

**ALLEN GINSBERG'S "AMERICA" AND CHACAL'S "AMÉRICA AMEM":  
COUNTERCULTURE POETRY IN THE US AND IN BRAZIL**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims at making a comparative analysis between the poets Allen Ginsberg and Chacal by discussing their poems "America" and "América Amem", from the books *Howl* (1955) and *América* (1975), respectively. The comparison of their poetry is based on the concept of Technocracy, given by Theodore Roszak in his book *The Making of a Counter Culture*. Thereby, two contexts are exposed to the analyses of two different generations: the Beat Generation and the Mimeograph Generation. Although the poets are neither from the same country, nor from the same decade, their poems converge in the sense that they show a criticism about the political actions of each country. However, it is important to consider their divergent points in relation to the different societies to which they were exposed to and how these socio-political contexts affected their books *Howl* and *América*. Then, the problem is exposed and the analysis of this study is based on the convergent and divergent points to approach the poetry of Ginsberg and Chacal despite the fact that one is exposed to a technocratic society and the other is not.

**KEYWORDS:** Counterculture, Allen Ginsberg, Chacal, Comparative Studies, The 1960s.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo visa fazer uma análise comparativa entre os poetas Allen Ginsberg e Chacal através da discussão de seus poemas "America" e "América Amem", de seus respectivos livros *Howl* (1955) e *América* (1975). A comparação de seus poemas tem embasamento teórico no conceito de Tecnocracia, estabelecido por Theodore Roszak em seu livro *A Contracultura*. Dessa forma, dois diferentes contextos históricos são expostos para a análise de duas gerações: a Geração *Beat* e a Geração do Mimeógrafo. Apesar de os poetas não serem do mesmo país e nem de terem surgido na

mesma década, a poesia de ambos é convergente no sentido em que tentam um engajamento político em relação ao que estava acontecendo em seus países. Porém, é importante considerar seus pontos divergentes em relação ao contexto sociopolítico a que cada um pertencia, e como este afetou suas poéticas de engajamento político nos livros *Howl* e *América*.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Contracultura, Allen Ginsberg, Chacal, Literatura Comparada, Anos 1960.

Counterculture in the United States of America is often dated to after the attack on Hiroshima, in 1945.<sup>1</sup> In the following decade, a conservative political approach, during Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidential years, controlled the technological and powerful US. Wisconsin's senator Joseph R. McCarthy reinforced it by the reprisal towards any subversive act within the US government's departments or private institutions, as well as in any private life, and especially regarding music industry, Hollywood and publishing houses, for example. The result of practices of repression toward any suspicious behavior is known as the Second Red Scare<sup>2</sup>, which was a massive fear of communism. Therefore, because of McCarthyism in the 1950s, conformity became an expected social behavior in the country. The reprisal towards leftist and rebellious groups either due to their personal or professional lives were generally to silence, ban, or, sometimes, to even deport them as a consequence for any commitment level to communism.

So, at the same level that the protests during the 1960s attempted to change the post-WWII political and social panorama in the US, part of the 1950s cultural agents had already attempted to respond to the same struggles - with reprisal, though<sup>34</sup>. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's bookshop and publishing house in San Francisco, City Lights Books, was on trial, in 1957, because of the second edition publication of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems*. In a letter dated on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1957, from Morocco, to his friend Lucien, Ginsberg explains the situation about his book being seized by the customs inspector Chester MacPhee at the San Francisco Post Office.

“Oh, yes, listen of all things, a customs inspector name of Chester MacPhee at SF Post Office seized 500 copies of new Carr-less edition of *Howl* as obscene 2 weeks ago, so City Lights tells me. He sent me a

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<sup>1</sup> The idea that after 1945 the US became an economic lord created, according to Todd Gitlin (1987), deeply affected the cultural manifestations afterwards in the 1960s. Therefore, counterculture probably would not existed without such a fertile territory of economic, political, social and cultural boom after the end of the World War II.

<sup>2</sup> The First Red Scare occurred between 1918 and 1920 in the US, during Thomas Woodrow Wilson's presidential years (1913-1921), as a consequence of the fear provoked by Bolshevism, anarchism and the Russian Revolution's (1917) implications on the country.

