

# EPIC POETRY IN BRAZIL

*Literary Innovation and Debate in the 19th Century*

Roger Friedlein | Marcos Machado Nunes | Regina Zilberman



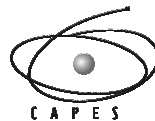
**Epic Poetry in Brazil:  
Literary Innovation  
and Debate in the 19th Century**



**Edited by**  
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**Marcos Machado Nunes**  
**Regina Zilberman**

**Epic Poetry in Brasil:**  
**Literary Innovation**  
**and Debate in the 19th Century**

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## Introduction

In nineteenth-century Brazil, epic poems might appear to belong to a literary genre that had already left behind the high points of its history, namely the colonial-era epics *Caramuru* by Santa Rita Durão and *O Uruguai* by Basílio da Gama. In addition, in the context of the cultural transformations of Romanticism, the very idea of literary genre appears problematic. Pillar of a literary practice based on authority and norm, literary model and imitation, the old system of genres is constituted by the use of stable referentials that ensure the reception and communicability of a text. But this logic of creation and circulation of literature will no longer make sense with the emergence of new aesthetic and literary values like the autonomy of the creative subject (and, by extension, of the literary field as a whole), the imagination as a source of creation, dismissing the norm and the model, and originality, imposing each creator the construction of his own path to follow. In the passage from the 18th to the 19th century, we have a scenario of radical transformations in literature accompanying a wider context of transformations in culture and society, on a global scale.

However, as in many of the transformations that mark this period, the past cannot be fully supplanted.

In the case of epic poetry, traditionally conceived as narrative poetry with an elevated style, heroic subject matter and a discourse inclined to approach a fictional universe in a totalising manner, the tendency towards innovation was counterbalanced, at that moment, by the logic of the formation of national literary canons.

In Portugal, for example, a consensus is very close to being reached around a text from the literary past – *Os Lusíadas* (1572), which occupies the central place in the canon. In Brazil, a consensus will be impossible, and that place, idealised for a long time, will remain vacant, despite the countless attempts, in general built around the figure of the Indian as a convergent factor of heroism and identity.



These attempts form a set of texts that contradict the classical thesis of the death of the epic and its replacement by the novel. Marked by innovation, by transgression and, equally, by the intention to dialogue with a millenary literary tradition, a series of epic texts will be published or remain in fragment or project, with different degrees of ambition and canonicity. In general, their reception will be problematic. The vast majority of these texts do not have a second edition, and much remains to be investigated concerning this little explored corpus. Some bibliographical references of studies on the epic production in Brazil and in European literatures in the nineteenth century will be given at the end of this introduction.

This publication presents a collection of studies that deals with the situation of epic poetry – between tradition and innovation – in Brazil in the nineteenth century, both in the texts and in the debate they trigger. In this sense, the volume is divided into two sections: “Tradition and innovation in epic practice”, covering some of the epic texts produced in the period, and “Epic poetry, object of debate”, which analyses moments in which a critical and theoretical discussion on epic poetry takes place.

As far as creative practice is concerned, the combination of epic genre tradition and romantically influenced innovation marks, for instance, *Confederação dos Tamoios* (1856).

Rafael Brunhara’s chapter, “The *Confederação dos Tamoios*, exemplary epic”, analyzes how Gonçalves de Magalhães’ epic poem represents the consolidation of the ufanistic intent of creating a national epic, which already affected writers from the generation of 1830 onwards. According to Brunhara, since its first reception, however, the work was overshadowed by severe criticism, especially that of José de Alencar, who accused it of ineptitude in versification and an inadequacy that occurs both thematically and formally and, paradoxically, as Saulo Neiva (2017, p. 8) points out, in a deviation from the consecrated models of the epic genre. Brunhara analyzes in the texts that are part of the so-called “Polêmica sobre a *Confederação*” (the “Polemics on the *Confederação*”) the competing definitions of the epic genre and argues that the poem by Gonçalves de Magalhães not only employs rhetorical-formal elements of an epic whose prototype is Virgil (including the reformulation and generic mixture undertaken by the poet of the Aeneid

in relation to Homer) as well as makes use of these to highlight themes dear to Romanticism, thus seeking a harmonization between the classical model and a certain aesthetic program of the first romantic generation. In this way, Magalhães' conception of the epic genre would be in accordance both with his own poetic programme and with a model of the epic not properly considered in the polemics about the poem. In this sense, Brunhara shows how the poem dialogues with precepts of the epic of the past and, at the same time, agitates future discussions about the genre.

