

RUFFATO, Luiz. (Org.). *25 Mulheres que estão fazendo a nova literatura brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2004. 364p.

Unlike other contemporary Brazilian short story anthologies to come out in recent years, in which women writers were visibly underrepresented, *25 Mulheres que estão fazendo a nova literatura brasileira* is a collection that, according to its illuminating introduction, highlights new contributions by Brazilian women who began their writing careers in the 1990s. Cíntia Moscovich – the only female writer to be included in the 2001 *Geração 90: manuscritos de computador* – is here, three years later, joined by twenty-four fellow authors to comprise this eclectic, yet enriching addition to Brazilian literature.

Luiz Ruffato's introduction describes the broad thematic and stylistic scope of the anthology and excuses the absence of yet another twenty-five Brazilian women writing today. Moreover, Ruffato provides a brief chronological and historic account of the remarkable trailblazers who slowly – but deservedly – gained recognition in Brazilian literature during the past two centuries (lamentably, yet understandably, as this account reaches the second half of the twentieth century it is diluted into a lengthy list of names and dates). One striking example Ruffato gives to illustrate the painstaking path of women writers in the past is that of Júlia Lopes de Almeida who – despite her recognizable talents – was denied one of the original positions in the Academia Brasileira de Letras, a spot that was then granted to her husband.

The twenty-five prose pieces are organized alphabetically by the author's last name, an arrangement that adds to the

collection's sense of stylistic and thematic diversity. Each story is prefaced by a concise biographical sketch of the author and a chronological listing of her previous publications. As Regina Dalcastagnè astutely points out in the book's endpages, these short stories represent a multiplicity of narrative voices and styles, ranging – in her words – from pop to poetic. She goes on to cite an uneven quality to the contributions – a flaw that is perhaps an outgrowth of the collection's intentionally wide appeal – and underscores the predominance of female protagonists, as well as the prevalent confessional tone of many of the stories. At least two stories, however, break from this mold: Fernanda Benevides de Carvalho's "Pão físico" and Livia Garcia-Roza's "Minha flor", which are rendered through male voices. Both of these narrations however, through vastly different means and techniques, serve to illuminate the condition of the stories' female characters.

A collection such as this one – designed to provide the panoramic scope of women's contemporary writing – is admittedly difficult to summarize without misrepresentation. Indeed the allure of this collective volume lies precisely in each reader's voyage of discovery, rather than in a reviewer's schematic rendering of the entries. At the risk of reducing these fictional pieces to a few simplistic comments, however, I present the following brief observations. In general, many stories focus on our universal desires and urban-based banalities of daily life, love and sex, often narrated in a chatty, colloquial pitch (for example, Álex Leilla's "Um elefante", Ana Paula Maia's "Nós, os excêntricos idiotas", or Mara Coradello's "Silver tape"). Other contributors linger on language as a defining element, such as Luci Collin's experimental prose in her Beatles' song-inspired "No céu, com diamantes", and Adriana Lisboa's swiftly-sculpted, calligraphic flashes of life in "Caligrafias". The process of writing itself is woven into the subject of "Bondade" by Simone Campos and of "Glória" by Guiomar de Grammont.

Love and sex dominate the palette of fiction writers such as Cíntia Moscovich in "Um oco e um vazio", Clarah Averbuck in "Psycho", and Claudia Lage in "Uma alegria". Heloisa Seixas' "Madrugada" details methodically and magnificently the intensity of passion's grasp. Other stories dig deeper, often impart-

ing a more philosophical, soul-searching, life-and-death questioning tone. "Considerações sobre o tempo" by Adriana Lunardi is one such story, in itself a string of musings about life and love (a theme echoed in Nilza Rezende's "Por acaso"), by a narrator who has literally disintegrated into ashes.

Several stories reveal life in motion – away from the comfort and confinement of the domestic realm – in search of adventures and answers: a Portuguese instructor's cybernetic correspondence with a famed author, and subsequent trip to the Amazon in Claudia Tajes' "Flor roxa"; the wayward wanderings of a street woman stripped of memory in "A um passo" by Rosa Amanda Strausz; the cab-ride reflections of a daughter summoned home by her father's death in Paloma Vidal's "Mundos paralelos"; or the mystical voyage North by a young orphan named Eve, at the end of Leticia Wierzchowski's "O morro da chuva e da bruma".

Grave social issues come to the surface in several of the short stories. Tércia Montenegro's three-tiered piece "D.T.", for instance, expressively captures the anguish and tragic violence of an impoverished family fractured, and ultimately destroyed, by alcoholism. Similarly, Ivana Arruda Leite's poignant piece "Mãe, o cacete" denounces in defiant resonance the sanctity of motherhood (whereas a more ironic tone of resistance is present in Índigo's "Drinque com azeitona dentro", about a girl's fight against the devil in the form of her math teacher). The nasty side of friendship and love's redemption through childbirth in "O sétimo mês" by Cecília Costa is offset by the moving presence of loss in Augusta Faro's tale of magic realism "Gertrudes e seu homem", as well as in Tatiana Salem Levy's reality-punched "Desalento", which chronicles a mother's piercing loss of her child.

For those of us who revel in Brazilian literature and culture, and challenge gender biases, this anthology is a welcome contribution to the field. In its invigorating multidimensionality, *25 Mulheres que estão fazendo a nova literatura brasileira* lends a spirited voice to contemporary Brazilian fiction.

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