

Ensaio

Essay

“A WOMAN’S PLACE: RACHEL DE QUEIROZ’S DÔRA, DORALINA”

Freqüentemente a obra de Rachel de Queiroz é analisada em termos da condição de mulher da autora e de suas protagonistas. Notam-se a presença de mulheres no centro de suas obras, e sua introdução de qualidades “femininas” no canon mais “duro” e “masculino” da literatura realista do Nordeste. Recentemente, críticas negativas acusam-na de defender a distribuição tradicional de poderes entre os sexos e a posição de inferioridade das mulheres estabelecida pela sociedade patriarcal brasileira.

Dôra, Doralina mostra que a posição de Rachel de Queiroz em relação ao “lugar da mulher” é menos terna e mais ambígua do que a crítica conta. Consciente de sua posição secundária, Dôra, a protagonista, tenta uma auto-afirmação que se choca com obstáculos originários não só da distribuição patriarcal do poder entre homens e mulheres, como também daquela entre classes sociais, que afetam tanto homens quanto mulheres. Os conflitos que resultam têm lugar, mais do que entre homem e mulher, entre mãe e filha: patroa e empregados; cidade e campo; legalidade e marginalidade. É só enquanto parte dessa matriz mais ampla que adquirem significado conceitos como a “feminidade,” a “ternura” ou o amor às crianças que, na obra de Rachel de Queiroz, tanto atraíram os primeiros críticos.

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Almost all the recent editions of Rachel de Queiroz's works reprint the "Louvado" written in her honor by Manuel Bandeira in 1960, on the occasion of the commemorative one-volume edition, by the José Olympio publishing company, of four Rachel de Queiroz's novels. In that traditional Northeastern folk-poetry form, Bandeira praises her brasilianness, her heart, her intelligence, her beautiful eyes and her love for her nephews and nieces; after all that, he also praises her four novels.¹ The little poem confirms her popular appeal and the respect her work has acquired among her colleagues and among critics. But in its choice of things to praise it also indicates the problems inherent in a classification of her work it is seen specifically as that of a woman author. It is difficult to imagine a *Louvado* that would praise a male author's eyes or his qualities as an uncle. It might also be unnecessary to praise the eyes of a woman author whose work is unambiguously classifiable as "feminine." But Raquel de Queiroz claims a place in literary territory usually colonized by male writers. Her novels often have women at their center, but these female characters can be found in the fields or at other remunerated work, rather than in the kitchen or the bedroom, and her heroines do not consider marriage the necessary aim of all their efforts. At the same time, however, neither her novels nor her heroines can properly be classed among the great denouncers of inequalities between men and women, or among revolutionaries. Rather, if her novels are critical of social and economic conditions that their characters in powerlessness, poverty and disease, their most typical final stance is a clear-eyed resignation, a private decision not to be tricked into confusing social constraints with the dictates of nature, in short, neither to clamor for, nor to give up the possibility of change.

Rachel de Queiroz's first novel, *O Quinze* (The Year Fifteen), was published in 1930, when she was twenty years old, and immediately won her popular favor and the critical recognition of

a prestigious literary prize (Prêmio Graça Aranha). It is set during one of the most serious droughts in the Brazilian Northeast, by its subject as well as by its lean, clear style, places her now among the group of Northeastern regionalist, realist writers: José Lins do Rego, Graciliano Ramos, Jorge Amado, whose works dominated and for a time almost defined Brazilian literature.

That her first novel preceded the works now most commonly seen as defining that movement is hardly ever mentioned in the critical literature.² Instead, she is presented as softening and completing the work of the other Northeastern writers, by adding to it, as Fred Ellison terms it, "an extra dimension, as it were, an insight into feminine psychology. . . an understanding of maternal instinct and tenderness toward children. . ."³ She shares in the concern for social justice – or rather, the strong sense of social injustice – that characterizes the writings of these Northeastern novelists, contributing to what has been described as the "cycle of politico-social projection," that deals with "banditism, mysticism, draught," and documents the persistence of the large, colonial, Northeastern landholdings that define its social and economic condition.⁴ Her work is thus doubly stereotyped, if not explained, as that of a woman, and as that of a member of the Generation of the 30's, and much of what is said about it tends to strengthen one, the other, or both of these classifications. Even a cursory glance, however, shows that, though without the open, outright violence her companions often depict, her world is not as benign as Ellison implies: the strong maternal feelings of the heroine of her best-known novel, *As Três Marias* (The Three Marys, 1939) do not keep her from aborting her child rather than exposing him to the dangers of blindness or neglect through poverty to which she has seen other children fall victim. And already in *O Quinze* Conceição had felt repelled by her starving godchild Duca; though she then nurses him back to life, the example she saw in him of what can happen to children may have as strong a part in consoling her when she realizes she will not have any of her own as the fact that she has taken charge of bringing him up; significantly, she replaces a "natural" relationship to a child with one predicated upon the social rules governing her role as godmother. In both cases Rachel de Queiroz shows the "natural" instincts of motherhood thwarted and neutralized – or replaced by – social conditions. In both

