ANOTHER NATURE:

NATURE AND THE CITY IN BRAZILIAN SHORT FICTION, 1950-2000

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In Western literature nature and city have, historically, been represented as antithetical, even as the complex relationship between the two has been represented and complicated. The dichotomies of nature and culture, environment and industry, the rural and the urban have been recurrent themes in Brazilian literature, and have played an important, if not central, role in most Brazilian literary movements, informed both by trends in Western literature and by factors specific to cultural, social and geographic realities in Brazil.

In this dissertation I examine the relationship between nature and city as it manifests in Brazilian short stories and *crônicas* from the 1950s to the 1990s, particularly ones written in and about the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. During this period Brazil underwent a transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and an internal migration that shifted the population from a rural to an urban majority. The space of the city, especially of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, became a central focus for cultural production. This time period also coincides with the military dictatorship and an era in which an idealization of "progress" – economical, industrial, social – was enforced, often at a cost to the Brazilian natural environment. The ways in which the city was imagined were informed both by a hyper-valorization of industrial progress and by an urban

population that still recalled rural life; both are significant influences on the literature that emerges during this time.

As cultural production shifted toward its urban centers, Brazil saw an increasing and rich production of literature pertaining to an urban experience, addressing themes such as fragmented consciousness, social mobility, crime, displacement, and individual subjectivity. The refocusing on the city as central to cultural production created a new context for the nature/city relationship to be addressed in literature – identifying nature's presence and significance in urban fiction, in narratives set in urban environments, is at the center of my project.

What I have perceived in my reading and explore in the next chapters is that, during this period, certain literary representations of the natural world within the context of urban spaces encourage and demand a reading of nature that does not position it as antithetical to the city, but rather as a presence embedded into, essential and inevitable to the structure and workings of the city and to the identity and imagination of its inhabitants. This is a representation of nature that does not set it apart as a haven or as a wilderness, the bucolic nature of Arcadia in neoclassical poetry or the punishing terrain of the sertão, it does not divorce nature from the urban flux, but shows it as participating in and woven into the dynamic mechanisms – both structural and social – of the city. In the urban settings evoked in the short stories I analyze, manifestations of nature occur as part of the urban landscape, such as gardens, parks and the sea; in processes of decay and regeneration; in encounters between city-dwelling humans and the flora and fauna of the city; in the protagonists' imagination and in the language itself. They occur, as well, through the very absence of traditional or recognizable representations of nature.

Roger Bastide, in his essay "Machado de Assis, Paisagista" (1940), acknowledges this "presence through absence" of nature in the context of Machado's writing, which coincided with "the first moment of urbanization" in Brazil. Bastide argues that in Machado's fiction there exists a very deliberate presence of "landscape" writing, in spite of the fact that the latter's narratives are conspicuously devoid of the traditional – and supposedly expected – descriptive passages venerating a lush, tropical, devotedly *Brazilian* landscape. Instead, Bastide argues, Machado uses schematic references that merely hint at the qualities of the environment his characters inhabit, sometime attributing the physical qualities of the land and sea to the characters themselves. Bastide writes:

> Foi isso, com efeito, o que procurou realizar em seus romances: não permitir descrições para divertimento, verdadeiros enfeites postiços no livro; é preciso que a natureza seja uma personagem que represente o seu papel, que a paisagem tenha significação e finalidade próprias, que sirva para facilitar a compreensão dos homens ou auxiliar o desenrolar da ação, e não seja um mero quadro rígido [...] O que lhe agrada nesse escritor é que a natureza está em toda a parte. Em toda a parte, isto é, mesmo onde não aparece à primeira vista, nos conflitos dos homens e no íntimo da alma. (7)

He contends that Machado's implicit and abstract treatment of nature was a response to the urban environment in which his narratives take place, and to the new, urban social realities that were in a process of formation, in which dialogue and self-reflection become more relevant than lengthy descriptions of the setting.

These observations, although made in 1940 about fiction written at the end of the nineteenth century, continue to resonate with both the content and the form of more recent Brazilian urban literature, which, beginning in the 1960s, was no longer at its cusp but already recognized as a predominant trend. They resonate, as well, with premises of

ecocriticism, a field of literary criticism that had emerged in the 1970s and has become increasingly prevalent since the 1990s. A basic principle of ecocriticism is a movement away from an anthropocentric perspective, and toward a more integrative, inclusive vision of humankind's relationship with the spaces it inhabits, and with the beings who share those spaces. This shift bears on the question of human subjectivity, interdependence, and the relationship between individuals and the greater networks of which they are a part.

Works such as Timothy Morton's *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007) for example, encourage a view of humankind's relationship to nature as inclusive rather than exclusive – humans are not stewards of an earth they merely occupy and consume and that needs their care or control, but are just one part of its extensive and complex ecology. What is prioritized is understanding and sustaining nature as it manifests even within urban space, rather than nostalgic attempts to return to an imagined state of pure nature, unmarred by human influence. Morton goes so far as to reject the term "nature," since the term deems itself, implicitly, to be peripheral to the subject naming it. New Materialism is one of the more recent iterations of ecocriticism. It concerns itself with the meaning and agency of matter itself, redrawing ontological categories and questioning the relationships of humans and non-human "things" and systems. Stacy Alaimo, in "States of Suspension – Transcorporeality at Sea," describes new materialism as addressing the "interchanges across human bodies, animal bodies, and the wider material world," generating a "new materialist and *post humanist* sense of the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments" (476). Eduardo Viveiros de

Castro's *A inconstância da alma selvagem* (2002) and Mel Chen's *Animacies* (2012) introduce perspectives that redefine the object/subject relationship humans have with non-human entities, calling for a reexamination of the limits of individual consciousness and subjectivity, a theme that is central to contemporary literature.

It is important to note that an ecocritical framework is not limited to an analysis of the nature-related or ecology-related content of a work of literature, but that it extends to an analysis of language and formal aspects, as well. It is true that, in some of the works by the authors represented, the presence or absence of nature is, in fact, an explicit theme, for example in Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's "O homem que espalhou o deserto," something of a cautionary tale in which a boy with a penchant for cutting leaves with scissors grows up to demolish trees on an industrial scale, turning the country into a wasteland. For the most part, however, the works I discuss were not written *about* nature and are certainly not what would be called nature writing. Nature appears, in most of the works, as a *part* of an integral experience, not as the subject itself. The integral experience is an urban one, and nature is implicit in it. This integration finds a particularly compelling expression in the literary narratives I will be analyzing, in the sense that literature has the ability to position supposedly contradicting elements in such a way as to make their union coherent and meaningful, and at the same time, as is aptly demonstrated in the short stories I will be discussing, to recognize the incongruity and uncanniness that are revealed by such a union.

In *The City in Brazilian Literature* (1982), Elizabeth Lowe argues that short prose lends itself especially well to writing about urban themes, singling it out as "a form

uniquely suited to the demands of translating the city into art, with its ability to present reality as a segmented, illogical, and ephemeral experience" (28). Indeed, the short story, already a prolific genre in Brazilian literature, enjoyed a particularly fertile surge in production during the time period I will be discussing. The economy of narrative of the short story lends itself to portraying the remarkable within the ordinary, the flashes of perception and revelation that are set off by seemingly mundane, pedestrian events, which are characteristic of urban themes.

The choice to limit my analysis to short works is a pragmatic one, as well. Reading a number of short works by a variety of authors allows for a wider breadth of material representing the diverse ways in which nature emerges as an integral part of the urban experience. These authors, Rubem Fonseca, Clarice Lispector, Rubem Braga, Lygia Fagundes Telles, João Antônio, and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, have all produced literature that deals with urban environments and the experience of living in them. While they address themes relevant to any city dwellers, the cities they write about are unique: São Paulo the sprawling metropolis, and Rio, built in striking juxtaposition to the mountains and ocean that give it its form. I consider these contrasting geographies, and the ways in which they are reflected in the relationship between the city and nature. However, just as each city is identified and represented by its physical geography, so it is by an imagined geography, the commonly held and reproduced *ideas* about the city's organization and qualities. The influence of preconceived ideas on places is a theme I will return to in the next chapter, where I discuss the expectations and desires projected upon Brazil's natural landscapes.

As for the two cities, their spatial identities are formed by factors that are cultural as well as geographic. São Paulo has its fair share of parks and gardens yet is recognized for its concrete and skyscrapers. The beaches and jutting mountains of Rio de Janeiro exist beyond their physical manifestation and have become symbols, trademarks of the city, their image commodified. It is reasonable to assume that both the physical and imagined characteristics of Rio and São Paulo are reflected in fiction set in these cities, and are, in turn, shaped by these and other narratives. My purpose, in this study, is not to conduct a comparison between the two but, rather, to note the various iterations of nature that emerge in narratives set in these cities, and to mine the ways in which these iterations are incorporated, through narrative, into the urban experience in two of Brazil's largest metropolises. It is worth noting that the spatial identities of both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are shaped by blatant inequities in the distribution of wealth, a theme that recurs especially in work by João Antonio and Rubem Fonseca, respectively.

The first chapter of the dissertation introduces a historical context, in which I discuss the role representatiaon of nature played in consolidating a national and literary Brazilian identity, and the significance of the urban/rural relationship in earlier periods of Brazilian literature, in particular as it was articulated in the Regionalist movement. Chapter two is dedicated to fiction written in the period between the 1950s and 90s and set in Rio de Janeiro. In crônicas by Rubem Braga, I address a prevailing urban nostalgia for country life, complicated by liminal spaces where nature is included in the urban landscape. In stories by Clarice Lispector I focus on a pliable subjectivity catalyzed by human/animal interactions. In Rubem Fonseca's stories, I study the subversive role nature can takes in an urban context. The third chapter, similar in its format to the second,

is dedicated to stories set in São Paulo, also between the 1950s and 90s. In João Antonio's story I examine the way environment is built and animated through narrative, referencing the intersection of ecocriticism with narrative theory. In Lygia Fagundes Telles' stories I study the mediating role nature has in establishing interiority and exteriority. In Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's stories, I address the intersections of body, matter and environment, referencing material ecocriticism.

Alfredo Bosi, in his introduction to the collection *O conto brasileiro contemporâneo* (1978), describes two trajectories through which Brazilian fiction, after the 1960s, transcended the realism and regionalism established in the 30s and 40s:

> De um lado, o processo modernizador do capitalismo tende a pôr de parte o puro regional e faz estalarem as sínteses acabadas, já clássicas, do neo-realismo, que vão sendo substituídas por modos fragmentários e violentos de expressão. Esta é a literatura-verdade que nos convém desde os anos de 60, e que responde à tecnocracia, à cultura para massas, às guerras de napalm, as ditaduras feitas de cálculo e sangue. De outro lado, a ficção introspectiva, cujos arrimos foram sempre a memória e a autoanálise, ainda resiste como pode à anomia e ao embrutecimento, saltando para universos míticos ou surreais, onde a palavra se debate e se dobra para resolver com as suas próprias forças simbólicas os contrastes que a ameaçam. (21)

Both of these expressions – the fragmented and violent, as well as the self-reflexive and surreal – are represented in the work of the authors I chose to include.

There exist overarching themes relevant to the literature set in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Some of these themes, which emerge in both chapters, are: The street as environment, with its own order and time, in which individuals must negotiate their survival and their identity; A curated nature, such as in parks and gardens, where phenomena associated with the natural world become displaced from and then replaced in

the urban grid; Nature as a phenomena eliciting both desire and dread, as familiar and uncanny, appearing in unexpected forms or in disquieting juxtaposition with industrial elements of the city; The city perceived as an organism, its structures and infrastructures personified or made into a literary entity in and of itself, subject to natural cycles of consumption and their interpretations, such as decay, digestion, anthropophagy and renewal; The role of the non-human presences in the city – animals, plants, and inanimate objects, as they are used allegorically, and as they represent and mediate human consciousness; and finally, the use of narrative structure and language that evokes nature, whether through imagery and metaphor, or formally through a lyricism that does not necessarily describe a superlative, exotic tropical landscapes, but a sometimes brutal, sometimes transcendental urban quotidian.

CHAPTER I: PARADISE, WILDERNESS, METROPOLIS

> ... que a visão é sempre a extensão de um aparato e que a natureza é sempre uma "segunda natureza". O Brasil como um território intocado. O Brasil como um Jardim do Éden construído. O Brasil como o lugar de uma natureza tão natural porque foi construída assim. O Brasil como cópia de si mesmo. O Brasil hipnotizado por si mesmo.
>
> Natalia Brizuela: *Fotografia e império, paisagens para um Brasil moderno*

> An aesthetic observation of distant and dislocated natural environments changes when literary figures experience connections that encompass both human subject and natural object.
>
> Lee Rozelle: *Ecosublime, Environmental Awe and Terror from New World to Oddworld*

To contextualize the nature/city dialectic I discuss, in this chapter, the way the representation of nature have been interpreted in a number of texts and images describing Brazil, beginning with the discovery voyages and continuing to the nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century, the latter being the point of departure, in the next chapters, for a more detailed analysis of the theme's presence in contemporary Brazilian literature, and the main focus of this dissertation. I trace the significance attributed to the

representation of Brazil's natural environments through a discussion of visual depictions of Rio de Janeiro made by foreigners who had arrived in the city early in the nineteenth century, informing the construction of a national identity that was closely tied to an emerging national literature, and illustrating the possibilities and limitations of translating a land into landscape. I examine the shift of attention, in Brazilian literature, to a less idealized Brazilian landscape, and then to the metropolis, which, I argue, frames a shift from the preoccupation with national identity to a preoccupation with individual experience and subjectivity.

An Eden on earth

The attempts to represent nature and in particular the natural environment of Brazil itself has figured significantly in Brazilian literary and artistic production. While humans' relationship to nature is a common theme in literature, its prevalence in and importance to Brazilian literature is noteworthy, and has been, during some periods, even normative. This prevalence is derivative from a broader interest – economic, political, aesthetic – in Brazil's natural environment, from the moment it came into the West's awareness, and, in fact, plays an important role in the perception of Brazil by the West (and, eventually, by Brazil itself); a perception largely dependent on defining Brazil's otherness, its perceived exoticness, vis-à-vis empire. The very first documentations of Brazilian territory were rife with descriptions of its flora and fauna, functioning both as a practical catalogue of the unfamiliar and as a demonstration of awe. Pêro Vaz de Caminha's famous letter to King Manuel I of Portugal, in 1500, served as a register of the landscape, animals and people, all wondrous to the Portuguese explorers' eyes, and

concludes with a flurry of superlatives, asserting that the newly encountered land is fertile and will yield whatever is planted in it, and suggesting, too, that its most valuable crop will be the salvation of the native population: "Águas são muitas; infindas. E em tal maneira é graciosa que, querendo-a aproveitar, dar-se-á nela tudo, por bem das águas que tem. Porém o melhor fruto, que nela se pode fazer, me parece que será salvar esta gente".

Aside from engaging the imagination of the West, then, the virginal land and indigenous population of what would later become Brazil motivated some of the first interests in claims to the territory, including an interest in its natural resources, most notably the eventual extraction of brazil wood, and an interest in its native population, that is, the saving of the so called "savage" souls by the Jesuit missionaries, and the enslavement of this same population by the "bandeirantes", Brazil's early explorers. A pragmatic interest in Brazilian natural resources and indigenous populations – whether for the sake of financial gain or nation/culture building – will, too, continue to reveal itself in future cultural production.

Subsequent texts in the 16th and 17th century by European colonists in Brazil also included effusive, inventory-like reports of its natural resources, such as those by the Portuguese traveler and writer Pero de Magalhães Gândavo (1540-1580), and the Portuguese naturalist Gabriel Soares de Sousa (1540-1591), who wrote in his *Tratado Descritivo do Brasil em 1587,* of the cashew trees: "A sombra destas árvores é muito fria e fresca, o fruto é formosíssimo; algumas árvores dão fruto vermelho e comprido, outras o dão da mesma cor e redondo" (Carvalho, 36). The poets Manuel Botelho de Oliveira (1636-1711), and Frei Manuel de Santa Maria Itaparica (1704-1768) wrote similarly

detailed and descriptions in their poems, such as in Itaparica's *Descrição da ilha de Itaparica*:

> Inumeráveis são os cajus belos,
> Que estão dando prazer por rubicundos,
> Na cor também há muitos amarelos,
> E uns e outros ao gosto jucundos,
> E só bastava para apetece-los
> Serem além de doces tão fecundos,
> Que em si têm a brasílica castanha
> Mais saborosa que a que cria Espanha.
> (Carvalho 41)

The Arcadian poets of the 18th century continued to evoke nature in their poetry, but in ways which positioned it as an influence over and extension of the human spirit, such as in a sonnet by Cláudio Manuel da Costa (1729-1789): "Campos, que ao respirar meu triste peito / Murcha e seca tornais vossa verdura." (Carvalho 43)

Throughout the 19th century, emergent Brazilian literature, along with an emergent sense of nationalism, were characterized and legitimized by their exaltation of the Brazilian landscape and supported by the newly founded institutions IHGB (Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute) and the Imperial Academy of the Fine Arts[1]. The poet Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864) famously compared Brazilian nature with that of its ex-metropolis, privileging the former in a manner not so much full of wonder at a novelty, but rather patriotic, claiming it as his, or a collective Brazilian "our" own: "Nosso céu tem mais estrelas, / Nossas várzeas têm mais flores, / Nossos bosques têm mais vida, / Nossa vida mais amores" (3).

[1] Refering to the publication, early in the 19th century, of Ferdinand Denis' *Résumé de l'Histoire Littéraire du Brésil* and Almeida Garrett's *Bosquejo da História da Poesia e Língua Portuguesa,* Antonio Cândido writes that "tomou-se a brasilidade, isto é, a presença de elementos descritivos locais, como traço diferencial e critério de valor." (*Formação da literatura brasileira*, volume I, 27)

These approaches to the subject of nature have been, to some degree or another, informed both by national politics and by the diversity of perspectives with which Brazil itself has been perceived and imagined over the centuries, notably those originating in the Occident. Since its very first representations in text and image, Brazil has been defined by its perceived otherness in relationship to European culture and cosmopolitanism, and, as demonstrated above, this representation often utilized descriptions of a resplendent, abundant and primal natural environment, one that attributed to Brazil a mythical, edenic presence.

Returning to the first impressions Europeans had of the land which was to become Brazil, it is worth mentioning that the physical elements of the environment that so excited the imagination of explorers were, in fact, novel to the European gaze, whether it be Dutch, French, or Portuguese – but even before this environment was seen and explored, it already played into an existing narrative of an Eden on land. In *Visão do Paraíso* (1959), Sergio Buarque de Holanda compares the ways in which Portuguese and Spanish colonizers of the South American continent expressed their belief in this myth of an earthly Eden, and how their respective interpretation of the myth affected their approach to the natural environment of their newfound colonies. He offers a genealogy of the myth – referencing Greco-Roman and Medieval sources – and of the edenic motivations that influenced the imagination of those who set out to conquer the new world, for example: the notion that the air in this Eden on earth is ideal, is *non ibi frigus non aestus*, neither cold nor hot, an observation that echoed through early descriptions of the Brazilian climate. In the chapter titled "non ibi aestus", for example, Holanda quotes Frei Vicente de Salvador:

> Ainda que a terra do Brasil é calida por estar a maior parte dela na zona torrida, contudo é juntamente muito humida, como se prova do orvalhar tanto de noite, que nem depois de sair o sol a quatro horas se enxugam as ervas […] E esta humidade é causa de que o calor desta terra se tempera e faz o clima de boa complexão. Outro é pelos ventos Leste e Nordeste, que ventam do mar todo o verão […] e lavam e refrescam a terra. (414)

Sérgio Buarque suggests that the Iberian conquerors' descriptions of the flora and fauna of the New World may appear to be less than scientific, made with "uma precisão que por pouco se diria científica" (275). If these accounts provided any thorough and detailed information about nature in the Americas, including its more unfamiliar elements, it was not in the service of learning about this nature's materiality as it really is, its "carnalidade," unless in the interest of appropriating the material wealth that it may offer. Instead, the Spanish and Portuguese saw nature "through" and "in spite of" nature itself, "através e apesar da natureza." Their ideas about paradise on earth were already formed, an amalgamation of themes taken from mythology of the Golden Age and of a paradise before the Fall, in Genesis, a place where "o perfeito acordo entre todas as criaturas, a feliz ignorância do bem e do mal, a isenção de todo mister penoso e fatigante e ainda a ausência da dor física e da morte" (Idem, 185). What they found in the New World, while new to their eyes, already belonged, in a sense, to an idea that had existed before they set eyes on it. That is not to say that the Paradise they expected to find was metaphorical or immaterial – they had set out to find an actual place, and the land they found themselves on, by virtue of the extraordinary, marvelous, and sometimes monstrous plants and beings they encountered proved itself to them, willing believers, as that very place – paradise on earth. The representation of a Brazilian natural landscape as it is produced through a predetermined perception, with deliberate ends in mind, will

repeat itself in future cultural production, and will, itself, become a subject of critical cultural production.

It is ironic, but perhaps inevitable that such initiatives, first of discovery and then of exploration, would be encumbered with preconceived ideas about the qualities and significance of the places discovered and explored. The results of this tendency render representations of the environment – and the environment itself – subordinate to the purpose that is bestowed upon them. This is the case even as they elicit praise and awe by the very entities that prescribe their purpose. In this sense, as significant as nature is made to seem, it cannot function as more than a backdrop to the desires projected upon it. It is a means through which creators of narrative – whether explorers or authors of fiction – bestow meaning and identity on the people and societies that pass through it. It is possible, in fact, that narrative attention deliberately directed at the natural environment and explicitly conferring meaning upon it, turns the environment all the more vulnerable to being instrumentalized. What I seek to explore in the next chapters are fictional narratives that do not necessarily reference nature directly or make of it their intentional object. Rather, in them, nature makes itself present and relevant in understated or unexpected ways, in tandem with and as part of an urban organization of space and function, one that does not take the presence of nature for granted.

Of course, pre-formed ideas persist, and there is no divorcing representations of nature from the culture that frames them. What can be a relevant change, however, is a reckoning with these ideas on a smaller scale and more intimate register, unbeholden to the connotation of national or collective identity. If, in a 1978 short story by Lydia Fagundes Telles, a mysterious trail of ants appears, it may carry with it the connotation of

Macumaíma's saúvas – the bane of Brazil – , of the agricultural devastation wrought by the ants in *O triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma*, even of early naturalists' treaties such as Pero Magalhães Gandavo's "Tratado da terra do Brasil," in which "toda esta terra do Brasil é coberta de formigas pequenas e grandes, estas fazem algum dano às parreiras dos moradores"; but in Telles' story these same ants function on an intimate, psychological register, contained to the story's setting and characters.

