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Translating Multilingual Life

Cultura é produto da agricultura. É ela um "colher" (*colere*) das coisas arrancadas da natureza. Civilização é produto da vida urbana. É ela a tentativa de informar significativamente a vida do "cidadão" (*civis*). É formação, não colheita. Poucas cidades têm tal poder formativo. A maioria é centro dos seus arredores camponeses. Foco de cultura. Poucas cidades deram o salto para se tornarem berços de civilização, Praga é uma delas. Tal salto pode ser explicado sociologicamente, mas tal explicação pode ser dispensada. [...] Quem visita tais cidades, deve amá-las ou odiá-las. E quem nelas nasceu, e viveu, deve aceita-las como centro do mundo. *Sum civis Pragensis.* [1]

Vilém Flusser, *Bodenlos* (2007: 23)

From Flusser's Philosophical "Groundings": Out of Prague, Into the World

In his 1992 philosophical autobiography *Bodenlos*, the Czech–Brazilian philosopher Vilém Flusser describes his native city in all of its multilingual, cultural and intellectual effervescence. In the chapter "Praga entre as guerras" [Prague Between the Wars], the past and its specific coordinates of time and place are posited as critical points of departure for much of his subsequent philosophical activity: prefigurations of a life of thought that spanned most of the twentieth century, while transiting a number of other languages and cultures (Latin, Brazilian Portuguese, French, English) far from this point of cultural and linguistic origin.

For those already familiar with Flusser and his work, it might appear that he would not have even needed to leave Prague in order to come into close contact with a wide range of languages and philosophical positions. Moreover, he may not even have departed so radically from this presumably comfortable intellectual starting point were it not for the series of historical catastrophes—the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Second World War, the Holocaust, the postwar Stalinist takeover,

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the rise of the Iron Curtain and the Cold War, and over fifty years of totalitarian rule in Central and Eastern Europe—that were to become an inseparable part of the history of Prague and its European civilization in 20th century. Out of this string of calamities, Flusser would emerge as a prime example of his book's polysemic title, *Bodenlos*: a "groundless" or "ungrounded" subject, in constant translation between languages, ideas and cultures, without the navigational certitude of a single home base for much of his life.

As Flusser's examination of his own specific place of origin as a departure point for his own life of continual transcontinental flight, out of a Europe that is no longer 'quite itself' anymore (that is, if it ever has been). Nonetheless, perhaps it is precisely because of this "falta de fundamento" ['groundlessness'] (20) that his approach to philosophy continues to resonate in early 21st-century intellectual culture. Such reflections may well lead to a closer look at a number of other geographical spaces that, while perhaps not claiming or even explicitly aspiring to the cultural complexity of an early 20th-century metropolis like Prague (no matter how imperfect or segregated it may have actually been), still invite both their inhabitants and others in transit to initiate an in-depth exploration of their own multilingual and cultural diversity. Although, as Adorno and other critical theorists have endeavored to remind us, a more contemporary discussion of culture might do well to avoid orienting itself by way of the by-now all-too-questionable term of 'civilization,' there are certainly other more nuanced ways to articulate much the same kind of intellectual ebullience that Flusser appears to idealize in interwar Prague: a recurrent point of orientation that linked not only to his own fertile philosophical beginnings, but also the sudden and tragic end of his own life's journey in a automobile accident outside his native Prague in 1991.

Even while setting aside the possibility of entering into a debate on such value-laden considerations such as the putative worth of a particular cultural origin (as I am somewhat skeptical that Flusser would go so far as to ask: "How can anyone aspire in good faith to being a 'true philosopher' if they do not start out in a 'civilized' focal point such as Athens, Florence, Prague, Vienna, Paris, New York, etc.?"), Flusser's philosophical autobiography still serves as a multifaceted model for how thinkers, scholars and other cultural agents might arrive at a more complex understanding of a geographically specific starting point as a prelude to subsequent philosophical inquiry, whether one's own or that of others. In mapping out one's own lived experience, whether that of a supposedly 'multicultural' world city, or any of the presumably 'monolingual,' 'provincial' or 'insular' cultures imagined to be juxtaposed against it, to say nothing of the possible in-between spaces, from sprawling suburbs to outlying urbanized neighborhoods, all of these spaces not only overlap, but also allow for varying levels of exposure to other languages and cultures. After all, there

is perhaps nothing more provincial than the facile assumption that one's own city, no matter how cosmopolitan and indispensable it may seem to its own inhabitants, is the 'center of the world.' With this preconceived notion firmly ingrained, no amount of studying, traveling, or tuning in to other cultures can ever serve to dismantle this hierarchy of one's own geographical centrality, to say nothing of others' implicit marginality.