cases, as in that of Dôra in her latest novel, one striking fact about the outcome of the plot is precisely that the heroines do not marry or, if they do, do not have children. Their desire for a child is never denied, but neither is it sufficient to make them accept the social constraints appended to the natural process of having one. In all cases, as it becomes apparent if one considers her heroines carefully, the "feminine psychology" she explores is more complex and contradictory than that maternal and humanitarian "femininity" which is also part of its composition. At the same time, the presence of these specifically "feminine" characteristics in her fiction and in some of her character-like the regret her heroines do show at being childless, or like their explicit compassion for the children who do in fact appear in all the novels-allows more problematic aspects of her fiction to remain, so to speak "unread," if the critic is unwilling or unprepared to respond to them.

Dôra, Doralina, Rachel de Queiroz's latest novel (now more than ten years old),⁵ explores some of the implications of a more complex vision of the feminine, while incidentally throwing into clearer relief the place of the feminine in her previous works. It is the first-person, episodic narrative of the life of its doubly eponymous narrator. Like all the fiction by Rachel de Queiroz, it addresses the question of the place of women in various sectors of Brazilian society, their ability to choose that place and to influence the conditions of their placement.⁶ The reader is served immediate notice, however, that any answer to that question will be ambiguous: though the narrator and heroine gives her names to the novel as a whole, the three sections into which it is divided are titled after those who impose their limits upon her freedom: "Senhora's Book," "The Company's Book," and "The Comandante's Book." Further clues to the development of the novel's argument appear in the variation of forms in the three sections, from the "Northeastern" realism of the first, to the almost picaresque structure of the second, in which Dôra's travels with a Gypsy theater company in the backlands, and finally, to the urban domestic form of the third part, showing the heroine in the metropolis of Rio de Janeiro. The resulting triptych suggests, in its variety of forms, the generality of the narrator as a prototypical heroine of Brazilian novels; it does so by following Dôra/Doralina's voyage into knowledge of self and of the world,

of the distribution of power between the two, of the strength of her desire and the limits of her capacity to affect the circumstances of class and gender into which she was born.

We first see Dôra as a rebel against all her circumstances, beginning with her name. She is not Dora, like Theodora, the scholar, the "lover of God," but Dôra, after Our Lady of Sorrows, Maria das Dores, invoked during her difficult birth. Her name is of ambiguous import: it could make her think of herself as the joyous outcome of a difficult process but becomes a perpetual reminder of her obligations to the mother who suffered to afford her life, and, as if in revenge, marked her for sorrow and pain, for a passive suffering which she will not accept and cannot escape. Doralina – or rather, Doralina-my-flower – is the name she wants, given by her father, as a gesture of love and a promise of protection, conditioned upon her acceptance of a decorative, submissive position, withdrawn and denied through his death.

She is born into the remote property of a landed family. After the almost incidental death of her father, her mother takes the reins of that property firmly in hand. Nothing happens there without her knowledge and consent. She directs the planting of the fields, the tending and castrating of the livestock; she keeps the books and defends the borders of her lands. To her daughter she is, at the same time, an example of the possibility for action and the exercise of power by a woman, and an obstacle to emulation. In the exercise of those functions of control and decision generally allotted to the adult male of the house, and combining the usually divided authority over household and fields, the mother finds a justification for not acting in the traditionally female ways. She is short on warmth and on the usual signs of affection; her dress is severe, and though she only wears colors that suit her, the sureness and consistency with which she does it disguise from her daughter her "feminine" preoccupation with her appearance. She speaks little and refuses the intimacy associated, in societies where sex-roles are sharply differentiated, with the women's quarters and with the relation between mothers and children. The girl grows up resentfully calling her Senhora (the Lady), like all her other subordinates, and resisting the ascendance she can neither bear nor openly challenge, and the authority which in occupying both the male and the female position as understood by the society at large, preempts the space in which Dôra could exercise her rebellion.

