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**Unstable Boundaries: the Global and the Local in  
Karen Tei Yamashita's Through the Arc of the Rain  
Forest**

Faculdade de Letras  
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**Unstable Boundaries: the Global and the Local in Karen Tei Yamashita's  
Through the Arc of the Rain Forest**

By

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This is to certify that the thesis presented by Cláudio Roberto Vieira Braga, entitled “Unstable Boundaries: the Global and the Local in Karen Tei Yamashita’s Through the Arc of the Rain Forest”, complies with the University regulations and that it meets the accepted standards of this Faculty with respect to style and content for the degree of “Mestre em Letras: Estudos Literários,  
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I dedicate this work to  
the man who taught me how to read  
when I was 5 years-old, my father  
Altino Ramalho Braga.

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the novel Through the Arc of the Rain Forest (1990) by Asian-American writer Karen Tei Yamashita. The narrative is read as a representation of the contemporary world, in which mobility takes place in a global scale, inducing a state of unstableness of the traditional boundaries that surround our physical and non-physical spaces. The effect of this condition reshapes the local dimension and transforms spaces through juxtaposition and interconnectedness. Such transformation is depicted in the mobility of the characters of the novel, whose implications are investigated from the local and the global perspective. Consequently, the national is a dimension that is highly affected, as nations seem to have their boundaries dissipated by the current state of globalization represented in the novel. In addition, the present thesis constitutes an analysis that combines the aesthetic use of Magical Realism with the articulation of the global and the local in a discussion of Yamashita's work. It argues that Yamashita's stylistic and structural devices surpass and expand the scope of Asian-American literature, offering readers a new understanding of our present world, in which complexity, change and unpredictability challenge the conventional views.

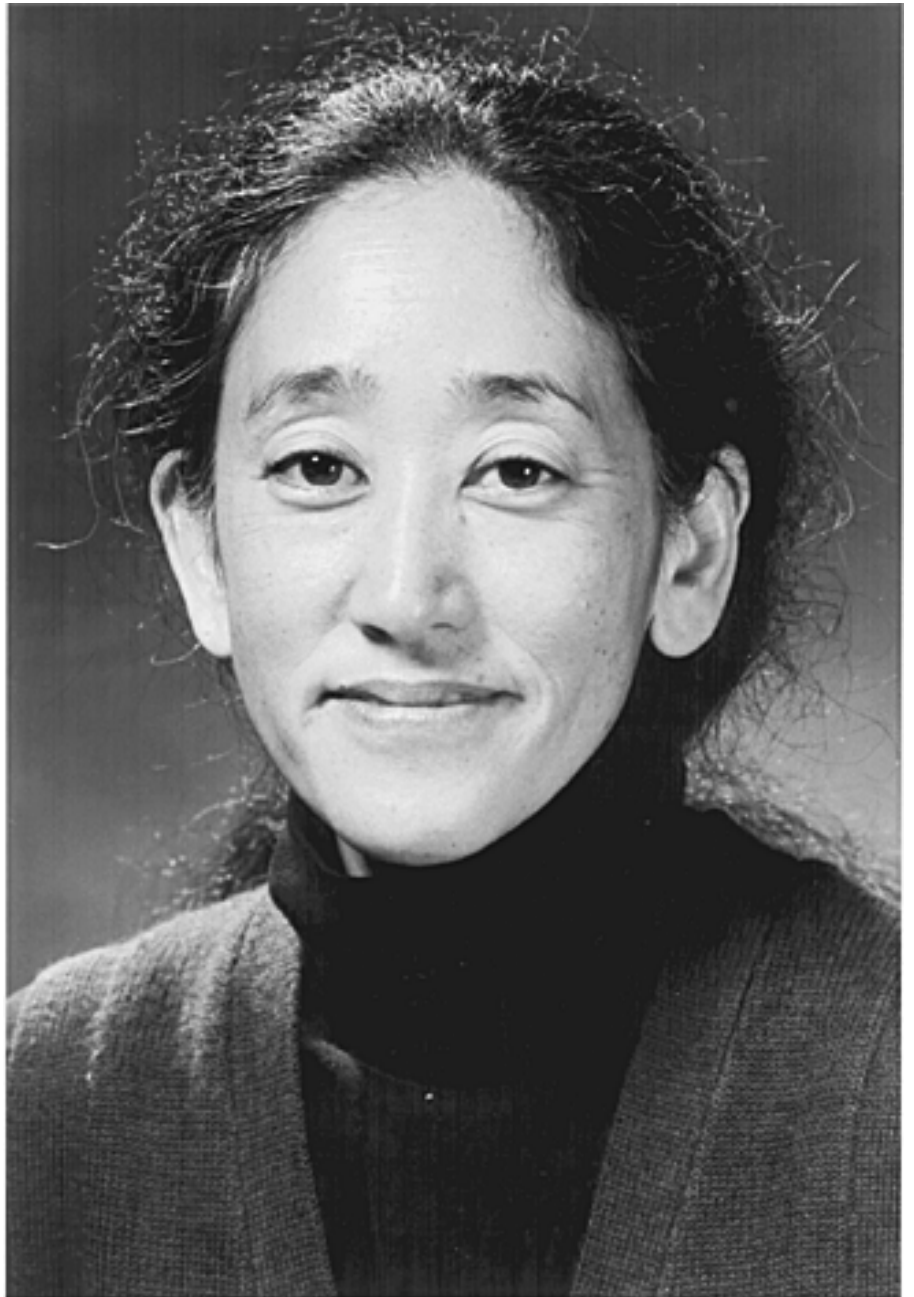
## RESUMO

Este estudo tem por objetivo investigar o romance Through the Arc of the Rain Forest (1990) da escritora asiático-americana Karen Tei Yamashita. A narrativa é lida como uma representação do mundo contemporâneo no qual a mobilidade acontece em escala global, induzindo a um estado de instabilidade das fronteiras tradicionais que circundam nossos espaços físicos e não físicos. O efeito desta condição remodela a dimensão local e transforma os espaços através da justaposição e da interconectividade. Tal transformação é descrita na mobilidade das personagens do romance, e suas implicações são investigadas a partir das perspectivas local e global. Conseqüentemente, o nacional é uma dimensão altamente afetada, na medida em que as nações parecem ter suas fronteiras dissipadas pelo presente estado de globalização representado no romance. Além disso, a presente dissertação constitui uma análise que combina o uso estético do realismo fantástico com a articulação do global e do local na discussão do trabalho de Yamashita. Argumenta-se ainda que os recursos estruturais e estilísticos de Yamashita superam e expandem o escopo da Literatura Asiático-Americana, oferecendo aos leitores um novo entendimento do mundo contemporâneo, no qual a complexidade, a imprevisibilidade e a mudança desafiam as visões convencionais de mundo.

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*“In Through the Arc, where I fit in is to tell the story by the use of juxtaposition and satire. (...)I would find it hard to write a book without ideas, without political content, or without a vision”*

*Karen Tei Yamashita*

## Introduction

*The first globally multi-racial, multi-cultural,  
multi-continental societies on any substantial  
scale were in the periphery, not the core.  
Anthony D. King<sup>1</sup>*

I was first introduced to U.S. Immigrant Writing in 2001, during a course I took at UFMG, which focused on the literary productions of Arab-Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans. The section devoted to Asian-American writers called my attention in such a special manner that I began to read and research them more deeply. Later, I became particularly interested in Karen Tei Yamashita's first novel, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest<sup>2</sup>, because the author covers a wide scope of topics artistically represented by the use of literary devices, which are arranged in an intricate way. Therefore, I chose with joy to research this award-winning book for my Master's thesis, conscious of the challenge involved in discussing a highly complex work.

If it was the immigrant writer's gaze that made me embark on a journey of reading and researching this field, the perspective of Yamashita proved to be even more involving insofar as she surpasses the geographical and ethnic boundaries traditionally associated with Asian-American writing. In the Journal of Postcolonial Studies, Jean Vengua Gier and Carla Alicia Tejeda put into question Yamashita's usual classification as an ethnic or multicultural writer. They emphasize the global nature of Asian-American writing quoting Yamashita's very words:

I don't necessarily think of Through the Arc as an Asian-American book, although I'm an Asian-American writer, and I don't have a problem with that. I

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<sup>1</sup> King, Anthony D. Culture, Globalization and the World-System. Contemporary Conditions for the Representations of Identity (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1997) 8.

<sup>2</sup> From now on I will use Through the Arc to refer to Through the Arc of the Rain Forest.

think, though, that Asian-American literature is changing. It has to be more inclusive because the geography is changing, the map is changing. People are moving very quickly and over a shorter period of time, because of the globalization of the Pacific Rim economies. (qtd. in Gier and Tejada 72)

Yamashita herself is one of the “quickly-moving-people”. First she went to Japan, where she lived for a year and a half. Her goal was to investigate her family roots. In 1975, she arrived in Brazil to research Japanese immigration in a project intended to last six months. She stayed for nine years, which evidences her explicit interest in Brazilian culture, and then she went back to the United States in 1983.

Examining Yamashita’s personal process of moving from one place to another, Gier and Tejada ponder that “her subject matter and her formal approach to it continue to defy the geographic and canonical boundaries implied in that label. Her works engage the question of hybrid identity and the politics of mobility” (2). Such a broad spectrum is confirmed by Rachel C. Lee in her specific analysis of Through the Arc:

the novel’s cumulative gendered effects – the personal emphasis, the focus on women’s emotional life and homosexual domesticity, the antiprogressive structure – all make the novel suspect in Asian-American studies, where mimetic, straightforward declarations or grand narratives against oppression are prized over. (137)

To be fully understood, Lee’s questionings have to be confronted with an analysis of what is considered Asian-American Literature. Elaine H. Kim defines it as “published creative writings in English by Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Southeast Asian (for now, Burmese and Vietnamese) descent about their American experiences” (811). Traditionally, Asian-American writers tend to explore the East-West conflict, narrating stories that bridge life in the United States and the countries of the so-called Pacific Rim. Recurrent themes usually explored are racism, acceptance in America, experiences of the old exiles,

assimilation, conflicts of generations and narratives of heroes, most of them centered in a male figure. In addition, the prevalence of autobiographies is noticeable in Asian-American Literature, as Kim points out.

It becomes obvious that Asian-American Literature is a term that holds an immense variety of cultural traditions whose differences need to be carefully thought out. Because of that, I turn to Helena Grice's analysis because she sees Asian-American as "a limited conceptual term, an imagined geocultural space and a narrow discursive category" (134). Therefore, I would rather situate Yamashita's writings within Japanese-American fiction.

Since its beginning in 1880s, Japanese immigration to the United States was marked by the presence of both men and women, differently from other groups of immigrants whose majority was made of men. This balance between both sexes made the Japanese and their American-born children marry within their ethnic group, which caused their Japanese cultural background to be more isolated. In the following years, "a substantial number of *Nisei* writing, both male and female" (139) was produced, according to Grice. The portrayal of a Japan left behind, as well as their perspective of America can be found in the first literary registers.

After the 1950s, many autobiographies and fictional narratives had the internment experience<sup>3</sup> as their main focus. These writings usually describe life in detention camps during the Second World War, when the American Government interned Japanese-Americans in closed areas located in certain American states. Grice states that "these texts bear testimony to their author's desire for acceptance in America" (139). In the late 1960s, however, Japanese-Americans, like other Asian-Americans, start to "reject assimilation" (820), as Kim observes. They write about recent immigrant experience, hostility faced in the United States and cultural shock, which broadens the perspective of previous decades.

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<sup>3</sup> As stated in the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, "the Japanese- American Internment refers to the forcible relocation of approximately 112,000 to 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans, 62 percent of whom were United States citizens, from the west coast of the United States during World War II to hastily constructed housing facilities called *War Relocation Camps* in remote portions of the nation's interior".

Recently, in his book Narrating Nationalisms, Jinqi Ling analyzes the process of transition from traditional to contemporary in Asian-American Literature, from the 1970s to present days. Discussing the existence of a crisis in Asian-American studies, Ling criticizes the insistent view of the “community’s ‘tradition’ – symbolized by railroads, immigration, exclusion or internment” (4-5) and the opposite point of view that tends to see the new production as something totally apart from the past. Dividing the history of Asian- American literature in two major periods, Ling states that “the Asian-American literary articulations of the pre- and post-1980 periods should be conceptualized not as mutually exclusive entities but as participating in a nonlinear process of cultural dissent with indeterminate but insistently transformative results” (5).

Published in 1990, Through the Arc is a novel that is representative of this relationship between the traditional and the contemporary Asian-American Literature, although a first superficial reading may look like the novel is more a negation rather than a negotiation of this ethnic background. Nevertheless, I keep the point I made earlier regarding the fact that Yamashita goes beyond ethnic boundaries, due to certain singularities not found in Asian-American literary production. One of the most relevant is the setting: Through the Arc is mainly set in the Brazilian Amazon rain forest, in which there is a fictional site called Matacão. By inserting this peculiar setting in the middle of the jungle in the north of Brazil, Yamashita noticeably initiates her literary path outside the Asian-American’s traditional binary East-West. Because of this, her narrative reaches a global dimension as she evolves to the introduction of other themes and different approaches of global interest, such as the devastation of the rain forest and the American economic and cultural influence in the world, symbolized by the installation of a huge corporation from New York in the forest. At the same time, Yamashita discusses local issues, usually related to the Brazilian way of living, such as the local cultural production, religion, sexism or the influence of media, especially radio and television, in Brazilian people’s lives.

This is not to say, though, that Through the Arc contains no reference to Asian-American themes; the Japanese diaspora, for instance, is an issue approached in the novel, although the Japanese characters do not immigrate to the United States, but to Brazil. The work in railroads is another example, although Yamashita refers to it satirically: the main character's ability to fix tracks is magically provided by a ball that whirls six inches over his head, as I discuss in Chapter I.

As I investigated this profusion of themes and situations logically organized in subplots, I identified mobility as a motif in the novel, functioning as a larger river, lying on the plot and feeding smaller streams. The subplots are the streams and minor rivers that flow to it. In Through the Arc, Yamashita discusses the disordered and continuous movement of people, ideas, capital, technology, information, and images in the contemporary world. Cultural expressions of Japanese, French, North-American and mainly Brazilian origins are intertwined in the novel through the diversity of characters, settings, features and conditions. The way I see it, such mobility provides a juxtaposition of the global and the local and is a structural device used by Yamashita to describe the human experience of movement, with emphasis on change and interconnectedness. The representation of this intense mobility of characters, settings, behaviors and attitudes intrigued me and I decided to analyze it profoundly.

As a result of this choice, a theoretical research about mobility in contemporary society becomes crucial. Arjun Appadurai calls it "flows", and proposes that we think the world in terms of a huge global cultural fluidity that is currently taking place all over. He represents such fluidity in scenes or landscapes that he divides in five. They are the *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes* and *ideoscapes*. Appadurai's concept of *ethnoscapes* will be helpful in Chapter I, in which I discuss the representations of human flows in Through the Arc. In the same chapter, I also make use of Iain Chambers's notion of

migration, cultural diversity and homelessness as mechanisms that disrupt the conventional sense of place and identity.

In this investigation, I analyze how the global cultural flows are portrayed in different ways, carried mostly by the characters in the story. The most relevant move is the protagonist's immigration, a process of search for belonging. Kazumasa Ishimaru, born in Japan, comes home with "the ball" one day, when he is 12 years-old. The ball simply appears next to his forehead after he feels the "Divine wind" and hears the echo of an "enormous crack of a thunder" (3). His parents worried about the ball he acquired in such a supernatural event, but soon they became used to the whirling sphere. They realize, however, that Kazumasa becomes somehow "different". When he wants to go to Brazil, where his cousin is already living, his mother influences his decision to go because she believes in Kazumasa's need for a journey that can help him understand the supernatural ball, which is now part of him. His immigration to Brazil is not yet a simple movement of an immigrant looking for better life conditions. It is a journey he undertakes in the search for his own self, having his ball permanently revolving around his head.

The ball that accompanies Kazumasa in his immigration to Brazil often works as Kazumasa's consciousness, but its main function in Through the Arc is another: it is the narrative device, an omniscient narrator that sees and tells everything, frequently addressing the reader:

These things I knew with simple clairvoyance. I also knew that strange events far to our north and deep in the Amazon basin, events as insignificant as those in a tiny north-eastern coastal town wedged tightly between multicolored dunes, and events as prestigious as those of great economic capital of the world, New York, would each cast forth an invisible line, shall I say, leading us to a place they would all call the Matacão. (15)

I intend to relate the clairvoyance of the narrator to the articulation between the global and the local, as I see its omniscience as an instrument to discuss globalization. This way, defining and problematizing globalization becomes another theoretical framework to this research.

Globalization and, consequently, global movement are not new, although greater attention has been given to the issue recently. In his Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, first published in 1964, Marshall McLuhan is one of the first to discuss globalization. He coined the expression “Global Village”, in which one dominant culture tends to impose itself and homogenize the local ones around the world. However, recent thinkers, like Appadurai, tend to reject the homogenization thesis, simply because it has not taken place the way McLuhan predicted in 1964. On the contrary, Fabio Duarte sees in the present world the strengthening of global relationships and the rebirth of local characteristics.

In this research, I rely on the current view that sees globalization as a means of agency and exchange among local cultures, although I must consider the dangers of oversimplified formulations. In “Spatial Criticism: Critical Geography, Space, Place and Textuality”, Phillip E. Wegner, for instance, opens his discussion about it stating that “any concept like ‘globalization’ is always already a deeply ideological one, occluding the particular agency and interests involved in such a process of spatial reterritorialization” (189). In addition, Anthony D. King does not consider defining globalization as an easy task. He turns to Roland Robertson and selects three possible points of departure for this debate: Globalization is “the crystallization of the entire world as a single space, the emergence of the global human condition and the consciousness of the global as such” (qtd. in King 11). The idea of crystallization has to be discussed further, since to crystallize means two distinct things: to take on a definite, precise, and usually permanent form and to become transparent and bright. In my contention, the ideas of transparency and brightness seem more appropriated, as long as they are used together with the words “emergence” and “consciousness”, both Robertson’s



terms. Finally, I reckon upon John Tomlinson's concept of complex connectivity. By this, he means, "globalization refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life" (2).