<sup>3</sup> Many protests happened during the 1960s in the US, mainly in search of freedom. The Freedom Summer in <sup>4</sup> and the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, the Occupation of Alcatraz in 1969, Martin Luther King's speeches for the Civil Rights Movement and Selma to Montgomery Marches are some examples of how part of the population was attempting to change the political context of the country.

clipping from Page 2 of SF Chronicle about then. Big furor apparently [sic] locally, Rexroth denouncing Customs over radio, American Civil Liberties Union lawyers going to court. I suppose it will get in Life too; all in all perhaps a good deal, except that there's back orders for 500 copies already piled up & I'd rather they got filled. (...) I really didn't expect that to actually happen, though [sic] we had wisely consulted ACLU a year ago for legal OK & advice & got optimistic prognosis from them then - that's why they handle it rapidly now." (Theado, 2003, p. 244-245)

*Howl* was being seized because, according to MacPhee, "The words and the sense of the writing is obscene. You wouldn't want your children to come across it"<sup>4</sup> (Theado, 2003, p. 245). However, before publishing the second edition of the book, Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg had asked the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)<sup>5</sup> advice to make sure the poems would be publishable without any trouble regarding federal laws and social behaviors. Even though the ACLU had given the green light for both, they got caught by a federal employee, which shows that the US were conducting a deep social and cultural repression not only from inside the government offices, but also from many several federal institutions.

On the other side of America, in Brazil, during the 1970s, the poet Chacal was facing a similar political reprisal, but in another socio-political context: the middle of the dictatorial censorship that started in 1964 and went on until 1985. When Chacal first released his mimeographed book *Muito Prazer, Ricardo* (1971), the dictatorial censorship had already started. For Chacal, as well as for his colleagues from the so-called "Mimeograph Generation", the shadow of the censorship pressure was an enormous barrier for official publication, but at the same time, it served as a rich context for subversion through either politically engaged or alienated poetries. The work of Chacal is mostly read as alienated regarding the politics in Brazil's 1970s. However, we will argue that he does get close to a politically engaged poetry when writing the book *América*, in the sense that he opens his poems to

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<sup>4</sup> This is a fragment of one interview published in *The San Francisco Chronicle* on March 25, 1957.

<sup>5</sup> The ACLU is an organization that aims at "defend[ing] and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to every person in this country by the constitution and the laws of the United States of America" (in [https://www.aclu.org/faqs#1\\_1](https://www.aclu.org/faqs#1_1)).

the events of the exterior world, i.e. his context, as Cacaso briefly mentions<sup>6</sup>. Based on that affirmation, what will serve as the argument for the literary comparison is that Chacal makes use of similar themes used before by Ginsberg in his book “America”.

Brazil, in the 1970s, was absorbing the US cultural imperialism, and was trying to build a modernization at all costs. Nelson Werneck Sodré, in *A verdade sobre o ISEB*, describes the crisis that Brazil was passing through in the 1970s.

“Naquela altura, tudo denunciava o agravamento da situação brasileira, com o aprofundamento das contradições de uma sociedade em que o velho e o novo convizinhavam e defrontavam-se violentamente. O aspecto mais evidente, por essa época, estava justamente na violência que presidia o processo histórico e que era pouco habitual na vida brasileira. [...] com a renúncia de Jânio Quadros, e em 64, com a destruição do regime democrático e estabelecimento do mais longo, mais triste e mais repressivo e liberticida dos regimes que o país já conheceu.”<sup>7</sup>

The contradiction between the cosmopolitan Brazil, that was intended and promoted by the government since the early 1960s, and the provincial Brazil that was the reality of many countryside cities and estates regarding infrastructure and basic resources for life, created enormous social and class gaps. Sodré continues his criticism on the Brazilian government during Juscelino Kubitschek’s presidential years (1956-1961):

“O governo Kubitschek, a essa altura, fizera a sua opção – embora ainda não no campo do petróleo – e estava desenvolvendo uma política de submissão ao imperialismo. Nessa época, aliás, originaram-se e assumiram proporções

<sup>6</sup> Cacaso. “Tudo da minha Terra”. *Almanaque*, nº6, São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1978, p.36.