So what would it mean to examine these other, 'outlying' sites of geographical origin as a point of departure for linguistic and cultural complexity? How do non-metropolitan areas (islands, rural regions) or urban enclaves (especially neighborhoods segregated on the basis of ethnicity or socioeconomic status) exhibit these elements differently, and what of the thoughts of those who are born into and live in those spaces that do not claim or require centrality to reaffirm their cultural significance, especially when they appear in any number of different languages? In order to address the philosophical challenge that Flusser's work poses to the relative merits of self-described "centers of the world" and their putative margins, many of those who have experienced similar narratives of origin in spaces and terms that extend beyond those of Flusser's Prague (as well as other more recent elaborations of urban identities and cosmopolitanisms) might begin by sketching out the obvious differences made manifest by the initial epigraph, by way of what might come to be understood as a series of superimposed micro- and macro-cartographies. These alternative mappings, grounded as they are in a ever shifting set of personal experiences and interactions, will not (nor even need to) correspond to official mappings of present-day geopolitical realities in order to function as a viable means of conceptualizing a continually shifting landscape of often overlapping multilingual cultural identities.

Welcome to My World: Thinking On (and Off) the *Costanova*

It is with these questions in mind that I begin to juxtapose my own set of local and ever-shifting mappings of cultural identity alongside of Flusser's descriptions of his cultural origins in subsequent translation. While it may seem at first to be a leap of reasoning as equally "groundless," it can also be argued that this act of translation, from one language and cultural space into another, already provides grounding for what other wise might seem an arbitrary (if not excessively autobiographical or identitarian) transcultural combination. With the possibility of such common academic criticisms ever in mind, it should also be emphasized that I am in no way presenting these alternative remappings as all-encompassing or exhaustive for other people who transit the same cultural spaces

that I do. In fact, I would want them to encourage others, both here and elsewhere, to suggest their own visions of alternative cultural cartography, especially in ways that do not always, or even begin to, overlap with my own.

In my particular case, any initial micro-cartographical survey that might better reveal the cultural contours of my place of origin would show that it is not a city, but rather first and foremost an island in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Southern New England: first named Noe-pe by the Native Wampanoags, Claudia by early Italian explorers and Texel by the Dutch, but also known by other names, all of them overlapping with one another and, like the feminine names of Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, never perfectly commensurable representations of the places they presume to refer to. Along with the adjacent coastline and inland areas, it constitutes an agglomeration of not only urban, but also suburban and rural space, all made accessible to one another by ferries, train lines and above all a rapidly expanding interstate highway system that connects the main population centers of this cultural archipelago presently estimated at over 10 million inhabitants. It goes without saying, however, that no one ever experiences this kind of community, be it that of a city or a region, in its totality (or for that matter, even completely in the present). For some, this region might include cities known by names like Boston or Lowell, Providence or Woonsocket, Fall River or New Bedford, New London or Waterbury, New Haven or Bridgeport: but like any other archipelago, be it geological or conceptual, it hardly ever includes all of the points on the map for all of its inhabitants; in fact, many are intentionally avoided. Just as important as the minor cities listed here, if not more so, are the smaller, in-between places (small towns, farms, forests, beaches, bodies of water) that hold the region together and that are often considered to be its most characteristic points of reference. Finally, all of them co-exist alongside other often invisible or abandoned places, if not those already departed who continue to inhabit them, if only in the memory of the living, if at all.

So if Flusser's interwar Prague can in fact be identified by both a generalized and broad-based multilingualism and a overall high level of intellectual activity, even across the often insurmountable early 20th-century divisions of ethnic origin or socioeconomic status, the cultural and linguistic complexity of the place that I am mapping out here might also be more accurately characterized by a similar memory of the past: in this case, that of a population of working-class migrants arriving from other parts of the world and their descendants. While the peoples who inhabited the region in earlier historical periods were equally instrumental in connecting the region to the rest of the world—with everyone from Wampanoags, Yankees, Azoreans, South Sea Islanders, enslaved and free Africans and their descendants, Inuits from the Arctic, the occasional Japanese castaway or other solitary travelers, together with other global islanders traveling the world on trading vessels and whaling

ships—the tens of millions of immigrants who arrived during the industrial boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were to contribute enormously to the present-day cultural mélange. All of this historical background might help explain why concepts such as the "shrinking of the time-space continuum" and the "disappearance of borders" so central to the understanding of present-day discussions of globalization are hardly novel concepts here, as they have already been an integral part of this region's cultural worldview for centuries.

