



Helena Bonito Pereira (Ed.)

BRAZILIAN IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY FICTION



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BRAZILIAN
IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY
FICTION

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About the authors

Helena Bonito Pereira

A Doctor of Modern Letters, University of São Paulo (Universidade de São Paulo, USP) who did her post-doctoral internship at the Hispanic Studies Department of the University of California, Riverside. A faculty member of Mackenzie Presbyterian University's (Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, UPM) Post-Graduate Letters Program and academic publications coordinator for the same university. She coordinates the research group "Literature in the post-modern context", which is listed in the CNPq Research Groups Directory. Academic editor of the *Todas as Letras* review. A member of the main Letters-related entities in Brazil and abroad, such as the International Comparative Literature Association (Icla), Brazilian Comparative Literature Association (Associação Brasileira de Literatura Comparada, Abralic), Brazilian Studies Association (Brasa) and International Association of Portuguese Language Scholars (Associação Internacional de Lusitanistas, AIL). Among other works, Dr. Pereira edited the two volumes that precede this one and on the same subject: *Ficção brasileira no século XXI* (2009) and *Novas leituras da ficção brasileira no século XXI* (2011), both published by Mackenzie Press.

Biagio D'Angelo

A Doctor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow. A Literary Theory and Creative Writing Professor of the Rio Grande do Sul State Catholic University's (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul) Post Graduate Letters Program. His academic publications include *Borges en el centro del universo* (Fondo Editorial UNMSM, 2005), *Las babas del sabio. Ensayos sobre la dislocación de la escritura* (Fondo Editorial UCSS, 2008), *Comparaciones en vertical. Conflictos mitológicos en las literaturas de América Latina* (Supernova, 2009) e *Oriundos das palavras. A meta da literatura em Machado de Assis e Guimarães Rosa* (Editora UFRGS, 2011). Dr. D'Angelo has also published three books of poetry, of which *Benjamín. Poema com desenhos e músicas* (Melhoramentos, 2011) won the 2012 Jabuti award in the Children and Youth Literature category and became part of the 2012 Basic Collection of the National Foundation for Children's and Youth Literature.

Marlise Vaz Bridi

A Doctor of Portuguese Literature, USP. Currently a Professor in UPM and USP, a member of the Editorial Board of the Júlio de Mesquita Filho São Paulo State University (Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho, Unesp), of the National Letters and Linguistics Post-Graduate and Research Association, a reviewer of the São Paulo State Research Endowments Foundation (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo, Fapesp). Dr. Bridi's expertise lies in the domain of the Letters, with emphasis on the Portuguese language, and her activities focus on the subjects of: Portuguese literature, female-authored literature, contemporary fiction and literary discourse.

Ana Lúcia Trevisan

A Doctor of Spanish and Spanish-America Literature, USP. Professor of Literature in UPM Undergraduate and Post-Graduate programs. Currently a member of the Anpoll working group “Vertentes do insólito ficcional”. Also a translator and essayist, with works published in books and periodicals in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and the United States. In 2008, Dr. Trevisan published the book *O espelho fragmentado de Carlos Fuentes: literatura e história em Terra nostra* (Mackenzie Press).

Aurora Gedra Ruiz Alvarez

A Doctor of Portuguese Literature, USP, and with Post-Doctoral work in Intermediality, Indiana University. A Faculty member with UPM. A reviewer for Fapesp, Capes and specialized Letters reviews. A member of several associations: Abralic, Icla, Brazilian Association of Portuguese Language Professors (Associação Brasileira de Professores de Literatura Portuguesa), AIL, Nordic Society for Interart Studies, and others. Dr. Alvarez studies the relationships between verbal and non-verbal text, as well as the issues revolving around the fragmentation and unfolding of the subject in contemporary literature. Her bibliographic production and other academic activities have been based on these lines of research.

