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THE LITERARY CONSTRUCTION
OF THE SERTÃO IN JAMES WELLS'S
THREE THOUSAND MILES THROUGH BRAZIL

Myriam Ávila

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

Resumo: *Três Mil Milhas Através do Brasil*, do viajante inglês do século XIX, James W. Wells, é único pelo fato de que seu autor, que cruzou o sertão brasileiro quase todo o tempo sozinho, indo mais além do que qualquer outro viajante daquele século no Brasil, era tanto um técnico, no sentido mais pragmático do termo, quanto um artista. Como artista, possuía também mais de uma habilidade, pois não apenas ilustrou seu texto com desenhos de observação de grande qualidade como demonstrou talento literário.

Palavras-chave: James W. Wells; narrativas de viagens; Charles Dickens.

“O que é que buriti diz? É: –

Eu sei e não sei...”

Grande Sertão: Veredas.

Very little is known about the English engineer James W. Wells, who traveled through Brazil in the late 1870s, and published in 1886 a two-volume book about his experiences in this country. Despite efforts which involved research in the archives of the Royal Geographic Society, the dates and places of his birth and death could not be determined. What we know for sure is that he came to Brazil in his twenties as an engineer, remained here for over a decade, and he later purchased a house in Kent

which he named Olinda, after the beautiful seaside town in the State of Pernambuco. In this house he compiled his notes and wrote *Exploring and Travelling Three Thousand Miles Through Brazil*. This book is in many aspects an exception among travel books on Brazil and especially on Minas Gerais.

James W. Wells had to wait more than a century to have his work acknowledged and discussed, certainly not any lack of enterprise on his part. The acknowledgment, belated as it is, did not come, however, from where he expected. Not in England, his mother country, but in Brazil, Wells' travel book has been recently rediscovered and appraised. *Three Thousand Miles...* was unearthed¹ by Roberto Borges Martins during a stay in the United States. Later, in Brazil, where Martins came to occupy the Chair of the Fundação João Pinheiro, a state foundation for the advancement of economic, geographic and historical research, Martins had a Portuguese translation published as a luxury edition in 1995.²

Every travel book is bound to be curious either for its exotic objects of discussion or for the novel look it casts on otherwise familiar subjects. But *Three Thousand Miles Through Brazil* is unique in that its author, who crossed the Brazilian backlands mostly on his own, going farther than most of the other travelers in 19th century Brazil, was both a technical man in the most pragmatic sense and an artist. He used his hands both for cutting his way through the forest and to make sketches of people and scenery. His descriptions rely not only on preciseness of observation but also on imagination. His dialogues are more true-to-life than true: they are recreated so as to picture the colorful quality of uneducated Brazilian Portuguese in English. For the purpose of expressiveness, Wells kept many terms and phrases in Portuguese, using footnotes for the transcription of the original pronunciation of English sounds. It is not enough for him to convey the meaning of a conversation; he had to stage it in an almost theatrical way.

At every page, we find ourselves before a literary mind that wants to make the most of the material at its disposal. It is not an original mind, to be sure, but one that is formed by the models of its time. Novel writing was Wells' ultimate goal as evidenced by his second book, which has the Amazon as its setting. His model for character drawing, dialogue and humor was Charles Dickens. He also makes use of stock characters from adventure books such as Mayne Reid's and James Fenimore Cooper's, greatly in fashion in his time. Intertextuality plays a major role in his book, for he has constant recourse to citations including contemporary plays and opera as well as classics such as *Don Quixote* and *The Divine Comedy*. Wells' repertoire is a fair sample of what the up-to-date reader in Victorian England would recognize and identify with.

Dickens furnishes Wells with more than general lines. From his *Martin Chuzzlewit* the young engineer takes a formula for travel writing that perfectly suits some passages of his own pilgrimage. In that novel, Dickens tells the story of a young English architect who goes to America in search of work and success. Martin, the protagonist, is very disappointed at what he finds in the land of his dreams: people are pompous, callous and stupid, and grasp every chance to take him in. The small town he was bound to turns out to be an unhealthy swamp, where he almost dies of fever. Luckily, he can always count on his faithful and cheerful servant Mark Tapley, by means of whose industry and support they both manage to escape many perils and return to England in safety. The novel cost Charles Dickens the ill will of the Americans and made an apology necessary in the subsequent editions.

The repeated mentions to *Martin Chuzzlewit* in *Three Thousand Miles...* throw light on the personality of James Wells, of whom very little is known, and can explain his responsiveness to aspects of Brazilian life which the majority of travel writers do not mention. He pictures himself in the book (and indeed, he does not refrain from being the hero of his

own tale) as Mark Tapley, willing to keep his good humor through the most disagreeable experiences. However, his profile is much more akin to that of Martin's, for he is a young engineer and draftsman who intends to succeed in a faraway South American country. Without openly stating it, Wells secretly identifies with Dickens' hero, since he too needed to make a name for himself and eventually win the hand of a suitable Englishwoman. He projects his desires almost naïvely in some episodes of his journey, and that turns his narration into a kind of Bildungsroman, interspersed, however, with pragmatic commentaries on the economy of the country and the ways in which the English might profit from it. The mixture becomes awkward sometimes but, still, it is a telling illustration of the struggle between Wells' all too British prejudices and his unconscious drive towards the Unknown, towards Otherness.

The fact that he does not have a "position" like other famous travelers, many of whom come from the European gentry, or are already famous in their own professions, is a severe drawback for Wells. Never actually acknowledging it, he resents the treatment he gets from his superiors in the engineering firm, to whom he refers in ironic terms. He certainly does not get much consideration from his superiors. Whereas his colleagues worked in twos, Wells did all his surveys by himself and was finally sent on his own on a hazardous journey through the wilderness of Goiás in order to find an alternative road to Tocantins. The evidence of his small importance in the world sank deep into his mind. Although overtly stating the inherent importance of any representative of Britain in a backward tropical land, his own subordinate position makes him liable to identify – subconsciously, as it were – with the lower class of Brazilians whom he employs as his followers but who become more and more his fellow travelers. They too have left their families and native places, are homesick and apprehensive about what is to befall them. Nevertheless, it is in this desolate condition, far from any human community and roaming through a land no one had ever crossed

before, that their qualities show at best. James Wells, who uses a stereotypic discourse, according to which Brazilians are lazy, sickly and ignorant, has to admit, every now and again, that they can be also trustworthy, tough when the circumstances require it and perfectly skilled in their crafts.

Beyond his barely conscious identification with the small of the earth, Wells' insight into the less evident facets of the *mineiros* owes to the influence of Dickens' novels in that this traveler takes a close look on things and people, unusual for foreign travelers. Novel writers are prone to take individuals, more than types, for characters. In *Three Thousand Miles*, the young engineer often abandons the panoramic view for a more detailed scene that another traveler might have reckoned meaningless and unworthy of being described. Neither his colleagues nor the native people look like cardboard figures in his text, however discreet Wells intends to be. His hosts and hostesses have generally an existence of their own, a face and a voice. Sometimes Wells even stops to wonder what is to become of them thenceforth. A comparison with Richard Burton's or Charles Hastings Dent's attitude towards the common people, who stand as a definite "they" for both, will show how much more disposed Wells is to mix with Brazilians in general, in spite of all his sarcastic comments about them.³ If he cannot find a lovely face among Brazilian country girls, he shows himself to be looking for one all the same. His disappointed observation that country girls won't open their mouths before strangers reveals how anxious he is to get to know them.

Wells' good knowledge of spoken Brazilian Portuguese makes it easy for him to perceive the peculiarities of the language of the *sertanejo*, catching inflections which the too callous ear of the educated Brazilian, who, at the time, was in all probability someone who lived in town but had extended properties in the country, did not care for. The deviations from official syntax and vocabulary that would be heard by a Brazilian as mere errors, are received by the foreign ear as a language in itself. However,

the traveler appraises the *sertanejo* speech as a very imprecise one, characterized by a haziness that seems often willfully misleading:

“Is this the road to Inhotim?”

“Nhor?”

“Is this the road to Inhotim?”

“Nhor, sim”, (Yes, sir).

“How far is it?”

“Oh-hum-four leagues or more.”

“How much more?”

“Oh, um pedaço” (a bit)

“How much is the pedaço?”

“Oh, um tiquito” (a small piece)

[...]

I meet many a reply like this; there is always a varying number of leagues and the rest, the rest being um pedaço; um pedaço; alguma coisa; uma coisinha; ou mais um pouco (a piece; a good bit; something; a trifle; or a little more) (116-7).

Some words seem to him to comprise such a wide range of meanings that they end up being almost meaningless. The word “bicho” eludes definition, as it may apply to animals, people and situations alike. “À-toa” is a term that defies classification, indicating that one couldn’t care less for the specificity of a bird or a flower. What James Wells could not foresee is that the term “train”, which he helped to introduce in Minas Gerais, would become a synonym for “thing”.

On the other hand, Brazilian Portuguese lacked some concepts that were basic to English. “Coziness” was the kind of homely comfort that *mineiros*, or any other Brazilians, were unable to conceive of. The local idea of a well-furnished drawing-room consisted of a cane-seated sofa with one cane-seated chair at each side, at right angles with each other, unsoftened by cushions or stuffing. The concept of social classes was far too loose for an English mind. Everybody felt entitled to shake hands with anybody, nobody had the sense of what was due to a better educated man. All formality was a sham:

There was much bowing and passing of compliments, but after the ice of ceremony had thawed, we found many a genial and jocular nature under the assumed “society manner” that an educated Brazilian will assume or drop as he does his coat. The black coat is the war-paint of the ‘doutor’, – I prefer him in a dressing-gown, ceroulas, and slippers; he may be rather slipshod in appearance, but he feels comfortable, at his ease, and is consequently natural, and his good points come to the fore (I: 215).

All of what was antipodal to his own rules of behavior at once annoyed and fascinated the young Englishman. The force of habit collided with longing to be free from rigid etiquette. He represents this longing for spontaneity in a dialogue with a Northern Brazilian girl, in the last chapter of his book:

“[...] are you married?” she suddenly inquires after a pause.

“No, I am a bachelor.”

“Why do you not get married?”

“I cannot find any one to have me.”

[...]

“I am going to be married.”

“When?”

“On the 30th of this month.”

“Allow me to congratulate you upon the near approach of such a happy event.”

She stamps her foot, and says, “It is not soon, it is quite a long time to wait. I do so want to get married.” (after another pause and a repetition of the sigh), “But, perhaps, after all, I shall not marry even then.”

“How is that?”

“Because it is very likely that I may find some one else that I like better. I have already been nearly married lots of times, but when the time comes I refuse. The last occasion was because my lover told me that he did not like me to talk to other young men; did you ever hear of such impudence? I sent him off immediately, for I am not going to be shut up in a house all day with only stupid slaves to talk to. [...] I am so sorry, for I am always thinking of young men, as young men are always thinking of young women, as is quite natural. Do you not think so?” (II: 303, 304).

Although the veracity of the above conversation has been disputed,⁴ it is clear how refreshing it would be for James Wells, young and lonesome, to hear a girl say how natural it was for young people to be sexually attracted by the other sex, a statement that he would hardly have heard from a Victorian girl. At the beginning of his journey, he had found some charming farmer daughters too *en décolleté* but, a thousand miles further, it is useless to be shocked at the sight of a group of wild backwood white girls dressed only in skirts. The mixture of attraction and repulsion at what appeared to him very loose morals makes his discourse waver with undecidedness.

But not only in this aspect does Wells fall prey to feelings contrary to his convictions. The shock of opposed notions of life is a constant in Wells' text. In no other travel book on Brazil does the insufficiency of the colonial discourse show to such an extent, partly as a result of Wells' own personal conflicts, partly because he was young enough to see with unprejudiced eyes what he had only learned to express in prejudiced images. Unlike Burton, he is unable to speak all the time from a central position.⁵

One of the aspects in which his wavering shows more clearly is that of the work ethic. Among the commonplace notions about Brazil, the laziness of the natives is perhaps the most generalized. Whereas Wells sticks to this notion throughout the book, he cannot help feeling the charm of leisure ("This life on the Sono is decidedly pleasant, it is quite like a long picnic") and admiring the *matutos'* untiring muscles whenever they find a goal well worth their effort. The traveler's idle country people are the same who work under his command for twelve hours each day without interruption and even risk their lives for "trifling wages" that will grant them, at most, a spree in town.

Wells comes as a herald of the industrial revolution. Pedro II knew that the only way to promote economic development in Brazil was to

open ways of communication that would bring the products of inland farms to the coast efficiently and cheaply. The train was the modern means of transportation that could do for Brazil what it had already done for the United States. Wells was born at the height of industrialization. He had no heart for the old rhythms of handicraft work, he was all for speed and technology. His up-to-date mindset, however, coexisted with a romantic imagination, aroused by operas and books, as well as with an artistic sensibility for the beauties of nature and the music of words. Each part of his mind searches for something else in Brazil. The engineer seeks money and acknowledgement as an enterprising professional, whereas the romantic wants to prove himself a hero, an explorer and a benefactor of mankind, as well as to capture the beauty of the scenery and the unusual tones and nuances of an exotic language. Whereas the practical man would like to cut down a whole forest and classify the timber according to variety, so as to sell it to the best advantage (399), the artist wants to preserve the woods and the fauna that enlivens it, while the hero wants to be celebrated as the first man ever to cross that wilderness.

It is the emergence of different, sometimes opposed discourses in the text that opens the way to a vision of the *sertanejo* life that, deviating from the pictures drawn by other, older and more higher ranking travelers, reminds the Brazilian reader of Guimarães Rosa's work. The resemblance seems at first to lie mostly on the region described, which corresponds approximately to Riobaldo's "grande sertão". Later we find that some Rosian themes are already touched on in *Three Thousand Miles*, as a result of Wells' curious and unguarded observation of the Other. He is almost the only traveler in Minas to depict independent, somewhat man-like but seductive young women, which could furnish material for the enactment of a character like Diadorim. We may imagine Wells' having met Diadorim as a little girl:

[...] a pretty little whitey girl, about nine or ten years old, was a wild young amazon; it was a sight to see her astride the bare back of a horse, going at full speed, guided only by a rope tied around his mouth, dashing through bush and dodging the branches, with her hair and short skirts streaming in the wind. Nearly every day she passed my rancho chasing cattle, shouting and waving her arms" (I: 276).

The figure of the devil is another constant in Wells' book, significantly in contrast to the Englishman's pragmatic spirit. He makes fun of the superstitions of his Brazilian employees but frequently falls prey to an eerie feeling which he can only describe in terms of Dante's *Inferno*. He is himself taken for the devil in a little village, just like Riobaldo says happened to a stranger in his neighborhood. Moreover, Wells changes his Christian name to Diogo, so Brazilians can pronounce it, but, ironically, never learns that Diogo is an appellation for the devil.⁶

But what especially marks the author of *Three Thousand Miles Through Brazil* as a predecessor, in the Borgian sense, of Guimarães Rosa' is the attitude to language, the ability to distinguish the specificities of the *sertanejo's* language and the amount of attention it gets in the book, where it plays almost the role of a character. As I mentioned above, the misleading meanders of the native speech are depicted in a most theatrical way in Wells. Drawn to extremes, this aspect of language is responsible for a great part of the charm Brazilian Portuguese acquires in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Riobaldo will tell his tale, but not in a straightforward way, for his tale must flow like the river (Rio= river), not like a man-built channel. This is an apprenticeship Wells has to undergo. The dense vegetation that hinders the direct progress of the track seems to suggest that there are more ways to go than the straight railway. When his surveys are finished, he concludes that it may not be a good idea to build a railway across the wilderness. In the next part of Wells' travels, as he goes through a region never trod by man, he traces a map of it and baptizes the main river with

his own name, in its Portuguese translation: Rio Diogo. The name, written in flowing water, does not stay. But the glory of a moment glimmers forever in his text. Having taken off his coat of prejudices and cliché concepts, James Wells stands like Adam in a soon-to-be-lost paradise.

Read as a Bildungsroman or as an intertext for Guimarães Rosa, James Wells' *Three Thousand Miles Through Brazil* reveals a quality of literary achievement that is hard to find in travel books. Moreover, it presents to the Brazilian reader a rare instance of the crumbling down of colonial discourse in face of an impervious environment. Unable to draw on stereotypes alone, faced with the absence of wild Indians, dangerous beasts, highwaymen, mineral riches and the like, but also with the presence of what is beyond its powers of expression, the discourse of the colonizer falters, announcing, for the attentive critical mind, the post-colonial agency.

NOTES

¹ There are scattered mentions to the book in some Brazilian authors of the first half of the 20th century. Soon after it was published, His Majesty, D. Pedro II, received a copy from the author, which was duly thanked by the Emperor.

² I did the translation, published as *Três mil milhas através do Brasil*.

³ In their books, Burton and Dent only exceptionally make use of dialogue, so that the native's speech is never heard. There is – at least at the textual level – no actual interaction between these travelers and the people they meet on the road. Moreover, they never use the pronoun “us” as comprising lower class Brazilians.

⁴ Tania Quintaneiro, in *Retratos de mulher* (Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 1996) interprets this conversation as a didactic exposition intended to show how Brazilian women would express their feelings “if they were allowed to manifest their repressed thoughts and desires” (99-100).

⁵ I take it as a shared characteristic, to a certain extent, of all travel literature about the inland of Brazil, as opposed to the coastline, the abandonment of the locus amoenus as descriptive system, and its substitution by the discourse of lack or “devoidness”. I am currently developing arguments along this line that will eventually compose the material for a book.

⁶ I deal with this subject in the article “Doutor Diogo e o diabo na terra do sol”, published in *Cânones & contextos, Proceedings of the V Congress of the Brazilian Association for Comparative Literature (Abralic)*, v. 2, Rio de Janeiro: 1998.

A BRAZILIAN WRITER (MONTEIRO LOBATO)
IN NEW YORK¹

Marisa Lajolo

Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie / Unicamp / CNPq

Resumo: Entre maio de 1927 e março de 1931 o escritor brasileiro Monteiro Lobato (1882-1948) viveu nos Estados Unidos, onde desempenhava a função de Adido Comercial do Consulado Brasileiro em Nova York. O texto focaliza relações de Lobato com a cidade, manifestadas em cartas, livros, artigos do *New York Times*, documentos consulares e correspondência lobatiana.

Palavras-chave: Monteiro Lobato; Estados Unidos; cinema; feminismo; correspondência.

Manhattan stands on live rock.
Which is highly meaningful.²

From June 1927 to March 1931 the Brazilian writer Monteiro Lobato (1882-1948), his wife and kids lived in New York City, where he held the post of Commercial Attaché to the Brazilian Consulate. During these forty-five months, Monteiro Lobato had time to grasp the United States. Upon his return to Brazil, he wrote *America* (1932),³ a book which sold six thousand copies in the first year and three thousand more two years later.

This paper intends to discuss the North American experience of Monteiro Lobato as it can be grasped throughout different textual genders.

Letters he wrote to his friends, diplomatic documents issued during his New York period, some *New York Times* articles he might have read and passages from his book *America* can suggest to us glimpses of a New York available to a distinguished Brazilian in the last years of the second decade of the twentieth century.

Let's start with the world of movies, a subject that seems to have impressed Monteiro Lobato very much during his stay in New York, although even before living in the United States he was already converted to the beauty and importance of cinema as a new language, to the point of discussing it in the short story *Marabá*, first published in *O Macaco que se Fez Homem* (1923). It is a short story in which different narrative languages – theater and novel – are successively tested and abandoned by a narrator that finally sticks to the movie, considering it the language of modernity. The story includes – as characters – Cecil B. de Mille and Annette Kellerman, popular names of the contemporary cinematographic scene.⁴

In his book *America*, he refers to the cinema in different passages. His mentions range from personal experiences (like the day he went to Rialto Theater to see *The Trespasser*, starring Gloria Swanson [117. Cap. V]) to general and abstract considerations like the death of the novel and its replacement by film or the wrongs of censorship. Monteiro Lobato himself encompasses both the particular and the general perspectives when he praises a magnificent and luxurious theater building, as a kind of metonymy of the importance and strength of the new art. He points several reasons: the polyphonic nature of its language, the different expertise it requires and its economic importance.

The elements available for the cinema are really incredible [...]. In order to create a movie, there is the gathering of many artists from different fields: the author that writes the script, the director, the continuist, the painter, the musician, the architect. For the first time humanity has been able to create an art that partakes of all the others [...] it also has at its service what all the others have always lacked: countless millions [...].⁵

This enthusiasm is somewhat refrained when Monteiro Lobato realizes how the North American censorship – very active in the late twenties – might represent a hindrance to the new art since it embodies:

[...] the tyranny of religion and politics, agents of mass domination that benefit only those that turn religion and politics into business. The trick is to convince the masses that the censorship measures are taken in the general interest, when they are really taken to the sole advantage of the ruling elite.⁶

Lobato's love for the cinema lasts his whole life. In 1941 (the date is not completely accurate) he wrote a passionate article about the masterpiece *Fantasia* (Disney, 1941), one of the first and less figurative cartoons, and so, one of the first cinematographic works to take full advantage of the language of the new media :

Fantasia let me astonished [...], unable to talk about it, to define it. It is so fresh, so original that the usual critic vocabulary is completely impotent. Disney is a new kind of genius and his art is an art total and completely fresh/new, never before dreamed of not even by the most delirious imagination. Until Disney, cinema was nothing but a mix of theater and photography. It was a theatrical representation photographed in all its movements, colors and sounds. Disney has created a big new thing: the conjunction of photography and imagination.

[...]

Walt Disney is the supreme compensation for the horrors that war is bringing to humankind. There is the war, yes. There is random air bombing. There is the slashing of innocents. There is Hell. But humankind saves itself by creating in this tragic instant the high compensation of Disney, the Great Creator.

[...]

We, people from today, are troglodytes from the Stone Age facing the creature that shows us the wonders of a still remote future: Disney, Disney, the troglodytes hail thee!⁷

While in NY, the world of movies is also present in his family life, if we are to credit a letter he writes to his wife⁸ when he was away in a short trip to Detroit:

Dear Purity

I am here and begin to visit the Ford plant. Too big! Today I have seen 1/1000, and I must spend one thousand days to see all. But don't worry. I will see only 5/1000...

Go to the movies and don't worry about me

Juca

Till to Monday or 3ça.

Funny that he writes in English to his wife, nicknamed Purezinha... Lobato starts the letter by translating her name – *Maria da Pureza* to *Purity*, translation that gives it a kind of Victorian accent. Monteiro Lobato closes the letter by mixing up English and Portuguese to name the weekdays and comments very good humouredly on the length of his absence, promising his wife – supposedly worried by her husband's absence? – he will abbreviate the visit to the Ford plant; the Ford family and their business are a recurrent theme in Lobato's correspondence but he spares his wife the praise of what – in Economics – has become known as Fordism.

Unfortunately it has so far been impossible to discover if “dear Purity” accepted the suggestion of her husband. Actually this evanescent figure of the wife in Lobato's life, particularly in his New York period is so far a complete mystery: which New York was available for a Brazilian housewife, with a poor English, probably short of money since Lobato's salary seems to have been around 400 dollars to support a five persons family. How was her daily life?