In *Bodenlos*, Flusser apparently considered these two models of cultural contact—the European metropolis *vs.* the outlying destination points of European emigration—to be distinct from one another, at least upon initial examination: "A gente pode encontrar-se na fronteira entre duas culturas que se chocam (tal não era o caso de Praga, porque lá as três culturas fundamentais, a tcheca, a alemã e a judia, formavam síntese, portanto nova cultura). Isto é a situação do clássico imigrante. […] deve procurar sintetizar, dentro de si próprio, as duas culturas entre as quais se encontra, e depois, progressivamente, fazer com que a "nova" cultura venha a substituir a "velha" na sua "forma" de estar no mundo."(69)[2]

This succinct description of the complexities of the immigrant experience, in contrast to Prague's tripartite (yet by no means non-problematic) confluence of languages and cultures, brings us to an implicit recognition, not only of the centuries-long persistence of global flows of languages and cultures in the configuration of cultural reality in this region and others, but also the enduring importance of outside spaces in the configuration of one's own local cultural environment long after the process of immigration has presumably ended. Naturally, one might question whether immigrants are really only confronted with a single "new" culture in the form of monolithic mainstream culture, or whether this new culture is in fact comprised of a multiplicity of cultural and linguistic communities, not only other European immigrant groups, but also Native, Asian and African Diaspora groups often classified simplistically within other cultural or ethnic groupings. (One of the most obvious examples of this deceptive simplicity of what are often considered Spanish-speaking communities in my region might be that of Central American or Andean immigrants, whose mother tongue may actually be Maya-Quiché, Quechua, Aymara or another regional indigenous language.)

So what Flusser presents here as "the border between two cultures" is in fact not a single, impermeable dividing line on the horizon, but a broader set of concepts, some quite different from

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[2] One may find oneself on the border between two cultures that clash (this was not the case in Prague, as the three base cultures there, German, Czech and Jewish, formed a synthesis, and therefore a new culture). This is the situation of the classic immigrant, […] who must attempt to synthesize inside of him/herself the two cultures in between which s/he is situated, and then progressively make the "new' culture begin to replace the "old" in its "way" of being in the world.

what might emerge from studies of border consciousness and identity as elaborated by such well-known theorists as Gloria Anzaldúa and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, or those that point to other forms of mixed, transcultural and transnational worlds: whether those in global circulation such as the British Columbian Native artist Bill Reid's Haida-inspired sculptures, or in writings from the Angolan-born Lusophone author José Eduardo Agualusa that connect a reading from this coast with the cultures of the Portuguese-speaking Atlantic. In this dispersed transcultural prism of often-contrasting global border regions, one might come to the realization that perhaps the most serious danger to cultural diversity is the limited perception that only a single, primary border lies on the horizon, or that one is always on one side of it or the other.

My own story is, after all, a different one: for over the course of my life and that of countless others in this region, the most important and frequently crossed international land border was not the more distant southern frontier with Mexico, but rather the one with Canada, our nearest and officially bilingual neighbor to the North. To give just one anecdotal example: when we were children, on visits to Canada, my brother and I would race on foot towards the border, and when we arrived at it, we would stop and stand with one foot on either side, experiencing the concrete sensation of being literally in two countries at once, and then jump back and forth, waving at one another and at our parents from the other side. As silly as it may appear at first, this childhood game of continually hopping back and forth, over and onto this border, even today with the recent obstacles imposed by an increasingly 'securitized' world, remains as much a part of my cultural identity as any single location within either of these two adjacent nation-states, to say nothing of an expanded list of other global sites. In crossing this and other borders, however, it would be impossible not to recognize how this relatively carefree passage is far from universal; and yet, those officially "denied access," along with those "permitted entry," still attempt and succeed in crossing back and forth all the same. In the same way that some activists claim that "no one is illegal," one must also recognize that by now we are all subject to a certain degree of suspicion, cultural illegitimacy or even outright irrelevance and dismissal, depending on who has deemed it necessary to evaluate our faces, voices, bodies, 'baggage' or assorted identifying 'papers.'