Framing the wild

The foreign fixation upon its landscape and its indigenous population remained a continual presence in Brazil throughout the centuries. The motivations behind this interest varied over time and with the changes in political regimes, from Brazil's time as a Portuguese colony, to an independent kingdom and a republic. The *Indianismo* movement is an apt example of this, having begun as a foreign fascination with the indigenous people and then reinterpreted by Brazilians who were searching for an entity – the native – that could represent the new nation. Whereas Chateaubriand's natives, in *René* and *Atala*, were an exotic and distant mirage, for Alencar and his peers native Americans were a much more tangible reality with a language - Tupi - and a meaningful territory - Brazil. It was in this context that Antônio Gonçalves Dias, for example, compiled one of the most important Guaraní dictionaries of nineteenth-century Brazil, under the auspices of the IHGB.

If the initial perception of Brazil was framed by the existing myth of a possible paradise on earth, its status as part of the "new" world, a virginal, untamed natural

environment, played into other existing Western conceptions, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of the state of nature and the natural man, Romantic and Neoclassic movements in the literary and visual arts, and developing interest in the natural sciences, among others. Artifacts from and representations of the Brazilian landscape and indigenous population became valued and commodified for their own sake, not necessarily for their commercial value – but predominantly through the interpretation of and for the consumption of Europeans. In *Iniciação à literature brasileira,* Antonio Cândido uses the example of the pineapple to illustrate the tendency, in literature written in Brazil, to attribute symbolic or allegorical meaning to the physical reality, a process which he calls "transfiguração" – transfiguration. The pineapple is a fruit which was new to the Europeans in Brazil, and which had undergone a process of accumulating allegorical meaning, through their eyes:

> Em muitos cronistas, como os citados, ele é referido simplesmente como fruta saborosa e rara, mas Simão de Vasconcelos já o apresenta como fruta régia, armada de espinhos defensivos e encimado pela coroa. E n'As Frutas do Brasil (1702), do franciscano Frei Francisco do Rosário, a alegoria se eleva a um engenhoso simbolismo moral, pois, diz o autor, a sua polpa é doce e agradável às línguas sadias, mas mortifica as que estiverem machucadas, ou seja: ele é como a vontade divina, que é bálsamo para as almas arrependidas, mas caustica as rebeldes. A partir daí o autor elabora um sistema complicado de alegorias teológicas, ensopado de retórica barroca. O abacaxi continuou dali por diante a sua curiosa carreira, aparecendo em cronistas e poetas, até o século XIX, como alegoria e símbolo, valendo por elemento representativo do país. Este pequeno exemplo mostra a importância do processo transfigurador, que foi favorecido pelo Barroco e mais tarde pelo espírito nativista, estendendo-se a áreas mais amplas e significativas da realidade. (Candido, 22)

These attitudes were cultivated and well represented by two institutions – the National Museum, and the Imperial Academy of the Fine Arts – both established early in the 19th century, soon after King of Portugal Dom João VI and his court arrived. The

national museum, was established by João VI in 1818, in Rio, with the purpose of serving the natural sciences and cataloguing the abundant natural specimens of the tropical land. The *Missão Artística Francesa,* the French Artistic Mission, arrived in Rio in 1816, with the purpose of establishing the *Escola Real de Sciências, Artes e Ofícios*, an academy of instruction in the arts and sciences.

Both initiatives were part of King João VI's agenda of creating an erudite, elite society in the colony-turned-seat of power – one modeled after the French, which was the model for culture in Europe, at the time. Along with his support for the establishment of a museum and library, Dom João concerned himself with introducing a pedagogical element to Brazilian cultural activity, introducing a variety of establishments of higher education and opening the door for the arrival of professors, scientists, and artists from abroad to help with the organization of these institutions. This moment is significant, in that there was explicit attention given to a cultural production directly related to the physical location and attributes of Brazil, an attention that later on was incorporated into both the articulation and dissemination of a unique Brazilian culture.

The artists' stay in Brazil left a cultural legacy that influenced the artistic production of later generations and played an important role in the formation of Brazil's image, both in the exterior and within the country[2]. Nature was a dominant theme in the works produced by members of the Mission, who were neoclassicists and so trained in

[2] In her book *Fotografia e império, paisagens para um Brasil moderno,* Natalia Brizuela writes of the influence of the travelers, naturalists, and artists who came to Brazil since the 18th century, and specifically after the Portuguese court's arrival, "Todos esses grupos ajudaram a articular os modos pelos quais o Brasil seria observado não só pelos de fora mas, também pelos de dentro do Império" (Brizuela, 86) and "As pinturas da paisagem brasileira feitas pelos membros da missão e pelos primeiros viajantes naturalistas também ensinaram a elite brasileira e sua esfera letrada a olhar para o próprio país, tão vasto e dividido" (Brizuela, 40). This subject is elaborated upon in Flora Sussekind's *O Brasil não é longe daqui: O narrador, a viagem,* 1990).

the depiction of bucolic landscapes, albeit ones situated in a Mediterranean environment, and of staging biblical, mythological, and historical scenes within such landscapes. It was also an obvious subject matter due to the visual novelty that the natural environment in and around the city of Rio de Janeiro offered the French artists, and due, too, to the influence of European naturalists, contemporaries of the artists, who were documenting Brazil's flora and fauna, and by doing so influencing the way it was perceived and valued. The artists' approach to the natural environment in their new home, and the manner in which they portrayed this environment in their work reflect the complex relationship between old world and new world culture. The work of two of the artists, the painters Jean-Baptiste Debret and Nicolas-Antoine Taunay, illustrate this relationship especially well.

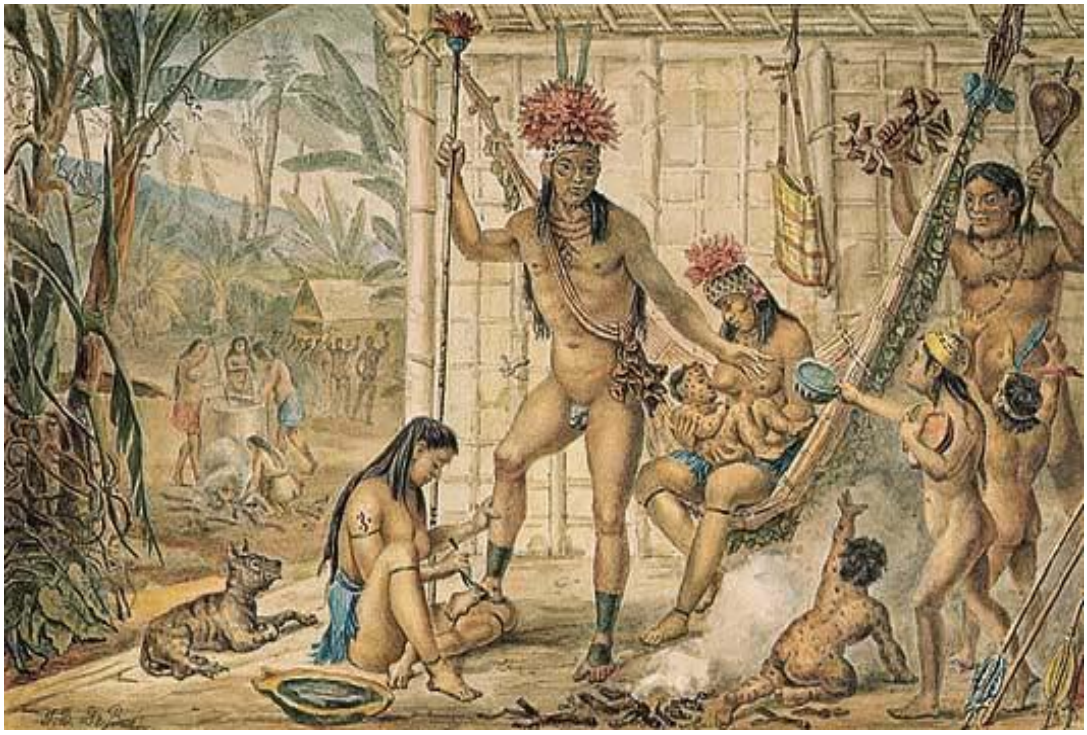
Upon arriving in Rio, Jean-Baptiste Debret, who was officially an historical painter, though generally eclectic in his subject matter, began a period of intense production, painting portraits of the royal family, as well as scenery for the theater and for public festivals. The work he is best known for, however, is an extensive collection of illustrations and lithographs produced during his fifteen years in Brazil, that he later published in Paris as a three-volume book titled *Viagem Pitoresca e Histórica ao Brasil* (1834–39). The first volume is comprised of illustrations of indigenous Brazilians, the second illustrations describing Rio society at the time, and the third includes reproductions of Debret's own paintings and aquarelles of Rio landscapes as well as imperial portraits (Bardi 458).

His depictions of the indigenous Brazilians are interpreted, by Bardi, as idealizations – the individuals' bodies are well defined, muscular, and positioned in

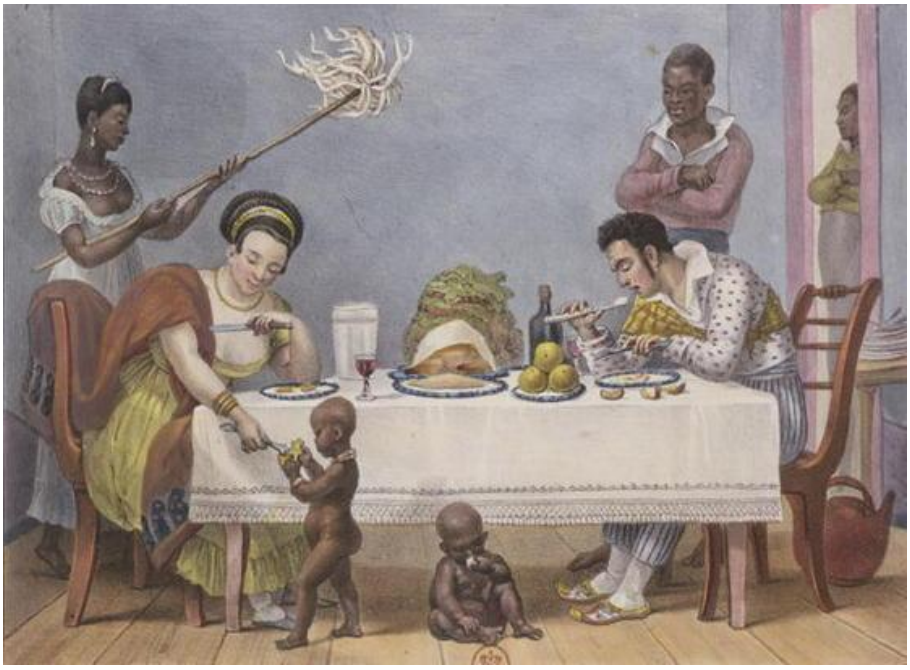
traditionally heroic poses. In the text accompanying these images, Debret writes, "É no índio selvagem que encontramos o princípio e o germe de tudo aquilo que o espírito humano concebeu como idéias filosóficas, elevadas, admiráveis e mesmo bizarras, aplicadas por ele unicamente através do instinto e da inspiração" (Debret, volume I). The "wild" native, then, offers the European an embodiment of the wellspring from which were brought forth those lofty ideas of the "human spirit", that is, of Western civilization, linking civilization to wildness, but through the safety of a theoretical narrative of origin. It is the native person, as well as the concept of the native, which remains to embody savagery and be admired for it by those "civilized" enough to enjoy such an aesthetic and intellectual activity. This attitude of simultaneous dissociation from and admiration of the native, and of the native and, therefore, wild, natural environment, will reproduce itself, in a variety of iterations, in national literature and in a greater national rhetoric.

In some contrast to the idealizing images of natives, Debret's scenes of daily life in Rio's streets and interiors are often ironic, drawing attention to the contrast between the masters and the African slaves who are often shown taking part of the same scene in distinctly different roles. The wealth of details with which the scenes are invested makes the artist's subtle social and political statements more distinct; Debret takes great care to describe each article of dress, decoration, household object, animal, plant and street corner that appears in these illustrations as if it were a documented specimen. In the accompanying text, Debret often refers to his work as a collection in the sense of a collection of artifacts, and indeed the book was published in France for a European audience, as a kind of guidebook or almanac of exotic lands, a genre that was popular at the time. Once again, the descriptive depiction of everyday events and scenes in the New

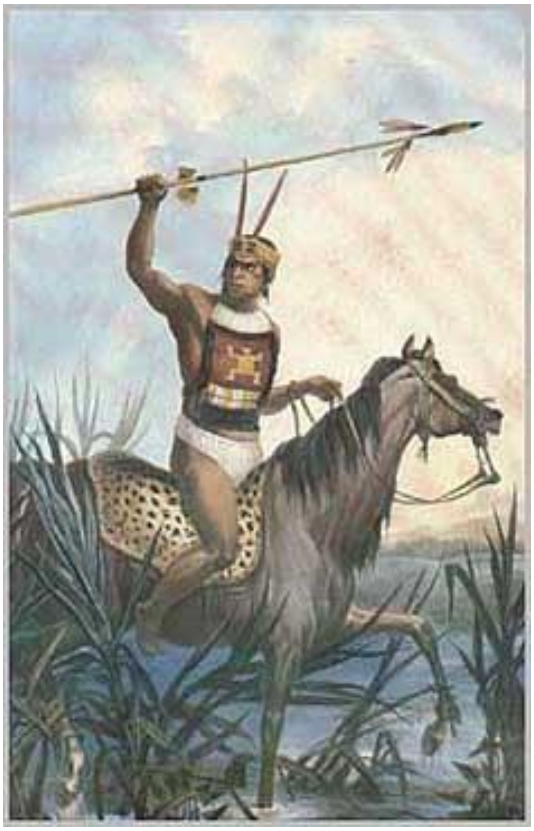
World serves to satisfy the curiosity of a foreign public invested in what is different and exotic – that which can be contrasted with familiar environment and customs. Today, the book serves as an important historical document giving insight both into the daily life of a variety of social classes in early nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro, as well as into a Frenchman's perception of the customs and social organization of the Brazilian capital at that time.



Jean-Baptiste Debret: *Família de um chefe Camacan preparando para uma festa* (1820-30)



Jean-Baptiste Debret: *Um jantar brasileiro* (1827)



Jean-Baptiste Debret: *Guerreiro indígena a cavalo (1820-30)*

Nicolas Taunay's portrayals of the natural landscape in and around Rio point to a more complex engagement with the new and radically different environment in which he had arrived, as can be inferred from the ambiguities and contradictions in his paintings. A landscape painter first and foremost, Tauney was expected to fill the position of landscape painting instructor at the academy once it was established. The striking vistas, saturated colors and bright sunlight of the region apparently made a strong impression on him. Taunay's great grandson, who authored a study of the French Artistic Mission, writes of Nicolas Taunay that, "apenas chegado ao Rio de Janeiro, viram-no, de tal modo empolgado pela beleza dos panoramas fluminenses, pintar dias e semanas a fio, fazendo enormes caminhadas atraves da floresta que coroava as montanhas da Tijuca para descobrir novos pontos de vista e paisagens que lhe fixassem a atenção" (Bardi, 450).

Taunay did not stay long in the apartment set apart for the French artists but searched for a place in the outer parts of the city that were still undeveloped, finally buying some land and a house in the Tijuca forest. Tijuca reminded him of his wooded home in Montmorency, which happened to be the very site where Jean-Jaques Rousseau had constructed a well and a garden. In her book *O sol do Brasil* (2009), a study of Taunay's time in Brazil, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz describes how Taunay sought inspiration in the wilderness outside of the city, yet at the same time found such an environment challenging to his aesthetic sensibilities and his work. The colors, sunlight, and wild exuberance of the local vegetation were overwhelming and Taunay, who was trained in painting organized, pastoral scenes, felt himself dominated by the untamable nature of the tropics – "[d]izia-se dominado pela natureza indomada dos trópicos" (Schwarcz 259). His landscape paintings include elements from both his neoclassical training – a diffused

light, the inclusion of domesticated animals such as cattle and dogs, an ordered composition – and elements from the new environment he was in – bright colors, dramatic land formations, vegetation typical to the tropics, such as palm trees, and the presence of slaves, a fact with which Taunay had great difficulty reconciling himself, and which he commented upon through his paintings.

The painting titled *Cascatinha da Tijuca* (1816-1821), shows the artist at his easel at the foreground, almost in miniature, while most of the canvas is taken up by a resplendent natural landscape. In the middle background there is a small footbridge, reminiscent of the signs of human habitation typical to pastoral landscapes, and, in the forefront facing the artist, there is a single banana tree, symbolizing the tropical vegetation. Schwarcz writes,

> Dessa maneira, a natureza em Taunay não lembra só o debate com a Arcádia. Revela uma paisagem classicista, que dialoga, agora, com o ambiente "natural" dos trópicos, sem ser uma tela de tema histórico ou, muito menos, mitológico. E tudo vem emoldurado pela luz dos trópicos, que confunde a cena ... um retrato do retrato; uma representação da representação e da dificuldade de representar. (266)

Nicolas-Antoine Taunay: *Cascatinha da Tijuca* (1816-1821)

The painting titled *Gato com um papagaio* (1816-21) addresses similar ambiguities, but on a different scale. This still life can be read as an allegory for a meeting of the Old World with the New World, about which Taunay had ongoing ambivalence. Performing this allegory are animals, the representative fauna of each environment. The cat, a domesticated animal familiar to Europeans, is curled into a position of repose but remains alert and with its predatory eyes open – it represents the Old World. The Parrot, a bird associated with the tropics, sporting colorful plumage and peering warily at the viewer, represents the New World. In spite of being painted in the

tradition of a still life, the scene is charged with energy and the potential for movement and conflict; the two animals are natural enemies, and yet the artist depicted them in a state of apparent co-existence. Schwarcz suggests that the painting might be an allegory of Taunay's own experience in Brazil.

Nicolas-Antoine Taunay: *Gato com um papagaio* (1816-21)

These representations of landscapes and other aspects of the natural environment in Brazil produced during the earlier part of the nineteenth century were part of a developing interest, on the part of both European and locals [3], in defining a Brazilian identity based on qualities unique to the Brazilian people and land. At the same time, however, this expression was organized and framed by established European principles used to define cultural and national identity. Cultural production in 19th century Europe

[3]It should be noted that there were artists working in Brazil well before the arrival of the French Artistic Mission, also invested in a representation and interpretation of a Brazilian quotidian, for example Miguel Arcanjo Benicio da Assunçao Dutra, artistically known as Miguelzinho Dutra (Bardi 480).

was largely influenced by Romanticism, a movement that favored nature as the site and catalyst of artistic inspiration, aesthetic ecstasy, and a retreat from the quotidian – from a pedestrian, dreary, isolating urban life. The concept of nature came to represent a counterpoint and antithesis to the city, modernization, industrialization, and to the increasingly disjointed and alienating mode of existence major European metropolises. It represented, too, a subjective, emotion-driven expression of the self, and through this expression, a sense of nationalism – a need to identify, emotionally, with a place of origin. Schwarcz writes, "A partir de finais do século XVIII e inícios do XIX, a paisagem seria mais claramente associada a uma visão individual e subjetiva, e aos discursos de identidade nacional: ela se transformaria em "terra natal" (125). The depictions of a Brazilian landscape – of its flora, fauna, natural environments and indigenous population – were harnessed to this cause and came to represent an authentic, unique and legitimate origin, supposedly independent of the culture and language imported to Brazil from Portugal and other Old-World nations. What was thought of as unique to Brazil was demarcated, on the one hand, by its difference from the European matrix, and on the other hand by what was considered, by this same matrix, to be empirical information about Brazil itself, its people, and its environment.

These representations, whether produced by foreigners or by Brazilians, were an interpretation of an environment mediated by the human gaze, by human organization of space, ideas, and meaning. Schwarcz addresses this specifically as it relates to visual depictions of landscape: "A paisagem sempre significou a natureza esteticamente processada, um instrumento cultural; ou melhor, uma forma de ver, mediada por elementos históricos, culturais e sociais". The notion of an "aesthetically processed

nature" will remain acutely relevant to a Brazilian cultural production that will consistently employ the Brazilian natural environment as allegory, description, criticism, and self-reflection. "Não há olhar livre de cultura" Schwarcz continues,

> e é preciso reconhecer que nossa percepção transformadora é que estabelece a diferença entre essência (como natureza) e paisagem (como representação). Segundo Schama, ainda, a própria palavra *landscape* (paisagem) teria entrado na língua inglesa no século XVI, procedente da Holanda, significando tanto uma unidade de ocupação humana – uma jurisdição, na verdade – como um objeto aprazível no campo da pintura. Mesmo o termo *natureza* carregava outra derivação, uma vez que se referia antes de tudo às regiões que não eram dominadas por "europeus", embora incluíssem muitas terras então entendidas como fazendo parte da Europa. (125)

While an emphasis on Brazilian nature was a central element in positively defining and representing the country and nation, it also served as an implicit contrast with those regions "dominated by Europeans", and "human occupancy" associated with a sophisticated, intellectual and cosmopolitan culture. The interpretation of the nature/metropolis relationship functions, then, both as a contrast between the new world and the old world, and as a contrast between two environments – the rural and the urban.

City and country

In literature written in and about Brazil, as was demonstrated in the visual arts, the representations of the natural environment have been politically and culturally charged, reflecting subjective interpretations of Brazilian-ness, and demonstrating the complicated, many layered and often paradoxical relationship Brazilian writers and thinkers have had with the culture they consumed and produced, in their quest for "a literature of their

own".[4] Again, as was the case with its visual representation, nature became a key literary trope by virtue of two seemingly contradictory roles it played in the development of Brazilian literature. On the one hand, it served as a signifier of a Brazilian authenticity and its presence functioned as proof of an "original" Brazilian literature; in a territory subject to the political and cultural impositions of its colonizers, the land's physical features, landscapes and indigenous populations could be neatly distinguished as original phenomena and as such were determined to be representative of an authentic Brazilian-ness and the starting point for the development of an authentic Brazilian culture. On the other hand, it was a signifier of European values; this very preoccupation with an "authentic" literature and an "original" local culture was a product of European criteria for defining national culture, and so the search for such a distinction was a project founded on European ideals transplanted to the colony. Similarly, the very preoccupation with nature and nativism fulfilled expectations prescribed by literary movements originating in Europe, such as neoclassicism and, later, Romanticism. Finally, the depictions of Brazilian landscapes and indigenous populations often had more to do with answering the West's desire for the exotic than an attempt to engender a literary expression relevant to the values, problems and imagination of those identifying as Brazilian. An emphasis on the literary representations of nature, then, played into the two sometimes conflicting forces shaping Brazilian culture and literature – the attempt to express and preserve an original, local experience, and the attempt to identify with and be acknowledged by international (European) cultural and literary models, and to take part in a creative process that addresses universality. If, on the one hand, Alencar's *O Guarani*

[4] "[…] no seu desejo de ter uma literature," From the introduction to Antonio Candido's *A Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1949).

and *Iracema* famously try to experiment with the Portuguese language to create a style capable of describing the country's nature and specificities, they are also heavily dependent on that same European tradition and models to build their plot. In the case of *O guarani* Alencar heavily bases the premise of his novel on Chateaubreiand's *Atala*, a love story between a native and a European colonizer.

