

A Statesman in the Academy: Joaquim Nabuco at Yale

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IN THE DIARIES of the Brazilian ambassador, Joaquim Nabuco, the first representative of the Brazilian republic to the United States, for the date of 14 May 1908 there is the following entry:

We proceed to New Haven (Shannon, Maurício, and I). Received at the station by the Secretary of the University, Rev. Anson Stokes, and Prof. Lang. We had tea with Mrs. Stokes, and at 5:00 I gave my lecture on Camões. Dined at the University Club. Twelve at the table. In my lecture, I introduced the system of asking one of the students to read the passages of Camões that I cited. The student was Mr. Williams, son of Prof. F. Wells Williams. (*Joaquim Nabuco Diários*, p. 671)

Nabuco is speaking of his lecture, “The Place of Camões in Literature”, written in English (translated to Portuguese in 1911 by Arthur Bomilcar and in 1940 by Carolina Nabuco), being the first of six lectures presented by the ambassador in North American universities in the period 1908-1909. After Yale, he spoke at the University of Chicago on 28 August 1908 on “The Approach of the Two Americas” and, the following year, at Vassar College on the 21st April on “Camões, the Lyric Poet.” In homage to a university of women, Nabuco translated all the stanzas from Camões’ lyric poetry in number and gender to the feminine plural. Next came Cornell University on April 23, on “The Lusiadas as an Epic of Love” and, finally, the University of Wisconsin, on June 20, 1909 on “The Share of America in Civilization.” Overcome by exhaustion and illness, Nabuco was unable to travel to Wisconsin, and his university appearances came to an end.

The six topics he selected for his lectures demonstrate well the division of his interests between poetry and political culture, three written on the Portuguese poet Camões, emphasizing the role of love and rhetoric, and three on the Americas, presenting the pan-Americanism that he was promoting, above all in the United States where, as Nabuco reminded the Yale students, he participated in the placement of the cornerstone of the Pan American Union in Washington, D. C. on May 11, 1908, just a few days before his visit to Yale.

Nabuco’s intention, in this undertaking, is to be not only the ambassador of a country, but of an entire language and culture, and

of a continent and experience held in common; he hopes to attract the attention of American students, who are unacquainted with Brazil, and win them over by speaking on subjects that they study and understand in their academic endeavors: Latin, which they were all obliged to speak, epic poetry, philosophy, ethics and American cultural and political history. Although two different translations of these lectures were published in Brazil, the original texts written in English deserve to be known and read, for the polished style, the brilliant rhetorical exposition, the clarity of thought and the subtle argumentation. In these writings, the dry and good-natured humor of the author shines forth, as does the research, the well-informed commentaries, rich documentation and precision of his writing and references, all necessary ingredients of a good academic essay in English. Yet beyond that, he hopes to attract his public's curiosity by addressing uncommon topics: in 1908 Yale undergraduates could still be brought together as a group to hear a distinguished diplomat speak on Camões, and even on the national sentiment in Brazil, although that address was limited to the Hispanic Club.

Nabuco's American lectures at Yale University are of interest equally to Camonian studies and to the theme of national identity, because they support a vision of the poetry of discovery and the foundation of his country that is at the same time heroic, ethical, and erotic. His reading of Camões is noble, romantic, and heroic, on equal terms. The ocean voyage and the encounter of new lands and peoples are the themes that still rule his vision of the world, reflecting the long colonial and imperial period, while being presented as examples and a lesson for the young republic in a period of transition.