In any case, a close proximity to this border, reachable in only a six-hour drive, as well as the cities and landscapes that lay beyond it, provided me throughout my childhood and up to the present day a series of alternative models of how bilingual, and even post-bilingual, identity can be configured, especially by way of the cultural production of Allophone ('Other-Language') First Nation and migrant groups. The point, then, is not to draw out the borders of such linguistic zones with solid lines, but rather with a perforated series of dots and dashes, complete with in-between

spaces and a potentially limitless number of crossing points. From this perspective, bilingualism is hardly the ultimate goal on this journey through languages, but rather only the first stop toward a more complex understanding of linguistic diversity and community.

Moreover, although it may come as a surprise to some, the border with Canada is not the only international border in this region. Another was the often ignored sea border with the Atlantic Ocean, one as important as any land border, over which so many of the immigrants to this region had arrived to populate the cities and towns of the regions and provide a workforce for its industries. In the 1960's and 70's, the most numerous group of new arrivals from across this eastern horizon were the Portuguese-speaking Azoreans and Cape Verdeans. While not a group that I personally 'belonged to,' that is, if ethnic origin is the sole factor in determining one's belonging to an immigrant group, their traditions and language—parades, *festas*, food, music and media culture—were nonetheless an unavoidable part of growing up on this Portuguese-speaking *Costanova* for myself and those around me. Although by this time most of them arrived by plane from their native islands in the North Atlantic, through their connection with the fishing industries and other seafaring traditions of the region, the continuing link of transnational migration with this ocean border would continue to be underscored, especially with the subsequent large-scale arrival of Brazilian immigrants in the region from the late 1980's to the present. With these two geographical frontiers in mind, it thus becomes possible to draw an alternative macro-cartography out of this linguistically migrant *Côte-Neuve* that cuts across the forests of Québec and the rest of Canada on one side, and out into the Lusophone Atlantic towards the Azores, mainland Portugal, Cape Verde, Brazil, Africa and beyond on the other, thus complementing other cartographies that point toward multilingual zones in the rest of the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, or Central Europe, as well as beyond to Africa, Asia and the Pacific. With this sort of multiple cultural cartography in mind, living multilingually can mean that one is actually departing in a number of often opposite directions, towards a number of different cultural and linguistic borders at once, with one's own experience what ties them together.

Beyond this initial duality, there are still other sets of borders. Some are internal: those of a regional patchwork of ethnic, linguistic, cultural divisions spread out among the region's cities, towns, and rural areas. Whether my grandparents' Italian, French-Canadian or Polish ethnic neighborhoods preserved in living memory today, with their mills, churches, clubs, stores and other social gathering places, or the suburbs a short drive away that marked for many in my parents' generation their own brand of social mobility as part of the middle class. There was also the border between what we lived and what we saw on television, whether an astronaut landing on the moon,

the absurdity of a television family on a situation comedy, or the stark brutality of the ongoing war in Vietnam and Cambodia. And every so often, a voice might even break through what on the surface seemed to be a completely monolingual media environment: a local Portuguese-language radio or television show highlighting a overseas possession such as Macau or news on Portugal's own colonial war in Africa, a late-night ice hockey match in French on AM radio from Montréal, or other Allophone media interventions on shortwave that reminded us that the reality of our lives was different from how the largely monolingual mainstream media in this country was attempting to shape it.

The fourth, by no means final, conceptual border post on this cultural linguistic map is, and ultimately remains, the one at the airport, one which has already come to link metropolitan centers directly to regions on this and on other continents. By the beginning of the 1970's, air travel had become affordable to the North American middle class, opening up areas of the world to travel that up to that point had been largely reserved for the few. Many of the inhabitants of this region would travel to visit and re-establish personal ties with their countries of origin, but equally important to these voyages of cultural return was the exploration of other countries beyond the scope of one's own ethnic identity. As the 21st century continues to provide new and direct connections between the region to a ever-expanding set of transit hubs in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and beyond, this crisscrossing of continents and cultural perspectives shows no sign of slowing down, bar a new series of global transformations, including potential disasters, comparable to those that came to characterize Flusser's 20th century, complete with its own re-bordering and recombination of global regions, languages and cultures.