In this context, Indianism as a potentiator of innovation, as in the case of Magalhães, leads to several other projects penned by central actors in Brazilian Romanticism, sometimes unfinished (ZILBERMAN, 2020). However, innovation does not only concern indigenous protagonists – some of them pictured not only as warriors, but also as singers of traditional poetry –, but also the new traits of heroism in more traditional epic figures as well, such as Pedro I in *A Independência do Brasil* (1847-1855).

“Transformations of epic heroism in *A Independência do Brasil*, by Teixeira e Sousa”, by Marcos Machado Nunes, begins by analysing the reception of the poem. According to Nunes, critical voices contemporary to the poem's publication were emphatic in highlighting the presence of a dynamic of continuity and change in elements of the poem, with particular focus on the incorporation of other genres within the text. Nunes then focuses on how this dynamic influences the construction of heroism in the poem, a central element in the tradition. The poem's hero, Prince Regent Pedro (later Emperor Pedro I), is portrayed as an epic hero who, guided by a divine plot to which he is subjectet, acts through the use of words rather than as a warrior. Moreover, the poem presents Pedro's relationship with the collective as being based on a model of affection drawn from family relations.

The poem *Anchieta, ou O Evangelho na Selva* (1875), by Fagundes Varela, is also in a certain sense indianistic; it combines however the Gospel and Indianism against the background of the epic genre. New is here the anchoring of its poetic dimension in the voice of the author, and not in tradition. Roger Friedlein starts from this observation in “Narrator and poet in Fagundes Varela: *Anchieta ou o Evangelho nas selvas* (1875)”. According to

Friedlein, although among the many facets of José de Anchieta features that of being the author of the first epic poem written in the Americas, *De gestis Mendii de Saa* (Coimbra, 1563), in the literary recreations of the poet's character in the 19th century – as much as in the numerous biographies of the Jesuit – other aspects of his personality predominate. In *Confederação dos Tamoios*, for example, the figure of Anchieta, in his capacity as poet, would appear as marked by a romantic sensibility of a lyric poet who finds himself in communion with nature and the autochthonous inhabitants of his adopted country. As shown in Gonçalves de Magalhães' poem, Anchieta would mark the beginning of a historical lineage of Americanist poets that would be continued until reaching the 19th century. Fagundes Varela's poem, on the other hand, according to Friedlein, stages the polyfaceted missionary in his preaching of the Gospel, and therefore as a narrator possessing a power of irresistible attraction, creating for his neophyte audience, each night, a fascinating world of peace to which the audience is carried away, and whose flagrant contrast with the warlike reality of everyday life remains unresolved until the end of the poem. The figures of Anchieta as a poet and Anchieta as a narrator indicate, according to Friedlein, how between the two epic poems, by Gonçalves de Magalhães and Fagundes Varela, the focus is transferred from the national dimension of the epic to another one, which is closer to the narrative. As the epic genre is transformed, the self-reflexive vision of the first poet in Brazil conceived in the epic poetry of Romanticism is also modified. Varela distances himself from the historicist self-reflexivity of earlier Romanticism to arrive at an individualist poetics. In this sense, Fagundes Varela's poem is a site of literary innovation, but also of implicit reflection on poetry and its making.

In fact, innovation not only coexists with reflection but certainly inspires it, triggering an explicit theoretical debate at the time around its limits and possibilities, justifying, substantiating or condemning it. An intense (though sometimes dispersed) reflection on epic poetry is articulated in discourses that circulate in diverse textual typology: paratexts, literary historiography and criticism, press, private writing (letters), as well as in literary texts, particularly in the epic poems themselves, in moments of self-reflection (as we have seen in Fagundes Varela).

Precisely the literary discussion that takes place around the epic genre in nineteenth-century Brazil will be the second focus of the papers that make up this book and occupy the section “Epic poetry, object of debate”. These investigations will help to dimension the expectations that are built about the genre and to better understand the particular texts, their construction and reception.

If it is true that, from Romanticism onwards, an intense debate on the relevance and scope of epic poetry has arisen in Brazilian literary circles, this debate is not unique to Brazil or isolated in the country. It occurs also in the context of international exchange, in the first place between Brazil and Portugal. Accompanying the celebrations of the third centenary of its publication, *Os Lusíadas* enters the discussion agenda with force. If, however, from the point of view of poetic practice, Camões’ poem serves as an epitome of tradition, on the other hand, we find in Joaquim Nabuco an innovative critical proposal that introduces us to a very particular situation of the tradition/innovation dynamic.