This dialectic relationship of the local and universal is articulated in Antonio Candido's seminal *Formação da literatura brasileira* (1959), an analysis of the development of Brazilian literature. In this articulation, the representation of nature continues to be an apt paradigm for illustrating the relationship of a people to its literature. In his introduction, Candido acknowledges a tendency to locate the official beginning of Brazilian literature at its Arcadian phase, a phase characterized by an idealization of near-wilderness; a bucolic, edenic natural environment:

> O leitor perceberá que me coloquei deliberadamente no ângulo dos nossos Primeiros românticos e dos críticos estrangeiros, que, antes deles, localizaram na fase arcádica o início da nossa verdadeira literatura, graças à manifestação de temas, notadamente o Indianismo, que dominarão a produção oitocentista. Esses críticos conceberam a literatura do Brasil como expressão da realidade local e, ao mesmo tempo, elemento positivo na construção nacional. (2)

The "realidade local" of a colonial and still very rural Brazil, as well as Indianism and a Neoclassicist valorization of Arcadia were structured around depictions and idealization of a local, indigenous natural environment, which was made into an enduring symbol of Brazilian authenticity. Nature was to be not merely described, but glorified, as testament to the greatness of the country and its potential. At the same time that this idealization was valued, even deemed necessary for the development of national culture, it was also, Candido claims, an obstacle for the very much desired assimilation into an international context, for which it was sought out in the first place. While the literary

subject matter was deliberately "local," the forms used were European, taken out of context of their own development and applied, as a badge of cultural legitimacy, to a literature striving to be both original and accepted.

The representation of Brazilian nature then, has long been tied to a series of complex dichotomies which were at the center of the search for a Brazilian cultural and national identity: the central vs peripheral, civilized vs wild, artful vs authentic, sophisticated vs naïve, universal vs regional, cosmopolitan vs provincial. While these have been, historically and still, derived from Brazil's relationship to Europe and more recently, the United States, they have played out, too, within the country, in the relationship between urban and rural Brazil.

It can be argued that throughout its development Brazilian literature has always, in some way, addressed the role of nature and was informed, especially, by the changing perceptions of the city/country relationship. As mentioned earlier, the early colonial period saw a proliferation of travel journals and descriptive treatises on the New World, its landscape and people; the European models of Neoclassicism and Romanticism followed, with their idealizations of a nature that served as contrast to the metropolis. The theme is pervasive; some of the most recognized works in Brazilian literature, works that stand out as groundbreaking or representative of trends in Brazilian cultural production, feature especially pointed attention to this theme.

Euclides da Cunha's (1866-1909) *Os sertões*, for example, introduced a different kind of nature to contrast with the metropolis – the harsh, parched, punishing Sertão, a far cry from the lush forests surrounding and penetrating Rio – paving the way for the regionalist literature that would follow. In other works, irony and critical self-awareness

were used to comment on earlier representations of the nature/city relationship, while deliberately attempting to give it new meanings. Lima Barreto's *Triste Fim de Policarpo Quaresma* shows the protagonist's futile attempt to leave the city and find an "authentic" Brazil in the countryside, and in agricultural occupation. Mário de Andrade's *Macunaima* irreverently and ironically turns inside-out the rhetoric which had been used to represent the indigenous Brazilian hero and the narratives of progress and the industrialized city.

Regionalist literature, in particular, offered a different approach to the city/country relationship, shifting the works' geographical and thematic center from an idealized, exotified Brazilian landscape to specific Brazilian locales and the often harsh reality faced by its people. This literature featured the rural areas in Northeastern Brazil and the Sertão, seeking to express an authentic experience of Brazilians living in these rural communities, and the climactic and social hardship they suffer in an unforgiving environment. This approach, however, was itself problematized, and found new iterations in literature to come.

In *The City in Brazilian Literature,* Elizabeth Lowe writes that

> [t]he first, nostalgic phase of regionalism has been responsible for a whole series of ideological paradoxes, which have had a decisive role in distorting Brazilian cultural history by ignoring or placing wrong emphasis on its vital urban tradition. One result has been what Candido calls "compensatory aristocratism," in which the writer, full of the "colonial complex," seeks to overcompensate for what he sees as the inferior condition of the "provincial" writer by encasing himself in "classical" European culture and not only using imported themes and motifs, but also writing in a foreign language, such as French, Italian, or English. Another negative result of misplaced regionalist ideology has been that often the Latin American writer, anxious to widen his pathetically small audience, will produce "exotica" based on the regionalist literary tradition to satisfy foreign taste and expectations of what Latin American literature should be. […] This has amounted to a travesty of the Brazilian Modernist aspiration for a "literature for export," and has resulted in what Alfredo Bosi calls a "literature of development," which poses a great many ideological problems for the modern writer (5). Finally, a "myth of urban rurality" has long colored thinking about the Brazilian city and its culture.

> In seeking to preserve cherished values from the regional patriarchal tradition, many social and cultural phenomena have been interpreted as rural, when in fact they are decisively urban in nature. (16)

In Lowe's view, the local/universal paradox, which has played out in earlier Brazilian literature, is present, too, in works based on the regionalist literary tradition. While she may be doing a disservice to works in this category by seeming to limit their value to the result of a preoccupation with foreign approval, she brings up an interesting complication in the literary expression of the urban and rural, in Brazil. The two are not discrete environments, but act upon and affect each other, especially in the ways in which they are perceived. A literature that is urban can be perceived as having rural elements, when such elements are expected. If what was seen as regional (and, therefore, traditionally rural) literature may, in fact, have strong urban elements that are muted or not explicitly registered, could what we consider urban literature also have rural elements that are not immediately obvious, and that function beyond a mere evocation of the past? Furthermore, could elements that are usually, in the context of the rural/urban comparison, associated with the rural, such as plants, animals and other manifestations of a natural environment, be present in urban literature in new ways, without a requisite link to a rural tradition?

The territory depicted in contemporary Brazilian literature, whether physical or imaginary, has been increasingly urban. In the second half of the 20th century it has been decidedly urban. Implicit in the turn to the urban is what has traditionally been its counterpoint – the rural, what the rural has come to represent in terms of regionalist literature as well the movement between both spaces. This is present in the geographical and psychological manifestations of *Fugere urbem,* a recurring escape from the city to

the countryside, as well as an importation of rural images, customs, and values into urban space, through longing, imagination and memory.

Malcolm K. McNee, in his article "Returns of the Natives: Neo-regionalism and Counter-Pastoral in Contemporary Brazilian Narrative," makes a case for a continued examination of the movement between these poles, the urban and the rural, in contemporary Brazilian literature, even as the literature is increasingly defined as predominantly urban. "The rural has persisted in Brazilian narrative both as a direct object of literary figuration and, even if often only indirectly, in a discursive counterpoint with the urban," he writes, and encourages attention to "the sustained dialectical tension between these two poles of the territorial imaginary: the city and the countryside" (52). Certainly, the two are both relevant in and of themselves; the turn toward urban literature does not erase or usurp the place of literature that came before it but, rather, evolves from it and is implicitly (and, sometimes, explicitly) informed by it. Certainly, too, their dialectical relationship is relevant. What a turn to urban literature provides, in *addition* to its dialectical relationship to the rural, is the possibility of reading new meanings in themes that were previously associated predominantly with non-urban imaginaries – namely, the natural environment. Nature is pervasive independently of geographic location. It is present in the wildnerness, in rural land and curated landscapes, and, as is the subject of this study, in urban environments. Among the authors McNee cites is Lígia Moraes Leite Chiappini, who in *Velha praga? Regionalismo literário brasileiro* writes,

> In the same vein of acknowledging the dialectical tension between the urban and the rural and, therefore, the continuing relevance of rural experience to urban literature, I want to acknowledge the presence, in urban spaces (real or imagined) of what can be considered "nature", traditionally associated with the rural experience. Nature is not restricted to its obvious connotation with the rural,

> however, and its presence in urban spaces can serve, also, as an expression unbound by this dialectic. (667)

It is this presence of nature in urban spaces, expressed both implicitly and explicitly in the literature I analyze, that I will focus on in the next two chapters.

The urbanization which Brazil has undergone and the shift from a regional-based definition of Brazilian culture to a metropolis-based definition of Brazilian culture produced an accompanying shift from a preoccupation with defining a nation, to a preoccupation with defining the experience of the individual in their environment. In contemporary urban literature, then, the matter of national or collective identity and agency is transferred, in a sense, to matters of individual identity, agency, and subjectivity. What becomes dominant is the role of the *individual* as he or she negotiates the impersonal social and economic systems of the city. In light of this, I would like to raise the following questions: How might have the transition toward an urban-centric cultural production affected the perception and representation of nature in the literature? What role might this representation of nature play in the individual's negotiations with an urban environment?

In *The metropolis and Mental Life*, Georg Simmel seeks to "solve the equation which structures like the metropolis set up between the individual and the super individual contents of life." That is, to make sense of the inherent need for individual subjectivity even within a structure that imposes "social-technological-mechanism[s]" which are collective, rather than individual (47). One of the ways in which an individual must accommodate to these external forces, Simmel claims, is through a different kind of engagement with them, as "[t]he metropolis exacts from man as a discriminating creature a different amount of consciousness than does rural life" (48). He argues that the

metropolis demands an intellectual, rather than an affective or emotional response to stimuli. And yet, as we will see in the short stories I explore in the next chapters, characters are shown to have aesthetic, emotional, even spiritual revelatory experiences brought upon by seemingly ordinary experiences lived within an urban structure. Often, the catalyst for these experiences occurs precisely at the location of some manifestation of the natural world within the city.

CHAPTER II: RIO DE JANEIRO

> *[…] in the palimpsestic landscape of Rio de Janeiro, then the relationships between these pasts could be described as porous: full of passageways, cumulative, marked by unfixed boundaries. […] It is a metropolis without a past of defined ethnic boundaries, a city permeated by a history of often fluid frontiers between order and disorder, popular and erudite, black and white, nature and urban, public and private, sacred and profane, centre and periphery.*
>
> Bruno Carvalho, *A Porous City*

When considering the juxtaposition of nature and city in Rio de Janeiro, the immediate association takes on a bird's eye view and conjures up Rio's striking geography, the green hills jutting off the coast and interrupting urban spreads; the blue beaches and bay. Nature is evoked on a large scale, apprehended from a distance. Those juxtapositions closer to the ground, at human eye level, are the ones punctuating the narratives of the works discussed in this chapter. In these works of short fiction written by carioca authors in the last half of the 20th century, the individual's subjective experience intersects with, and is profoundly altered by, small-scale, often ordinary, unexpected moments in which nature asserts its place in an urban space. The particularities of Rio – its coastline, forests and landmarks remain relevant but, rather than displayed in a panoramic postcard-image for a removed observer, nature makes

itself known through its appearance in the individual's quotidian, intruding upon and shaping their interior landscapes.

Rubem Braga: an aesthetic of nostalgia

The dichotomy of the urban and the rural is performed in a geographic sense, and is performed, also, in an abstract sense. The rural and the urban function not only as descriptions of an environment, or of economic and social organization based on a particular environment, but function, too, as a collectively imagined idea or system of ideas, charged with its own complex meanings and associations. Raymond Williams, in his discussion of the tensions created by the city/country relationship, gives the example of twentieth century rural Britain, which, he writes, "was subsidiary, and knew that it was subsidiary" (248). The *ideas* associated with rural living, however, remained a persistent, even strengthened element in British literature and culture, Williams observes, so that "there is almost an inverse proportion, in the twentieth century, between the relative importance of the working rural economy and the cultural importance of rural ideas" (248). That is, the idea represented by the rural can have a powerful cultural valence even while the rural environment itself, its practices and social organization, become less relevant – the idea of the rural, in fact, gains this valence as a reaction to a shift to a more urban social and economic organization. Williams makes the distinction that these "ideas associated with rural living" are commonly associated with the past, while the ideas of city living are commonly associated with the future; "The pull of the idea of the country is towards old ways, human ways, natural ways. The pull of the idea of the city is towards progress, modernization, development" (296-7).

The individual parts of this dichotomy, the "pull of ideas" of the country and of the city, gain meaning within the tension created between them. In works of Brazilian regional literature, the narrative is often organized both geographically and thematically around rural areas, and the city appears as a penetrating, punctuating presence. In these works, the city is a place from which a threatening change arrives, the place toward which characters are drawn away from their structured, known lives; it is an *idea* that disrupts the continual, "authentic", "natural" existence. Alternately, in a Brazilian literature that has increasingly been organizing itself around urban areas – again, both physically and thematically – representations of the country serve a similar penetrating, punctuating role, introducing the past, with its nostalgia and implicit criticism of change, into a space carved out for the future.

Rubem Braga (1913-1990), best known for his *crônicas*, accompanies the transition from rural living to city living both in the trajectory of his own life and in the lyrical prose he produced. The *crônica*, a genre of short prose that draws on journalism, fiction, memoir and lyricism, is a form that gives space and legitimacy to a personal narrative, while at the same time presenting the narrative as a crystallization of collective experience. Braga's portrayals of a swiftly vanishing connection to the land and to nature draw on his own coming of age in the country and eventual move to the city and are frequently expressed in an intimate tone that insinuates complicity and comradery with the reader, a kind of knowing wink. He had spent his childhood in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, a city in the interior of Espirito Santo, where he developed an intimacy with a rural way of life more present in, and to this day associated with, the interior of Brazil. His adult years were spent living in larger metropolises, internationally and in Brazil,

most notably in Rio de Janeiro where he made his permanent home and of which he became a kind literary representative. His writing, then, emerges from the perspective of an urban man with an attachment to a rural past. His audience is an urban one, albeit one that may have shared Braga's preoccupation with that which the city has left behind. "Por fim, o cronista escreve sobretudo para pessoas da cidade, pessoas que, como ele, também conectam cotidiano a asfalto," writes Luiz Carlos Simon, in his study of Braga's crônicas, *Duas ou três páginas despretensiosas* (2011). And within the site of this urban quotidian Braga straddles country and city life through an evocation of a disappearing green past and, at the same time, an eye trained on the forms greenness takes in the city itself.

Known by a series of affectionate titles such as "o bicho do mato cosmopolita", "urso", "lobo", "o único lavrador de Ipanema" and "o fazendeiro do ar," Braga himself came to represent the union of the rural and urban. His home in the neighborhood of Ipanema had its fair share of similarly descriptive names: "quintal aéreo," cobertura agrária," jardim voador" and "nave vegetal," given the lush garden he planted in his apartment. "É que o jardim foi feito numa área comum do condomínio, um espaço ocioso e árido, junto à casa de máquinas, que ele transformou na mais verdejante cobertura do bairro" (Ventura). These names given to him and to his home share a particular aesthetic of contradiction, and their appeal and poignancy indicate a collective preoccupation with the contradiction of the city and the country, or of what these two are imagined to represent. In his writing, Braga brings the two together, or rather, points out moments in which the two are seen side by side, or even as complementary parts to the urban experience. His work, however, is a work of contrasting, of comparing. Even when the

two are superimposed, the presence of nature, in Braga's city, is set apart as that which redeems the city, a city caught up in its own progress and in need of redemption.

In "Um pé de milho", appearing in a collection by the same title (1945), for example, Braga observes a relatively common sight, of plant life growing where it was not intended. In this case, however, the commonness of such a sight is undone by the fact this is no invasive weed, as is usually the case, but a plant that is meant to be cultivated, here growing rogue: a lone stalk of corn growing near a city street corner. A stalk of corn is an apt evocation of country life, here in obvious contrast with its environment. Braga treats the event as miraculous by casually comparing it to something as momentous, at the time, as the first radar contact with the moon: "Os americanos, através do radar, entraram em contato com a lua, o que não deixa de ser emocionante. Mas o fato mais importante da semana aconteceu com o meu pé de milho" (48). This comparison pits foreignness against familiarity, privileging the latter. The foreignness is of the "americanos", already a continent and culture apart, of outer space and of technology advanced to the point of incredibility – though his wonder at this "contact with the moon" is not without cynicism. Such an achievement is so inconceivable it becomes absurd and, more importantly, impersonal. The corn, claims Braga, is far more wondrous. For the everyday people of Rio, for and to whom Braga presumed to write, space exploration is a remote experience, one they may contemplate with wonder, but which remains dissociated from their immediate reality. The proximity of a street corner in a familiar city, however, is accessible. The growing corn is familiar, as well, to someone who has lived in the country. What is remarkable is not one of these elements or the other, but the way in which the corn is brought into relief by its rarity on a street corner, rather than as

part of a cultivated field. “Sou um ignorante,” Braga writes, challenging an implicit assumption of city dwellers’ sophistication, “um pobre homem de cidade. […] Tinha visto centenas de milharais – mas é diferente. Um pé de milho sozinho, em um canteiro, espremido, junto do portão, numa esquina de rua – não é um número numa lavoura, é um ser vivo e independente” (49). A stalk of corn in the city is not like a stalk of corn in the country. Its singularity, its uncanny context, imbues it with a new meaning for its observer, who may see himself, too, as an unlikely singularity in the city: an individual.

A city is, of course, teeming with individuals. Couched in the analogy is its inversion; we can imagine the masses populating the city to be as homogenous and faceless as a field of corn, as “números numa lavoura.” What Braga calls attention to is the grace in making the leap from a mass identity to that of a unique individual. While the stalk of corn signals something displaced, and while the recognition of displacement can signify a state of separation and loneliness, Braga uses elements from the country – the image of a field of corn – to elevate this state of uniqueness, to render it that of a “thriving and independent” individual in the city.

The crônica genre allows for the expression of an individual’s subjectivity in a direct, deliberate way. The narrative voice has its attention turned both outward to observe and comment upon the writer’s environment and inward to the writer’s own experience and memory. There is a deliberate self-awareness and self-reference at play in making these observations. In Braga’s case, the self-reference is often expressed as an affectation of modesty; his self-identification as “um pobre homem de cidade” is a performance of diffidence, and at the same time draws attention to the fact that he is, in

fact, positioned in the critical, privileged place of a man of culture, the authority of writing the text.

Braga applies the same wistful, self-diminishing rhetoric to his comparison of the work of a city man to the work of a country man and, by association, to their ties with these environments. In "Vem a primavera", also published in *Um pé de milho*, he laments his lack of synchronicity with the seasons and the elements, with that which can be interpreted as natural, circular time. A knowledge of these things, he writes, belongs not to writers or bureaucrats but to the farmer, the hunter and fisherman:

> Só o lavrador sabe as coisas; só o caçador e o pescador, seus irmãos mais velhos, e jamais nós, cujo calendário é o vencimento dos títulos, os invencíveis títulos, que se vencem ao sol e à chuva com a mesma triste pressa, a mesma cruel monotonia. Eu e Genolino não plantamos legumes na terra, mas apenas cultivamos estas tristes couves da literatura que são as crônicas [...] feitas de palavras vãs e não da força da terra e da água do céu. (129)

In his comparison, the knowledge of men who live in a more intimate communion with nature is deemed more valuable than that of intellectuals. What they produce, too, is deemed more valuable than writing, than "sad cabbages of literature". And yet within the apology there is an affirmation of this vain word-making: the crônica itself as we read it, which communicates the longing for the farmer's knowledge, and which reveals, too, a kind of redemption, a testimony to the persistence of natural time even within the cruel monotony of the city and in the face of the oppressive spaces of bureaucracy: "[...] afinal, a verdade é que desde logo a minha varanda tem flores, e ali atrás do ministério do trabalho, entre o horrível ministério da Fazenda e a lagoa com estátua de Rio Branco, perto de teu apartamento, ó Genolino, as grandes árvores deitam flores rubras" (130). Indifferent to the knowledge of men, regardless of where they are planted or grow, there are trees that can be counted on to send down the same red flowers every spring.

Braga's attention to the encounters with the natural world within the confines of the city addresses, also, the more obvious juxtapositions of a natural space and an urban one, which are especially dramatic in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Stretching along the bay of Guanabara and the beaches to its south, and interrupted, in its very center, by jutting, densely forested mountains, the city has distinct divisions between natural and developed environments. The seams between these environments can serve as liminal spaces, where there is an awareness of each, and of the tension between them.

In "O mato", from *Ai de ti, Copacabana,* Braga describes the crossing from one space to another, this time forgoing the personal, anecdotal tone and instead narrating the transition of an archetypal man, an everyman, as he turns from a city dweller into a part of the living forest. His transition constitutes not only a physical crossing from pavement to forest floor but a spiritual, even mystical, one as well, from a state of thinking to a state of being, from man to mineral.

The transition begins with a day's cycle in the city, described through its weather, one of the more ubiquitous manifestation of the natural world marking the urban environment: "Veio o vento frio, e depois o temporal noturno, e, depois da lenta chuva que passou toda a manhã caindo e ainda voltou algumas vezes durante o dia, a cidade entardeceu em brumas" (89). As if in response to this series of weather events, or as its inevitable continuation, "the man" crosses over from one space to another:

> Então o homem esqueceu o trabalho e as promissórias, esqueceu a condução e o telefone e o asfalto, e saiu andando lentamente por aquele morro coberto de um mato viçoso, perto de sua casa. [...] Ainda bem que de todas as grandes cidades do mundo o Rio é a única a permitir a evasão fácil para o mar e a floresta. Ele estava ali num desses limites entre a cidade dos homens e a natureza pura; ainda pensava em seus problemas urbanos – mas um camaleão correu desúbito, um passarinho piou triste em algum ramo, e o homem ficou atento àquela humilde vida animal e

> também à vida silenciosa e úmida das árvores, e à pedra escura, com sua pele de musgo e seu misterioso coração mineral. (89)

The crossing occurs both geographically and mentally, as the man's thoughts turn from the consideration of his urban problems to a state of perception of the forest life, to a state of awareness of a deeper life inside the inanimate, all in the breath of one sentence.

The transition becomes even more profound as the man imagines the crossing of boundaries between his own self and the forest life "[...]sentiu vontade de deitar e dormir entre a erva úmida, de se tornar um confuso ser vegetal... ficaria verde, emitiria raízes e folhas ... sem angústia nem amor, sem desejo nem tristeza, forte, quieto, imóvel, feliz" (89). Even in this liminal location, where the asphalt gives way to earth, where thoughts oppressed by urban life give way to a meditative state of communion with nature, the two aspects are irreconcilable. The communion is desired: "sentiu vontade de deitar e dormir"; the man *would* become himself green, send out roots, and turn silent, immobile, happy and without desire. But as Braga describes the transformation into a person-plant, his careful language remains within the realm of a wistful, impossible desire; the desire to be without desire, a longing to belong to that from which one is shown, at least in this text, to be separate. The crônica draws a clear line between the city and an entirely natural space antithetical to the city, even while the two are both part of the experience of living in Rio, and of the bird's eye view of the city.