Future Mappings: Both Here and Beyond

It is hardly my intention, in spite of all the cultural, geographical and linguistic displacements I have experienced over the course of my life, to imagine myself, like Flusser, as 'bodenlos,' at least to the same extent that he imagines himself to be. Ultimately, for all of my self-imposed attempts to extend my own experience beyond the limits of both my own ethnic cultural heritage and a canonized Western cultural tradition, I have always been fortunate enough to be able to return to this reasonably tranquil coast where I was born and raised, in order to settle in once again, live, move around freely and work. Here I am after all these years, reading Flusser along with other works of mid-20th-century Brazilian culture—from the urban architecture of Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa,

the visual art and performance of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, the *Cinema Novo* of Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Glauber Rocha, to the fiction of Clarice Lispector—as part of a graduate seminar I offer in the Department of Portuguese at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. It seems all too fitting at times that we read, view and discuss these works against the multilevel, 'social Utopian' backdrop that is its 60's-style Late Modernist campus designed by architect Paul Rudolph, all the while continuing to research the surrounding region and its largely Portuguese-speaking immigrant culture, as well as the local questions of (post-) bilingualism and translation inseparable from this cultural project. It is important to note, however, that this study in multiple languages, even in such rarified architectural spaces, has not resulted in disconnecting completely this academic project from the ethnic and cultural realities of the rest of our lived environment; in many cases, it may actually have brought us, as if in some circuitous global rerouting, closer to it. So as this relocalization of Flusser and his Brazilian contemporaries through translation onto my own *Costanova* might suggest, living between languages, ethnicities and cultures in this way is far from an empty Utopian ideal, but actually much more of a far-reaching reality at this point than I or anyone else in the region might have envisioned in the 1960's and into the early 1970's. After all, living multilingually does not simply serve to document or preserve fragile cultural practices and endangered historical sites, but is also a living, breathing work in progress that interweaves and negotiates previously separate ethnic narratives, cultural identities, languages and experiences in ways once thought impossible.

That is to say: my own mixed ethnic background, my academic persona as a professor of a single language, literature and culture (at least according to the strictest of disciplinary definitions), and my 'off-duty' set of linguistic and cultural interests at any given moment hardly ever overlap in any consistent, clear-cut or predictable way, and I can't say that I could make them 'match up,' even if I wanted them to. On the contrary, what stands out is the immediacy with which a wide variety of the world's languages and cultures continue to permeate my lived experience in the here-and-now, facilitated by the globalized media, interactive landscape and continued transnational migration so characteristic of the early 21st century. So much of my grandparents' life between languages has been taken off the streets of the ethnic neighborhood: nowadays I can always stay at home and read the 'Japanese' novels of Belgian author Amélie Nothomb in French, the Roman poems of the Austrian Ingeborg Bachmann in German, or the post-Cold War Balkan travel narratives of Andrzej Stasiuk in Polish; listen to foreign-language broadcasts such as RDP Açores on my car stereo, or Première Plus, "la chaîne satellite de Radio Canada," now beamed crystal clear from Montréal into my home; or collect mp3's from a wide range of musical traditions (whether Brazilian, Turkish, Cape Verdean,

Cambodian, Caribbean or any number of crosscultural musical fusions) that emerge from virtual obscurity thanks to the Internet. After all, as so many theorists of globalization have reiterated, the problem is no longer the lack of media options, but rather a surplus of them. For this reason, I find myself opting out of mainstream media to an ever-increasing extent (if not entirely): viewing clips from global TV on internet websites, watching an indie or foreign film at home, at my university or in one of the art-house cinemas in my neighborhood, or sitting in a café with materials to explore other languages such as Romanian, Turkish, Farsi or Bahasa Indonesia, often with interlocutors as eager to look out beyond the local majority-language culture as I am. In this way, it is perhaps still possible to live across languages even in this officially monolingual corner of the world for those committed to doing so, in spite of the implicit infrastructural challenges it might entail: not merely as 'parties' being served at a ever-increasing range of dining options, but as active, critical participants involved in reshaping cultural space, determining, at least to some extent, the content of what circulates before us.

