

## **CABOCLAN<sup>1</sup> THEORETICS OF CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY**

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It seems that, under the scourge of these two demons, perhaps only in the Greek sense, who are J.J. and Agostinho, I find myself venturing into a genre of recollections somewhat different from what has thus far been mine, and which a few readers, consistently loyal and, moreover, loyal, have kindly considered to be of some interest. If, based on what has already been written or published, one could continue to assert that my memoirs are not exactly a record of what happened to me, for I seem somehow immune to events, but rather of what occurred to people in whose lives I simply stood present, in this corner of history which, after all, belongs to the world, perhaps another path now opens before me: that of bearing witness not so much to people as to ideas. Paraphrasing an already aged saying of mine, I would now write that I am not passing through the lives of people; I am passing through the ideas of people.

This, surely, strikes me as something akin to Plato, if indeed his dramatic genius, still unspoiled or led astray – let us be strictly scientific – by politics, did not invent everything, including himself. So, what should I do, knowing full well that within my possibilities, which may be many but never include pretending, would be, like the Greek, to weave my dialogues, in a representation, as faithful to truth as I am able, and here recount what the two of them said that morning in Itapoã. In one respect, however, my dialogues would differ from the early Platonic ones, which, according to scholars – and to which I dare add my personal observation that confirm theirs – never seem to reach any kind of conclusion, whether because the thinker had none yet, or because he was loyal in this to his Master, who believed philosophy consisted in asking, not answering. In my dialogues between the two Friends, there would be something far more intriguing: that the conclusion lies in the beginning. I even believe that this is how it always unfolds: what first comes to them is the conclusion; only afterward do they, with great logic, lay out the arguments that prove it. And as happens most of the time, the conclusion they begin with is the same, so their dialogue is not so much the weaving of a cloth but its examination under a microscope, which delights me greatly due to my

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<sup>1</sup> *Cabocla*, the feminine form of “*caboclo*,” is a term that, besides referring to the mixture of white and Indigenous peoples in Brazil, describes a typical figure from the Brazilian Sertão.

own entomologies; doing nothing more than unraveling fabric, though they take great pleasure in giving the impression that they are weaving. I suppose this has led many to classify them as perfect specimens of rationalists. And what a good philosophical problem this would be: to wonder whether all rationalists do not tread the same path, and if, in the end, it is not the others, the intuitive or the mystical, or whatever name we give them, who effectively stand before reality with humility, discretion, and a good deal of patience.

I am, however, as is my unfortunate habit, wading into what I do not know, or know only by hearsay. To return to the solid ground more worthy of my scientist's feet, I will say that the conversation took place just before the little bars of Itapoã, on a stretch of beach where the coconut trees extend right up to the sea. The sea there is uniquely still, green and gray, with its waves already broken by the line of reefs, lapping at the first white, fine sands with the sweetness of a small lake or that rhythmic ripple with which, in the shelter of the shore, calm streams of the plains mark their quiet life. A place for those who feel somewhat weary of the world to lie down and rest, sure that hardly anyone will pass by, for all the traffic moves along the road behind the coconut groves, simply gazing either at that familiar and humble boundary of land and water, or at the farther one, that elusive line that never quite is, of sky and sea.

There, then, it seemed to us a fine harbor to drop anchor. The two, being philosophers, quickly settled themselves in any manner in the softness of the sand, caring little for the trouble it would later take to brush themselves off before returning to the city, that is if they even intended on brushing themselves off. I, always prudent and a man of luck, seated myself on a whale bone, which I duly classified, though it was not a homoptera, as J.J. promptly pointed out: a fragment of the lower right jawbone.