This scene is reminiscent of scenes in Arcadian poetry: the poetic voice solitary and contemplative, seeking a refuge in nature and producing a lyric description of a bucolic location that is both specific in its details as well as idealized in its significance. In *Formação da literature brasileira,* Candido describes a motivation for the pastoral themes in Arcadian poetry, suggesting that

> [a] poesia pastoral, como tema, talvez esteja vinculada ao desenvolvimento da cultura urbana, que, opondo as linhas artificiais da cidade à paisagem natural, transforma o campo num bem perdido, que encarna facilmente os sentimentos de frustração. Os desajustamentos da convivência social se explica pela perda da vida anterior, e o campo surge como cenário de uma perdida euforia. A sua evocação equilibra idealmente a angústia de viver, associada à vida presente, dando acesso aos mitos retrospectivos da idade de ouro. Em pleno prestígio da existência citadina os homens sonham com ele à maneira de uma felicidade passada, forjando a convenção da *naturalidade* como forma ideal de relação humana. (58)

The nostalgia I have been pointing out, in Braga's writing, is not unlike the sense of loss Candido describes, his explanation that "[o]s desajustamentos da convivência social se explica pela perda da vida anterior, e o campo surge como cenário de uma perdida euforia." Braga idealizes a more recent history of country living, and not the Arcadian trope of a Golden Age, but the tradition (both cultural and literary) of longing for a lost innocence found in nature runs through his crônicas. What is different, is that the setting in Braga's narrative is not restricted to an unattainable utopia, or even to the countryside he so often brings up, which is both geographically and temporally remote. Braga's *Fugere urbem* is performed within the city itself, whether through the observation of the fauna growing next to government buildings, in "Vem a primavera," or a walk up the hill and into one of Rio's forested areas, as in "O mato," the narrator has an experience equivalent to fleeing the city even as he remains within its quotidian space and time.

And still, the natural world, in Braga's writing, whether remembered or observed on a street corner or at the city's boundaries, carries with it a dependable quality of nostalgia – an idealization of some possibility beyond the present, of the past, of childhood, of a collective innocence. But the same innocence and innocuousness attributed to nature could also be used to mask more complicated critiques of Brazilian society and politics. "Parece que vão fazer uma lei para proibir dizer essas e outras

coisas," he writes in the crônica "A nova lei", in 1958, with barely disguised contempt for those censuring powers. He continues and acknowledges his methods of circumventing those powers, at the same time ironizing his predilection for writing on nature: "Como não gosto de cadeia, passarei a falar das borboletas azuis. Encherei as colunas dêste jornal e os ares desta República de borboletas azuis até que seja proibido falar de borboletas azuis. Então, se me permitirem, falarei das borboletas amarelas. Há muitas borboletas e muitas côres neste país; estou sereno e otimista" (67).

Of course, the butterflies he threatens to write about – and, by so doing, actually does write about – are symbols, literal placeholders for and indicators of prohibited expression. The frivolity and fleetingness of butterflies contrasts with the gravity of what we are encouraged to imagine Braga would write if he were not prohibited, and with the gravity of censorship itself. The butterflies, on this occasion, do not appear to have the same role as the red flowering trees, the stalk of corn or the forest on which Braga focuses in the other crônicas I discussed. Nature is an apt subject in and of itself, and serves, too as an apt instrument with which to comment upon other subjects. By using an image from nature – and one that is ostentatiously lovely and harmless – in order to perform conformity, Braga communicates that such an image is likely to be considered innocuous. Braga's butterflies, however, mean much more than a mere description of butterflies: as symbols, they have become subversive. The self-awareness and irony with which Braga presents his butterflies to the public could indicate that such subversion may not be entirely absent from other, similar imagery in his crônicas. Perhaps the red flowering tree, the stalk of corn and the forest function on several registers, are useful beyond their mere description and their evocation of a receding communion with nature.

Braga's crônicas are deceptively simple, short and descriptive, yet they function, simultaneously, as meditations of a loftier nature, about humankind's relationship to its environment. There is, in the relatively brief form, the careful attention to the natural world and its seasons, and the inevitable widening of meaning, something not unlike the Japanese Haiku form. In both, the narrative voice takes the role of an observer, and turns the reader into a complicit partner in observation. In both, too, there is a tone of carefully controlled wistfulness, of an experience that is both pinned in the present moment yet also evocative of what is fleeting or no longer accessible. Braga's persistent return to nature in his writing is a return to the values that nature and a rural experience represent, and a comment on their precariousness in a new, urban context.

Clarice Lispector: the indifferent garden, human/animal subjectivity

Like the setting for Braga's stories and crônicas, the settings of Clarice Lispector's short stories are predominantly urban; the city itself, its streets, public spaces, even the interior of the home, where much of her narrative takes place, is defined by its borders with the city. Her stories often pick out commonplace occurrences that manifest at the boundaries between home and street, and at the boundaries between the inner self and the social self; both boundaries are emblematic of urban life. In Lispector's writing, these limits are penetrated, or are redrawn, to affect a change upon a character's perceived or expressed identity and subjectivity and upon the relationship of the characters with the space they inhabit. These instances are often mediated by a manifestation of nature within the space of the city, such as the pivotal moment in "Mistério em São Cristovão," in which three masked boys, in the act of breaking and

carrying off a branch of flowering hyacinth, are confronted with – and deeply shaken by – the face of another, looking at them through the window of her room (*Laços de família,* 1960).

While in her stories, as in Braga's, seemingly simple encounters with nature are the site of some profound moment, revelation, or shift in perception and mood, the manifestations of nature in Lispector's work are not usually conspicuously defined as such in the text, and the narrative does not itself comment *on* the presence of nature. Rather, it introduces this presence subtly, as part of a scene, often an element of the scene that helps create heightened emotion or tension. "Numa noite de maio – os jacintos rígidos perto da vidraça – a sala de jantar de uma casa estava iluminada e tranquila" begins "Mistério em São Cristovão" (131). In this nocturnal scene we are confronted with rigid hyacinths – the adjective a starling one for describing flowers, yet apt for this particular bloom, which grows in dense clusters of fragrant flowers along an upright spike. These flowers stand sentinel at an illuminated window, and from this first description, detailed and evocative as it may be, it is still not clear whether we are looking into a window, at an interior, or out of it, at the garden. The hyacinths are enticing and difficult to reach; they are also a threatening presence. What are they standing guard over? "Mal porém quebrara a haste do jacinto maior, o galo interrompeu-se gelado. Os dois outros pararam num suspiro que os mergulhou em sono. Atrás do vidro escuro da janela estava um rosto branco olhando-os" (134).

At the moment the three boys disrupt the space of the night-time garden and break off stalks of the hyacinths, there is contact between the illuminated interior of the home and the dark exterior. The contact occurs through an exchange of gazes – the masked

boys suddenly aware of a pale face looking out at them, the owner of the pale face, itself mask-like, looks at the boys. On both sides of the window, something is lost and some new, troubling awareness is gained. Those rigid, flowering spears at the window, both framing and barring it, grow at the site of permeability between the known, domestic interior, governed by social and family order, and the mysterious somnolent garden, governed by the pulse of nature that, even though cultivated, at night takes on an air of wildness. The act of breaking them is simultaneous with the moment of confrontation. What remains at the site of the intrusion is a garden that seems to be alive in an alarming sense of the word, as if it were another entity, alert and breathing, swelling and contracting, a being indifferent to the trauma performed by the humans that consider it their creation: "O jardim, despertado no sonho, ora se engrandecia, ora se extinguia; borboletas voavam sonâmbulas. Finalmente a velha, boa conhecedora dos canteiros, apontou o único sinal visível no jardim que se esquivava: o jacinto ainda vivo quebrado no talo... Então era verdade: alguma coisa sucedera" (136).

The site of permeability between an ordered and wild space is one Lispector visits often in her stories. In "Amor," published in *Laços de família*, Ana, a housewife who has for years quietly seen to the raising of sons and the continuity of a middle-class home in Rio de Janeiro, is jarred out of her "skillfully pacified life" by commonplace events taking place on a streetcar ride back from the market, specifically, the confronting sight of a blind man chewing gum. The encounter leaves her with a debilitating empathy and leads her to spend an evening in the city's botanical garden. There, she enters a world both serene and disquieting, "O Jardim era tão bonito que ela teve medo do Inferno" (29). Ana, when entering the gates of the Jardim Botânico, also steps into a place where nature

is meant to serve a human need. However, the botanical garden, the very name of which implies a methodical study of nature, is far from tame. Inside the garden, what should be most natural, most 'of this world' is suddenly rendered otherworldly, unknown:

> De longe via a aléia onde a tarde era clara e redonda. Mas a penumbra dos ramos cobria o atalho. Ao seu redor havia ruídos serenos, cheiro de árvores, pequenas surpresas entre os cipós. Todo o Jardim triturado pelos instantes já mais apressados da tarde. De onde vinha o meio sonho pelo qual estava rodeada? Como por um zunido de abelhas e aves. Tudo era estranho, suave demais, grande demais. (28)

The dark, mysterious garden is juxtaposed with the ordered, illuminated world comprised of Ana's home, her domestic errands, and the trolley that shuttles her between them. The dark garden appears to Ana indifferent to her, and ripe with secret meaning that forces her to seek such a meaning in herself as well. Access to the garden is monitored; there are gates that shut at a certain hour, keeping visitors from entering or, as Ana realized in a panic, from leaving.

When she is finally able to leave it, the influence of the botanical garden continues blooming in her. Returning home, she at once becomes aware of the small and insidious lives and deaths that indifferently overrun the rooms she had devoted her life to keeping hermetically clean:

> O pequeno horror da poeira ligando em fios a parte inferior do fogão, onde descobriu a pequena aranha. Carregando a jarra para mudar a água - havia o horror da flor se entregando lânguida e asquerosa às suas mãos. O mesmo trabalho secreto se fazia ali na cozinha. Perto da lata de lixo, esmagou com o pé a formiga. O pequeno assassinato da formiga. O mínimo corpo tremia. As gotas d'água caíam na água parada do tanque. Os besouros de verão. O horror dos besouros inexpressivos. Ao redor havia uma vida silenciosa, lenta, insistente. (31-32)

In one of its more abstract forms, nature is present in the language used by individuals inhabiting the city. The way Ana's life is told, and the purpose she chose for

it long before her trip to the garden, hangs on metaphors of planting and growing, imagery and language taken from nature – "Ela plantara as sementes que tinha na mão, não outras, mas essas apenas. E cresciam árvores. Crescia sua rápida conversa com o cobrador de luz, crescia a água enchendo o tanque, cresciam seus filhos, crescia a mesa com comidas, o marido chegando com os jornais e sorrindo de fome, o canto importuno das empregadas do edifício" (23).

Moments of fluidity and permeability between order and wildness such as these recur in Lispector's narratives, as do the exchange of gazes and simultaneous mutual recognition at the center of "Mistério em São Cristovão." These latter are especially poignant through the presence of animals, and animal-human encounters, in her work. Animals are an apt example of nature's presence within the city; whether wild or domesticated, Lispector's animals are introduced as part of an urban system – in the home, at the zoo, in the garden. Animals appear in a variety of forms: they appear in rhetorical devices describing a character's physical or psychological qualities; they participate in allegory, describing systems of relationships between the characters and the world they inhabit; and they appear throughout the narrative, as companions to and counterpoints, or foils, of the human characters themselves. This animal presence provides powerful, sometimes unexpected access to the experience of human subjectivity and its transformations. The process, through the narratives, of creating and attempting to fathom the relationships between human being and animal is exemplary of the Clarician search for the Other and, through the Other, the self.

In this search, the division between self and other becomes flexible, permeable and transitory; it is a necessary division at the initial stages of narrative, but is gradually

questioned, re-drawn, warped into new forms. Lispector's characters perceive what is "outside" of their own being – whether that be another character, an object, an animal, an abstract concept – and then gradually, through a language that permits pronoun switches, ambiguous verb conjugation, metaphors, invention and illogical juxtapositions, this perception of the "other" opens up to become inclusive, allow an exchange of subjectivities, and the division between beings becomes permeable. A resemblance is revealed, and a belonging that is inclusive rather than exclusive. The distinguishing line can be re-introduced, but both subjects have already been changed, transformed by the narrative experience.

In the piece "O relatório da coisa," in *Onde estiveste de* noite, for example, Lispector introduces the readers to "Sveglia," an entity that defies simple definition, functioning as both object and concept, among other designations. The narrative is comprised of a series of statements and anecdotes that are attempts to describe Sveglia, or at least reveal the ways in which it manifests. "Seu mecanismo é muito simples. Não tem a complexidade de uma pessoa mas é mais gente do que gente," is one such attempt, and another is "Sveglia é o Objeto, é a Coisa, com letra maiúscula. Será que o Sveglia me vê? Vê, sim, como se eu fosse um outro objeto" (81). As is often the case in Lispector's experiments in trans-subjectivity, the mutual gaze is a channel for recognizing one's self as an "other." More often than not, these exchanges occur between a human character and an animal.

The encounters between humans and animals in Clarice Lispector's short fiction are addressed by Silviano Santiago in the essay "Bestiário," in his collection (*Ora (direis) puxar conversa!: ensaios literários*. In the essay, Santiago makes an investigation of the

possible meanings of the human condition and the animal condition, using the catalyzing moments of metamorphosis, whether conceptual or linguistic, of human to animal and vice versa: "Na ficção de Clarice Lispector, o parasitismo recíproco – da vida animal pela vida humana, e vice-versa – serve de belvedere lírico-dramático, de onde narradores e personagens olham, observam a eles e ao(s) outro(s), intuem, fantasiam, falam e refletem sobre o mundo, os seres e as coisas, sendo por isso difícil – e talvez desnecessário – diferenciá-los" (163).

Santiago concerns himself with readings of works in which the representative animal is a wild one. With the exception of the dog in Lispector's "A partida do trem" (*Onde estiveste de noite*), the animals appearing in his analysis of human-animal encounters are the wild horses of "Seco estudo de cavalo" (*Onde estiveste de noite*), the caged buffalo of "O buffalo" (*Laços de família*) and the whales of "Morte de uma baleia" (*Visão de esplendor*). Santiago locates and studies the moments in which there is a contact – literal or figurative – between a human and a wild animal, and maps out how, in Lispector's narratives, the savage informs that which is human, and the human that which is savage. The presence of Lispector's domesticated animals, however, offers a particular kind of insight. They are, on the one hand, nearer to the human state, by virtue of their cohabitation, relationship of affect, and designation as companions, that is, of being of some kind of *use* to the humans. On the other hand, this proximity can be misleading, and puts into relief the differences, complicating the human-animal relationship even more.

What happens, in these moments of inclusion, of shared or exchanged subjectivity, when the "other", the "non-human", is a porter of some measure of supposed, or projected humanity, by virtue of being domesticated? In her book *Animacies*

(2012), Mel Chen investigates the division between levels of "animacy", defining the term as a quality of agency, consciousness, mobility and sentience, among others. Of the process of relinquishing the central position of the human to the animal, she writes that

> Recentering on animality (or the animals who face humans) tugs at the ontological cohesion of "the human," stretching it out and revealing the contingent striations in its springy taffy: it is then that entities as variant as disability, womanhood, sexuality, emotion, the vegetal, and the inanimate becomes more salient, more palpable as having been rendered proximate to the human, though they have always subtended the human by propping it up. (98)

Of domesticated animals, specifically pets, she writes that,

> [p]ets bear the dizzying simultaneity of being named, individualized, and "kinned" while remaining special and distinct precisely for being nonhuman. In a way, animals serve as objects of almost fetishistic recuperation, recruited as signifiers of "nature," or "the real," and used to stand in for a sometimes-conflicting array of other cultural meanings (including fear, discipline, sexuality, purity, wisdom, and so on). (100)

Being "kinned," that is, placed in a position of familiarity and of implicit intimacy, permits the human character supposedly more direct access to the experience of the animal character, thus creating ties of affection and of identification. On the other hand, the relationship of "domesticated" and "owner" is laden with a power hierarchy beyond the basic human/non-human relationship of power (LaCapra, *History and its Limits,* 154). The human characters are confronted with a contradiction: they see themselves as part of a category that includes the animals with which they live, and at the same time they are positioned as superior over the animals in an unequal power dynamic. Even when humans manifest feelings of compassion, empathy, love or identification with the animal, it is a compassion that is part and parcel of the necessity to oppress its object. In "The crime of the mathematics professor", the professor cannot bear the role he feels he did not himself choose, as a dog's owner – the subject of a dog's silent, irrefutable,

absolute devotion (*Laços de família*). The compassion he feels for the creature is so painful to him that it turns to contempt, which in turn brings him to destroy the source of the feeling. In Lispector's "A legião estrangeira", in the collection by the same title, the narrator describes an episode in which Ophelia, the neighbor's child, feels, for the first time, the pleasure and pain of this particular kind of compassion for a living being which she must dominate. "Se ele corria, ela ia atrás, parecia só deixá-lo autônomo para sentir saudade; mas se ele se encolhia, pressurosa ela o protegia, com pena de ele estar sob o seu domînio, 'coitado dele, ele é meu'; e quando o segurava, era com mão torta pela delicadeza" (122). Such compassion demands that its subject be, simultaneously, themselves and that other for whom they feel compassion, engendering a moment of existential pain; at once a division and a joining together of being.

There is a kind of violence in the Clarician compassion, which is difficult for its subjects to contain. The narrator of "a legião estrangeira" introduces her story with the description of another chick that she had taken into her home, some time after the events of the story had transpired. Of this creature, she writes, "Eu queria que também ele sentisse a graça de sua vida, assim como já pediram de nós, ele que era a alegria dos outros, não a própria [...]. Mas era amar o nosso amor querer que o pinto fosse feliz somente porque o amávamos" (109). The narrator's son, perhaps moved by the pain of compassion, himself, perhaps perceiving it in his mother, asks, "Você quer ser a mãe dele?" In fact, it is often through the experience of maternity that the anxiety of compassion is expressed and complicated in Lispector's work. In this case, and others, maternity is not defined by the gestation and raising of one's own child, but through the recognition that the other must, truly, be other, even as one recognizes the solidarity that

exists between the subject and object of compassion. The child's naive question is not so absurd, after all. In this case, being the mother of another being is not a biological or even an affective relationship, but one of existential solidarity. A person can feel a maternal impulse for any other being. In the story "O homem que aparecia" from *Via crucis do corpo,* the narrator, confronted with the sense of futility she sees in a man she barely knows, ends the narrative with the question "Como é que posso ser mãe para este homem?" (40). She just as well could have asked, "How can I understand and contain the experience of being this man as part of the experience of being myself?" In the story "Uma galinha," from *Laços de família,* the chicken's position in regard to humans changes with a simple act of maternity – she lays an egg. How could that be? "De pura afobação," the narrator offers, "surpreendida, exausta. Talvez fosse prematuro." But the daughter projects onto the chicken an expression of solidarity between beings: "Mamãe, mamãe, não mate mais a galinha, ela pôs um ovo!" she cries, "Ela quer o nosso bem!" (33).

The state of solidarity that is part of this troubled compassion is just one of the many forms taken by Lispector's meditation on the theme of belonging. "Temptation," in *Laços de família,* describes a moment in which two beings discover each other and recognize that they "belong" to each other, even as they must acknowledge the impossibility of their belonging, since, as the narrator plainly observes, one is a girl and the other a dog. Both the strong feeling that reverberates between them at the moment of their meeting, as well as the tragedy of this moment's inevitable end, attest to the depth of the desire for belonging. The moment is made more significant and exceptional by the fact that the desire that connects them is not an asymmetric one, it is not erotic, nor

maternal, nor born of domination, but a mutual comprehension and acknowledgment; they are both one. “Ambos se olhavam,” Lispector writes, and in this declaration there isn’t one subject and one object, but two subject-objects, sharing one experience through a mutual gaze, though still separate from each other (68). “Mas ambos eram comprometidos,” Lispector reminds us. The two beings’ belonging to each other is undermined by the conventional belonging prescribed to both. “Ela com sua infância impossível, o centro da inocência que só se abriria quando ela fosse uma mulher. Ele, com sua natureza aprisionada” (68-69). In the Clarician search for belonging, there is often a futile attempt to find belonging through the shared experience of being.

While animals are an obvious and recurring example of the category of non-human beings that share an existential experience with humans, it is also interesting to consider the other entities that populate this category. Chen, in her book, addresses a hierarchy of “animacy”, that is, a linear organization of things according to their level of this quality. The organization accommodates humans, animals, and inanimate objects. About the presence of the inanimate in this group, Chen writes, “New materialisms are bringing back the inanimate into the fold of Aristotle’s animating principle, insisting that things generate multiplicities of meanings while they retain their ‘gritty materiality,’ [...]” and continues, “The history of objects is a combination of intuitive phenomenologically acquired abstractions and socially acquired histories of knowledge about what constitutes proper “thingness’” (5). In Lispector’s work, the processes of assimilation and re-differentiation occur, too, between human characters and objects or abstract “inanimate” concepts; “inanimate” but still containing this quality of animacy that is receptive to human subjectivity. In the stories “A geléia viva” in *The Foreign Legion* and returning to

"O relatório da coisa" in *Onde estiveste de noite,* the narrator portrays reality in such a way that throws into relief those qualities and physical substance common to all that exists, whether material or abstract, in a radical ontological organization. In "A geléia viva" the narrator discovers that everything, including herself, is made of one material, a live jelly. In "O relatório da coisa," there the quality, "Sveglia," is attributed to humans, animals, objects and ideas, without distinction. All can "have" the Sveglia quality, which, in addition to being a quality attributed *to* things, is also a thing in itself: "Sveglia é o Objeto, é a Coisa, com letra maiúscula. Será que o Sveglia me vê? Vê, sim, como se eu fosse um outro objeto."

In the story "As águas do mar," in *Onde estiveste de noite,* a woman experiences an encounter with the ocean that sees her both confronting the ocean's "otherness" and recognizing her capacity to merge with it. She emerges from the experience, and from the water, new and distinctly herself. In this story, too, the ocean is imbued with a subjectivity, and the two – woman and ocean – are comparable in both characteristics and experience. "Aí está ele, o mar, a mais ininteligível das existências não humanas. E aqui está a mulher, de pé na praia, o mais ininteligível dos seres vivos. Como o ser humano fez um dia uma pergunta sobre si mesmo, tornou-se o mais ininteligível dos seres vivos. Ela e o mar" (123). The short narrative begins with the two beings facing one another and continues with the two surrendering to each other, as "[s]ó poderia haver um encontro de seus mistérios se um se entregasse ao outro: a entrega de dois mundos incognoscíveis feita com a confiança com que se entregariam duas compreensões" (123). Upon entering the ocean, and with her "entrega", her surrender to its water, the woman simultaneously becomes part of it and becomes conscious of her own distinct self in it. Leaving the water

toward the beach, the woman's body is likened to a "hard and rough" prowed boat made of a material that resists the water's force: "Às vezes o mar lhe opõe resistência puxando-a com força para trás, mas então a proa da mulher avança um pouco mais dura e áspera" (126).