Dôra is thus placed in a doubly determined position of antagonism: she must oppose her mother as a daughter, competing with her in the usual way for the attention of men, and for the recognition of youth and beauty. But she must also oppose her in the way in which sons compete with fathers, for independence in the world, for control of the family's wealth. The result is ambiguity in the distribution of culturally sex-linked attributes, though one must note that this redistribution takes place entirely within the underlying, class-based structure according to which power and appropriate action are assigned in their society as a whole.

One consequence, nevertheless, of this preemption of roles by the women in the novel, is that the traditional men's sphere shrinks and male characters come to occupy positions either secondary or invested with symbolic charge associated with those of women. The administrator, Antonio Amador is entirely under Senhora's orders; Senhora's husband is dead, and Dôra's husband, Laurindo, has little weight in himself, characterized as weak-willed and ineffectual, and functioning almost exclusively as an object of dispute between mother and daughter. But the subordinate position of the men and the authoritative one of Dôra's mother at Soledade do not indicate that the family farm offers an instance of the establishment of a "community of women," like those Nina Auerbach sees explored in some fiction by women.⁷ Rather, in the society of which Raquel de Queiroz speaks, the possibility of the exercise of power by women is determined clearly by class as well as by gender. As members of the landed class, Dôra and her mother automatically occupy the position of power as soon as the male of the same class who ought to exercise it has defaulted. They could, of course, within as well as outside the text, refuse to take the power and its responsibilities (Mãe Inácia, in *O Quinze* does not step outside of the traditional role, and in her timidity, religiosity and adherence to what one can call, with one critic "patriarchal discourse,"⁸ exaggerates its markers), or they could, like other women, have wrested that power, more or less covertly, from men still present. But these are simply examples of the various ways in which individual preference interacts with socially determined constraints. What is characteristic of Rachel de Queiroz is that she forgets neither the preferences nor the constraints, and in *Dôra*, *Doralina* explores this interplay.

Thus, the first conflict in the novel is located not in a clash between male and female, but in one between two women. The novel opens with an exposition of the estrangement between mother and daughter, as seen from Dôra's point of view. For an entire chapter, as if to stress this formulation, closer to *Cinderella* than to the myth of the Amazonas, it is unclear that the powerful, resented figure the narrator evokes is her mother. The maternal, as commonly understood, thus appears not as an instinct, but as the corollary of a woman's relation to a – male – source of power and authority. When the mother becomes the source of that power, the maternal acquires some of the characteristics which, in the usual understanding, are defined as paternal. Rachel de Queiroz thus begins to redefine that “maternal” and “feminine” element she is praised for developing in her novels, and in a move necessarily related to that redefinition, robs the archetypal struggle between fathers and sons of its gender-specificity, and once again shows the psychological as conditioned by, and secondary to, the social.

In keeping with this realignment of roles, Dôra first asserts herself against her mother in a struggle about a man, receiving at Soledade a fugitive renegade, Delmiro, treating his wounds, hiding him from the law, and offering him a place to live as a penitent hermit in one forgotten corner of the farm. She decides, in other words, to introduce a man and a stranger into the mother-dominated society where she lives. But although Delmiro is a bandit, he enters Soledade in a dependent position and is invited to stay as a sign of Dôra's authority. Once she has nursed him back to health, it is he who comes to play the role of nurturer, and it is he who is associated with the curative powers of nature and with the conservative position of women. The confrontation between Dôra and Senhora over Delmiro does not involve the choice of a mate, but it does provide Dôra with a sphere of influence of her own, carved out of the field of her mother's authority. The association of Delmiro with the realm of nature and religion, and his half-worshipful, half-protective but passive and subordinate relation to Dôra complete the conflation of genders: if Senhora occupies the position of stern father, he turns out occupy the slot reserved in the social structure to the humble and protective mother.

