



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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Contents

About the authors 7

Introduction 13

Brief notes for Brazilian literary history 19

Helena Bonito Pereira

Symphony in *transblanco*. Adriana Lisboa's Oriental poetic 33

Biagio D'Angelo

Meaningful gap: about Adriana Lunardi's *Vésperas* 47

Marlise Vaz Bridi

Alberto Mussa's *The mystery of Rio*: crime and history on the edge
of the fantastic 59

Ana Lúcia Trevisan

Mongólia: focalization as cultural clash mediation 73

Aurora Gedra Ruiz Alvarez

Mãos de cavalo and the staying power of literature in the age of digital mediatization 99

João Manuel dos Santos Cunha

Reading route for a novel in transit: Luiz Ruffato's *Mamma, son tanto felice* 127

Marisa Lajolo

Lilith ostracized 139

Lílian Lopondo

Two ways to reach the port 157

Gloria Carneiro do Amaral

Os vendilhões do Templo: a reader's experience 171

João Leonel

Narrative construction and the question of the double in *Subsolo infinito* 193

Maria Luiza Guarnieri Atik

Galiléia and the backlands 209

Wagner Martins Madeira

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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

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Marlise Vaz Bridi

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Aurora Gedra Ruiz Alvarez

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Marisa Lajolo

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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:

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