<sup>7</sup> At that time, everything was announcing the worsening of the Brazilian situation, with the contradictions deepening of a society in which the old and the new were neighbors and fought with each other violently. The most evident aspect, at that time, was focused on the violence of the historical process, and that was not usual to the Brazilian life. [...] with the resignation of Jânio Quadros, in 1964, and with the destruction of the democratic scheme, it was established the longer, sadder, most repressive and annihilating from all the schemes the country had ever known. [Sodré, Nelson Werneck. *A Verdade sobre o ISEB*. Rio de Janeiro: Avenir, 1978, p.27-28] (My translation). <sup>8</sup>JK government, at that time, had made its option – although not yet in the petrol field – and was developing a politics of submission to the imperialism. By this time, the paths of what, in the future, would be known as the “Brazilian model of development”, had initiated and had assumed defined proportions. [Sodré, Nelson Werneck. *A Verdade sobre o ISEB*. Rio de Janeiro: Avenir, 1978, p.35]. (My translation)

definidas os rumos do que, no futuro, seria conhecido como “modelo brasileiro de desenvolvimento”.<sup>8</sup>

Sodré’s criticism is much in relation to the submission of the country to the US cultural and political imperialism. The contradiction of Brazil serves as theme for some of Chacal’s poems. The “America” Chacal writes about, contains elements of the modern Brazilian, as a consequence of political adjusts and the US cultural imperialism, as well as the provincial Brazil; those different Brazils and Brazilians are used as indicators of his political criticism in the book *América*. Chacal uses elements of modern capitalism in his poetry, by mentioning the concept of ‘disposable’, in reference to the poetry that is made to be consumed and to be thrown away. The poet is coherent with this theme when editing *Almanaque Biotônico Vitalidade*<sup>8</sup>, one that contains a strong criticism of the dictatorial censorship. Chacal’s participation in the “Mimeograph Generation” can also be seen as a subversive act that contains a strong political positioning, since that once one subverts the official – and therefore, approved by the censors – publishing houses, this person also subverts the norm established by the dictatorship.

Marginality, then, arises as an option, a placement for the leftist poet, not only in relation to the editorial market, but also in relation to the political context: it is the politically engaged poet that makes the mimeographed book an option, independently whether it is lasting or transitory. The handmade book is part of the marginal option, one that Ana Cristina Cesar<sup>10</sup> affirms to be a refusal to the system of the production in series. Chacal can be understood as a subversive poet of the time by mimeographing the book *América*, for not accepting the impossibility of publishing because of the censorship, as a way to escape off the system. In the 1970s the poets of Chacal’s generation had only two options: they could either publish through their own label Nuvem Cigana, and by that subvert the system, or not publish at all, and by that, accept the publishing houses’ system of the time.

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<sup>8</sup> The *Almanaque Biotônico Vitalidade* was edited by the group *Nuvem Cigana*, which was an outsider group that used to publish their own books alternatively. People from different fields of study were part of Nuvem Cigana, and, consequently, of *Almanaque Biotônico Vitalidade*. Among the poets, Chacal, Charles, Ronaldo Santos and Bernardo Vilhena were part of the editorial board and used to publish not only the *Almanaque Biotônico Vitalidade*,

The relationship between Ginsberg and Chacal surpasses the similar difficulties both had regarding socio-political issues in their respective time and nations<sup>11</sup>. The attempt of political engagement, the concern with their present times, the anguish and relief for saying/writing, the rupture with the poetic form, are characteristics are in both books *Howl and Other Poems* and *América*. These elements are intrinsically presented in the poems and not only that, but also the poets' gazes to life in each period of time can be intersected.

Spontaneity is a tool that both poets claim in their process of writing. It is not that their poems were written spontaneously. Or even if they were, that does not matter here. What is relevant is the effect that spontaneity as a poetry tool makes in their poems. It represents the idea of portraying the happenings of the “now or never”<sup>9</sup>, the happenings of the socio-political context of each one. The effect of spontaneity in their poems may look like a less labored process of writing, a poetry that is not interested in literary references, in the refining of words: it is poetry interested in representing the naked reality, the grotesque, the underground.

In a different perspective, Ginsberg uses in his poetry the idea of “now-or-never” to have an effect of stream of consciousness in his writings, and not in terms of making a disposable poetry, one that is to be consumed as a product. In the words of Roszak, also with testimonials of Ginsberg, the beatniks reveal how the US poet used to write and see the action of writing in the mid-fifties, when Ginsberg was writing his book *Howl*.