In Through the Arc, interconnectedness is unveiled gradually, as the characters develop their interest in the Matacão. Before they all move to it, readers are dealing with different subplots based on different locations: New York City, Kazumasa's village in Japan, São Paulo City and Chico Paco's village in Ceará, with its multicolored sand beaches. Some of these places are described as exotic, presumably due to the writer's focus on an American audience, who, for instance, has no idea of what the multicolored sands on the coast of Ceará are like. Readers are instigated by evidences that all these familiar and unfamiliar places and characters are going to be linked but there is no way to predict the consequences of such complex web of interconnections. Later, their personal travels bring them all together, due to different reasons that make them feel attracted to the Matacão, as I discuss in Chapter III. Through the use of stylistic and structural devices that enable the characters to be connected to each other, Yamashita intertwines different cultures in one single space that is the Matacão, the microcosm in the story. Bringing everything they have and being everything they are, these characters serve the purpose of throwing all multiplicities they represent into a single bowl. At the end of the story, the reader is led to conclude that the whole world has always been connected, although the view in the beginning is too fragmented to be visualized. It is like the accomplishment of what Tomlinson calls global spatial-proximity: "the shrinking of distances through the dramatic reduction in the time take either physically ( for instance, via air travel) or representationally (via transmission of electronically mediated information and images)" (3). In Chapter III, I investigate in detail how the proximity of subplots turn out to be one main plot, as well as how the local and the global dimensions are juxtaposed.

This investigation, which is an approach to Yamashita's fictional representation of globalization, leads to the necessity of examining the use she makes of Magical Realism,

which I do in Chapter II. I consider that Magical Realism works as a literary bonding agent in Through the Arc, through which Yamashita combines different subplots and converges them all to one main purpose, which is representing the instability of boundaries in the contemporary world, provided by an extreme mobility of images, people, technology, capital and ideas, as I discussed earlier. Magical Realism also helps telling a story that involves Yamashita's perception of a Brazilian society with its many local cultural characteristics complexly juxtaposed to other dimensions, such as the national and the global. The author herself explains it, in an interview to Michael S. Murashige:

Through the Arc is trying to convey about living in a country that's both developing and developed – and has indian and aboriginal culture that is undiscovered and dying. It has an urban culture that is highly cosmopolitan and also very imitative and a government that has pursued policies of bringing this technology into the country. All those things are in this rather strange mix. It's very real. (328)

In this sense, Magical Realism becomes an appropriate tool to depict the strangeness of such a paradoxical mixture, and it makes relevant the examination of this literary tradition in this Introduction. Before being turned into a worldwide “globalized” literary device, Magical Realism used to be mainly associated with Latin-American Literature. The term, however, was first used in the art field, to refer to post-expressionist paintings. It was coined by German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 and, after that, was borrowed by literary critics to refer especially to Latin American authors, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Marquez, and Alejo Carpentier. According to William Harmon, Magical Realism is an international tendency of works whose "frame or surface may be conventionally realistic, but contrasting elements such as the supernatural, myth, dream, fantasy, invade the realism and change the whole basis of the art" (297). It can be seen as an attempt to show real life

situations in a magical way, with the purpose of provoking specific effects. The magical and supernatural elements co-exist with the conventional notion of reality.

In Yamashita's Through the Arc, the magical, strange, and supernatural elements are linked to the conventional and the ordinary, and thus constitute a norm, offering some different possibilities of interpreting the world. From her perspective, the hybridity found in the world is represented by characters such as a Japanese immigrant with a whirling sphere close to his forehead, a New York businessman with three arms and a Frenchwoman with three breasts, naturally accepted by other characters. In Through the Arc, these magical characters – the Japanese, the American and the French – live contemporary situations, in a contemporary world. On the other hand, it is relevant to note that the Brazilian characters are not constructed in the tradition of Magical Realism, although they perform some really bizarre activities. From a Brazilian point of view, they seem quite ordinary: the married couple Batista and Tânia Aparecida, jealous, noisy and funny, the maid Lourdes and her handicapped son Rubens from São Paulo; Mané da Costa Pena, a kind of *matuto* from the rain forest; the fisher-pilgrim Chico Paco, his mother Dona Maria Creuza, and Gilberto from Ceará. Yamashita's choice of not changing the Brazilian characters physically may be explained by the exoticism that they naturally embody, at least from the perspective of an American audience, which was, indeed, Yamashita's first target audience when she published Through the Arc. I believe this was carefully devised by the author, perhaps as a way of expressing her personal view of Brazil.

Discussing the perception that the author has of Brazilian culture is returning to the point of the experiences she lived in Brazil. Yamashita's use of Magical Realism, for instance, is related to a famous Brazilian soap opera from the 70s, as Cristina Stevens mentions: "The novel is similar to *Saramandaia*, a soap opera exhibited by *Rede Globo* TV Station in the 70s. [...] Yamashita lived in Brazil from 1975 to 1984 and she might have felt more comfortable

using humor and Magical Realism as a strategy to discuss Brazilian social problems in her novel<sup>4</sup>” (267).

More than the use of Magical Realism, the structure of the novel is based on the Brazilian *telenovela* scheme. Questioned by Murashige, Yamashita tells why she chose to arrange Through the Arc according to the *telenovela* format: “I thought the soap opera would be a good way to talk about Brazil because it’s so much a part of the psyche of the country. And soap operas have been a way for people to criticize society and the government in a hidden manner” (329).

Regarding Brazilian experience in the 60s and 70s, it is relevant to register how television was used as a means of unification, with a view to keeping the whole nation under the control of an authoritarian government. In literature, the use of allegory and Magical Realism was crucial in those decades. Writers made use of such devices as alternatives to eschew censorship of dictatorial rules.

Yamashita lived in Brazil under this kind of atmosphere. In a way, her choice of using the Brazilian *telenovela* format also testimonies to the historical moment of the last years of military dictatorship in Brazil, when the need of criticizing things “in a hidden manner” was still necessary. Moreover, what about her choice of Magical Realism instead of a realistic approach? This question I pose is to be investigated. The initial stages of my research, however, suggest that it is the influence of a Brazilian context that, to a certain extent, leads the author to create a story about events which take place in Brazil, and also to choose a literary device widely associated with Latin-American cultural production.

Furthermore, I believe that, by using the structure of a *telenovela*, Yamashita obtains the necessary technique that juxtaposes and connects different subplots into the main one. What Yamashita wants to combine is “local histories” and “global designs”, in Walter Mignolo’s terms. Differently from the Brazilian political experiences that meant unification in

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<sup>4</sup> Translation mine.

a national level, Through the Arc goes beyond the regular boundaries that divide nations because Yamashita portrays connections between the local and the global entangled in a relation of diversity.

As I discuss the representations of the local and the global in Yamashita's novel, and how these spheres are fictionally articulated in Through the Arc, ultimately my study intends to analyze and investigate how local cultures in different parts of the Brazilian territory are affected by global influences and vice-versa. Due to this, my conclusion leads to a discussion of how the local and the global tend to prevail over the national dimension, although they do not simply abolish it.

### Mobility of Characters in Through the Arc: Movement in a Non-isomorphic Path.

*"Civilization is a movement and not  
a condition, a voyage and not a harbor"*  
Arnold Toynbee<sup>5</sup>

The reading of Through the Arc is comparable to the taking of journeys within a journey. This notion is deeply based on the fact that all characters move by some means, and the reader follows the trajectories they take, simultaneously, knowing that the novel itself is “the” journey made of journeys. In another dimension, outside the plot, there is the author’s journey, an issue I approached earlier in the Introduction. Significantly, Yamashita’s personal experiences of traveling and researching appear to be the sources of many components of Through the Arc, such as the three countries in which she sets the story: the U.S., Japan, and mainly Brazil. More than the setting, the signs of a journey are in the characters, in circumstances they go through, in the actions they perform, and the plot itself. Besides, the journey sensation is also incited by literature itself, as Iain Chambers points out:

... for to write is, of course, to travel. It is to enter a space, a zone, a territory, sometimes sign-posted by generic indicators (travel writing, autobiography, anthropology, history...) but everywhere characterized by movement: the passage of words, the caravan of thought, the flux of the imaginary, the slippage of the metaphor, the drift across the page... the wandering eyes. (10)

My view of reading Through the Arc as a journey is analogous to Chambers’s analysis of writing as traveling, even though these two dimensions can be mixed up before one can realize such fusion.

In Through the Arc, the sense of an intense movement prevails, provided by distinct dimensions of journey. I recognize several elements in the structure of Through the Arc that

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<sup>5</sup> English historian & historical philosopher (1889 - 1975).

resemble the mobility of complex transportation systems such as the subway systems of metropolitan areas. I choose this analogy for many reasons. First of all, it helps to situate the novel in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Published in 1990, Through the Arc approaches issues of a globalized postcolonial world in which the model of the metropolis is the space where things take place. As Chambers writes, “in the migrant landscapes of contemporary metropolitan cultures, de-territorialized and de-colonised, re-situating, re-citing, and re-presenting common signs in the circuits between speech, image and oblivion, a constant struggling into sense and history is pieced together” (14-15).

I argue that the redeployment of contemporary society that Chambers discusses is fictionally represented in Through the Arc through multiple and disordered flows of characters. If the “model of the city becomes, in Raymond Williams’ words, the model of the contemporary world” (qtd. in Chambers 27), then the system of transportation in the metropolis is the privileged condition in which this world is constructed. No complex metropolitan area is able to exist without an equally complex transportation system. The subway is often the system of many of them. What would be the transportation system in Through the Arc then? In other words, what moves the characters and everything they carry? Before I discuss and find out the answer to this question, I start by arguing that Kazumasa, as a main character that changes and connects the others, functions as a type of troubleshooter of Through the Arc’s transportation system, analogically speaking.

Interestingly, Kazumasa is a character who has the more-than-symbolic ability to fix tracks of trains, an ability that he uses in Japan and in Brazil. As the main character and a troubleshooter, he is the one who keeps the flows of all others in the story, influencing, connecting and many times changing their routes, as I discuss more fully in Chapter III.

The connections that the subway provides are complex because these systems are asymmetrical arrangements that are apparently disordered, but as their main purpose is to transport people, subway trains also carry these people’s stories. The subplots and the plot of

Through the Arc, which I call journeys within a journey, are organized as a subway system of a metropolitan area, in which the characters are on the move, having themselves shaped as they move. To be more specific, I prefer to compare the novel with the New York City Subway, which is a system that works uninterruptedly, transporting thousands of people everyday. Its map shows dozens of lines represented by different colors going in all directions in a two-way continual flow, often crossing each other. Designed to serve different neighborhoods, these lines symbolically begin/end in certain points in the map where the stations in the suburbs or in the extreme points of the island are. However, begin/end is particular to each subway user, depending on where he/she lives and where he/she goes. In Chambers's words, "Migrancy involves (...) a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain" (5). With its centenary recently celebrated in 2004, the NYC subway is a system built throughout time. Its numerous lines were extended many times, to all directions, witnessing the growth of a metropolis, serving all kinds of people. In other words, the system was created and expanded according to the passengers' needs, but these passengers were also built by it. In a similar way, the characters of Through the Arc in incessant flows comprise a representation of identities constituted on the move, subject to all kinds of changes.

The everyday mobility of people in the NYC subway is not restricted to native New Yorkers who simply go to work or home. Various ethnic communities have been taking the same trains as these "typical" American citizens since New York City's first official subway system opened in Manhattan on October 27, 1904. A variety of visitors, citizens from other states, businessmen, tourists, legal and illegal immigrants, and many other groups intensify the permanent flow and exchange of cultures. In Through the Arc, the ethnic groups are manifold, too, and their representations apparently cover the representations of East and West, the former colonies and neo-colonial powers, whose only resemblance is the experience of living in constant mobility.



Mobility as an important feature of human experience is caused by different reasons. The subway users, for instance, go on their journeys due to their own diverse interests. These people's reasons have, however, some common point that propels them to keep on using the same transportation system and going to similar places where they accomplish what they intend to. What is the transportation system of the characters in Through the Arc? On the other hand, what keeps them moving? These are the issues that I intend to discuss. In the NYC subway system, users keep their diverse concerns but usually make use of the stations of Manhattan central area, which are the passengers' main point of intersection.

The largest stations of the system are noticeably located in the geographical central area of the island. It is precisely the fact that millions of passengers embark and disembark daily that makes these stations larger, besides being places of encounter. In Through the Arc, the encounter of characters in particular locations generates new combinations, which are significant to the plot. The central region of Manhattan is an area full of contrasts and extreme diversity. The green of Central Park co-exists with the concrete man-made empire of skyscrapers, similar to Yamashita's setting that comprises the Amazon rain forest and São Paulo City.

In this chapter, I intend to trace and analyze the prevalence of mobility in the construction of Through the Arc by tracking the trajectories of some key characters, which illustrate mobility in the contemporary world. In order to arrange the analysis of these characters' mobility, I classify movement under two large groups: the global flows, such as immigration, that imply a national border-crossing in the story, and the movement performed within the national boundaries of Brazil. This is not meant to oversimplify the discussion of human flows represented in Through the Arc, but on the contrary, to make it more specific. In order to identify the representations of global cultural fluidity and their implications in the plot, I discuss the characters that perform movements in a global scale, in which the crossing of national borderlines redeploys traditional boundaries, exposing how blurred they have

become. I rely on Arjun Appadurai's model of global cultural flow, Chambers's Migrancy, Culture, Identity, and Sudesh Mishra's account on diaspora criticism.

Appadurai views the world in terms of "disjunctures between economy, culture and politics" (221). According to him, the world cannot be oversimplified through binary oppositions such as center-periphery, east-west, north-south. The study of today's global complexity depends on the mobility of people, images, technology, capital and ideas. These are dimensions that Appadurai calls ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas and ideoscapas:

I use terms with the common suffix scape to indicate first of all that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national grouping and movements (whether religious, political or economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods and families. Indeed, the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part by their own sense of what these landscapes offer. (221-22)

In other words, these terms coined by Appadurai refer to fluid perspectives that are irregular or "non-isomorphic flows" (11), as Anthony King strengthens, and, above all, they are intertwined. Introducing this discussion of Appadurai's scapes is crucial to identify their representation in Through the Arc, particularly that of ethnoscapas. I am aware that a choice of discussing the scapes separately would imply a certain level of analytical risk, due to the connectivity of these five kinds of movement in both the contemporary world and its fictional counterpart. As Chambers points out, "the modern migrations of thought and people are

phenomena that are deeply implicated in each other's trajectories and futures" (6). Relying on that, I am going to establish the representations of global human mobility or ethnoscapas as the guide for this chapter. The connections that derive from these characters' mobility as they cross each other's way are going to be analyzed in Chapter III.

To choose ethnoscapas as the key premise for the analysis is a choice linked to the very nature of the novel. Through the Arc is pretty much centered on the mobility of its characters, which echoes Appadurai's definition of ethnoscapas: "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers, and any moving groups and individuals that constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (222).

Obviously, Appadurai does not suggest the absence of human mobility in previous human history but reinforces that the global condition of these human flows affects the world in a new impressive scale. Moreover, the landscapes of human beings frequently create and live in new "imagined worlds" and so they "are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the 'imagined worlds' of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them" (222). Nowadays, a large number of people cross national borders in such a fast way never seen before.

The most relevant representations of ethnoscapas in Through the Arc which I discuss in this chapter are based on the mobility of Kazumasa Ishimaru, Jonathan B. Tweep, Michelle Mabelle, and Tânia Aparecida DJapan. Additionally, I discuss Hiroshi Ishimaru and Batista DJapan's movement, due to their association with Kazumasa and Tânia, respectively. Kazumasa is initially portrayed as a "typical" Japanese who immigrates to Brazil, but he does not in fact settle in a Japanese-Brazilian community, and instead travels to many places around Brazil. Also on the move, the New Yorker Jonathan B. Tweep is sent to Brazil by his company GGG, where he meets the French Michelle Mabelle. The Brazilian character Tânia

Aparecida starts her business trips within the limits of São Paulo State. As business grows, she goes to other Brazilian states and then the other parts of the world. She never comes back because there are always important business meetings or new contracts. Her husband, Batista Djapan, goes to the Matacão to take care of a new branch of their business. These characters' flows produce so many changes that a return to their old ways of life becomes impossible, suggesting the impossibility of the immigrant's attempt to go back home, as Chambers points out: "Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming – completing the story, domesticating the detour – becomes an impossibility" (5). It is also relevant to note that the flows within Brazilian boundaries sometimes acquire certain nuances similar to the global one because of Brazil's huge territory and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, I believe that it is necessary to distinguish global movement and domestic movement in order to accomplish the analysis. For this chapter, I am going to concentrate on the implications of the global movement performed by Hiroshi, Kazumasa, J.B., Michelle, Tânia and Batista.

I pinpoint two main causes for mobility in a global scale in Through the Arc: search for belonging and economy. Kazumasa is a representational construct for the first cause because his reasons to immigrate are a personal search for belonging. Jonathan Tweep, Batista and Tânia Aparecida perform their movement because of economic reasons, stimulated by the development of their businesses. Also worthy of being discussed, Michelle Mabelle, the French ornithologist that goes to the rain forest to study birds, has her global movement justified by scientific research.

I am going to start by discussing Kazumasa's search for belonging, having the characters Hiroshi and Kazumasa as creative representations of the Japanese immigration to Brazil. In order to understand Kazumasa's mobility, his cousin Hiroshi needs to be discussed, too. The conception of both characters seems to be inspired by Yamashita's research in Brazil, where she collected data about Japanese immigrant communities. The main register of her studies is the book Brazil-Marú, published two years after Through the Arc, although

previously planned, as the author explains to Murashige: “The second book was really the first. I went to Brazil in 1975 on a fellowship to study Japanese immigration to Brazil. I spent the first two, three years researching for that book, and the rest of the time – in between raising a family – I wrote the first draft of Brazil-Marú” (323).

In Brazil-Marú, Yamashita narrates the saga of a group of Japanese immigrants in Brazil. Their story includes the accomplishment of the immigrant dream of prosperity through hard work, conflicts and problems within the members of the community, and assimilation, ending with one descendant of the original immigrants narrating the story of unemployed Japanese-Brazilians doing the inverse journey of their ancestors, returning to Japan to work on menial tasks.