Thus, it was, and without any real intent, one of them remarked that classical philology in Portugal was worth nothing. I dared to contest, recalling works and names, though prudently silencing Viale, who would have been immediately made victim, his blood staining the enemy's field. Nonetheless, I told them that there were, in Portugal, those perfectly up-to-date with foreign bibliography on the subject, who wrote works that could easily hold their own in Oxford or Heidelberg, and moreover, it seems to me, a layman, the ultimate limit of human effort, those who could write in Latin, which, as far as I understand, is excellent, and even in Greek, which no doubt could be of the same high quality. And do you know what happened? They both scoffed. They said that writing Greek and Latin today is merely the pastime

of someone who has nothing meaningful to say in their own language, a way to kill time for the survivors of XVII century Academies, an artifice that lives on imitation, moreover, they added, writing, and even more so speaking, Greek or Latin was commonplace for the fools who Socrates confounded in his dialogues, whom Aristophanes, to cite an opponent, ridiculed in his comedies, whom Plautus kicked around in his farces, all ending, in a laughter tinged with melancholy, as it foretold the end of everything, in the *Satyricon* of Petronius, if it is Petronius's, or of any another, if it is of any another.

Humanists of the spoken and written word thus buried, I didn't even raise my voice to defend any studies or criticisms, for J.J. swept away the lines he had drawn in the sand with the back of his hand – lines always straight, as is his nature – and pronounced his verdict:

“Nothing is worth anything. And in Brazil, the same occurs. Now and then, someone appears who wouldn't look out of place at a university in America or Italy, or any of those places, but what they produce is nothing; it gets lost in the current of what's being done abroad: sounding foreign, you know? As for schools, none; they never have disciples, no one carries on the work. What was born with him dies with him.”

“So, what one must conclude,” I ventured, “is that our people are not cut out for classical philology, and that's the end of it.”

“Our people have a knack for everything. What occurred is that classical philology was invented and developed in countries that have nothing in common with Portugal or Brazil, countries that follow entirely different paths; what came to us from them has as much to do with the deep reality of countries and peoples—ours, of course—as with royal absolutism or parliamentarism, idealism or materialism and capitalism or socialism. All these ideas are theirs, only theirs, and should have stayed with them. The core of our thought and our true way of proceeding has nothing to do with that. We are others, and in being others that this hasn't entered our education, our lives, or even, much more gravely, our ideals. They conquered us, occupied us once, and we have never liberated ourselves since. And, when those nations are dragging themselves through decadence, treading paths that will lead nowhere, we have not yet found the strength to free ourselves. Our philology is not ours, it is theirs; just as our economy is theirs, just as our politics or our schools are theirs. Everything is foreign, everything ready-made, all tailored to fit them, not us.”

J.J. agreed straight away, as he was already in agreement. He even gained enough energy to scratch new lines in the sand, but when does he ever lose that energy? There he continued, making his marks while Agostinho spoke about philology through Europe, since American philology seemed to him nothing more than a mere continuation of what had been done from England to Italy. To begin with the former, or rather, myself—since perhaps Agostinho, in conversation, had gone straight to his dearest adversary, the scholarly Germany—he asserted that the English never saw classical philology as anything more than a chosen field for a game of intellect, criticism, pedantry, irony, and certainty; limited by the downfall of the ancient world to a state of anthology, selected by the thousands of erudite scholars who have traversed it in every direction, enriched by the interpretations of a world that did not remain static in the realms of speculation and creation, the field of classical antiquity allows the English to indulge in some of the activities they love most: adhering closely to reality, documenting as much as they possibly can, avoiding theory as much as possible; the ability to present new behaviors under the guise of the most untouchable antiquity; to find in the classics a secure shell of protection for their timid reality; a Mediterranean sun and a comforting genealogy of words.

“And even,” he conceded, “some vague awareness that they were once Mediterranean, at least in the megalithic era, and some remorse, disguised as irony and indifference, for having sided with Europe instead of remaining loyal allies of those who first established a continuous front across the sea; like a launching dock from which the future unity of the world might set sail.”

I shall pass from England, if he hasn't, to Germany, as I craved to see what he would make of the scholarly German philologists, there spread on that sand, but still in his coat and tie, ready to remind us, comparing the waves and clouds, that he had once been to Fiji. Neophyte things: if he had trodden as much as I, he would remember fewer names of places and would find them quite similar, for it is not simply moving about that makes us different from who we are. Reverting, however, as Bruno would say, destroyed German philology; he did not concede that any scholar, or any of the creators who also wandered about, had done more than attempt with Greece, because deep down, for French reasons, or perhaps recalling Canossa, they always despised Rome, fleeing from the Germany they recognized, inside and out, so somber, melancholic, harsh, and savage, as old Tacitus painted it, despite his intentions.