A poesia de Ginsberg revela o mesmo anelo de projetar o impulso imaginativo original – embora pareça evidente que tal improvisação presta-se muito menos à literatura que à música ou à pintura. A intenção de sua poesia em meados da década de cinquenta era, diz Ginsberg, “apenas escrever... soltar a imaginação, descerrar o segredo, anotar linhas mágicas saídas de minha mente

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<sup>9</sup> This expression will be used in relation to the idea of the poets' way of writing, without prevision or revision, and to relate their ideologies with the capitalism context, which they criticize in their respective books discussed here in this study. Also, the expression “now or never” is used in consequence of the verse used by Chacal in his poem “Pop Art”, which is: ande logo seja breve leve love/pop art: use e abuse e descarte/breve leve now ou never leve love/pop art art pop/ é melhor e dá ibope/ pop pop pop art/ art art art pop/ pop art é cultura/ aproveite enquanto dura/ pop art em toda parte/ agora também em marte. (Chacal, 2007, p. 240).

real”. Dois de seus poemas mais conhecidos dessa época foram escritos sem previsão ou revisão: a longa parte inicial de *Howl* foi batida à máquina em uma tarde; *Sunflower Sutra* foi completado em vinte minutos, “eu na mesa escrevendo, Kerouac na porta da cabana esperando que eu acabasse”. Sobre *Howl*, diz Ginsberg: “Eu havia tido anos antes uma iluminação beatífica durante a qual ouvi a voz antiga de Blake e vi o universo desdobrar-se em meu cérebro”, e isto serviu de inspiração para a posterior explosão.<sup>10</sup>

The poem “America” is one that indeed portrays all Ginsberg’s characteristics that were already exposed here in this study: commitment with the socio-political context, spontaneity, tentative of highlighting the humanistic holy side of people, and the need for expressing the anguish in his writings. Therefore, the poem “America” will be analyzed here in order to sustain the argument that Ginsberg was a poet of resistance and that he can be read in parallel to Chacal’s poetry, published in Brazil’s 1970s.

“America I've given you all and now I'm nothing. America two dollars and twenty-seven cents January 17, 1956. I can't stand my own mind.

America	end	the
when		human
will we		
war?		
Go fuck		your atom
yourself		bomb
with		
I don't		don't
feel good		bother
		me.
I won't	I'm	in my
write my		right mind.
poem		
till		

<sup>10</sup> The poetry of Ginsberg reveals the aspiration of projecting the original imaginative impulse – although it is evident that this improvisation is less regarded to literature than music or painting. The intention of his poetry in the midfifties was, in Ginsberg’s words, “only to write...let the imagination run, revel the secret, take note of magical lines coming from my real mind”. Two of his best known poems of this period of time were written without prevision or revision: the long initial part of *Howl* was typed in the writing machine in one afternoon; “Sunflower Sutra” was completed in twenty minutes, “I in the table writing and Kerouac at the hut door waiting me to finish”. About *Howl*, Ginsberg says: “I had had years before a beatific illumination when he listened the ancient voice of Blake and saw the universe unfolding in my brain”, and this served as inspiration to the posterior explosion. (Roszak, 1972, p.134) [My translation].



America	you	be
when		angelic
will	?	
When will	off	your
you		clothes?"
take		

When will you look at yourself through the grave? When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites? America why are your libraries full of tears? America when will you send your eggs to India?

I'm sick of your insane demands.

When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks? America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world. Your machinery is too much for me. You made me want to be a saint. There must be some other way to settle this argument. Burroughs is in Tangiers I don't think he'll come back it's sinister. Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke? I'm trying to come to the point. I refuse to give up my obsession. America stop pushing I know what I'm doing. America the plum blossoms are falling.

I haven't read the newspapers for months, everyday somebody goes on trial for murder.

America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies. America I used to be a communist when I was a kid and I'm not sorry. I smoke marijuana every chance I get. I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet. When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid. My mind is made up there's going to be trouble. You should have seen me reading Marx. My psychoanalyst thinks I'm perfectly right. I won't say the Lord's Prayer. I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations.