In her biography, *The Life of Joaquim Nabuco by his daughter Carolina* (1928), the author explains the reasons that led the ambassador to choose academia as the ideal audience before which to expound his ideas and present his favorite themes:

Among the many and varied settings for these speeches which Nabuco as ambassador was obliged to deliver, none was more pleasing to him than that of the universities. In speaking to America's youth, he found consolation for not being able to address the youth of Brazil in the twilight of his life. Expansive in nature, he was even more so with students. The apostle's spirit in him inspired him with a desire to join the academic profession, and a supreme eagerness to speak at length to his young countrymen before his death. In one of his letters written in 1909 he said: "My ambition in this final phase of my life is to speak to youth, to spread the sentiments and ideas which I shall take away with me when I depart and thereby carry with me into eternity. I believe that I could leave a political testament which would be a chart showing the reefs ahead and the route we should follow to avoid them. The greatest glory of all is to train disciples, in

other words, to relive politically another generation, still serving the fatherland. I am afraid that I am too ambitious for my age and the present state of my health. It was also in these universities that certain of his literary and spiritual qualities stood out more and were better understood; his vast fund of knowledge and culture, for which he received the epithet “scholarly”; the subtleness of his critical judgment; and, in a utilitarian country, his ardent love of the beautiful. (*The Life*, p. 337)

The attraction of the universities becomes clear in a note sent by Nabuco to Machado de Assis, in a letter from Washington, D.C. dated June 8, 1908:

(...) This year I’m going to receive the degree of Doctor in Letters from Yale, and the University of Chicago invited me to give the official commencement lecture at the end of the academic year, on the day of the awarding of degrees, which is a great honor. (...) I also accepted to speak next year at one of the special days of the University of Wisconsin. (...) I am very pleased for Brazil with all these honors, which are essentially made to the country. (*Cartas*, p. 308)

The desired reply soon arrives from the master Machado in a letter dated June 28:

My dear Nabuco. Allow me to compliment you on the lectures that you gave there and for your speech at the ceremony of the Union of the Americas; they all came out in the *Jornal do Comércio*. You don’t forget this country wherever you are, just as you don’t forget your old friends, and I’m thankful that I received the copy of the *Washington Post* with the speech. The lecture about Camões’ role in literature revealed once more the attention that you have given since youth to the poet and the poem. It comes with new and refined interpretations, the same long critical reach and the usual clear and eloquent style. I say the same of the lecture on nationality in Brazil. Really, the men you point out in Latin America do justice to the community of spirit of the great nation in which our government so justly placed you to represent it. And finally, my congratulations on your doctorate from Yale University. (Machado de Assis, *Obra completa*, p. 1089)

And on the first of August, Nabuco replies:

(...) My grateful thanks for your kind words about my lectures at Yale. On August 28 I should be in Chicago, as I told you. Here I live the life of a peregrine, from university to university. (*Cartas*, p. 310)

A willing traveler, Nabuco would himself try to be the link bringing together those distinguished universities through love of the Portuguese language and the spirit of Brazilian national identity. After a synthetic panorama of national history, he presents to the students examples

of idealism and liberty, with which he builds a cultural theory of the Americas, in which Brazil will occupy a place comparable to that of the United States. In his university travels, Nabuco shows the double intention of sowing his ideals, his concept of civilization and literature to a new generation, and of leaving with them an image of Brazil as an idealistic and progressive country, on a path parallel to the country of his friends Elihu Root, Secretary of State, and Theodore Roosevelt, President of the Republic. That mission had its challenges, such that every lecture was one more victory for the ambassador-intellectual-itinerant lecturer, as he confesses in his diary on June 8:

I write to Machado and to Rodrigues. To the latter I remind to ask Yale for the catalog, the Hispanic Society, and I say: "There you should all think about my successor and hint that he should practice English. Here only English is spoken. Everything has changed in Washington. The Bureau of the American Republics that when I arrived seemed like a hot bed of conspiracy and ill will against the United States, after Brazil's example has become a public arena, in which the combatants fight for first place in the friendship and confidence of the Americans. And about time...but if only I had a profession that didn't make me so visible, oblige me to attend so many functions and that didn't shut me away the entire year in the iron circle of the English language and didn't isolate us so much. (*Joaquim Nabuco Diários*, pp. 673-674)

