Eduardo Prado and “The American Illusion”: 
Nation and Republic in the Context of the Brazilian Stock Exchange’s Crash of 1891* 
by Marcus Vinicius de Freitas
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*This lecture will be in Portuguese.

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Abstract. In 1891, the Brazilian stock exchange crashed due to speculation, inflation and political upheaval. In this context of economic, political and cultural turmoil, Eduardo Prado published a book entitled A Ilusão Americana (The American Illusion), which condemned the Brazilian political sector for emulating the American regime since Brazil had removed the imperial house of Pedro II from power in 1889 and became a republic. Prado was a very wealthy landowner and coffee planter from the province of São Paulo, who had spent most of the previous decade in Paris, in the company of Eça de Queirós and his literary companions, the self-described “Vencidos da Vida” (Defeated by Life). Prado is considered to be Eça’s model for Jacinto de Torres, the protagonist of his novel A cidade e as serras (The City and the Mountains). As conservative as Jacinto, Prado returned to Brazil after the inauguration of the Republic to fight against the new regime. His book displays the enormous amount of contradictions Brazil faced along its path towards modernity.

Marcus Vinicius de Freitas is Professor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where he has been teaching since 1992. He is currently Fulbright Chair of Brazilian Studies at UMass Amherst, where he teaches a course entitled “Brazilian Travelers in the USA, American Travelers in Brazil, 1863-1942.” He is also Chair of the Acervo de Escritores Mineiros at UFMG (Archive of Writers from Minas Gerais). A native of Belo Horizonte, Freitas holds a PhD in Portuguese and Brazilian Studies from Brown University (2000) and BA and MA from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (1985 and 1990). He has published seven books, 16 book chapters, and more than 30 articles in his fields of expertise, which include literary theory, Brazilian and comparative literature, and imperial and modern Brazilian history. He has received three long-term Academic Fellowships (CAPES and CNPq), four long-term Research Grants (CNPq), and 15 awards, including an Honorary Mention by São Paulo Literary Prize (2009) for his novel Peixe Morto (Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2008), the Petrobás Cultural Prize and Fellowship (2007) for the same novel; and an Honorary Mention by Jabuti Prize (2002) for his book Hartt: Expeditions in Brazil, 1865-1878 (São Paulo: Metalivros, 2001). His most recent book, Contradições da Modernidade (Campinas: UNICAMP, 2012), analyses the periodical Aurora Brasileira, published by a group of Brazilian students at Cornell University in 1873-75.

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