Although it has not been possible yet to determine any of the movies Monteiro Lobato and his family might have seen in the United States, one affair in the Brazilian-New York community deserves our attention. In July 1927, Francisco Silva Jr, a Brazilian citizen presumably living in New York wrote an indignant letter to the *New York Times* complaining about movies that – according to him – denigrated the image of Brazil as a modern country. The newspaper published his letter under the title *Faults of the movies*:

[...] most of motion pictures nowadays are composed of childish yarns, vulgar scenes and depraved titles.

Foreigners and traveled persons see the need for more information in the making of scenes of foreign countries and foreign people. The idea of ridiculing other nationalities and showing only their faults is very irritating. It not only creates a bitter feeling abroad toward this country but also becomes partially responsible for the erroneous idea the average American has of the rest of the world.

Yesterday I saw a picture supposed to show scenes of Brazil. It is a brand new picture, of a reputable make and directed by Charles Brabin. Once more Brazil was shown on screen as a Spanish-like colony, semi-civilized and disgraced by poverty and fevers.

[...]

Let the hero in all pictures be an American, but at least stop showing the rest of the world as a filthy horrid hell on Earth. Francisco Silva Jr. July 11, 1927.⁹

Three months later, Mr. Silva Jr. rides again. Another letter addressed to the editor of *The New York Times* is published under the title *Film slight is protested by Brazilian* and reads that

Nothing seems to satisfy so much the average movie fan in this country as a feature ridiculing a foreign land. The producers, therefore, obey this salesmanship commandment and are always on the safe side as the picture is never shown without the necessary changes in its subtitles when exported to the country so malicious portrayed. But here in this country remains the erroneous conception created by the Hollywood settings and many millions of Americans continue believing that civilization of mankind was begun in Manhattan and has not yet gone beyond the boundaries of the United States.

It is for this reason that once more I bring to the columns of your paper my protest against a motion picture depicting my country in the usual pernicious way. It is a yarn entitled "The girl from Rio " in which Rio de Janeiro is again presented with the irritating environment of a Spanish village, where Spanish is spoken and the tango is the sole occupations of his inhabitants.

The story is about a British merchant who goes to Brazil to close a transaction of millions bags of coffee. Although he goes there in such an important mission we see him in the capital of Brazil in the most humble and miserable surroundings apparently because Rio de Janeiro has no

hotels as if that modern city did not have all the up-to-date comforts for those who can afford them. While no actual scenes from Rio are shown, some dark, narrow, slummy alleys depict the streets of the Brazilian Capital.

The main character in this picture – the biggest man in Rio – bears the name of an authentic prominent Brazilian of that city, well known in the coffee business circles. It seems to be too much coincidence that this choice of name was incidental and owing to the role he plays this point is very much harmful to his good reputation.

To the director of this picture and to those that may have their minds swayed by these reels of absurdity, I wish to say the following: Rio de Janeiro is a city of nearly a million and a half inhabitants, a very large business center as modern as any city in this or in any other country.

[...]

The motion picture could be used as the best medium for the building of international good will, I for one, however, regret that a few mercenary minds looking only for box office profits overlook the fact that they create an erroneous conception in millions of minds and foster a feeling of antagonism toward this whole country. Francisco Silva Jr. New York , Sept. 27.¹⁰

If we add to Francisco Silva's analysis of North American movies the fact that some contemporary pictures present Brazil – as well as other Latin American countries – as a paradise for crooks from all over the world, we must agree with Mr. Silva Jr. In Mel Brook's *The Producers* (ironically, the bad men in the second letter of Mr. Silva Jr. ...), the closing scene is the escape of the villains to Brazil where they can leisurely enjoy their fortune.

Although Monteiro Lobato seems to have nothing to say concerning this issue – in June 1927 he had just arrived in New York – the question was important enough to be dealt with by the Brazilian Consul himself, Sebastião Sampaio. In July 29, he sends a cable to the Brazilian Foreign Affairs Minister reporting how he had set the matter in a way that shared with Mr. Silva Jr. what today would be rightly denounced as racist prejudice:

[...] I have verified the film presents Brazil as a land of Negroes, deathly climate and barbaric habits with no reference to the true Brazil. I talked at length to the president of *First National* [Pictures, ml]. He promised me they will cut all the references to Brazil from all the copies, even the ones already distributed. The board of Directors apologized and declared they had no intention to offend and promised to avoid future mistakes. I preferred this solution instead of official complaints to the press, which are always risky [...] A Brazilian citizen had already written to a newspaper and I was afraid other Brazilian newsmen could write or cable Brazilian newspapers.¹¹

Another aspect of North American life – at least of New York's life – that very much impressed Monteiro Lobato was the growing and strengthening of a new female identity. The subject is mentioned in different passages of *America* and one of the longest chapters of the book (Chapt. XXVIII, 217-235) discusses the Freudian psychologist Fritz Wittels.¹²

Inspired by Wittels' article, *Flaming youth should be encouraged, not lambasted*, Lobato discusses the psychologist's opinion regarding the new woman. Monteiro Lobato seems to approve (as well as Wittels) women's new behavior and role in society. This approval, however, acquires a funny tone when presented in a book – Monteiro Lobato's *America* – that reproduces cartoons originally published in the *New York American* (the first North American newspaper to publish color cartoons) that might be considered inconsistent with women's liberation. The cartoons mock new female attitudes regarding life in general, particularly women's independence and new sexual role in love relationships. So, apparently, the visual image contradicts the verbal one.

It might be interesting to note that the feminine question has already appeared in Monteiro Lobato's polemical novel *O Presidente Negro* (*The Clash of Races*) published in 1926. The plot depicts a presidential election in the year of 2228 with three candidates: two males (a black one and a white one) and a female, the white and beautiful Miss Astor who ends up marrying Kellog, the white male, so they can beat Roy, the black candidate. Monteiro Lobato tried very hard to publish this book in America.

So, new roles ascribed to women were already in Lobato's mind when he went to the United States. We may think, however, that his experience of the new female protagonism in America might be responsible for the *matriarchal* point of view of his children books, which gains definite features after the writer returns from the United States in 1931. In the stories written and re-written thereafter, the main character is a rag doll (Emília) and the only male protagonist (the young boy Pedrinho) very seldom plays the role of hero.

Many years later, gender issues appear in a curious passage of a letter Monteiro Lobato wrote to his life long friend Cândido Fontoura.¹³ After considering his North American period "the most interesting five years of my life", he makes a cryptic comment : "I still belonged to the male sex and took advantage of this".¹⁴ It remains to us – his later readers, or even better, to *dear Purity* – to decide (or to imagine) what advantages he was talking about.

The same Cândido Fontoura to whom Monteiro Lobato wrote the letter we comment on above may introduce us to the last section of this paper: Monteiro Lobato and the United States. Cândido Fontoura is the addressee of one of the first letters Monteiro Lobato wrote after his arrival in New York. In a letter of June 24, 1927 crowded with exclamation marks, Monteiro Lobato had eyes to nothing but wealth and happiness in America

Here am I, in the biggest city in the world. Really the biggest! Everything is enormous, gigantic, beyond imagination. Only by seeing it can our Brazilian mind understand the proportion of this endless city. Everything [here] is different from there [Brazil]. Order, discipline, an easy life, the wealth of the people [...] Everybody has a car and not just a Ford. People are so, but so much rich that Ford has fallen down: it is too cheap a car. Today's newspaper carries sensational news: Ford has stopped producing the cheap models to launch the *Edsel Model*. Imagine that even the porter of our apartment has a Cadillac [...] We see poverty nowhere. [...] Money rolls. Restaurants, hotels, theaters and stores are crowded. In short, everything in here is the opposite of what it is in Brazil. Poor Brazil, deluded by the idea that God is Brazilian... no way: God is every inch North American! [...] ¹⁵

In this letter we find a Monteiro Lobato that sees only the bright side of New York life with its city line of skyscrapers and rows of cars. It seems that, at least right after their arrival in New York, Monteiro Lobato and his family participated to some extent in this golden America: they lived in “The Towers”, a very new and elegant building at 205 – 24th Street – Jackson Heights, L. and they owned an automobile of which he boasts about to his friends.

Two days later, in June 26, 1927 in a letter to his brother-in-law Lobato insists on this paradise-like description of New York. His sociological appraisal of well-to-do people is, however, more finely tuned. He does mention different classes and different income levels. But his enthusiasm remains, and the example of the building concierge is used again:

We sense in everything the amazing wealth of the country. There are no poor people, a poor man here is the equivalent to an average middle class. Even the porter of our apartment has a Cadillac,¹⁶

But in 1927 New York was not only this charming and rich city Lobato describes; there was an inner city that maybe Lobato could not (or did not want to) see even though it was available to his eyes: a few days before he wrote these enthusiastic accounts of New York, an official document signed by the Brazilian General Consul in New York, Sebastião Sampaio, depicted a New York scenery much less optimistic than the one described by Lobato.

In June of 1927 – just a few days after Monteiro Lobato’s arrival in New York City – the Brazilian Consul communicates to his superiors the need to repatriate Brazilian indigents:

Mr. Minister, I am honored to inform you that accordingly to the current legislation I will repatriate on the 23rd of this month by the ship “Pan America” the Brazilian citizens Georgette de Almeida Cardoso and Carlos Pinheiro, that lived in indigent conditions in this city, as it was found in investigations made by the Consulate.¹⁷

So the city crossed by rich people riding luxurious cars that take them to fine restaurants and shops has a counterpart in an inner city where Brazilians find no way to live decently and have to be repatriated, in a kind of early rehearsal of the present situation of so many Latin American immigrants in the United States.

But by then, Monteiro Lobato was not only fascinated by America, he was also – as he had always been – disillusioned with Brazil. Whenever he compares Brazil with the United States – and he does so in almost every letter he writes from there – his conclusions are always pessimistic. Brazil is always seen as a rude, out-of-date and conservative society.

If it is true that it is constitutive of the imperialistic age of Capitalism that poor countries are to be maintained so in order to allow the wealth of others,¹⁸ it took Monteiro Lobato a long time to understand it, and so to understand the double face of America, to realize the contradictory role played by the United States in the political and economic context of Latin America. But he finally does understand it. In 1941, after being in jail for four months as a result of his campaigns pro Brazilian exploration of petroleum, he broke the spell that, in his youth, made him worship the United States.

In 1944 he cancels his membership of a North American Agency, “União Cultural Brasil – Estados Unidos”, and explains his gesture to a friend arguing that he has finally realized the role played by the USA: “North Americans bravely fight fascism in Europe”¹⁹ while giving “moral and material support to Brazilian fascism”.

Three years later, in April 1947, in a letter written from Argentina²⁰ to a Brazilian friend (Nise Therezinha Antunes),²¹ Monteiro Lobato is even more radical in his judgment of North American political role in the post-Second War world. Commenting on the Vargas dictatorship that was then supported by the North American Government, Monteiro

Lobato strongly disapproves of the international politics of the United States and sounds completely disillusioned with the role to be played by the United States in world politics. He seems to consider the confrontation between the United States and Russia as the sole hope for world peace

[...] I see my dear friend, that the bastards go on with their sordid persecution and this tells me how things will be in this poor country (Brazil), now that Truman has launched the program of a Holy War... But fear nothing. Holy wars end up in disaster and this one will last up to the announcement by Russia that they also have the atomic bomb. Everything will then be settled. The problem now is that only the United States have the Bomb and this monopoly brings the world the same unbalance that happened when only the Germans had asphyxiating gases; as soon as every belligerent country had them, no one used them, not even the crazy and desperate Hitler.²²

In this final point of view – stated 14 months before his death – Monteiro Lobato seems to come to terms with the old Monteiro Lobato (his old self) that, even when enraptured by New York's standard of living he had glimpses of the international context from which North American wealth came from. In November 1927 writing to another friend – Alarico Silveira –²³ a letter (from which the epigraph to this paper was taken) he shows quite an interesting perception of Imperialism:

When I stop at Wall Street and think of those monstrous buildings as stations where the invisible wires of economic dependence of thousands and thousands of huge enterprises are connected, and now also of countries that before the war were creditors of this one, and see France, England, Germany, Brazil and *tutti quanti* tied to the US, I clearly see in my imagination the image of the third world dominator – third chronologically speaking, but first for the solidity of its base.²⁴

Monteiro Lobato does not dwell on the subject but the mention of it might be enough to suggest that contradictions are one of the most constant and important features of this polemical Brazilian that has lived for a while in New York City. The United States seem to have strongly

impressed both the citizen and the intellectual Monteiro Lobato, who was never afraid to review his positions and act accordingly. He does so regarding the figure of the Brazilian peasant, *Jeca Tatu*,²⁵ and he also does it regarding the political role played by the United States in the first half of twentieth century.

Not bad for a Brazilian like Monteiro Lobato, a man born in a pre-republican Brazil which still held slavery and who in 1926 translated into Portuguese Henry Ford's *My Life and Work* and in 1947 wrote the pamphlet *Zé Brazil*,²⁶ praising Luís Carlos Prestes, the leader of the Brazilian Communist Party...

NOTES

¹ Paper presented at 5th. International Conference of APSA. Minneapolis, October 05-08 2006. Travel funds were provided by Fapesp and CNPq.

² Unless otherwise indicated all translations are mine. Portuguese originals are in footnotes. "A base de Manhattan é uma rocha viva. Isso é um símbolo de alta significação" (LOBATO, 1970: 112-113).

³ Cf. LOBATO, 1956. The book has been first published in 1932.

⁴ Later on, the cinema seems to gain weight in Monteiro Lobato's work through the book *Memórias de Emília* (1936), a completely surrealistic fake memory book where the ragged doll Emilia goes to Hollywood and together with Shirley Temple enacts a parody of Quixote de La Mancha. Mixing together one of the most classic Western novels – D. Quixote – and the Hollywoodian scene Monteiro Lobato seems to re-write in this children's book the parody through which in the twenties' short story *Marabá* he had experienced the shift of modern narrative languages from one to another.

⁵ "– Os elementos de que dispõe o cinema são na realidade tremendos, adverti eu. Para a criação dum filme juntam-se numerosos artistas tirados de todos os campos. O autor do enredo, o encenador, o organizador da continuidade, o pintor, o músico, o arquiteto. Pela primeira vez a humanidade conseguiu criar uma arte que participa de todas as mais."

"– Não só participa de todas as mais, acrescentou Mr. Slang, como tem a seu serviço o que sempre faltou a cada uma delas individualmente: milhões sem conta para que se realize como fulgura na imaginação do artista" (Cf. LOBATO, 1956: 137).

⁶ "– A Censura, continuou Mr. Slang, é o meio insidioso com o qual a Moral – e por moral não quero dizer a moral natural ou filosófica, conjunto de princípios e normas de conduta que, sem infração das leis da natureza humana, permitem a vida em sociedade. Quero dizer a tirania da religião e da política, associadas em simbiose, com olho na dominação das massas em proveito dos que fazem da religião e da política um negócio. A esperteza está em arrastar as massas a se convencerem de que é de interesse social o que na realidade é do interesse apenas dessas elites dirigentes" (Cf. LOBATO, 1956: 133).

⁷ “FANTASIA deixou-me estarecido. É a expressão. Estarecido. E embaraçado para definir. Tudo tão novo, tudo tão inédito, que o vocabulário crítico usual mostra-se impotente. Disney é um tipo novo de gênio e sua arte é uma arte total e absolutamente nova, jamais prevista nem pelas mais delirantes imaginações. Até o aparecimento de Disney, o cinema não passava duma conjugação do teatro com a fotografia. Era uma representação teatral fotografada em todos os seus movimentos, cores e sons. Disney criou a grande coisa nova; a conjugação da fotografia com a imaginação. [...]”

“Walt Disney é a suprema compensação dos horrores que a guerra está trazendo para a humanidade. Há a guerra, sim. Há o bombardeio aéreo às cegas. Há o estraçoamento dos inocentes. Há o inferno. Mas a humanidade salva-se produzindo neste momento trágico a altíssima compensação dum Disney, o Grande Criador. [...]”

“Nós, gente de hoje, somos trogloditas da Pedra Lascada diante dessa criatura que nos entremostra maravilhas de um ainda remoto futuro.

“Disney, Disney, os trogloditas te saúdam” (Cf. LOBATO, 1956: 113-115).

⁸ MLb 3.1.00168 cx3. Originally written in English.

⁹ ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The New York Times*, Jul. 13, 1927, p. 22. Originally written in English.

¹⁰ ProQuest Historical Newspapers. *The New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1927, p. 5. Originally written in English.

¹¹ Senhor Ministro, Tenho a honra de confirmar o seguinte telegrama: “48 – Reservado Cinematógrafos Nova York exibindo filme intitulado *Framed* representando Milton Sills fabricado First National Pictures maior fábrica mundial. Verifiquei filme passando-se Brasil expondo-nos terra negros clima mortífero costumes bárbaros sem querer dar vista alguma autêntica Brasil. Conferenciei demoradamente Presidente First National. Acabo obter todos milhares cópias inclusive todas já distribuídas serão cortadas todas referências Brasil. Diretoria excusou-se nenhuma intenção ofender prometeu providenciar evitar futuras inadvertências. Preferi semelhante solução incidente em vez protestos imprensa sempre contraproducentes. O meu telegrama tem detalhes que dispensam outras explicações. Telegrafei, e não pude ser mais resumido, porque já um brasileiro havia escrito a um jornal desta cidade e temi que outros brasileiros jornalistas escrevessem ou enviassem telegramas aos jornais do nosso país. Devo acentuar que o Sr. John McGuirk, Presidente e o Sr. J. A. Rowland, Vice-Presidente e General Manager, na First Nacional Pictures Incorporated, lamentaram sinceramente o fato e prometeram que semelhante fato nunca mais se reproduziria. Tenho a honra de reiterar, Senhor Ministro, os protestos da minha respeitosa consideração. Sebastião Sampaio À Sua Excelência o Senhor Doutor Octavio Mangabeira, Ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores. 129. RESERVADO. Nova York, 29 de julho de 1927. Sobre um Film Deprimente para o Brasil.

¹² Fritz Wittels (1880-1950), Psychologist deeply impressed by Freud's ideas. His book *Sex Habits of the American Woman* was published in 1951.

¹³ Cândido Fontoura (1885-1974) invented and patented a very popular medicine aimed at improving appetite, the Biotonico Fontoura (what we would call today an energizer). The label of the flask was designed by Monteiro Lobato and in its composition there were large doses of alcohol. Other letters suggest that Lobato and Fontoura intended to introduce this medicine in the United States.

¹⁴ “Foram muito interessantes e ricos os anos que passei nesse país. Creio que foram os 5 anos mais interessantes da minha vida. Eu ainda pertencia ao sexo masculino e tirava partido disso”, carta de 09 de março de 1948 a Fontoura.

¹⁵ “N. Y. 24.6.27 Fontoura: Cá estou, na maior cidade do mundo. É bem a maior! Tudo imenso, desconforme, acima de tudo quanto podemos imaginar. A nossa mentalidade brasileira só vendo é que pode alcançar a proporção/ desta cidade infinita. Tudo diferente dahi. A ordem, a disciplina, a facilidade da vida, a riqueza do povo [...] Todo o mundo tem automóvel, e não Ford. O povo enriqueceu tanto que o Ford cahiu. Tem o defeito de ser m^{to}. barato. Os jornaes de hoje dão a sensacional noticia de que H. Ford parou o fabrico de fordecos e vae lançar o Edsel. Imagine que o porteiro do nosso / bloco possui uma Cadillac! [...] Não se vê miséria por aqui. O povo é [assustadora^{ra}.] gastador. Vê-se o dinheiro rolar. [...] Em summa: isto é em tudo o contrario do nosso pobre Brasil, illudido com a historia de ser Deus brasileiro. Deus é norte-americanissimo!” (Biblioteca Infantil Monteiro Lobato. Pasta 33 – documento 3498 [xerox of original manuscript]. Transcript by Emerson Tin).

¹⁶ “Sente-se em tudo a riqueza espantosa do país. Não há pobres, o pobre daqui equivale ao remediado daí. Toda a gente possui auto. O porteiro cá da nossa casa possui uma (sic) cadillac” (Cf. LOBATO, 1970: 104).

¹⁷ “A Sua Excelência o Senhor Doutor Octavio Mangabeira Ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores. Senhor Ministro : Tenho a honra de comunicar a Vossa excelência que, de acordo com a legislação vigente repatrio em data de 23 do corrente, pero vapor ‘Pan América’ os brasileiros Georgette de Almeida Cardoso e Carlos Pinheiro, que se achavam nesta capital em estado de indigência, conforme verifiquei em inquérito feito por este Consulado Geral [...]. A 22-6-27 Secretaria das Relações Exteriores 8 JUN 27 N^o de entrada J628X3”.

¹⁸ Cf., for instance, Florestan Fernandes (1920-1995), *Sociedade de Classes e Subdesenvolvimento* (1968) and *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil* (1975), Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1931), *Dependência e Desenvolvimento na América Latina*, and Octavio Ianni (1926-2004) *Estado e Capitalismo no Brasil* (1965); *Dialética e capitalismo* (1987).

¹⁹ “Os americanos fazem a maior das guerras ao fascismo na Europa e dão todo o apoio moral e material ao mesmo fascismo aqui” (Cf. LOBATO, 1970: 262).

²⁰ From 1946 to 1947 Monteiro Lobato lived in Argentina.

²¹ Cf. BL Ms00011, Centro de Documentação Alexandre Eulálio, Instituto de Estudos da Linguagem, UNICAMP.

²² B.A. 8.4.47

Terezinha:

[...] Minha cara amiga: vejo que os infames continuam na sórdida perseguição, e isso me dá medida do que vão ser as coisas nessa pobre terra, agora que o Truman lançou o programa da Guerra Santa. Mas não tenha medo. Todas as guerras santas acabam em desastre, e a de agora vai durar até o dia em que a Rússia anunciar que também tem bomba atômica. Imediatamente tudo endireitará. O mal atual é que a bomba está só com os E.U.; isso traz aquele mesmo estado de desequilíbrio de quando só os alemães tinham gases asfixiantes; no dia em que todos os beligerantes passaram a ter gases, nenhum os empregou – nem o louco Hitler no seu desespero.

²³ Cf. LOBATO, 1970: 112-113.

²⁴ Alarico

[...] quando paro na Wall Street e me ponho a considerar aqueles monstruosos prédios como estações onde vêm ter os fios invisíveis da dependência econômica de milhares e milhares de empresas gigantescas e também agora de países que antes da guerra eram credores deste, e vejo ali amarrados a França, a Inglaterra, a Alemanha, o Brasil e *tutti*

quanti , desenha-se-me, nítida na imaginação a imagem do terceiro dominador do mundo – terceiro em ordem cronológica, mas primeiro quanto à solidez de base. A base de Manhattan é uma rocha viva. Isso é um símbolo de alta significação (LOBATO,1970: 112-113).

²⁵ Cf. LAJOLO, 1983, p. xx.

²⁶ Cf. LOBATO, 1947.