This situation is the object of Regina Zilberman’s chapter, “*Os Lusíadas* according to Joaquim Nabuco: the debate over the poem’s nationality in the press of 1872”. Joaquim Nabuco publishes in 1872 *Camões e Os Lusíadas*, a book preceded by an article, with the same title, printed in the newspaper *A República*. He presents, through the press, the main theses of his book, which are based on the surprising assumption that *The Lusíads* belong to Brazilian literature. To better dimension the meaning of Nabuco’s discussion on the epic, Zilberman contextualizes it in the debate on the existence or not of a specificity of Brazilian literature in relation to the Portuguese, which runs through the nineteenth century and is the basis of Indianism. According to Zilberman, the assumptions of Romanticism on the construction of a national literature, based on the representation of Nature and the indigenous people would be, for Nabuco, mistaken. Such bases would not correspond to the concrete reality of Brazilian society, which would find its particularity, rather, in slavery, an institution, in turn, doomed to disappear. For Nabuco, since there is no viable basis for the affirmation of his particularity, being, as Zilberman notes, in a way, “foreign” the literature then made in Brazil, a vacuum is created that could be filled by the literary heritage of the

Portuguese language. Thus, for not finding a reason to justify the separation of Brazilian and Portuguese literature, Nabuco adopts the aesthetic criterion to affirm the superiority of *Os Lusíadas* over *Confederação dos Tamoios*. The premise of Nabuco's text remains the idea that epic poetry would be able to synthesize the aspirations of representation of nationality. More than that, with Zilberman's work, it becomes clear how the debate on the epic comes to imply the more general questioning about the possibility of a whole national literature, indicating the centrality of the genre in current conceptions of literature and its discursive representations as a synthesis of a national literature.

But this debate also occurs (largely overseen until now) between Brazil and its South American neighbors. As Dirk Brunke shows in his contribution to this volume, "Brazil and the River Plate: critical intersections and possibilities of the epic in the 19th century", Brazil appears in this context as a space that is favourable to the epic. It is the authors from the River Plate region who discover the epic potential of the Brazilian national territory. At any rate, Brazil and the Río de la Plata assumed a central position with regard to the epic genre: the controversy over *Confederação dos Tamoios* (1856) was accompanied by the publication of a large number of poems, exceeded only by the quantity of texts published in the Río de la Plata region. Brazilian and Río de la Plata epics have mutually inspired one another. There are, for example, theoretical contributions from authors from the Plata region – exiled in Brazil – who theme "Brazil" in their texts. The most important example in this context is the epic poem *Cantos del peregrino* (1846-57), by the Argentinian José Mármol, who uses the motif of the "tropical" to stylise Brazil as a space of inspiration, favouring heroic poetry, comparing it with the climatic conditions of Argentina, arid and lacking in poetic stimuli. In his study, Brunke explores the contact of the Rioplatense (Juan María Gutiérrez, José Mármol) and Brazilian (Joaquim Norberto Souza Silva) authors, focusing on the theoretical discourse and how it is articulated in paratexts (prologues, footnotes, glossaries) and in self-reflexive passages in the epic poems.

Particularly in Brazil (unlike in Argentina), the discussion on the epic constitutes a central piece of the discourses of nationality formation, but also of aesthetic innovation. Notorious to this day has been the debate

between José de Alencar and Gonçalves de Magalhães, which unfolds in the conflict between the epic and the novel. Alencar, though probing the possibility of a larger formal rupture, (like Nabuco) condemns Magalhães's *Confederação dos Tamoios* precisely because it is not worthy of occupying the position of the coveted "national poem"; thus, the assumption shared by both is that there needs to be such a text. This polemic is certainly the best known and most studied episode in the history of epic poetry in 19th century Brazil. But as we have seen in the works of Regina Zilberman and Dirk Brunke, the reflection and discussion on the genre and its meaning in the context of emerging national literatures is not exhausted in it.