The division between the self and the other, then, is not necessarily presupposed, but can be re-established after an awareness of the possible union between them is acknowledged. The reasons for such a re-establishment of separation are varied. In his essay, Santiago describes one of these as the recuperation of the rational after having surrendered to delirium. In his reading of Lispector's "Seco estudo de cavalos," he argues that there exists, in the text, a dichotomous relationship between transgression and fear, in which transgression is connected to pleasure and fear to the conscience, to obedience, and to "a negação da transgressão," the negation of transgression. Citing the following part of the text, Santiago describes the girl's initial delirium as she first desires to be, then sees herself as a horse:

> Na inveja do desejo meu rosto adquiria a nobreza inquieta de uma cabeça de cavalo. Cansada, jubilante, escutando o trote sonâmbulo. Mal eu saísse do quarto minha forma iria se avolumando e apurando, e, quando chegasse à rua, já estaria a galopar com patas sensíveis, os cascos escorregando nos últimos degraus. Da calçada deserta eu olharia: um canto e outro. E veria as coisas como um cavalo as vê. Essa era a minha vontade. (54)

Santiago argues that, in this text, it is not merely the images that create a transition from human to animal and vice versa, but the language, too, reflects the transgression of the boundary between beings. He points out a place in the text where there is a change in tone, attributing it to the abrupt appearance of a "human" rationality that takes the place of an "animal" exuberance:

> (...) se pudesse ter escolhido queria ter nascido cavalo. Mas – quem sabe – talvez o cavalo ele-mesmo não sinta o grande símbolo da vida livre que nós sentimos nele. Devo então concluir que o cavalo seria sobretudo para ser sentido por mim? O cavalo representa animalidade bela e solta do ser humano? O melhor do cavalo o ente humano já tem? Então abdico de ser um cavalo e com glória passo para a minha humanidade. O cavalo me indica o que sou." (51)

The exuberant and "audacious" writing permits a girl to be a horse, without having to lose her voice, her subjectivity, her humanness. This writing dismantles the conventional and rational definitions of being, and of categorical relations. In the moment in which the girl "(n)ão quer assumir as consequências imprevisíveis e perigosas que a guardariam, caso tivesse nascido bicho e tivesse dado o *sim* à origem animal da espécie humana," (Santiago, 169), the conventions appear once more, clearly differentiating between the girl and the horse.

These dividing lines, however, can be drawn and erased, re-drawn and erased, carrying out a dynamic, plastic and fluid interpretation of belonging and subjectivity. In this context, the boundaries that contain and separate beings are neither fixed in place, nor discarded entirely, but constantly considered and reconsidered, leaving their subjects transformed by the process.

Rubem fonseca: subversive nature, predator and prey

Rubem Fonseca's Rio is dark and rife with crime, his characters nonchalantly cruel. The violence they perform and contemplate is unsettling but hardly gratuitous. In fact, it is the contemplation of violence – often narrated in a disaffected first person, that engages the reader's identification with the characters and functions to raise political and moral questions, the blurred line between empathy and apathy. Fonseca's literary career began in the early 1960s and he has continuously published novels and short story

collections since then. For about six years, between 1952 and 1958, he served as a police officer and commissioner in Rio de Janeiro. His stint on the police force is often cited as a source and inspiration for Fonseca's depictions, in his fiction, of the city's "underbelly", the violent and sexual crimes, the moral corruption, the characters occupying the margin of society. Certainly, an inclination toward the psychological intricacies and the extremes of human social and moral nature could be the motivation for both vocations.

The surge in urbanization, beginning in the 1960s, as well as economic and political shifts that were ushered in with the military dictatorship, are the context and catalysts for the rise in violence in Brazil during this time and, with it, for the growing prevalence of literature dealing with violence. Fonseca's fiction is exemplary of this trend and, in fact, was the source of a new designation, expressed by Alfredo Bosi as *brutalista* – brutalist literature – to describe a style of writing in which both content and language are harnessed to depict urban violence. As Bosi describes it,

> a sociedade de consumo é, a um só tempo sofisticada e bárbara. Imagem do caos e da agonia de valores que a tecnocracia produz num país do Terceiro Mundo é a narrativa brutalista de Rubem Fonseca que arranca a sua fala direta e indiretamente as experiências da burguesia carioca [...]. A dicção que se faz no interior desse mundo é rápida, às vezes compulsiva; impura, se não obscena; direta, tocando o gestual; dissonante, quase ruído. (19-20)

The "sophistication" and "barbary" of a capitalist, consumer society that exacerbates already existing social and economic gap, translates to a violence that is sophisticated and barbaric, too. It is an institutional violence that manifests through systematic oppression of populations and individuals, and through the tension between antagonistic social groups that live in close proximity and overlapping territory in the densely populated urban environment. Violence is inherent and necessary in nature,

where we perceive it to exist outside the matrix or human morality. It may be inherent, too, to human nature, but the violence in question here is one that exists within these matrices and defies them. In what ways are our violent impulses a reaction of our innate, natural, animal selves? In what ways may these impulses be a perversion of our natural, moral selves? And, how does our environment, whether physical or political, prescribe the circumstances of this violence and its outcome? Fonseca's writing raises these questions and leaves them to discomfort its readers.

A city inevitably functions according to such exploitative power dynamics and Fonseca's narratives often portray predatorial behavior that show this exploitative relationship taken to an extreme. In the story "O olhar", in *Romance negro e outras histórias,* for example, a sworn vegetarian discovers a taste for meat, specifically the flesh of any animal – not excluding human – that has first, before being slaughtered, looked him in the eyes. In the pair of short stories "Passeio noturno I" and "Passeio noturno II", in *Feliz ano novo,* a successful businessman goes on nightly drives, perfecting the art of running over and killing pedestrians. In each of these stories, a human predators hunts, kills and sometimes consumes not only without remorse, but with relish. The prey, also human, is unsuspecting and the reader, so very human, is dismayed and yet, through the dependable literary device of implicit identification with a first-person narrator, may find themself identifying with the reasoning and reactions – and titillation – of the predator, even as they are discomforted by the brutality of the violence. In "O olhar", the hunt is contextualized in fine dining, a celebrated sophistication appropriate to the civilized, erudite man the protagonist claims to be, and yet this appetite that begins with a finely prepared restaurant meal coolly evolves, in a few short pages,

into a bloodlust that perverts the mere need for sustenance. The nightly hunts of the protagonist of "Passeio noturno I" and "Passeio noturno II" are also contextualized in his hyper-success in capitalist terms, embodied in the impressive luxury car he drives, the same car he uses so skillfully to complete his kills. Here, too, qualities that are coded as socially positive are juxtaposed with behavior that is coded as morally reprehensible.

"Passeio noturno I" is an especially short story, but compact and effective as a tightly wound spring. The metaphor of the hunt is persistent in it, and even the story's brevity functions to emphasize the sense of a predator's practiced preparation for and efficient execution of the kill. The preparation begins with the protagonist's evening routine at home, where he first secludes himself in the library, waiting for the time to pass: "gostava de ficar isolado e como sempre nada fiz. Abri o volume de pesquisas sobre a mesa, não via as letras e números, eu esperava apenas" (396). He then goes through the motions of dining with his family, another suspension of time until the story's main event toward which the tension builds. "A copeira servia à francesa, meus filhos tinham crescido, eu e a minha mulher estávamos gordos," he states, and although these facts are stark and few, they produce a portrait of the family, as well as the man's sense of indifference, tinged with contempt, for the circumstances he describes (396). Once he has fulfilled the bureaucracy of family life, to which he does not seem to have any attachment beyond the perfunctory, he takes his car – a Jaguar – out of the garage. The car has "um motor poderoso que gerava a sua força em silêncio," not unlike the predaor after which it is named (396). Once in the street, the sense of waiting and suspense gives way to action as the hunt comences: the location is chosen – "tinha que ser uma rua deserta [...] Cheguei numa rua mal iluminada, cheias de àrvores escuras, o lugar ideal," and the prey

is picked out – "então vi a mulher, podia ser ela, ainda que mulher fosse menos emocionante, por ser mais fácil" (396). The man narrates the kill itself with the same concise and objective language as he did the events leading to it. The juxtoposition of phrases such as "ouvi o barulho do impacto partindo os dois ossos" with a first-person narration that does not change register, consolidates the sense of the protagonist-narrator's dissociation from what is considered appropriate social and moral human behavior.

In his study of "Passeio noturno I" and "Passeio noturno II," titled "O prazer na morte: a poética da destrutividade em Rubem Fonseca," Fernando Gil attributes the protagonist-narrator's laconic descriptions to a greater theme, in Fonseca's work, of a silence he describes as the uncommunicability between people and, ultimately, an uncommunicability with the self:

> A natureza reificada da consciência impõe um silêncio sobre si mesma, movendo-se apenas sobre a exterioridade das coisas e impedindo um salto para dentro de si própria, de seus horrores e de suas misérias. Nada, em suma, revela-se à luz de uma visão reflexiva, interiorizada, ainda que a narrativa seja paradoxalmente narrada em primeira pessoa. (Gil 42)

Such dissociation from others and from self-reflection, Gil argues, disenfranchises the man from his social self and forces him to seek meaning through the violent annihilation of the other, a destructive impulse that is erotic (43). The context of this social alienation is a hyper-capitalist society, in which, "os objetos tomam vida própria, 'auratizam-se' como forjadores do espaço de 'felicidade' possível," that is, a world in which the sight of his car gives the man a sense of joy while a human life only gives him pleasure when he destroys it. "O prazer, assim, somente é alcançado por meio da destruição, do aniquilamento do outro, que se instala no universo da opulência" (44). The story

performs a hunt evocative of the behavior of animal predators, and yet the eroticizing of violence and fetishization of a machine that symbolizes wealth are all too human, signaling some of the more extreme psychological and moral phenomena of human behavior.

The vegetarian-turned-butcher in "O olhar" presents a similar animal behavior turned human perversion. This story's protagonist discovers an appetite for meat that is conditioned on seeking out and choosing an animal, in a version of a hunt, then butchering it himself before consuming its meat. This behavior can be considered animalistic, in the sense that there lacks a "civilized" reservation, or even repulsion, to confronting the cruelty necessary for the production of meat; it challenges the usual attempts to dissociate those two elements – the life of an animal and the meat that ends up on the table. And yet, the protagonist-narrator of this story is not satisfied merely by choosing, butchering and eating the animals he "hunts." What is essential to him is a mutual recognition between the animal and himself: the gaze of the animal, in which the man seeks signs of intelligence and awareness, characteristics attributed more readily to humans than to animals: "Segurei o coelho pelas orelhas, com a mão esquerda. As pernas do animal se distenderam mas ele logo as encolheu e lançou-me um olhar. Um olhar significativo e direto, afinal! […] Li o olhar dele, um olhar de obscura cuiosidade, de leve interesse" (72). His need to be recognized by the being he kills, and the relish in killing and consuming the being that "sees" him, is a human variation of the hunt, and at the same time, the perversion of what would be considered morally and socially acceptable human behavior.

While they approach it from starkly different directions and toward blatantly different ends, both Fonseca and Lispector explore the subjectivity of an "other" through animals, complicating the boundaries between animals and humans. The moment, in Lispector's "Tentação," in which the girl and basset hound lock gazes, in which "ambos se olhavam," is similar in form to the scene in "O olhar." However, while the gaze in both stories is mutual, in "O olhar" it is far from equal. Lispector's girl, upon recognizing the subjectivity of the dog, acknowledges it has a "self" and an agency equal to (perhaps even greater than) her own. The experience leaves her humbled. Fonseca's character, on the other hand, upon recognizing in the rabbit's eyes an intelligent awareness, and a *responding* gaze, finds elation in taking its life – not in spite of, but because of having experienced it as another subjective being.

The catalyst for the protagonist's new appetite in "O olhar" is, curiously, inspired by another, underestimated agent of destruction. The man's transformation occurrs after an episode in which he faints and, upon waking, compulsively writes a poem he titles "Os trabalhadores da morte". The "death workers" are bacteria, the final agents in the processeses of living, eating, killing and being killed. The poem is both scatological and existential, a reminder that we, like all organisms and regardless of whether we hunt or are hunted, are ultimately consumed, and consumed by what is in the basest material, "aquela mancha marrom de bactérias / começa a tomar conta do corpo inteiro. / Elas atacam em turnos: […] afinal tenébrio e ptino acabam com o que restou / de homem, gato e cão. / Não há quem resista a esse exército / contido num cagalhão" (63-64).

Excrement, pests, and general processes of decay are a casual part of the urban landscape in Fonseca's long short story "A arte de andar nas ruas do Rio de Janeiro."

"Uma cidade grande gasta muita água e muito excremento," observes Augusto, the story's generally stoic protagonist. A former worker for the department of water and sewage, he has a particular intimacy with the city and its more visceral elements. This intimacy ranges from cohabitation with rats in an abandoned apartment in the historical city center to daily perambulations in Rio's streets, where he engages with the city's marginalized population, embraces trees, notes the transformation of buildings, and with an indifferent, egalitarian care, searches for the center; the heart of the organism that is the city of Rio.

It is hard to ignore the presence of nature in Augusto's Rio. It is not an idyllic nature, however, meant to evoke the countryside, the traditional antithesis to an urban-inspired anxiety. Augusto's Rio is alive with vermin, lined with columns of displaced trees, decorated with blatantly artificial "natural" land formations. It is a nature that, while offering Augusto a kind of consolation, is not sentimentalized as part of a lost experience, an evocation of a countryside left behind. In Campo de Santana park, Augusto accesses carefully curated natural environments, meant to offer an authentic experience of nature. But even the space designed to represent a natural atmosphere is exactly that – *designed* and artificial. Augusto, who decides to stay inside the park overnight to better commune with the trees, hides from the park watchmen inside a cave: "Quando ouve o bip do seu Casio Melody alertando-o, Augusto entra até o ponto mais fundo da gruta, onde fica imóvel como uma pedra, ou melhor, uma árvore subterrânea. A gruta é artificial, foi feita por outro Francês, mas há tanto tempo que parece verdadeira" (27). The antithetical relationship between an authentic natural space and a planned urban space is here both emphasized and complicated; nature is and isn't natural. In *The Urban*

Revolution, Henri Lefebvre points out this particular seam in the organization of urban space:

> But what becomes of the attempt, inherent in urban space, to reunite the spontaneous and the artificial, nature and culture? There is no city, no urban space without a garden or park, without the simulation of nature […] Are these spaces the site of a term-for-term correspondence, or nearly so, between the city and the country? Could they be the visible re-representation of an elsewhere, the utopia of nature? Do they provide an essential reference point against which urban reality can situate and perceive itself? (26)

In Augusto's case, the park and within it, the cave, do function as a kind of utopia, a space he seeks where he can be what he wants to be and not what the city demands him to be. Not unlike the protagonist of Braga's "O mato", Augusto imitates stone. While in "O mato" this was possible by crossing over into the real forest, here it is possible within the heart of the city itself. Of course, the stone he imitates is artificial, but does it matter? Lefebvre's questions are succinctly contained in the description of the artificial cave, "artificial, […] mas há tanto tempo que parece verdadeira" (27). It does not seem to matter, to Augusto, and his unsentimental appreciation of nature, which pragmatically includes the artifice of nature, reframes the trope of the contrast between city and country. Even the trees, which inspire in Augusto an emotional response distinctly lacking in his relationship with other humans, are not made sentimental; they are distinct beings in their own right, "indifferent" to their enemies, enduring and tolerant as Augusto perhaps strives to be. "Abraça e beija as árvores, o que tem vergonha de fazer à luz do dia na frente dos outros; algumas são tão grandes que ele não consegue juntar os dedos das mãos atrás delas. Entre as árvores Augusto não sente irritação, nem fome, nem dor de cabeça. Imóveis, enfiadas na terra, vivendo em silencio, indulgentes com o vento e os passarinhos, indiferentes aos próprios inimigos" (27).

Urban flora and fauna are certainly not confined to the spaces allotted to them. Birds, vermin, and insects fill the city, and if they are overlooked it may be because they are such a constant presence. Augusto, for one, appreciates the rats that infest his home: "Diziam que os dejetos, os carrapatos e as pulgas dos ratos transmitiam doenças horríveis, mas ele sempre se dera bem com eles, com exceção daquele pequeno problema da mordida. Gatos também transmitiam doenças horríveis, dizia-se, e cães transmitiam doenças horríveis, dizia-se, e seres humanos transmitiam doenças horríveis, isso ele sabia" (17). Through his pragmatic, equalizing gaze, we are made to question the criteria of the division between desirable and undesirable urban dwellers.

The urban assimilates nature not only by the actual presence of gardens and creatures, but through the imagination; the city itself is imagined and described as an organic entity. Augusto decides to quit his job with the water and sewage company and devote himself to writing because the city, as mentioned earlier, uses a lot of water and excrement, as if the city were a beast it had become too difficult to sustain. The city, like any organism, is subject to processes of decay and regeneration and there is constant awareness, in the narrative, to the transformations of the streets and building at the center of the city, which change names and functions, are demolished and rebuilt. Augusto's landlord, for example, complains about the "mania que esse gente tem de mudra os nomes das ruas" (17), and Augusto tries to bring Kelly to Rio Branco avenue, to compare it to an old photo of the avenue. His walks through the city are often described as if the narrative voice were giving the reader directions, listing the names of the streets as he passes them, and listing, too, what they had once been like. "Agora Augusto está na rua do Ouvidor," we are told, "indo em direção à rua do Mercado, onde não há mais mercado

algum, antes havia um, uma estrutura monumental de ferro pintada de verde, mas foi demolido e deixaram apenas uma torre" (49). Augusto is commited to observing and, in his way, tending to, the organism that is Rio de Janeiro.

The city, then, is both literally and figuratively replete with nature. However, in an urban context, nature's existence can also be implied by its negation. Urban space is inherently one that had been constructed in place of nature, one that exists by virtue of nature having been cleared out. Certainly, the natural world continues to exist in it, in many of the manifestation observed so far, but within this new context, nature can also manifest as that which is no longer natural, as an assimilated and curated part of constructed urban environment, as in the case of a park. It can, too be perceived as an invasion of the the constructed urban environment. Unaccounted for manifestation of nature in a city – such as vermin, decay, inclement weather – while occurring as perfectly natural phenomena, inherently seem displaced. They are inconvenient at best, but can be destructive, subversive, undermining of order, marking a return of that which has been exiled. Such a return, the success of the banished in reclaiming a place, small as it may be, points to a vulnerability in the organization of the urban system. This interpretation again pits the two forces, nature and industry, against each other. What results, however, is not merely a conflict, but a meeting that is ultimately transformative, both for the urban spaces themselves and for the individuals inhabiting them.

Returning to the theme of the hunt, and the designations of predator and prey, it is curious to note that Augusto is, arguably, neither. He walks the streets, engages with humans, animals, plants and constructions without taking anything and without giving of himself. In one of his rarer moments of emotional investments, he observes, about the

prostitute he has decided to teach how to read, that she is missing a tooth. Teeth reappear throughout Fonseca's work – an apt link between humans and their primal tendencies, signaling power, desire and the violence of consumption. In this case, the lack of teeth, a kind of impotence, is what inspires Augusto to feel empathy toward another human. "Kelly está quase chorando, e com a careta que faz aparece a falha do dente, o que lhe dá um ar sofredor, desamparado, lembra os dentes que ele, Augusto, não tem e desperta nele um amor fraterno e uma desconfortável pena, dela e dele" (47). Augusto is far from powerless or vulnerable – he is not prey. But Fonseca makes it clear he is not a predator, either. What kind of new dynamic does this introduce? What dynamic does it invite or herald? Augusto's attention to what is discarded, neglected and overlooked in the city's public spaces, not the least of which are its disenfranchised and homeless communities, is crystalized in his final observation, in the last lines of the story: "[…] aos domingos a maioria dos restaurantes do centro não abre; como todo domingo, será um dia ruim para os miseráveis que vivem dos restos de comida jogados fora" (50). The prevailing system is clearly flawed

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Each of the three authors illuminates the intersections of Rio's urban space and its natural phenomena in different ways. Braga, through explicit attention drawn to a natural world imposed upon an urban environment, reinforces a nature/city dichotomy that privileges and idealizes nature. In Braga's crônicas, a proximity to nature, whether experienced or contemplated, is restorative; it exists in the city-dweller's imagination as a longed-for state. Lispector's narratives reckon with moments in which characters are

profoundly affected by their own permeability to nature, moments in which the natural phenomena casually observed in the urban landscape intrudes on their consciousness and alters their subjectivity in a way that is far from casual but is disorienting and revealing. Fonseca, too, addresses the presence of nature in the city as a disruptive, subversive element. However, it is not only the physical manifestations of nature that offer revelation to his characters; in Fonseca's stories, nature, specifically through primal impulses usually attributed to animals, serves as a vehicle for questioning the power dynamics created by the systems of power that make cities possible.

CHAPTER III: SÃO PAULO

É noite e tudo é noite. Uma ronda de sombras,
Soturnas sombras, enchem de noite de tão vasta
O peito do rio, que é como si a noite fosse água,
Água noturna, noite líquida, afogando de apreensões
As altas torres do meu coração exausto. De repente
O ólio das águas recolhe em cheio luzes trêmulas,
É um susto. E num momento o rio
Esplende em luzes inumeráveis, lares, palácios e ruas,
Ruas, ruas, por onde os dinossauros caxingam
Agora, arranha-céus valentes donde saltam
Os bichos blau e os punidores gatos verdes,
Em cânticos, em prazeres, em trabalhos e fábricas,
Luzes e glória. É a cidade... É a emaranhada forma
Humana corrupta da vida que muge e se aplaude.

Mário de Andrade "A Meditação
sobre o Tietê"

São Paulo offers a less dramatic contrast between its cityscape and natural landscape, due both to its location and layout, and to the way it is imagined – industrial, congested, hyper-developed relative to other Brazilian cities, more of a sprawl and not showcasing geographical interruptions such as the sea, forests, or mountains. A close contact with and contrast between natural and urban spaces may not be as ostentatious a phenomenon in São Paulo as it is in Rio de Janeiro. However, I propose that the city and its representation in fiction often offer more nuanced juxtapositions of natural phenomena and urban environment, inviting more varied and abstract interpretations of the

relationship between the two and deepening the question of how an individual might assimilate to or dissociate from their environment. In this chapter, I offer a variety of readings of environment and of how it informs the experience of characters in stories by João Antônio, Lygia Fagundes Telles and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão.