It is another struggle over a man, this one lost to the mother, that causes Dôra to leave the farm. This development is

ambiguously weighted as well: the long relation of opposition between Dôra and her mother ends when Dôra's husband Laurindo is killed by Delmiro, possibly as the result of a barely expressed wish she breathed to the old bandit the night she found her husband in her mother's chamber. The readers' sympathies are with Delmiro, since Laurindo was not only a sneak and a fop, but also a destroyer of the natural order that Delmiro had re-instituted on the outer edge of the farm. Delmiro's wild enclave, where plants and animals were preserved from use or wanton destruction by civilization, marked the presence of the divine, both immanent and transcendent; the relation of mutual protection he had established with Dôra marked, for him, as the proper guardian of the order of the farm. But Laurindo's death is also preceded by the still-birth of his and Dôra's child, in an interruption of the blood line that would preserve social and economic conditions on the farm for one more generation and that defined the sphere of the husband's usefulness. Dôra's widowhood, however, like her mother's before her (and in her childlessness), rather than marking her as helpless, free her for the voyage out into the world in search of a different place for herself. Unlike Conceição, however, whose move from the farm to the city marginalizes her because she does not marry, and fails to open new perspectives for her since she still functions within roles traditionally ascribed to women, as a teacher and a purveyor of charity,⁹ Dôra begins almost immediately after her move to function within parameters associated with a male figure – that of the wanderer or the *picaro*.

Rachel de Queiroz has explored this outside world before, without, however, juxtaposing it to a realm of feminine authority. Characteristically, however, if one considers the balanced tone in which she approaches the assorted violence and injustice of the world she describes in other works, this juxtaposition is not presented in terms of antagonism, and the contrasts between these worlds are shaded by Dôra's perception of the world of feminine authority as oppressive, and of that outside of Soledade as free. Others of Queiroz's works, and often also her heroines, are acutely aware of the limits imposed upon the freedom of women to act and decide, upon their access to any form of power, and of the price they pay for self-determination, but she uses this insight to stress that it is not only the women who must pay that price for power, that power and freedom are not necessarily synonymous.

In the earlier novel *The Three Marys*, the painter who tries to seduce the heroine, and who is drawn in a most unflattering way, is nevertheless seen as also worthy of compassion, dimly aware of his various failures, shoring up his self-esteem with acts that are socially acceptable only because the double standard that applies to sanctions of behavior by men and women imprisons him in his obligation to seduce just as it both victimizes and protects the women he must desire. Even in *Lampião*, her portrait of the prototypical Northeastern bandit and macho, Rachel de Queiroz stresses the basic weakness that finally destroys this brutal and naïve strongman besieged by paranoia as well as by the police, alienated from his possible allies and incapable of coming to terms with his enemies; she shows that though his force made Maria Bonita, his companion, leave her husband and children for him, it is his weakness that keeps her attached to him.

It is in the interstices of this global system of repression in which both women and men are imprisoned that Dôra seeks her freedom. The second part of the novel tells how she joins that emblem of the free life, a wandering theatrical troupe. Its detachment from family, land, convention – its creation of its own familial structure, space, and conventions – offers her the perfect opposition to her origins and thus the perfect rebellion against her mother, without excluding her from all community, in fact, integrating her, for the first time, in a group she can recognize as a family. Its imputed freedom of mores offers her the ideal rebellion against a received morality whose tenets she, like other Queiroz heroines, must put to the test before accepting. Both personal morality and family are then shown to be goods which must be freely chosen, not imposed through social rules presented as naturally determined. Again, however, Rachel de Queiroz transforms the oppositions she sets up by driving them through the narrows of the perceptions of individual characters: Dora demands to be given the right to moral and economic choice but cannot yet see that all her mother's power derives from her having taken such rights upon herself. It is her mother whom she sees as the source of constraints, and whom she resents.

Once away from the farm, Dôra slowly finds that not all possibilities are open to her: if she needs money, she can get it – in ways that will not immediately compromise her social standing – by selling some of her own cattle, that is by still depending upon the

farm, or by an array of more or less humble jobs. She is still in thrall to the king and wealth of opportunity offered her in accordance with her character, her upbringing and the intensity of the demand she makes upon the world around her. In conquering her freedom, discovering and asserting her self, she still does not place herself in an adversarial position towards a world that offers a woman like her very few avenues for development; rather she simply becomes capable of recognizing the effective limits to any freedom she can achieve. Her freedom means that is out from under her mother's authority, and not under the confining authority of any man but she has learned that they too live under constraint, and that her confinement within these same constraints is independent of their decision.