In another letter from May 23, telling how he overcame those obstacles, he comments that "At Yale University I was very well received..." --an impression confirmed by the reports in the university's student newspaper, *Yale Daily News*, the country's oldest:

Yale Daily News. Tuesday, May 5, 1908

Brazilian Ambassador to Lecture." Illustrious South American Diplomat Here on May 14 and 15. "Joaquim Nabuco, the Brazilian Ambassador to the United States, will address the University on Camoens, the famous Portuguese poet, in Lampson Hall on Thursday, May 14, at 5 o'clock. [At the request of the lecturer, W. Williams, 1910, will also read a prose version of two extracts from "The Lusiads."] The following day he will speak under the auspices of the Hispanic Club on "The National Spirit of Brazil.

On May 15, the student newspaper carries news of the ambassador's success: "As a large and appreciative audience greeted Senor Nabuco when he spoke yesterday on "The Poetry of Camoens," an unusual attendance is again anticipated tonight." In his diary, Nabuco makes no reference to the lectures, only to the social details of his reception:

May 15, 1908

We had lunch (Shannon, Maurício, and I) with the Stokes, and later Mrs. Stokes took us for a ride in the phaeton to see the outskirts of New Haven, which are

beautiful, especially with the green spring leaves. We had dinner with Prof. Lang. Later I gave my lecture on the Spirit of Nationhood in Brazil. (Diários, p. 672)

Nabuco's passage through Yale is further documented in columns of the bulletin, *Yale Alumni Weekly*, in the first instance thanking the ambassador for the donation to the University library of documents related to the negotiations on the border between Brazil and British Guiana:

Special vote of thanks were passed by the Corporation... to His Excellency, Senor Nabuco, the Brazilian Ambassador to America, who lectured at Yale last week, for his gift to the University Library of an important collection of Brazilian government publications, consisting of a complete collection of documents relating to the negotiations carried on several years ago in regard to the boundary line between Brazil and British Guiana. *Yale Alumni Weekly*, Vol. XVII, no. 35 (May 20, 1908), p. 834.

And, in the number dated July 8, there is a list of honorary degrees granted by the Corporation with his name, indicated to receive the title of "Doctor of Letters," with the succinct description: "Joaquim Nabuco. Brazilian Poet and Diplomat."

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Joaquim Nabuco. Brazilian Poet and Diplomat. (*YAW*, July 8, 1908). Vol. XVII, no. 40.

Poet and Diplomat

On conferring the doctorate *honoris causa* in Letters to the poet-ambassador (to the contrary, Columbia University gave him the doctorate in Law), Yale University may not have appreciated that their diploma enhanced the prestigious link between literature and politics which, according to Antonio Candido's study (1985), had characterized members of the Brazilian intellectual elite since before independence (1822). Ítalo Moriconi reminds us in an essay on Nabuco the statesman ("Um estadista sensitivo") that the Brazilian public servant felt himself to be more authentic when enjoying the literary life, even when he dedicated his time almost exclusively to affairs of state. In describing the great figures of the transition between empire and republic at the end of the 19th century, Moriconi considers them all, although in different degrees, to be men of letters:

Rui [Barbosa] and Nabuco are literary men, but not exclusively as is Machado [de Assis]. And they are politicians and leaders (administrators), but not exclusively as is Rio Branco. They are men of letters in the sense that the intellectual personality in the 19th century is formed by or based on a literary education. Literature is a pivotal area in the discursive-cognitive repertoire of the intellectual generations following 1870." ("Rui Barbosa pós-moderno?")