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CONSTRUCTING THE STAR: LISPECTOR'S AND AMARAL'S *A HORA DA ESTRELA*

Caroline Couillard
University of Toronto

Resumo: Em 1985, Suzana Amaral adaptou o romance *A Hora da Estrela*, de Clarice Lispector, de 1971, à tela do cinema. O tema central da narrativa é a busca de identidade por parte da protagonista. Lispector enfatiza esse aspecto através das meditações de um personagem-narrador, que reflete, durante a narração, sobre os tópicos: voz, silêncio, construção de personagens e a sempre difícil tarefa que rodeia o processo de criação. Rodrigo, o narrador masculino e sua voz, aspectos tão centrais do romance de Lispector, são substituídos, na narrativa de Amaral, pelo desenvolvimento de outras personagens que constroem (ou pelo menos tentam construir) Macabéa. Amaral usa também outros elementos cinematográficos para obter esse objetivo. Este artigo examina a função do narrador e como a mesma se manifesta em ambas as narrativas: no filme e na obra literária.

Palavras-chave: Clarice Lispector; Suzana Amaral; *A Hora da Estrela*; narratividade literária e fílmica; identidade e linguagem.

In Clarice Lispector's *A Hora da Estrela*, the narrator Rodrigo S. M., assuring his own literary presence and importance, proclaims: "A história –determino com falso livre arbítrio – vai ter uns sete personagens e eu sou um dos mais importantes deles, é claro" (17). It has been argued that Rodrigo is as much the protagonist in *A Hora da Estrela* as is Macabéa, the young Northeastern girl whose story he attempts to transcribe (or invent).¹ The novella, disclosing Lispector's concerns with the issues of language, identity and writing, functions on several levels by highlighting Rodrigo's struggles to give his protagonist a voice and Macabéa's own

attempts at discovering her identity through language. In Suzana Amaral's filmic adaptation of the novella (1985), the narrator Rodrigo is absent and the narrative focus is on Macabéa's attempts to forge herself an identity. Amaral's protagonist reveals her quest for identity through her experimentation with silence, language and imitation. A close examination of the narratives shows how, despite Rodrigo's absence in the film, both the filmic and literary versions sustain the challenge of character creation and the discovery of one's identity through language. In the novella, Lispector's development of both protagonists and their struggle(s), and her use of narrative point of view, focalization and metanarration, disclose how Macabéa tries to find herself through language. At first, she is only given Rodrigo's language. Later, she borrows it from other sources to finally discover her own which she paradoxically expresses with silence. In Amaral's version, cinematographic techniques such as the framing and the mise-en-scène and what is more important, the use of sound and character development, all contribute to highlighting Macabéa's quest for identity through language and silence.

With her last novella *A Hora da Estrela*, published just a few months before her death, Clarice Lispector, according to most critics, had broken away from her customary style. This was indeed the first time Lispector tackled some of the socio-political issues affecting Brazil's migrant population, which she had been accused of ignoring until now (Fitz, 1985: 92; Martin 324; Sommerlate Barbosa 326; Sloan 93). On one level, as Pontiero points out, the story of Macabéa, the young, unattractive, uneducated Northeastern protagonist who moves to Rio in search of a brighter future "embodies the Brazilian legacy of poverty and ignorance" (286). At times, it is with vivid imagery that Lispector expresses her understanding of this Brazilian "legacy" referred to by Pontiero: "Devo acrescentar um algo que importa muito para a apreensão da narrativa: é que esta é acompanhada do princípio ao fim por uma levíssima e constan-

te dor de dentes, coisa de dentina exposta” (30). On another level, the inevitable demise awaiting the ingenuous Macabéa seems to speak of an unfortunate universality which Lispector’s insidious narrative voice occasionally expresses with humour: “O registro que em breve vai ter que começar é escrito por sob o patrocínio do refrigerante mais popular do mundo e que nem por isso me paga nada, refrigerante esse espalhado por todos os países. Aliás foi ele quem patrocinou o último terremoto em Guatemala” (29). Still, some have argued that Lispector’s Macabéa is not representative of a national, let alone international poverty. Regina Dalcastagnè, for instance, in “Contas a prestar” suggests that Macabéa represents not the poor, but rather the “populace”: “Ela é conduzida para dentro do texto como alguém que lê e escreve, que junta recortes de jornal e vai ao cinema, que consome anúncios e quer saber o que significa a palavra cultura, [...] – ela é a massa” (89). Though concerns for social issues form the basis of her novella, Lispector’s trademark preoccupation with language, writing and silence is also evident in *A Hora da Estrela*, thus linking this last novel to her previous work. Indeed, in this novella, Lispector continues to address the complex issues of writing and creating as illustrated by the prominent role Rodrigo S. M., the narrator, plays in the story. More specifically, through Rodrigo’s musings, Lispector reflects on the role the author plays in the act of literary creation and the difficult task of creating itself: finding a voice and speaking for the voiceless, constructing a character, reproducing a language, elaborating the shape of the final work, even choosing a title. In *A Hora da Estrela*, Macabéa and Rodrigo vie for the position of protagonist and their rivalry, though first expressed through language, will eventually resolve itself in silence.

The story of Macabéa, the protagonist, is rather simple: a young Northeastern girl moves to Rio when the aunt who had brought her up after her parents death, also passes away. Once in the city, Macabéa finds a job as a typist (which pays less than minimum wage); a room (she has to

share with four flatmates); and a boyfriend (who is not interested in her). Things only get worse for the ingenuous young Northeasterner. She is a terrible typist and barely makes enough money to live on, surviving on a diet of hotdogs and Coca-Cola. Moreover, her boyfriend falls for her colleague. In an ironic and sad attempt to forge herself a brighter future, Macabéa goes to consult a fortune-teller who promises her marriage and riches. But such a future is not to be for Macabéa and she dies, victim of a hit-and-run accident as she steps out of the tarot-card reader's home.

For Hélène Cixous, however, Lispector's story line is somewhat incidental, for Lispector's text: "est aussi un flot de questions immenses et humbles qui ne demandent pas de réponses: elles demandent la vie. Ce livre se demande qu'est-ce qu'un auteur? Qui peut bien être digne d'être l'auteur de Macabéa?" (1987: 125). Who indeed is deserving of, or worthy of being Macabéa's author? According to Rodrigo, our only source in this matter (and not a trustworthy one, as he himself admits to the "falso livre arbítrio" governing his writing [17]), the task of writing Macabéa is his, though he finds it incredibly challenging. In his own words: "Por que escrevo? Antes de tudo porque captei o espírito da língua e assim às vezes a forma é que faz conteúdo. Escrevo portanto não por causa da nordestina mas por motivo grave de 'força maior', como se diz nos requerimentos oficiais, por 'força de lei'" (23). Writing Macabéa and finding her voice is a complex endeavor, one he cannot escape but also one he cannot realize. Part of the difficulty Rodrigo faces in telling the tale of Macabéa is that he lacks complete control over his protagonist and her story. Repeatedly throughout the text, Rodrigo admits to not knowing how the story will end, or not possessing details about his characters. He is given as (or gives himself as) the creator of Macabéa and yet she seems to be outside of his control, for Lispector also exerts control. Through Lispector's pen, Rodrigo searches for his identity just as, through his, Macabéa seeks her redemption from anonymity. Sommerlate Barbosa points out in "*A Hora da Estrela*:"

A Reinforced Affirmative Reply” that “Macabéa is not the only protagonist in the text; Rodrigo S. M. parallels his implicit reflections to the explicit narrative of Macabéa’s life” (235). Rodrigo is so consumed by Macabéa – his dear Maca as he calls her– and by his task, by his desire to paint the whole Macabéa, that he gets lost in the information he possesses: “Ela me incomoda tanto que fiquei oco. Estou oco desta moça” (33). Yet writing Macabéa is something he must do despite the toll it is taking on him. Rodrigo is forced to write, to construct Macabéa because he says, his protagonist has no voice of her own as one of the numerous titles for the story indicates: “Ela não sabe gritar” (13).

As several critics have pointed out, *A Hora da Estrela*’s central theme is as much about the process of writing itself as it is about Macabéa’s story (Ferreira-Pinto 20; Archer 253; Fitz 1985: 185; Cixous 1989; Swanson 133). Rodrigo’s challenge, to find the appropriate language for his protagonist Macabéa, is amplified by the discrepancy between their socio-economic situations. Not only is it difficult for Rodrigo to find the words he needs to recount her story: “Tenho então que falar simples para captar a sua delicada e vaga existência” (19); but it is nearly impossible for him to reproduce her language for as he states: “pois se eu tocar no pão da moça esse pão se tornará em ouro – e a jovem (ela tem dezenove anos) e a jovem não poderia mordê-lo, morrendo de fome” (19).

Rodrigo’s challenge, therefore, consists in striking a balance between his potentialities, that is what means are available to him as a middle-class, educated writer and Macabéa’s reality, that of an uneducated, poor, ingenuous migrant worker.² As he says: “É claro que, como todo escritor, tenho a tentação de usar termos suculentos: conheço adjetivos esplendorosos, carnudos substantivos e verbos tão esguios que atravessam agudos o ar em vias de ação, já que palavra é ação, concordais?” (19), and yet in order to paint the most accurate portrait possible of Macabéa, he cannot bring himself to use these words. A solution would be to allow

Macabéa to speak for herself, however Rodrigo is incapable of renouncing the hold he has on language and as a result, he rarely allows Macabéa to speak for herself. One reason is that Macabéa has very little to say as Rodrigo claims: “Ela falava, sim, mas era extremamente muda. Uma palavra dela eu às vezes consigo mas ela me foge por entre os dedos” (37). However, Rodrigo is not quite as noble as he paints himself. Despite his claim that “o direito ao grito” (13) and his self-professed attempt at giving Macabéa a voice, he rarely does allow her to speak. When he does, as is the case with one of her conversations with her boyfriend Olímpico, he often prefaces her discourse with some belittling comment: “Sentavam-se no que é de graça: banco de praça pública. E ali acomodados, nada os distinguia do resto do nada. Para a grande glória de Deus,” (58) and then goes on to reproduce the discourse, theatre-like, with personal pronouns added on staging her discourse and thereby further reducing her ability to express herself by mocking and demeaning the instances of direct discourse allotted her:

ELE: – Pois é.

ELA: – Pois é o quê?

ELE: – Eu só disse pois é!

ELA: – Mas “pois é” o quê? (58).

A detailed analysis of instances of discourse in *A Hora da Estrela* shows that Macabéa’s voice is not only seldom heard, but that what she does say when allowed to “speak” is often borrowed from other sources or practically empty of content as will be detailed later. Indeed, on the rare occasions when he does allow her to speak for herself, Rodrigo is incapable of stopping himself from interjecting, adding, explaining or elaborating on Macabéa’s discourse, as if he did not trust Macabéa to paint an accurate portrait, and painting an accurate portrait is what matters most. Rodrigo does not believe Macabéa can represent herself for she does not question herself nor her existence: “A datilógrafa vivia numa espécie de atordadoo nimbo, entre céu e inferno. Nunca pensara em ‘eu sou eu’”

(45). According to Rodrigo, his presence is indispensable. He is Macabéa's creator, he is her voice and he will eventually become her. The transformation begins early on. In order to write Macabéa, he must not shave, nor can he sleep and he is required to wear threadbare clothes. He says: "tive que me abster de sexo e de futebol. Sem falar que não entro em contacto com ninguém" (28-29). At the end, narrator and creation fuse into one and when Macabéa dies – the only possible closure – Rodrigo dies with her: "Não vos assusteis, morrer é um instante, passa logo, eu sei porque acabo de morrer com a moça" (103).

In the end, Rodrigo and Macabéa are one. As Earl E. Fitz points out in his study on point of view in *A Hora da Estrela*, "the narrator's own relation to life and death is inextricably bound up on the creation of his protagonist, Macabéa, and of 'life' in literature" (1982: 203). Rodrigo's and Macabéa's fusion into one is made concrete at the very end of the novel. However, Rodrigo is somewhat hesitant to accept his fate, despite the fact that he recognizes its possible outcome from the very beginning of the novella. Early on, he keeps himself clearly separate from Macabéa, claiming that "aliás – descobro eu agora – também eu não faço a menor falta, e até o que escrevo um outro escreveria" (18). Despite this claim and others like it, Rodrigo also recognizes the inevitability of the situation and he expresses concern about his relationship with his protagonist early on in his narrative: "Será essa história um dia o meu coágulo?" (16). Later, he states that "a ação desta história terá como resultado minha transfiguração em outrem e minha materialização enfim em objeto" (26). The object he turns into, is Macabéa. Yet the Macabéa he presents is a curious character. Rodrigo's Macabéa sleeps in cheap, blood-stained, cotton underwear, wipes her nose on her skirts and rarely bathes. She is, in his own words, "incompetente para a vida" (31) for she "não sabia que ela era o que era, assim como um cachorro não sabe que é cachorro" (34). Rodrigo presents us with a one-dimensional character: a naive, innocent, uneducated,

illiterate, ugly little girl who is all but invisible to the world surrounding her. It is, however, very difficult to trust Rodrigo's interpretation of Macabéa. Not only is he our only source on her, filtering her speech and her actions as well as other characters' views of Macabéa, but he is also extremely inconsistent in his judgement. Some of his comments are absolute, baring Macabéa's anonymity, below-average intelligence and looks while others denote a young woman who, despite her unfortunate circumstances, exists, has faith and dreams. Furthermore, the Macabéa Rodrigo introduces at the beginning of his narrative is not the same as the Macabéa who dies, victim of the hit-and-run accident at the end. An analysis of her evolution throughout the novella is fundamental if one is to understand Macabéa and Rodrigo's relationship. As we will see, Macabéa's evolution reveals itself through language, that is, her discovery of her voice and her own identity.

Macabéa's journey is therefore one of self-discovery leading to a rejection of her anonymity. Referred to as "uma moça" (a girl) or "a nordestina" (the Northeasterner) for a better part of the novella, Macabéa is given a name only when she meets Olímpico, he who will become her boyfriend of sorts. Yet even her name suggests her imperceptibility:³

- E, se me permite, qual é mesmo a sua graça?
- Macabéa.
- Maca – o quê?
- Béa, foi ela obrigada a completar.
- Me desculpe mas até parece doença, doença de pele (53).

It is also upon meeting Olímpico that Macabéa's sensuality begins to manifest itself in a more straightforward manner. Though the Macabéa of the beginning is secretly in love with her boss, her "pequenos óvulos tão murchos. Tão, tão" (41). She did have sexual dreams, "ela que de aparência era assexuada" (42), but had certainly never acted on them despite her infatuation with soldiers.

Through the conversations she has with Olímpico, we learn of her passions and her desires. Whereas Rodrigo painted her as an anonymous, identity-less character, she herself reveals a young woman hungry for love, eager, if a little uncomfortable to share her ambition to be a movie star and touched by beautiful things: “– Sabe o que mais eu aprendi? Eles disseram que se devia ter alegria de viver. Então eu tenho. Eu também ouvi uma música linda eu até chorei” (62). This beautiful song she hears bring on a kind of catharsis and Macabéa weeps “porque, através da música, adivinhava talvez que havia outros modos de sentir, havia existências mais delicadas e até com um certo luxo de alma” (62).

It is by placing Macabéa in opposition to Olímpico that her true character stands out. Olímpico, also a Northeasterner recently migrated to Rio de Janeiro is much more vocal than is Macabéa, in fact “e não é que ele dava para fazer discurso?” (57). Unlike Macabéa, he is aware of his surroundings and the socioeconomic situation of the country and has ambitions to become a politician, upholding “os direitos do homem” (57). He presents himself to Macabéa as a successful, ambitious, educated man and Macabéa is awed by his manner, his looks and his knowledge. But Olímpico de Jesus is adept at lying because he had been “criado por um padraço que lhe ensinara o modo fino de tratar pessoas para se aproveitar delas e lhe ensinara como pegar mulher” (54-55). Macabéa, infatuated with Olímpico, therefore turns to him frequently, asking questions and the meaning of words, denoting a *soif de savoir*, a curiosity that is not in keeping with the description Rodrigo has given of her. However, when she asks her boyfriend for information, he cannot answer her and either lies, invents or becomes frustrated with her incessant questions: “Falaram também em ‘élgebra’. O que é quer dizer ‘élgebra’? – Saber disso é coisa de fresco, de homem que vira mulher” (61). Macabéa’s curiosity about words is significant for several reasons, least of which because it reveals a

curiosity that has not been explained by Rodrigo. If the girl is as unaware of her existence as the narrator claims, then she should remain untroubled by these words she reads. Yet language plays a fundamental role in shaping the young Northeasterner. At times, her ingenuity shows through, as when she takes language at its literal meaning:

- Olhe, Macabéa...
- Olhe o quê?
- Não, meu Deus, não é “olhe” de ver, é “olhe” como quando se quer que uma pessoa escute! Está me escutando? (67)

Other times, Macabéa seems oddly aware of the power of language and she struggles to keep a paralyzing silence from coming between herself and Olímpico, though unlike Olímpico, she has not developed an ability to use language to her advantage: “E Macabéa, com medo de que o silêncio já significasse uma ruptura, disse ao recém-namorado: – Eu gosto tanto de parafuso e prego, e o senhor?” (54).

Finally, language is, for Macabéa an opportunity to discover her own identity. Fundamentally a “silent”, voiceless person, Macabéa uses language as a means to fabricate herself. Thus it is that she continuously “borrows” language from other sources, namely from Rádio Relógio, the program she listens to religiously. The tidbits of information she gathers from the radio show often serve as the point of departure for her conversations with Olímpico. Nonetheless, Macabéa’s conversations with Olímpico “era sempre oco. Dava-se conta longinquamente de que nunca dissera uma palavra verdadeira” (66). And despite the effort she continuously makes to keep the conversation flowing between herself and Olímpico, she is seldom successful. Referring to Macabéa, Hélène Cixous points out in “L’heure de Clarice Lispector”: “– être si pauvre que la pauvreté est partout dans l’être: le sang est pauvre, la langue est pauvre et la mémoire est pauvre” (129) and indeed, Macabéa’s poverty comes through in all that she touches, including her language.

Though arguably not at all satisfying, Macabéa's relationship with Olímpico does result in our young protagonist's discovery of herself. Olímpico's abrupt and demeaning attitude towards her forces Macabéa to reassess how she sees herself and also how she interacts with others. When in a fit of rage Olímpico "disse-lhe: – Mas puxa vida! Você não abre o bico e nem tem assunto!" (67-68), Macabéa is forced to confront who she is and vocalize it:

- Não sei bem o que sou, me acho um pouco ... de quê? ... Quer dizer não sei bem quem eu sou.
- Mas você sabe que se chama Macabéa, pelo menos isso?
- É verdade. Mas não sei o que está dentro do meu nome. Só sei que eu nunca fui importante (68).

The affair between Macabéa and Olímpico soon fades as Olímpico leaves her for her workmate Glória. Contrary to what could be expected, once alone, Macabéa does not fall into despair, but quite the opposite: "no dia seguinte ao que ele lhe dera o fora ela teve uma idéia. Já que ninguém lhe dava festa, muito menos noivado, daria uma festa para si mesma" (74-75). She also takes concrete steps to better herself, first by going to see a doctor recommended by Glória, then by consulting a fortune-teller in the hopes of forging herself a brighter future. Though her experience with Olímpico has changed her – after all, in a certain light, Macabéa is no longer the same anonymous girl she was at the beginning – there still remains some relics of the old Macabéa, namely her absence of vocality. For after Olímpico leaves her, Macabéa returns to her silence, she who had tried, unsuccessfully, to be vocal.

The relationship Rodrigo develops with his protagonist Macabéa is a very complex and paradoxical one. On one hand, Rodrigo paints himself as the exact opposite of Macabéa: he is vocal whereas she is silent; he has an identity where she wallows in anonymity; he is powerful as the creator and she must suffer passively (and at times silently) the

strokes of his pen. However, things are not as they seem, or rather as Rodrigo would have us believe. Though granted, he is her creator; it is also clear that he is Lispector's creation and thus shares with Macabéa the "indignity" of being controlled. Lispector makes clear Rodrigo's secondary position as narrator by affixing to her novella the "Dedicatória do autor [Na verdade Clarice Lispector]" (7) and by inserting her signature in the list of titles Rodrigo proposes for the novella. Deborah Archer suggests that:

The Hour of the Star is about control. Well, actually it is about lack of control, which in this text is both a lack of privilege (the inability to choose, powerlessness) and also a denial of privilege (refusing to choose, relinquishing power). The author, "(in truth Clarice Lispector)", presents herself to us from inside parentheses. Her authority is an afterthought, an aside, a whisper inserted between the lines within parentheses, power displaced by punctuation (255).

As for Hélène Cixous, in "Reading with Clarice Lispector", she proposes that both Lispector's signature and "Dedicatória do autor (Na verdade Clarice Lispector)" pose Lispector as the true voice of the text. While the former, inserted immediately after "O direito ao grito", implies Clarice as "the scream of the text" (146), that is, the voice, responsible for the rhythm of the text, for its "orality"; the latter suggests a doubling of the author, made concrete by Lispector giving her voice to a male narrator. Either way, the text suggests that Clarice Lispector, despite relinquishing narrative power to Rodrigo, still poses herself as one of the voices, the voice of Macabéa and that of Rodrigo. Furthermore, Rodrigo recognizes himself that he has no power over his protagonist and her story. Numerous times throughout the text, he confides in his reader that he "não me sinto com o poder de livremente inventar" (26); that he must write about the girl lest he choke (22); that he "não sei bem como esse isto terminará" (21). Macabéa in fact exerts a much more powerful hold on Rodrigo than he does on her. She completely consumes him.

As narrator-creator, Rodrigo summons up enormous pity for his character and deplores the conditions she must live in, all the while lamenting the fact that he can do absolutely nothing about it. Rodrigo seems convinced that his life as a middle-class – though of limited success – writer is far superior to that of his poor, unhappy protagonist. However, a closer look denotes how it is Rodrigo who is much less happy than she is; it is he who struggles with the truth and the language, with his voice and her silence. It is also he who strives to attain that which Macabéa already possesses: silence. Rodrigo's novella, he claims, “é feito sem palavras. É uma fotografia muda. Este livro é um silêncio. Este livro é uma pergunta,” (21) and his intention, clearly stated at the beginning is to write “uma história com começo, meio e ‘gran finale’ seguido de silêncio e de chuva caindo” (17). Macabéa may not possess a voice of her own, having used both Rodrigo's and other sources' to express herself; she may be illiterate, starved both for nutrition and affection and chronically ill, however, she possesses a peace of mind that Rodrigo recognizes and can only strive for. In his own words: “a moça é uma verdade da qual eu não queria saber” (48).

Macabéa's evolution throughout the text is obvious as has been stated. It also constitutes another nexus between narrator and protagonist for while Macabéa evolves, from a silent, identity-less character to a relatively vocal one before finally finding solace in death and her ultimate silence, Rodrigo, in his own eyes, regresses, eventually becoming his protagonist. Though it can be said that Rodrigo enjoys what Macabéa longs for: an identity and the capacity to express himself, Macabéa also possesses that which Rodrigo strives for: peace of mind and silence. Macabéa obtained without searching and possessed without asking. Writing the story of Macabéa then, becomes Rodrigo's final prayer, his ultimate intent at discovering abundance in emptiness.