In the event, she uses that freedom to link her life to a man's – to an outlaw, like Lampião, but more genteel, to a smuggler who gets rich during the war, possibly supplying the enemy. In her willed and enforced ignorance of "The Comandante's" business, however, Dôra chooses to enter the traditional "woman's place" she had never so completely filled.¹⁰

After the middle, and picaresque part of the novel which, with its episodic construction and its panoramic view of society, with its assumption of the freedom of marginality for the central character, the book returns to the form of a realistic chronicle of bourgeois life. Dôra and the Comandante buy a little house and furnish it; he goes out on business that she should not trouble her pretty head about; she spends her time cooking and cleaning, and for the first time becomes financially dependent on her man, who considers it an insult to his pride for her to touch her own money. Thus the freedom of her choice of lover leads her, in a reversal of the usual terms of rebellion, to take precisely the subordinate place her mother had refused.

In its movement from the land to the city, on the other hand, this development also calls into question the stereotypes of the urban as liberating and the rural as confining for women. Dôra is not typical, but even as an isolated case, she casts soft shadows upon both accepted ideas and their accepted critiques. When Jorge Amado, for instance, wants to free Malvina, of *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, from the oppression of her traditional home, he sends her to Rio, to study, or to be a secretary. In *Dôra*, *Doralina*, however, Rio appears not as a site of progress and

emacipation, but as place where strong economic and social pressures for changes in outlook, in social mobility, in opportunity, mask a paradoxical reinforcement of traditional forms of relation and replace women in positions of subjection from which they could escape, under special circumstances, in the countryside. The power she could have derived from her class and social position as heiress or mistress of Soledade dissipates in Rio, where her origin is meaningless; if she has the satisfaction of escaping her mother and avoiding conflict with her, she also has the experience of the limits of choice in her course of action. Dôra in Rio confirms the vision of woman's place in the city that Queiroz sketches out in *O Galo de Ouro*, with its pair of destructive, manipulative women who cannot, despite their efforts, do more than attach themselves to a man and be carried with him wherever his temperament, interacting with an indifferent destiny, should carry them all.¹¹

Dôra's return to the farm, at the end of the novel then takes on ambiguous meanings once again. On one hand it is a defeat on all fronts: she has not made her way in the big world outside; she has not made a decent living for herself; she has not learned new ways of relating to the world of men, of money, of work, of power, that in any way differ form, or criticize traditional structures. At the same time, her absence from the farm has made an orderly transition of matriarchal power impossible, and she returns to a land of ruined pastures, crumbled buildings, and ancient retainers, their value residing purely in their link with the past and opposition to the alienation of cities. It is the kind of farm destroyed by the draught in *O Quinze*, where destruction is inevitable because it is natural. But it is also the kind of landed property where the patriarch of Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits* founds a bastion of the old Latin-American rural aristocratic order whose prosperity rests upon stern paternalistic power and the defense of values calcified into a complete inability to understand and guide events in the modern world. But if *Dôra*, *Doralina* is not a story of thralldom to nature, neither is it a complete story about the willed imposition of a particular social structure: we do not see the land reclaimed, and do not get an analysis of the constraints such reclamation would place upon the heroine; we see neither an old order affirmed nor a new one beginning. Dôra returns to the land as to a refuge, and though we

are told there will be a future, we are not told its shape. In the last action of the novel the old manager's son brings his old mistress' daughter a descendant of her old favorite cow, which her mother had bought away from her; the calf had been born in Delmiro's old clearing. Hope thus arises from a rearrangement of the old elements of owner, cow, clearing, manager, but the future is not guaranteed by it. In Rachel de Queiroz's world desire is granted only limited satisfaction, rebellion butts up against constraints that cannot be removed while there is human life, and therefore, society. Freedom and happiness are serendipitous states, gifts that cannot be counted upon and that do not depend upon the will of the individual, regardless of sex, class or wealth. Her strength lies not so much in showing a way out of the various forms of misery informing her novels, but in the understanding she has for the sufferers; not in the fervor with which she combats the constraints under which her characters live, the various hypocrisies and cruelties of their world, but in the clarity with which she sees these constraints, and uncovers the hypocrisies. A gentle rebel, her gentleness is neither passive nor accepting; it questions some of the central assumptions according to which women are assigned a behavior, a share of power, a place. But in general her heroines shun the violence of the world against which they rebel and attack neither that world nor, as is common in the literature of contestation by women, themselves. In this time that likes extremes and denigrates resignation and compromise, Rachel de Queiroz's novels find themselves dissenting on two fronts. However either of these confrontations turns out in the end, her work will have provided one of the important maps of the battlefield.