João Antônio: ryhzomes and streetlights

As explicitly as Rubem Braga's crónicas evoked the poignant contrast between natureand the city, João António's stories discourage a nostalgic or idealizing vision of the urban landscapes of his stories, nor does the natural world have an obvious, always literal presence there. It does, however, appear in the minute, avid, attentive observations of its child-protagonists; in the extensive description/construction of a veritable ecosystem of a São Paulo sub-culture and its environment, and in the language and structure of the narratives. Antônio uses a lyric realism to narrate the lives of characters living on the margins of society – characters who have an intimate relationship with the street. The directness and specificity in the description of places, together with the colloquial language, gives the narrative a sense of immediacy and establishes a concrete sense of place and present. While João Antônio's subjects are people – the marginalized population in the city – his writing inevitably become a portrait of the city's streets and public spaces, and, more importantly, the network of connections among individuals and the relationship of these characters with the spaces to which they have access.

Such a portrait of São Paulo emerges in "Malagueta, perus e bacanaço", the final story in Antônio's first collection, by the same title, which saw immediate critical and popular success when it was published in 1963. It is a long short story, recounting the

quotidian adventures and misadventures of three characters who share, among them, the role of protagonist: Malagueta, an old man and professional beggar, Perus, a youth on the cusp of adulthood, and Bacanaçu, a man in his prime, charismatic and a sharp-dresser. The story is divided in six parts, each named after a location in São Paulo through which the three pass during the course of one Saturday night, looking for pool games to hustle, winning and losing money in a constant flux. Their perambulations begin in the Lapa neighborhood and continue to Água Branca, Barra Funda, Pinheiros and, finally to Lapa again. They begin the night completely broke and, after winning and losing money several times, end it penniless once more. This circular route – circular both geographically and circumstantially – and the repetition prevalent in the characters' activities and speech – for example the recurring variations of "está a jogo ou a passeo?" – lend the narrative a cyclical quality without an obvious climax, moment of epiphany or change that would move the plot forward toward some resolution or revelation. Rather, the plot moves around itself, circular but decentralized; its division into a series of small, fractal narratives and its multiplicity of protagonists each with their respective point of view and tangential anecdotes all serve to create a story that appears to have grown in a cluster, as rhizomes grow, rather than to have been constructed in one arc.

Cheryll Glotfelty's foundational statement, in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, that "simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii), is broad enough to both support and to generate a myriad of applications of this relationship. More recently, there has been a turn toward the relevance of ecocriticism to narrative theory (and of narrative theory to ecocriticism), in addition to ecocriticism's already established dedication to narrative content and themes.

That is, the manner in which a story is constructed and read is as relevant to this relationship between literature and the environment, as is the subject matter of the story. This has been the recent themes of a collection of essays, edited by Erin James and Eric Morel, who write, in their "Introduction to Ecocriticism and Narrative Theory," that "[w]hile […] traditionally ecocritics have privileged the content of narratives over their form, an increasing number of scholars interested in the intersections of literature and environment are turning their attention to the very structures by which narratives represent and construct environments for their readers, and are thus increasingly engaging in the concepts and lexicon of narratology, or narrative theory" (1). Much of this new attention is focused on the narrative construction of "storyworlds": the location, or new environment, to which the reader is transported by a narrative, and the reader's subsequent relationship with this place. However, narrative also constructs, perhaps in a more obvious way, the physical environment occupied by its characters, and their relationship with this environment.

The readers' storyworld and the characters' environment are, ostensibly, the same narrative-generated place, but characters have the unique double role of both populating and defining this place. They and their environment are formed by the same narrative fabric and so in addition to occupying the place, they are a fundamental part of it. This position of being both a witness to and an integrated part of an environment is not unlike one of the basic premises of ecocriticism, which argues for a re-evaluation of humankind's perceived relationship to nature, positioning humans as part of nature and its network of relationships, rather than in a dichotomy with it.

Place-generating narrative structures are inherently descriptive, in order to give the visual, auditory and other sensory cues that are perceived and experienced by the place's observers – the readers – and the place's occupants – the characters. However, these structures can be far more than merely descriptive. In "Malagueta, Perus e Bacanaço," the story's narrative creates a reciprocal relationship between the city and the human agents that occupy it, each informing, shaping and, in a way, narrating the other. In the following scene, for example, the teeming streets in the Lapa neighborhood are described in a rush of details, punctuated with the simple phrase, "Bacanaço sorri":

> A rua suja e pequena. Para os lados do mercado e à beira dos trilhos do trem – porteira fechada profusão catando ou depositando gente empurrada e empurrando-se no ponto inicial. […] É pressa, as buzinas comem o ar com precipitação, exigem passagem. Pressa, que gente deixou os trabalhos, homens de gravata ou homens das fábricas. […] Lusco-fusco. A rua parece inchar. Bacanaço sorri. O pedido gritado da cega que pede esmolas. Gritado, exigindo. […] Bacanaço sorri. (106)

Each pulse of descriptive details first appears to be a straightforward sketch by the narrative voice, giving a sense of the atmosphere as well as showing the juxtaposition between the different social classes who occupy the street. However, each time Bacanaços smiles, the description of the streets gains a new, slightly more complex dimension, seen and judged through his eyes. With each smile, too, a layer is added to Bacanaço's character, a depth to his perspective, expressive but still mysterious. What, in this street scene, is inspiring his reaction? Is it a smile of approval or amusement, smugness or irony? The scene continues:

> O sinal se abriu e nova carga de gente, dos lados da Lapa-de-baixo, entope a rua. Gente regateia preços, escolhe, descompra e torna a escolher nas carrocinhas dos mascates, numerosas. Alguns estenderam seus panos ordinários no chão, onde um mundão de quinquilharias se amontoam. E preços, ofertas, pedidos sobem numa voz só. Bacanaço sorri. (107)

The description of the street at this particular hour, the end of the workday and prelude to night is informative to the reader both contextually and aesthetically. Contextually, we are shown the street as the site of intersection between the mass of people, "nova carga de gente", who use it as transport, and the mass of people, "numa voz só", who use it to sell their wares, creating a snapshot of urban class organization based on commerce and the use of public space. Aesthetically, we are presented with a compelling sensory experience that communicates the sights, sounds and rhythms of an environment through poetic prose. The environment is thus constructed, for the reader, through both the form and the content of the narrative. Lapa's streets gain an even fuller dimension, however, as the observing perspective becomes that of a character. As the scene progresses, the descriptive narrative becomes less neutral and, almost imperceptibly, shifts entirely sinto Bacanaço's stream of consciousness:

> Trouxas. Não era inteligência se apertar naquela afobação da rua. Mais um pouco, acendendo-se a fachada do cinema, viria mais gente dos subúrbios distantes. A Lapa fervia. Trouxas. Do Moinho Velho, do Piqueri, de Cruz das Almas, de Vila Anastácio, de... do diabo. Autos berrariam mais, misturação cresceria, gente feia, otários. Corriam e se afobavam e se fanavam como coiós atrás de dinheiro. Trouxas. Por isso tropicavam nas ruas, peitavam-se como baratas tontas. (107)

The scene is thus constructed by Bacanaço's observations, while, at the same time, reveals his own biases and complexity, for example as he makes the following distinction between the two classes: "Há espaços em que o grito da cega esmoleira domina. Aquela, no entanto, se defende com inteligência, como fazem os meninos jornaleiros, os engraxates e os mascates. Com inteligência. Não andam como coiós apertando-se nas ruas por causa de dinheiro (107). His judgement of the day workers, that they crowd the streets for the sake of money, is ironic when we consider how money drives most of his and his companions' actions.

Finally, the city delivers what it appears Bacanaço had been waiting for as he cast his equivocal smile upon the street. The night "officially" begins when the streetlights light up, and night is when Bacanaço and other "vagabundos", "malandros", and "tacos", rather than the "trouxas", have access to the streets: "Bacanaço deu com a primeira luz. Lá no meio da cara da locomotiva. Num golpe luzes brotaram acima dos trilhos dos bondes. Os luminosos dos bares se acenderam e a fachada do cinema ficou bonita. A Lapa trocava de cor" (108). Bacanaço does not merely notice the first light, but "deu com" it, a more significant, almost physical encounter that is evocative, too, of the expression "dar à luz", to give birth. With the illumination of the street lights, the streets transform into a place where Bacanaço and his companions have more agency. The "first light", in this context, is not the natural light of dawn but rather that of a mechanical, electric dawn, the dawn of night, which is Bacanaços day. His participation in this moment of transformation again highlights the mutual influence that place-generating narrative and character-generating narrative have on each other.

Scenes such as these, lyric litanies of sights, sounds, rhythms and lights are interspersed throughout the story, offsetting the scenes of dialogue and action. In these more descriptive scenes, São Paulo reveals itself again and again, each time within the specificity of a particular street, at a particular moment of the night, and a particular mood that is an amalgamation of the atmosphere in the street with the characters' perception and state of mind, whether individual or collective.

The triad's ages and stations in life lend themselves to an allegorical interpretation of the collective as forming an archetypical man; the three, together, complete three main stages of a man's life – youth, maturity and old age. The allegory, however, is not of a

universal man, but is very specific to a particular place, time and social circumstance. In a few years, Perus could come to occupy the role of Bacanaçu, then of Malagueta. Malagueta could have once been Perus. Each is an echo of the other. The triad functions, then, both as three individuals each with their own perspective and relationship to the others, and as a collective with its own sense of self, a group-organism that must adapt to its environment. Often, their actions are narrated in the plural and, often, the plural is extended to their perceptions, desires and feelings, as when "estavam os três quebrados, quebradinhos. Mas imaginavam marotagens, conluios, façanhas, brigas, fugas, prisões […] e em pensamento funcionavam. E os três comendo as bolas, fintando, ganhando, beliscando, furtando quebrando entortando, mordendo, estraçalhando…" (112). Inclusive boundaries of identity and subjectivity, and a plural expression of subject-hood are elements that dovetail with literary ecocriticism's turns away from anthropocentricism, that is, away from the traditional position of evaluating reality exclusively from a human point of view, and of attributing moral worth to humans, only. The most obvious consequences of this expansion beyond the human is the exploration of the possible subjectivity, personhood and moral worth of *non*-humans such as animals, of inanimate objects and even ecological systems. However, the mere fact of complicating and decentralizing such an entrenched view of subjectivity, however, opens the door for considering other permutations of this change; for example, the subjectivity of a collective of human individuals, rather than just one.

The identity of the three characters, whether individual or collective, is inexorably a function of the environment they live in. They are, individually or collectively, "vagabundos", down-and-outs, derelicts, bums, poor and dependent on the subculture of

the street for survival and for participation in a community. At the same time, they are, or aspire to be, "malandros", the venerated, street-smart rogues, which is, too, a designation that sees them dependent on the subculture of the street, albeit in a position of some agency and social recognition. And, finally, the three are "tacos", pool players of some skill who hustle other players. One of the defining variables of all these designations is money, but not the money that creates wealth, class and commerce – rather, the mercurial money that is won and lost in the hustle; that buys their cups of coffee as well as the possibility of betting on another game, another hustle. Money is what propels them from one neighborhood to another and what motivates their interactions in the community. The street and pool halls are the means to this quest and are the environment in which they function and to which they must adapt. These are locations that are in constant flux – of people, of safety, of opportunity – and so the adaptation necessarily creates a flux in experience, which the narrative gives voice to through the characters' individual and collective expression and behavior. For example, as the three walk away from a humiliating encounter with the police, their entire being is overtaken by the weight of their vulnerability to losing: "a gana do jogo lhes passara de todo e não percebiam o vento quieto e úmido batendo-lhes agora, nas caras e nas pernas. As três cabeças seguiuam baixas. Eram três vabagundos e nada podiam" (139). A loss is more than just lost money or a lost opportunity, it represents the precariousness of their position and taps into a greater, existential sense of loss, as the passage continues: "uma carga humilhada nos corpos, uma raiva trancada, a moral abaixo de zero. Secos, apenas se olhavam, quando em quando, sem reclamações. Fazer o quê? Era três vagabundos e iam" (140). Moments later, having narrowly escaped another altercation with the police, the winds

shift and "[u]ma vontade súbita os tomou. A cidade não dera jogo, dera prejuízo e até estrepe no caminho? Nao havia nada não. São Paulo era grande e eles, três tacos, tinindo para o que desse e viesse. Haveria jogo em algum canto. Faziam fé" (143). Again, the collective and individual state of their spirits is directly affected by their vulnerability to the flux of the street and their precarious status there. The flux is never ceasing as, just moment later, while they walk through Pinheiros neighborhood they are deeply affected again, this time by the mood in the neighborhood itself. Always on the lookout for an opportunity to hustle a game, for an opportunity to transform their luck and circumstances, they have a keen sensitivity to their environment that leaves them especially permeable to its effects. They do not merely pass through it, using it as a backdrop for transport, like the masses of workers Bacanaço observed, earlier. Rather, their survival depends on a symbiotic relationship to an environment that they must constantly read, interpret and respond to. The narrative works to build and demonstrate this relationship by consistently providing scenes such as the following one, in which the narrative voice begins with a simple description of the scene, then introduces individual responses to the scene, finally shifting into a collective response:

> Na rua comprida, parada, dormida – vento frio, cemitério, hospital, trilhos de bonde; bar vazio, bar fechado, bar vazio... Malagueta arriava a cabeça no peito, leso, mãos nos bolsos. Bacanaço à frente, vestira o paletó e ia como esquecido dos companheiros. E nem o menino Perus falava. E caminhavam. Topavam cachorros silenciosos, chutavam gatos quizilentos, urinavam nos tapumes, nos escuros. Andaram muito, magros e pálidos. E sentiram-se cansados e com fome e sonados. (143-4)

While each man is described in terms that lend him an air of solitude and withdrawal from the others, their movement through the neighborhood is described collectively. It is a movement that is physical, even visceral: they run into dogs, kick cats, urinate on walls,

all actions that communicate a bodily intimacy with their environment. The narrative voice continues to describe the collective reaction, even as the later becomes less physical and more psychological: "Como aquele silêncio os calava... Não falavam, não assobiavam, um não olhava para o outro. […] Em pensamento, Malagueta, Perus e Bacanaço xingavam Pinheiros […] Silêncio os baixa a zero e cigarro nada resolve, só afunda o pensamento errado, amargo, que embota a malandragem, numa onda de coió" (144). Ultimately, it is not only their outwardly reactions that are narrated as collective, but their inner thoughts, as well, deepening the sense of an inclusive identity and extending it to be a kind of inclusive subjectivity.

The story is nocturnal, that is, it takes place entirely during one night, and describes a world that functions outside the formal conventions of daytime. Night, itself, is a significant natural phenomenon of the urban environment to which the characters are subjected, a phenomenon that deeply affects the sense of place, the sense of time and its passage, and the nature of interaction among the people who occupy it. Perhaps the most affecting, constant and overlooked intervention of nature in urban environments is that of the change from day to night and vice versa, the shifting light, changes in temperature and atmosphere. A city in the night is the same and yet not the same city it is during the day. Its solid structures are rendered differently, not just visually, but functionally and psychologically. The matter-of-fact order – whether structural or social – necessary for the functioning (and disfunctioning) of a metropolis becomes rearranged in the perception of whomever accesses it at night. Things that are not possible or acceptable during the day can find a way to be, at night.

In this story, a recurring image of streetlights describes the intimacy the trio feel with the night. The lights inspire exhilaration and well-being, they are a sign that it is not yet day, that things are still possible. "Luz elétrica joga calma em tudo," is one of the phrases repeated by the narrative voice that winds subtly from the perception of one character to that of another, and to a general, collective perception. As dawn approaches, the presence of the electric lights is celebrated even more, and is perceived as a defiance of the coming day: "os luminosos ainda resistiam, os postes de iluminação com seus três globos ovalados eram agora de todo silentes, e atiravam sobre a cidade um tom amarelo, desmaiado, místico no sossego geral da hora. […], os luminosos, em profusão, jogavam cores, faziam truques, acendiam e apagavam uma repetida festa muda (142-3). The lights, of course, do not have the agency to "resistir", but they are personified as such by a narrative voice that continues to express the mutual effects occurring between the characters and their environment. Just as in the previous scene Bacanaço is affected by the moment in which the street lights first turn on, there is an implicit significance given to their presence at the end of the night, the end of the period which they define.

Indeed, the effect of the natural cycle of day and night, and the sense of the city's subsequent transformation into a different place, at night, is especially potent in the liminal times, at dusk and just before the dawn. "A cidade expunha seus homens e mulheres da madrugada", the narrator observes, "E quando é madrugada até um cachorro na Praça da República fica mais belo" (128). As the streetlights turn off, they announce the beginning of the end of the night. Both when lit and when unlit, the lights serve as an inverse analogue to daylight and ensuing night, and the event of their lighting and extinguishing references the liminal times of dusk and dawn. Streetlights are concrete,

functional mechanisms, designed as part of the city architecture and both figuratively and literally grounded in the immediacy of the city streets, and yet in Antonio's story they gain an almost mystical influence over the environment, as heralders of the shifts to and from nighttime.

When dawn itself arrives, it is announced by the extinguished streetlights but is not itself mechanical nor local, as they are. It is atmospheric, occurring far beyond the city but affecting it intimately, as "[l]uzes se apagaram nas ruas. Uma palpitação diferente, um movimento que acorda ia-se arrumando em Pinheiros. Primeiros pardais passavam" (150). It is the young Perus who pays attention to this change in the air and anticipates the sunrise: "Perus acompanhava os dois, mas olhava o céu como um menino num quieto demorado e com aquela coisa esquisita arranhando o peito" (150). It is common, in Antônio's stories, that a child protagonist be attentive to the more explicit yet overlooked presence of nature in the São Paulo streets of his narratives, such as stray dogs or chickens, plants and gardens. Peru's earnest and emotional response to the natural phenomena of daybreak contrasts with the cynicism that seem to be required for the three's nighttime activities and, in fact, he is reluctant to share his feelings about the dawn with any of the other men.

The lyricism with which Antônio describes the streets changes its tone and style in the description of dawn. It becomes less abrupt and rythmic, and more sinuous: "Mas à direita, aparecia um toque sanguíneo. Era de um rosado impreciso, embaçado, inquieto, que entre duas cores se enlaçava e dolorosamente se mexia, se misturava entre o cinza e o branco do céu, buscava um tom definido, revolvia aqueles lados, pesadamente. Parecia um movimento doloroso, coisa querendo arrebentar, livre, forte, gritando de cor naquele

céu" (150). The description of dawn and Peru's response are cut by a return to the more immediate environment: "Já era um dia. O instante bulia nos pêlos do braço, doía na alma, passava uma doçura naquele menino, àquela janela, grudado. – Vamos brincar? – Bacanaço chamava" (151). Peru's impassioned response in this scene is counterpoint to Bacanaço's shrewd observations and subtle mocking response of the earlier scene, and to his pragmatic call to gather the men together for another game.

Malagueta, Perus and Bacanaço manage to lose their last game spectacularely, returning to their original state of pennyless despondence, returning to the Lapa neighborhood, completing the night's cycle. In a last gesture to the three's integration into the environement of the streets, the narrative pans out in its final scene, describing them through the eyes of other characters, the patrons of a neighborhood bar, who "falou-se qu naquela manhã por ali passaram três malandros, murchos, sonados, pedindo três cafés fiados" (159). They are just one part of many in the rich texture and perpetual flux of the city, as much a part of the environment as they are its observers.

Lygia Fagundes Telles: interior exteriors

In Lygia Fagundes Telles' stories, nature sometimes appears as a mysterious, troubling force, out of place but endowed with an authority that supersedes that of logic or social conventions. These interventions occur within supposedly organized, domestic structures, interiors that are meant to be functional. In the stories "As formigas" and "Seminário dos ratos" for example, pests disrupt an assumed order – the ants invading a boarding house bedroom night after night with a singular purpose that terrorizes the room's inhabitants; the rats taking over the building in which a right-wing government

meets to plan their extermination (*Seminário dos ratos*, 1977). In "A mão no ombro," in the same collection, a man living a conventional life in the city finds himself intermittently transported to a garden that appears to exist only in his own mind, a mythic space in which his consciousness becomes altered, and the effects of which extend into the material, banal world away from the garden. The play between interior and exterior spaces – imagined or real – helps build, in Telles' stories, a psychological depth and lingering unease. The narrative's movement between exteriors and domestic interiors is often mediated by natural phenomena, positioning it both as an element integrated into these spaces, and as an agent that permeates and troubles the division between them.

In her essay on "The Fantastic, the Gothic and the Grotesque in Contemporary Brazilian Women's Novels" (1996), Cristina Ferreira-Pinto remarks that "what will distinguish the gothic within the fantastic mode is its 'preoccupation with the domestic realm' […], which is constructed as an oppressive environment, wherein a sense of terror or imminent danger looms over the protagonist" (71). As the genre evolves, over time, to deal with the individual's psychological challenges in adversarial social situations, Ferreira-Pinto claims, the modern gothic becomes "an enactment of the split of the subject, and an expression of the subject's desire for unity […]. Thus the gothic is used by contemporary authors, particularly women", who have developed "'a literary form capable of more radical interrogation of social contradictions' and 'blurring the boundaries between the 'natural' and the supernatural'" (72). A desire for unity in the face of a fragmented and fragmenting reality is endemic to the urban experience, as is a tense boundary between interior, private spaces like the home and exterior, public spaces.

When Lygia Fagundes Telles began publishing her fiction in Brazil, in the late 30s and early 40s, she was a young woman entering a field that was predominantly male. Ferreira-Pinto observes that "[i]t should not be ignored […] that the relationship of the Brazilian female author to the literary canon has been very problematic, especially through the first five decades of this century. Up to then, women had been occasionally accepted in the canon on the basis of their "exceptionality" (e.g. Raquel de Queiroz, Clarice Lispector)" (71). It was not only their status of authorship that was qualified on the basis of gender, but the subject of their writing was considered female, their authorial voice feminine, possibly their audience expected to be female. Still today, even in casual introductions, her name is likely to be preceded by a qualification, for example "One of Brazil's finest women authors." Whether this functions as a disclaimer or celebration is tellingly and conveniently unclear. Of course, given the historical and still prevailing influence of the patriarchy and its myriad cultural and social manifestations, which include inequality in exposure and reception, an author's being a woman *is* relevant. And, while the fact that their universe of experience is one lived by a woman inevitably has some resonance in the universes they create in their fiction, this fiction will, first and foremost, explore and comment on being *human* in a particular place and time. So, the gender of these writers is relevant to, but not defining of their work.

Tânia Pellegrini, in her book *Despropósitos: estudos de ficção brasileira contemporânea*, writes of the period in which urbanization was rising in Brazil, and reflected in its literature, "Na mesma época, Clarice Lispector e Lygia Fagundes Telles colocaram, cada uma sob seu registro particular, os problemas específicos da mulher urbana, principalmente a de classe média, num tempo em que a industrialização se

acelerava, trazendo o campo para a cidade e tentando transformar 'cinquenta anos em cinco'" (17). If their lived and observed experience gave them access to the "specific" problems of the urban woman, as well as the desire to write about these, it is important to note that these "problems" can be read as both personal and political. That is, they emerge organically from the character development and narrative arc of the work of fiction, and are anecdotal, inevitable and necessary to the integrity of the work. In addition, they may be read as a deliberate statement on a social structure, and as such, political.