By choosing for the theme of his first lecture before Yale students, “The Place of Camões in Literature,” Nabuco defends not only his preference for literature, returning to the interest in Camões that he followed throughout his life, but in the esthetic qualities of language and literature he holds up to Yale students a high concept of culture, tied to classicism and to the universalism of the Portuguese discoveries. His choice of the Camonian epic poem is proof that literature nourished his political interests, or more specifically his relationship with political culture, which he understood in its esthetic dimensions. At the time he was writing *Minha Formação* (“My Formative Years”) in 1899, he confesses in his diary that [...] my mistakes were caused by mistaken idealism; I would never have been able to relate an idea, a belief, a principle that wasn’t for me an esthetic magnet [...] (“My Formative Years,” pp. 79-80). Carolina writes in the biography:

Placing Camoens before the American people was good propaganda for the Portuguese language, and it permitted him to talk about a subject that delighted him. Throughout his life he cherished a love for Camoens, a love that had inspired his first book at the age of twenty, *Camoens and the Lusiads*. At the age of sixty, he composed several sonnets in honor of the poet, which he left unpublished. He noted the following in his diary: “I am reading the *Lusiads* – this book is truly my companion as it always was. I am sorry that I have not memorized any more of it, but I must memorize the Isle of Love and Venus’ supplication to Jupiter, so that I can recite them along with sections on Adamastor and Inez de Castro, which I have never forgotten” (*The Life*, p. 338).

In Nabuco’s concept of culture, originating in Europe and inherited from history, however, according to the illuminating essay by Silviano Santiago, “Worldly Appeal,” there hides one of the poles of the contemporary political contradictions of the country’s recent history, which he experienced. The statesman goes through a crisis of representation, in which universal cultural values, always distant, must be constructed through a long period of apprenticeship, and not simply located or searched out in the national identity. Santiago characterizes Nabuco’s perspective as “intellectual curiosity about the world” and lack of interest in participating in local politics:

The homeland that fascinates the heart does not deceive the mind and, thus, the “great spectacle” of the world is that which “captures and commands the intelligence”... In the years of his youth and his maturity, sitting in the audience of the Brazilian stage on which the minor drama of the young nation is performed, Nabuco dreams of being in the audience of the great playhouse of humanity, where the seductive and definitive plays of the century are performed. (“Worldly Appeal,” p. 150)

Nabuco shares the definition of “instinct of nationality” with Machado de Assis, Brazilian life being a sharing and recapitulation *sui generis* of the great archetypes of Western civilization found in Europe. His universalizing impulses seem to distance him from American reality: “I would not trade all the landscapes of the New World, the Amazon forest, the Argentine pampas, for a stretch of the Via Appia, a curve in the road from Salerno to Amalfi, a bit of the quay on the Seine in the shadow of the old Louvre” (“My Formative Years,” Chap. IV). Situating himself, he takes the point of view of the cultured yet distanced observer, comparable to those of the great novelist and anticipating the exile in Brazil of a Dr. Ricardo Reis, esthete and monarchist. Nabuco observes the ‘spectacle of the world’, so as to detect and analyze the roots of its culture, praising above all its European origins, communicated by the intimate feelings of artistic expression:

In Paris and Italy, I had exchanged political for literary and critical ambition, that is, with a thick European layer in my imagination, a layer impermeable to local politics (“My Formative Years,” Chap. IV)



Photo: Agence France Presse

Luís de Camões.

In Nabuco’s imagination, Brazil is one of the stages of humanity and he is the spectator, perhaps comparable in his duties as writer-ambassador to Machado’s Counselor Ayres. In the chapter of his memoirs, “Attraction of the World,” Nabuco explains his narrative point of view, using a theatrical metaphor, of the type so dear to Machado: “...I am more a spectator of my century than of my country. For me, the play is civilization,

and it is staged in all the great theaters of humankind, now connected by the telegraph.” (“My Formative Years,” Chap. IV). We are dealing with a doubly absent spectator, who is located between two unstructured poles, the Brazil he defends and for which he feels a longing when he travels in the World, and world culture that he misses when he returns to his Massangana in Brazil. And, even more, he is a near-sighted spectator, too far from those stages, reclining in a provincial armchair, however considering himself connected to the four winds by the technology of the times, the telegraph, as Santiago explains:

He prefers to characterize himself as a spectator more interested in the theatrical drama of the century than in that of his native country. He sees the spectacle of the century as that of a civilization in full dramatic ebullience, so that the great play performed on European stages attracts him irresistible. Since he lives in a provincial country, he is far from the stage on which the great drama unfolds, but he can be its spectator in the coziness of his own home, due to modern means of mass communication such as the telegraph. (“Worldly Attraction”, p. 148)

Arriving in Washington, D.C. in 1905 as the first Brazilian ambassador, Nabuco becomes the man of action, actor and spokesman for a pan-American politics, allied with the interests of Roosevelt, in order to promote Brazil and strengthen the ties between the two countries. In the university auditoriums, beginning with Yale University, Nabuco could exchange his chair as spectator in the theater of humanity for the role of director and main character, a role even greater than ambassador, perhaps a Samorin or viceroy of Portuguese India, an interpreter of the great culture spread in the world by the Portuguese voyages, one of the themes of Camões’ *Lusiads*, pronounced in the halls of one of the most distinguished universities in the world. At Yale, Nabuco the spectator becomes a writer and actor, declaiming his text on a great stage of civilization, where the actor is a triply absent figure, living out the Camonian “disconcert of the world:” far from his country (Brazil), far from his esthetic and philosophical sources of reference (Lisbon and classicism), and persona or alter ego of his own history, speaking in a difficult Anglo-Saxon language. The task is heroic and the probabilities of success are minimal, since he is speaking to audiences who are completely ignorant of his subject matter, which deals with a cultural reality far beyond the horizons of the young American students. Still he does not lose his hope or vigor:

In the lecture “The Place of Camões in Literature,” Nabuco selects a series of topics of a romantic nature, which express the highest qualities of Camões’ work, categories that define the Luso-Brazilian cultural heritage for his time. The hero of the epic is collective, of the “peito ilustre Luistano...Aquelles que por obras valorosas/Se vão da lei

da morte liberando.” The first attribute that he takes from the *Lusiads* is perfection, an esthetic contribution of the “Portuguese race” under Latin influence: the primary attribute that he praises in the *Lusiads* is perfection, the esthetic contribution of the “Portuguese race” under the influence of Latin: “Once perfection is attained, one should simply copy it. Perfection is final.” (*The Place of Camões in Literature*, p. 3). And perfection equals heroism: “Aquelles que por obras valorosas/Se vão da lei da morte liberando.” Nabuco’s *Lusiads* is a poem of heroic voyages by sea,

They were midway on the wide ocean
Cleaving the ever-restless waves;
The billowing wind blew gently,
The sails of the ships were concave;
White spume was whipped backwards
As the mighty prows sped on
Cutting the sacred waters of the deep,
Where the cattle of Proteus never sleep. (I-19)

and of the observation of Nature:

Gently the breeze transported the ships
As if Heaven was at last their ally,
The elements serene, the horizon showing
Not one cloud nor any hint of danger.
They had rounded Cape Corrientes,
Ancient Africa’s southern boundary,
When unknown islands swam into their reach
With waves breaking restlessly on the beach. (I-43)

He comments on the perfect picturesque precision and esthetic perception of the poem: “He will call the ships *swimming birds*”, ‘nadantes aves.’ (*The Place of Camões in Literature*, p. 9). In the sailors who saw the horizon of the Tagus disappear, he implicitly recognizes an expression of longing and melancholy, comparable to the celebrated poem “Song of Exile” by the Brazilian romantic poet, Gonçalves Dias: “What Portuguese ever saw that Tagus coast disappear in the horizon who did not keep the last impression fixed by Camões? (*The Place of Camões in Literature*, p. 9):

Little by little our gaze was exiled
From the native hills we left behind;
There remained the dear Tagus and green
Sintra, and on those our sight long dwelt;
Our hearts, too, stayed behind us,

Lodged with their griefs in the loved land;
And when at last all faded from the eye,
Nothing was visible but sea and sky. (V-3)

