

ALENCAR, José de. *Senhora: Profile of a Woman*. Trans. Catarina Feldmann Edinger. Austin: U. of Texas Press (The Texas Pan American Series), 1994. 198p.

GALVÃO, Patrícia (Pagu). *Industrial Park: A Proletarian Novel*. Trans. and Foreword Elizabeth & K. David Jackson. Afterword, K. David Jackson. Lincoln: U. of Nebraska Press (Latin American Women Writers), 1993. 153 p.

In the Introduction to their 1993 book, *Ambiguity and Gender in the New Novel of Brazil and Spanish America* (U. of Iowa Press), Judith Payne and Earl Fitz remind us that "Brazilian literary history has benefited not only from a surprisingly large number of women writers but also from several influential male writers who created strong and unconventional female characters capable of transgressing orthodox gender boundaries" (3). Examples of such works, one by a Brazilian modernist writer, Pagu, and the other, a nineteenth-century prototype of a strong female heroine drawn by an influential male writer, José de Alencar, are currently available in their English translations. Both novels aid in filling in the lacunae between the English availability of fiction by Machado de Assis, Clarice Lispector, Lygia Fagundes Telles, and Nélide Piñon among others, works that strive to give voice to the experiences of Brazilian women. Both translations augment our ability to appreciate and to compare cultural differences, historical customs, class divisions and gender roles.

Alencar's heroine, Aurélia, the *senhora* in question, reflects an inherently romantic dualism between reason and feelings, between wealth and poverty and/or between gender-specific

qualities that shape, fairly or not, traditional women's roles. Aurélia, a woman who is raised in poverty only to assume wealth after the death of her parents, has only male models to guide her actions in her new social position. Angry at the custom of the dowry bestowed upon the bridegroom by the bride's family and the inherent ability of money to guide every aspect of personal choice, Aurélia tries waging her life's battles against those practices. It is in her relations with her "bought" husband, Seixas, that we see Alencar decrying marriages of convenience and echoing support for the new Brazilian practice that allowed for a freer choice of marriage partners. In love with and rejected by Seixas, whose own poverty matched her original condition, Aurélia arranges to purchase his hand after coming into her money. Aurélia is in psychic and physical turmoil until the novel's resolution, as we watch her public behavior, cold, calculating and businesslike, conflict with what Alencar sees as her more personal, domestic or female nature. Intriguing about Aurélia is her unwavering, inner determination to follow a path toward personal happiness and self-fulfillment even when at odds with her external behavior. This romantic dualism between nature and reason in its female guise is the most enticing feature of the novel and illustrates Alencar's rather unrivaled voice in Brazilian letters. Aurélia does not suffer from either death, madness or the loss of loved ones, a common nineteenth-century artifice used in depicting women who deviate from established patterns (i.e. act in male roles). Rather, she ultimately experiences a happy ending; a satisfying relationship with her husband and untold wealth.

Juxtaposed within the story is Alencar's extremely poetic and visual imagery of public and private spheres and his impeccable representation of the life of both the wealthy and poverty-stricken citizenry of Rio de Janeiro in the 1800s. He pays strict attention to the minutiae of city life in all its guises; showing us the food on the table, the plays on the stage, the poets read, the songs sung. While Alencar may not necessarily be prone to overt, social commentary in his urban novels, his constant concern with societal inequality is marked by the sequential descriptions of clothing or food for example.

Edinger notes that she kept faithful, as much as possible, to nineteenth-century "diction, images and tones" and checked

as many editions as possible in order to correct "omissions, secretions and substitutions". Such careful work shows in the easy readability of the translation and helps achieve her purpose: "... to familiarize American readers with this powerful novel that features a heroine very different from those found in American works of the same period, and thus to develop an appreciation for the literary production of other nations of the Americas" (xv). However, she also makes a curious choice in deciding not to include historical or cultural notes and/or explanations, calling them "extraneous". I, for one, think that this sort of documentation is useful and sometimes necessary for the reader unfamiliar with Brazilian customs.