Although illustrating these issues of immigration similarly, Hiroshi and Kazumasa’s tales in Through the Arc are told in a much more lighthearted way than Brazil-Marú’s multigenerational saga, especially Kazumasa’s. Hiroshi, who is Kazumasa’s cousin, is the first to immigrate. He travels on vacation before starting college and stops in Rio de Janeiro, where he falls in love with Brazil:

[He] sat out on the beach of Ipanema. He sat there all morning and afternoon and evening, the balmy breeze caressing his thick hair and the sand and salt air peppering his face and arms. The bronzed women and men sauntered by wet, warm and carefree, and Kazumasa’s cousin began to weep. He sent his regrets to the University of Keio and never returned to Japan. (9)

Hiroshi’s romanticized motivation to stay in Brazil does not find continuation in the story. He actually establishes himself in São Paulo, where most Japanese immigrants live. It is not clear what he does for a living until his cousin comes to Brazil and wins the lottery. After that, he becomes the manager of Kazumasa’s money, recommending how the new millionaire should invest his money: “Karaoke bars, suggested Hiroshi. How about it? You and me, Kazumasa. Open karaoke bars all over Brazil. You’d like karaoke bars” (60). Economically,

the karaoke business is, above all, a business from which they make money, as I discuss in Chapter III. As a cultural expression, it resembles the immigrant's wish to preserve the Japanese culture in the new land. In fact, Japanese-Brazilian communities are known by their efforts to preserve the most features of Japanese culture they can, as Yamashita found out in her research in Brazil: "I also enjoyed seeing how the Japanese culture could move into the Brazilian one, and absorb it, but continue to hold its own" (Yamashita 326).

However, one of the most significant inspirations Yamashita obtained from this study in Brazil seems to be used in the conception of the main character Kazumasa, as she reports: "I spent so much time studying that immigrant community that I had to put a Japanese in" (Yamashita 326). It is more relevant, therefore, to explore the author's approach to immigration through Kazumasa. Differently from Hiroshi, Kazumasa's motivations to immigrate are discussed in more detail in the novel. He does not immigrate because of the beauty of the land or moved by a spirit of adventure. In fact, what calls his attention is how similar Japan and the Japanese community in Brazil are, as his opinion is shaped by the media: "Kazumasa had seen an NHK documentary about the Japanese in Brazil. Most of the Japanese who had immigrated there seemed to live in a quaint clump in an urban setting much like Tokyo. Then there were those who lived in the countryside growing Chinese cabbage, daikon and tea" (9).

Kazumasa is also motivated by his own unusual "nature". As said in the Introduction of this thesis, he is the Japanese with a ball whirling six inches from his forehead, who wants to find the reason why he is like that. This ball is his companion, often functioning as his conscience and the story's narrator at the same time. "Something drew Kazumasa and me irresistibly to Brazil" (9), tells the ball, addressing the reader independently.

Kazumasa's mother is another influence to his immigration. She thought "Brazil seemed to be the sort of place that might absorb someone who was different" (9-10). As any mother, she is concerned about her son's happiness and suggests that he should go to Brazil:

“Your cousin Hiroshi, remember? She pulled the address out of a small notebook. He lives in São Paulo now. Go see him”(10). Hiroshi seems to represent the previous existence of an immigrant community, as another factor of attraction to new immigrants, which induces him to come to Brazil.

In Brazil Kazumasa gets a job in the São Paulo City subway system, similar to the one he had in Tokyo. With his ball, he is able to look over and find, “with amazing exactitude, a system of standards and measurements to calibrate even the most imperceptible deterioration in any length of tracks” (7). An Asian immigrant working with railroads is a recurrent theme in Asian-American literature, although in a context that refers to their immigration to the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “and their remembered labor that made these immigrants ‘American’”(114), as Rachel Lee points out. In Through the Arc, Yamashita plays with the figure of the railroad worker by delegating to the ball what is considered Kazumasa’s “natural” ability to work with railroad systems. In Lee’s words, “Yamashita’s protagonist - Kazumasa Ishimaru - seems a subtle parody of a familiar archetype, the Chinese-American railroad worker” (113). In fact, Yamashita instigates readers that are familiar with Asian-American writings by inserting the railroad worker into a new setting and another historical moment, redeploying, according to Lee, the “archetype for postnational purposes” (114).

Another playful immigrant reference in the construction of this character is the immigrant’s dream of prosperity, although Kazumasa does not show any ambition to become rich in the new land. Influenced by his superstitious maid Lourdes, “Kazumasa spent all his money on lottery tickets, raffle tickets, sweepstakes, and even the horse races. Everywhere he went with Lourdes, he gambled and won. It was an immigrant’s dream” (42). The dream here is money itself, regardless of whether if it is earned through hard work or luck. Nevertheless, the main fact is that his sudden fortune has important implications for the plot, as his money is used to sponsor other characters’ businesses.

Also concerning Japanese characters, it is relevant to point out that Through the Arc does not discuss issues that are usually traditional in immigrant writing such as racial prejudice, the need to be socially accepted, and assimilation. Kazumasa and Hiroshi do not face problems in being accepted in Brazil. When Kazumasa becomes rich, his character develops into a type of hero of the poor people: “All of a sudden, people in the crowd began to step forward to shake Kazumasa’s hand, to embrace and to kiss him. In an instant he was carried up by this sea of humanity, rocking and singing and cheering. All through the night, the people danced and sang in the road in front of Lourdes’s home” (45).

Significantly, Kazumasa begins to experience, in the friendly side of Brazilian people, a feeling of belonging that he is not used to: “Kazumasa and I were there, in the very center of it all, laughing and singing and crying, all at once” (45). Indeed, this is part of his search for belonging, which is in a way achieved in the Brazilian affectionate atmosphere.

One last approach to the analysis of Kazumasa and Hiroshi would be from the perspective of diaspora. Among many different definitions, I make use of this term “to refer to any people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands; being dispersed throughout other parts of the world, and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture” (“Diaspora”).

In “Diaspora Criticism”, Mishra analyses the study of one of the main diasporists, William Safran, highlighting six characteristics that define a diasporic formation. In summary, an “expatriate minority community” has been dispersed from a specific original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions; retain a collective memory vision; believe they are not fully accepted by society in the host culture; regard their ancestral homeland as their true home; believe they have to be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland; and continue to relate, somehow to the original homeland.

Mishra emphasizes that “scholars have reacted diversely to this schema” (17), in which the six characteristics consolidate a definition for a diasporic formation. Published in



1991, Safran's approach is restricted to the homeland/hostland relationship; it lacks traumatic events as causes to diasporas, and do not include those diasporas that scatter for aggressive or voluntarist reasons, for instance. That is why scholars have added new ideas to Safran's study: Mishra's himself points out that Safran and other famous diasporists forget to include in their definition and models of diaspora the matters of class, gender and generations.

If approached from the perspective of Safran's six characteristics, Kazumasa and Hiroshi do not constitute typical representatives of a diasporic formation. As I have discussed, they are accepted in the hostland with little or no prejudice; they do not show bonds to their homeland such as memories, nostalgia, or connections with relatives. They do not write to their families or receive letters; they do not send money or keep pictures of places or people from Japan. For these reasons, I refer to Kazumasa and Hiroshi as a representation of an atypical diaspora, or a representation of ethnoscaapes, for Appadurai's term seems to be more inclusive.

Economic reasons are determining factors for Jonathan B. Tweep's mobility. At first sight, the coming of J.B. to Brazil strongly resembles the colonizer that moves towards an unknown land wishing to exploit its natural resources and dominate the natives. In spite of similarities, J.B.'s movement is adapted to a more recent historical moment marked by an unprecedented expansion of capitalism. J.B. is an executive who works for GGG Enterprises, a huge American corporation in New York. He goes to the Brazilian rain forest attracted by the possibility of developing a \$9.99 product based on the trading of healing feathers. His ambitions constitute the foundation of Yamashita's critique of the exploitation of natural resources by postnational companies. This critique becomes more evident when J.B. is informed about a kind of plastic recently discovered in the rain forest, the Matacão. As any typical businessman, he soon perceives an opportunity for profit and does everything that is necessary for his company to start extracting the plastic. He goes to Brasília to meet politicians and obtain permits; he promotes huge investments in new technologies that allow

the difficult task of extracting the hard Matacão plastic. More than that, “J.B. made the triathletic decision to import an entire building, all twenty-three floors, to the luxurious Matacão Row, overlooking the Matacão itself. [...] He wanted GGG’s presence to be felt immediately” (76).

Unlike Kazumasa, J.B.’s relationship with the new land does not involve any feelings, only his needs as a businessman are relevant. He develops no friendship with the natives, unless they are useful to his business purposes. The woman he falls in love with and marries is Michelle Mabelle, a French woman whose three breasts make him feel that she is good enough for a man like him. The romance was to him “the indescribable meeting of hearts and minds where two overqualified human beings find their romantic match” (122). He keeps on expressing his feeling of superiority in other occasions: “Nothing seems to work in this country!” (72), says J.B. “It exasperated him that things did not seem to work in this [that] country. There was no organization” (75).

One relevant feature of J.B. is his third arm. Instead of being considered an abnormality, his additional arm is viewed as an attribute that provides him with speed and efficiency at work, as I discuss in Chapter II. The natives’ reaction to J.B.’s third arm in the Matacão emphasizes the model of a colonizer-colonized encounter in which the first generates impact on the natives, and the latter are impressed by the new. This imposed way of thinking remains in the contemporary world: “Americans were certainly more advanced!” (74), they exclaim, when they first spot the extra arm. Before they get used to it, they “discussed third arms at length. Did other Americans have three arms? How about three legs? And better yet, three penises” (75)? Mané and his friend’s funny speculations imply a critique to a Brazilian point of view that tends to overrate imported products, ideas or people, resembling a heritage from colonial times when anything coming from abroad would be certainly considered better. Through humor, Yamashita seems to question the whole history of imperial colonization, suggesting, then, the construction of the myth of superiority of a culture over another.

In the wake of the myth of superiority, Brazilian tropical weather is another point from which Yamashita develops J.B.'s neo-colonial view. He never feels comfortable in the hot weather; he is always "in a visible sweat" (74). His small tape recorder does not work: "It's the humidity, Mr. Tweep fumbled in exasperation" (74). Moreover, J.B. starts thinking that "his third arm might be atrophying in this hot tropical weather" (75) and his efficiency as an executive may be threatened. If J.B. were a writer, he would certainly use literature to describe the native as lazy because of such hot weather, perpetuating the image of the colonized as inferior. Moreover, this would justify any abusive act of exploitation under his command.

Another character on the move is J.B.'s wife Michelle Mabelle, who plays a secondary part in Through the Arc but provides a relevant illustration of the effects of global mobility. She performs her own journey migrating to Brazil to study a rare Brazilian tanager and traveling in order to research "the migration patterns of the red-eyed vireo, taking intermittent trips into the forest and banding one of the few species known to migrate to the Amazon region" (73). The importance she gives to her ancestry of "a long line of bird lovers" (122) seems to satirize the European sense of nobility and the pride derived from it because her ancestors lived close to important people but were themselves obscure: "It was said that her great-grandfather, while studying a strange species of cockatoo, had met Paul Gauguin in Tahiti. And drawings of North American birds by her great-aunt, who had immigrated to French Canada, predated those of John J. Audubon" (122). Besides being a satire on the European nobility pride, this passage refers to human mobility as well. Mabelle is the only immigrant in Through the Arc that shows a high level of attachment to the cultural background of her homeland. The use of elements from French culture makes Mabelle a character whose home country seems to be present in her, more than in the others. Her talking parrot sings the *Marseillaise* and learns French expressions from Mabelle; she feeds her birds with *Camembert* cheese, and the babies she has are named *Liberté*, *Égalité* and *Fraternité*.

Such connections to the homeland have Mabelle end up differently from the other characters: “She swept up her three chubby babes and all the birds and their cages and had everything transported via private jet back to her birthplace in southern France” (203). Besides being the only one who goes back home, Mabelle is a quite ambiguous character who loves birds but keeps them in cages and a bird defender who gets married to an executive whose company trades feathers for profit, despite the way these feathers are obtained. Due to this, Mabelle seems to be Yamashita’s satirized portrait of the incongruity of contemporary activists, attempting to balance the inconsistency of a modern speech and a conservative attitude.

As profit seems to be a strong reason that triggers movement, I move on to the analysis of Tânia’s business trips. Initially, only her husband Batista is interested in pigeons. He looks after the birds and trains the carrier pigeons as a hobby. Soon neighbors become fascinated by the messages the pigeons are able to transport: “For some reason, no matter how simple nor how silly, the messages brought by the pigeons were more wonderful and exciting than a voice on a telephone” (15). Batista becomes an expert in pigeons’ seed; he starts timing pigeons’ trips and breeds prizewinning birds, which start to fly further and further away, always returning to the couple’s apartment. But “it was Tânia Aparecida’s idea, therefore, that great money was to be had in the pigeon business. Unlike Batista, who was really an enthusiast and sportsman, Tânia began to see pigeons as a profitable source of income” (92). She surprises her husband with the idea of using the pigeons’ messages for commercial purposes. “Pigeon advertising [...] Dona Tânia invented it” (93), says one of their recently hired workers.

As business expands, both of them need to travel to take care of it. Batista goes to the rain forest where they set up an important post. While he stays at the Matacão post, Tânia travels all over the world. Batista tremendously dislikes losing control over his wife, but conflictingly he recognizes Tânia’s gift for business and “he knew he had to thank her for

making Djapan enterprises a real business” (127). Tânia begins to set up posts in towns around São Paulo: “Tânia Aparecida was opening new homing posts in towns everywhere. The entire state of São Paulo was soon criss-crossed with Djapan Greeting Pigeon routes, and other states were eager not to be left behind in this trend” (137). The distances she goes increase gradually: “Soon she found herself as far from her home as Rio Grande do Sul, thousands of miles away at the very southern tip of Brazil. From there it was a short hop to Buenos Aires in Argentina. Djapan Pigeons Communications went international” (137). As she moves from one place to another, each day farther, Batista’s jealousy increases:

“Tânia Aparecida: where were you when I called at 2:00 AM yesterday? What were you doing at such an hour?”

“Darling, 2:00 AM your time is 10:00 AM here. I was in important negotiations,” Tânia Aparecida returned.

“Do you know how long it’s been?”

“It’s only temporary. Look how far we’ve come!”

“It’s going to be a year!”

“How time flies!”. (138)

The spreading of their business seems to be a stronger compulsion they cannot avoid. They miss each other but they do not want to quit. However, as time goes by, Tânia maintains the intense rhythm of work and Batista becomes depressed, as he cannot control his wife’s new way of life. His inner feeling implies that a return to the old way of life that he is used to becomes more and more impossible each day. I view Batista’s restlessness as an allusion to the immigrant’s feeling of the impossible homecoming, in Chambers’s words, because home for him is his wife’s arms, precisely what he misses most. The diffidence enhances as he notices that his wife is changing: “Batista read the newspaper articles with a mixture of pride and jealousy. Tânia Aparecida was in most of the photographs, her hair cut and waved in

some new style. Batista stared at her features, trying to find the woman he loved within the black-and-white newsprint” (134).

On the other hand, the absence of direct contact does not seem to affect Tânia Aparecida, who finds herself too excited with business life: “compared to washing and cooking this was so much better” (92). Tânia still loves her husband, although she never considers the possibility of interrupting negotiations to go meet him. Her relentless efforts culminate with the conquest of the world, “as Tânia Aparecida wove the Djapan Pigeon Communications network farther and farther over the globe and, as she had always wished and dreamed of, traveled abroad for the company to New York, London, Paris and Las Vegas” (138).

Such international distances gradually change the patterns of their relationship as a married couple. Their contact is now exclusively mediated by some means of communication, such as the telephone, their own pigeon message service, fax, conventional letters, or post cards. When “months of absence were quickly turned into years” (174), Batista starts to doubt the image of the woman he has in his mind, which after all that time no longer exists, as she changes physically and behaves in a different way now. Despite the long distance in time and space, he never gives up loving his wife:

just when he was beginning to fear that he was losing his memory of her, that he would not recognize her if he saw her, that the memory of her face was only of the photographs she had sent him, he would catch a whiff of some scent, some odd perfume in the air that could only belong to Tânia Aparecida. Then the memories would flood back in rushing torrents, his heart heaving, a deep moan cupped in his throat. He often thought that it would be easier if Tânia Aparecida were dead, but then he knew it would be worse. (197-8)

Batista’s dilemma is the one of a man who left home. His representation of home, however, is not São Paulo City where he lives, but his wife’s companionship. The

exaggerated number of professional tasks that keeps them apart from each other suggests that the author criticizes the absence of limits of the hard working dogma of capitalism, imposed on those who choose to have their own business: “There was bird seed to negotiate, cages to build, water troughs to clean, pigeon dung to cart away. He had nearly a dozen full-time workers, expensive incubating machines, barns silos, and trucks” (136).

As they pay the price of investing in their own business, time passes and Batista starts to create a new Tânia Aparecida in his mind and heart. The idealized picture that he paints of her is equivalent to the ideal image an immigrant develops of his beloved homeland. In his famous essay “Imaginary Homelands”, Salman Rushdie describes how exiled Indian writers, including himself, establish a relationship with their homelands that is based on a sense of loss, memory and (re)creation: “we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10). My analogy is that Tânia Aparecida functions as Batista’s private “imaginary homeland”, which is based on a “present that is foreign” and a “past that is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time” (Rushdie 9).

In this sense, it becomes impossible for Batista to go back home. The impossibility of a homecoming culminates when the couple loses their business. Having nothing else on the Matacão, Batista has no choice except heading back “home”. But where is home indeed? The “real place”, São Paulo, is never mentioned. The only reference of home is Tânia Aparecida’s arms, which he believes will come back to him: “Batista knew that Tânia Aparecida was coming home. He knew because he himself had written it down out of habit for the weekly pigeon message. Having lost all pigeons, Batista stuffed the small piece of paper away in his pocket” (210). The superstitious act of writing himself a message in a small piece of paper to be carried by the pigeons, which is the original idea that started off the pigeons communication business, is no longer possible as he does not have any of his pigeons anymore. Ironically, Batista is the man who breeds the best homing pigeons in the world, the

birds whose main ability is to find their way home over long distances. But now he cannot find his own way back to Tânia Aparecida, the only true home he believes he has. At the end of the narrative, Batista's hope is all that is left as he sees "a small figure emerge on the horizon, the figure of a dark-skinned, saucy woman he knew so well" (211). In fact, the narrator does not tell if the woman he sees is really Tânia Aparecida. This event remains obscure. Nevertheless, I perceive that the woman he knows "so well" exists only in his mind now. The facts in their tale suggest that, after years of separation, Tânia is too changed physically and psychologically so Batista is not able to know her "so well" anymore. As he sees a shape of a woman in the horizon, at a certain distance, I believe that this is perhaps not Tânia, whose new way of life as an 'emancipated' woman seems to be a one-way road. In other words, it is implicit that she does not want to be a housewife again and Batista will never have his ideal wife back, neither their old way of living.