Notes

¹Manuel Bandeira, "Louvado para Rachel de Queiroz," in Rachel de Queiroz, *Quatro Romances* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1960).

² One of the first reviews of the novel places it in a line of succession to José Américo de Almeida's *A Tagarela*, but is careful to note its difference from the earlier novel, specifically in its focus on the draught and therefore on the problem of the relation between the characters and their environment, leaving aside sentimental, "novelistic," entanglements. See Augusto Frederico Schmidt, "Uma revelação - *O Quinze*," in *As Novidades Literárias, Artísticas e Científicas*, Rio de Janeiro, Aug. 18, 1930, n° 4, rpt. in Rachel de Queiroz, *O Quinze* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1972), 6-9. Schmidt makes a point of the novel's having been written by a woman, but establishes a distinction between Queiroz novel and the "futility and falseness of our feminine

literature,"(7) comparing her with Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf(9). The comparison becomes more intelligible if one notes also that he considers its "literariness" the greatest virtue of the novel, having been charmed by that more than by "the political and national role the work acquired without meaning to."(8) Adonias Filho does note that her novel precedes the works of the other "Northeastern" novelists and contributes to the strength of the literary movement they made into a model of the modern Brazilian novel. See Adonias Filho, "O Romance *O Quinze*, in Queiroz, 1972, p. 10-16.

³ Fred P. Ellison, *Brazil's New Novel, Four Northeastern Masters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 135.

⁴ Carlos Alberto Azevedo, "Literatura e Praxis Social no Brasil: O Romance Nordestino de 1930," *Revista Iberoamericana*, 48(1982) 120-121:89-104,91, quoting Rui Façó, *Cangaceiros e Fandáticos* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1963), p. 194. Azevedo mentions Rachel de Queiroz only briefly, concentrating on the works of the men in the movement, intimating that she simply contributes to their overall project, and defining that as entirely social in preconditions and expression, undifferentiated in terms of gender.

⁵ Rachel de Queiroz, *Dôra, Doralina* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1975). There is a somewhat lame translation into English, *Dôra, Doralina* (New York: Avon, 1984).

⁶ For an overview of Rachel de Queiroz's fiction with specific emphasis on her heroines, see Joanna Courteau, "The Problematic Heroines in the Novels of Rachel de Queiroz," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 22(Winter 1985) 2:123-144. Unlike Courteau, I do not see the heroine of the novel in question as achieving unambiguous fulfillment.

⁷ See Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), who sees in the (often fictional) construction of communities of women separated from the world of men, an appropriate feminine response to the uneven distribution of power between genders.

⁸ See Carmen Lúcia Tindó Secco, "*O Quinze* e o Papel Social da Mulher," *Suplemento Literário de Minas Gerais*, nº 787 (Oct. 31, 1981), p. 9.

⁹ See Tindó Secco.

¹⁰ Courteau argues that the sexual fulfillment Dôra experiences with the Comandante is a sign of her growth and supersedes the implications of her domestication: "Dôra represents a stage in feminine development that only recently has been recognized in the fields of psychology and sociology: a woman's perception and understanding of her own sexual needs"(14). The remark seems more appropriate in regard to female characters in Anglo-American than in Brazilian literature. Jorge Amado, who like other Northeastern novelists does not shy away from sexuality, has been severely criticized from a feminist perspective, for his portrayal of women who are sexually satisfied but entirely submissive to men, that is, where sexual awakening has nothing to do with empowerment. It may just be that the achievement of sexual satisfaction by women is valued differently in different cultures...

¹¹ Rachel de Queiroz, *O Galo de Ouro* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1985). This novel appeared originally in the form of a serial published in the mass magazine *O Cruzeiro*, in the first months of 1950; the present edition is its first in book form. It is being reprinted as something of a piece of nostalgia for the times when the Governor's Island was a rural outskirts of the city of Rio de Janeiro, where people still lived in the rhythms of nature despite their constant and necessary travels to the city for work and entertainment. The preservation of the rural enclave appears as impossible; the city as corrupting; the women characters are trapped either in the endless work and worry of the rural poor or in the semi-criminal activities that offer them freedom in the city. When Nazaré rebels, she can do it only in terms of deviance, either by breaking sexual taboos or by using sexuality against the men who otherwise determine her destiny. At no point could she have the option, offered to those of Queiroz's heroines who within a different social class, of choosing to do battle in the same field where men operate, that is, by taking control of her environment on her own.