"[T]anto a literatura de temática homossexual," Pellegrini writes, "como a 'literatura feita por mulheres' – às vezes até a despeito de sua própria intencionalidade, em cada autor/a específico/a -, assumem uma função política própria, a sua micro-política, na medida em que procuram, por meio das mais diferentes formas de representação, desmontar noções conservadoras de sexo e/ou gênero, reconstruindo, revalorizando e revitalizando aspectos de cada um, sempre escamoteados ou censurados pelas estruturas sociais conservadoras" (23). This access enriches the reflection on the experience of the individual in the city, and in particular highlights the tensions between their inner world and the external reality demands from them a particular outward performance, necessary for assimilation to the flux of the city. The relationship of interiors and exteriors functions on many levels – the interiority of mind, of subjective experience versus the external social presentation; the interiority of private or domestic spaces versus public ones. If the "oppressive environment" of the "domestic realm", as Ferreira-Pinto mentioned, became the site in which, historically, women found ways to create "radical interrogation of social contradictions' and blur the "boundaries between

the 'natural' and the supernatural'", their complication of this space and its dynamics continue to develop along with the urban literature, which casts domestic spaces in contrast with public, urban ones. Each of the following three stories by Telles presents an alternative interpretation of interiority – whether of mind or of space – as well as the way characters navigate this interiority and its permeability, by means of the natural world, to the outside.

The premise of Telles' short story "The Ants", much like her celebrated novel *As Meninas* (1973), is the transition young women make to a new, unfamiliar urban setting. In the story, the two women are students and their move to these new surroundings in order to pursue their studies. These new circumstances are also, however, implicitly disorienting and threatening. Home, community and private space are not to be taken for granted but must be negotiated and improvised. "Nenhuma pensão nas redondezas oferecia um preço melhor a duas pobres estudantes com liberdade de usar o fogareiro no quarto" the narrator matter-of-factly determines (3).

The old organization of family and the family home, is left behind and a new organization must be pieced together, which includes occupying spaces that are transient – or rather, the stage for transience – and making them into a makeshift home. In the context of urban literature, the home often functions as antithetical to the street, its interior serving as a possible refuge, a contrast to the exposure of the street (as in the Clarice Lispector's stories). Here, however, even the interior is suspect.

The story's events take place entirely inside the boarding house. The narrative opens with the women entering the house and ends with their exit, or rather, their escape from the house. On both occasions, in both the very first scene and the very last one, the

house, seen from the outside, is described as a face, its windows as eyes: "Ficamos imóveis diante do velho sobrado de janelas ovaladas, iguais a dois olhos tristes, um deles vazado por uma pedrada" (3), the story begins, and ends with: "Quando encarei a casa, só a janela vazada nos via, o outro olho era peubra" (9). This symmetry of imagery in the narrative's structure gives the house a presence and relevance that even the story's human protagonists do not earn. The house *is* the story.

The house's odd and inhospitable first impression is compounded by the discovery that a previous tenant had left behind a box of human bones presumably used for medical study. While the girl who is a medical student is excited about this discovery, it sets an ominous tone. Once in the house, the women industriously transform the rented room into a makeshift home, changing even the lightbulb to give the space a warmer feeling. However, the women's matter-of-fact approach to their new daily routine and environment is undermined by a particular combination of common and yet uncommon natural phenomena. Each night, ants enter their room and move the bones, apparently arranging them into a full skeleton. It is not unusual for ants to infest a house, they are common pests, and there are common methods of exterminating them. The ants' nightly rearrangement of human bones, however, is already in the category of the fantastic and the gothic. The ants, to which is attributed a resolute will, behave in ways that appear both deliberate yet irrational; irrational only because they cannot be explained by the human characters' reason.

The little we know about the two women there is that they are students, one studying medicine and the other law, and thus effectively defined by their dedication to reason. Yet this fails them inside the boarding house. Their attempts to find reasonable

explanations for the appearance and behavior of the ants become increasingly irrelevant, for example, “Deve ter sobrado alguma coisa aí nesses ossos e elas descobriram, formiga descobre tudo” (5) does little to explain the ants’ appearances and disappearances. They explain the smell that appears every night by claiming “É de bolor. A casa inteira cheira assim” (5), yet, as the narrator has to admit to herself, “mas seria bolor? Não me parecia um cheiro assim inocente” (6). Mildew – another perfectly common natural phenomenon in old or unkempt houses, is here conflated with something far stranger, a smell that is somehow linked to the appearance of the ants, at night, when the supernatural casually takes the place of the natural. Telles performs the deft shifts from the believable to the unbelievable, from the casually domestic to the freakish and threatening in her language, as well. This phrase, for example, contains the delicate seam that joins the mundane with the morbid: “agora a gente podia ver que a roupa de cama não era tão alva assim, alva era a pequna tibia que ela tirou de dentro do caixotinho” (4).

The ants act as intermediaries between exterior and interior. They are proof of the permeability of the separation between the two but sustain the mystery of this permeability – it remains unknown where they come from, each night, and to what place they disappear in the morning. They belong to the natural world yet, inside the room, they blur boundaries the between natural and the supernatural since there is, in their action, an inversion of a natural process. The process of death and decay, morbid in itself yet common and known, turns still more morbid and enters the realm of the uncanny when it is reversed. By arranging the bones into the form of a skeleton the ants seem to be anticipating a resurrection. They are working toward a reversal of two of the most significant of natural laws, that of the inevitability of death, and that of the inevitability of

entropy. They work with apparent purpose, attested to by the consistency and repetition of their actions and by their attempts to put the bones into a coherent form. When something appears rational and deliberate, yet its reason is obscure, it is far more disturbing than when the reason is known, or even when it is seemingly arbitrary. There is, in this foreboding reversal of nature, a reflection of the anxiety, both personal and societal, about a departure from the traditional organization of community and domestic spaces. No amount of decoration, familiar childhood objects or even a new lightbulb distributing warmer light, such as the one the women install in the room, can turn the boardinghouse into a home. Rather, these details highlight the precariousness of the improvised comfort and familiarity the women are attempting to instill there. It highlights, too, the lack of coherence between their idea of home, associated with childhood and the past, and their new reality transitioning into adulthood, self-sufficiency and life in a city. The interior of the house and, within it, the room itself, are spaces that serve as a physical manifestation of the anxiety inherent in this transition, and in the sense of deep alienation that accompanies it.

The mystery of the ants is never explained and there is no resolution – not for the characters in the story, nor for the reader – except for the escape from the room. None of us will know what end the ants are working toward and what the fully constructed skeleton might signify. There is no opportunity offered in the story to explain, and thus disarm, whatever motivated these strange events to transpire. What is important, however, is not the resolution to the mystery, but the mood it creates, the sense of nature in reverse, nature with ominous intentions, and the resulting suspended tension inside the house. This tension is suspended indefinitely: the women leave the scene before the

narrative can offer any explanation, and the reader, too must leave the scene when the narratives ends. The house, however, remains. It is the last image of the story, observed from the outside and containing its mystery within. As for the women, while they fail to find an explanation for the mystery and fail, too, to face down the terror it inspires in them, there is agency and power in their exit. While they could not reason away the confounding unnatural-natural phenomena in the house, they do manage to extract themselves from it and from its oppressive, threatening interior.

"Seminário dos ratos" stands apart from Telles' other short stories since it is less of a psychological drama and very much a political satire. Even within this genre, however, it shares many of the elements that create the uncanny, fantastic yet convincing situations present in "The ants" and many of Telles' other stories. Here, too, the events take place in an interior that ultimately becomes an important entity in itself. A house in the countryside had been selected by the Brazilian government for hosting an international gathering of policymakers to address a worldwide crisis – the proliferation of rats[5]. The location is the subject of some contention, as the Chief of Public Relations reports to the Secretary of public and private welfare ""Bueno, é do conhecimento de Vossa Excelência que causou espécie o fato de termos escolhido este local: por que instalar o VII Seminário do Roedores numa casa de campo, completamente isolada? […] Não se conformam é de nos reunirmos em local retirado, que devíamos estar lá no centro,

[5] It is worth noting just how prevalent is the presence of common pests in Brazilian letters. Rats, ants and cockroaches make repeated and far from casual appearances: the ants appearing as agents of orderly destruction in Raduan Nassar's *Um copo de cólera* and Lima Barreto's *Triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma;* the ubiquitous *sauvas* of Mário de Andrade's *Macunaima*; the delirium of rats in Dyonélio Machado's *Os ratos*; the transcendental cockroaches in Clarice Lispector's "A quinta história" and *A paixão segundo GH*, to name a few, in addition to others previously mentioned in this text.

dentro do problema" (118). The center, that is, the place where rats proliferate, is the city, and the location for the seminar was especially selected to be far from the city and thus removed from the very rat problem it is meant to address, illustrating the hosting governments' hypocrisy. The Chief of Public Relations continues, "Onde poderiam os senhores trabalhar senão aqui, respirando um ar que só o campo pode oferecer? Nesta bendita solidão, em contato íntimo com a natureza" (118). Ironically, the house will become the scene for an intimate contact with nature indeed, albeit the kind of nature that is seen as an abomination, rather than restorative and the kind of contact that inspires terror, rather than tranquility.

The story, then, does not take place in the city, but the city is evoked through the presence of the rats. It is a presence that is, at first, articulated only abstract, as a problem to be solved, and that eventually becomes very real, when the rats descend upon the house. When discussing the rate at which the rats multiply, in the cities, the Chief of Public Relations reports that rumor has it "que temos agora cem ratos para cada habitante, que nas favelas não são as Marias mas as ratazanas que andam de lata d´águana cabeça" (118). The facetious comparison of favela women with female rats is a commentary on the dehumanization of the poor by state power, reminiscent of the infamous Nazi propaganda films blatantly comparing Jews to rats. While not stated explicitly, there is an implicit allusion to race here, as well, since the favela population is predominantly black. The repugnance to rats is universal, as is their association with the ills of urbanization, such as overcrowding, overextended resources and infrastructure, disease and poverty. In Telles' story, then, rats both represent the city and are identified as its bane, as the undoing of a desired order. They serve as an obvious stand-in for a

disenfranchised part of the nation's population that has come to be seen as pest to be exterminated rather than citizens to be governed.

The contempt mixed with fear that a ruling class feels towards its disenfranchised subjects is a recurring theme in history and one that has generated different representations in cultural expression. Elizabeth Ginway addresses it in her article "Eating the Past: Proto-Zombies in Brazilian Fiction 1900-1955", in which she explores the zombie trope in the Latin-American context generally and the Brazilian one specifically. She links the threat associated with zombies to the perceived threat of a displaced, marginalized or oppressed population that seeks to overturn the mechanisms that keep it oppressed, writing that the zombie trope "captures the inarticulate anxiety accompanying the incursion of social and technological change that erodes cultural traditions or institutions, provoking the return of the living dead who refuse to remain buried" (10). This trope, she argues, "resists strict taxonomic boundaries", and can therefore contribute to readings of canonical texts. She gives the example of Erico Verissimo and Lygia Fagundes Telles who, she writes, "use the zombie motif to denounce the military dictatorship and its repressive policies (1964-1985). While Verissimo's *Incidente em Antares* (1971) brings back the dead to reveal the truth about torture and corruption, Telles' "Seminário dos ratos" (1977) recreates the horror that the military leaders have of their own citizens, who appear to them as a relentless swarm of zombie marauders" (10). Indeed, in Telles' story, the humans' ostentation of comfort and security at the house, and their subsequent incredulousness and terror upon its being invaded, also brings to mind slave rebellions with which zombies are historically associated.

It is important that the story does not take place in the city itself but that, rather, the *idea* of cities is present in the story as the epicenters of the rat problem, and places that are becoming threatening to the governing powers. The house in the country is not unlike the *casa grande,* the master's house, defined by its separation from the subordinate population. There is, in the choice to hold the seminar in the country estate, a sense of nostalgia for country life, couching within it a nostalgia for and valorization of the *latifundo* system. This resonates with one of Ginway's premises to her analysis of the zombie theme in Brazilian literature, in which she argues that "Brazil's proto-zombie stories mark the transition from a rural, agricultural-based economy to an urban consumer society. In each story, the disintegration of the rural community or family as well as the social hierarchy and institutions associated with them is manifested in the zombie-like behavior of its characters" (1-2). When the rats appear in the house, then, they are bringing the city into the country, interrupting an institution's performance of power, wealth and privilege and forcing a confrontation with the troubling products of modernity and progress, that is, of urbanization in an unequal, classist and racist system. These are the products of progress that the institution prefers to acknowledge only abstractly, from a removed location. Ironically, the city is brought to the country via a natural vector, and its arrival in the country house is far from abstract, it is decidedly visceral.

As the rats' overwhelming presence begins to be felt and tension mounts in the house, sound functions much like smell did in "The ants," as if the disruptive presence of natural phenomena must manifest, at first, on a purely perceptive level, before being "known" for what it is; the undesirable, un-idealized intrusion of nature registers on a basic, primal awareness before it registers on an intellectual awareness. "Um barulho tão

esquesito," the Secretary notes, "como se viesse do fundo da terra, subiu depois para ot teto" (119). As time passes, his discomfort with the mysterious sound increases, and his reactions become more dramatic: "Aumenta e diminui, olha aí, em ondas, como um mar… Agora parece um vulcão respirando, aqui perto e ao mesmo tempo tão longe" (120) and, finally, "Eu não disse? […] Nunca me enganei, nunca! Já faz horas que estou ouvindo coisas mas não queria dizer nada, podiam pensar que fosse delírio, olha aí agora! Parece até que estamos em zona vulcânica, como se um vulcão fosse irromper aqui embaixo" (122). As this is a satire, a reader is more informed about the events of the narrative and less invested in the characters' emotional experience, confronting these events. In fact, the more dramatic they are, the more these experiences are rendered humorous or pathetic. It is clear to the reader that rats are invading the "VII Seminário do Roedores," and while this fact will prove to be horrific to the characters, it is welcome to the reader, who is invested more in the realization of the satire than in developing empathy with the characters.

As the rat invasion gains momentum, its presence begins to be felt beyond the subtle awareness of sounds and smells. Ordered, dependable systems of hierarchy and technology begin to come undone. First, communication breaks down: "Uma maçada!", cries the Director of Armed and Unarmed Conservative Classes, "Cheiros, barulhos… E o telephone que não funciona, porque o telephone não está funcionando? Preciso me comunicar com a Presidência e não consigo, o telefone está mudo!" (123). Soon after, transportation is sabotaged: "nenhum carro está funcionando […] Os fios foram comidos, comeram também os fios" (125). This is no common rat infestation, but a calculated attack and siege. The rats take on a super-natural dimension, and in one of the final

scenes, evocative of George Orwell's famous scene in Animal Farm, the lines of the allegory blur, as the Chief Cook tells of his ordeal: "um deles […] ficou de pé na pata traseira e me enfrentou feito um homem, pela alma de minha mãe, doutor, me representou um homem vestido de rato!" (124). Animals have historically been an apt instrument for satire and allegory, and there is something especially affecting about using an animal that has such a well-defined relationship to humans to represent those very humans. Such is the case with the pigs in *Animal Farm*, and such is the case in this story. Until the very end, when the rats finally appear and are described by the narrative voice, rather than by the characters' voice, it remains ambiguous whether these truly are rats infiltrating the seminar, or whether they are people all along. When the rats do, finally, make a non-equivocal appearance, they take over the house, and the house, illuminated from within, and seen from the outside, at a distance, is the story's final image. The house has been usurped, and in an inversion of autonomous humans and the pests they seek to remove, even the reader is relegated to its outside. The story's title "Seminário dos ratos" gains a new significance – it is no longer a gathering of world leaders searching for a solution to a rat problem but a gathering of the rats themselves.

The significance of exteriors and interiors in Telles' work plays out in less literal forms, as well. In "A mão no ombro" we return to a psychological narrative, told in free indirect discourse, in which the central character finds himself outside in a garden that appears to exist nowhere but in his own mind, "Um jardim for a do tempo mas dentro do meu tempo, pensou" (82). Telles brings us into the garden from the very beginning of the story, and only a few pages in does the man, the garden's dreamer, wake up and discover he had been inside his own bed in his own room, all the while. This protagonist is a "um

empresário de sucesso casado com uma mulher na moda," (87) living a life of expected conformity, his daily routine of work and social engagements automatic, so that he is "Habituara-se tanto ao cotidiano sem imprevistos, sem mistério. E agora, a loucura desse jardim atravessado em seu caminho" (56). The garden is mysterious, simultaneously seductive and menacing, and, as the man quickly understands, is a kind of prelude to death. The next time he is transported to the garden is when he is inside his car, attempting to begin his usual commute to the office. In both instances, the enclosed, orderly space is juxtaposed with the eerie garden, in which it was impossible to tell what season and what hour of the night or day it was.

Not unlike Ana's experience of the botanical garden, in Lispector's "Amor," the man in this story is deeply affected by what he encounters in the garden to which he is transported – a statue's marble face corroded by rainwater, an insect wrapped in spider web, a path that may lead deeper into the garden and, as he intuits, death. While in the garden, even as he is bewildered, he finds himself assimilating to it, even becoming, physically, a part of it; after describing a tree in the garden, a "figueira viva mas fria: um tronco sem formigas e sem resina" he continues to notice that "senstiu-se oco, a sensação de leveza se misturando ao sentimento inquietante de um ser sem raízes: se abrisse as veias não sairia nenhuma gota de sangue, não sairia nada" (82), as if he, too, were a resin-less tree. Upon arriving in the center of the garden, he runs his fingers over the moss on a stone bench and finds it "sensível como se lhe brotasse da própria boca" (84). The man is both in the garden, and *is* the garden, himself; the garden is an outdoor place, complete with paths that lead even further out, yet it is also seems to be a completely subjective

place, experienced solely by the man, effectively existing inside his mind.

Ignácio de Loyola Brandão: body and matter

Whereas Telles explores interiors, Brandão's characters undergo their transformation as a reaction to assimilation into the city's systems – its streets, organization and functions. And where even in her short fiction, Telles' characters are psychologically complex, Brandão's characters are usually nameless, a kind of everyman. What is unique about them is not their internal lives but the events that happens to them, the physical conditions they find themselves in, and their subsequent response to these. While these protagonists often describe themselves as having certain unique qualities, for example as being especially attentive, curious or courageous, these are qualities that are subjective and which anybody may attribute to themselves. In fact, the stories often have the sense of a nightmarish dream, with its own unexpected logic, and which any of us readers could find ourselves dreaming, acting as the protagonist.

A recurring theme in these surreal narratives are the characters' disassociations from their own bodies and to an ever present, vague but foreboding threat of systematic authority that is manifest not only in governmental structures, but in social and environmental structures as well. Among the authors discussed in these chapters, Brandão provides the most deliberate and perspicuous attention to the complicated relationship between nature and city, environment and industry, and to the individual's relationship with the urban spaces and systems they inhabit.

These themes are present in his early novel *Zero* (1974), a work of dystopian speculative fiction about Brazil under totalitarian regime, and in his novel *Não verás país*

nenhum (1981), set in a dystopian São Paulo where trees are extinct and garbage has become natural resource. His dedication to these themes is apparent, also, in his role as the first editor of *Planeta*, a journal of parapsychology, UFOs and ecology.

Brandão's short stories maintain an affinity to the science fiction and speculative fiction genres, introducing phenomena that defies expected and familiar laws of physics or of society. One of these stories, "O homem do furo na mão," was later expanded into his novel *Não verás país nenhum*. In fact, Brandão's stories often read like synoptic experiments in speculation, using a very short form to propose a question or display the hypocrisy or absurdity of certain physical and societal phenomena. They seem to ask, what would happen if – then giving a short and efficient sketch of how it may unfold, complicating and troubling ideas we take for granted and to which we are attached.

The collection *Cadeiras proibidas* (1996) is divided into sections titled "cotidiano", "corpo", "clima", "mundo", "indigação", "descoberta", "ação", "vida". These titles and the sequence itself give a sense of Brandão's interest in the elements that constitute the physical experience of living on the earth (quotidian, body, weather, world) and in the drives and consequences implicit in human engagement with this physical experience (quest, discover, action, life). The stories within each section take place in distinctly urban locations and deal with physical aspects of an environment, whether this environment is the site of the body itself or with which the body interacts.

In this collection, "O homem do furo na mão," "O homem cuja orelha cresceu" and "Os homens que se transformavam em barbantes" are three of several stories in which the human body or its parts are isolated, compromised, disembodied, or behave in "unnatural," or rather, hyper-natural ways, as in the case of the ear that would not stop

growing and, finally, was used to feed the city's population. In "O homem e as pedras que gritavam" and "O homem que viu os postes se dobrarem", the material with which the city is built takes on the properties associated with living, organic beings, while simultaneously threatening the integrity of human bodies.

In recent years, an intellectual intervention called a "turn to matter," or New Materialism has emerged and found expression in a variety of fields in the social sciences, arts and humanities. In the introduction to *Material Ecocriticism*, edited by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, they posit that "Material ecocriticism […] is the study of the way material forms – bodies, things, elements, toxic substances, chemicals, organic and inorganic matter, landscapes, and biological entities – intra-act with each other and with the human dimension, producing configurations of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories (7).

The premises of New Materialism are a useful framework in which to read Brandão's fiction. In particular, its engagement with the human body and the body's relationships to non-human matter. In "Painful Material Realities, Tragedy, Ecophobia," one of the essays collected in *Material Ecocriticism,* Simon Estok writes that

> Out of the welter of books and articles that have recently appeared relating to material ecocriticisms, human bodies have reappeared as the site and source of concerns about our changing relationships with the material world. These bodies are often a site of beleaguerment from a threatening 'outside.' They are, in Iovino and Oppermann's terms, "material narratives" about the way human corporeality is dangerously entangled within a complex of discourses and material agents that determine its very being. (130)

When the man in "O homem e as pedras que gritavam" first encounters a screaming stone, he does not notice it right away, as "o grito se confundiu aos muitos ruídos da rua, naquela hora: ônibus, apitos, músicas, buzinas, máquinas, britadeiras,

passos. De modo que o grito da pedra não foi ouvido" (77). Soon enough, however, another stone screams as he absentmindedly kicks it, and this time he takes notice. Taking notice of such a thing is a matter to be commented on; the man only notices the stone's scream because, the narrative voice notes, he is an unusually curious and interested man. Such curiosity goes against the current, and so is undesirable in normative contexts: "por ser curioso e interessado perdia os empregos, queria ir além da superfície e os chefes não gostavam. Cada um no seu lugar, fazendo o que deve. Direitos e deveres, proclamavam. O dever de um funcionário é ater-se ao seu trabalho, nada mais" (77). In only a few lines, Brandão sets up the unusual premise to this narrative: the material world defies basic expectations (a stone, which is inanimate, can scream, which is an animate, even *human* response); and, one must go against the current, go beyond the "superfície," to be able to perceive this truth.