Some of the other contributions to the debate consider the epic thereby satirically, and are articulated retrospectively, from the point of view of those who already consider the debate to be over. In this sense, Antônio Sanseverino's interest in his contribution to this book, "In the middle of this prose, an epic poem", is to go through the references to the epic in the prose of Machado de Assis. The starting point is the critical performance of Machado, called to debate the attempts of epic poetry, mainly in the 1860s. Machado's chronicles incorporate epic references, in elevated terms, to ironize the precariousness of daily life in Rio de Janeiro. In the novel and the short story, according to Sanseverino, the reference to the epic is also presented as irony to debased characters and actions. In a way, the critic learned the literary field and the place of epic poetry in Brazil. The fictionist, in turn, made a prose in which the discourse incorporates the authors of the tradition, epic scenes and characters, but only in vocabulary. This mismatch between scenes and narrative discourse indicates the impossibility of heroic action, revealing a modern prose, which breaks with the epic tradition. Parallel to these developments, however, the epic genre continues to be topical and is pushed towards modernity. Sousândrade's *O Guesa* will be the best example for that.

This volume brings together a selection of articles that stem from two phases of a PROBRAL project (CAPES and DAAD) between UFRGS in Porto Alegre and Ruhr-Universität in Bochum.

The project has manifested itself in, so far, three congresses of the Deutscher Lusitanistenverband DLV (Association of German Lusitanists)

in Mainz (2017), Augsburg (2019) and Leipzig (2021), and has produced a series of publications as its main outcome: *A epopeia em questão* (2019), *Épica e modernidade* (2022, first in the journal of the Brazilian Association of Comparative Literature ABRALIC, 2020), a thematic *dossier* in *Revista Épicas* (2020) and another *dossier* in *Conexão Letras* (2022).

This volume brings together a selection of articles from these volumes, and this introduction is largely based on the introduction to *A epopeia em questão*, where we had already formulated the basic problems with a slightly different focus.

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Bochum/Porto Alegre, the editors

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Tradition and innovation  
in epic practice

## *A Confederação dos Tamoios,* an exemplary epic

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The title of this work might sound naïve or provocative, depending on the understanding of the term *exemplary*. How could *A Confederação dos Tamoios* be exemplary if it became known when the epic was a poetic genre under discussion, perhaps awaiting reformulation? In other words, what *model* could it be linked to at a time when models were already uncertain or called into question? We propose the hypothesis that *A Confederação dos Tamoios* can be considered exemplary precisely because it gives rise to a controversy that brings to focus the central debates on the epic genre in the 19th century. In a way, because it is an epic composed during Romanticism, *A Confederação dos Tamoios* articulates questions about the epic genre in which its present can be seen, its future projected, and its past resumed.

Thus, *A Confederação dos Tamoios*, whether due to the elements it mobilizes internally or to the controversy it gave rise to, demarcates an important place for the epic genre in Brazilian literature from the 19th century onwards.

We will argue that the poem occupies this place due to a conscious oscillation throughout the work of Gonçalves de Magalhães. The official founder of Brazilian Romanticism occupies a transitional intermediary place, which alternates between the neoclassical forms and the new precepts of a romantic aesthetic. For this reason, the assessments of his work are often disparate: Alcântara Machado, for example, calls him a *regretful romantic* (1936), while Antonio Candido, in his *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*, defines him as an *early romantic*, considering him the representative of a “vacilante” generation that placed the aesthetic and common places of classicism in a romantic setting (CANDIDO, 2014, p. 369).

We intend to argue that this oscillation is typical of the poetry of Gonçalves de Magalhães and that it can be revealing, leading to a more proper understanding of his poem *A Confederação dos Tamoios*.

Thus, in this work, we will consider certain aspects of the controversy initiated by José de Alencar surrounding *A Confederação dos Tamoios* following closely the propositions expressed by Saulo Neiva in his article “Reler hoje *A Confederação dos Tamoios?*” (2017). Nevertheless, we will also, in response to his invitation in that work, propose a reading of the poem that “o insira novamente na obra de Magalhães, mais do que na ruidosa polêmica que o envolveu” (NEIVA, 2017, p. 15). In this direction, this work seeks, at first, to explain the poetic course and program of the work of Gonçalves de Magalhães and then to discuss examples from *Confederação* that place the poem in this program and that outline a particular conception of epic poetry, in contrast to those flaunted in the controversy raised by José de Alencar about the poem.

There had already been an attempt at a Brazilian epic during Romanticism, with the poem of Teixeira e Souza, *Independência do Brasil*. The first volume dates to 1847, and the second to 1855, but the work was already in the making at the beginning of the 1940s, as stated by the author in the preface to the first volume (SOUZA, 1847, p. 16).