J.J. could not resist interrupting to abundantly quote his favorite author; without misquoting, of course; but in the end, I asked myself if *Germania* could still be presented as a pamphlet against Rome. I'm inclined to believe it wasn't Tiberius who was the degenerate, but Tacitus; how could he not see that, whatever the real or supposed inferiority of customs, a country of blue skies and sun is always in the right over a land of mists and rains? Could the gods possibly have held more favor for the Germans of the Baltic than for the Latins of Capri? But such sad conclusions can lead to political bias; Tacitus' republicanism blinded him so much that it dragged him into preferring German; unless, which is also possible, it's all a pure invention of Nordic commentators; no wordplay intended with "Norden".

Be that as it may, it was established by both butchers that the entire endeavor of German classical philology, aside from its housekeeping efforts or making information work with the precision and convenience of a Pauly-Wissowa, where everything is present except inventiveness, resulting in precisely this: providing, in a Greece of romantic wonder, an escape from Germanic realities, or rinsing off the remorse for continuing, in modern times and with far greater efficiency, the crushing of vital originalities which the Doric – I believe it was the Doric – when descending, so efficiently began in the Eastern Mediterranean. I believe at this point Agostinho was more carried away by the rigidity of J.J.'s views than by his own passions; but the truth is everything was devastated, from poor Winkelmann – oh, how they glossed his death!, ! – through all those who have passed through the *Rheinisches Museum* and other illustrious institutions, down to some poor soul who, perhaps merely to earn his bread, has spent his days commenting on the fragments of a playwright whom I care little for, and for whom the audience of his time surely cared even less.

As for Italy and France, it's hardly worth speaking of. The least that has been said of the latter's classical philology was to drag it around three motifs: first, the need for original content for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and thus Boissier's disdainful burial, who I don't even know if ever really collaborated with the magazine; second, avenging the wars of 1870 and 1914 by defending the Latin genius from Germanic attacks; thirdly, proving that Greece was Cartesian, masking the betrayal France dealt herself when it turned her back on the sixteenth century and threw herself entirely into the arms of Boileau. As this was happening, almost at the horizon's line but drifting toward the course of Sergipe, an *alvarenga* vessel one of the last to still cast a flutter of sails upon these seas – caught my eye, and since ships interest me far more than



philology, I let the attack on Boileau pass without protest; not for my own sake, properly speaking, but because, as I believe, he's the only French author our Lieutenant-Colonel Mourão knows by heart and enjoys quoting in conversation. Watching the ship, my thoughts wandered to Timor and the distant Friend, which did not give me much opportunity to dwell on this Sedan in which France once again plunged into the most irredeemable of defeats. Yet I ventured:

"But didn't you both attend the Sorbonne? Didn't you attend the Collège?"

"Better if we hadn't. I, for one, wrote a lot of nonsense because of it," replied J.J. And he fell silent, gazing at the other, not daring to claim the same apropos.

I don't know if he expected silence, but silence he received. However, surely, it was because Agostinho was already launching an attack on Italy, accusing its philology of being nothing more than an effort to present itself to the world as the descendant of the Empire. A quest for nobility, as if all the invasions had never happened, and as if it wasn't precisely in Italy where the fewest Roman traditions were preserved. A flaunting of ancestors entirely lacking intimate connection, soul resonance, or any constructive purpose. A philology erected on the high quality of secondary education; *liceu, liceu*, and more *liceu*. They paused for a moment, as if weary from the slaughter, and I seized the opportunity to intervene.

"Well, let's suppose it's all accurate, and inflame things by saying that all German, French, Italian, English philologists—or their counterparts from Missouri or California—are just as you've said: pedants, or escapists, or narrow rationalists, or fantasy-prone noblemen. How would that prevent authentic classical philology from existing in Portugal, Brazil, and even in Spain, which they've barely even touched? Who knows if it might even be free from those very faults."

"That's not the point, Mateus-Maria. The point is that in Portuguese and Spanish speaking lands, nothing has been done but to monkey the philology from beyond the Pyrenees or the Alps; the same Latin in secondary education, the same classical languages in the same Schools of Letters, the same teachers trying to produce the same books and journals. Moreover, the exact same thing that was done with history and literature, or even with mathematics and physics. We have known nothing but to copy foreign schools and foreign mentalities. Never has there been an effort to be what we truly were."