Once aware of the existence of screaming stones, the man becomes sympathetic to their condition, his body becomes the means of seeking out their now animate "body": "começou a pisá-las mansamente, preocupado com a sensibilidade das pedras. As pessoas olhavam e seguiam, depois começaram a parar, vendo aquele estranho balé. Então, ele localizou. Sob a pressão do pé, a pedra gemeu suavemente. Para se certificar, ele comprimiu mais e a pedra gritou. Verdadeiramente" (78). As he becomes obsessed with collecting more and more of these stones, his unusual behavior begins to call the attention of other human pedestrians, who can hear, coming from his bag, "estranhos ruídos, não identificáveis. Nem humanos, nem animais" (78). What is this new animate being that defies categorization? What is this new matter? Soon he reaches a part of the city where there are many stones and few people, then no people, and he finally finds he has turned

into what could only be a stone, himself. At this moment, we have a brief access to the consciousness of this new matter, this animate inanimate, "e sem se importer com isso, com o tempo e com o espaço, como se tivesse a eternidade à sua frente" (79). This brings to mind a similar scene I discussed in Rubem Braga's story "O mato", in which a man imagines himself transformed into a forest plant. Braga's man is, at first, "atento [...] à pedra escura, com sua pele de musgo e seu misterioso coração mineral", and then feels a desire to turn into a "confuso ser vegetal [...] sem angústia nem amor, sem desejo nem tristeza, forte, quieto, imóvel, feliz". There is, in both of the authors' descriptions of the new state of being, a similar emphasis on a newly encountered absence of charactaristics that define the human expeirence: love, desire, sadness, and a preoccupation with time and space. In Brandão's narrative, however, the transformation is not, as it is in Braga's, a mere projection of desire framed in an idyllic natural setting, idealizing the mineral state, but an actual, possibly permanent, material transformation. And, while in Braga's description of the new (imagined) state there is an explicit mention of happiness, insinuating the non-human state is a privileged one, Brandão's narrative does not offer us such a clear judgment. In his protagonist's newfound rock-consciousness, there is only the allusion to eternity, open to an interpretation of whether this is a desirable fate or a damning one.

In the same collection in which appears "O homem e as pedras que gritavam", the story "O homem que viu os postes se dobrarem" follows much the same pattern. A man witnesses the spontaneous transformation of cement poles into some new elastic, gelatinous material, which makes the heavy poles bend and fall to the ground. While the general population panics, the man examines the poles thoroughly, discovering that they

have again solidified. Once more, what is essential to the story is the man's singularity as someone who questions unusual phenomena, rather than ignores or flees from it: "Uma das características deste homem era enfrentar as coisas," the narrator reports, "Os postes que amoleciam era algo a se descobrir" (64). When the man seeks the help of scientists at the university, even they disappoint him, preferring to disbelieve his testimony and give dismissive, pseudoscientific explanations of the poles' condition. When the man insists, they answer, "Saber certas coisas pode atrapalhar nossa vida. Melhor ignorá-las" (64). The man, resigned to this "acomodação geral," finds himself alone. Sitting on one of the bent poles, he feels it soften once more and envelope him into its material where he is crushed, bones and all, "[r]eduzirem-se a uma pasta." Just like the man who had turned into a stone, this man becomes part of the mysterious material that had inspired his unpopular quest to understand the nature of his environment.

What is especially affecting in this story is the descriptive attention to the materiality of the poles as they transform. They are first described in detail, as "de concreto, altos, base grossa, um metro de diâmetro," and then, contrasting with the presumed solidity of such structures, their movement is compared to that of rubber and described with the verb "verger," to bow or bend. Most powerful is the description of the contact between this "concreto amolecido" and human bodies, which occurs on three occasions. First, some of the city's people, paralyzed with shock at seeing the poles behave so unexpectedly, "recebiam o poste na cabeça." The impact of this contact is surprising in itself – the posts bend slowly, so it is not a fast and forceful trauma that stuns or kills the people, but rather a slowly moving, soft mass of such weight that it crushes the vulnerable, equally soft mass of people's bodies, like a collision in slow

motion. The second kind of contact occurs when the man, seeking empirical evidence of the transformation, touches a pole with his finger. The concrete "cedia," it gave way to the pressure of his finger as if it were "geléia de mocotó" (63), the gelatin extracted from pig cartilage, and a comparison which evokes a visceral response to this strange material, which may or may not be alive. Finally, there is the moment in which the man sits on one of the poles, and his body is consumed by the "body" of the pole, presumably turning him into the gelatinous material.

These encounters – with the screaming stones and with the gelatinous concrete poles – suggest, in exaggerated, surreal ways, that human perception, description and interpretation of the material environment is limited or misguided. The exceptionality of our own bodies as separate from this environment and its materials, and the notion that "other" material, whether animate or inanimate, exists for the benefit of our use, especially, are construction that New Materialism is seeking to question and dismantle. The stories are both a challenge and a warning: on the one hand they suggest that it is preferable to defy the pedestrian masses that ignore the phenomena that inconveniently subverts the norms, while, on the other hand, they suggest that there is implicit threat in this defiance. It is the threat of losing access to the normalized, regulated systems and of losing one's own perceived form and identity. The process by which the characters in these two stories lose their physical integrity is disturbing, and this kind of loss can be read as a source of existential anxiety. It could also, however, be read as a source of liberation. When the man in "O homem e as pedras que gritaram" finally turns into a rock, or rather, when the reader is encouraged to guess that this has occurred, it is because he is described as no longer worrying about space nor time, as he faces eternity.

As I noted earlier, this could be read as a damning state, a kind of purgatory, or a privileged state, compared with the familiar human condition of being worried, to say the least, about space and time and their meaning. There is not so much emphasis on moral judgment or a neat solution, in these stories, but rather an engagement with unsettling possibilities, with new permutations of the natural order to which we are accustomed.

The ambivalence about a compromised body and altered physical state is especially apparent in the stories in which human bodies undergo a change spontaneously, without the obvious intervention of "other" matter, external to the human body. In "O homem do furo na mão" a man discovers a hole has formed in his hand. In a Kafkaesque sequence of events, he finds himself forced off the bus he takes to work, abandoned by his wife and by his housekeeper, fired from his job and prohibited even from sitting on a park bench, all because he has a hole in his hand and, even more importantly, because he refuses to cover up this abnormality. Although he is indignant about the abuse he receives from authorities, the man finds satisfaction in the freedom granted him through the forced release from his daily routine and duties. Reluctant to go home or to other familiar places, he eventually wanders the streets and joins other individuals, "vagabundos," under a bridge. He notices that one of these individuals has the same hole in his hand, and the two acknowledge each other; the "otherness" he has experienced through the transformation of his body is uncommon but not exceptional and his experience is witnessed and accepted.

In "Os homens que transformavam em barbantes," an entire city is affected by a condition that makes some people's bodies turn into a different material. Some of the afflicted turn into twine, others into glass. While at first this causes great alarm, the city

gradually becomes accustomed to the phenomena, and "[a] cidade parece estar se habituando com a possibilidade de eventualmente alguém se transmutar. Não causa mais surpresa quando um barbante é levado pelo vento […] Ou quando os vidros se liquefazem, no momento em que uma pessoa vira a esquina e dá um esbarrão noutra. A população se acostumou" (55). The troubling, surreal experience of bodily transmuation, here, is collective rather than individual, and so is normalized. The story ends with the following observations: "Naquela cidade, tudo é frágil, a vida humana tem a espessura de um fio. Ou é delgada como um vidro." One may ask, in what place is human life not fragile? The disturbing transformation of human bodies into different matter functions, here, directly as a simile, the surreal image of a string-body or glass-body serving a universal statement about the fragility of human bodies and lives.

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In the stories discussed in this chapter, I have found that the idea of nature expands beyond physical manifestations of landscape, flora and fauna, expressing itself through more varied interpretations of environment. These interpretations of environment, for their part, become useful tools for analyzing the experience of individuals in urban spaces. In Antônio's story, there is a narrative symbiosis between the characters and the São Paulo neighborhoods and streets they move through. The narrative used to develop each has direct and dynamic effects upon the other. In Telles' stories, interior spaces that are supposedly safe and staid are sites for the infiltration of mysterious and distressing forces from the outside. The permeability of the

interior/exterior boundary complicates the straightforward home and street dichotomy, turning interiors inside-out. In Brandão's stories, the body is under constant threat of either assimilating into the structures and materials that make up its environment so much that it *becomes* them, or of changing in such a way that it can no longer participate in its environment as it had before. In his stories, existing in an urban environment means being subjected to seemingly arbitrary dissociation from the body and, through the body, from the self. A "self", in fact, becomes an inconvenience, in such an environment – a liability when confronting systems of authority and the cities they have constructed.

CONCLUSION

All can be measured by the standard of the capybara.
Everyone is lesser than or greater than the capybara.
Everything is taller or shorter than the capybara.

Sandra Beasley, from "Unit of measure"

Dividing the whole, reassembling the parts

The premise of this project rests on a historically established dichotomy between the city and nature, specifically as it pertained to framing and interpreting Brazilian cultural production in the 19th century and into the 20th. In the first chapter of this dissertation I demonstrated how the European gaze projected upon Brazil the identity of a superlative natural environment, while European cultural trends imported to Brazil encouraged a positioning of nature as a contrast or antithesis to urbanization and urban life. These perceptions informed Brazilian literary production which, in its varied iterations, both assimilated as well as commented upon them. What I have offered, in this dissertation, is a questioning of the division between nature and city, and a suggestion that the urban spaces and natural phenomena appearing in the works of the fiction I analyze are not necessarily at odds with each other but are, rather, complementary elements integrated into one another to create the environment with which the characters engage.

It could be useful, at this point, to approach the original premise inversely: the city and the country are both part of a reality that is, inherently, complete. The places, processes and phenomena associated with both city and nature are not separate from each other. The subjective experience of this reality is, also, whole, divided only by the constructions and perspectives projected by the subjects who experience it.. Divisions and categories are drawn, whether individually or collectively, as tools for mapping and understand reality and its experiences. The nature/city trope has been one such powerful division into categories and continues to be a productive site for analyzing and understanding our relationship to each other, to the places we occupy and the processes in which we participate. What has always been meaningful is how, and where, we choose to draw those categorical lines: how emphatic these lines might be, or how pliable.

The question I have addressed in this dissertation, then, can also be expressed as the following: In what ways has the perceived dichotomy between nature and city evolved to allow for novel interpretations of each, and of both in relation to each other? That is, in what ways has the positioning of these categorical lines changed? How does a rearrangement of these lines bring about a greater proximity to a complete experience of reality – in this case the subjective experience of an individual in an urban environment – while still providing the language and concepts for describing and analyzing it?

I addressed these questions through close readings of short stories by canonical Brazilian authors who have established themselves as writing on urban themes. In chapter two, my focus is on narratives that take place in Rio de Janeiro, by the authors Rubem Braga, Clarice Lispector and Rubem Fonseca. In his crônicas, Braga deliberately calls attention to a contrast between nature and city, playing on a familiar theme of the city-

dweller's nostalgia for the countryside, but at the same time emphasizing the presence of the natural world within the city itself and pointing to sites of overlap that complicate a simple division between the two; Braga's stalk of corn, in "Um pé de milho," takes on a different meaning in a city street than it would in a country field. In Lispector's stories, characters are confronted with various normative manifestations of nature in the context of a city – such as the garden, in "Amor," and the host of animals that populate the stories, but nature, here has a mediating function; rather than being the object of attention, it appears, at first, as an unremarkable part of the urban setting, but ultimately serves as a vehicle for the characters' ability to transcend their environment, circumstance and states of mind. Through the characters' awareness, there is a conscious drawing and redrawing of the line separating human individuals from their environment and from the animate and inanimate beings with which they share it. Fonseca's nature is so much an integral part of the urban landscape, that the narratives seem to comment upon this very fact, often subverting the sense of what is natural. Augusto, in "A arte de andar nas ruas do Rio de Janeiro", makes a point out of finding refuge in a stone cave in the park, but casually mentions that the cave is man-made. The protagonists of "O olhar" and "Passeio noturno I" and "Passeio noturno II" perform brutalities which imitate the behavior of animal predators, yet which reflect the brutality underlying a recklessly capitalistic urban society.

In chapter three, I analyzed stories by the authors João Antônio, Lygia Fagundes Telles and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, who wrote in and about São Paulo. In these narratives, I traced interpretations of a nature/city relationship that extend beyond encounters with parks, plants and animals. In Antônio's work I explored how

environment – whether grounded in the streets the characters traverse or atmospheric, affected by daylight and nightfall – is informed by character development and formal elements of the narrative. Telles' stories employ nature as a catalyst for shifting boundaries of interiority and exteriority, both spatial and psychological. In "As formigas", for example, the improvised home turns into an interior more menacing than the street outside, while in "A mão no ombro" a man is projected from his bedroom into a garden that he effectively carries with him, in his mind. Brandão's São Paulo is industrial, a schematic vision of concrete, asphalt, cars and people on their way to and from their office. This environment and its materials are devoid of nature in its more obvious forms – even the rocks, in "O homem e as pedras que gritavam," seem like by-products of human construction, appearing on the sidewalk and in the more industrial part of the city, and are "unnatural", animated versions of rocks. Yet, the human relationship to environment is made expressive through the heightened awareness of the materiality of both, and the uncanny absorption of one's material into the other's.

This dissertation was divided by city and authors for the sake of its structural organization, yet, even early in my reading I noticed, and noted in the introduction, that there are overarching themes that recur throughout the stories. After a closer reading of the stories, three main concepts have repeatedly emerged as relevant, and would offer fertile areas for further reading and analysis. These are: a green retreat; the designation of personhood; and an animate environment.

A green retreat

Horace's *fugere urbem* and Northrop Frye's "green world"[6], two canonical literary conventions, each position nature and the city in a relationship that emphasizes the contrast between the two. This contrast is emphatic because the two are geographically exclusive; each is found outside the boundaries of the other – the boundaries often being literal city walls. I have argued, in this dissertation, that such a contrast becomes increasingly less stark, but rather is closer to a symbiotic union. Interestingly, in some cases it is still through a pattern of retreat and return, albeit on a smaller scale and without a change in geography, that such a symbiotic relationship plays out. When the girl in Lispector's "Tentação" meets the basset hound; when Antônio's Malagueta perceives night fall, and Perus, day break; when Telles' businessman wakes up in a garden of his own imagining without having left his house or car; when Brandão's characters are confronted with the materiality of their own bodies, all these are small-scale movements of retreat and return, occurring not outside of the city but within it, embedded into its fabric. All, too, are catalysts for a character's shift in perspective. Just as the urban experience is perceived as fragmented, as a series of disjointed, consecutive events that the subject must mediate in order to piece together a coherent experience, these moments of retreat and return occur in the form of fragments. As such, the resulting contrasts form a kind of repeating pattern rather than a divide; they create a unifying experience, rather than one of opposition. Even in Frye's more traditional green retreat,

[6] The retreat from the city into a "green world", a woods or other kind of wild place outside the city borders is a literary convention proposed by Frye, in his 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism*, to describe a pattern in Shakespearean comedies of a "rhythmic movement from normal world to green world and back again" (182). Nature offers challenges and freedoms outside of society's normative conventions, time spent in nature permits conventions to be upturned, and so creates the opportunity to resolve problems that have been created within the city and its social, moral and legal limitations.

the two elements, the city and the green world, are both necessary for a transformation or resolution to take place. In the fiction analyzed in this dissertation, these retreats occur in multiple, minute, understated ways, all the more profound for their subtlety.

The designation of personhood

Which, or rather, who's point of view is privileged in the narratives? To whom is subjectivity attributed? Is it reserved for humans, or can humans acknowledge it in the other beings that make up their environment? Lispector's stories, especially, offer a compelling approach to these questions. Her characters repeatedly challenge their own subjectivity via that of other entities, especially animals. Through her human characters' fluid boundary of self/other, other entities are shown to share the category of personhood. Fonseca, too, manipulates traditional notions of human and animal. The protagonist of "O olhar" seeks, in the gaze of the animals he kills and consumes, precisely a sign of the awareness, intelligence and consciousness associated with a human subjectivity, while the protagonist of "Passeio Noturno" performs an inversion of this, dissociating from the human prey he pursues as if the women were not people, or as if he, himself, were an entity superior to people. Antônio's "Malagueta Perus e Bacanaçu" experiments with collective subjectivity, as his characters' interiority is often narrated in the plural. Brandão's stories experiment with a manipulation of the characters' person-ness, of their human bodies and sense of agency.

It is important to note that in the designation of personhood is embedded a chronic paradox of perspective. The act of "designation," as well as any discussion of its possibility is, by design, the impulse or effort of the human subjects who engage with the

question, and as such, limited by their perspectives. In the prologue to *A inconsistência da alma selvagem*, where he discusses an Amerindian viewpoint of personhood that is radically more inclusive and flexible than the one prevailing in Western culture, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro offers not a solution to this intractable conundrum, but an approach that is as useful in the analysis of Western literature as it is in a Western reimagining of the organization of beings in this world:

> O objetivo, em poucas palavras, é a reconstituição da imaginação conceitual indígena nos termos de nossa própria imaginação. Em nossos termos, eu disse – pois não temos outros; mas, e aqui está o ponto, isso deve ser feito de um modo capaz (se tudo 'der certo') de forçar nossa imaginação, e seus termos, a emitir significações completamente outras e inauditas. (15)

Literature that produces expressions of fluid and inclusive subjectivity trains the capacity for imagination of which Viveira de Castro writes, permitting writers, readers and critics, even within the contraints of their perspectives, to recognize and generate new meanings.

An animate environment

"Environment" is such a ubiquitous term, and its signified even more ubiquitous – what, after all, does not exist in an environment? In this dissertation I have used the term sometimes for its convenience and versatility, to indicate the location or setting in which a scene occurs or characters act, and sometimes when it itself was the subject of analysis – a dynamic, complex and surprising participant in the stories' development. It is precisely this, the re-consideration of environment as an active, participatory entity rather than a passive backdrop, that I found to be a recurring and instructive theme. The recognition of the environment as an entity *with* rather than *in* which a character develops, is present in Lispector's universe, where elements usually relegated to the

background, like flora and fauna, are endowed with transformative agency. It is present in Brandão's uncannily animated rocks and concrete; in the enigmatic house of Telles' "As formigas", with its window-eyes and obscure nightly rites, and in the commanding garden of her "A mão no ombro". It is especially present in Antônio's "Malagueta Perus e Bacanaço," where the narrative creates a kind of call and response between the characters and the streets they occupy. The acknowledgment of an engaged and animate environment is an essential component in identifying the enmeshment of the urban and the natural. More often than not, in the narratives mentioned above, the environment reveals its agency via the workings of natural phenomena within urban mechanisms.

The case for the aesthetic

Ursula Heise, in an afterword to Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt's *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narrative* (2010), reinforces the importance of ecocritical analysis of the aesthetics of creative works, not merely their content. Citing the parallel between postcolonial and ecocritical studies, both "areas of literary and cultural study that are intimately connected to broader political projects", Heise observes that these "assess creative works most centrally in terms of whether they portray the realities of social oppression and environmental devastation accurately, and what ideological perspectives they imply." While she agrees that this portrayal is clearly necessary, she makes a case for the importance of the aesthetic, as well, since, "if factual accuracy, interesting political analysis, or wide public appeal is what we look for, there are better and more straightforward places to find them than novels and poems." The

"aesthetic transformation of the real", she concludes, has "a particular potential for reshaping the individual and collective ecosocial imaginary" (258).

The works I chose to analyze, with the exception, perhaps, of Brandão's[7], do not have an ecological agenda, and most do not focus on the accurate portrayal of "the realities of social oppression and environmental devastation". They were written before, or at the cusp of, the public, mainstream awareness of ecological activism that consolidated in Brazil in the 1970s and 80s. And yet, as I hope to have shown in chapters two and three, they provide rich material for reflecting upon more contemporary questions that deal with the effects humans and their environment have upon each other, through their "aesthetic transformation of the real". Fields of study and critical approaches that have developed around these questions, such as Animal Studies, Environmental Justice and Ecofeminism would be as productive for further analysis of works by the authors discussed in this dissertation, as they would for analysis of more contemporary works of Brazilian fiction. Luiz Ruffato's *Eles Eram Muitos Cavalos* (2001), Rodrigo Lacerda's *Vista do Rio* (2004) and Ana Paula Maia's *Entre Rinhas de Cachorros e Porcos Abatidos* (2009) are examples of more recent novels and novellas set in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro, in which these elements are pivotal to the narrative, and which would be excellent sources for further explorations.

[7] In 1985 Ignácio de Loyola Brandão published his *Manifesto verde*, a small volume of non-fiction in the form of an open letter to his children and a public call toward ecological awareness and the preservation of the planet.

The literary landscape

In considering Brazilian literature and the urban environment, it is worth noting that Brazilian literary production has, over the last decade, undergone significant changes that reflect both shifts in the social and economic realities of an increasingly urbanized country, as well as shifts in modes of thinking about the creation and dissemination of literature. Independent avenues for publishing have been circumventing the dominant large-scale, high-cost book production and distribution as authors turn to cheaper and more autonomous methods of publishing, whether digitally, in small print editions, or through low-tech, photocopied pamphlets. This trend has engendered small ecosystems of literary influence and collaboration, growing organically and encouraging innovative and experimental literature that may not have otherwise been published. A new *Literatura Marginal* that emerged in the early aughts, created by writers living in and writing about the urban periphery, has been giving visibility and credence to literature that reflects the realities of a socially and economically disenfranchised population. In the more traditional literary circles, small independent presses have been mushrooming. As global literature becomes more relevant, Brazilian writers are increasingly writing fiction set in locations outside of Brazil, and Brazilian literature has been enjoying a small boom in translation and representation abroad and in international readership. The "city", in Brazilian literature, acquires new dimensions, no longer necessarily defined by national borders and identities.

Finally, a "third wave" of ecocriticism, articulated as one "which recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries," (Slovic and Adamson, 2009), veers away from the Anglo-American perspective that had

dominated the field and introduces a global and postcolonial approach, bringing literature at the periphery of the Anglo-American perspective into the center, or rather, into one of many centers.

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Concepts and their terminology are palimpsest, their evolving meanings forming layers that do not entirely disappear. The trope of a nature/city dichotomy is persistent and continues to be relevant, even as it gives way to the recognition of a nature/city whole; the dichotomy remains as an index of previous interpretations and provides useful vocabulary for bringing new interpretations into relief.

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