Though Rodrigo is absent from the filmic version of *A Hora da Estrela*, the introduction of his perspective is, I propose, at the heart of Suzana Amaral's successful adaptation. Successful not because it faithfully reproduces the literary text, but rather because, in adapting this novella, Amaral has ensured that the essence of the narrative is conserved while allowing for important changes governed by the change in medium. Indeed, while in the filmic version of *A Hora da Estrela*, the socio-political issues may seem to take precedence over the literary preoccupation with the function of the author, the importance of language and literary creation, a closer inspection reveals how Amaral, even without the obvious presence of a narrator, manages to highlight these very Lispectorian concerns.

In adapting Lispector's novella to the screen, Suzana Amaral chose to underscore the issue of character development as it relates to her specific medium, by highlighting Macabéa's experiments with language. With no narrator to speak of in the film, the construction of Macabéa, and more importantly her evolution as a character, is therefore dependent on a variety of elements (though a more obvious, not to mention easy choice would have been voice-over narration): Amaral's use of *mise-en-scène* and sound as well as other cinematic techniques; the involvement of the spectator; the development of secondary characters; the emphasis on language and silence; and finally the casting of Macabéa as a narrator of sorts achieved by collapsing the literary figures of Rodrigo and of Macabéa into one. For in Amaral's version of *A Hora da Estrela*, Macabéa retains some of her creator's powers. She is, after all, the one who tries to construct herself by imitating her colleagues and roommates, by posing in front of mirrors and windows, and by creating her own scenario with the rich foreigner. Amaral thus retains most of Lispector's innovations and preoccupations but transfers them into her medium of choice.

Visually, Amaral's use of lengthy takes, medium and close-up shots, tracking and pan shots of Macabéa are revealing. Throughout the film, Macabéa, played by Marcélia Cartaxo, is seen eating, drinking, sleeping, returning home, typing, or simply waiting. The somewhat longer-than-average takes of Macabéa often framed in medium or close-up shots, tend to make the spectator slightly uncomfortable as he watches Macabéa in her daily activities.⁴ The spectator, then, becomes a voyeur of sorts, intruding on her everyday life and the camera "takes on" the role of narrator reserved for Rodrigo in the literary narrative. These shots, much like Rodrigo's comments, are far from flattering: one reveals Macabéa getting up in the middle of the night to use the chamber pot. While she is sitting there, she grabs a piece of leftover chicken and starts to eat. Several others show her wiping her nose on her blouse or carefully running her hands over her features as she observes herself in an old and streaked mirror whose streaks deform her. Macabéa is often shown by herself and Amaral uses medium or close-up shots of her protagonist in a significant manner. Though Macabéa is a fundamentally silent character, the close-ups serve to emphasize her features and expressions and as such are concrete, visual reminders of Olímpico's words (played by José Dupont): "A cara é mais importante do que o corpo porque a cara mostra o que a pessoa está sentindo. Você tem cara de quem comeu e não gostou, não aprecio cara triste. [...] vê se muda de 'expressão'". Olímpico's words cannot be taken at face value for Macabéa's features are very communicative of her emotions, and not only sadness. Shortly after they have this conversation, Macabéa confesses she has always wanted to be a movie star and her whole face lights up with joy at the thought. What Macabéa cannot express verbally is deduced from her eyes, her shy smile or the way she looks away when uncomfortable. Other examples show her "flirting" with a security guard in the subway, with a customer in a coffee shop and with two men on the

train. Even more expressive than her half smile and head turning, is the sad and painful expression formed when she discovers the guard is only doing his job and the customer is blind. Finally, the use of close-up or medium shots also contrasts vividly with the extreme long shots very occasionally used by Amaral. One scene shows Macabéa returning home after work and clearly indicates an isolated protagonist in the vastness of the city. The urban setting, also important in the filmic narration, serves as a backdrop to Macabéa's discomfort and loneliness and suggests she is not in her element. Interestingly, Olímpico and Macabéa, both Northeasterners unaccustomed to the city, often meet in parks as if trying to escape the urban setting.

Amaral uses framing as well to further define her protagonist. In scenes showing Macabéa alone, she is in the centre of the frame and the camera follows her with pan or tracking shots. However, in scenes where other characters are present, Macabéa is often pushed to the side, half hidden or in the background, while the secondary characters usurp her place in the frame. This is clearly demonstrated in one of the opening sequences: Macabéa is shown typing at her desk. As she gets up to bring the papers to her boss, the camera follows her hesitant footsteps down the stairs. The images of Macabéa working at her desk are interrupted by scenes of her boss Raimundo and Glória, her workmate, taking stock of boxes, their slow, silent and methodical counting first echoing Macabéa's typing, and then, her footsteps. As the camera reveals Raimundo and Glória in the foreground, Macabéa appears in the right hand side background and stands silently in the doorframe, waiting to be noticed. Raimundo is called away and Macabéa's earlier hesitant descent is contrasted to Raimundo's decisive walk to Pereira's office, where the manager proceeds to complain about Macabéa's filthy typing job. Both Raimundo and the manager are in the foreground when in the corner appears Macabéa, framed by the door, again waiting to be noticed.

Other technical elements used by Amaral, the lighting, the colours and the costumes also contribute to painting a Macabéa uncomfortable in her environment. All of these elements including the ones previously discussed highlight the Northeasterner's anonymity (in the city, in the office and at home) and also contribute to painting a paradoxical picture of the young protagonist. Scenes in the office, the subway, the city or the fortune-teller's home are shot using a cold, anonymous blue lighting, tinting everything and giving the viewer a sense of discomfort which perhaps reflects the discomfort Macabéa is sensing. In contrast the scenes in the park, for example, where she meets Olímpico, reveal the bright, crisp colouring of her surroundings and the vividness of the hibiscus flower she holds on her lap.

Macabéa's poverty, lack of style, anonymity and prudishness are accentuated by the way she dresses: grey skirts, simple blouses, socks and cheap plastic shoes. She is only nineteen, but dresses as a middle-age woman, contrary to Glória who wears brightly coloured and revealing clothing. Macabéa's clothing becomes a symbol of sorts, and takes its importance in the final scenes of the film. After having met with the fortune-teller, Macabéa, hopeful of a meeting with a rich foreigner, stops at a shop and impulsively buys a light blue, frilly dress. She leaves her old clothes, vestiges of her old self, hanging in the change room. Walking on the sidewalk in her new dress, she lets down her hair and is immediately transformed into a secure, confident, even pretty young woman, on her way to meet her destiny. The camera tracks her walk in a medium shot, revealing Macabéa from the waist up. This is significant because as the viewer finds out shortly after, Macabéa has not changed her cheap plastic shoes. One of these will come off during the accident and the camera will zoom in on it lying in the middle of the road, perhaps as a symbol of Macabéa's unfulfilled sexuality, or as a reminder that one cannot totally change one's destiny.

Costumes also reveal the nature of other characters in the film, namely Glória's, as we have seen, and Olímpico's, Macabéa's boyfriend. When they first meet, Olímpico is having his picture taken in the park. He is wearing a suit jacket and tie, and looking dapper. Macabéa stares at him and her facial expression suggests she is rather impressed by this well-dressed man who can afford to have his photograph taken in the park. Olímpico's elegance however, is artificial, much like he is. When the photograph is done, he gets up and removes the jacket and tie, borrowed from the photographer. Later, he will steal a watch from a workmate, pride himself that Macabéa hasn't cost him much, and take the telephone token Macabéa offers him so that he can phone her and uses it to telephone Gloria instead. Still in another scene, after both characters are caught in the torrential rain, Olímpico, ever the gentleman, will proceed to dry himself off with his handkerchief while Macabéa is left to wipe her arms with her skirt hem. Amaral's use of costumes and props serve to further define Olímpico's character and oppose his stingy, dishonest, indifferent nature to Macabéa's simple, trusting and naive one.

Perhaps the most significant cinematographic element in *A Hora da Estrela* is Amaral's use of sound and of silence to suggest associations and leitmotifs that contribute to the creation of Macabéa's character. The sound track of a radio station accompanying the opening credits will reveal itself to be not only Macabéa's favourite station, but what is more important, her primary source of knowledge. Rádio Relógio as it is called gives the official time every few minutes and fills its air space with tidbits of information and commercials. Macabéa sleeps with the radio close to her pillow and listens to it on a regular basis, absorbing the trivial information and using it to make conversation with her boyfriend. Olímpico, however, does not react very well to what he calls her constant nonsense and accuses her of lying when she relays on information taken from Rádio Relógio. Macabéa's dedication to Rádio Relógio and her

inability to diffuse the information she gathers from it suggests she is more at ease listening than speaking, a characteristic that will become more obvious as the film progresses as, for example, Macabéa is repeatedly shown listening in on Glória's telephone conversations.

A constant of Rádio Relógio's regular broadcasts is the ticking of a clock, marking the passing of each second, which Macabéa really likes and mimics for Olímpico one day in the train. The passing of time is also evoked by the dripping of the faucet in Macabéa's apartment and with her slow and strained typing, reproducing the clock's tic-toc throughout the film. In the literary version of *A Hora da Estrela*, Rodrigo the narrator is continuously reminding his readers that Macabéa's time is running out, that her life, consisting of a hum-drum existence is predetermined and that he can do nothing to change it. The constant rhythmic punctuation of the typewriter, of the dripping water and of Rádio Relógio is therefore Amaral's aural indication of Macabéa's limited time. Finally, the commercials also broadcasted on Rádio Relógio serve as an aural reminder of Macabéa's needs, highlighting her poverty by displaying luxuries she cannot possibly afford. Macabéa's poverty and want is also accentuated by her obsession with cutting out and pasting magazine advertisements on her bedroom wall, and is emphasized when one of her roommates gives her a shoe box in which to put her possessions, commenting that she owns very little. On two occasions, Macabéa listens to a different radio program. The first time, she is alone in her apartment, having lied to her boss in order to get a day off work. Once her roommates leave, she turns on the radio and listens to "The Blue Danube". This is a liberating moment for Macabéa during which, prompted by the music, she feels moved to dance around the room with her bed sheet serving as a partner. When the music ends, Macabéa stands in front of the mirror, arranges her sheet as a veil of sorts on her head, and stares at herself as an off voice is heard: "Sou datilógrafa e virgem, e gosto de coca-cola." This scene is fundamental as it

is the first time Macabéa takes control of her existence and expresses who she is, first by enjoying the day off, then by expressing her passion through dancing and finally by vocalizing (if only in thought) who she is. This scene also serves as a nexus, linking previous scenes of Macabéa's sexual awakening – her unsuccessful flirting with different men and her masturbating at night – to her meeting with Olímpico. Sometime after meeting Olímpico, Macabéa is sitting on her bed, writing in a notebook. The radio is tuned to a music channel airing what Macabéa will describe as “uma música linda”. Later, Macabéa will tell Olímpico about this beautiful song she heard on the radio and will attempt to hum it for him. Olímpico, characteristically, is unsympathetic to Macabéa's passion and interrupts her singing by blowing up a paper bag in her face. These scenes with the music are significant as they uncover a Macabéa touched by beautiful, sensual things. And, like some of the passages in the literary text, they serve to reveal a much more complex character than previously described. The radio in general and Rádio Relógio specifically, therefore, are not only the source of Macabéa's knowledge, providing topics of conversation for those awkward moments spent with Olímpico, but they are also a source of knowledge about Macabéa, highlighting her wants and fuelling her passions.

Another aural motif present in Amaral's film is that of the typewriter, its slow yet determined rhythm punctuating several of the scenes. Its association with Macabéa and its connotation with writing and language skills are highlighted by the fact that Macabéa writes continuously. At home, she is seen with a notebook, at times seemingly copying what she hears on the radio, other times simply writing. At the office, Macabéa struggles with the typewriter and her mediocrity as a typist is a constant source of irritation for Raimundo, her boss. Yet being a typist is a source of pride for Macabéa. Though a terrible typist and possibly a worse reader, she pursues the act of writing with dedication, linking her with Rodrigo,

the narrator of Lispector's novella who, though troubled by Macabéa and his experience with retelling her story, seems unable to stop himself. The typewriter and Macabéa's writing connect her to language, though not necessarily an oral one. In fact, Macabéa is obsessed with language and vocabulary, as she continuously tries to understand the meaning of words read at work, seen on posters or heard on the radio.

In the filmic version, aural silence – as opposed to the written one found in the novel – also plays a fundamental role as the scarcity of discourse or dialogue reveals. While others speak in the film, Macabéa is silent, using speech only when absolutely necessary, contrary to other characters who are much more vocal. Glória, for example monopolizes what few conversations she has with Macabéa, volunteering very private information such as the number of abortions she has had (five) or that she has lied in order to take time off work for a date. As for Olímpico, he often reproaches Macabéa her lack of conversation. When she does speak, she mainly reproduces what she hears on the radio, often making mistakes while doing it, pronouncing “álgebra” as “élgebra”, for example, or stating that Lewis Carroll was a priest. Macabéa is therefore constructed in opposition to the secondary characters, amongst them her workmate Glória and her boyfriend Olímpico. While Glória and Olímpico are outwardly more successful, outspoken and self assured than Macabéa, they are revealed as quite shallow and one dimensional. Glória does not hesitate to steal Macabéa's boyfriend to redeem herself, as was suggested by the fortune teller and Olímpico drops Macabéa for Glória, only to return to her when Glória leaves him. To emphasize their superficiality, Amaral does not allow for the extensive development of Olímpico and Glória's relationship. Most scenes dedicated to their affair silence them, and, significantly, the scene of their meeting is accompanied not by the soundtrack of their conversation, but rather with that of Macabéa's typewriter, inserting her aurally where she is not visually present.

While often corresponding to the image other characters have of her, the view we as spectators have of Macabéa does not necessarily concord with the image she has of herself. Amaral is very successful at highlighting this dichotomy: the camera emphasizes Macabéa's distorted reflection in mirrors and windows and the spectator is allowed glimpses of another Macabéa, a sensual one. In the literary text, Rodrigo states: "Macabéa, esqueci de dizer, tinha uma infelicidade: era sensual. Como é que num corpo cariado como o dela cabia tanta lascívia, sem que ela soubesse que tinha?" (73).

Though Macabéa may not be able to identify her sensuality by name and others certainly do not recognize it, it is present and Amaral makes it an important part of Macabéa's presence on screen. Several scenes show Macabéa flirting with men in a café, while waiting for the subway, or riding it. Though these scenes and others like it may only highlight Macabéa's ingenuity and lack of charm, by focusing on her point of view, they also serve to allow us into her mind and discover another side of her. These few episodes with men will wake up in Macabéa a desire she was (and we were) unaware existed and one night she wakes up startled to find she was masturbating in her sleep. Interestingly, the "flirting" scenes, mentioned above, principally take place in silence. The spectator senses Macabéa's interest not because, like Glória, she vocalizes her desires, but because of the actress' facial expressions and Amaral's use of point of view shots, revealing to the spectator the object or objects of Macabéa's gaze.

Amaral uses the motif of the mirror and other frames repeatedly to reveal a Macabéa boxed in by her life, by her looks, by other's perceptions of her – including our own as spectator. Shots of Macabéa's reflection while she looks through a window distort her features perhaps suggesting she is not as we see her. While in Lispector's novella, we must rely on Rodrigo's often unreliable construction of Macabéa, in

Amaral's version, the same unreliability comes from our own interpretation of what is presented to us. Amaral focuses on Macabéa's discovery of herself and on her evolution as a character. The Macabéa who dies at the end of the film is not the same Macabéa who lurched in doorframes waiting for someone to notice her. Macabéa spends the better part of the film learning to be, learning to exist. At times, she does this on her own, by looking at herself in mirrors, for example, as if she had just discovered she owned a body. In her apartment on her day off, Macabéa stares at herself in the mirror, disguised as a bride with a white bed sheet serving as a veil. The camera shows Macabéa's reflection and the poor quality of the mirror reflects two images superimposed. After some time, the camera moves slightly allowing the "real" Macabéa into the frame, and the viewer sees three protagonists. This play with reflections and mirrors, a very visual indication of the complexity of Macabéa, is echoed in the sound track as the Blue Danube previously heard on the radio is replaced by a very distorted, slightly irritating, computerized, extra-diegetical version of that same piece. Other times, Macabéa constructs herself by imitating what surrounds her. After watching her roommate get ready for work, Macabéa stands in front of a window and mimics her roommate brushing her hair. After Glória lies to the boss in order to get some time off, Macabéa walks into his office and does the same thing. Another scene shows Macabéa standing in front of a shop window, imitating the mannequin's pose in the showcase. Even her language skills stem from sources outside of her: the vocabulary she questions comes from the radio or subway signs or her boss' letters. And in a terribly uncomfortable scene, she stands in rain with Olímpico, at a loss for something to say until she spots a hardware store window nearby. "Eu gosto tanto de parafuso e prego, e o senhor?" she asks. Other times, if not exactly mimicking others, Macabéa requires their help and follows their guidance. On Glória's advice, she turns to Madame Carlota,

the fortune-teller in search of a better future. Much as Rodrigo has no power in the novella to change the course of Macabéa's destiny, Macabéa, in the film, is equally powerless to change her own: her attempts at forging herself an identity by imitating mannerisms and borrowing language failed and she resorts to the possibilities offered by the fortune-teller. Madame Carlota predicts a brighter future, a meeting with a rich gringo, marriage and happiness to follow. Once again playing with the mirror leitmotiv, a shot shows Macabéa's reflection inverted in the crystal ball. What Macabéa was unable to do by herself, Madame Carlota accomplishes. After stepping out of her home, Macabéa is quasi-transformed. She lets her hair down and stops in a shop to buy a dress. This time, her likeness, multiplied in the three face mirror, is not deformed at all and the mirror reflects several Macabéas. Despite the possibilities and promises made by the fortune-teller, Macabéa's destiny is only resolved in her death. As she steps out of the shop, she is hit by a rich foreigner driving an expensive car. The last scenes of the film unravels in slow motion as Macabéa lays dying on the street, fabricating her own closure to this drama: "in the spirit of the film's ambiguous title, this moment of bright light predicted by the fortune-teller allows Macabéa to fulfill her dreamt-of role as star of her own drama." (West & West 46). Only in death, is Macabéa reborn as Rodrigo pointed out at the end of his narrative: "Enquanto isso, Macabéa no chão parecia se tornar cada vez mais uma Macabéa, como se chegasse a si mesma" (98). Amaral ends the film with a freeze frame of Macabéa as she runs into the sunlight towards the rich foreigner, her face illuminated by the light and by a radiant smile, while the same distorted version of the Blue Danube is heard on the sound track.

Finally, to borrow a favourite tactic of Rodrigo, I have forgotten to mention one thing: Macabéa is a complex character, rendered even more so by the distorted information we as readers receive from Rodrigo

and as viewers from a multitude of sources. Rodrigo's construction of Macabéa, her own discovery of herself and the role language, silence and literary or filmic creation play in her construction deserve a much more detailed analysis. But perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps for her to exist, it is enough for Macabéa to assert – albeit in voice-over in the film and as indirect discourse in the novel: “Sou datilógrafa e virgem, e gosto de coca-cola.” (44).

NOTES

¹ See for example Maria José Somerlate Barbosa's “*A Hora da Estrela*: A Reinforced Affirmative Reply” or Cristina Ferreira-Pinto's “A luta pela auto-expressão em Clarice Lispector: o caso de *A Hora da Estrela*” amongst many others.

² Deborah J. Archer, in “Receiving the Other: The Feminine Economy of Clarice Lispector's *The Hour of the Star*” writes: “The impossible task which Lispector sets for herself is to make her words fit her protagonist's – the other's – reality, and her self-conscious, halting, introspective narration demonstrates her acute awareness of and extreme sensitivity to the power and imperfection of language.” (253-54).

³ Some critics have examined Macabéa's relationship to the Israeli Maccabean tribe. See for instance Naomi Lindstrom's “Clarice Lispector's World of Cultural Allusion” or Michael Martin's “Suzana Amaral on Filmmaking, the State, and Social Relations in Brazil: An Interview” in which Amaral comments on the significance of all names in Lispector's novella.

⁴ In a brief discussion on the length of “average” takes, Bordwell points out in *Film Art: An Introduction* that: “After the coming of sound, the average [of a take] stretched to about 10 seconds” (259). In Amaral's film, some takes of Macabéa stretch to over one minute.

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QUINTANA'S MAP

Johnny Lorenz

Montclair State University

Fulbright Professor at UNISINOS, Rio Grande do Sul

Resumo: Mario Quintana é o poeta de Porto Alegre. É muito comum um poeta se identificar com sua cidade; mas é incomum que uma cidade se identifique com o poeta. Este ensaio tem como argumento que a poesia de Quintana se tornou um discurso compartilhado por todos os porto-alegrenses e que a figura do poeta contribuiu para a construção de uma identidade coletiva. Oferece uma análise de “O mapa,” um dos mais conhecidos poemas do autor, e explora a relação entre dois sistemas: cidade e idioma, ambos sistemas impossíveis de abranger não só por seu tamanho mas também por serem continuamente reconstituídos. A cidade e o idioma permitem uma interação social ao mesmo tempo que lhe limitam as possibilidades – com as ruas e com a gramática. O amor do poeta pela cidade se manifesta no momento em que a cidade se apresenta como um espaço desconhecido. O poema imagina a cidade como um corpo que nunca será inteiramente visível. O poema é também a profecia de que, no futuro, a assombração da cidade – quando o poeta virar “um pouco do nada” circulando no vento e pelas ruas – revelará a única maneira possível de superar a divisão entre o caminhante e a cidade sobrevivente.

Palavras-chave: Mario Quintana; cidade, idioma e poesia; “O mapa”; discurso poético e identidade coletiva.

“Sinto uma dor infinita
Das ruas de Porto Alegre
Onde jamais passarei...”
Mario Quintana. *O Mapa*.

A Brief Introduction to Quintana

Who is the poet of your city? In the streets of Porto Alegre, Brazil, random pedestrians arrive at a singular name: Mario Quintana. A poet might identify with a city, but not often does a city identify itself with a poet. Of the fame of Quintana (1906-1994), the critic Maria da Glória Bordini asserts: “Readers of every kind – children in preschool, retirees sitting on park benches, professors of Portuguese or of chemistry, housewives, parents and grandparents, journalists and typographers, factory workers, businessmen, taxi drivers, truck drivers and maids – for years have surrendered themselves to the magic of Mario Quintana’s poems” (7).¹ This long list is not flattery, not just pretty embellishment. Quintana – a poet completely unknown in the United States – is widely loved in Brazil and especially in Porto Alegre. The small figure of this poet, his cane in hand, crossing the downtown streets, smoking a cigarette, heading towards a bar or coffee shop... this figure was (and remains) a legend of the city. With evident pride, the people speak of their poet, and many of them have stories to tell about their encounters – about his sharp wit, his love for drink, his uninterrupted bachelorhood, and his economic struggles. When Quintana found himself suddenly homeless, it was a soccer player, the great Falcão of the local team Internacional, who put Quintana in an apartment. The poet, too, was a celebrity.