“It’s worth telling our Mateus-Maria here that all of this would be fine and well if we were like them; at least then we could present a body of work equivalent to theirs, which could be considered excellent by their standards, though it might not be by ours. But the worst part, Agostinho, is that the situation is bad, truly bad, and it feels like a hothouse.”

“Of course. We have classical philology like we could have sweet potatoes on the North Pole. The simple fact is this: we are different, and it’s not in our interest to seek in the classics exactly what they seek. We have problems far too serious to be playing cricket, we are far too rich to be regulated by the French, we are too Mediterranean to have to flee the mists, and we are far too future-oriented to be overly bound, outside of patriotic blandness, by the glories – or what they call glories – that have reached us from a near or distant past.”

This man has enough skill in the art of sophistry to readily construct a theory. But the truth is, I’m not sure if the one he crafted on that beach didn’t carry a large portion of truth. For him, as he has written in several works, the world is divided into two great categories: one for the Indo-Europeans – and I’m not sure if at times he doesn’t broaden the concept too much or attribute to the Indo-Europeans many things that are of other peoples’ – and another one for the Mediterraneans, which includes everything from Iberian to Phoenician, and perhaps something more than all of that, since he includes Latin Americans, Africans, and the people of South Asia, although for him, South Asia extends from Mongolia downward. The big difference between the two sectors, then, lies in something that is neither language, nor race, nor geography, for otherwise it would be impossible to understand anything. Placing the equator between reason and intuition would also be difficult, particularly due to the complexity of defining terms. Therefore, we must settle with what he once said: the essential difference is that the Indo-European does not see reason merely as one of the spectacles of the world, but as its organizer and its criterion. The Indo-European did not limit himself to acknowledging the existence of reason; he put it to practice, employing it to make the universe easier, easier to manipulate, that is. What happened to reason is much like what happened to gunpowder: the Chinese, if they were the ones who discovered it, used it for fireworks; the European used it to demolish rocks and fire bullets.

“When the Indo-European ventured south, what he found was the Mediterranean, a world living in contemplation, in integration, in a deep kinship with existence, a harmony still lingering, though vastly different from

what might have existed before the Fall. He arrived, destroying it, and this destruction is the Athenian man slaying the last half-human, half-beast creature, imposing upon the universe that once was, a new order, one that gave rise to the city-state, philosophy, politics, geometry, armies, law, notaries, and schools. Yet, he didn't destroy it evenly; those who suffered his fiercest fury were the poor Cretans; a vase entwined by an octopus gave way to theories of heroes; the cat, slipping between stalks and brushing against them as good cats do, was replaced by the dog that lies at doorsteps and recognize Ulysses; the prince of lilies was never more. Yet, there remained parts of the Mediterranean that escaped, and for some time it was possible to be free even from the Romans; note, if you will, that even later, it was the only place where the bull was considered worthy of competing with people. Or rather, where people were deemed worthy of competing with the bull, not merely seen as raw material for soldiers, jurists, or bureaucratic clerks. Crete succumbed; Sicily succumbed; Sardinia succumbed; the Berbers succumbed; only Spain did not fall, and did even more. At a certain point, while it was still worth the effort, Spain took Rome and adopted from it what was valuable: the universality of language, the principle of peace within borders, the conception of a law of nations, the basic formula of the republic, and an impatience with tyranny. From this, it left testimony in its defiance of the Indo-European, whether by setting Numantia ablaze, by voicing a fight with Viriathus, or even by preserving Basque as a living language; Spain took the best of Rome, but without the vices. And when the Iberian Peninsula embarked on the enterprise of the Discoveries, what it carried in the hold of its ships was the precise blend of Rome and the Mediterranean, a mix that, had it triumphed, would have spread across the globe the same peace that the Roman Empire had bestowed upon southern Europe for four hundred years."