The second great impression of the poem is that of the expansion of an empire, but no longer between Europe and Asia; Nabuco is able to arrive in the West by traveling east, because he thinks that the two shores that the poem brings together are Europe and America. In his judgment, America has a modernity and future that is much greater than Asia's. Thirdly, he praises the creative power and imagination of the poem, which is capable of transforming a "tedious shipboard diary" into great poetry, with unforgettable figures such as "The Old Man of the Restelo" and "Adamastor," for him symbols of knowledge and determination. Next, Nabuco sees an example of the rebirth of plastic representation that ties Camões' poetry directly to Raphael's painting: "I never went to the Farnesina that I had not the impression that Camões and Raphael were twin painters" (*The Place of Camões in Literature*, p. 16). In the use of mythology, Nabuco sees no 'cosmic confusion' (in Thomas Greene's unhappy expression), rather the survival of a polytheistic paganism, which Fernando Pessoa wanted to revive.

Continuing his reading of the poem, Nabuco finds four of the highest values in life put into action -- "Country, Love, Poetry and Action" -- which for his generation were as much political and cultural as romantic. In this interpretation, the poem is not only about ethics, but about a life experience forged out of necessity and poverty, and not lacking a lesson in love tied to progress and to the hero: "...they are not wrong/Who claim rutting emasculates the strong" (III, 139). Nabuco muses that the poem could never have been written had Camões prospered in Portugal, if he had never been condemned to exile and poverty, as in the notable cases of Dante and Milton. On this point he sees the sublime hand of destiny, so dear to his thinking: "...without the voyage to India it is impossible to imagine the *Lusiads*. He might have produced a poem as beautiful; he could not have produced one so stirring... you see throughout his work the figure of the Poet under the [empire of] fate intent on the creation of the *Lusiads*" (*Place*, p. 21).

Following this line of thought, Nabuco discovers the qualities he most admires in this work; besides beauty, he esteems glory, genius, and immortality. He hopes to make his young listeners at Yale, who are probably descendants of puritans, into self-styled "intellectual children" of this work of Latin culture, touchstone of one of the great nations of the Americas. And he bequeaths them, as a lesson remaining from his lecture, a secret of cultural politics of his generation and his epoch, which is that of esthetic education and reasoning: "Intellectual measures must be taken

in depth and width, as well as in height, and you have to look for them in design, in colour, in music, and not only in words” (*The Place of Camões in Literature*, p. 25). Through Nabuco, Camões loans his spirit and his art to the Americas, and his voice to Brazil.

On his second day at Yale University, Nabuco spoke on “The Spirit of Nationality in the History of Brazil” to the Hispanic Club. Tracing a wide historical and cultural panorama of the development of his country (“Brazil and the *Lusiads* are the greatest work of Portugal”), Nabuco increasingly emphasizes the attributes of a continental Americanism that the United States and Brazil hold in common. Because of their isolation and distance from Europe, they share the need to base themselves on their own realities, the self-reliance that has engendered a sense of nationality since colonial times.

Then came the decisive religious factor, in the case of Brazil inscribed by two letters, S.J., with geniuses and giants like Father Antônio Vieira, S.J., who developed a mission that in Nabuco’s words brought about a common treatment of indigenous society in the Americas, from Brazil to Canada. He speaks of the struggles to free us from foreign domination--whether from Dutch, Spanish, English or French--and of the strong forces that united the most distant regions of the two countries, the “bandeirantes and pioneers” who went into the interior to colonize the land. To the good character of those who governed, Nabuco adds an idea of their grandeur and promise for the future, two qualities held in common by the countries represented in the first Pan-American conference.