Perhaps Quintana’s popularity is explained by the fact that he wrote for a local newspaper, *Correio do Povo*, or that his poems are widely taught in the school system. But this explanation is not sufficient. Nor does it touch on the visible delight with which the people of Porto Alegre recollect the words of their poet. While I was living in Porto Alegre in 2003 (I had received a Fulbright grant to translate the poetry of Quintana and to conduct research at his archive), a waiter at a restaurant noticed one of Quintana’s books on my table. He then recited to me his favorite verse!

“Da vez primeira em que me assassinaram / Perdi um jeito de sorrir que eu tinha...” (Poesias, 14) – “The first time that they murdered me, / I lost the smile that’s mine alone...” The critic Solange Fiuza Cardoso Yokozawa remarks on Quintana’s unique popularity: “The statistical proof of this popularity is the success of his book sales... The empirical corroboration of this success is the fact that Quintana’s poems are on the lips of the people” (58). What makes Quintana so popular? The critic Donaldo Schüler praises Quintana’s formal verses: “The verses of Mario Quintana make strange that which habit had made familiar” (75). Augusto Meyer described “o fenômeno” Quintana: “I know of no other poet for whom the poem is such a perfect consubstantiation between living and singing, to suffer living and to suffer singing. He is, lighting the way for others, the greatest poet of Rio Grande” (67). It is Quintana’s “singing” that Manuel Bandeira, in a poem dedicated to Quintana, would praise as well. The poem mythologizes Quintana’s “*quintanares*”, a neologism for Quintana’s work. Bandeira’s poem begins: “*Meu Quintana, os teus cantares / não são, Quintana, cantares: / são, Quintana, quintanares*” (Mario Quintana, 204). Cyro Martins finds in Quintana’s work a revelatory ability: “to reveal, with the easy music of its verse, the suggestive penumbras of the passing moment” (87), and Martins refers to “the relative limitation of his vocabulary” (90). Perhaps it is this “limitation” that makes the poet’s verses so memorable. Quintana’s vocabulary is accessible, his language immediately delightful. He once claimed: “*Eu escrevo para a Maria de todo o Dia. / Eu escrevo para o João Cara de Pão*” (*A Cor do Invisível*, 26).

If Quintana’s language offers simplicity, it is an exacting simplicity that always manages to mystify. For example: “*As únicas coisas eternas são as nuvens...*” (Poesias, 60) – “The only eternal things are the clouds...” Fausto Cunha recognizes that Quintana, like Carlos Drummond de Andrade, regularly brings colloquial language into his poems (219). Regina Zilberman also makes note of this fact: “Mario depends radically on the orality of

speech,” enabling what she calls “an immediate dialogue with the reader” (Mário Quintana, 41). Quintana once imagined a poem “*como um gole d’água bebido no escuro*” (Poesias, 151-2) – a poem “like a gulp of water swallowed in the dark.” The metaphor is appropriate because water belongs to everyone. Moreover, water enters you. Fábio Lucas refers, in similar terms, to Quintana’s success: “By exploring anaphoric structure, he obtains results to which every poet aspires: entry into the reader’s memory” (15). Quintana’s language seems to give itself completely to the reader, without pretension, only pretending to be transparent. Yes, if his poetry is water, it is water in the dark. Quintana’s vocabulary may be simple and unassuming like water, but water in the dark is not the same. It is mysterious once again.

Na Praça da Alfândega

There is a bronze statue in one of the downtown plazas of Porto Alegre that Quintana loved so much – the Praça da Alfândega. The artist of the piece is Xico Stockinger, a renowned sculptor. Commissioned for the city’s immensely popular annual *Feira do Livro* in 2001, the statue depicts Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902-1987) conversing with Mario Quintana. The statue celebrates Quintana by bringing him into conversation with Drummond – in a sense, it elevates Quintana to national importance. The *mineiro* Drummond (from the state of Minas Gerais) attained a kind of status among academics and critics that Quintana never quite reached. The statue in Porto Alegre brings Quintana into symbolic relationship with Drummond. In fact, during their lifetimes, the poets admired one another, even writing poems of praise for each other. But the statue gains a profound relevance when we consider how Quintana is claimed by *gaúchos* (the people of Rio Grande do Sul) and most especially by *porto-alegrenses* (the people of the capital city of Porto Alegre).

Rio Grande do Sul is often imagined as a place apart within Brazilian national identity, both by other Brazilians and by *gaúchos* themselves. It is a long-standing tension that dates back to the Brazilian monarchy's strained relationship with its southern outpost, its high taxing of what was the region's chief commodity, *charque* (dried and salted beef) and the subsequent Guerra dos Farrapos (1835-1845), as well as the 19th century colonization of the south of Brazil (particularly the waves of German and Italian immigrants that came to Rio Grande do Sul) that changed the ethnic makeup of the region. As Luís Augusto Fischer suggests in his introduction to the work of another important *gaúcho* writer, Simões Lopes Neto, certain Brazilian tropes do not manifest themselves within the *gaúcho* self-imagining: the crafty *malandro* and the eroticized *mulata*; the samba and the tropics. In Rio Grande do Sul, the mythic and macho *gaúcho* is celebrated, the haunting rhythm of the *milonga* is more appropriate than the samba, and one feels a real winter (*Lendas do Sul*, 11). It is a region nevertheless protective of its Brazilian identity in the face of its own striking similarities to the other *pampa* regions – Argentina and Uruguay. The clearest way in which it separates itself culturally from those neighbors is through the Portuguese language; a shared language works to bring the far-flung regions of Brazil into what Benedict Anderson has famously referred to as the “imagined community” of the state.

That public statue of Quintana suggests a split – or a doubling: to be at once Brazilian and yet separate. Mario Quintana is positioned *next to* Carlos Drummond. While the statue establishes an intimacy between the two poets, it also marks the distance between them. The monument implicitly distinguishes the national from the local. In fact, the sitting figure of Quintana is juxtaposed to the standing figure of Drummond; Drummond reads to Quintana from a book. There is a slight suggestion, therefore, that the great Drummond is at the service of Quintana. The juxtaposition of these two poets makes Quintana more clearly the poet of Porto Alegre. It reinforces the imagining of a culture both within and yet apart.

The statue confirms, for *gaúchos*, that “Mario” (as he is affectionately called) is “*nosso poeta*.” Not only is Quintana imagined as “our” poet, the collective “we” is imagined as well. The legend of Quintana might be understood in terms of the merits of his work but also in terms of how legend itself functions. Quintana is a poet who wrote love poems to his city. The popularity of his work can be explained, in part, by a general need to create a linguistic site for civic pride. Quintana becomes a means of inventing Porto Alegre. His poetry becomes the expression of who “we” are, not so much because he celebrates Porto Alegre, but because Porto Alegre celebrates Quintana. His poems become, then, a kind of shared language; they become a means of imagining community not only through the content of those poems but, in fact, through their circulation.

A Visit to Trebizonda

Quintana wrote, in his poem “*Obsessão do Mar Oceano*” (“Obsession with the Sea”): “*Se eu morresse amanhã, só deixaria, só, / Uma caixa de música / Uma bússola / Um mapa figurado / Uns poemas cheios da beleza única / De estarem inconclusos...*” (*Poesias*, 156) – “If I die tomorrow, / I will leave behind just this: / a music box, / a compass, / a figurative map, / some poems of a singular beauty / that remain unfinished...” The poetry of Quintana is, in a sense, a “figurative map” of Porto Alegre, his adopted city (he was born in the interior town of Alegrete). The list of objects that the speaker of the poem will leave behind is enigmatic; although the list offers details, those details suggest deeper uncertainties. The compass and the map seem to give definitive locations, which, in fact, neither item – alluded to as pure abstractions – really provides. These small details begin to suggest a deeper concern for Quintana about the location of the city, namely Porto Alegre – a city that at once manifests itself before his eyes and yet is a subject of which he too is a part.

The city consistently appears as the social body that at once includes and excludes him. The beloved city suggests both an intimacy and a distance; it is a site of belonging, the possibility of a collective space and a collective imagining, and yet – in the words of one critic – the urban space often appears in Quintana’s work as “a space recognized negatively as a non-space, the labyrinthine ghostly city” (Clemente, 74). The streets of Porto Alegre appear again and again in Quintana’s work, most famously in “O Mapa” (which we will patiently consider later). Maria Virgínia Poli de Figueiredo argues: “For Quintana, the street is the world; it is the spatial measure of our lives. Just as each person has his time, he has his communal space – the street – and the space of social life – the city” (74-5). Regarding Quintana, the poet and critic Armindo Trevisan asks: “Who would take on the task of making an inventory of the streets in the work of the poet?” (29). Quintana was a poet-pedestrian. In fact, he never drove in Porto Alegre; he walked those streets he loved and, therefore, became an even more visible figure. Tania Franco Carvalhal explains that “the streets are the privileged setting of his first verses. He frequently refers to *ruazinha*, employing the diminutive to express affection” (17). This diminutive form of “street” – “*ruazinha*” – creates an untranslatable intimacy between the poet-pedestrian and the streets he travels.

There is a widely-held opinion that Quintana was a poet uninterested in social questions, preferring philosophical abstractions and exploring concepts of time, death, and the phenomenon of language. These sorts of interests lead a number of critics, with good reason, to detect in Quintana’s poetry a desire not to engage with social realities but to seek refuge from them: “poetry comes to be a refuge, a secure place, a weapon which the poet and humanity can utilize to liberate themselves from their own lives, their own existence... poetry makes the poet and the reader forget reality” (Peixoto, 34-5 and 39). Even Zilberman, who argues that Quintana responds directly to his social and political climate, recognizes in Quintana’s work the strong

tendency to escape: “Poetry is transformed into the preferred refuge of the writer” (*Mário Quintana*, 176). Quintana once claimed in an interview: “poetry, for me, is the art of speaking to oneself” (Távora, np). Indeed, Quintana seemed to cultivate the image of the poet who is disinterested in any political agenda. One of his most well-known sonnets asserts:

*Eu nada entendo da questão social.
Eu faço parte dela, simplesmente...
E sei apenas do meu próprio mal,
Que não é bem o mal de toda a gente[...]* (*Poesias*, 5-6)

What does the “social question” mean?
I am a part of it, that’s plain.
I know the things that cause me pain
are not the same for every man.

Quintana once complained that most of his contemporary Brazilian poets would do better running for office rather than writing poems; not everyone, he argued, can be Castro Alves, the great abolitionist poet (van Steen, 15). Quintana clarified: “a good cause never saved a bad poet” (van Steen, 15).

But Quintana’s poems as a whole refute his fantastic contention in the above sonnet, written early in his career, that he lived not in Brazil but in “Trebizonda” (*Poesias*, 6). The poem alludes to the ancient Empire of Trebizond, a center of commerce and culture on the Black Sea that dates back the 13th century. Quintana’s Trebizonda, incidentally, should remind us of Manuel Bandeira’s poem “Vou-me embora pra Pasárgada” – Pasárgada is the ancient Persian city where the poem’s speaker dreams of living. Both Trebizonda and Pasárgada allude to a distant time and place; they suggest an escape from modern Brazil. We must acknowledge, however, that neither poet imagines a true exile, for both countries become utopian versions of Brazil itself. Quintana’s aforementioned sonnet identifies Trebizonda as the private country from which the poet sings, but rather than solipsism, the sonnet offers solidarity. The poet sings of shared hopes and desires – “Nos-

muns desejos e esperanças” (*Poesias*, 6). Bandeira’s poem imagines a land not so different from Brazil, a land where conditions are only slightly better – but enough to make a difference. His poem, for instance, sings of telephones and of contraceptives that work correctly (*Estrela da Vida Inteira*, 144). Trebizonda and Pasárgada are hopeful re-imaginings of Brazil.

In his poem “*Uma Canção*” (“A Song”), a response to Gonçalves Dias’ famous “*Canção do Exílio*” (“Song of Exile”), Quintana discusses the possibility of leaving Brazil but only to turn “exile” into a kind of psychological condition:

*Terra ingrata, ingrato filho,
Sob os céus da minha terra
Eu canto a Canção do Exílio!* (*Apontamentos*, 123)

Ungrateful land, ungrateful child!
Beneath the heavens of my home
I sing my song, the Song of Exile.

The poem turns exile into a paradox. The trope of exile suggests here a profound estrangement within one’s own country. However, the poem is at once a mark of dissatisfaction and a refusal to leave. In the very first stanza, the poem parodies Dias’ most famous verse: “*Minha terra tem palmeiras. / Onde canta o sabiá*”. Quintana’s poem satirizes this nostalgia for a romanticized Brazil.

*Minha terra não tem palmeiras...
E em vez de um mero sabiá,
Cantam aves invisíveis
Nas palmeiras que não há.* (*Apontamentos*, 123)

This land of mine, it has no palm trees.
The only whistling in the air
is the song of birds you cannot see
amid the trees that are not there.

Just as the poem paradoxically imagines exile as an experience of *not* leaving, it imagines absence as a kind of plentitude – the birds that do not exist outnumber the single *sabiá* that sings in the original “Song of

Exile.” The speaker of the poem belongs to no country; the irony, of course, lies in the fact that the poem is not only written in Portuguese but reinforces its own national allegiance by expertly playing with the most canonical of Brazilian verses.

Quintana’s “*Uma Canção*” is also a critique of urbanization; the poet often lamented the loss of charming streets of jacaranda trees and the increase in polluted boulevards and towering billboards. Quintana wrote, in an epigrammatic poem entitled “*Barulho e Progresso*”: “*O progresso é a insidiosa substituição da harmonia pela cacofonia*” (*Caderno H*, 2) – “Progress is the insidious substitution of cacophony for harmony.” Regina Zilberman argues that this repudiation of progress is typical of Quintana, and he “denounces the substitution of articles of consumption in place of spiritual values, as in ‘The supreme castigation’ [*Caderno H*, 48] which hypothesizes that future civilizations would believe the God of the twentieth century to be Coca-Cola” (*Mário Quintana*, 173). Zilberman asserts elsewhere that Quintana is part of a modern *literatura gaúcha* that offers: “the affirmation of a personal identity before massification, reacting to the leveling advance of industrial society” (Zilberman, 118). As an example, she refers to Quintana’s poem “*Sonho de Uma Noite de Verão*” (*Esconderijos do Tempo*, 72). In the poem, a procession of scarecrows marches through the center of town, undeterred even by the police who attack them with bombs of laughing gas. One way, certainly, of reading the poem is to understand it as a terrifying vision of the oppressed worker in the capitalist police state. Quintana’s poem offers a vision of social protest, of disgruntled marchers invading the streets. Using the image of the scarecrow to suggest the living dead, the poem introduces bombs of laughing gas in order to indicate, at once, both the violence of the police state and a failed attempt – through (carnavalesque?) laughter – to distract the citizenry from its anger. The poem documents the violent confrontation between the authorities and the disenfranchised as each side

seeks to claim the streets as its own. Quintana's love for the streets of Porto Alegre is not an innocent love, nor is it blind; a number of Quintana's poems include images of the homeless, tacky advertisements, cramped housing conditions, and urban pollution. The poet consistently condemns the oppressive manifestations of *ordem e progresso*.

Anatomy of a City

Quintana's poem "O Mapa" ("The Map") is his ode to the streets of Porto Alegre. The music of the poem seems to occur almost by chance (the mark of the poet's meticulous work). The rhyme scheme is unpredictable. In English, I tried to reproduce the poem's subtle music by playing with unstructured rhymes and by keeping the poem's meter of three heavy syllables per line. Here is a sample:

*Sinto uma dor infinita
Das ruas de Porto Alegre
Onde jamais passarei...*

*Há tanta esquina esquisita,
Tanta nuança de paredes,
Há tanta moça bonita
Nas ruas que não andei
(E há uma rua encantada
Que nem em sonhos sonhei...) (Apontamentos, 143)*

I feel an endless ache
For the streets of Porto Alegre
That I will never take...

There are so many curious turns,
So many nuances of walls,
So many beautiful girls
In those streets I never walked
(And there is a street I would love
That not even in dreams I've dreamt of...)

“O Mapa” carries the anguish that arises from the simultaneous presence and absence of the beloved city. The poem offers this irony: the lyrical voice of the poem creates an intimacy with the city precisely when it becomes strange to him, when he considers the city at a distance, through a representation of the city on paper. The speaker of the poem is not, in fact, looking at the city; he is looking at a map. Only by turning away from the city does the city become visible. The map, like the poem, is the means by which the city is imagined and simultaneously lost. The poem, in fact, imagines a street “*que nem em sonhos sonhei*” – a street that “not even in dreams I’ve dreamt of.” But that street comes to be imagined through its own negation.

“O Mapa” offers a vision of a terrestrial city that can be documented, an object represented by the certainties of a map. A map is an expression of power; it is the production of knowledge that explains a secret, laying bare a space. And yet the poem also introduces us to the idea of a city that escapes our comprehension, a mystery within the grid. And the city is an object that is outside of the body yet constituted by the body – a body circulating as the living pedestrian and (the poem later reveals) as ghostly traces in the morning air: “*Serei um pouco do nada / Invisível, delicioso...*” (*Apontamentos*, 143) – “I’ll be a bit / of that delicious nothing / no one sees...” The speaker of the poem anticipates his own haunting of the city, when he will be at once present and absent on the urban streets, when he will be so completely integrated into the city that he will be rendered invisible. As Avery Gordon argues in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, a ghost does not constitute a haunting; the ghost is merely a sign that indicates a haunting is taking place (8). Quintana’s poem reveals that the city is haunted precisely by the ghosts that are not there – there is only a little bit of nothing, the paradox of “*um pouco do nada*”.

The haunting of the streets of the city reminds us of Derrida's theory of the haunting of language – the ghostly “trace” in our grammar. This trace cannot be explained with the vocabulary of past, present, or future nor with the vocabulary of location but rather through “*différance*,” a neologism that troubles the location of linguistic meaning; it imagines meaning as continually deferred, never definitively located in any word (of *Grammatology*, 66-7). The relationship between city and language is established through a shared anxiety/uncertainty of location. The speaker of Quintana's poem reveals himself to be a ghostly presence even before his death – in fact, in a wonderfully Derridian turn of events, the ghostly trace seems more present than the “present” speaker whose life not only seems suddenly fleeting (compared to the streets that will survive him and compared to his own ageless ghost) but who, in fact, has been disappeared from the streets as he gazes at the map, removed, in a sense, from the streets of the living. He sees the city as though from above, through the eyes of a floating specter. The conclusion of the poem is troubled by the word “*talvez*,” or “perhaps”. The speaker of the poem claims that this city, Porto Alegre, is the city of his wandering and “*talvez de meu repouso*” (*Apontamentos*, 143). The city is – perhaps – the city of his repose, his slumber, his final sleep. But while the word “perhaps” suggests that he might not rest in peace in his beloved city but in some other city, the word also suggests a much deeper uncertainty: he might not “rest” at all. The idea of wandering the city is no longer a question of agency; the poem privileges the city itself as the site of restless circulation. It is a system – like one's language – that includes the poet and is not defined by him.

The city is never static, never finished making itself. Our city is never completely ours. Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* suggests there exists a “rhetoric of walking” (100) in the city. He argues:

“The walking of passers-by offers a series of turn (*tours*) and detours that can be compared to ‘turns of phrase’ or ‘stylistic figures’” (100). As we walk down the streets that have been put down for us, we nevertheless perform spontaneously within those parameters to create our own style, our way of moving in the city. Michel de Certeau imagines a relationship between walking and linguistic style and therefore suggests a provocative way of approaching Quintana’s “*O Mapa*”. The poem imagines the streets the poet will never know as though these streets were an unrealized vocabulary; this impossibility of walking down every street mirrors our desire for our language to be complete, also an impossible wish. The city – again, like our language – is an unconquerable space, not only because both language and city are larger than us but also because neither is ever really finished, neither can be fully realized or whole. Language and city are constantly reconstituted. Furthermore, the street and the word allow social interaction, but both are, at the same time, limits. In a sense, we choose the streets we walk down; in a sense, the streets restrict our movement. At the end of the road, we must turn left or right. The street makes our movement in the city possible, but it does so precisely by limiting our possibilities. Language works in much the same way – making the traffic of ideas possible precisely by limiting the possibility of what can be said.

The literary critic Paulo Becker returns us to utopian imaginings: “What ‘*O Mapa*’ presents to us, in fact, is the utopia of a humanized city, one that can be felt by its inhabitants like a second body” (52). How can a city be a second body? Perhaps because the body is intimate yet remains strange to us; like a city, a body holds secrets. But the city is a body that is shared; the poem imagines a social body. And the individual body of the poet – in life and in death – is part of the city, in the figurative and in the most literal sense. The poem

documents an uncanny experience of the city, the city that appears familiar and strange, undermining the border between self and other. The speaker of the poem imagines the city as another body but recognizes, through a kind of prophetic vision, that this body includes him and, in time, will possess him completely. He sees the city as his future form, his other or “second” body. In some sense, he surrenders to the city; this surrender is simply the acknowledgement that the city that includes him will also survive him. This act of surrender allows the speaker of the poem to overcome his anxieties regarding his tenuous claims of ownership over his body, which is both a part of him and yet something strange, a system that works with its own agency, regulates itself and dies without permission.

The prophecy of the poet’s own destruction is not a nightmarish vision but a dream of completion, an even erotic consummation. One is reminded of Walt Whitman’s “To a Stranger”. The speaker of Whitman’s poem considers a passing stranger and indulges in imagined intimacies with him/her: “your body has become not yours only nor left my body mine only, / You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass, you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return, / I am not to speak to you” (85). Both poems share a voyeuristic pleasure (although Quintana celebrates, too, the streets and the girls he will *never* see), and both poems – each in its own way – imagine the individual body as shared, social, as inextricably linked to other bodies. We are drawing close to Bakhtin’s celebration of Rabelais, who, Bakhtin contends, imagined the body always “in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world” (317). The always unfinished body reminds us that the city itself shares the same condition – it is never complete; it is open and ceaselessly

remaking itself. Both in Whitman's and in Quintana's poem, the individual body is taken by passersby. But perhaps Quintana's poem is not as sensually daring as Whitman's poem or Bakhtin's hypothesis, which imagines the body as a collection of orifices, as penetrated and penetrating, incessantly giving and taking while it is alive. Quintana's poem imagines the body opened only by death, when the body will be dispersed, circulating in the urban breeze. "*O Mapa*" is not a celebration of the carnivalesque.