Pagu (Patrícia Galvão), the author of the second text in translation, on the other hand, is very much a product of the political and aesthetic turmoil of the 1920s. *Industrial Park* is primarily concerned with delineating the Brazilian immigrant – population and the social realism of the 1930s that resulted in a new political awareness of the disparity among classes and the growing disenfranchisement of modern literature from the classical markers. But there is also an increasingly more important sub-theme: documenting the changing role of women. This novel (published in 1933), along with Laura Villars' *Vertigem* (1926) and Ercília Nogueira Cobra's *Virgindade inútil: novela de uma revoltada* (1927) are works where gender, race and class are presented within the backdrop of the rapidly growing and problematic urban environment of São Paulo, the site of the burgeoning industrial complex. All the central protagonists in the three works are women who live on the margins of society because of the very system of inheritance that worked in favor of Alencar's heroine. Also in contrast to the opulent, well-ordered and generally serene life of Aurélia, the women in *Industrial Park* either demonstrate the raw misery that accompanies low wages, lack of education, sexual abuse and cultural traditions, or the vapid self-centeredness of Brazil's wealthy "lost generation".

As a view of what K. David Jackson calls "the urban social theater of deprivation" (130), *Industrial Park* is divided into sixteen chapters or segments composed of smaller scenes of varying length, 124 in all, which often consist of fragmentary vignettes that first parody, then satirize, but always document

the life of the working class and those who benefit from this work. As Jackson explains: "The novel as a structure may be either read as a linear accumulation of scenes, amounting to the chronological accumulation of episodes. . . or viewed as an album of photographs. . . The chapters are linked through the lives of the book's main characters, the social milieu, geographical landmarks, and the workers' growing movement toward revolution" (131). In other words, Galvão does not idealize the 'industrial park' for its mass-productive ability to ease the life of the wealthy, but rather for the exploitative practices that cumulate in political and social oppression of the workers.

The Jacksons have taken considerable care to contextualize the oftentimes curious and colloquial vocabulary that Galvão uses, a lexicon that was meant for and understood by the avant-garde initiates of the Semana de Arte Moderna. Calling the work a *roman à clef*, the translators initiate us to the fact the novel is for and about the modernists and their social world: as an example, Pagu's own personal relationship with Oswald de Andrade is mirrored by the characters, Otavia and Alfredo Rocha. Assimilating this information is knowing more about the accomplishments and criticisms of Brazilian Modernism in both artistic and social manifestations; not knowing this still animates a world very different from the cultural Brazil of Busby Berkeley and Carmem Miranda.

In the accompanying essay, K. David Jackson places much emphasis on Galvão's participation within the aesthetic and political revolutions of the time. He identifies many of the over fifty characters who appear in the hundred page novel as representatives of "the negative dynamics of the avant-garde that favors a state of permanent revolt" (144). In conjunction with Jackson's reading, I think *Industrial Park* needs also to be read as part of the growing body of texts that fictionally or historically document women's cultural conditions and point to clear changes in legal and social policies: the social histories that Brazilian women, themselves, are constructing in order to view their own history. Margareth Rago's *Os prazeres da noite: prostituição e códigos da sexualidade feminina em São Paulo (1890-1930)* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1991) is one example of a current work that investigates literature to document women's history, as is Martha de Abreu Esteves' *Meninas perdidas* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e

Terra, 1989), which looks at what happened to lower class, immigrant women as the industrial revolution was gearing up in Brazil of the *Belle Époque*.

Although the Portuguese edition of *Parque Industrial* was republished in 1981, it is still difficult to come by, making this English version even more welcome. The Nebraska edition benefits immensely from the translators' preface done by Elizabeth and K. David Jackson, and by K. David Jackson's thoughtfully researched concluding essay on the importance of this piece and the accompanying bibliography.

Both *Senhora: A Profile of a Woman* and *Industrial Park: A Proletarian Novel* are extremely important additions to the growing number of works of Brazilian literature available in English.

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