João Manuel dos Santos Cunha

A Doctor of Comparative Literature, Rio Grande do Sul State Federal University (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul) and University of Limoges, with Post-Doctoral work in Comparative Literature, Université Paris III, Sorbonne Nouvelle. A professor of Literature in the Undergraduate and Post-

Graduate programs of Pelotas Federal University (Universidade Federal de Pelotas). A member of the research group “Literatura comparada: interdisciplinaridade e intertextualidade” (UFPel-CNPq). A member of the Anpoll working group “Literatura Comparada”. Dr. Cunha has published several books, including *A tradução criativa: A hora da estrela – do livro ao filme: a intersecção de duas narrativas* (Editora Mundial, EDUFPel, 1993) and *A lição aproveitada: modernismo e cinema em Mário de Andrade* (Ateliê Editorial, 2011), in addition to chapters in collective works and articles in academic reviews on the relationships between word and image.

Marisa Lajolo

A Doctor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature, USP, and with Post-Doctoral work, Brown University. Tenured Professor at São Paulo State University (Universidade de Campinas, Unicamp) and faculty member at UPM. Senior CNPq grant recipient and a regular contributor to *Carta fundamental* magazine. Her book *Poeta do exílio* (FTD, 2011), a biography of Gonçalves Dias, won the Brazilian Academy of Letters 2012 Children’s/Youth Literature Award.

Lílian Lopondo

A Doctor of Portuguese Language, USP. A Professor of the USP Post-Graduate Portuguese Literature Program and of the Mackenzie Presbyterian University Post-Graduate Letters Program. She currently coordinates the inter-institutional research project “O outro eu: fragmentações e desdobramentos do sujeito na literatura e em outras manifestações culturais da contemporaneidade”, which resulted in the book *Leituras do duplo*, published by

Mackenzie Press (2011). She has published articles on the issue of otherness in domestic and international periodicals.

Gloria Carneiro do Amaral

Associate professor at USP and UPM. Active in the areas of French, Brazilian and comparative literature, particularly from the 19th and 20th centuries, giving lectures, tutoring studies and writing articles. Dr. do Amaral authored *Aclimatando Baudelaire* (Annablume, 1996), on the repercussion of the poetry of *The Flowers of Evil* on Brazilian poets in the final three decades of the 19th century, and *Navette França-Brasil* (Edusp, 2010), a study of Roger Bastide's literary critique, as well as of articles on French literature such as "Amizade e poesia", on the preface of the first edition of the complete works of Baudelaire by Théophile Gautier (Boitempo, 2001).

João Leonel

A Doctor of Literary Theory and History, Unicamp. An Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Letters Professor with UPM. He develops studies on the Bible as literature and the history of Protestant reading. Leader of the CNPq-associated research group "Núcleo multidisciplinar de estudos do protestantismo". Also a founding member of the Anpoll working group "Literatura e sagrado". Dr. Leonel has published several books, including: *História da leitura e protestantismo brasileiro* (Paulinas, Mackenzie Press, 2010); *Novas perspectivas sobre o protestantismo brasileiro* (Paulinas, Fonte Editorial, 2010), as editor; *A Bíblia sob três olhares* (Fonte Editorial, 2011), and *Bíblia, literatura e linguagem* (Paulus, 2011).

Maria Luiza Guarnieri Atik

A Doctor of Modern Letters, USP. Tenured Professor of UPM's Post-Graduate Letters Program and Letters course. Former academic editor of the *Todas as Letras* review, where she is currently a member of the Editorial Board. As a researcher, Dr. Atik participates in the following projects: "Literatura brasileira contemporânea: rupturas, confluências e interações", "Os desdobramentos do eu: o duplo na literatura e em outras manifestações culturais da contemporaneidade" and "Fantástico e mitologismo: presença e limites na literatura latino-americana contemporânea". A member of the research group "Literatura no contexto pós-moderno" of UPM's Post-Graduate Letters Program.

Wagner Martins Madeira

A Doctor of Letters, USP. Dr. Madeira is a University Professor, author of the book *Machado de Assis: homem-lúdico. Uma leitura de Esaú e Jacó* (Annablume, 2001) and the editor of a collection on Oduvaldo Vianna's theatrical work titled *Comédias* (Martins Fontes, 2008).