But Quintana's poem offers a provocative vision: the inhabitants of the city are not even aware of what they are taking, of what they are being given. The speaker of "*O Mapa*" imagines himself as the dust in the city's air, passing not only through the streets of Porto Alegre but also, necessarily, through the bodies of its inhabitants. The dream of death is not one of divine communion in the afterlife. There is no other city. Nor does the poem share the Romantic vision of a return to the natural elements, to be "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course / With rocks, and stones, and trees" (147), as in Wordsworth's famous "A slumber did my spirit seal". The reference to nature in "*O Mapa*" is only a means of imagining oneself circulating in the urban streets: "*Quando eu for, um dia desses, / Poeira ou folha levada / No vento da madrugada, / Serei um pouco do nada / Invisível, delicioso*" (*Apontamentos*, 143). To become, one day, dust or leaf is simply to become *um pouco do nada*, a bit of nothing. The dream of death in "*O Mapa*" is not to return to nature or to God, but rather to become fully realized in the social. It is for this reason that the poem suggests, early on, that the map of the city could be confused for the "*anatomia*" of his own body (*Apontamentos*, 143). But the sadness that informs "*O Mapa*" arises precisely from the limitations of this dream of social communion, achieved only through one's own extinction.

The Future Ghost

In one of his earliest sonnets, Quintana offers a vision of the street as a haunted site, much as he does in “O Mapa”. His own footsteps seem to him the footsteps “da minha futura assombração” (*Poesias*, 4) – the footsteps “of my future ghost.” His present walking foreshadows his ghostly wandering of the city. The effect of this association is, again, to disrupt time so that the haunting seems the more stable condition, whereas his current footsteps are fleeting, destined to be merely the memory of the inevitable ghost, the ghost that cannot die.

The poem imagines a window of time in which the streets are emptied both of criminals and of law enforcement.

*Dorme... Não há ladrões, eu te asseguro...
Nem guardas para acaso persegui-los...
Na noite alta, como sobre um muro,
As estrelinhas cantam como grilos... (Poesias, 3-4)*

And up atop the wall of night,
the distant stars seem singing crickets.
I promise you there are no crooks
or cops to put the crooks to flight.

The poem offers a utopian moment when the street is freed of any rule of conduct, either through its violation or through its enforcement. However, this vision is problematized by the fact that the street is empty.

This problem leads us back to “O Mapa” – where the poet considers the city but is, in fact, alone with the map he studies. One might suspect that a sonnet addressed to the city would escape the tormenting loneliness commonly associated with erotic love. But we might understand Quintana’s love poems to the city as the articulation of a shared solitude, one that enables a sense of community and even the opportunity for solidarity. Quintana consistently presents us with a lyrical voice that is at once alone and yet part of a social picture. But often, it seems as though the very people who constitute

the city get in the way of the poet's appreciation for the city. Though Quintana's poetry celebrates the streets of Porto Alegre, it also suggests overwhelming feelings of alienation caused by the urban assault on the individual. Let us remember Quintana's famous – and untranslatable – poem entitled "*Poeminho do Contra*": "*Todos esses que aí estão / Atravancando o meu caminho, / Eles passarão... / Eu passarinho!*" (*Caderno H*, 28). In the face of the (often suddenly) antagonizing presence of the urban street, in the face of those who literally or figuratively stand in his way, the poet romanticizes his own isolation, even suggesting a unique relationship to time that elevates the poet through the figure of the *passarinho*, the bird. While the others simply "pass," the poet takes on another shape, freed of man's alienation from nature and his own preoccupation with death. One is reminded of Yeats' golden bird in "Sailing to Byzantium"; in both poems, the poet's transformation into a bird is a means of defeating – or transcending – one's own mortality. It is, too, a dream of escape from community and into art: to be, as Yeats' poem imagines, transformed into a bird "set upon a golden bough to sing" (194). And we have yet another example of poetic flight to an ancient world – Quintana's Trebizonda and Bandeira's Pasárgada exit alongside Yeats' Byzantium. All of these places are real, but none of them are real destinations.

As we have seen, Quintana's odes to the streets of Porto Alegre, then, depict moments of profound solitude. We might consider here Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, which, in a brilliant moment, explores an inverse relationship between love of individuals and a wider love for community – suggesting that the two are not necessarily compatible:

[...] the more I love mankind in general, the less I love people in the particular, that is, individually, as separate persons... In twenty-four hours I can begin to hate even the best of men: one because he takes too long eating his dinner, another because he has a cold and keeps blowing his nose. I become the enemy of people the moment they touch me... On the other hand, it has always happened that the more I hate people individually, the more ardent becomes my love for humanity as a whole (57).

Much like this anonymous character, the speakers in Quintana's poems seem to experience a profound affection for the city only at the moment in which the lyrical "I" contemplates humanity at a distance. It is perhaps a problem, a limit, a qualification. But it is also a particularly urban experience of social love, which, like any love, has its measure. The streets bring the masses into view; one has the opportunity to view the many as one single body. This body is at once a tangible force and a fiction, a fiction that allows for a feeling of inclusion or exclusion, for a vision of solidarity or of alienation.

This ambivalence informs Quintana's "*O Mapa*" – for it is only in death that the speaker gives himself completely to unequivocal inclusion in the social without being touched by terror. The destruction of his body is not the condition for tragedy, nor for divine elevation. The destruction of his body is the opportunity to overcome finally the division between himself and the city he adores. In *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Octavio Paz offers a mythic rendering of the city: "Almost all the rites connected with the founding of cities or houses allude to a search for that holy center from which we were driven out" (208). He continues: "We have been expelled from the center of the world and are condemned to search for it through jungles and deserts or in the underground mazes of the labyrinth" (209). But the speaker of Quintana's "*O Mapa*" does not search for a center – the journey is not a pilgrimage, nor is it really even a search. There is no destination for Quintana's wandering.

Nor is there really a center of the city. It is the plurality of the city streets that inspires the poem. The democratic dream of "*O Mapa*" lies in its imagining of a city with no center and, thus, no logocentric meaning; the city will not be explained. There is no secret, unless it is a true secret – that is, a secret that can never be revealed. In fact, the wandering in "*O Mapa*" does not require a purpose; it is not work, nor is it productive. For the pedestrian to finally arrive somewhere would mean, in a sense, the death of the pedestrian. And death, as imagined by the poem, does not lead the inhabitant out of the labyrinth. Death is the moment one becomes the labyrinth.

NOTES

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QUINTANA EM *IBIRAPUITAN*, UM SUPLEMENTO À HISTÓRIA E À CRÍTICA LITERÁRIAS¹

André Luis Mitidieri-Pereira

Doutorando em Letras/PUCRS-CNPq

Abstract: This paper focuses on Mario Quintana's early poetry, published in "Ibirapuitan", a largely unknown literary magazine from his hometown of Alegrete (Rio Grande do Sul). While already containing the seeds of Quintana's rich and diversified poetical production, these early poems are remarkable in that they exemplify the Derridian concept of "supplement".

Key words: Brazilian poetry; Derridian *différance*; genetic criticism; Mario Quintana; supplement; textual criticism.

Reconhecido no Brasil inteiro como um lírico do cotidiano de Porto Alegre, Mario de Miranda Quintana não nasceu nessa capital do Rio Grande do Sul. Nosso Baudelaire das ruas porto-alegrenses viera à luz em Alegrete, no interior do estado sulino, a poucos quilômetros das fronteiras com a Argentina e o Uruguai. Era o penúltimo dia de um gélido julho em 1906. Como sempre nessa época, o Minuano soprava forte. Levando o nome de um grupo indígena da região, o vento agravava os rigores do inverno gaúcho naquela povoação agropastoril, situada às margens do Ibirapuitã, na acepção guarani, o rio das madeiras vermelhas.

Em tal cenário, bem longe das passagens e galerias parisienses, mas nem um pouco distante dos influxos da cultura francesa, o menino de saúde um tanto débil alfabetizou-se e aprendeu as primeiras lições de

francês com seu pai, o farmacêutico Celso Quintana. Pelas mãos de sua mãe, dona Virgínia, Mario entrou em contato com a língua espanhola. Na terra-natal, o garoto realizou seus primeiros estudos, em 1914, com a professora Zulmira Contino, a “Dona Mimi”. Um ano depois, ingressou na escola do mestre português Antônio Beirão, onde concluiu o curso primário.

Espaços e personagens que marcaram a infância do guri “doente, por trás de uma janela” (Quintana 2005: 743),² tornam-se recorrentes na obra poética que depois produziria. Como já nos alerta Regina Zilberman (1982), o autor retira da própria história os principais motivos de seu texto literário, “fortemente impregnados das recordações e vivências do artista. É este caráter pessoal – até confessional e autobiográfico – a marca registrada de Mario Quintana. E, com ela, o escritor assegura sua cadeira cativa na cultura brasileira” (18).

No mesmo trabalho crítico, Zilberman chamava a atenção para os “quintanares”³ publicados entre 1938 e 1939 em um periódico literário de Alegrete, o qual levava o nome do rio que banha essa cidade: *Ibirapuitan*. Por sua vez, em uma obra de enfoque biográfico, a professora Néa Castro (1985) também informava sobre aquelas primeiras publicações de Quintana. A partir dos rastros seguidos nesses dois livros, a revista alegretense mostra-se de suma importância para a presente abordagem de uma etapa, muitas vezes negligenciada, da vida literária do poeta brasileiro.

Ao debutar na literatura, algumas vezes, Mario Quintana disfarçou-se por meio do pseudônimo Cândido Manoel de Santa Bárbara. Foi quando o adolescente se mudou pela primeira vez da cidadezinha fronteiriça. Contribuiria então com a revista *Hylaea*, da Sociedade Cívica e Literária do Colégio Militar de Porto Alegre, no qual estudou entre 1919 e 1924, e onde apenas se interessava por disciplinas como francês, história e português.

No último desses anos, durante os quais boa parte do mundo tentava copiar a *Belle Époque*, Mario divulgaria uma composição poética na terra em que nascera (Remédios 40). Valendo-se também de um falso nome – J.B. de Sá –, homenageava sua paixão prematura, filha do agente funerário local. O periódico em que constaria tal registro não pôde ser localizado. Entretanto, na década de 1980, o já celebrado escritor ainda sabe de cor o mencionado soneto, um de seus pioneiros: “Que linda estavas, Maria / no dia da comunhão” (Castro 38).

Mais tarde, ao mesmo tempo em que assiste a inúmeras comemorações pela passagem dos 80 anos de seu nascimento, Quintana grava essa parcela da sua memória de vida e do seu trabalho autoral no livro *Baú de Espantos* (1986: 16-17). Logo abaixo do poema, parcialmente modificando quanto à estrutura, registra a data em que o teria elaborado:

MARIA

Que linda estavas no dia
Da Primeira Comunhão,
Toda de branco, Maria,
Com rosas brancas na mão.

Nossa Senhora esquecia
Ao ver-te, a sua aflição,
E eu, contrito – que heresia! –
Tê rezava uma oração.

Pois quando te vi, de joelhos,
Pousar os lábios vermelhos
Nos pés do Cristo, supus

Que eras Santa Terezinha,
A mais linda e mais novinha
Das esposas de Jesus!

(1923)

Enquanto a vida real trazia perdas para o jovem poeta, o mundo artístico, por outro lado, começava a lhe oferecer consideráveis ganhos. Depois de sair do Colégio Militar, empregando-se por pouco tempo na Livraria do Glo-

bo, retornou à casa, para trabalhar na farmácia de seu Celso. Em 1926, quando perdeu a mãe, sagrou-se em primeiro lugar no concurso literário promovido pelo *Diário de Notícias* de Porto Alegre. Com o pseudônimo de Antônio Morteiro, havia apresentado o conto “A sétima personagem”.

No ano seguinte, assistiu ao falecimento do pai, ao mesmo tempo em que, assinando-se M.M. Quintana, obteve publicação na revista *Para Todos*, do Rio de Janeiro, dirigida por Álvaro Moreyra.⁴ Referindo-se ao ator que interpretava o filme *O Garoto*, de Charlie Chaplin, o trabalho aí divulgado volta à luz na página dois do suplemento “Letras e Livros” do jornal *Correio do Povo*, de nove de janeiro de 1982, onde sua data de composição aparece como sendo 1927. Essa informação é corrigida no relançamento do poema em *Baú de Espantos* (1986: 38):

MANHÃ

Esta noite eu sonhei que era Jackie Coogan,
Me acordei
Bom dia, Senhor Sol, quanta luz! –
Todo iluminado por dentro de alegria.
Na janela,
A fresca manhã sirria!
(os coqueirais crespos cutucavam ela...)
(1926)

Em 1929, o moço de Alegrete instalou-se na capital sul-riograndense, indo trabalhar no periódico liberal *O Estado do Rio Grande*, sob a direção de Raul Pilla. Publicou poemas no jornal *Correio do Povo*, no *Almanaque do Globo* e na *Revista do Globo*. Ao estourar a Revolução de 30, alistou-se como voluntário e seguiu para o Rio de Janeiro. Teve como atribuição fazer o diário da tropa: “Eu floreava. Era por encomenda [...] Nos puseram a policiar o Mangue, a zona de prostituição. Eu tinha ido lá pra morrer pela pátria, ora bolas” (Castro 50).

O “revolucionário” voltou ao Sul em 1931, e às suas atividades n’*O Estado do Rio Grande*, veículo fechado em 1932, num ato discricioná-

rio do general Flores da Cunha. À época, o chefe militar ocupava o cargo de interventor estadual, solidário que fora ao levante organizado pela oligarquia paulista contra o governo de Getúlio Vargas. Desempregado como jornalista, Mario aceitou a tarefa de traduzir *Palavras e Sangue*, de Giovanni Pappini, para a Globo de Porto Alegre (Bordini 1976: 12).

Lançada em 1934, tal obra marcava o início de uma fecunda carreira de Quintana como tradutor na casa editora gaúcha. Em 1935, ele dirigiu-se outra vez à então capital federal, onde permaneceria por curta temporada. Trabalhou na *Gazeta de Notícias* e conheceu pessoalmente a poeta que já divulgara seus trabalhos e a quem admiraria por toda a vida: “Quem me introduziu na vida literária foi Cecília Meireles. Lembro-me que ela publicou a ‘Canção do meio do mundo’ [...] no Suplemento do *Diário de Notícias*, com uma bela ilustração de Correia Dias” (Castro 53).

No retorno, ainda que ficasse morando em Porto Alegre, o poeta caminhante atuou de forma bastante ativa em *Ibirapuitan*: Mensário de Sociedade, Literatura e Arte. Fundada em Alegrete, no ano de 1938, pelo cronista Felisberto Soares Coelho, o “Fidêncio Caigoaté”, e sob a gerência de Emilio Lopes, essa revista circularia até 1939.⁵ Congregava intelectuais de diversas orientações estilísticas e ideológicas, entre outros: o militar piauiense Dionísio Villarinho; o prosador e lírico parnasiano Hernáni Schmitt; os poetas comunistas Ênio de Guimarães Campos e Laci Osório, assim como a poeta Lila Ripoll; o escritor regionalista Juca Ruivo; o sonetista e delegado de polícia Antonio Brasil Milano.

Mario Quintana publicara, na revista *Ibirapuitan*, alguns poemas depois reunidos em suas obras literárias *A Rua dos Cataventos* e *Espelho Mágico*. Lançado em 1940, o primeiro poemário indica o local e a data em que estaria pronto para publicação: “Alegrete, Natal de 1938”. Sete dos trinta e cinco sonetos aí constantes, por haverem figurado no magazine alegretense, auxiliam a confirmar o prévio preparo do livro, conforme sinaliza seu autor.

No primeiro número de *Ibirapuitan*, do mês de janeiro de 1938, era impresso aquele poema que passaria para *A Rua dos Cataventos* como o “Soneto VIII”, no qual um sujeito poético maduro começa por assim cantar: “Recordo ainda... E nada mais importa... / Aqueles dias de uma luz tão mansa / Que me deixavam, sempre, de lembrança, / Algum brinquedo novo à minha porta / Mas veio um vento de Desesperança / Soprando cinzas pela noite morta! / E eu pendurei na galharia torta / Todos os meus brinquedos de criança [...]” (Quintana 1940: 36).⁶

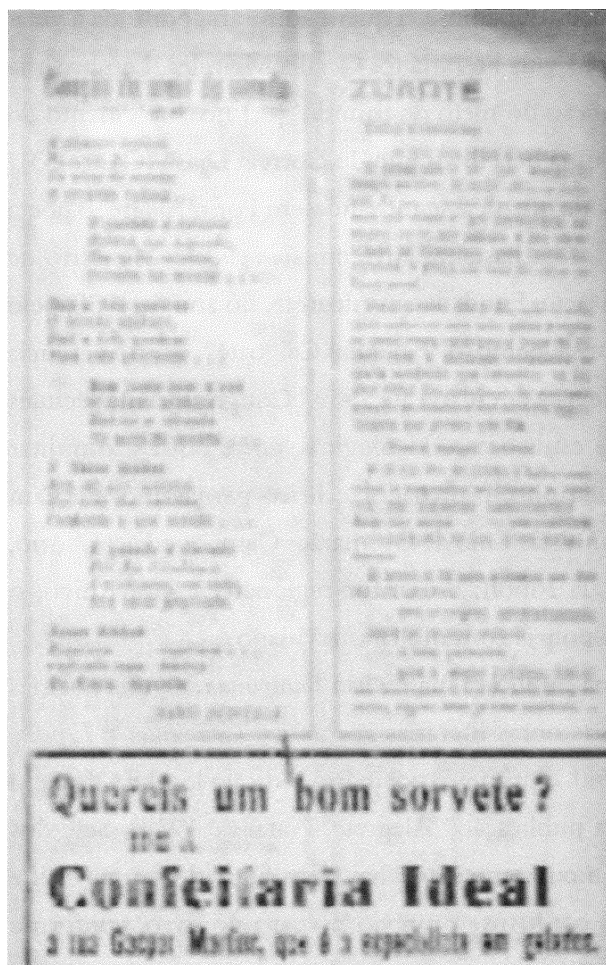


Fig. 1: QUINTANA, Mario. “Canção do meio do mundo”. *Ibirapuitan*, Alegrete (RS), ano 1, n. 2, fev. 1938.

No volume II do mensário, aparecia a “Canção do meio do mundo”, em sete quartetos. Publicada em *A Rua dos Cataventos* como o soneto XXIV (1940: 99-101), com duas estrofes de quatro versos e duas de três, a reformulada canção agora inclui uma dedicatória a Lino de Mello e Silva. Com exceção das questões referentes a ortografia ou pontuação, ocorrem poucas mudanças na versão do poema para o livro, como as de letras maiúsculas para minúsculas.

Isso se dá porque as palavras anteriormente localizadas no início dos versos deslocam-se ao meio das frases na nova disposição gráfica. Alterações mais significativas acontecem nos versos sete e oito de *Ibirapuitan* – “Um grilo cantava, / Sózinho no mundo...” – que passam à seguinte ordenação, transformando-se no quarto verso da primeira estrofe da obra literária *A Rua dos Cataventos*: “Um grilo, sózinho, no mundo, cantava...” Já o verso 27 de *Ibirapuitan* recebe artigo definido feminino plural e, aglomerado com o 28, compõe o décimo quarto (e último) verso do soneto XXIV da publicação em livro: “Cofiando as suas barbas de Pedro Segundo” (Quintana 1940: 101).

O número III da *Ibirapuitan*, de março de 1938, trazia o “Soneto XXII”, dedicado como “Especial para Rumo”. Na organização d’*A Rua dos Cataventos* (1940: 63-65), o poema em destaque tem a dedicatória transferida: “Para Erico Verissimo”. Demonstra cinco correções de pontuação, uma de atualização ortográfica e o acréscimo de dois acentos agudos, nas palavras “pára-sol” (verso um) e “olhál-a” (verso oito). O mesmo volume da revista trazia a “Crônica XXII”, de Manoel del Rio, a seguir, transcrita de forma atualizada:

O Mário – boêmio a Murgër e algo satanista a Baudelaire, desdenhoso e magnífico como Chateaubriand [...], nem ligava, e, supremo desprezo, estava com a cabeça bem raspadinha.

Eu vi que as meninas estavam com vontade de dar uns cascudos na cabeça dele. E eu ajudava. E dava a valer, com os nós dos dedos em ângulo bem pontudo. E ele bem que merecia...

Para não haver confusão eu digo o nome todo dele. Mário de Miranda Quintana. Sim, porque alguém pode pensar que se trata do Mário Suárez, se bem que este até agora é almofadinha... mas só nos dias feriados, e sempre usou pastinhas.

Os números IV e V de *Ibirapuitan*, agora em volume único, englobaram os meses de abril e maio de 1938. O “Soneto VII”, aí apresentado, sofre apenas a inclusão de uma vírgula em *A Rua dos Cataventos* (1940: 31-33). Aliada à manutenção do título do poema, essa pequena alteração vem apontar a um estágio de finalização do primeiro livro de Quintana. Tal indício parece confirmar-se no volume seguinte do periódico, agregando os números VI e VII, de junho e julho. Em uma de suas páginas, figurava o “Soneto II”, com a seguinte observação: *D’A RUA DOS CATAVENTOS*. Além do mais, a presente edição bimensal de *Ibirapuitan* noticiava que:

Duas revistas cariocas, “Pan” e “O Malho”, transcreveram páginas de *IBIRAPUITAN*.

“O Malho”, em um de seus números de fevereiro, o soneto VII, do poeta Mário Quintana;

[...]

Assim, vai *IBIRAPUITAN* vencendo galhardamente, mercê do seu luzido corpo de colaboradores, pois, certamente, outras colegas irão colhendo e divulgando algumas das pérolas que oferece, dadivosamente, às letras nacionais.

Só não compreendemos por que os brilhantes colegas não mencionaram a farta messe de onde carregaram tão saborosos pomos.

Será por ser *IBIRAPUITAN* editada em uma cidade relativamente pequena?

Talvez...

[...] Se-bem que Alegrete, embora pequena em prédios e modesta em população, albergue dentro de seus muros uma escola complementar, um colégio-elementar (ambos estabelecimentos estaduais), um ginásio municipal, duas escolas particulares, quatro grupos escolares e três escolas isoladas municipais, um jornal diário (o mais antigo do Estado, já no seu 56º ano), uma revista ilustrada mensal, um periódico em inglês e francês, e dois jornais escolares mensais. Na campanha conta cerca de quarenta educandários, entre estaduais e municipais, afora os particulares.

Quanto ao mais: – possui rede de águas e esgotos, luz elétrica, cinemas, associações de clube (Associação Comercial, Associação Rural, Associação dos Empregados no Comércio, Sociedades Operárias, Sindicatos, Associações de Professores...), charqueadas, é sede de comarca, de município e de polícia judiciária, de uma divisão e uma brigada de cavalaria do Exército Nacional, de delegacia de saúde, aquartela um regimento de Cavalaria, além das repartições federais, estaduais e municipais, entre as quais um posto aerológico da União.

Pra que mais?

O resto se subentende.

Mario Quintana, ao lado de Juca Ruivo e Hernáni Schmitt, passava a constar entre os redatores de *Ibirapuitan* no editorial do volume que abrigou os seus números X e XI, de outubro e novembro de 1938. O soneto “Lunar”, aí constante, irá ressurgir sob o número XIII em *A Rua dos Cataventos* (1940: 55-57). Nessa obra literária, o poeta apenas transforma uma vírgula em ponto exclamativo e suprime outro ponto de exclamação no último verso do seu texto. Por outro lado, na mesma edição do periódico, alguém que se escondia sob o pseudônimo “Sensitiva Sentimental” dedicava ao sonetista de Alegrete o quarteto “Simpatia”:

ASSIM COMO ESTRELAS BRILHAM NO CÉU,
A AMIZADE QUE ESTE DEDICA E LEVA,
BRILHA, COM REFLEXOS DE LUNÁRIO,
NESTE CORAÇÃO QUE TE AMA, Ó MALEVA.