The profusion of migration in today's world is relevantly represented in Through the Arc, in which not a single character is static. Discussing the mobility of Kazumasa and Hiroshi, J.B. and Michelle, Batista and Tânia in this chapter is a stimulating exercise of figuring out what they possibly represent. The figure of the main character Kazumasa would be first identified as a representation of the Japanese diaspora in Brazil, as Brazil is the host country for the largest community of Japanese outside Japan. Functioning as a symbol of a dispersed ethnic group, Kazumasa chooses to reside permanently in the host country, very far away from his homeland, but there are other features to be considered. Kazumasa does not maintain his distinctive Japanese traditional way of life. Moreover, he does not keep connections with homeland and family. On the contrary, he gets married to Lourdes, a Brazilian woman who worked as his maid when he arrived in Brazil. He is not established in a Japanese neighborhood in São Paulo City or in a community in the state's countryside, where Japanese immigrants are typically set. Once in Brazil, he keeps on traveling around the huge Brazilian territory, due to personal and professional reasons. In addition, his initial motivation



to immigrate, which was to feel at ease with his own self, is in fact brought about in Brazil, where he simply does not have bonds with his homeland. The ball whirling over his forehead, for which he wants to find an explanation, is surprisingly identified with the Matacão plastic, its “mother”, as they are magnetically attracted to one another.

J. B. Tweep, as the CEO of the postnational corporation GGG, is never associated with the United States. He is mainly acknowledged as a businessman whose only interest is his company's. Therefore, J.B. is more a representation of a postnational capitalist whose identification does not relate to where he is but to what he does. He is a good illustration of a postnational figure ready to operate in New York, Brasília or somewhere in the jungle. In J.B.'s circumstances, the obsession is to move to where profit is.

At first sight, Michelle is an environmentalist and a scientist, but, contradictorily, the one that destroys environment is her employer and husband, as pointed out earlier. Also, the fact that she is a character connected to the French cultural values of her homeland – she feeds her parrots with camembert - suggests that she is too fastened to traditional national values, unlike any other character in the novel.

The analysis of Tânia Aparecida leads to the need of contrasting her business trips to J.B.'s. The comparison of these characters' mobility provides the picture of a “twenty-first-century globalized, multinational, and diasporic world” (Linda Hutcheon 3) that is represented in Through the Arc, a world in which human flows are not one or two ways anymore, as Chambers states:

For although the journey from the centre into the periphery, seeking the unexpected, the bizarre and the wonder of it all, may still dominate [this] literature (...) such stories ultimately represent a weak echo in the volume of travel migration and dislocation that so many people coming from elsewhere have faced and continue to experience. (4)

Coming and going “elsewhere” is what makes Tânia very representative of our times. Although her pigeon business is based on a postcolonial country, her trips in order to set it up abroad do not restrict her to move from periphery to the centre, because she is neither in the periphery nor in the centre. The movement is actually multi-directional, resulting in a much more complex system that does not follow traditional tendencies based on binary oppositions such as North-South, East-West, or centre–periphery. In addition, she creates transnational networks that provide a global interconnectedness that goes beyond business. In Globalization and Culture, John Tomlinson discusses globalization citing McGrew: Globalization is “simply the intensification of global interconnectedness” (qtd. in Tomlinson 2). Because of this, I see Tânia Aparecida as a representation of the “great movements of people across boundaries and territories” (Homi Bhabha 196), currently taking place in the world.

As Michelle Mabelle seems to establish a conventional relationship with her homeland by keeping her life in Brazil filled with French national symbols, Batista DJapan also presents a conservative pattern of relationship with his wife that is based on sexism: “When a man comes home at night, he should have a supper waiting!” (12) he says. This explains why he does not feel comfortable in the new world order in which his wife goes on her business trips and they stay far from each other. The man, once extrovert, becomes secluded and more jealous every day.

Back to the journeys of my introductory analogy, I maintain the argument that the subway system with its lines and passengers is a suitable comparison to Through the Arc’s model of mobility. Therefore, the world that Yamashita portrays in the novel is as complex as the metropolis scene in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in which French, North-American, Japanese, or Brazilian origins are less important, not thwarting one’s opportunities in such assorted atmosphere. In Appadurai’s words,

People, images, technology, capital and ideas follow non-isomorphic paths: of course, at all periods in human history, there have been some disjunctures

between the flows of these things, but the sheer speed, scale and volume of each of these flows is now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture. (225)

Appadurai's statement about the disjunctures among the five scapes finds in Through the Arc a representation that is rich in its elements of mobility, according to the examples I have selected for this chapter. Through this investigation, it becomes clear that the scapes are disjunctured not only in relation to each other but also in relation to the official configurations of the world, such as the centre-periphery division, the East-West, and mainly the nations. Moreover, the analysis of the characters' mobility leads me to identify the disjuncture among the ethnoscares themselves. The human flows represented in the novel defy the organization of the nations and disrupt the conventional ideas of movement, as they portray an atypical Japanese diaspora, an American incursion that does not represent the American Empire but a postnational global enterprise, and a third-world business that conquers the whole planet. In a "Personal Response", Bhabha writes:

Today, the great movements of people across boundaries and territories – migrants, economic and political refugees, diasporic communities, exiles – coincide with the diminution of the sovereign authority of the nation-state. Transnational federations, supranational legal bodies, and global corporations have both breached the national territory and attenuated its economic autonomy and its social territoriality. (196)

This eases the understanding of why Kazumasa, Hiroshi, J.B., Michelle, Batista and Tânia are never described from the perspective of their nationalities, and, with the exception of Michelle Mabelle, they all show no apparent bonds with their homelands. Therefore, if I conclude that they had no homeland to return in the end, it is also possible to state that they did not seem to have them even *before*, at the beginning. Also, these character's lack of bonds with the national dimension is supported by other elements in the story, such as setting.

According to Cristina Stevens, Yamashita's "choice of a magical setting seems to invite us to abandon the traditional concepts of nation (emphasis added) so as to embrace a new definition of world in which culture has become plural, and consequently refuses to fit the narrow dimensions imposed by geographical boundaries<sup>6</sup>" (269-270).

As a representation of this new world, Through the Arc shows, as I have argued in this chapter, an intense mobility that implies cultural exchange through the crossing of blurred boundaries. Therefore, I turn to the analysis of the global and the local perspectives in the next chapter, which are addressed not only through a magical setting but also through other magical elements.

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<sup>6</sup> Translation mine.

## Addressing the Global and the Local through Magical Realism, the Literary

### Bonding Agent of Through the Arc

*We live in a world of many kinds of realism, some magical, some socialist, some capitalist, and some that are yet to be named.(...) In much aesthetics expression today, the boundaries between these various realisms have been blurred.*  
*Arjun Appadurai<sup>7</sup>*

One of the most noticeable literary devices in Through the Arc is Magical Realism. When Rachel Lee refers to the novel as a “quasi-magical realist narrative” (106), she suggests that Through the Arc is not a typical magical realist book in the tradition of Gabriel García Marquez, for instance, but Lee does not deny that Magical Realism is a relevant literary strategy in the novel. This chapter focuses on Yamashita’s use of Magical Realism in Through the Arc as an artifice of literary unification, examining how it provides a juxtaposition of the global and the local issues discussed in the novel. In other words, this chapter approaches Yamashita’s view of the global and the local, as she articulates them through Magical Realism, in order to discuss the influence of global culture on local cultural manifestations. Magical Realism itself started out in Latin-American literature but later developed into a world-wide “globalized” technique in literature or “an international tendency”, as William Harmon points out in his dictionary of literary terms. It is an attempt to look at life through a symbolic perspective, with the purpose of provoking specific effects, in which the magical or supernatural elements co-exist with the ones that represent a conventional notion of reality.

In the Introduction of this thesis, I discuss the origin of the term Magical Realism in 1925, when Franz Roh coined the term to refer to post-expressionist paintings, and also how

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<sup>7</sup> Appadurai, Arjun, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1996) 53.

its concept is transferred to literature, borrowed by literary critics, mainly Latin-American. The quotation from Harmon's A Handbook to Literature that I have cited in the Introduction shows that he defines Magical Realism based on words such as "supernatural, myth, dream, *fantasy*" (297, my emphasis). Also, J.A. Cuddon makes use of the words "imaginary, *fantastic* and dream-like quality" (521 my emphasis), in order to explain Magical Realism. Moving from one field to another in time and space, Magical Realism has developed new nuances, but it has always been related to the fantastic. As a matter of fact, fantastic is sometimes used as a synonym to Magical Realism. Literary studies in Portuguese and Spanish bring the word *fantástico* instead of magical. Reviewers and critics such as Gier and Tejeda often choose the word fantastic to refer to some elements in Through the Arc. Due to these reasons, I opt for discussing Tzvetan Todorov's notion of the term fantastic before moving on with this analysis. In The Fantastic, Todorov states that ambiguity is what leads the reader to the fantastic: "Reality or dream? Truth or illusion?" (25). This ambiguity generates a hesitation "that creates the fantastic effect" (26). Similar to Cuddon, Todorov discusses the definition of the fantastic with the help of the words supernatural, extraordinary phenomena, illusory, imaginary and as being a kind of description of "events which are not likely to occur in everyday life" (34).

In this thesis, I choose not to call Through the Arc a magical realist or fantastic novel, but I prefer to refer to it as a novel filled with magical elements. As I am going to discuss, the novel brings the magical, bizarre, and supernatural elements connected to what is usual and ordinary in contemporary society, offering some different possibilities for interpreting the world. In Magical Realism, Theory, History Community, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris put together several essays on Magical Realism. Analyzing all of these essays, Zamora and Faris conclude that different authors have singular opinions about Magical Realism. Nevertheless, there is one coinciding point in their analysis, which is the fact that "the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday

occurrence – admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism. Magic is no longer quixotic madness, but normative and normalizing” (3).

In other words, magical elements in a literary realm are to be seen like any other attribute, as I intend to show in this chapter. For this analysis, I set up and analyze two groups of characters in Through the Arc: the non-Brazilians and the Brazilians. I also work on the Matacão, the magical realist site in the story, and on the main character’s ball, a satellite next to his head that also functions as the narrator.

The non-Brazilian characters are Jonathan B. Tweep, Michelle Mabelle and Kazumasa Ishimaru. As I am going to discuss, each of them presents a different physical aspect that is magical realist. I intend to show how their extraordinary looks create the ideal condition for their social approval and acceptance in the literary reality of Through the Arc, following Zamora and Faris’ notion of Magical Realism. Jonathan B. Tweep, often J.B., is an American executive from New York with three arms. He “accepted his third arm as another might accept ESP, an addition of 128k to their random access or the invention of the wheel” (30). He also benefits from his third arm, being a pianist, a baseball player, juggling balls in a circus. “In the matter of love making, well, the advantages were obvious” (31), the narrator tells, humorously. Mabelle is a French ornithologist with three breasts that “had always harbored extreme embarrassment and shame about her unusual trinity” (122). However, she is naturally accepted by other characters. In fact, J.B. falls in love with her because of her three breasts. Kazumasa has a ball that gravitates and whirls next to his head. To him, “who had gradually discovered the thing in front of his nose, the ball became something of comfort” (5). He has no problems being accepted in Japan and in Brazil, although his whirling ball looks odd in the eyes of people. On the contrary, the sphere helps him to find jobs in railroad departments in Tokyo and São Paulo City.

As Yamashita associates these magical characters – the Japanese, the American and the French – with contemporary situations, she constructs a “reinvented world” produced by

her own creative writing. In fact, Rawdon Wilson uses this expression to refer to the use of Magical Realism in literature. However, what kind of effects would these magical elements provoke in Through the Arc? In my contention, they accentuate the conventionally realistic portion of contemporary society, making J.B., Mabelle and Kazumasa critical representations of the contemporary. In this sense, an American capitalist, who is supposed to work more and faster, needs to develop a third arm. A Brigitte Bardot-like Frenchwoman, who is also an animal rights activist, is supposed to have bigger breasts or an extra one to fulfill the attributes of an icon of sexual beauty. Finally, a Japanese man guided by his own personal satellite resembles the universal association of Japanese with technology that makes life easier, as well as enhances human dependency on it. In other words, I state that the three of them represent global stereotypes, often produced by media, of the American, French and Japanese subject.

Another analytical perspective of these three character's magical constitution is related to the author's view of Brazilians. As she tells Murashige, "there is a very generous and gracious acceptance of strangers and people who come to visit Brazil(...) I wanted that to be there – the man with three arms or a man who had a ball in front of his head would be accepted. Without question" (329). In other words, J.B., Mabelle and Kazumasa's experience in Brazil tells a lot about the Brazilian hospitality, which the author personally experienced while living in the country for nine years.

Differently from J.B., Mabelle and Kazumasa, Magical Realism is not in the physical characteristics of the Brazilian characters. Actually, Batista, Tânia, Chico and Mané are involved in bizarre events, performing magical professional activities. In São Paulo, Batista and Tânia Aparecida DJapan develop a pigeon message business, which starts with one single bird and turns into a large company, the "DJapan Pigeons Incorporated". The enterprise grows fast: first in the state of São Paulo, then Brazil, and finally the whole world. The couple's relationship also turns into something quite uncommon. They separate from each other when Batista goes to take care of their business on the Matacão and Tânia Aparecida begins to



travel around the world, expanding the business in an endless chain of meetings with executives. Batista gets mad because she never returns home; she is always sending her husband messages promising to return soon. Batista is the one who starts it all but Tânia is responsible for the expansion of the business. She has the idea of sending advertising messages. Soon, the huge “Pomba Soap Company” requests the services of their company. Thanks to Tânia, the couple’s business achieves a multinational level, and its name is changed to “Djapan Pigeons Communication International”.

The *cearense* Chico Paco is a fisherman who makes a pilgrimage to the Matacão, the uncommon place he believes to be sacred. His story of faith and pilgrimage is covered by the media and makes him famous all over the country. Soon he becomes the owner of Radio Chico Station, whose show “Answered Prayers” is the most popular. He engenders an institution that supports pilgrims that come from different parts of the country: the Foundation for Votive Pilgrimages. He is also the *Chicolândia* Amusement Park’s owner, built next to the Matacão, in which there were imitations of Hollywood movie scenes and great world monuments.

Mané da Costa Pena is a regional type from the rain forest who finds out how to heal by tickling one’s earlobe with a feather. It starts as an innocent habit: “The others teased him, calling him ‘Mané Feather’” (18), and “all his folk said he was crazy” (22). But his life is changed forever when a national television channel comes and interviews him about the feather. When the reporter has her shoulder pain relieved by the feather in front of the cameras, people begin to believe that Mané can perform all sorts of cure using the feather. Accidentally, the feather turns the humble barefoot Mané into a celebrity, and later a Doctor on “Featherology”. People start stroking their ears with feathers all over, and many come to the Matacão to meet Mané.

Batista, Tânia, Chico Paco and Mané play similar roles of self-made men/women who come out of nothing and succeed economically. However, the representations of such stories

of success through Magical Realism serve the “purpose of political and cultural disruption” (3), which is, according to Zamora and Faris, one of the functions of Magical Realism. These authors state that “Magical Realism also functions ideologically [...]: it creates space for interactions of diversity” (3). Analyzed from this point of departure, the Djapan pigeon company is a magical device that creates at least three different versions of interaction in the contemporary world. The first one is in the beginning; the pigeons carry messages with sayings of wisdom and luck, and all sorts of predictions. They are written by Batista, who becomes a kind of “prophet/ fortuneteller” (41). These messages are initially collective but, as they train more pigeons, they are able to send individual messages that work as self-help ones, changing people’s lives. Crowds of people simply believe in the messages without questioning them. Empowered as her husband’s agent, Tânia calls him: “There’s a publisher who wants to put all of your messages in a book” (138). Secondly, the pigeon business functions as an advertising company. Tânia Aparecida finds out how much money she can make sending personal messages of products. Mr. Rodrigues, the executive from “Pomba Soap Company” - a playful allusion to Unilever’s Dove soap bars - hires the services of Djapan instantly, increasing the sales.

Thirdly, the growth of the system of communication of Djapan Pigeons is an allusion to the advent of the internet, although it does not depend on technology to exist. It begins as a new kind of mail, more sophisticated than other means of communication: “the messages brought by the pigeon were more wonderful and exciting than a voice on a telephone” (15). It becomes a prestigious means, too: “The surprise was that instead of communicating by telephone, he could now communicate with Tânia Aparecida via their pigeon communication service” (138). Like a female Bill Gates, Tânia Aparecida waves the “Djapan Pigeon farther and farther over the globe” (138), making their business grow as fast as the World Wide Web. The company’s branching out and its frantic setting up of new posts in the five continents also resemble the growth of a franchising system in the era of capitalism.

Chico Paco's Radio and Foundation suggest a critique to a very frequent combination nowadays: religion, money and fanaticism, fostered by the use of media as means of manipulation. Everything starts with a promise made by a simple woman and an honest belief of a naïve fisherman. The people's response to Paco's pilgrimage and the amplification of his story told by the media transforms it little by little. "It's him. It is the angel Chico Paco!" (83). Gradually, pilgrimage and faith are turned into a profitable business based on premises that are no longer honest: "Radio Chico was now a bustling entity with new and popular programs, eager sponsors, and thousands of new listeners everyday" (163). The diversification of the business includes the opening of *Chicolândia* amusement park, sponsored by the American multinational enterprise GGG.

Mané's ascension also takes place through the media. Before television comes, his people do not believe in healing by feathers. The mediation of television makes the public response change. "The habit, he explained, was better than smoking or drinking. It had worked wonders with his sleepless children and was completely natural" (18). The manipulation by the media is clearly represented in this change. The people and the media, which often refers to him as a modest, simple man in the two first parts of the book, start to consider him a feather guru. As a consequence, he was so frequently accosted by feather enthusiasts and sales persons that "he is finally summoned to give classes and lectures at the local college" (79).

My analysis so far shows seven characters that I have divided into two groups: the non-Brazilians and the Brazilians. Moreover, I distinguish two different magical realist strategies for each group: the non-Brazilians with their magical physical looks, and the Brazilians with their bizarre occupations. However, what is most relevant is that, in spite of the two different strategies, Magical Realism is the connection, a type of literary bonding agent, which helps join them all in a single main plot. They are all characters whose looks and stories are fundamentally filled with magical elements. These elements, which I call the

literary bonding agents in the novel, function as a “space for interactions of diversity” (3), as I have cited before from Zamora and Faris’ Magical Realism, Theory, History, Community. Even the four Brazilians present great cultural diversity, as they come from different Brazilian states, very far from each other. In this manner, I realize that the extension of such cultural diversity is wider than the local or the national: it is global, as I intend to discuss in the second half of this chapter.