Introduction

What is the current state of the various streams of Brazilian fiction in the early 21st century? This book aims to address some of the driving lines found in today's fiction. It is a collective reading on the part of Doctors of Literature associated with undergraduate and post-graduate courses in different Brazilian universities. Its goal is to raise the academic profile of recently published Brazilian literary narratives, in an effort to overcome known hurdles imposed by the lack of temporal distancing and the justifiable insecurity pointing out what posterity may or may not recognize.

The narratives analyzed ahead have been pre-screened in the sense that they either won, or were short-listed for, awards from the year 2000 on, such as the Brazilian Academy of Letters *Machado de Assis* award, the Jabuti, the Portugal Telecom, the APCA (São Paulo State Art Critics Association), and São Paulo, of the São Paulo State Culture Bureau. The adoption of awards or nominations as a requirement for the selection of the narratives was not intended to take the contents of short lists as absolute or indisputable, as a novel's critical fate, visibility and sales success may develop years after

its appearance. Neither do we dismiss the frequently justifiable controversy and challenges that emerge soon after the disclosure of the panels' decisions. Still, we understand that such nominations are one possible parameter, simply insofar as they are the product of the readings of a group of experts who covered a significant share of recent production and chose the works that appeared most relevant to them. There are well known cases of books that were widely publicized and enjoyed expressive sales at the time of their release and that disappear from literary sight in a relatively short while. The complexity of the interacting factors leading to positive or negative appraisal lies beyond the scope of the studies in this volume.

By covering a limited cross-section of a mere twelve novels from the vast expanse of contemporary Brazilian fiction, this group of essayists proposes to carry out an exercise in reading that is, by definition, not aimed as a comprehensive effort or ambition. Out of hundreds of award-winning or nominated works from the past ten years, the ones this book addresses were selected based on the essay authors' discretion and choice. Each author's theoretical training and taste also drove the readings, which rely on different methods and abide by the theoretical and critical standard each one deemed most appropriate for the text at hand. In other words, a commitment to the post-modern critical apparatus is purely elective in these studies, as each we attempted to ensure the essayists' right to work according to the approach they believed to be most constructive given the selected novels. With no concern for creating a definitive framework, or a premature canon of the early 21st century, the diverse critical angles reaffirm the freedom of method that should govern any intellectual effort addressing literary text, to

be understood as an expression of individual creativity that aesthetically represents the circumstances and ideology of its age.

These twelve essays on contemporary novels attempt to cover the beginning of the present century.

In the opening essay, “Brief notes for Brazilian literary history”, Helena Bonito Pereira places contemporary fiction production within the frame of Modernism, a movement that prevailed over the entire previous century due to its ease of assimilation and transformation. A brief overview of the driving lines in Brazilian fiction over the past three decades rounds out the picture, in an effort to identify, wherever possible the points of convergence, inflection and dissonance between contemporary manifestations and their forerunners.

Next come the essays on fiction narratives, alphabetically according to the novelists’ given names.

Adriana Lisboa’s *Sinfonia em branco* proposes a new view of tragedy, not in the classic, traditional sense of theatrical tragedy, which requires public catharsis to sublimate. It is a “silent tragedy” where the deities are not present in the narrated scene and the horrors are not explicit. Tragedy consists of Eastern-favored, devastating epiphanies that the Rio-based author offers to the reader.

In “Meaningful gap: About Adriana Lunardi’s *Vésperas*”, Marlise Vaz Bridi offers comments on the book in which Lunardi uses fiction to reconstruct the biographies of female writers, bringing the subject of death into the discussion.

In “Alberto Mussa’s *The mystery of Rio*”, Ana Lúcia Trevisan studies the dimensions of the aesthetic hybridization that pervades the novel, based on historic images that are reshaped according to the precepts of Fantastic literature. The novel, which

unites apparently opposite spheres, also includes the thriller genre, which drives the narrative's intrigue. The study of the text covers the hazy boundaries between history and fiction to reveal the forgotten memories of a multi-faceted, ancient and deeply Brazilian culture.