America I still haven't told you what you did to Uncle Max after he came over from Russia.

I'm addressing you. Are you going to let our emotional life be run by Time Magazine? I'm obsessed by Time Magazine. I read it every week. Its cover stares at me every time I slink past the corner candystore. I read it in the basement of the Berkeley Public Library. It's always telling me about responsibility. Businessmen are serious. Movie producers are serious. Everybody's serious but me. It occurs to me that I am America.

I am talking to myself again.

Asia is rising against me. I haven't got a chinaman's chance. I'd better consider my national resources.

My national resources consist of two joints of marijuana millions of genitals an unpublishable private literature that goes 1400 miles and hour and twentyfivethousand mental institutions. I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions of underprivileged who live in my flowerpots under the light of five hundred suns. I have abolished the whorehouses of France, Tangiers is the next to go.

My ambition is to be President despite the fact that I'm a Catholic.

America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood? I will continue like Henry Ford my stanzas are as individual as his automobiles more so they're all different sexes

America I will sell you stanzas \$2500 apiece \$500 down on your old stanza  
 America free Tom Mooney  
 America save the Spanish Loyalists America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die  
 America I am the Scottsboro boys.  
 America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell meetings  
 they sold us garbanzos a handful per ticket a ticket costs a nickel and the  
 speeches were free everybody was angelic and sentimental about the  
 workers it was all so sincere you have no idea what a good thing the party  
 was in 1835 Scott Nearing was a grand old man a real mensch Mother Bloor  
 made me cry I once saw Israel Amter plain. Everybody must have been a  
 spy. America you don't really want to go to war.  
 America it's them bad Russians.  
 Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen. And them Russians.  
 The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia's power mad. She wants to take  
 our cars from out our garages.  
 Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red Reader's Digest. her wants our  
 auto plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy running our fillingstations.  
 That no good. Ugh. Him makes Indians learn read. Him need big black  
 niggers. Hah. Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.  
 America this is quite serious.  
 America this is the impression I get from looking in the television set.  
 America is this correct?  
 I'd better get right down to the job. It's true I don't want to join the  
 Army or turn lathes in precision parts factories, I'm nearsighted and  
 psychopathic anyway. America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.”

Berkeley, January 17, 1956 (2008, p.39-43)

It is impossible to read the poem “America” without consider the socio-political context in which Ginsberg was facing in Berkeley in 1956<sup>11</sup>. It is impossible to think about this placement not only as a data, it is more than that; it is the intersection between poetry and the socio-political context that was surrounding Ginsberg. Berkeley, a city in the East of the San Francisco Bay Area, is the place where, in 1956, Ginsberg saw a little America, a place where he could live the contradiction of that US society – since it is known that the San Francisco Bay Area had one of the biggest

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<sup>11</sup> The dissent of the young students of the University of California, Berkeley, throughout the Free Speech Movement raised a political consciousness from the center, that is, the bourgeoisie youth, willing to deconstruct the imperialism towards social issues such as immigration and, mainly, civil rights in the Bay Area. Bearing that in mind, the FSM's beginning is historically known when taking part on the civil rights movement, shaking the Negro status as inferior in the Bay Area of California. The FSM<sup>14</sup> (September 14, 1964- July 26, 1965) emerged in the University of California, Berkeley as a student protest that had Mario Savio as its principal voice. Some of the students who participated in the movement were active in the civil rights movement in Mississippi, and had returned from the southeastern state, having taking part of the COFO (Council of Federated Organizations) Summer Project.

aggregations of hipsters in the US in the fifties. This marginal option via socio-political opposition is a process of making poetry totally bound to its time and its generation, and when dislocated from its historical context, it is emptied to its political and ideological values, as Iumna Simon and Vinicius Dantas affirm (1985, p. 53). Also, the use of anaphora emphasizes the place, the location, the importance of directing his speech to America - the nation, the country, the governors, the population, and every single thing related to America – when, in the beginning of many lines in all stanzas, the poet repeats the name of the intended message receptor: America.