And to conclude, he raises idealism as the main characteristic of the country and its people: “Of that idealism Americanism makes part. We are, and always have been, loyal to our Continent. Our Nation could never be enslaved to a selfish, low task; imagination governs her...she has never known arbitrary or personal rule...” (*The Spirit of Nationality in the History of Brazil*, p. 11). He praises the loyal and responsible administrators that Brazil has had, loyal and responsible since the old Portuguese governors. Above all in the case of the emperor D. Pedro II, Nabuco cites his support for the people, his personal rectitude and the little importance he gave to the throne. There was always order in Brazil, but without sacrificing liberty, without the need for a strong man, a savior of society, he said:

In Brazil, as you see, freedom was never given up for the sake of order; on the contrary, it kept coming out, as its fruit, from the same tree of order planted in our Independence (*The Spirit of Nationality in the History of Brazil*, p. 9).

And as an example of Brazilian idealism, he invoked Independence, abolition of slavery, the republic, the intellectual qualities of political life and even the hope, at the time, to expand its territory, making reference to the dispute with British Guiana that was submitted to the decision of

President Cleveland, as he conveniently reminds his American audience.

Who is that impassioned orator, that illustrious and cultured ambassador from a place so little known and studied in American universities, and why does he write and speak with such brilliance and perfection on the heroic, ethical, and esthetic qualities of his culture?--the few thousand students of Yale who had the privilege of hearing Nabuco must have been asking themselves. Would they have realized that it was to call their attention as young university students to “what really is deserving among your fellow Republics of the South” (*The Spirit of Nationality in the History of Brazil*, p. 13), as if they recognized and respected continental qualities and not only national ones? The ambassador in his lecture is attempting almost the impossible, to place Brazil on an equal footing with the great values and main currents of North American civilization, to bring alive the great works of Latin and classical cultures from the Luso-Brazilian world and, as a representative of politics and letters, above all to leave an immortal, dignified, and unforgettable impression of his country. That was the very impression that he had left even among Brazilians who know him, here registered by a young Alceu Amoroso Lima, one of the great literary and social critics of his age, in 1906:

I saw Joaquim Nabuco only once in my life: a glimpse and in my youth. But it was enough to fix forever on my retina the most glowing image of Brazilian humanism in the flesh. I saw him before reading him and, when I read him, I saw him once again just as I had seen him before I read him. His spirit and body formed an harmonic unity, not exceeded by any of our compatriots to this day. Not even to compare with him. He continues as a solitary, unique, unmistakable figure...[...] right away I recognized Elihu Root, the famous North American delegate and our Nabuco. I was astonished. His high bust [...] an open face, illuminated by an interior light that complemented the twilight luminosity of his hair, serene and Olympic eyes, his hat, indispensable at the time, but in his hand, which was an audacity [...] In everything a greatness, a serenity, a harmony, a peace and with so much human simplicity [...] Nabuco will always be, for me, the great conciliator.... (Lima, 1965, pp. 6-7)

At the same time, that kind of heroism comes at a very high cost: to abandon the affective-erotic armchair of the observer, to exile oneself from his native land by less than heroic transoceanic voyages, to explain his highest thoughts in the “iron circle of the English language” on the stages of the universities of Yale, Vassar, Cornell, Chicago and Wisconsin, on a peregrination that must have demanded the tenacity of a baroque Jesuit. All this Nabuco did, but not without a shadow of melancholy, of willful sacrifice, out of a sense of obligation and as a personal legacy to the future. He needed to leave a testament of all that he had learned and loved, the fruit of a privileged life of culture and fortune. Let us follow the diary of his last voyage leaving Brazil, on

October 18, 1906, with his last impression of his native land:

We followed the coast; at a distance there was Maceió, then hours later Cape St. Augustine, the familiar Pernambucan landscape—the white border of beach, the coconut trees, the green hills; in the afternoon we were opposite Recife. After my friends and the students left, I remained standing there, looking at the sunset in the west blazing like a Turner over Olinda. At night the moon seems like a ship, a golden caravel floating on a black cloud. In this way I take leave of Recife, perhaps forever. (*The Life*, p. 332).