I realized the following two things: how simple history is when explained by tracing lines in the sand under the murmur of tall foliage and beside a sea like that sea; and how the enterprise of the Discoveries ultimately failed because the Peninsula, driven by Rome's impulse, expanded the Roman work east to west, yet did not correct the great flaw in Rome's history: the failure to secure the Empire along the north-south axis. The peoples of the North Sea and the Baltic remained unsecured, and once again, a second wave of barbarian invasions descended upon the Empire. But was that all? He quickly assured me it was not merely that.

"The Indo-European had not yet developed enough for his mission to be considered fulfilled; there wasn't yet, despite everything, a truly international



law; no concept of nation; no physics; no combustion engine; nor could the impassibility of the physical universe and its internal forces of disintegration be considered overcome. Neither had the means been found, with North America and the invention of Puritanism, for the Indo-European to fully realize the potential of efficiency and organization that he carried within his guts, even if he had implemented his purely Indo-European economics – though tinged with Mediterranean messianism in philosophy or politics, with the Slavs – a formula that could facilitate the creation of new mechanisms. The Mediterranean spirit carried by the Portuguese proved useful for many things, not least in enabling Brazil to expel Dutch and French occupiers, thus sparing it the entanglements that led American civilization into dead ends; the Spanish Mediterranean infused a ferment into areas of the Americas that, otherwise, would have little more to offer today than the docility, subservience, and fatalistic statism of their indigenous peoples. But it was lacking the full strength of Rome.”

“But what matters to us, today, is whether Rome’s development has reached its peak or not, and whether the Mediterranean can prevail or not.”

J.J. promptly affirmed:

“It can. Without a doubt, it can.”

Agostinho was very scientific and very moderate:

“It seems that it can. Look how those with more antennas can sense that we are at one of those turning points in history. Christianity, at its core, was Mediterranean in its beginnings, but it soon understood that it could not triumph and expand unless it adopted Indo-European mechanisms. From the start, Christianity was Catholic in the universal sense, and apostolic in the missionary sense; but it was its Roman identity that gave it victory, though we know at what cost, and what sacrifices were made. With the Renaissance Popes, Christianity seemed poised to return to its Mediterranean roots, but the Protestant Reformation pushed it once again onto the path of global expansion, though now bound to usury, Caesarist centralism, and wage labor exploitation. But look at what’s happening today, how talk of ecumenism abounds, and how it seems that the hierarchy is increasingly distancing itself from the Indo-European, both geographically and socially. Rome is completing its mission: automatic production is on the horizon; the powers of the Caesars are being increasingly curtailed; the worship of a God of many diverse languages is due, as Fernão Lopes might say, of many and untamed

languages, of many faces, and even of none at all; of many temples, or perhaps no temple at all. Now, truly, the Father's House will have many mansions; and they will be the mansions of the prodigal sons."

"I'm not saying I agree with all of this," I interrupted, a little apprehensive that the man, though not being of his nature, might carelessly slip into oratory. "But we already have here a couple of ideas on the table, and perhaps it's worth going to the point. One is that our classical philology is worth nothing; another is that those who have produced good classical philology, perhaps with the exception of the English, are mere barbarians who only followed Rome in its Indo-European efficiency, but lack everything that the Mediterranean—now broadened by you to encompass almost the entire world—gave to Rome or preserved for after Rome. Then there's the idea that our philology is poor because it has, like many other things, consisted of a spiritless imitation of what others do. It seems we can conclude that either we have no business doing classical philology at all, or we must pursue it, if not with new methods, at least with new objectives."

"Even with new methods. But at least with new objectives. Greece and Rome were scaffolds that served to build the perfect world for the Mediterranean to expand, to give everything it was promised, and, reshaping time, but filled with new possibilities and from the richness that comes from remembering, to go beyond the falls and reclaim Paradise. If Paradises can even be reclaimed. If Adam ever returns as he should, the flaming swords will dissolve into light."

"Leave Paradise aside. Return to Greece."

"Very well, what interests us about Greece is twofold: to show that everything it achieved was done with a sense of pure political organization, especially through philosophy and the subtle rule of law. But art was also political because it primarily concerned itself with a human ideal. And how political their gods are."

"Was their tragedy also political?"