The images contained in the poem “America” represent the period of transition between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, after 1945; the position of the US in these wars was of entirely engagement with technological interests, looking for an imperialist power in Eastern nations. Ginsberg, on the other hand, was not in favor of the governmental decisions towards war and makes it clear throughout the poem “America”, as in the lines “when will you end the human war?/Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb”. These lines represent explicitly a contrary opinion from the one of the US government. Moreover, the theme of war brings the concepts and the paradox of life and death, and in “America” it is also an issue, always referring to the context of the war, such as: “When will you look to yourself through the grave?”; This is an example of how war is linked to death, and only death, to Ginsberg – war in the poem does not seem a necessary or a considerable action for America. According to the poem, war is a negative force, one that will end the humanistic actions, and will be dominated by an imperialism of machinery, and this capitalism, this exacerbation of industry is, in his words from the poem, “too much” for him.

There are many references in the poem “America” to the fifties’ socio-political context: the left-wing against the fifties’ anticommunism, as a fear spread out by McCarthyism, when persecutions and arrestments were promoted by senator McCarthy. The scenario also included the Wobblies, which were the anarcho-syndicalist movement of the Industrial Workers of the World; the Sacco & Vanzetti, which were anarchic-militants who were judged and accused by murder and were killed unfairly in 1920; the boys of Scottsboro, who were nine Afro-American boys that were arrested

unfairly with the charge of raping a white woman in Alabama; and the Scott Nearing, which was a socialist candidate to the 1919 American Presidency (2006, p.61-62); There are almost none literary references in the poem, the only literary reference in the poem is one by Ginsberg himself “A Supermarket in California”: “When can I go to the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks”. Here he makes an allusion to the same image written a year before by him, walking and strolling in the supermarket with his mentor poet Walt Whitman. When making reference to his own poem, Ginsberg establishes an intertextual relation, giving continuity to the hipster discourse and inquiries about how lonely hipsters are in the America, and how long it would take to have their voices heard through penumbras and darkness. This may be considered a literary reference because of the strong presence of the poet Walt Whitman in these questions and thoughts.

Returning to the subject of Ginsberg’s non-capitalistic ideas, in the poem, the stanza that starts with “I’m addressing to you” and finishes with “I am talking to myself again” may define it as a stanza of paradox, when there is the affirmation of two senses at the same time, or even, when there is a contradiction of senses. Making it clear, Ginsberg addresses the message to the US population, the mass, when talking about Time Magazine, a product of the publishing capitalism<sup>12</sup>, creating a paradox when affirming two meanings. The poet includes himself as part of the mass population, although his ideas are not part of the common sense. To position himself, the poet says he is “obsessed by Time Magazine” and that he reads “it every week”, although it does not have the same sense as to the mass population. When he admits to be talking to himself once more, when feeling alone, he is neither part of the mass culture nor part of the mass population. As is said in the lines “It occurs to me that I am America. I am talking to myself again”, the poet recognizes himself as part of America, therefore, when addressing America, he is talking to himself, he is alone.

In the last stanzas of the poem, Ginsberg uses a totally different way of writing to, again, include himself as part of one specific group of people from America. According to Claudio Willer,

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<sup>12</sup> Here it is important to return to the quotation of Benedict Anderson already mentioned in this article, remembering that the printing press technology created an imagined community of capitalism.

the lines are a colloquial way of writing, which attempts to copy the vernacular speech, particularly the Afro-American from the south of the US (2006, p.62). Starting with the sonority, that is a very important element of these last stanzas. In the repetition of the words “them bad Russians” the sound of the word “them” may be related to the word “damn”, as an irony of making part of the government thoughts. Since America was in conflict also with Russia, to call Russians, or the Russian government, “damn Russians” represents an irony made by Ginsberg. Also, these lines may represent the US conservative view of the Russians, at that time.

After pointing all these ideas of one single America, Ginsberg affirms that the situation of the country, and his viewpoint exposed in the poem, “is quite serious”, and he finishes with a last verse telling his “queer shoulder” will be put to the wheel - and here “queer” not only means delicate, but also homosexual – in other words, that he is working on America persistently. Ginsberg ends his poem telling the readers that his howl to America was the poem.

In the other side of America, in Brazil’s seventies, Chacal writes the poem “América Amem” that will be discussed here in comparison to Ginsberg’s “America” already mentioned.