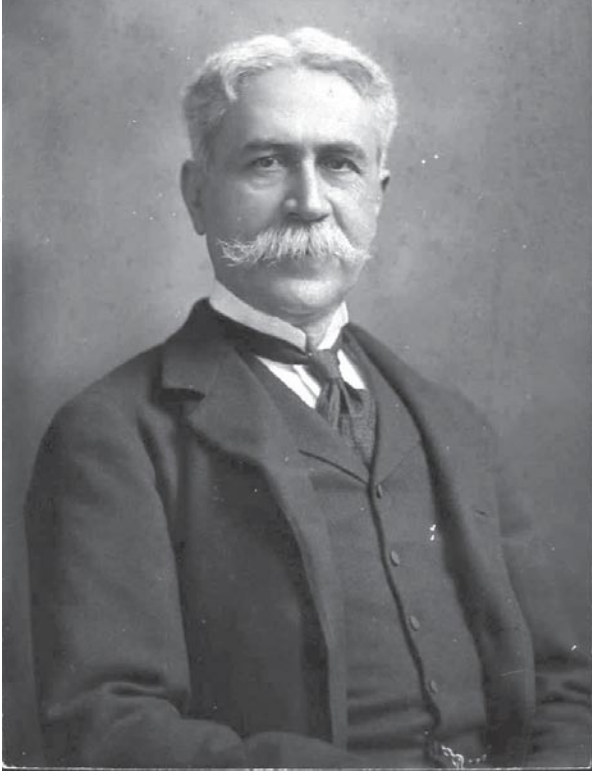
We find in this personal confession the same elements of composition and thought that shaped his lectures on Camões and his mission to the American students: there is the observer, still on board, watching the landscape as if it were a painting, his ship a caravel in the discoveries, under the moonlight, hidden by the shadow of his melancholy, by a distant imagined place, outside of time and geography.

Speaking in the Cocoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. on the sculptor Saint-Gaudens, on December 15, 1908, that is, six months after the Yale lectures, Nabuco continues to reflect on the role of conscience, ethics and esthetics in the hopes of individuals and of nations. He states in his brief comments that through hope, desire, and love -- following the example of the highly praised sculptor-- the artist may be united with his prime materials, with the eternal flux, as Camões must have understood it in the philosophy of his lyric poetry:

We are all but drops in the ocean. Yet we all want to have the consciousness of the ocean and not just of a drop. In each one of us present here today this consciousness reflects the image of the great American sculptor. This is glory; this is immortality (*The Life*, p. 337).

If his lectures are drops in the ocean, Nabuco keeps thinking about the ocean, buoyed by the idealism of his many hopes, by the legacy of his thought and his message. Upon leaving Yale, and after his performance at the university lectures to follow on the stages of academia, in some of the most prominent institutions in the United States, through the register and poetry of his words, Nabuco rose to a possible perfection, as he had seen in Camões. For his lectures he deserved, if only for a moment, the same words with which he praised the great sculptor: “This is glory; this is immortality” (*The Life*, p. 337). In the cycle of university lectures, there appeared another Nabuco, the master, the poet-ambassador, even if absent and mortal, far from his land, speaking about a forgotten culture, on the great stages of universal knowledge.

The texts of all his lectures were published, in journals or as separata, but in single copies, located mainly in Yale libraries and in two or three others, where they ended up for unknown reasons. They have been brought



Joaquim Nabuco.

together and submitted for publication to Yale University Press, along with the first English translation of “My Formative Years,” as a homage to Nabuco’s presence at Yale University. There will be a symposium on April 4-5, 2008 to commemorate the centenary of his visit to Yale and the publication of his lectures in English for the first time.

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ABSTRACT - A study of the academic discourses of Joaquim Nabuco, Brazil's ambassador in Washington, D.C., at Yale and five more universities from 1908-1909. Nabuco returns to Camões as the example of great love for a language and a culture, nobly represented by Brazil. Nabuco compares the two great nations as examples for the then current politics of pan-americanism.

KEYWORDS - Nabuco, Yale, Conferences, Camões, Nacionalism, Poet, Diplomat.

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