"Why not? Except that in this regard, the Greeks were unable to find formulas for victory; they merely presented the cases—always tragic—of man's encounter with destiny; solving the problem was a task that demanded too much from the political. It seems to me that G.B.M. is right when he writes that overcoming destiny requires the abolition of politics, and thus, it could

only have been resolved by Christianity – the Eastern kind, that is; there exists, merely, the mystery of mysteries, and here arises the other goal of our classical philology – what our classical philology should be. We must make clear the political role of Greece, the mark of the invader; but we must discover or recognize ourselves in the invaded, and therefore we have to research and record all traces of what managed to survive from the world that the Greeks subverted. When law ends, when philosophy ends, when art ends, it is in those depths that our feet must stand firm. What we must do with Greece is exactly this: archive it in politics and, through archaeology in every sense, unearth the universe it covered. That is why Eudoro's orientation seems perfect to me, and I wanted to bring this man to Brasília. But it seems it's not going to happen after all."

"Do you have a sea there? No, you don't.. Do you have coconut trees there? You don't. Do you have this pleasant warmth that never permits us to work too hard? You don't. What would I do in Brasília? The most you'll get from me, since you have this obsession with organization, which makes you a very amusing Mediterranean, because besides the obsession there is the style, is to put me in São Félix, with Roberto, and we'll set up one of your Centers there. As for the rest, don't even hope for that."

And, as if to further affirm his resolve, he laid completely down on the sand and kept looking at the branches, now swaying more in the breeze that was beginning to cool the air.

"I'm not an amusing Mediterranean at all. Among the Mediterraneans, I'm Iberian, a young man, like you and Mateus-Maria. But perhaps I still carry a great dose of Rome in me."

"Of Greece, we've seen," I replied: "archived without appeal and unearthed by archaeology. And Rome? What do you have of Rome?"

"I have nothing. We are Rome. We speak Latin. We've turned the language into something that stretches from Acre to the Philippines, and it can circle around anywhere. That so-called east-west mission of Rome was fulfilled by us in such a way that Magellan's voyage became possible. And from the barbarians they took all that was necessary for their technical advances. But we are a Rome that, because we have completed its task, and because we have Mediterranean blood in us, and because everywhere we go we encounter peoples who were and still are Mediterranean, can now tear down the scaffolds itself. Everything, however, depends on whether, with this Brazil,

we will go beyond Rome and trace the north-south axis. You know what? I've often thought that this is the real meaning behind Brasília having an east-west administrative axis, loyal to Rome, and a north-south residential axis, because only that will make the world truly inhabitable."

"And do you think the architects thought of this?"

"Poetry may consist in not thinking about what will be thought from them on."

"Well, forget poetry for now, continue with Rome."

"With Rome, we need to examine what, to it, was political, just as with Greece, and what was technical, which Greece never had or had poorly. As with Greece, we also need to investigate what was covered up with Mediterranean, and in our particular case, especially with what pertains to Spain. That is the past. As for the present, there are two tasks. First task: taking consciousness of how we are Roman, and through the Romans, how we are Greek, so that we understand well how the scaffolds are built, where they are, and how we will dismantle them. Second task: becoming fully aware of how we are Spanish, and of the brotherhood we share with Indigenous, Black, and Asian or Malay peoples; being prepared to recognize our Mediterranean in their Mediterranean; and having the audacity to bring that Mediterranean to our hyperborean friends."

"Do you think that's possible?"

"Firstly, I think there is no other path for history. And, since there is no other, this is the possible one. Isn't that what's already happening in a disorganized way and without much awareness? Who is paying for the Indo-European invasion of the Mediterranean, or rather, the two invasions, the prehistoric one and the one from the Middle Ages? Isn't it the Mediterranean workers? Didn't Switzerland have to build a bullfighting arena? Aren't there Italians fighting every night in Germany? Didn't ours surge into Paris? Isn't Europe falling into the vices of economic prosperity that partly led to the great barbarian migrations? Haven't I seen Greeks and Italians in Australia..."

There we are with his travels.