If the characters carry their own symbolic cultural space, the Matacão is the fictional site that provides the stage for their interaction. It is as magical as the characters here analyzed, but, in the reinvented literary world of Through the Arc, the Matacão is a physical space to which people travel for different reasons. The Matacão is made of a mysterious plastic material and located in the Amazon Rain Forest. The main events in the story take place on the Matacão.

Bizarre characters performing odd activities in a supernatural place is an association that serves a higher purpose. In my contention, Magical Realism is a device carefully planned by the author, in order to express the articulation between local cultures and the global cultural flows that influence them. Gier and Tejeda state that Yamashita “writes about the micro-effects of transnational economics in an empirical and realistic manner but your [Yamashita’s] decision to address these issues creatively in the ‘fantastic’ propels them into a different realm”(59). When Gier and Tejeda employ the term transnational, they hint at the notion of movement which, in the novel, goes beyond the field of economy, involving cultural issues like immigration, ethnicity, cultural exchange, technological development and the manipulation of media. In Through the Arc, these issues go from the local to the global and vice-versa. In order to discuss these flows in the novel, I focus on two main magical devices in the novel: Kazumasa’s ball and the Matacão.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to narrow down the concept of the global and the local before I proceed with the analysis. The use of the words global and local is very recent,

presenting meanings which may differ. Fabio Duarte distinguishes the terms global and globalization from Marshall McLuhan's Global Village concept, in which one dominant culture tends to impose itself and homogenize the local ones:

We do not see the global as a strategy to encamp all others in order to reach one common denominator. This would be reductive and dangerous because it mitigates differences and makes them indistinguishable. We see it as an agency of particularities inherent to each space, to each ethnic group, mobilizing diverse cultures<sup>8</sup>. (33)

Conceived as an agency, the global is associated with the movement of culture in a world scale. Such movement is promoted and increased by modern means of communication, transportation and technology. In this sense, the interaction between different cultures in contemporary world globalization is different from eliminating regional manifestations, as McLuhan states in his book Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, published in 1964. Global agency is the means to reach the globe and when the globe is reached, we can talk about globalization. Another parallel discussion is related to the so-called global culture. The cultural elements of a supposed global culture are those which one day were related to a certain local culture or which started as local. These elements spread out by the means of the global media devices, such as cinema and advertising. According to this, one can say that the local cultures that held the power of global communication took advantage of it and promoted the spread of their own cultural values, influencing other local cultures around the world. Would this be a means of homogenization? The influence of one culture over another is not a new phenomenon. The difference today is the global proportion of such influence. It takes place all over the world, anytime, as long as a group is somehow in contact with another. However, cultural influence is different from cultural suppression because the local reacts in many different ways to the global cultural influences, as Appadurai states:

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<sup>8</sup> Translation mine.

The globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, and clothing styles) that are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues. (229)

It seems that, to a certain degree, the local resists the influence of the global, but it is certainly transformed by it. The local, usually associated with the permanent and diverse manifestations of local cultural values, started to be modified by the global recently, although there is no way to determine when the process started. But the study of the local dimension of cultures has gained visibility recently, because of the modern means of communication, like TV and the internet. Paradoxically, the internet, today's main tool of global cultural influence, has been turning into a window to many local manifestations that have not had the chance of showing themselves to the world before. Differently from television, the internet allows interaction; it is a two-way road because one cannot simply have his/her own TV show, but certainly can have his/her own website. Non-democratic regimes in countries like China and Iran try to control the use of internet, but the number of users who get to express themselves through it grows faster than governments can possibly control. Some of these groups have, maybe for the first time in history, the opportunity to communicate with each other and expose to the world how they feel, what they think and produce.

The local dimension has also become better visualized after the end of the cold war period. The bipolarization of the world in two huge blocks, ruled under the political and military influence of the United States and the Soviet Union, left no time and space for discussing regional and local affairs. I would ponder, then, that the discussion of the local dimension has increased after 1990, for the local itself has always been there, taking place everywhere in the world. Its exposition to the world, however, was politically possible after the end of the Soviet Union and technologically propitiated by the ascension of the internet.

As I center this research on the representations of cultural mobility, the most relevant analysis to be done in Through the Arc is how the global and the local interact. Duarte sees in the present world the strengthening of global relationships and the rebirth of local characteristics. In my contention, the articulation between the global and the local through the lens of magical elements inserted in the story serves to provoke specific effects. Through them, Yamashita criticizes the ideology of efficiency in the North-American society, where an employee needs to have three arms so that he is able to work more and much faster, and a Japanese man needs to be guided by his own private satellite.

This satellite, Kazumasa's ball, is undoubtedly one of the most important magical devices in Through the Arc. It leads me to identify two different levels of relationships in the novel. It is a device that helps main character Kazumasa to live by providing him some extra gifts. At the same time, the ball is the narrative voice omnisciently able to watch and tell different events taking place all over, sometimes suspending the sequence of facts to address the reader directly.

The origin of the ball is told at the very beginning of the novel as a typical magical realist event. After a supernatural "enormous crack of thunder" and "flying mass of fire", the ball came straight to Kazumasa's forehead and remained there. The Japanese boy "was never again in his life alone" (5). From this moment on, there develops a "personal" relationship between the sphere and Kazumasa. The ball becomes part of Kazumasa, suggesting the association between technology and Japanese society. Strategically located next to his head, the sphere may represent a critique of the human dependence on technology. "When he felt no particular impulse to do or accomplish anything, he simply followed his ball" (5). But technology is simultaneously portrayed as something that also provides human development. The ball plays the role of an instrument of work for Kazumasa. When Kazumasa finds a job in a railroad company, he discovers that the ball is able to detect any problem in railroad tracks. This makes him "the man of the moment" (7) and he develops special skills of

measurements to adjust tracks with the help of his ball. One day, as any technological product in contemporary society, his gifted ball becomes obsolete, when someone invents a better one with a liquid crystal display (LCD) and five-year warranty. Kazumasa is then dismissed from his job in Tokyo.

But the obsolete quality of the ball in Japan may not be useless in a less technological society. When Kazumasa immigrates to Brazil, where his cousin is already living, the ball is again an instrument of work. At first he gets a job in the subway department of São Paulo City. Later, the ball's special and inexplicable skills turn it into a Matacão plastic finder and the postnational GGG enterprises hire Kazumasa so he can locate Matacão plastic deposits in the Amazon forest.

The second level of relationship I identify is the relationship between the ball and the reader. The ball is Yamashita's narrative strategy: "The advantage of having the ball as a narrator was that it gave me a lot of latitude in how I might tie segments and all the characters together. It was a way to have a singular vision running through the book" (Murashige 326). In addition, this omniscient narrator can be compared to an instrument of global agency in a contemporary society. Like the internet, the ball provides the reader with information from different parts of Brazil and from all over the world. This information comes simultaneously as if readers have different windows open at the same time, being able to access them through their personal computer. Yamashita reinforces this effect by structuring the novel as a *novela*, the Brazilian soap opera model which is characterized by having a central plot surrounded by many subplots that take place at the same time. Yamashita herself announces the similarity between her novel and a *telenovela*, in the author's note of Through the Arc:

the prime-time *novela* in Brazilian life is pervasive, reaching every Brazilian in some form or manner regardless of class, status, education or profession [...] In traveling to the most remote towns, one finds that a single television in a church or open plaza will gather the people nightly to define and standardize



by example national dress, music, humor, political state economic malaise, the national dream, despite the fact that Brazil is immense and variegated. (IX)

The ball is then a connection among different places in the Brazilian territory, where smaller stories are embedded within the main one, before they are all transferred to the Matacão, the main setting. A narrative vehicle, the ball also connects events and locations outside Brazil - in Japan and New York. Wilson relates this kind of magical realist narrative instrument to “the faculty for boundary-skipping between worlds” (210), calling it a kind of performing voice. In other words, the performing voice is the voice of a narrator with the ability to make the reader cross or skip from their conceptual space or real world into the fictional. The performing voice connects, according to Wilson, “several different places” (209) implicated in the story. In Through the Arc, the ball allows boundary crossing from one fictional space to another, in two different ways: it is possible for the reader to navigate from the novel’s magical realist world to a real world, as I do by analyzing characters in this chapter. In addition, it is possible to navigate from the local to the global and back to the local, as I discuss more deeply in Chapter III. The ball allows the reader to access different information in different locations, as events take place simultaneously, structured in separate chapters. In the first part of the novel, the reader is led to understand that all these stories will somehow intertwine and become one:

So it was that Kazumasa and I had come to live in Brazil. Kazumasa had no idea at the time how this simple pastime of staring at his window on the tenement scene below might affect his own future. These things I knew with simple clairvoyance. I also knew that strange events far to our north and deep in the Amazon basin, events as insignificant as those in a tiny north-eastern coastal town wedged tightly between multicolored dunes, and events as prestigious as those of great economic capital of the world, New York, would

each cast forth an invisible line, shall I say, leading us to a place they would all call the Matacão. (15)

As the main setting of Through the Arc, the Matacão intends to represent a space that is highly constituted by the global, even though it keeps its own local characteristics. It is a fictional site, made of a solid piece of plastic and “for some reason magnetic” (97). The Matacão is supernatural, like other magical elements in the story. Also, it comprises a world that could be, as Wilson defines, a fictional world “in which the indications of local place are sometimes those of the extratextual world but at other times those of another place very different in its assumptions, and which, if it were to exist purely, would be a close axiomatic world” (217).

Therefore, the several dimensions within the Matacão are linked by its own magical nature, since it functions as a link among different fictional worlds, also referring to extratextual world, in Wilson’s terms. In this sense, the Matacão serves the purpose of depicting, for instance, a national and transnational space to where characters are attracted for different reasons. That is why the Matacão is not located in the rain forest by chance: its location strongly suggests that the author needs a place in which the representations of the local and the global are clear and identifiable. The rain forest is local for twenty million people who live there; nationally speaking, the rain forest is almost 50% of the Brazilian territory in its northern region. Yet, the rain forest itself is also an international space: it extends to nine different South-American countries. It is undoubtedly a place of global interest, to where Greenpeace activists, scientists and tourists from all over want to come, research, explore and exploit, due to its environmental relevance, extreme biodiversity, possible oil and mineral reserves, and natural beauty. The Matacão is the representation of a space of global interest, but it also intends to be a global space, whose characteristics I choose to discuss from Duarte’s point of view.

Attempting to locate global space, Duarte gives the example of an ATM's virtual space compared to the São Paulo State Bank (Banespa) skyscraper in downtown São Paulo. Banks used to be made of physically-located-concrete buildings, mostly related to their communities. The Banespa skyscraper, for instance, is often identified as one of the main symbols of São Paulo City. But banks changed their own nature fast with the internet. As Duarte points out, banks evolved from buildings located in cities and towns to virtual cyberspaces available anywhere through the internet.

Like banks, the Matacão is a place that is first presented as local, physical and unknown in the jungle, arousing no global interest. It simply starts as the place where the character Mané da Costa Pena has an unproductive farm. Digging the land, Mané finds a shiny plateau, made of Matacão plastic, in his property. Television and radio networks announce to the whole country that this new mysterious place has been discovered and immediately thousands of people are attracted to it: teams of researchers with "sophisticated measuring equipment", tourists "looking for the tropical paradise", safaris made up of entomologists, international ecological groups, businessmen and their postnational corporations, pilgrims, etc. Strongly influenced by this sudden movement of people, the landscape of the Matacão changes from a local farm to a global cultural space in a very short period:

On the Matacão, human life was adapting itself to the very plastic mantle [...]  
A number of travel agencies had found it lucrative to expand their activities to include the promotion and sponsoring of events on the Matacão. The Ringling Brothers Circus had already come and performed on the Matacão, as had the Peking Acrobats and the Shakespearian Summer Festival of Kansas City. There had also been a Live Aid event with at least 100 big-name entertainers to raise money for the victims of nuclear fallout in Nevada, Utah and Arizona. The World Hockey play-offs were scheduled to be played on the Matacão this

year, and there was even talk of having the skating events of the Winter Olympics on the Matacão. And the Pope himself had chosen to meet his South American flock on the Matacão. (101)

Despite these varied international events, the manifestations of local culture are not eliminated. Yamashita portrays the local within the global by showing smaller events of minor international significance, like Candomblé affairs, weddings, folk-dancing and prayer meetings taking place at the Matacão. Through the Arc then corroborates Duarte's statement that the global and the local are dimensions that co-exist, exchanging and negotiating permanently.

This negotiation is doubly articulated: it is not only people and values from everywhere that move to the Matacão but the Matacão also goes everywhere. When industry researchers discover that the Matacão is made of a kind of hard plastic with magnetic properties, the postnational GGG corporation starts exploring Matacão plastic. With the help of Kasumasa's ball, they find many deposits of the plastic all over the Amazon forest, and soon "every industry from construction to fashion jumped into Matacão plastics" (142).

This is the point in which the two main magical devices in the novel are connected. Initially described as local phenomena from distinct locations, both the ball and the Matacão have their meaning expanded and become global. The sphere is the only technology available to discover new Matacão deposits because of its magnetism. The Matacão is the most modern and desirable product of its time and the greed for its plastic is an obvious parody for the greed for oil, as if it were an accentuated representation of humankind's avarice.

The combination of these two elements is the beginning of the turning point of the story. International spies want to kidnap Kazumasa because of the ball. The greed for Matacão plastic promotes intense destruction in the Amazon forest. In the end, as if nature takes revenge on humans, both the ball and the Matacão are destroyed by a bacteria, and with them all the other magical elements disappear from the story.

When Yamashita juxtaposes the “reinvented” world and the realist in Through the Arc she trespasses all kinds of symbolic boundaries and makes readers reach some conclusions about the “real” world. Her use of Magical Realism is in accordance with the definition presented by Zamora and Faris: “A mode suited to exploring – and transgressing – boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magical Realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction” (5-6).

Relying on Zamora and Faris’ definition, I claim that the most relevant fusion promoted by the magical elements in Through the Arc is the coexistence of the local and the global juxtaposed in one single space. As I have argued, Magical Realism ties subplots, each one portraying different cultures in the novel. Readers have the picture of the permanent encounter of local cultures from different parts of the globe provided by the mechanisms of global agency, through the literary device that is Magical Realism, an international literary technique that can be aptly used to discuss global issues. In conclusion, Magical Realism functions as a means of transportation whose passengers are the characters of the novel. They carry stories and cultural values, moving along varied spaces and, through this movement, a plot filled with global and local issues is constructed.

**Interconnectedness: the Articulation of the Global and the Local  
in a Space of Unstable Boundaries**

*“As in a real tree, there are interconnections  
and interdependencies between all systems levels;  
each level interacts and communicates  
with its total environment.”  
Fritjof Capra<sup>9</sup>*

The atom particles, the tiniest units ever discovered, are said to be parts of the atom due to the existence of a connection among them. Significantly, the particles of the atoms are invariably moving in the empty space, compounding sets of interconnected particles that originate larger sets that are also interconnected. The scientific model of a multidimensional set of “connected particles on the move” is the inspiration and a point of departure to this chapter, which I start by posing the questions: what and who is being interconnected in Through the Arc? What are the “connected particles on the move” in the novel? How do they connect? Attempting to find these answers, I focus on the interconnectedness among important components in the novel, such as locations, characters, businesses, ideas, and habits, in permanent rearrangement. The connections among them lead to transformation and thus to the issue of cultural influence. First, it is a basic requirement to clarify what I mean when I make use of the term interconnectedness in the context of this literary analysis. I choose to apply it as a term that “tends to refer to the idea that all things are of a single underlying substance and reality, and that there is no true separation deeper than appearances” (“Interconnectedness”). This definition leads me to another question: what would be the underlying substance(s) or reality under the many subplots and characters of Through the Arc? Moreover, the issue of the absence of true separations instantly leads to the artificiality

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<sup>9</sup> Capra, Fritjof, The Turning Point (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982) 280.

of the boundaries, a key point of this thesis. As boundaries are socially constructed due to political interests and power relationships, I propose to explore the blurriness of boundaries and how it remodels the spaces in the novel having Anthony King's notion of the subject as a main principle. According to King,

[b]oundaries are constantly being drawn round cultures, and sub-cultures, in terms of power, economic, political or social; territorial markers establish specific domains, whether laid down by the state, the market, by ethnic groups, or by people, who are inside, or outside. Cultural insignia can be visual or spatial, static or carried around. (151)

Discussing the symbolic and physical crossing of such boundaries must precede the analysis of interconnectedness. In Through the Arc, the representations of cultural global flows are so intense and frequent that readers are induced to view that boundaries actually do not exist in Yamashita's fictional world. Moreover, if boundaries are fictitious, so are the territories they supposedly divide. In this chapter, I also investigate the territories that are transformed by cultural global flows based on the anthropological notion of deterritorialization, deeply discussed by Arjun Appadurai.

As I argue in Chapter I, many characters function as representations of human mobility in Through the Arc, but the implications of such movements must be examined more carefully. The analysis of mobility in Chapter I exposes the fictionality of the national space insofar as I explain that the characters analyzed here show no apparent bonds with their homelands, crossing national boundaries freely, according to their own personal interests. Nevertheless, there must be different implications to be considered in the local and the global spheres. That is why I also wish to delineate how the global dynamics articulates the local cultural-economic order, in order to investigate how Yamashita juxtaposes the global and the local in spaces that are mapped by blurred boundaries. I use the expression global dynamics to stress the non-static nature of this process, in which a continuing development is provided by

a set of mechanisms that propel economic and cultural values/products in a global scale flow. In Through the Arc, some familiar representations of global dynamics are immigration, international trade, and cultural influence. With this investigation, I intend to identify and elucidate different levels of interconnectedness in Through the Arc, as well as the author's balance (or the lack of it) between the representations of the local and the global. In order to do that, I am going to rely on Fabio Duarte's analysis of the global from the local perspective, and on John Tomlinson's study of "complex connectivity" and "global spatial-proximity".

In my investigation of interconnectedness in Through the Arc, I begin by elucidating the concept of space in literature. In "Spatial Criticism: Critical Geography, Space, Place and Textuality", Phillip E. Wegner presents an overview of space and spatiality in literary criticism. The author cites some of the important thinkers, such as Arjun Appadurai, Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre and Neil Smith, to mention just a few. Analyzing Neil Smith's view, Wegner underlines the perception of different "nested spatial contexts", such as body, home, community, city, region, nation, and globe. Quoting Smith, Wegner emphasizes that "by setting boundaries, scale can be constructed as a means of constraint and exclusion [...] but a politics of scale can also become a weapon of expansion and inclusion" (qtd. in Wegner 183). Based on Smith's statement, I tend to view space in Through the Arc as an expanding and contracting force in which inclusion and exclusion are throbbing. Due to this permanent pulsation, the boundaries that usually help to define spaces become fluid, unstable, subjective and, in a way, nearly inexistent.