Já no volume XII de *Ibirapuitan* (dezembro de 1938), em que o magazine reassumia periodicidade mensal, Quintana veio a oferecer outra mostra de suas atividades intelectuais: a tradução da fábula “Os dois gatos”, do escritor francês Florian. Por outro lado, a primeira edição do ano II da revista, quer dizer, de 1939, abria-se com o poema intitulado “Programa para uma tarde nevoenta”. É o mesmo soneto XXXIII de RC (1940: 135-137), todavia suplementado pela dedicatória ao escritor intimista Reynaldo Moura.



Fig. 2: *Ibirapuitan*, Alegrete (RS), ano 1, n. 12, dez. 1938. (Capa)

Na peça poética em si, ocorrem duas adições de vírgulas, a troca de uma vírgula por reticências e a supressão dum sinal de mesma espécie. Ademais, as letras B e S, de “Bruxa Silenciosa” (verso cinco) vêm a ser formatadas em minúsculas, do mesmo modo que o verso sete – “Nessa longínqua Londres misteriosa” – é alterado no livro para “Nessa Londres longínqua, misteriosa”.

O volume número I do segundo ano de *Ibirapuitan* ainda atesta a recepção da iniciante obra lírica de Quintana, conforme o poema que lhe oferecia Antonio Brasil Milano. Também confirma a distribuição do mensário a distintos pontos do Rio Grande do Sul, da mesma maneira que ao Rio de Janeiro e à capital uruguaia, Montevidéu.

Nesse sentido, a segunda numeração de 1939, do mês de fevereiro, publicou artigo veiculado pelo *Correio do Sul*, de Bagé, onde destacava que “Monteiro Lobato, a mais alta expressão da literatura nacional, referindo-se à ‘Ibirapuítan’, teve palavras de franco louvor ao apreciá-la através de significativa carta ao seu diretor”. Na mesma edição, em uma coluna denominada “De Rebus Pluribus”, o poeta gaúcho começava a divulgar algumas quadras que encantariam a Lobato.

Mario continuou a publicar seus quartetos nos volumes seguintes de *Ibirapuítan*. Posteriormente, no entanto, alteraria o título da sua seção poética para “Pátio dos Milagres”. Também daria esse nome para uma obra literária que pensava lançar a público em breve, mas que

acabou não saindo na ocasião, e, quando surgiu, em 1948, Quintana suprimiu, modificou e ampliou muitas das composições originais divulgadas pelo periódico alegretense. Também o título foi mudado, e *Espelho Mágico* foi escolhido em razão de uma das quadras, inspirada em Swift, conforme observa o próprio poeta ao final. A composição denominada “Da sátira” diz: “A sátira é um espelho: em sua face nua, / Fielmente refletidas, / Descobres, de uma em uma as caras conhecidas, / E nunca vês a tua...” (Bittencourt 2).

Publicado pela Globo em 1951, *Espelho Mágico* ratifica a importância das primeiras formas de divulgação dos quintanares. As publicações em periódicos acabam por nortear a vida editorial do poeta gaúcho, como ele mesmo declara: “nos primeiros tempos em que publiquei poesia, eu escrevia sonetos, mais tarde reunidos em *A Rua dos Cataventos*, e as professoras recortavam e liam nas salas de aula, e os autores de antologia reproduziam. Então, eu diria que justamente foi através do soneto que me tornei popular” (Castro 72-73).

Ciente da popularidade da lírica quintanesca, no ano de 1941, Manuel Bandeira convoca “Canção de um Dia de Vento” e “Canção-Ballet” à antologia *Obras-Primas da Lírica Brasileira*. Em 1946, essas poesias integram o poemário *Canções*, editado pela Globo de Porto Alegre. De junho

de 1945 a setembro de 1946, o escritor alegretense publica “Do Caderno H” na revista *Província de São Pedro*. O espaço abrigaria poemas e “o que não é poesia, é coisa conceituosa” (IEL 14).

Ao passo que uma seleção de tais prosas poéticas constitui o livro *Sapato Florido* (1948), Mario contribui com o mesmo periódico literário trimestral ainda em 1946, bem como nos anos de 1947 e 1951, mas em outras seções.⁷ Por essa época, lança *O Batalhão das Letras* (1948)⁸ e *O Aprendiz de Feiticeiro* (1950). Nesse último volume de poemas, parece condensar o seu fazer literário bastante desordenado, do qual já dera sensíveis mostras em suas contribuições para: os jornais *Correio do Povo* e *Diário de Notícias*; os magazines literários *Hyloea*, *Ibirapuitan*, *Para Todos*, *Revista do Globo* e *Terra do Sol*.

As divulgações em periódicos da obra quintanesca igualmente depõem sobre o processo de formação do público-leitor e a incorporação social do escritor, ao atuar em grupos que conformam determinados sistemas de produção, circulação e recepção da literatura. Voltando à obra poética, ao texto fixado para publicação, a suas versões posteriores ou ao seu prototexto, o sujeito produtor engendra a multiplicidade qualitativa de cada um desses retornos, de maneira semelhante a seu estro poético:

[...] Estrada afora após segui... Mas, ai,
Embora idade e senso eu aparente,
Não vos iluda o velho que aqui vai:
Eu quero os meus brinquedos novamente!
Sou um pobre menino... acreditai...
Que envelheceu, um dia, de repente!...
(Quintana 1940: 37).

Esse oitavo soneto d'*A Rua dos Cataventos*, anteriormente publicado em *Ibirapuitan*, mostra-se paradigmático da diversidade poética de Quintana, “sempre fiel a si mesma” (Zilberman 2001: 438-440). Nele, o eu lírico parece validar o pensamento de Theodor Adorno sobre a “dialética

negativa” que, em vez de gerar uma síntese, “produz uma nova contradição, cuja complexidade exigirá ainda uma nova antítese” (Rocha 151).

Tamanha mobilidade originaria uma indeterminação conceitual, que se vincula à “constelação” adorniana. Essa idéia, por sua vez, combina-se ao “desconstrucionismo” de Jacques Derrida (1967). Para o filósofo francês, os sentidos de um texto não encontram localização precisa. Do contrário, são constantemente difusos ou propagados, indicando que a escrita produz várias diferenciações. Cada signo envia a outro, exigindo novas suplementações, as quais se coadunam àquele movimento, responsável por iluminar o caráter específico do objeto e por constituir um “aspecto que para o procedimento classificador é tanto indiferente quanto um fardo” (Adorno 162).

O Aprendiz de Feiticeiro (Quintana 1950) também suscita um estudo de suas relações com o material anteriormente divulgado por seu autor em jornais e revistas. Do mesmo modo, a presente pesquisa se articula com a noção teórica de “suplemento” (Derrida 2002). Assim, rasura muitos daqueles estudos críticos que consideraram a obra do poeta sul-riograndense através de uma metódica organização, suposta pelas edições de seus livros, mas desmentida, entre outros trabalhos, por suas publicações em *Ibirapuitan*.

Se a morte como pulsão representa o suplemento da vida, o “originário” da poética quintanesca tornou-se equivalente às últimas formas recebidas pelos quintanares: “O apelo do suplemento é aqui originário e escava aquilo que se reconstitui mais tarde como presente. O suplemento, aquilo que parece acrescentar-se como um pleno a um pleno, é também aquilo que supre” (Derrida 2002: 200). O sentido dos textos publicados por Quintana em volumes ordenados por gênero veio depois “suplementar a experiência que na origem é dividida, dupla, dúbia, indecível” (Nascimento 2001: 176).

Daí que retornar aos primeiros elos dessa cadeia literária, por intermédio de uma dilatação na temporalidade e de um deslocamento tópicos, também constitui outras peças que se suplementam no jogo derridiano da *différance*. No mesmo caminho, este artigo poderá servir de suporte a futuras investigações de teor crítico ou historiográfico literário, embasadas, por exemplo, nas críticas genética e textual. Visando a contribuir para tanto, procedi à digitalização da revista alegretense, uma vez que seus exemplares, depositados na Biblioteca Nacional, encontram-se à beira do deterioro, esse “mal de arquivo”.⁹

NOTAS

- 1 Esta pesquisa não se concretizaria caso me fossem desconhecidas as obras de Néa Castro (1985) e Regina Zilberman (1982).
- 2 Trecho de uma entrevista concedida a Edla Van Steen.
- 3 Quintana se referiu a seus poemas como “quintanares” no livro *Canções* (1946).
- 4 O estreante literato já encontraria divulgação no centro do país. Mandara alguns poemas para Cecília Meireles, sem conhecê-la: “Ela gostou, e publicou-os em *Terra do Sol*, revista que saiu até 1927” (Castro 52).
- 5 A revista *Ibirapuitan* volta a circular nos anos de 1970.
- 6 Apenas o primeiro número desse periódico não pôde ser encontrado.
- 7 “Do Caderno H” somente retorna em 1953, quando passa à página literária dos domingos do jornal *Correio do Povo*. O catálogo da revista *Província de São Pedro* pode ser consultado no seguinte portal: <http://www.ipct.pucrs.br/letras/saopedro/index.htm>.
- 8 Muitas seções biobibliográficas das obras aqui utilizadas informam que 1948 seria a data correta de publicação do livro infantil *O Batalhão das Letras*. Porém, Néa Castro (1985) diz que essa obra teria saído em 1941 pela coleção Nanquinote da Globo de Porto Alegre.
- 9 Agradeço especialmente a Leandro Ortolan e Maria da Glória Bordini (Acervo Literário de Mario Quintana); Carla Ramos, Débora do Nascimento e Jorge Luiz dos Santos (Fundação Biblioteca Nacional). Ainda sou bastante grato a Adeitalo Manoel Pinho, Alessandra Stucker, Cláudia Antunes e Maria da Conceição Araújo, que muito ajudaram para que revista *Ibirapuitan* pudesse hoje ser disponibilizada em meio digital.

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ENTREVISTA INTERVIEW

MÁRCIA DENSER:

*A LUCIDEZ DA CONSCIÊNCIA PERVERSA
OU “MIRISOLA É TÃO BOM QUANTO EU”*

Cris Gutkoski

Mestre em literatura e semiótica pela PUCSP e pesquisadora do Centro Cultural São Paulo, Márcia Denser faz o percurso da ficção à teoria. Ela estreou como contista em 1977, foi alcunhada de “musa dark” pelo colega Caio Fernando Abreu nos anos 1980 e hoje prossegue publicando narrativas curtas, paralelamente ao trabalho de coordenadora de oficinas de criação literária. A escritora separa as lides da ficção e da teoria com a seguinte imagem: fazer literatura é descer uma ladeira de costas, rindo e correndo; estudar a obra ficcional, a própria e a dos outros, é encarar o monstro subindo a ladeira a pé.

A entrevista foi concedida em Porto Alegre em 6 de novembro de 2004, após as duas tardes da oficina Estúdio do Texto, ministrada no Centro Cultural Erico Verissimo. Diante de dez alunos, ela defendeu a necessidade de saber escrever sob a pressão do tempo, exigiu a redação de exercícios sobre retratos e deslocamentos espaciais e ouviu a leitura de todos os textos. Explicou com paciência o que as descrições tinham de clichês e como era possível salvá-las: pelos recursos do humor, da memória, do fluxo de consciência.

A contista tem nove livros publicados: *Tango Fantasma* (1977), *O Animal dos Motéis* (1982), *Exercícios Para o Pecado* (1984), *Muito Prazer* (1984), *O Prazer é Todo Meu* (1984), *Diana Caçadora* (1986), *A Ponte das Estrelas* (1990), *Toda Prosa* (2002), *Diana Caçadora/Tango Fantasma* (2003). Também participa das antologias *Os Cem Melhores Contos Brasileiros do Século XX*, *13 Maneiras de Amar* e *O Decálogo*. Contos seus como *O vampiro da Alameda Casabranca* e *O último tango em Jacobina* revelam uma mistura incomum de pornografia e lirismo: os objetos sexuais são homens, um poeta e um mecânico, manipulados por mulheres desencantadas.



CG: Que tal ter sido chamada de “Henry Miller de saias” nos anos 70?

MD: Isso foi o Ignácio de Loyola Brandão que inventou, em 1977 ele era editor da revista *Lui* brasileira. Loyola dizia que *Tango Fantasma*, meu primeiro livro de contos, era “toda a sabedoria sexual de uma mulher em 108 páginas”. Ele tem um poder de síntese incrível e foi o primeiro que topou a parada de apostar em mim. Eu só tinha 24 anos. Quando o Loyola escreveu uma notinha na *Lui* dizendo que “Márcia Denser era o Henry Miller de saias”, no outro dia eu vendi trezentos livros... Quer dizer, ele vendeu essa imagem. *Tango Fantasma* foi lançado em fevereiro de 1977 e estourou em termos de crítica jornalística. As pessoas perguntavam quem era aquela maluca e diziam “isso não é pornografia, isso é literatura, mas muito ousada”. Para a época, evidentemente. Moacir Amâncio, que naquele tempo era editor da *Folha de S. Paulo*, abriu uma página inteira para o meu livro com o título: “Márcia Denser, a primeira escritora brasileira pós-pílula”. Para um autor estreante, isso era quase impossível de acontecer. Depois da revolução sexual e do feminismo, a mulher podia enfim escrever como um homem, mas com discurso não-falocêntrico.

CG: Como conseguiu ser publicada tão jovem?

MD: Naquela época, o momento político era extremamente favorável para as revistas literárias. Em São Paulo foi lançada a revista *Escrita* e eu ganhei o concurso literário mensal, assim como vários outros autores que hoje são consagrados: Osman Lins, João Gilberto Noll, Nélida Piñon eram colaboradores, o Caio Fernando Abreu era correspondente da revista. Eram publicados escritores inéditos ou já consagrados e o concurso mensal era bem importante. Saiu o conto *Tango Fantasma*, que mistura letras de tango. Até hoje tem muito tango na minha literatura, por causa dos meus pais. Meu primeiro guru, o Hamilton Trevisan, crítico e tradutor de Faulkner, era um dos editores da *Escrita*. Ele me direcionou no sentido da literatura, não havia oficinas literárias, era preciso ter gurus.

CG: Como influenciou na sua criação o regime ditatorial no Brasil, de censura e repressão?

MD: Passei batido.

CG: Como conseguiu?

MD: A minha literatura, no nível epidérmico, não tem como tema a política. Tem outro tema, muito mais sério, que são as relações de poder entre homem e mulher no sentido profundo. Porque as relações de poder interferem no corpo da mulher, também no sentido do público e do privado. Há lugares no mundo onde a mulher não tem direito a fazer aborto, o corpo vira uma coisa pública, é horrível essa interferência. O casamento monogâmico mantém a sociedade patriarcal em pé, mantém a família, a tradição e a propriedade. As relações de poder questionadas no meu trabalho vão muito mais fundo do que um mero regime de generais. Essas demolições, esse espezinhar de decálogos ainda estão sendo feitos no meu trabalho.

CG: Por que é importante escrever?

MD: Nem posso responder. Para mim é visceral. Escrevo porque... por que o rouxinol canta? É natural para mim. Não sei se é uma vocação, mas é algo que atende à necessidade de comunicação de um sujeito escritor que pretende fazer avançar o pensamento no tempo, dar uma contribuição importante. Embora eu faça toda uma transferência para a minha personagem e tudo o mais, sei que a Diana Marini é um arquétipo. Corri o risco de ela se apoderar de mim e eu querer ser ela, quase dancei. A memória de Diana Marini está no meu livro, pela editora Objetiva, na coleção Tarja Preta. Os meus deslocamentos para personagens começaram com Madalena, a garota do *Tango Fantasma*, que morreu e se transformou na Diana. Hoje eu tenho uma terceira personagem que é a Júlia Zimmel, uma mulher madura, de mais de 40 anos, judia, descendente de alemães. Mas eu procuro não explicar demais o meu trabalho enquanto estou fazendo. De dez anos para cá, desenvolvi a postura crítica, que é mais ou menos assim: aquela ladeira que você desceu de costas, rindo e correndo, fazendo ficção, você agora tem que subir de frente, olhando na cara do monstro.

CG: É uma imagem bonita.

MD: Essa é a posição crítica, explicar o que você está fazendo, não deixar para outro crítico escrever. Júlio Cortázar tinha forte consciência crítica a respeito da própria obra e de certa forma ele a despertou em mim, depois de ler *Valise de Cronópio*, uma obra de ensaio terrivelmente maravilhosa. Cortázar é um grande escritor que é também um grande crítico.

CG: E a leitura de Borges, que marcas deixou?

MD: Borges é universal, a linguagem dele dá inveja, é um gênio absoluto, o gênio da concisão. Ele transformou ensaio em ficção e isso é muito difícil. O que Borges faz é único.

CG: Sua produção alterna conto e novela. Há diferenças na dificuldade de compor esses dois gêneros? Na oficina inclusive fez a defesa do “escreva sem pensar”.

MD: A diferença é na postura criativa. A crítica aniquila a criação, isso é um postulado cortazariano. Se você fica pensando muito, você não escreve. Eu mando bala até botar o ponto final, não importa que algo esteja errado. Agora, a postura para escrever um conto, uma crônica, uma resenha ou um romance é distinta. A postura também muda quando te encomendam um texto, por exemplo, de trinta páginas. A gente diz que um conto redondo tem 180 linhas. Numa novela, as primeiras 180 linhas já são um conto pronto, a novela precisa se resolver na primeira parte. Mas o conto tem um núcleo que pode ser aberto sem aniquilar o assunto. O conto tem uma urgência, uma necessidade, você sente a puxada.

CG: Cortázar dizia que o conto é a queda livre.

MD: O conto exige intensidade e tensão. É como arrancar um bicho das suas costas. O conto *Relatório final*, por exemplo, eu precisei escrever para não me matar. Tive uma experiência horrível e precisava me livrar dela. Fiz 180 linhas sem parar, nunca mexi uma vírgula e botei ponto final. É o fluxo de consciência de uma mulher bêbada que precisa fazer um relatório, mas não consegue. É a antilinguagem burocrática. O texto saiu pronto. Há pessoas que lêem esse conto e passam mal, é uma experiência erótica.

tica extremamente negativa, repugnante, etc. Mas o nojento está embaixo do texto: o homem está morto lá em Osasco e a mulher, que mora no Morumbi, só pensa que amanhã irá a uma puta festa. Consolida-se aí uma coisa que o Marcelo Mirisola está levando às últimas conseqüências: a consciência perversa do brasileiro, ou a má consciência coletiva. Quem fala pelo meu narrador de *Relatório final* é a má consciência coletiva pós-moderna: eu penso o pior possível do outro, quero que ele se foda e que eu fique numa melhor. Eu denuncio essa ausência de consciência na minha literatura.

CG: Sua ficção e a de Marcelo Mirisola fazem uma mistura singular de pornografia e lirismo.

MD: Pornografia, lirismo e lucidez. Tem por aí, na literatura brasileira hoje, toda uma linguagem que é opacizante, obscura, mas a nossa linguagem é muito lúcida, fica muito claro o que a gente está querendo dizer. A gente é racional e se reveste da armadura da globalização: cartões de crédito, *traveller check*, metralhadoras. A grande *persona* globalizada é isso.

CG: É o idiota global, de que fala o romance mais recente do João Gilberto Noll.

MD: Introjetamos tanto a globalização que o nosso verdadeiro rosto é desumano. Mas o Noll é vitimado. Eu e Mirisola sabemos que somos vitimados, sabemos que estamos fodidos, mas o nosso trabalho na verdade quer despertar a consciência nas pessoas.

CG: Já se pode considerar Mirisola um sucessor da sua literatura?

MD: Não, não. Ele tem uma linguagem muito semelhante à minha e eu falei assim: “Finalmente chegou um cara com tanto talento quanto eu”. Esperei trinta anos para ler um escritor com talento igual ao meu. O Noll escreve muito bem e depois de um certo tempo está escrevendo melhor. O Caio Fernando Abreu não era tão técnico. Na minha linha, a da consciência perversa, eu era melhor do que o Caio, que também trabalha a questão urbana, pós-moderna, perversa. O Caio por excelência tem o discurso da inversão de papéis, não apenas por ser homossexual. Tem um conto em *Morangos Mofados* em que o paciente disseca o médico, o Caio é brilhante em inverter a relação de poder.

CG: A sua relação com o Caio Fernando Abreu era de amizade?

MD: Sim, era uma afinidade eletiva. A convivência era reticente porque o Caio era homossexual e os homossexuais têm problemas com amigas femininas. Eu estava namorando e tal, não era aquele tipo de mulher horrorosa, sabe, amiga de bicha? O Caio dizia “vamos visitar a Jaqueline”, e a Jaqueline pesava cem quilos. Mas a relação entre escritores era boa: ele admirava o meu trabalho e eu o dele. A gente sabia que era do mesmo tamanho.

CG: O que geração dos anos 70 deve a Raduan Nassar?

MD: Acho que eu não devo nada a Raduan Nassar. O trabalho dele é muito bom, numa linha regionalista tardia. Aquele torneio frásico é só dele, é um idioleto. Ninguém imita o Raduan. Ele deu o recado com *Lavoura Arcaica* e *Um Copo de Cólera*.

CG: Quem são os paradigmas inspiradores da literatura brasileira contemporânea?

MD: Rubem Fonseca, claro. E Dalton Trevisan. A primeira lufada veio com Trevisan, aquela coisa do “ah, então a gente pode escrever assim...”, isso nos anos 60. Também Rubem Braga e todos os cronistas daquela época, Fernando Sabino, Paulo Mendes Campos, eles eram brilhantes, propiciavam o contato com a modernidade no dentista, não precisava ir até a biblioteca. Você abria a revista *Manchete* no dentista e tinha lá Paulo Mendes Campos, Rubão, Stanislaw Ponte Preta era o mais simplezinho. Nos anos 70, Rubem Fonseca estourou com o grande livro dele, *Feliz Ano Novo*. Ali já era a cidade de Deus.

CG: Já era a cidade murada, a casa com grades.

MD: Rubem Fonseca despojou a prosa de todo o travessão, das aspas, fez uma limpeza dos signos na dicção e até uma diagramação diferente. Mas a obra dele, acho, acaba com *O Cobrador*. Os romances mais recentes não contam, ainda que a universidade queira que eles contem. Eu gosto de *Agosto*, mas é livro encomendado. Os últimos são péssimos, livros de punheta. Rubem Fonseca já concluiu a obra dele faz tempo, um escritor precisa saber quando parar de escrever.

CG: José Saramago passou dos 80 anos e continua lançando romances.