"...imposing their foods in restaurants, already walking down the sidewalk with mane and flip-flops? This is the beginning of the end, folks. Except this end has to be organized and accelerated. And it is Latin—or Roman—

America that should do it. Only we can solve the problem of the blacks in the United States; only we can put will and consciousness of a people obsessed with the work ethic of Puritans while watching automation take everything away from them; only we can offer them the notion that history is made by itself without our effort and our only obligation towards the turning of the world is to not interfere with its movement. You know what? I think it is extremely important that you take advantage of the scholarships to these countries; not to return learning America, even adopting the way they speak or their mannerisms; but to return having missionized in America. Until now, missions would come from there to the Papuans; Christian missions from Rome, the Christianity that was established when the Pope replaced Cesar; it is now time for the Papuans to send missions to America to preach the Mediterranean Christianity, the one that would advise to contemplate the lilies of the field, the one that placed children as a model of perfection and held for the Caesars the balanced mixture of contempt and comprehension that made one pay tribute without dwelling on it with either refusal or submission. Every Portuguese or Greek, every Brazilian or Peruvian, and these are very important, have the duty to pay for the technique they learn from the lesson that life is beyond work, the construction and the code. It would even be important to ensure that the people who go there would not lose time at all learning but would go only to teach. Learning should be in reverse. Scholarships for Americans to come to Brazil to learn that wealth is not a sign that God is within us."

"This, my friend, is politics, not philology. Go back to philology. If all that we have done is wrong, tell us what we should do."

"Get everyone who has any kind of interest in Greek and Latin, not to write dissertations that would perhaps be highly rated in Universities abroad, but to render into Portuguese all the texts that allow us to become aware that we are Romans, even in what the Romans took from the Greeks. It is essential that every young person in our language can read the so-called classics without the difficulty of penetrating the original. Secondly, it is suitable that mathematicians, physicists, biologists, and administrators, upon whom the axis of development rests – and you already know that development, to me, means bringing the Mediterranean to the surface – have an idea that the foundations of their sciences or techniques were laid in Greco-Roman culture, sparing us the spectacle of their ignorance and making them aware of their historical smallness as continuators, and of their greatness if they contribute to the rebirth of the buried world. They must read their classics, their Euclids,



their Theophrastuses, their Aristotles, their Plinys, their Vitruviuses, their historians, and good manuals should help them grasp the whole picture. I know that writing good manuals requires knowing as much as it is required for doctoral theses, and that it is necessary to combine science with humility: but perhaps it is not too much to demand this and that from our teachers of classicism.”

“If I had money, what I would do is create a museum for that philology. People don’t read. It would be better if they could see it,” suggested J.J.

“Maybe it will be done.”

“In São Félix?” I asked, being involuntarily ironic.

“No, São Felix should not be what Greece and Rome were. São Félix is for recognizing the Mediterranean, the one that archaeology will reveal to us, in which there is still life. Not covered by any dirt, except for what the fascination with New York or Paris casts over them. Exposed to the light sky, to the mirror-like river, to the reclining hills. There lies the Mediterranean feeling of repose enveloped by the atmosphere of things, as if one these things was part of it, or as if they had been animated by a human breath; there lies the harmony of no conflict between what is thought and what is lived; there lies the rediscovered peace of conscious and unconscious merging into a whole, a whole we lost memory of ages ago; there lies the secret that will prevent psychologists – yes, even the best ones, the ones who don’t search in mice for the human spirit, or for a flicker of God, which are one and the same – from never again supposing that the human spirit gradually formed through the experience of the world. Rupture, yes, that happened: and what we call consciousness is merely a fragment of the spirit. It is up to us to reconstitute it. São Félix is not about us knowing that the double-edged axe existed in the Mediterranean: it is about knowing that it existed in the *Recôncavo*; it is not for us to know that the bucranium was Mycenaean, but to discover that it exists as it was, on our fences. Everything is waiting to be seen and elevated; within us, with us, in our land. And our scholars who dream of Heidelberg and a Ph.D. from Harvard. The second part of our classical philology: to discover *Nordeste* and find the Mediterranean in it.”

“In that case,” I concluded, “let us pray to the gods, hopefully Mediterranean, that no one discovers us and throws us in the asylum.”

They snarled an awkward *Amen*; but brightened up quite a bit afterward, at one of the little bars, eating stuffed crab shells and drinking *batida*; or *batidas*.