The Matacão is, as I discuss in Chapter II, the physical and symbolic setting that is central to the plot of Through the Arc, serving the purpose of linking different dimensions through its magical environment. As stated previously, its magical nature is used as a connection between the global and the local. In the end of this chapter, I return to the investigation of the Matacão under a different parameter: the spatial analysis of it as a metaphor for the globe.



Before reaching the Matacão, where the web of the characters' relationships looks more obvious to the reader, there are other spaces that I consider important to examine, in order to characterize both the local and the global within the local, and to proceed to the discussion of interconnectedness. These spaces are São Paulo City contrasted to Lourdes's community in the suburbs, Chico Paco's coastal village in Ceará State, and Mané's rural farm in the Amazon rain forest, before he finds out the Matacão. I intend to discuss them under the perspective of Duarte's viewpoint, which relies on the work of geographer Milton Santos:

[t]his idea that each region has concomitantly local and global characteristics remains notable in the most recent book by Santos. In addition, the strongest and most instigating aspect is precisely the possibility that, instead of thinking the local from the global structures, we overturn the situation and study which elements are exclusively local and how each region plays its role in the globalized universe<sup>10</sup>. (101)

Thus, I start by analyzing the evidences of São Paulo City as a space that contains the local and the global "concomitantly", which become clear on the day Kazumasa wins the lottery. He goes on a city tour guided by Lourdes, a tour in which an immigrant is taken by a native who chooses where to go and how to go according to her own values. They go by bus as she usually does, due to her very simple way of life as a cleaning lady. Kazumasa is trouble-free and open-minded. He finds the tour fun, indeed. In the metropolitan area, he sees the sophisticated neighborhoods of São Paulo City, which are quite different from its downtown area, as well as different from traditional neighborhoods built by communities of immigrants of different origins. In other words, he has an overview of the metropolis, the space that Raymond Williams calls the model of the contemporary world. As they go away from the central area, they reach Lourdes's small suburban community:

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<sup>10</sup> Translation mine.

Lourdes took Kazumasa and me to the movies, through the shopping centers, in and out of shops and restaurants, through parks and churches, up and down the wealthiest and the poorest streets of the city. Lourdes showed us the great mansions where she had once worked as a maid or a cook or a nanny, and she took us to the end of one bus line and several transfers further to the outskirts of the city, where she lived with her own family. (42)

The transition from one space to another includes stops for coffee and cheese bread, as well as Cokes and ice-creams. The street drinks and foods are significantly constituted of local and global influence and, as they go on their tour, they switch from one globalized location, i.e. São Paulo City, to another global-influenced place, though they differ completely. The mediation of the means of transportation suggests the interference of mobility in the (re)arrangement of each of the two spaces, which are simultaneously remodeling each other by the permanent flows between them. The bus that crosses São Paulo city limits also evidences how the boundaries “have been blurred” (Appadurai 53), as it turns the transfer into a simple, imperceptible move.

As they reach their final destination, the description of life in Lourdes’s community tends to highlight how different it is from São Paulo. It stresses its local attributes, such as the tiny houses of “cement block structures with tin or tile roofs”, the oilcans and pots with “ferns, begonias, ivy and draping succulents”, the barefoot children running, and the dogs and chickens wandering “freely everywhere”. Nevertheless, a detail illustrates that there is no cultural isolation in the way of life of Lourdes’s community: “The bigger girls all carried babies and toddlers on their hips wherever they happened to go. The boys pulled carts piled high with smashed aluminum cans and old Coca-Cola bottles” (42). The bottles of Coca-Cola are not simply a symbol of global cultural influence, but the boys’ new use of them is a significant representation of how instruments of cultural homogenization can be “absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues”

(42), as Appadurai ponders. As I state in Chapter II, the local is certainly transformed by the global. It is also pertinent to consider the opposite possibility in Through the Arc, which is the global being transformed by the local.

The second space I investigate is Chico Paco's town in Ceará State, in the northeastern coast of Brazil. Differently from São Paulo City and Lourdes's neighborhood, the narrator does not devote many paragraphs to a description of that space, but calls attention to some aspects such as the physical beauty of the place: "the multicolored sands lifted in great changing dunes, a characteristic of this part of the coast" (24). More interesting than the place itself is what the locals can make of it, creating colorful pictures with sands in bottles that are taken everywhere:

Chico Paco remembered the first pictures in the bottles – the scenes of his home, mud huts, coconut trees and grazing cattle. One day, a tourist brought a picture of the Mona Lisa and asked the boy to duplicate it in a sand bottle, and he did. After that, the boy left the town and went away to be famous, sand-bottling every sort of pictures from the President of the Republic to the great Pelé. (25)

The sand-bottling artistic technique has its origins in a little town on the coast of Ceará State, due to the talent of a native boy and the place's unique multicolored sands. However, the cultural influence brought by human movement, symbolized by the tourist and the Mona Lisa picture, projects his work of art out of his village, as he starts to create pictures that are nationally and internationally known. The artist himself is now on the move, selling his sand bottles all over. More than artistic or commercial, the sand bottles can also function as a symbolic extension of that special place. By purchasing one of them, tourists take a piece of "paradise" home, keeping it forever.

In the same chapter of the novel, another description shows local cultural production turned into commercial goods but in this situation the local artisans who own the gift do not

travel and do not really benefit from it. Ceará's art of weaving lace is famous for its gracefulness, beauty and complexity. Although traditionally a women's occupation, Through the Arc shows Gilberto, who cannot walk, as one of the artisans in the village that fills his day weaving the fine Ceará lace:

During the day, Gilberto worked bent over a small pillow of pins and thread, tossing the ends of the balls of thread skillfully so as to weave a long, narrow and complex piece of finery. Dona Maria Creuza would take the lace ribbon, wound around pieces of cardboard, and dicker the price in the plaza. When the lace ribbon reached its final destination – the trim on a woman's blouse or negligee or the delicate border of a fine linen tablecloth – it had been bought for a hundred times the money Dona Maria Creuza received for it. (26)

Gilberto and his grandmother Dona Maria Creuza remain poor, whereas others make a lot of money by selling the Ceará lace around the world, especially in industrialized societies where handmade products achieve their highest status and prices. Furthermore, in a symbolic level, the work of weaving lace, which consists of a fine netting of fibers, announces in advance what Through the Arc really intends to be: a story of stories, complexly interconnected, woven in ornamental designs, in order to achieve a literary-artistic purpose in which the contemporary world's interconnectedness is portrayed. This is, indeed, what the narrator suggests in the end of the same chapter:

Just as Chico Paco set forward on his journey, Kazumasa and I were on a rickety train somewhere in the state of Minas Gerais (...) old Mané Pena was carving a foot-worm out of the sole of his foot, and Batista and Tânia Aparecida were rolling away from their early morning lovemaking. I also know, to make the picture complete, that at that very moment, there was also a certain American in New York, by the name of Jonathan B. Tweep, pensively

studying newspaper ads in the last car of a subway train. Well, I am full of such coincidental information, and international at that! (28)

As a representation of a local cultural manifestation, the Ceará lace has many other analogous examples in distinct locations around the world<sup>11</sup>. As a symbol of interconnectedness, the intricate patterns of the Ceará lace have other correlating illustrations in the story. One of them is the São Paulo's metropolitan area itself, entwined by a complex net of its buses lines. Another one is Mané's community in the southern region of the Amazon Basin, the third space I choose to investigate in this chapter.

Before settling with his family on a farm, "Mané had wandered the forest like the others – fishing, tapping rubber and collecting Brazil nuts" (16). These are, indeed, activities that used to be done by many indigenous peoples from the Amazon Basin. They resemble a nomadic way of life in which a community moves from place to place, rather than settling down in any particular location, searching for better life conditions. Considered primitive by the urban civilizations, these activities do not involve the depletion of natural resources of the rain forest.

The modification of the Amazon's natural space by humans and the remodeling of the native's way of life starts with the Brazilian government intervention, whose interest is to settle people on farms in order to "colonize" the Amazon Basin: "We've done the clearing for you, sir. Now it's all yours, from that tree yonder to that stick yonder"(16). The production of a "new space" by human actions intensifies tremendously after this, although it faces the power of nature, such as the wind, the tropical sun, and the "torrential rains [that] washed away the tillable earth" (16) in Mané's new property: "What was uncovered was neither rock nor desert, as some had predicted, but an enormous impenetrable field of some unknown solid substance stretching for millions of acres in all directions" (16). The discovery of the

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<sup>11</sup> Some types of laces include needle-point, *Valenciennes*, tulle, bobbin, pillow, Venetian, flat, Venetian point, *Alençon*, *Alostlace*, bone, cutwork, *merletti a piombini* (Italian), *reticella*, point *d'esprit*, *torchon*, macramé, blond, *d'Angleterre*, *Mechlin*, Brussels, point de Gaze, Duchesse, point appliqué, Bruges, *Binche*, filet, plat appliqué, English, Irish crochet, Limerick, *Carrickmacross*, *passementerie*, and guipure, to name just a few.

Matacão attracts television stations, and television attracts “scientists, super naturalists and ETs enthusiasts [who] flooded in from every corner of the world to walk upon and tap at the smooth hard surface formerly hidden beneath the primeval forest” (16). The intense and subtle flow of people brings with it condominiums and hotels. The natives, who used to live as collectors, find new jobs at the construction sites along the Matacão, or as hotel cleaners and clothes washers. Yet, some kind of simplicity persists in their way of life: the street bars, sidewalk cafes, the “jokes with the other old timers” (17). However, the coming of the national network television, as well as “the remote control and the buttons of his new TV” (17), suggest that relevant transformations are going to take place in Mané’s life.

Like the Coca-Cola bottle, the Mona Lisa replica, and the woven lace, Mané’s surroundings also show elements of global cultural influence. They are described before the foreign cultural invasion triggered by the discovery of the Matacão, as Lee observes: “He [Mané] builds his home, arguably his most localized setting, from the ‘residue’ of hotel construction sites and decorates its interior with the remnants of global products” (111). One of the global products to which she refers is again a Coke bottle, used as a vase to set Mané’s collection of feathers. Significantly, the Coke bottle is “strewn over an embroidered and hand-laced cloth on the TV set” (23). The Coke bottles in Lourdes’s community and the Ceará lace are miles away. By mentioning them again, now in Mané’s house, Yamashita shows new uses to the same products in different locations, adding to them other local characteristics. A collection of Amazon birds’ feathers in Mané’s home is strongly linked to the local. However, its position on the television set, side by side with the coke bottle and the hand-laced cloth produces symbolic connections among the local and the global, the North, Northeast and Southeast of Brazil, among the villages and communities that are birthplaces to different characters, and so on. Furthermore, the integrated use of these objects suggests that all combinations become possible: the local with the local, the local with the global, and the global with the global. The results of such combinations produce a variety of situations with

one single similarity: their interconnected nature, or the juxtaposition of the global and the local in a single space.

So far, the analysis of interconnectedness from the perspective of three localized spaces - a city and its neighborhoods, a coastal village, and a rural farm in the rain forest - has shown some of the representations of the local articulated to the global, mostly according to Duarte's point of view. Interestingly, Yamashita chooses to describe these spaces in Part I of her novel, strategically entitled "The Beginning", before the characters move to the Matacão. Through this strategy, one may infer that the juxtaposition of the local and the global is not something new, but was present before important events took place in the story. In fact, juxtaposition becomes more obvious and complex in Part III, entitled "More Development". Based on this, I also propose to investigate the articulation between the global and the local from another perspective, in order to avoid the mistake of settling "analytical boundaries" around those spaces. So I now turn to a more intricate perspective that is not related to the static geography of any specific location. It is the perspective of the construction of interconnectedness on the move. To reach this, I have discussed the mobility of characters in Chapter I, which serves my major purpose now: to identify and investigate the web of connections weaved in movement, especially as they go from varied locations to the Matacão. The examination of interconnectedness in the dimension of movement requires another theoretical concept, namely, deterritorialization. In Anthropology, the word "deterritorialized" is used "to refer to a weakening of ties between culture and place. This means the removal of cultural subjects and objects from a certain location in space and time. It implies that certain cultural aspects tend to transcend specific territorial boundaries in a world that consists of things fundamentally in motion" ("Deterritorialization").

The world in Through the Arc is, precisely, a world marked by flows that easily cross boundaries, because of their state of blurriness. In Chapter I, I discussed the mobility of Kazumasa Ishimaru, Jonathan B. Tweep, Michelle Mabelle, Batista, and Tânia Aparecida

Djapan, due to their national-boundary crossing. However, Lourdes, Chico Paco, and Mané da Costa Pena are also characters on the move, moving within Brazilian national boundaries. This is not to say that the representation of their experience is less deterritorialized, as Appadurai points out: “not all deterritorialization is global in its scope, and not all imagined lives span vast international panoramas. The world on the move affects even small geographical and cultural spaces” (61). Appadurai’s account on deterritorialization leads us back to the three spaces that I have analyzed – Chico Paco’s village, Lourdes’s community, and Mané’s farm – and it corroborates the perspective of the construction of interconnectedness on the move, which I discuss next.

Mostly Lourdes, Chico Paco, and Mané perform the crossing of state boundaries within the Brazilian territory. Significantly, Kazumasa also goes to many places in Brazil. More relevant than that, they are influenced and changed in the process of moving. As characters flow, the meeting with the others provides transformation, forging new ways of life as a consequence of economic and cultural influence. Therefore, for the analysis of interconnectedness on the move, it does not matter where or when they are, but how they go and what changes as they go. In order to identify and analyze it, I focus on the author’s devices to provide interconnectedness, such as Kazumasa’s intervention in other character’s lives, randomness, capital, mass media, religion and ecology.

As I affirmed earlier, the representations of human interconnectedness are mostly introduced in Parts III and IV of the novel. Nevertheless, I first discuss the representations of human interconnectedness in Parts I and II due to their relevance. I opened this chapter with some questions; one of them is how locations, characters, businesses, ideas, and habits are connected.

In fact, I started answering this question in Chapter I when I discussed Kazumasa’s immigration to Brazil. In his case, he is “connected” to Brazil by his family’s influence, as his mother encourages his immigration; by mass media, as he sees a documentary on about Brazil



on TV; by the previous emigration of his cousin Hiroshi, and mostly because of his feeling of displacement. The ball he carries next to his forehead makes him feel different from everyone, which makes him believe that going to Brazil could be a way of finding an explanation for it.

He settles in São Paulo, though not by chance: that is where the largest Japanese community outside Japan resides. In São Paulo, his cousin “calmly walked Kazumasa through the bureaucratic arrangements of renting a comfortable apartment with a maid on the fourteenth floor of a high rise” (10). From the large windows of his apartment, Kazumasa can observe Batista DJapan and his wife: this is how their stories start to get connected. Also by chance, he gets to know Lourdes, who comes to his life as the maid hired by his cousin. She falls in love with him, and their marriage constitutes the only happy ending in Through the Arc.

The element that connects these characters in the very first events of the story is randomness. Randomness is, indeed, a strategy that is often employed in literature, and it may captivate readers. In the Brazilian *telenovela* format, randomness is profusely explored. In addition, Yamashita herself tells the reader, in the author’s note, that Through the Arc is a kind of *novela*.

Randomness is again a strategy of interconnectedness when Batista DJapan starts to write messages to be carried by his pigeons. They were “like those in fortune cookies: aphorisms and pithy maxims, coincidental truths, humor, a thought for the day” (40). People speculate on the contents of the messages; they wait for the pigeons every week. They believe in such messages, interpreting them in varied ways. One day, Batista writes a cryptic one: “The Japanese with the ball will find friendship and fortune in Brazil” (39). This message becomes the author’s strategy to develop interconnectedness in the plot when Lourdes hears it on the streets and tells Kazumasa to believe it. Superstition is also an element of connection between these two characters of distinct cultural backgrounds. Kazumasa circles the lottery numbers “at random” (41), and wins. As he becomes rich, his money serves the purpose of

interconnecting characters and events in different dimensions, such as sponsoring other character's businesses or providing conditions for their mobility. Again I define Kazumasa as the troubleshooter of Through the Arc's subway system, as he provides and keeps mobility in the story.

The connections derived from Kazumasa's sudden wealth are numerous and deterritorialized. Appadurai states that "the idea of deterritorialization may also be applied to money and finance, as money managers seek the best markets for their investments, independent of national boundaries" (49). Playing the money manager in Through the Arc, Hiroshi invests Kazumasa's money successfully in an infinite, wide-ranging chain of businesses: "Without knowing it, Kazumasa began slowly to have international holdings, real estate in Tokyo and New York, hotel chains, entire islands with all their flora and fauna, stocks in everything from computers to cars to chips and clips" (87). The Karaoke business is particularly worthy of being analyzed as a mixture of business and global cultural influence. Lee identifies it as a sign of Yamashita's utopian "Asiatic Globalization" (117) or a tendency of a certain Japanification in Brazil. However, I wonder what Japanese karaoke could possibly represent in Through the Arc. This nightclub style is invented by the Japanese, as the narrator explains on page 87, but "Hiroshi sold the karaoke bars as franchises" (88). The word franchising, interestingly enough, comes from French and means "free". The business method that it stands for is developed in the United States, coming to prominence with the rise of franchise-based restaurants. In other words, the novel's karaoke is a Japanese idea, spread in Brazilian and South-American cities, through an American method, whose name derives from French. As a business that shows no ties to place, one could claim that Through the Arc's karaoke is deterritorialized. Moreover, Hiro's Karaoke functions as an instrument for the expression of any culture. Kazumasa likes to sing "popular Japanese songs" (149); Batista sings his own kind of music to express his *saudades* of Tânia Aparecida and Michelle

Mabelle prefers “Catherine Deneuve’s old hit songs” (175). Reduced to an instrument, karaoke is not a cultural influence, but a new way of expressing one’s culture through music.

Other types of connections resulting from Kazumasa’s money are related to sponsorship and donation. The pigeon business, which I analyze in Chapter I under the theme of mobility, starts to grow with Kazumasa’s capital: “Hiroshi, you give money to the pigeon couple. Buy more pigeon” (60). Through Kazumasa’s Foundation, the new rich’s money reaches other characters:

Chico Paco pulled out a check from the Kazumasa Ishimaru Foundation and signed by Kazumasa himself. A small note was attached to the check. “Mr. Chico Paco: I’m very happy you arrived at the Matacão safe to pray for Rubens. Please use this gift to continue your good work. Your friend, Kazumasa Ishimaru. (118)

The sponsoring of Chico Paco’s pilgrimage shows one relevant variety of interconnectedness in Through the Arc, which is the link between money and religion, which I discuss later on in this chapter. Before that, let me close the examination of interconnectedness related to Kazumasa’s capital by examining his involvement with J.B. Tweep and GGG, an aspect that is extremely relevant to the plot.