MD: E alguém agüenta ler Saramago? Eu não consigo. Também não consigo ler António Lobo Antunes. Que saco. Eles são saudosistas, passadistas. Tem muito escritor português bom, mas Portugal é insular, virou as costas para o mundo e morre de medo do Brasil. A literatura deles é sempre o mesmo assunto: as caravelas, a puta que pariu, o ano de 1500, ah, saco.

CG: Quando e como começou a dar oficinas de criação literária?

MD: Foi nos anos 90. A necessidade é a mãe das invenções, eu estava desempregada, tinha saído da agência de publicidade onde trabalhava. Para sustentar uma oficina com mais horas de duração, era preciso alguém que pudesse treinar junto com os novos autores, um jovem escritor precisa de realimentação e é isso que a minha oficina propõe: o *start* e a realimentação. Sozinho, um escritor vai murchando. Aí pensei em termos de laboratório, em campos e articulações a serem isolados, e a semiologia me ajudou. Qual é o texto mais simples, como aumentar a dificuldade? Fui descobrindo postulados e estudando a respeito. Eu faço uma pré-seleção dos alunos. Hoje as pessoas escrevem sob pressão, em dez ou quinze minutos, mas nos anos 90 isso não existia de jeito nenhum, eles suavam. Eu escrevia junto com os alunos até a terceira oficina. Tem um conto meu dessa época ainda inédito, chamado *Horizontes*, com 60 linhas, que é glorioso. Tinha acabado de levar um fora do meu namorado, precisei dar aula e produzi um conto na hora. Quando escrevo sob intensa emoção, sou um demônio. O título serve para negar os horizontes de uma relação sem futuro.

CG: As suas oficinas são realizadas por meio de convite?

MD: Eu prefiro ser convidada. A primeira aula é uma palestra, como foi aqui na Feira do Livro de Porto Alegre. Não posso ficar dando curso pela Internet porque podem copiar. Cada passo, cada exercício do Estúdio de Texto é medido e pensado, têm as suas decupagens.

CG: Qual é a parte mais difícil numa oficina de criação?

MD: É o empenho dos alunos, eu me empenho por inteira e exijo isso dos alunos, não posso fazer o serviço deles. No Brasil as pessoas ainda acham que a oficina de criação literária é opcional. A minha sistematização da oficina talvez resulte num trabalho de pós-doutorado.

CG: Há recompensas? A sua ficção se alimenta das oficinas?

MD: Tenho o sentido de missão também. De repente, um professor não saberia fazer o que estou fazendo. As pessoas têm que ser úteis e eu estou sendo útil. Isso não é pouco. Não é só a minha literatura que vai influenciar outros escritores. Se você não é útil, você é dispensável.

CG: Em que pesquisa está trabalhando atualmente?

MD: Trabalho na divisão de pesquisas do Centro Cultural São Paulo, que é um departamento da Secretaria Municipal de Cultura. Junto com a cinemateca, esse é o único órgão de pesquisa profissional fora da universidade, em São Paulo. Somos mestres, doutores, sobretudo especialistas com notório saber. O primeiro diretor foi Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes. Décio Pignatari ocupou o cargo que hoje ocupo na literatura. Cada área tem projetos autônomos. Um projeto da minha área é, por exemplo, analisar o *boom* literário dos anos 70 no Brasil. Outro projeto são as interfaces da literatura com cinema e teatro. Eu ganho dinheiro com isso e é muito legal: a gente faz debates, edita, publica. As publicações têm distribuição gratuita. Na gestão passada nós fizemos a cronologia das artes, de 1975 a 1995, com cinema, teatro, arquitetura, literatura, música...

CG: A sua oficina também funciona como “pronto-socorro da mídia”. Quais os limites da crítica literária produzida hoje em jornais e revistas de grande circulação?

MD: São muitos os limites, o primeiro é o tamanho do texto, são só 40 linhas. É muito pouco. Na minha época, quando comecei a escrever, a

crítica era mais séria, os professores escreviam em jornais e revistas. As imposições financeiras sobre os jornais mataram a crítica, hoje as vendas no mercado são a instância maior de valoração do autor. Mas a universidade existe e é ótimo que ela exista. Só que houve uma mudança: a academia se fechou no corporativismo, os professores não se pronunciam sobre os autores dos anos 90. Na minha geração, Antonio Candido se posicionava. Eu trabalho com Walnice Nogueira Galvão, Antonio Dimas, Roberto Schwartz. Eles acham que a geração dos anos 90 é apenas continuísmo dos anos 70. Mas são vários os escritores bons por aí: Marçal Aquino, André Santana...

CG: Fernando Bonassi faz literatura para ser lida em jornal, não?

MD: O Bonassi, nossa, o texto dele é paradigmático dos anos 90, fragmentário, mostra a cidade como um monte de lixo. Mas há outros caminhos, de maior resistência, como a literatura que faz o Bernardo Ajzenberg, por exemplo. O projeto poético dele é sério, tem pretensão estrutural e melhora a cada livro. O brasileiro não é escritor de romance, ele se movimenta melhor na narrativa curta.

RESENHA REVIEW

Cristina Ferreira-Pinto. *Gender, Discourse, and Desire in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Women's Literature*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2004. 204 pages. ISBN 1-55753-352-0 (paper).

The title of this well-written volume comes as no surprise to scholars in the field of Brazilian Studies as “gender, discourse, and desire” have been longtime interests of the author. Indeed, Ferreira-Pinto’s essays on such writers as Lygia Fagundes Telles, Gilka Machado, Clarice Lispector, Helena Parente Cunha and Sonia Coutinho are well known to academics both in Brazil and the United States. *Gender, Discourse, and Desire in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Women's Literature* brings together revised versions of some of Ferreira-Pinto’s previously published articles while also introducing the author’s recent scholarship.

For Ferreira-Pinto the study of women’s literature in Brazil must start from a historical and social foundation. For that reason she begins by offering a chronology of facts that have marked women’s participation in Brazilian society and literature. The author is a guardian of the traditions of women’s literature, which, as she underscores, has existed in Brazil since the 16th century. According to her, “Brazil’s female literary production has emerged against the canonical, male-produced literary and cultural discourse, and has often served as a counterpoint to a patriarchal, masculinist ideology that remained pervasive throughout the twentieth century” (p. 2). Ferreira-Pinto is not only interested in these moments of reaction against male supremacy but also in how female writing has played

a crucial role in the critique of dominant discourse in general and contributed to the growth of other minority literatures in Brazil.

Although she predominantly discusses how women authors have represented the female body, sexuality and desire, and deconstructed cultural myths and stereotypes about female social roles, Ferreira-Pinto also explores representations of women by nineteenth-century male authors. Influenced by Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, among others, she shows how works such as Manuel Antônio de Almeida's *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias*, José de Alencar's *Iracema*, Aluísio Azevedo's *O Cortiço*, and Machado de Assis's *Dom Casmurro* "have helped define and establish some stereotypes about female sexuality well rooted in Brazilian culture" (4). Studying such texts allows her to locate and destabilize the kind of male discourse and ideology that Brazilian female authors have opposed.

Grounded on the theoretical works of Lynn Hunt, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray, one of the best essays assesses Gilka Machado's innovative and subversive poetry, in which Ferreira-Pinto observes a reversal of gender roles, an exclusion of the male voice, and a focus on female identity and sexuality. As in the rest of the book, Ferreira-Pinto approaches Machado from a historical and comparative framework, placing her poetry in opposition to that of her contemporary Cecília Meireles and in relation to later authors such as Nélida Piñon, Cristina de Queiroz, Olga Savary, Marilene Felinto, and Helena Parente Cunha.

Gender, Discourse, and Desire in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Women's Literature also analyzes how authors such as Dinah Silveira de Queiroz, Sonia Coutinho, Lya Luft, and Lygia Fagundes Telles have made use of the gothic, the fairy tale, and the utopian novel to represent the female body. The author reviews important aspects of each of these subgenres, as well as the fantastic and the grotesque, to lay the theoretical foundations for her readings. She then carefully discusses symbols, metaphors, themes, characters and

narrators in each text, as they pertain to the discussion of sexuality. Although there is a separate section for each work, they are often studied comparatively.

Ferreira-Pinto dedicates a whole chapter to Sonia Coutinho's short fiction, focusing on Coutinho's deconstruction of cultural myths. Suggesting connections between Coutinho's life and her characters, especially when the stories depict women's experience of urban life, she examines Coutinho's portrayal of marriage and treatment of the roles of physical beauty and youth in the characterization of femininity as well as in Brazilian society in general.

One theme that Ferreira-Pinto treats vehemently is lesbian desire. She complains about critics' disregard of the theme, which, as she argues, has permeated Brazilian literature since colonial times. As she investigates the history of lesbianism in Brazil, Ferreira-Pinto looks into the evolution of Brazilian female-authored writing, providing detailed readings of works by Clarice Lispector, Myriam Campello, Edla Van Steen, Sonia Coutinho, and Lygia Fagundes Telles. At the same time she also considers the relationship between female agency and heterosexuality, showing how fictionists like Márcia Denser and Marina Colasanti have dissociated heterosexual desire from a patriarchal ideology of power, as they challenge "the dialectics of *domination* versus *subordination*" (157).

At a time when power relations are so intricately connected to discussions of national character and sexuality has guaranteed its proper place in our understanding of human identity, this nice volume is certainly more than welcome. Although literature is Ferreira-Pinto's main interest, cultural anthropologists and students of psychology, among others, will find her work illuminating.

Antonio Luciano de Andrade Tosta
The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

LUND, Joshua; McNEE, Malcolm (Eds.). *Gilberto Freyre e os estudos latino-americanos*. Pittsburgh: Universidade de Pittsburgh. 2006. Série Críticas: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana. 399p.

Gilberto Freyre e os estudos latino-americanos, organizado por Joshua Lund e Malcolm McNee, é uma coletânea de ensaios sobre diversos temas, contribuições de um escol de estudiosos da obra do célebre sociólogo, antropólogo e escritor brasileiro (1900-1987). Com base numa perspectiva multiangular e interdisciplinar, o volume pretende avaliar a importância da obra freyreana e sua permanência na atualidade. Se a heterogeneidade do livro o priva de certa coerência e foco, ela simultaneamente oferece uma imagem mais panorâmica e menos parcial desse gênio brasileiro tão versátil quanto polêmico.

O objetivo do livro, segundo os organizadores, não é fazer nem incentivar julgamentos sobre Gilberto Freyre, mas sim efetuar “interpretações significativas [...] que considerassem as implicações culturais sociais e políticas da sua obra, no contexto de vários debates importantes dentro (e nas fronteiras) dos estudos literários e culturais latino-americanos de hoje em dia” (1). É através da releitura contemporânea de Freyre e de uma revisitação interpretativa da sua obra que raíam novos rumos e abordagens para questões atuais.

Tal objetivo dos organizadores se mostra no ensaio de Christopher Dunn, intitulado “A retomada freyreana”. Baseado no discurso de posse

do Ministro da Educação Gilberto Gil, o autor anuncia o surgimento do neo-freyreanismo, que visa renovar o freyreanismo a fim de reafirmar a posição original e singular do Brasil como modelo de “um projeto novo das Américas” numa época de crise na história do Brasil.

O charme da obra freyreana reside não só na sua renovabilidade como também na sua n-dimensionalidade, sugerida por Raúl Antelo no ensaio “Gilberto Freyre: alteração e iteração”. Utilizando as idéias de alteração entendidas como transculturação e de iteração exteriorizada como esgotamento da norma, Antelo explora o conceito híbrido e paradoxal proposto por Freyre no contexto pós-moderno. Semelhantemente, Peter Burke, em “Gilberto Freyre e a história cultural”, também se apegua à multidimensionalidade freyreana para delimitar a trajetória que Freyre percorre rumo à definição da cultura. Enquanto a multidimensionalidade enfoca a pluralidade da obra freyreana, o hibridismo transformado por Freyre centra-se na interatividade racial e integração cultural. Baseado nessa característica, Robert.C.Young, em “O Atlântico luso-tropical: Gilberto Freyre e a transformação do hibridismo”, traça diversas facetas do hibridismo elaborado por Freyre, enquanto frisa que o hibridismo luso-tropical pode contrabalançar “forças disjuntivas da contra-modernidade pós-colonial”.

De maneiras diferentes, tanto Michel Agier quanto Nelson Vieira abordam a formação étnica da sociedade brasileira. Em “Nação brasileira e mistura dos genes: as mestiçagens de Gilberto Freyre” Agier toca em dois dilemas resultantes da miscigenação: (1) a mestiçagem fornece elementos tanto destrutivos como construtivos para a brasilidade; (2) como lutar contra o racismo com ferramentas que são, em si, raciais? Quanto a Vieira, em “Ambivalente, ambíguo ou amalgâmico? o discurso de Gilberto Freyre sobre os judeus” o autor contesta o rótulo anti-semita de Freyre ao relembrar a importância da multivocalidade na obra freyreana vis-à-vis

os judeus, asseverando ao mesmo tempo a interdependência destes com outros elementos étnicos na configuração multi-racial e multicultural do Brasil. Continuando a pista da mestiçagem mas se assentando numa perspectiva diferente, Lília Moritz Schwarcz, no ensaio “Gilberto Freyre: adaptação, mestiçagem, trópicos e privacidade em *Novo Mundo nos trópicos*”, mostra que a mestiçagem também pode ser uma forma *sui generis* de pensar uma “experiência brasileira da delimitação moderna do público e do privado”. E Patrícia Pinho no seu ensaio “Gilberto Freyre e a baianidade” enquadra a miscigenação num contexto geográfico específico, a Bahia onde se realizará a brasilidade na sua plenitude, e reflete sobre o papel fundamental de Freyre como um cidadão baiano autoproclamado e o criador da baianidade moderna.

Em “Reverberações lusotropicalais: Gilberto Freyre em África”, Fernando Arenas retoma o tema do luso-tropicalismo que engloba o triângulo lusófono afro-brasileiro-europeu. Segundo o autor, embora apropriada pelo Portugal estadonovista para preconizar o colonialismo, o ideário freyreano ainda constitui uma plataforma na época pós-colonial em que se edificará uma comunidade lusófona apoiada nos alicerces lingüísticos e culturais. Contudo, Jossianna Arroyo, no seu “Tropicalizaciones y globalización: Gilberto Freyre y la migración brasileña en los Estados Unidos”, sublinha as limitações do modelo do luso-tropicalismo freyreano em termos ideológicos, econômicos, sociais e étnicos para os imigrantes brasileiros enquadrados no novo pano de fundo do americanismo.

Laura Cavalcante Padilha, em “Os estudos literários africanos no Brasil – rumos e problematizações”, ressalta a questão do “forte apagamento da África no vetor alto da cultura brasileira” devido à sobrevalorização da Europa branca, à qual a obra freyreana poderá fornecer pistas. Por outro lado, Odile Cisneros, no seu ensaio “Primitivismo e identidad nacional en Gilberto Freyre”, revela o paradoxo de próprio Freyre

(assim como outros vanguardistas latino-americanos) perante a Europa: pretende superar a lógica eurocêntrica mas concomitantemente tem de se submeter a ela.

O primitivismo em Freyre mencionado por Cisneros também se manifesta no seu esforço de forjar a língua nacional que, ao ver de Freyre, se forma nas áreas tropicais. Em “El discurso de la lengua nacional en Freyre y Bello”, María del Pilar Melgarejo confronta Freyre com Andrés Bello, enquanto expõe a paixão comum dos dois pela fala popular. A língua não é só um instrumento ou um vínculo que une a nação, mas é também uma realidade baseada na qual se imagina e se produz a nação. *Last but not least*, a influência da obra freyreana ainda envolve a economia e ambiente. Fundamentando-se no modelo do psicanalista francês Félix Guattari, Ana Luiza Andrade, no ensaio “Gilberto Freyre no contraponto duro/dócil de matérias culturais: um perfil ecosófico”, explora a dicotomia doce/duro simbolizada por açúcar/ferro na obra freyreana, o que proporciona uma nova leitura de Freyre.

Sendo um livro interdisciplinar, *Gilberto Freyre e os estudos latino-americanos* fornece um prisma através do qual se refratam os diversos componentes do espectro freyreano. Comparadas com as conclusões já alcançadas no livro, serão valiosas as possibilidades e questões levantadas pelos autores deste conjunto de ensaios para mais interpretações sugestivas de Gilberto Freyre.

Yi Liu

Brown University

Socorro de Fátima Pacífico Vilar. *A invenção de uma escrita: Anchieta, os jesuítas e suas histórias*. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS, 2006. 221 p.

Anchieta é invenção de uma escrita? O título pode ser contundente, mas ao adentrarmos nas páginas do livro da professora paraibana Socorro Vilar teremos a oportunidade de percorrer uma série de argumentos resultante de uma longa pesquisa de doutorado na Universidade de São Paulo, que a levou a visitar muitas bibliotecas, inclusive do Velho Mundo, no caso as situadas em Portugal, para de lá extrair a fundamentação necessária à sua tese.

A autora parte da hipótese de que a imagem do Apóstolo do Brasil é uma invenção, isto é, em termos retóricos, uma forma de persuadir os espíritos, cuja adesão se busca pelo impacto da argumentação. A invenção de Anchieta é construída tanto a partir de uma base teológica, que trata de associar sua missão àquela de Cristo, de quem é fiel servidor, quanto a partir de uma decisão política de se ter o primeiro santo do Novo Mundo. Postos esses alicerces, tem início a invenção de Anchieta.

A figura de Anchieta, enquanto jesuíta, modifica-se conforme a compreensão histórica predominante em determinada época sobre o trabalho dos missionários da Companhia de Jesus na América. Essa interpretação estende-se do louvor à ação civilizadora dos padres jesuítas à reprovação aos erros cometidos pelos discípulos de Santo Inácio de Loyola no processo de evangelização dos povos americanos. A imagem

de Anchieta sobe e desce ao sabor das interpretações: ele é apresentado ora com o odor de santidade peculiar aos bem-aventurados, ora é apenas fruto da mentalidade jesuítica que a todos quer dominar, nem que isso represente o uso da força. Enquanto santo, sob a marca da idealização, o jesuíta é mostrado na praia, no momento em que escreve o poema dedicado à Virgem Maria. Enquanto sujeito contraditório, o missionário vem associado à figura do carrasco de João de Bolés, uma mácula na sua vida santa.

A Autora dedica um capítulo do livro à questão da hagiografia enquanto escrita sagrada: nesse ponto, ela investiga as origens do gênero hagiográfico, que remonta à Idade Média, numa época em que se valorizavam os relatos orais da vida dos santos; relatos esses que foram transcritos e ficaram célebres desde a obra *Legenda dourada*, de Jacques de Voragine. Forjar um “discurso de virtudes”, que exaltasse um jesuíta atuante no primeiro século da colonização do Brasil, era do interesse da Companhia de Jesus. Daí nasce a figura santa de José de Anchieta pela pena de seus renomados biógrafos. Anchieta foi biografado no ano que se seguiu à sua morte, ou seja, em 1598, por Quirício Caxa, que, com o título *Breve relação da vida e morte do padre José de Anchieta*, exalta as virtudes do jesuíta. A primeira história de vida de Anchieta já edifica as imagens recorrentes na historiografia brasileira a respeito do santo: ele é o “Apóstolo do Brasil”; e é o “pai” e protetor dos índios.

Em outro tópico, a pesquisadora menciona os escritos que são atribuídos ao Padre Anchieta. Entre eles, destaca os títulos *Apontamentos*, também designados por outros de *Fragments*. Ela diz que esses textos, provavelmente de autoria do jesuíta, foram a fonte principal das biografias sobre o autor do *Poema da bem-aventurada Virgem Maria, mãe de Deus*. Outro ponto discutido pela professora paraibana refere-se a uma disputa que se criou entre os padres jesuítas Manuel da Nóbrega e José de Anchieta. Ela verifica que o processo de construção

da imagem de Anchieta resultou no apagamento da imagem de Nóbrega, que ficou na história como político, enquanto Anchieta aparece envolto num nicho especial, a que fez jus por sua aura de santidade e por ser autor de feitos prodigiosos. Na escrita sobre Anchieta, sua figura vai se sobrepondo gradativamente a ponto de sua voz se constituir na memória da Companhia de Jesus no século XVI. Para a autora, a imagem de Anchieta escrevendo na areia das praias permanece no imaginário das elites brasileiras, porque ela representa não só a devoção à Virgem Maria, mas o poder do conhecimento. Daí a imagem do jesuíta ter sido usada ao longo da história nacional para fins promocionais. Não foi sem propósito que Getúlio Vargas foi representado num emblema junto à imagem do padre, para que ambos figurassem como patrocinadores da cultura brasileira.

Na construção da legenda de Anchieta, seus biógrafos buscaram uma série de imagens recorrentes na vida dos santos. Uma delas é o fato de o biografado ter sido objeto de eleição e de escolha por parte de Deus: Anchieta foi divinamente escolhido a partir do momento em que, acometido de uma doença, veio desenvolver sua missão evangelizadora no Novo Mundo. Outro fator de predestinação à santidade, atribuído ao jesuíta, advém do parentesco com o fundador da Congregação, Inácio de Loyola, que acaba por se juntar ao apagamento progressivo de sua descendência judaica – afinal ele era filho de cristãos-novos, muito mal vistos naquela época pela Espanha inquisidora. Para completar a imagem de santo, ressalta-se a estreita ligação do jesuíta com a Virgem Maria, para quem fez voto de perpétua castidade. Desse último aspecto, a autora passa a analisar o poema que Anchieta dedicou à Virgem. Esse texto anchietano demonstra a erudição do poeta, pois foi escrito em latim e revela conhecimento dos escritores clássicos latinos, a ponto de o poema ter adquirido “o estatuto de síntese do humanismo católico”. À imagem de santo, associa-se a imagem de sábio.

Para contrabalançar a legenda dourada de Anchieta, a pesquisadora insere o que chama de “legenda perigosa”, isto é, o episódio que vem macular a vida do padre. Trata-se da condenação e execução por heresia do protestante francês João de Boulés. Nesse episódio, Anchieta aparece como carrasco de João de Boulés, pois, numa carta, posicionou-se a favor da morte daquele opositor aos dogmas católicos. Essa palavra do jesuíta tem gerado uma polêmica sem fim, da qual a autora fez um rigoroso apanhado, contrapondo os depoimentos das partes envolvidas, sejam os procedentes dos que saíram em defesa do padre, sejam os oriundos dos que o acusam.

Ao rastrear a imagem do Padre José de Anchieta que se apresenta no que se escreveu sobre ele ao longo de quatro séculos, a Professora Socorro Vilar soube dar uma feição nova a um velho tema: ela percebeu que, por detrás daquela imagem a serviço de vários altares, havia um processo de escrita poderoso por sua invenção e por sua capacidade de fazer surgir da pena o monumento que melhor interessasse ao escritor, verdadeiro sujeito da escrita.

Francisco José Sampaio Melo
Doutorando em Letras da PUCRS

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Associação Cultural Acervo Literário de Erico Verissimo

Endereço para correspondência: Rua Ten.-Cel. Fabrício Pilar, 205/301
90450-040 Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil

Tel./Fax: (51) 33286243

E-mail: brasilbrazil@brown.edu

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