“américa amem me  
     ensinou a ser assim  
     antropofágico pagão um  
     fauno de calça lee

    américa amem palavras  
         palas  
 palavreados

    américa    amem  
     woody    woody  
     voo doo

feijão & arrote

    américa    amem  
     nosso    desespero  
     nossa    paixão  
     imensa” (2007,  
     p.301)

As well as Ginsberg, Chacal's gaze to his socio-political context is critical, especially in relation to capitalism, focusing on the US imperialism over Brazil. Then, there are two visions about the same subject however with different contextualization. Ginsberg was facing before him many different socio-political manifestations that were occurring<sup>13</sup> in the San Francisco Bay Area, and he, through his poetry, manifested himself – and his voice is considered one of the most active voices against the technocratic society. Chacal, on the other hand, was in another country, a nation that was accepting the US imperialism for international interests, and in another decade – a time when the imperialism was already consumed and the underdeveloped country was trying to get advantage from the alliance with the US, a kind of agreement where both could have political and economic success.

Therefore, the poem “América Amem” is inserted in a different context from Ginsberg's “America”, and it has its importance in relation to the Brazilian seventies' society and politics. It is important to pay attention in the poem's title, to the game of words and to the three meanings of the words in “América Amem”. In Portuguese, “América Amem” may mean an interjection “Love America!”; the second is the more sarcastic one, which may refer to a Christian action of saying “amen”, in the idea of submission and agreement. Moreover, the third supposed meaning that may be considered in this expression is in the use of the English language, which is the reading of “America Amem” as “American men”. These three interpretations of the title have a wide connection to the context of the poem. Therefore, there is not one singular way of reading, but three different ways that may be used to enlarge the poem significances.

In the first stanza, there is a very strong criticism towards the US capitalism. In this stanza, the expression “América Amem” may be read as “American men”, the people or the government who have imposed to the Brazilian people – induced by the Brazilian government – to be a “fauno de calça lee”. Chacal uses the image of a fauno who denies his animal part when demonstrating that the fauno is “civilized” when wearing jeans. Also, it is not any pair of jeans, i.e. a very disseminated fabric in

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<sup>13</sup> The Free Speech Movement, civil rights, Occupation of Alcatraz, protests against the Vietnam War, etc.

the twenty-century day-by-day life, but a pair of lee jeans, which means a worldwide spread trend of the capitalism and the mass production.

And in the line “um antropófago pagão”, anthropophagy is dealt as a reference to Oswald de Andrade and to Tropicália. The second stanza is ironic and sarcastic, and when the use of the expression “América Amem” may mean “America, amen”, as a submissive expression, one that accepts the happenings passively, without any disagreement – which is not the case of this poem. Then, the submission comes, mainly, from the words, the lies and the expressions that may signify the US speech to underdeveloped countries; these three choices of words, one in each verse, based on irony to the submission of the poet’s nation to the US imperialism. The third stanza starts with an English line, passing through a concept that is an action from an Afro-American religion to come to a typical Brazilian term inserted in a game of words. In this stanza, the expression “América Amem”, if considered as “Love America”, could suggest a certain hierarchy: First, love American culture: “woody woody”. Then, love what comes from the African-American culture: “voo doo”. And at last, love what comes from the African-Brazilian culture: “feijão e aroto”, maybe trying to play with the Brazilian typical food “feijão e arroz” (rice and beans). Also, the last line of this stanza has an ambiguity, since the word “aroto” or in English “to burp”, may mean satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding what was consumed – and here comes the idea of consumption and capitalism again.

The last stanza of the poem may have the same meaning as the third stanza of the expression “América Amem”: to love the passion of the nation in relation to the seductive American way of life – the passion of being involved to a capitalist era, but the despair of not having the same results of the US, of that America.

Therefore, having briefly analyzed these poems from Ginsberg and Chacal, it is relevant to say that although they are writing in different nations, and in different decades, they are criticizing similar subjects, and they have similar concerns about the socio-political happenings in relation to the capitalism/machinery era in the US (in the case of Ginsberg) and the consequences of them in Brazil (in the case of Chacal). The two Americas represented here by the US and Brazil have only

one side for the poets: the side of a nonimperialist America. The attempt of engaging in their socio-political contexts shows a similar hope for both Americas. Thus, the poets give their message in these two books and represent, particularly, in these two poems, similar criticisms to their nations.

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