One of Kazumasa’s many investments managed by Hiroshi is in GGG Enterprises stocks. One day, Kazumasa, who has no idea of his own investments, receives a phone call from J.B., when his holdings in GGG strike 50 percent, making Kazumasa its major investor: “since you now play such a large and critical financial role, I suppose it is incumbent upon us, as well as you, to develop a relationship, don’t you agree?” (89). This way, Kazumasa goes to the Matacão, where his ball is magnetically attracted to “the large slab” (105).

In Kazumasa’s point of view, such attraction may be an explanation to the ball’s existence. This makes him believe that he is close to an end in his search for belonging, as the narrator tells: “ he imagined himself with his face plastered to the floor of the Matacão and

me, his ball, hugging what he imagined to be my true mother” (105-6). For J.B., however, the magnetism between the ball and the Matacão plastic is simply a new profitable business: ““This ball, Mr. Ishimaru’, said J.B., ‘is the key. If I’m not mistaken, it should lead us to other deposits of Matacão plastic’” (113). J.B. was right.

The exploration of Matacão plastic through the use of the ball leads the entire story through another path, causing new events to happen, especially from the novel’s Part IV until its end. J.B. persuades Kazumasa to start the search for the Matacão as “his mission” in life, and they go on an endless journey through the forest, detecting countless deposits of Matacão plastic. “In the next few years, Matacão plastic would infiltrate every crevice of modern life – plants, facial and physical remakes and appendages, shoes, clothing, jewelry, toys, cars...” (143). The profitable magnitude of the Matacão plastic engenders huge voracity around the world: “Everyone was after a piece of Matacão plastic” (145). Complications such as the disappearance of Kazumasa, industrial espionage, the kidnapping of Lourdes’s children are events directly connected to the greed for Matacão plastic. Significantly, these events take place in Part IV and V, entitled “Loss of Innocence” and “More Loss”, respectively.

In addition, the multifaceted use of Matacão plastic can be seen as another dimension of interconnectedness, in which “all things are of a single underlying substance”, to borrow the expression from the definition of interconnectedness. The plastic, nevertheless, is commercially explored before researchers know exactly what it is; it is quite an unknown substance. Therefore, its versatile use spreads destruction, as a devouring bacteria starts to corrode the Matacão itself “and everything else made of Matacão plastic” (207). The end of GGG’s main business is also the end of J.B. Tweep: “he laughed hysterically, walked to the gaping edge of that twenty-three-floor plexiglass corporate structure and threw himself over” (208).

J.B.’s death comes after the failure of the economic activities of his GGG in Brazil. These activities include the extraction of the Matacão plastic, which I have examined in the

light of Kazumasa's sponsorship, as well as the trade of feathers, which is also worthy of discussion.

The feather business has no direct relationship to Kazumasa's money. As I discuss in Chapter II, the healing feather is Mané's creation. J.B. likes the idea and turns the feather into a business. Following my proposition of discussing interconnectedness, I pose again the same question of how they are connected. Yamashita does not focus on the strategy of randomness this time, but she relies on J.B.'s sense of business as a capitalist: "there was also a certain American in New York, by the name of Jonathan B. Tweep, pensively studying newspaper ads in the last car of a subway train" (28). Furthermore, the author develops an intense circulation of information through mass media. As soon as he is hired by GGG Enterprises, J.B. becomes obsessed with researching the ideal 9.99 product, until one day he finds it, as one of his assistants brings a story on a videotape: "It was Mané Pena on national television demonstrating the medical attributes of his wonderful feather on reporter Silvia Lopes" (58). Both J.B.'s habit of reading newspaper ads in the last car of a subway, and the fact that he is aware of Mané's story through a tape are the reasons for his coming to Brazil; this news functions as a device to connect J.B. to others in the story.

Radio, television and the pigeon communication system are mass media vehicles that play important roles in Through the Arc. Under their influence, characters are permanently reshaped. Discussing how mass media operates in the text, Yamashita tells Gier and Tejada that the "radio is a powerful medium of communication" (68) in Brazil, and she wanted to explore that. I investigate the use of mass media as an instrument of interconnectedness and character transformation relying on Appadurai's account of *mediascape*. Appadurai defines *mediascapes* as a repertoire of images disseminated around the world, highly influential and culturally transforming. The term also refers to the means of distribution of such information: internet, television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, etc. These images are selected, created and distributed according to a varied set of interests. They flow fast and with a high

degree of freedom. Billions of people around the world are influenced by Hollywood movies, for instance, but the reaction to them is complex and varied. Also according to Appadurai, these images “are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world; and to the images of the world created by these media” (223). He estimates that the most important thing about mediascapes is how they “provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ‘ethnoscapes’ to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of ‘news’ and politics are profoundly mixed” (223).

The mixing of business and religion, the media and politics is extensively worked into Through the Arc, where the radio seems to represent the best medium to reach the less privileged classes. Radio broadcasting is, for instance, responsible for the spreading of a lot of information among the characters, converging their initially separate stories into one: “Over the radio, Batista heard the news about Chico Paco’s progress” (85). The poor and the religious seem to be more susceptible to radio influence. Lourdes listens to the “Praise the Lord” radio station, which follows Chico Paco in his pilgrimage, “making updates every few miles” (117). With the money he gets from donations, Paco starts his own radio station whose main show is called “Answered Prayers”. Radio Chico soon evolves into a more complex business. It “was now a bustling entity with new and popular programs, eager sponsors, and thousands of new listeners every day” (163).

The complex net of connections that is weaved through radio broadcasting becomes more complex with the influence of other mass media. In New York, J.B. studies any possibility of turning simple things into profitable industrialized products, focusing on newspapers ads and watching TV. When he hears about the feather, he comes to Brazil, as I discuss in Chapter I, setting up a branch of GGG Enterprises on the Matacão.

However, the effect of the closeness between J.B. and Mané seems to cause more change in Mané’s life. There is the transformation caused by the flow of capital, in this case

the investments of GGG Enterprises in the feather, and the influence of media, especially television, present in his daily life.

Television has a well-built influence in Brazilian life, as Yamashita herself observes in the author's introductory note. Mané da Costa Pena is influenced by it as any other citizen, watching the soap operas and the news, but he is also changed by being the object of stories on national television:

To have one's life changed forever, three times, amounted in Mané's mind to being like one of those actors on TV who slipped from soap opera to soap opera and channel to channel, being reincarnated into some new character each time. One story had nothing to do with the other except that the actor was the same. (18)

Mané shows himself conscious of playing a role, as an actor in a soap opera, showing a certain level of awareness about the influence of media in his life. Moreover, it is not just watching television that causes transformation, but also being watched. That is what happens when the feather habit, mediated by TV, turns from one idiosyncratic habit, of which all his friends make fun, into a new healing method that everyone wants to gain access to. In this sense, I suggest that Yamashita constructs the character in such a way that he is sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly constituted by the old and by the new, the changed world around him, in which media is decisive.

Mané's reputation as the father of featherology attracts the press more and more. Radio and TV reporters interview him many times, and such exposition provides his connection to other characters, such as Chico Paco and Batista. Nevertheless, his relationship with J.B. causes the most significant transformations in his life.

The production of feathers in an industrial scale, under the concession of the father of featherology, is an agreement that seems to be good to both parts. J.B. benefits by making a lot of money, exploring the feather discovery commercially. "Recently conferred an honorary

degree by the Matacão University” (150), Mané is supported by GGG Enterprises. He is given an office at GGG and an “efficient” secretary, Carlos, the one who writes the “10-volume, leather-bound Encyclopedia of Feathers” (150), since Mané is illiterate.

In this change-of-life process, Mané’s wife Angustia leaves him with all their children because he “had stepped, barefoot, into a strange world where Angustia could not follow (151)”. He no longer has time for jokes in the pubs:

Very rarely now could Mané Pena be found at his favorite spot at the old café. Once, Mané Pena had been a rubber tapper in the forest, then a simple farmer on infertile soil. Then he had been a mason on construction sites along Matacão. Now he had left the labor of his former days for a different kind of toil. He had to be places at a specific time. He had to get airplanes to get there. He had to squint into bright lights. He had to talk about the same things over and over. The stress and tension of this new life was a constant challenge to the effectiveness of the feather. Mané Pena had once found the proper balance of relaxation and excitement in the simple feathers of the parrot or pigeon, but lately he had discovered that his needs were met only by more sophisticated feathers or rarer birds. He was not sure what this meant, but he knew it was significant. (121)

The old and the new life style are a negotiation of gain and loss. Loneliness becomes, for instance, part of the his new life: “Mané Pena rarely saw any of his family anymore. He missed the little ones, Beto and Marina, and all the grandchildren who once drifted in and out of his house [...]. It was not the same, not the same full house of poor but generous people who shared everything they had” (151).

Although he sadly misses his old way of life, Mané does not have much time to think of his loneliness. As a typical end-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-Century man, “ he consoled himself with the company of his color TV” ( 152). He believes things have to be the way they are, that he pays



“the price one paid for progress, for dedication to an ideal” (151). Lee observes that “Yamashita includes this account of Mané’s success in a section entitled ‘More Loss’, suggesting that a strictly gauge might not be the most suitable measure of life” (135).

Once projected by the mass media, the feather discovery connects Mané to the world. He lectures, writes books, encyclopedias, and gives many interviews to radio and television stations. Ironically, the feather is also responsible for disconnecting him from his family: “He explained that the feather had a way of sorting these lines out, of untangling the confusion in a big family. Now there was nothing connecting him to any of them” (151). Feeling displaced, he makes a suitable analogy between his life change and his television:

It was as if these buttons on his remote control had suddenly been reprogrammed to bring up a whole new set of programs, as if his TV were suddenly made to pick the signals from some foreign country like the United States. All the old shows that he loved so well, all the old soap operas, everything had suddenly been made to come out somehow different. (151-2)

Mané’s feather business and the role of television in his life are the two sides of the same coin, as they both lead to a transformation of his way of life. However, the Djapan’s pigeon communications system joins up business and mass media in one. Approached through the literary technique of Magical Realism, the pigeon business, “more wonderful and exciting than a voice on telephone” (15), can be analyzed as a satirical allusion to the advent of the internet, as I state in Chapter II. Nevertheless, as a means of communication, the pigeon business allows important interconnections in the plot that are to be examined.

Interconnectedness through the pigeons starts when Kazumasa’s chain of karaoke bars hires the services of Djapan, as Tânia Aparecida writes to Batista: “Good news! Gigeta’s Pizzas and Hiro’s Karaoke want an account with us”(94). Also, Chico Paco’s Foundation for Votive Pilgrimages “was quick to see the possibilities in homing pigeons, symbolic representatives of the Holy Ghost, and immediately contracted with Djapan Enterprises for

500 ‘pigeon pilgrims’” (133). Another connection is established when one of Batista’s birds arrives at the GGG Enterprises office in New York: “Batista’s New York pigeon caused a commotion in the business world, those repercussions eventually reaching Wall Street, sending GGG stocks shooting upward” (135). The pigeons and the messages they carry, respectively the means and their contents, constitute representations of what I call ‘connected particles on the move’ in the introduction of this chapter. I have compared them to the internet in Chapter II, which is a point I maintain, but I narrow down the analogy to see the pigeon communication business as a representation of the electronic mail.

Finally, the study of the “web of relationships” in Through the Arc is not complete without discussing religion and ecology as means of interconnectedness. In order to keep Dona Creuza’s promise, Chico Paco walks all the way from Ceará to the Matacão and meets Mané Pena, whose story he had already heard on TV: “It is another miracle sent from God that I am here in your home with you, a famous healer and inventor of the feather” (48). Their meeting is recorded by a reporter from a radio station, amplifying the accomplishment of a “miracle”.

In another “miraculous” event, Chico Paco walks from São Paulo to the Matacão. Lourdes also goes to it right away, after winning a trip to it on a radio show. There she volunteers her time for Radio Chico, while she has the idea of starting the “Telephone Pilgrimage” service, in order to help those whose prayers were of “modest nature, such as the recovery of some lost article or treasured possession or the blessings of a raise in pay” (132).

The blending of business and religion is a pattern in Through the Arc, and so it is with ecology. There are no campaigns to save the rain forest in the novel, but Yamashita approaches this issue through the feather, the pigeon business, through Michelle Mabelle and Batista DJapan. Incongruously, their love for birds is contradicted by Batista’s commercial exploration of the pigeons and Michelle’s habit of keeping birds in cages. In terms of the analysis of interconnectedness, birds are the reason why Batista and Michelle Mabelle meet

each other. In Hiro's Karaoke, "Batista noticed the Frenchwoman singing because of the parrot on her shoulder" (126). Later, when the Brazilian government decides to kill all birds in an attempt to eradicate the typhus epidemic, they join forces in order to save the birds: "Michelle Mabelle, the French bird professor, telephoned Batista almost every day now to voice her alarm" (199). The conflict between Batista's personal commercial interests and ecological awareness seems to remain unsolved: "Batista went home, exhausted and dejected by his inability to save not only his own prize Djapan pigeons, but any and all birds" (201). In addition, Michelle's vanity as the author of the "pioneering work on the neotropic family Thraupidae" (200) is a feeling that is mixed with her so-called ecological political correctness.

In this chapter, I depart from the study of three places where characters live; as I go on with the analysis of interconnectedness, I examine many kinds of links created as characters move, work and, as a final point, I identify several cases of interconnectedness among them. On their way to the Matacão, characters connect and reconnect in a ecological transformative process that reshapes their own selves, as well as the spaces they cross, and ultimately their final destination, the Matacão.

It is obvious that most of these contacts and their implications take place on the Matacão, as well as the main events of the story. The Matacão serves the purpose of larger levels of interconnectedness rather than the smaller and symbolic details that I have found and analyzed in the metropolitan space of São Paulo City, Paco's coastal village in Ceará, and Mané's rural farm in the rain forest. I conclude that the Matacão functions as a space of interconnectedness in a more extensive level, which is, in my contention, to view the Matacão as a metaphor for the globe. In order to support this point of view, which is an attempt to understand the events that have taken place there, I prefer to use the term complex connectivity, coined by Tomlinson: "By [complex connectivity] I mean that globalization refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and

interdependences that characterize modern social life” (2). In other words, complex connectivity is related to all kinds of linkages in a world scale, as Tomlinson explains, “proliferating between individuals and collectivities worldwide, to the idea of increasing ‘flow’ of goods, information, people and practices across national borders” (2). Applying Tomlinson’s point of view to the Matacão, I envisage a representation of the world in its most extreme contemporaneousness, whose main attribute is precisely a permanent (re)adaptation through all kinds of movement.

The meeting of such diverse characters on the Matacão, each of them with different businesses and cultural background, as well as the connections derived from such juxtaposition, portray a community that is, indeed, a global one. In Lee’s words,

Yamashita's text grapples with both new and old imaginative formations of community and coalition enabled and transformed by spatial convergences particular to postmodernity or late capitalism. These alternative communities are composed of nationally and racially heterogeneous social actors who are globally interrelated by virtue of worldwide media links, touristic travel across borders, international financial networks, transnational trade, and a shared ecology. (116)

Lee refers, indeed, to the events that I have selected to examine in this chapter, which ends with a discussion of the Matacão. The Matacão, a symbolic world in which this heterogeneous community lives, is a world with no boundaries, where no character finds difficulties accessing. Its fictionalized environment seems to be meant to portray what Tomlinson calls global spatial-proximity, that is “the shrinking of distances through the dramatic reduction in the time take either physically (for instance, via air travel) or representationally (via transmission of electronically mediated information and images)” (3). As a world of shrinking distances and vanishing barriers, the Matacão is a place in which all local and global cultural manifestations take place, as I have stated in Chapter II. As a

deterritorialized space, the Matacão is permanently articulated by the representations of a global dynamics in which the local and the global are juxtaposed.

## The National within the Global and the Local: Passing through the Arc

*The colonial model was embedded in the building of nation-states, as it is imbedded today in globalization and the weakening of the state by the forces of transnational finance and corporations<sup>12</sup>.*

*Walter D. Mignolo*

In the Introduction of this thesis, I proposed to investigate the mechanism of mobility, the use of Magical Realism, the articulation between the global and the local, and the traces of globalization in Through the Arc. As the research went on, I documented along the three chapters of this thesis a range of additional topics discussed in the novel that opened up the doors to a larger field. They have broadened my analysis and, at the same time, revealed the exuberance of Yamashita's work. Derived from the main theoretical scope, some of these key concepts are immigration, diaspora, homelessness, business and finance, capitalism, the nation, global cultural influence, global space, global dynamics, nomadism, religion, mass media, ecology, spatiality, and deterritorialization. I have tried to view them all in a state of juxtaposition and interconnectedness.

Nevertheless, these supplementary issues and their theoretical approaches have not made me neglect the central point to this thesis, which is the unstableness of boundaries that is provoked by a type of mobility that takes place in a global scale, reshaping the local dimension and transforming spaces-places through juxtaposition and interconnectedness. I have analyzed those aspects in light of theorists such as Arjun Appadurai, Anthony D. King, Fabio Duarte, Iain Chambers, and Walter Mignolo, among others.

In other words, I have identified a world in Through the Arc that is complex and dynamic, a fictional world in which the boundaries seem to be absent, but a deeper examination showed that they were not. In Liquid Modernity, Zygmunt Bauman speaks of a postmodern world in which "all distinctions become fluid, boundaries dissolve, and everything

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<sup>12</sup> Mignolo, Walter D. "Rethinking the Colonial Model", Rethinking Literary History: a Dialogue on Theory, (Ed. Linda Hutcheon and Mário J. Valdés, New York: Oxford UP, 2002) 160.

can just as well appear to be its opposite” (87). Bauman’s view of liquefying boundaries implies a process of apparent gradual dissipation that is precisely the one I have detected in the fictional world of Through the Arc. What I mean to say is that to visualize the porosity or blurriness of boundaries is different from stating that they do not exist. Behind the intense freedom of movement in Through the Arc, there is a whole history of boundaries. These fluid, unstable boundaries are multidimensional: ethnic, psychological, personal, virtual, and more obviously, political and geographical. Because of them, Yamashita chooses, for instance, to refer to a particular area in South America where more than 180 million inhabitants speak Portuguese: Brazil. This is an evidence that the national is still an important dimension, even when the focus is on the global and the local.

