians do irritating to Canadians ears. She also comments about racial issues, saying that people "would have to be born in Brazil" to be able to understand "the complexities of color presented. White skin, / the whiter the better, was prized by the rich" (*Hand Luggage* 61). One perceives that race is still a concern to Page, for she was raised among white people. In relation to the *favelas*, Page perceived in *Hand Luggage*, that in Canada now they have the same social problems as in Brazil; then she confesses that she was also blind to the poverty in her country. On the contrary of *Brazilian Journal*, in which Page paints Brazilian slums as beautiful, closing her eyes to reality, here Page reveals social consciousness. Page depicts both the real and the magical worlds, ugliness and beautifulness. In doing so, Page is once more framing 'Brazil' in its contrasts.

In relation to painters and poets from Brazil, Page recognizes their original value. She criticizes artists who live and/or are from Anglo-Saxon countries, saying that they have limited points of view in relation to their knowledge of the world, in relation to those artists who are from countries such as Brazil, who have experienced diversified perceptions.

Besides the noise, Page also mentions in the memoir her dislike of Brazilians unpunctuality, as she refers in several occasions in *Brazilian Journal*. However, even though Page criticized Brazilians for such behaviours, she remains with the same thought that Brazilians are

nice: “*Boa gente* – Brazilians. Their humour, absurd – surrealist, even” (*Hand Luggage* 63). It was observed that Page’s descriptions of Brazilians are very similar to the ones in travel writings. Despite Page’s feeling of displacement while living in Brazil, after returning to Canada, she felt desolated for having to leave “such a golden existence, such beauty” (*Hand Luggage* 70). What she means, is that Page got used to the glamour she had lived while in Brazil, as she confesses: “[when] I was young / I could cook, do the laundry, look after my house. / And now, to my horror, I found I must learn / all over again. [. . .] I had grown / accustomed to privilege” (*Hand Luggage* 84). Then, what she misses most is the *palacete*, as well as the tropical heat of Brazil, and the marvelous landscape. She writes at the end of the Brazil section: “[s]ome curious alchemy altered my font;” in other words, Brazil was magical to Page, a fantasy that deeply affected her experience as a traveler.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Brazilian House

In this great house white
As a public urinal
I pass my echoing days.
Only the elephant ear leaves
Listen outside my window
To the tap of my heels.

Downstairs the laundress
With elephantiasis
Sings like an angel
Her brown wrists cuffed with suds
And the skinny little black girl
Polishing silver laughs to see
Her face appear in a tray.

Ricardo, stealthy
Lowers his sweating body
Into the stream
My car will cross when I
Forced by the white porcelain
Yammering silence drive
Into the hot gold gong
Of noonday.

Appendix B

Macumba: Brazil

they are cleaning the chandeliers.
 they are waxing the marble floors
 they are rubbing the golden faucets
 they are burnishing brazen doors
 they are polishing forks in the *copa*
 they are praising the silver trays

their jerkins are striped like hornets
 their eyes are like black wax

they are changing the salt in the cupboards
 they are cooking *feijão* in the kitchen
 they are cutting tropical flowers
 they are buying herbs at the market
 they are stealing a white rooster
 they are bargaining for a goat

they are dressed in white for macumba
 their eyes are like black coals

they are making a doll of wax
 they are sticking her full of pins
 they are dancing to the drums
 they are bathed in the blood of the rooster
 they are lighting the beach with candles
 they are wading into the ocean
 with presents for Iamanjá

they are dressed in the salt of the ocean
 their eyes are like bright flames

they are giving her gifts of flowers
 they are throwing her tubes of lipsticks
 they are offering shoes and scarves
 brassieres and sanitary napkins
 whatever a woman needs
 they are flinging themselves on the waters
 and singing to Iamanjá

they are drenched and white for macumba
 and their eyes are droused and out

Appendix C

Brazilian Fazenda

That day all the slaves were freed
 their manacles, anklets
 left on the window ledge to rust in the moist air

and all the coffee ripened
 like beads on a bush or balls of fire
 as merry as Christmas

and the cows all calved and the calves all lived
 such a moo.

On the wide veranda where birds in cages
 sang among the bell flowers
 I in a bridal hammock
 white and tasseled
 whistled

and bits fell out of the sky near Nossa Senhora
 who had walked all the way in bare feet from Bahia

and the chapel was lit by a child's
 fistful of marigolds on the red velvet altar
 thrown like a golden ball.

Oh, let me come back on a day
 when nothing extraordinary happens
 so I can stare
 at the sugar-white pillars
 And black lace grills
 of this pink house.