Even so, at times I must admit I am tempted, especially in moments of *saudade*, to return to the cultural certainty of my childhood: one characterized not by any official monolingualism or primary school patriotisms, but by the immigrant cultural heritage of separate and distinct national origins passed down to me by my parents, grandparents and surrounding communities. Whether at home in Providence or with relatives in southern Connecticut, I still find myself detouring to drive through the neighborhoods where my family grew up and spent much of their lives, no matter how much the character of these cities may have changed in recent years. All the same, one doesn't need to reread Baudrillard or other postmodern thinkers to recognize how some of the few, supposedly well-preserved or restored 'ethnic' neighborhoods of the region, such as the Italian-American neighborhood of Federal Hill in Providence, especially in its present reincarnation as a weekend gourmet ghetto, can seem at times as much of a strangely simulated fiction as any theme park, at least in comparison to my own memories. Even so, I won't claim that I don't enjoy the nostalgic sensation of being and becoming that one can get in such spaces, much like the national pavilions at world's fairs, connected to one another by retro-futuristic modes of transport such as aerial cable cars or monorails: a model of futurity often promised, yet rarely delivered. Add to this the manicured perfection of, say, presumably 'authentic' Japanese Zen gardens, or even those more 'natural' adventures in what many in this genetically modified age still call 'the wilderness,' and the constructed nature of such cultural spaces becomes all the more clear. So I certainly wouldn't want to give the impression that I don't pass through this reconstituted 'ethnic neighborhood' and others like it from time to time, perhaps to speak Italian with some of the older people who work there and

stock up on imported groceries. After all, when it comes to the taste of certain kinds of food, that is precisely when the term 'authentic' retains for so many people a thin strand of validity, and I would never claim that I am any different in this respect. Am I 'authentic'? For many, probably not.

But I also wonder: Is this lingering insistence on the authenticity of one's own sense of taste simply another way of distinguishing once again 'the one who knows' from the so-called outsiders or transients who cannot taste or tell the difference? Over time, the nominally 'inauthentic product,' with no official *DOC* or seal of approval, has always had the power to create changes in the taste of even the most die-hard purists, quite often by the very immigrants who are considered to be an flawed addition to an otherwise 'perfect' cultural landscape. Then again, our present cultural fusions, whether culinary, architectural, linguistic or human, may well be future versions poised to complement classical understandings of authenticity, and I too may also linger to soak up the atmosphere in a sidewalk café or even to throw a few coins into the fountain, but not necessarily with the wish of returning to any faraway and eternal Rome (wherever that may be, as that city, like so many others, also seems to be experiencing a process of cultural transformation through recent immigration). Perhaps in throwing my coins, I am merely engaging in yet another repeated (and like so many others discussed here, clearly self-ironic) cultural gesture: not in order to return for a moment to a distant *Fontana di Trevi* or probe its underlying archeological layers of classical antiquity, but to engage in a more localized act: perhaps to spend some time with my own departed relatives, or to prepare for a more nuanced understanding and deeper appreciation of present and future cultural possibilities. Such sources of recollection, wherever they emerge, can serve as sites where memories and meanings can be reassembled differently, reconnected to other times and places, and for this reason they still remain necessary for me, in spite of how 'artificial,' 'inauthentic' or even 'tasteless' their inherent mixture of novelty and nostalgia may appear in comparison to those in presumably more established cultural locales.

Even so, in order to re-encounter the feel of my own cultural origins both on and off this multilingual and migrant *Costanuova*, I might find myself actually closer to home in less frequented spaces than this: for example, through the personal interaction involved in picking up *lahmajun* bread at the odd Armenian bakery or fresh produce at a backstreet Cambodian market, or 'losing myself' among the colors, music and crowds at a local Dominican street festival. In Flusser's words: "Uma vez transcendida a própria cultura (isto é, na situação da falta de fundamento), a gente passa a pairar por cima de um conjunto complexo de várias culturas, e a gente se vê a si própria assim pairando. Isto implica problemas de vária ordem. Por exemplo: a gente vê interpenetrações culturais, e abismos

entre culturas, e a gente vê os vários dinamismos que fazem com que culturas se interpenetrem, se distanciem e se entredevorem." (68)[3]

Flusser's work, thus recontextualized through translation, continues to remind us that one's own cultural origins, memories and genetic mappings are not simply to be preserved or celebrated as they so often are, but also to be interwoven with those from other cultures, and even to be set aside at times to allow other cultures to stand in and take their place for a moment. It is for this reason that I remain convinced, as I reflect, that this translated, multilingual life is not just a product of lived experience, but also a preview of unforeseen future steps towards other languages and global cultures, some of which continue to be found closer to home than might ever have been expected.

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[3] Once one's own culture has been transcended (that is, in the situation of groundlessness), one comes to be suspended above a complex set of various cultures, a one sees oneself suspended in this way. This implies problems on various levels. For example: one sees cultural intersections, cultural hierarchies, and abysses between cultures, and one sees the various dynamisms made when cultures intersect, distance themselves from one another, and devour one another.