Therefore, I have come to this conclusion with some final questions. How is the national approached in Through the Arc? Where should one locate the national within the discussion of globalization? And how would the global and the local dimensions be analyzed from the perspective of the national? Would this analysis ultimately yield a new perspective?

King points out that “the over-generalizing sweep of globalization submerges difference at the local, regional or national scale” (12). I have tried to confer a suitable balance on the discussion of the global and the local as well as on the issue of boundaries but I would not conclude this research without referring back to the nation. In Through the Arc, the United States, France, and Japan are some of the nations from which some characters come. Although I have avoided the term transnational, some of the representations of global movement that I analyze in Chapter I are also representations of a transnational movement, considering the crossing of national boundaries. The main point, however, is that they all converge in Brazil. In terms of the national dimension, Brazil is the most relevant setting in Through the Arc. Its legacy as a former European colony, the representations of Brazilian culture, the *telenovela* format that provides the novel with juxtaposition and interconnectedness, added to Yamashita’s personal experience of having lived nine years in

Brazil suddenly become all relevant motivations that validate an investigation of the national in this conclusion. This final analysis may lead to a new perspective on the local and the global dimensions, considering Walter Mignolo's statement that "the articulation of the local and the global is inscribed in a particular colonial legacy: the Spanish colonization of América (with an accent), and the U.S. imperial moves toward Mexico and Latin America" (268).

The national seems to persist in spite of a new world order that originates many of the recent theories in the field of cultural studies. In "Rethinking the National Model", which is the first chapter of Rethinking Literary History, Linda Hutcheon discusses that, although the national dimension has been legitimated by some kind of national literature, the recent consciousness about the existence of this national literary production does not imply that it has ceased. In other words, there is still literary production programmed to serve the political purposes of forming and validating nation-states. Going beyond that, Hutcheon poses an interesting question that is quite similar to the ones I have just posed in this conclusion, related to Through the Arc:

In our twenty-first-century globalized, multinational, and diasporic world, how can we explain the continuing appeal, not only, of the single-nation/single-ethnicity focus of literary histories, but also, of its familiar teleological model, deployed even by those writing the new literary histories based on race, gender, sexual choice, or any number of identitarian categories? (3)

I have stated that Through the Arc is, undoubtedly, a novel that surpasses the traditional focus of the single-nation/single-ethnicity that Hutcheon criticizes in her analysis, but it is also true that the novel relates to the national, for the national is a dimension that could not simply be forgotten or ignored. Moreover, the type of national that Yamashita chooses to set her globalized narrative is very significant. As a former colony in the so-called third world, Brazil is perhaps the ideal setting for a story like Through the Arc. King points out that "the first globally multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-continental societies on any



substantial scale were in the periphery, not the core. [...] ‘Modernity’ was not born in Paris but rather in Rio” (8). This is why I choose to close this thesis with the analysis of the national dimension contrasted to the local, in order to rethink the global. In this sense, I believe that Mignolo’s account on colonialism/postcolonialism serves this purpose adequately.

In Local Histories/Global Designs, Mignolo discusses coloniality in the context of a globalized world, a global colonialism, from a perspective that is radically decentered and based on concepts that he develops such as “border thinking”, departing from the notion of colonial difference:

The colonial difference is the space where local histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated , or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in different spaces and times across the planet. (ix)

I have shown in Chapter III how the results of the meetings of different local histories are represented in Through the Arc, but Mignolo’s postcolonial approach to the local and the global aggregates issues like power and the view of “two kinds of local histories” that are confronted, such as the encounter of Christian and Native-American cosmologies. In this sense, I discuss relevant cultural features related to the national dimension in Through the Arc as local histories implemented through the means of global designs in a process of radical appropriation. These artifacts are language, religious syncretism, coffee, carnival, and racial miscegenation.

Analyzing the British colonial empire, King states that “The cultural system which was the outcome of this political and economic system is most obviously, and importantly, represented by language” (6). King is referring to the status of the English language in a global context, after its worldwide spread by the influence of Great Britain. I particularly see

that his account of language as a representation of a cultural system can serve as an analogy to my analysis of Through the Arc. In the novel, Yamashita decides to maintain many words and expressions in the Portuguese language because they stand for cultural concepts that she considers “too Brazilian” to be translated. In a more complex view, they can also be signs of the specificities of the regional and the local. When Brazilians miss someone or something they have “*saudades*” (149 and 174). Chico Paco sails in his “*jangada*” (25) and catches “*badejo*”. Lourdes and her children like “cheese and *goiabada*” (43) for desert. Batista is a clerk-runner that “Brazilians call *despachantes*” (11); he often has some “*cafezinhos*” with “*delegados*” (11). Carnival time on the Matacão has the “*trio elétrico* [...] surrounded by and trailed by an enthusiastic crowd of jumping people” (190). Also, there are the “*lambada*” (98) clubs that spread out in L.A. and New York, and the branches of the “*jaboticaba tree*” (211), where Lourdes’s child Gislaine likes to sit.

To view Portuguese language as an important representation of the national turns this analysis back to the local and the global in a different way. The local, for instance, is approached through the author’s reference to Mané Pena’s “regional tongue” (17), which called attention when he first appeared on national television. Later, the narrator tells how “outsiders got used to Mané’s regional tongue and accepted his bare feet” (80), after he became famous for his feather discovery. Analyzed from a global perspective, Portuguese is ranked the sixth among the world's languages in number of native speakers, being most of them Brazilian citizens. The history of its diffusion shows some similarities with the English language: Portuguese is an European language that spread worldwide through a process of colonization, in which the Portuguese empire conquered different regions in the world, in the 15th and 16th century. Yet in the global perspective, another language is relevant in this analysis, namely English, the language in which the novel is written. English is, undoubtedly, the language of the contemporary global process, and is largely recognized as the main global language.

Besides the Portuguese language, religion is inscribed in Brazilian life since the early colonial times. Relying on Darcy Ribeiro and Renato Ortiz's studies, Mignolo presents a view of globalization as a process that started five hundred years ago, in which religion is a predominant feature:

In those five hundred years, I conceive of four coexisting moments that, for obvious discursive and chronological reasons, I have to list one after the other: Christianity, Civilizing Mission, Development, and Global Market. Each moment corresponds to a particular global design and, certainly, originates different local histories responding to the same global designs. (279)

The many local histories in Brazil have Christianity as a strong background, given the fact that there is a vast majority of Christians in Brazil. Officially, 75% of the population in Brazil declares to be Roman Catholic, which makes it the country with the largest Catholic population in the world. Followers of Protestantism are rising in number, currently at 15%, while spiritism followers are 1.3%. As I have argued, religiousness is intensively approached in Through the Arc through promises, processions, prayers, religious pilgrimage, saints, miracles, and evangelical radio stations that permeate the whole narrative. The African religious influence is also present. Interestingly, Batista, whose name is Catholic and means the one who baptizes, is described as a man who was "Catholic, cursed the priests and practiced *Candomblé*" (12). Religious syncretism is, indeed, a characteristic of Brazil that is not overlooked in Through the Arc.

The novel also brings references to coffee, one of the so-called national symbols of Brazilian culture and economy. The Brazilian maid Lourdes makes coffee on many occasions. An important one is the day Kazumasa visits her home in the suburbs of São Paulo City: she offers him some coffee as someone poor who wants to please an important visitor with the best thing he/she has. Brazil is the top green coffee producer in the world. Almost a third of the entire world's coffee comes from Brazilian fields. Besides, coffee has its relevance in a

global context, being the second product most traded in international commerce, second only to oil. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, coffee is “the world’s most popular beverage, with over 400 billion cups consumed every year” (“Coffee”). However, coffee as a Brazilian national symbol can be questioned. Originated in Africa, the coffee plant adapted itself to the weather conditions of São Paulo State and the south of Minas Gerais, both in the southeastern part of Brazil. Historically, São Paulo is known as the only state that has really profited from its production. The profits from coffee provided the resources for the state’s process of industrialization and, consequently, enrichment. Coffee, economically speaking, can be better identified as a symbol of São Paulo state, today the richest state in Brazil.

Carnival is commonly recognized as the most popular cultural expression in Brazil. The political use of Carnival as a means of national integration is an old issue, profoundly known and studied by Brazilian and foreign scholars. Openly sponsored by the government, Carnival in Brazil has always served the purpose of consolidating the national identity. On the other hand, Yamashita’s approach to Carnival in Through the Arc suggests another association, also well known in Brazilian studies, that sees Carnival as a means of popular alienation. Symptomatically entitled “Carnival”, Chapter 28 of Through the Arc starts with events of negative connotation: the kidnapping of Rubens and Gislaine, the growth of the typhus epidemic, and the exploitation of people’s good faith by Radio Chico. Watching people’s “demonstration of ardent suffering with a great deal of repugnance and personal pain” (187), Chico Paco sets Carnival as the best date for the inauguration of his *Chicolândia* amusement park, “in the midst of death” (186). Then, Carnival, “that devil-let-lose time of the year” (189), is strategically contrasted to the times of extreme suffering in Through the Arc: “...but Chico Paco, watching from above, would often see a funeral procession solemnly passing the *trio elétrico* in the opposite direction, and among the dancers, there were always people with the rash-ridden signs of the inevitable disease”(190).

As the owner of Radio Chico and Chicolândia, Chico Paco is manipulated by the system, as well as he manipulates people through the radio. He becomes part of the ideological-alienating apparatus of the nation, although he is not conscious of such role. Ironically, he is shot and killed in the Carnival crowd, victim of a bullet that was not meant to hit him.

The discussion of ethnicity in the context of the national in Through the Arc finds good examples in the characters Chico Paco and Batista DJapan. Paco has blond hair and green eyes, due to his probable Dutch ancestry and “Batista was a mellow and handsome mixture of African, Indian and Portuguese, born on a farm near Brasília and raised in the urban outskirts of São Paulo” (12). As Lee observes, “several of these characters are themselves embodiments of racial, regional and cultural cross-fertilization” (111). The novel seems to show that miscegenation is, indeed, the main characteristic of the Brazilian population. The marriage of Japanese Kazumasa and Lourdes in the end of the story confirms and perpetuates this tendency. Nevertheless, at the same time that it represents the national, miscegenation can also highlight the specificities of the local. The Northeast implied in Chico Paco’s blond hair and eyes are supposedly from the old Dutch conquerors that settled only in that region of Brazil.

The Portuguese language, religious syncretism, coffee, carnival, and miscegenation are elements that I have selected in order to discuss the national dimension in Through the Arc. As national references, they all reinforce the idea of the nation as a social construct. Brazil is a nation that speaks a language that comes from Portugal. People profess Roman Catholicism and African-born religions, cultivate and drink a popular beverage that is originated in Africa; release their tension through a popular festivity of Christian inspiration listening to an African beat, being themselves a mixed, multiethnic group. To complete her picture of Brazil as an “imagined community”, to borrow Benedict Anderson’s term, Yamashita could have added soccer and beer, respectively originated in Britain and Germany,

as key elements in her narrative, since they are also known as popular Brazilian cultural references.

The analysis of the dynamic nature of these five elements, however, shows how they can easily acquire diverse characteristics that refer to the specificities of the local, as I have stated in the previous paragraphs. A closer examination of Carnival and its striking variations across the large Brazilian territory would reveal that one could, in fact, associate this celebrations more with the local than with the national. In this sense, the use of Carnival as a strategy to construct a cohesive nation is defied by a local “creative insubordination” that takes place all over the Brazilian territory.

Paradoxically, it is possible to conclude that the intertwined arrangement of the national elements chosen to concatenate the national identity, in a way serves the purpose of unification. The “foreign” elements such as language and religion that I identify in Through the Arc are a combination that does not exist anywhere else in the world: it is uniquely Brazilian. Their representation in the novel, however, shows that other strong combinations of the local and the global spheres, which are characteristic of the present world, juxtapose them. In this way, Through the Arc portrays a world in which “the nation-state no longer has a monopoly over our ways of acting and thinking” (Hutcheon 25), although being relevant.

In one last analysis of the national, I turn back to the issue of globalization, this time trying to understand the role of the national dimension within the discussion of globalization. Concerning globalization, the definitions I have relied on since the Introduction of this thesis do discuss the national sphere as a priority. I have made use of the term globalization mainly as a synonym for agency and exchange among local cultures (Duarte 33), and to refer to “the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life” (Tomlinson 2). However, in my Introduction, I cited Wegner’s concern of the ideological conception of the word globalization, in which economic, political and ideological interests may be veiled. His concern now leads me to

associate the national as a relevant factor in terms of globalization and its representation in Through the Arc. In this sense, I also want to approach globalization in the novel as a process that could be depicted in terms of Americanization, Japanification, and Brazilianification<sup>13</sup>.

As a synonym for Americanization, globalization is usually considered a process from which the United States, the largest economy in the world, mostly benefits. This assertion would lead to a neo-imperialistic point of view in which the global scale is the main feature. However, I want to refer back to the last lines of Chapter I of this thesis, in which I conclude, among other things, that the New Yorker executive J.B. does not represent the U.S., but his postnational company GGG. Similarly, I establish in Chapter III that Coca-cola bottles are now representations of the global, and no longer exclusively of a country where the Coca-Cola Company was founded. To complete the dissociation, I also discuss how the locals give different meanings to the bottles, reshaping the concept.

In The Americas of Asian-American Literature; Gendered Fictions of Nation and Transnation, Lee develops the view of globalization as Japanification, according to her own analysis of Through the Arc. She highlights many references to Japan and Japanese culture in the novel, that she characterizes as “the author’s attempt to resolve the tension between her global and ethnic-specific interest, by making globalization a synonym, not for Americanization, but for the spread of Japanese culture” (116). One of these references is karaoke, which I have discussed in Chapter III. Nevertheless, Lee considers Yamashita’s Japanification an utopian point of view.

Finally, I detect some illustrations of an approach to globalization through Brazilianification in Through the Arc. The boom of “*Lambada* clubs in L.A. and New York”, (98), the reference to coffee as a genuinely Brazilian feature that is exported worldwide, as well as *matacão* plastic, the Amazonian export multiuse raw material, are Brazilian products

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<sup>13</sup> Americanization is a term already found in many English dictionaries. It refers to the cultural and economic influence of the United States on other countries. Lee uses “Japanification” in the same sense and Brazilianification is my neologism, both referring to the influence of Japan and Brazil on other countries, respectively.

that go everywhere. One of the main examples, however, is the spread of the Djapan Pigeon Communications International, the bizarre business owned by Tânia and Batista Djapan. Originated in Brazil, the system of communications by pigeons reaches the five continents. However, culturally or economically speaking, Brazil's status in the global setting is one of a former European colony with no significant international power. This leads me to conclude that the examples of Brazilianification in Through the Arc reveal the existence of such process but it does not provide real benefits to Brazilian people.

Interestingly, Americanization, Japanification, and Brazilianification are national perspectives that generate different approaches to globalization, according to the historical background of the U.S., Japan, and Brazil. In Mignolo's words, "nations will be shaped by the place that the nation occupies in relation to colonial and imperial structures" (267). In this sense, Americanization seems more visible due to international media, and also because it bothers many people in many countries that feel negatively affected by it. On the other hand, Japanification is not expected in a world focused on the West, and Brazilianification sounds rather unlikely. In my contention, the three of them are relevant as complementary processes to globalization. Isolated, their analysis could not explain, for instance, the lack of bonds among some character's businesses and their nations in the examples taken from Through the Arc.

Therefore, the most appropriate approach to globalization is indeed through the articulation of the local and the global that takes place in a state of interconnectedness, as I have argued in this thesis. Moreover, there is a strong incidence of global businesses in the plot of Through the Arc that are articulated in terms of the local and the global. These articulations show a certain level of influence of the national, but certainly are not controlled by it. This endorses Mignolo's wider depiction of globalization in which the global market is the fourth main feature of it, together with Christianity, a civilizing mission, and development.



In conclusion, Through the Arc more likely depicts a current state of globalization that shows a new notion of the global that is not necessarily originated in former empires or developed countries, but is radically deterritorialized, moving everywhere:

After the 1970s and more so after the 1990s, however, it becomes more difficult to locate global designs in particular countries, since transnational corporations are, precisely, undermining the power of the state (even the state of developing countries) to “produce” and “export” global designs. To the extent that global designs are no longer situated in one territory (e.g. those of British colonialism), local histories are correspondingly affected. (Mignolo 65)

I believe that the mode of transformation of the local cultural values and their local histories, as Mignolo prefers to call them, is based on an extreme prevalence of human mobility in the present world. This is intensively represented in Through the Arc, as I discuss in Chapter I. Besides human mobility, other tools of global cultural influence transform the local dimension, such as electronic mediation and transnational capital, both in the era of late industrial capitalism, as I have discussed in Chapters II and III. In this sense, I argue that the relevance of my research rests on the fact that it explores a literary work of acknowledged significance through the means of a set of theories of contemporary political interest.

Examined in this research, the unpredictable effects of features like mobility, electronic mediation and transnational capital are creatively approached in Through the Arc. The epigraph of the novel softly hints at their unpredictability, as Yamashita poses three questions that enhance readers’ expectations: “I have heard Brazilian children say that whatever passes through the arc of a rainbow becomes its opposite. But what is the opposite of a bird? Or for that matter, a human being? And what then, in the great rain forest, where, in its season, the rain never ceases and the rainbows are myriad?” (IV).

Before any type of analysis, my first reading of Through the Arc brought me the sense that the degree of complexity of characters and situations would make the “opposite”

something too simple to be turned into. Therefore, I started my research by attempting to pass through the arc of a kind of rainbow, in order to decipher at least part of what Yamashita intended to incite with the three questions in the epigraph. In a few words, I have found out that, applied to the novel, the Brazilian legend of the rainbow is indeed an oversimplification that cannot explain the world portrayed in Through the Arc, as the three questions would suggest. This piece of Brazilian popular culture, which says whoever passes through the arc of a rainbow turns into someone of the opposite sex, is a binary opposition that serves only as a point of departure. The multiple possibilities of examination include an uncontrolled and complex system in which everything has passed through different arcs of change. These arcs are myriad, as Yamashita writes in the epigraph, and they subject all elements to change in the novel, including the rain forest itself: “The old forest has returned once again, secreting its digestive juices, slowly breaking everything into edible absorbent components, pursuing the lost perfection of an organism in which digestion and excretion were once one and the same. But it will never be the same again”(212).

One among the many elements in Through the Arc, the rain forest manages to recycle itself, rather obscurely, following the same path of all other elements in the story, which is the path that leads to one of the arcs of change.

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