"*Mongólia: focalization as cultural clash mediation*" addresses the modern subject's resistance faced with the culture of others and, at the same time, the pursuit of the self. While analyzing these issues, Aurora Gedra Ruiz Alvarez examines the presence of entropy in the constitution of contemporary man and its reflection on narrative form.

In "*Mãos de cavalo and the staying power of literature in the age of digital mediatization*", João Manuel dos Santos Cunha offers comments on the novel in the light of the ancient tradition of "reparation" novels, problematizing the theme of the "second chance" by means of the redemptive recollection of times past, in a succession of fragments that must be put together not only by the protagonist, but also by readers themselves.

In a study of Luiz Ruffato's work, Marisa Lajolo points out aspects in the narrative's structure, focusing on the expectations and reactions of readers, who, according to the essayist, *postulate a pattern in the narrative procedure of the book*.

Based on Aristotle's considerations regarding tragedy, Lílian Lopondo uses Marçal Aquino's novel *Eu receberia as piores notícias dos seus lindos lábios* to analyze the construction of the tragic therein. Investigation of reversal, recognition and catastrophe necessarily leads to the study of the technique of mirroring and the double (Lavínia/Lúcia), according to the reflections of Bakhtin and Dällenbach.

In the study “Two ways to reach the port”, Gloria Carneiro do Amaral discusses the family ties, and fatherhood in particular, as presented in *The brothers* and *Ashes of the Amazon*. The quirks that distinguish the narrators are an essential aspect of the discussion.

“*Os vendilhões do Templo: a reader’s experience*”, by João Leonel, analyzes Moacyr Scliar’s novel from a reader’s perspective. Not the reader that critique idealizes and describes, but another kind: the author of the first-person essay himself. The chosen procedure requires letting one’s self be driven by the text, assuming it to propose a dialogue with the reader.

Nelson de Oliveira is the author of the text that inspires the study “Narrative construction and the question of the double in *Subsolo infinito*”. Maria Luiza Guarnieri. Atik’s essay analyzes the impasses created by the novel’s labyrinthine plot and the narrator-character’s voice amid delusions and hallucinations.

Finally, Wagner Martins Madeira’s “*Galiléia* and the backlands” focuses on Ronaldo Correia de Brito award-winning novel depicting the clash of two worlds – those of tradition and of hypermodernity, of waiting time and of urgency time. The novel problematizes the myth of eternal return by reverberating crimes and phantoms from the past that propagate indefinitely, in cyclic and recurring fable-like timing and form.

After reading through the brief summaries provided in the Introduction, a reader of the pages ahead will be able to confirm our initial claim: that this is a comprehensive reading proposal with several methodological possibilities. The readings do not exclude differences in terms of complexity level. This reaffirms the intent to form a modest collection that, without exhausting the subject, is representative of what is available to readers of

Brazilian 21st century literature. Note that the greater purpose of this publication is to bring Brazilian literature students and researchers closer to contemporary production, understood as an artistic and cultural product that uses text to recreate the contradictions of Brazilian society today.

Finally, the editor would like to express her thanks to Mackenzie Presbyterian University, which distinguishes itself among Brazilian higher education institutions for its consistent support of academic research and the dissemination of knowledge. She would also like to thank the Mackenzie Press team for the dedication and hard work that resulted in the publication of this book, which is expected to once again stir reflection and debate on contemporary literature.

ESSAYS ABOUT AUTHORS'S NOVELS:

ADRIANA LISBOA

ADRIANA LUNARDI

ALBERTO MUSSA

BERNARDO CARVALHO

DANIEL GALERA

LUIZ RUFFATO

MARÇAL AQUINO

MILTON HATOUM

MOACYR SCLiar

NELSON DE OLIVEIRA

RONALDO CORREIA DE BRITO