The leading cause of the misfortune of the work, seldom remembered, was not its poetic merits but rather its inadequacy to a poetic-political program that was spreading rapidly in the early years of Brazilian Romanticism. As for the form, the poem applies the distinctive elements of the epic genre: Pedro is the hero, and the marvelous is present in the representation of angels, demons, and personifications, such as Despotism and Anarchy, who appear in place of pagan deities in a formulation closer to Tasso and his *Gerusalemme Liberata* than to *Os Lusíadas* by Camões. However, it resembles Camões in the sense that it makes use of the decasyllable and the *ottava rima*. Thus, the formal model is Camonian, but the matter is strictly contemporary and offers a distinct representation of the marvelous, not adopting the mythological element, not even as a poetic figure.

When Teixeira e Souza allows himself to explore a topic of the ancient epic, the descent into the hells in Books V and VI, he represents Despotism,

the enemy of Brazil, who raises the infernal powers against the nation. He incorporates the pagan imaginary only in a listing, which is another formal feature of the epic (Book VI, stanzas 26 and 27):

XXVI

Per entre as trevas denegrída assoma  
A turba, que surgira desse Abysmo,  
A qual á velha Grécia, e antiga Roma  
    Já levara o fallaz polyteismo;  
Ninguém calcular pôde a vasta somma  
Dos deuses, que adorara o gentilismo!...  
Creu-se que o num'ro seu o Olympo enchia.  
    A cujo peso Atlante succumbia!

XXVII

São esses os que foram n'outra edade  
Rhea; Juno (dos numes soberana);  
Saturno; Jove (a excelsa divindade);  
    Pallas; Astrea; Ceres; e Dianna;  
    Thetis; e dos amores a deidade;  
Marte (da guerra divindade insana);  
Neptuno; Apollo; Baccho; Hermes; Summano;  
    Esculapio; Bellona; Hebe; Vulcano:  
    (SOUZA, 1847, p. 256-257).

As Paulo Franchetti shows (2007, p. 91-92), the poem is rejected, and its discredit, despite its modest poetic qualities, is due to Pedro II's commitment to favor the intellectuals of Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro, who exposed the need for studies and literary works dedicated to Brazilian Indigenous peoples. In fact, 1836 was the year of the first edition of the magazine *Nitheroy*, in which Gonçalves de Magalhães published his *Ensaio sobre a História da Literatura Brasileira – Estudo Preliminar*. That served as the first Brazilian romantic manifesto. In a well-known passage, he emphasizes the desire for detachment from Portugal and for poetry founded on mythology in search of a poetic morality “que empluma as asas ao Gênio” (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 148):

Com a poesia vieram todos os Deoses do paganismo, espalharam-se pelo Brasil, e dos céos, das florestas e dos rios se apoderaram. A Poesia do Brasil não é uma indígena civilisada, é uma Grega, vestida à Francesa, e à Portuguesa, e climatisada no Brasil (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 146).

The poets must now seek inspiration for their imagination in Brazil, in the Indigenous peoples. To this end, Magalhães draws on the idea advocated by Schiller in the principles of German Romanticism: it is the genius of the poet – his original inspiration – that becomes the only thing to rule art, that must break free from predetermined classical models and follow only the inspirations of the soul. The intention to explore themes that characterize Brazil's new status of independence perfectly harmonizes with the idea of genius, proving a certain anti-lusitanian tendency of the Brazilian literature of the period to establish once and for all their nationality.

This premise is innovative in terms of matter, but its form is still classical: although a new formal set of rules is sought, a representative or mimetic regime still prevails, which understands art as the imitation of nature or models. This understanding is, in our view, at the heart of the writing of *A Confederação dos Tamoios*. It manifests in an oscillation between romantic motifs and the classical framework halfway through the imitation of models and romantic inspiration.

This dichotomy between the notion of genius and the exemplary nature of the models appears in another part of the essay, which is cited less often. In it, Magalhães condemns the servile imitation of the ancient, the classical precepts of imitation that paralyze the genius, but at the same time advises the study of these texts, showing the force of these models. His romantic manifesto is mainly conservative:

e si até hoje a nossa poesia não oferece um caracter inteiramente novo e particular, é que os Poetas, dominados pelos preceitos, atados pela imitação dos Antigos, que como diz Pope, é imitar mesmo a Natureza (como si a natureza se ostentasse sempre a mesma nas regioens polares, e nos Trópicos, e diversos sendo os costumes, as leis, e as crenças, só a poesia não partilhasse essa diversidade) não tiveram bastante força para despojarem-se do jugo dessas leis, as mais das vezes arbitrarias, da quelles, que se arrogam o direito de torturar o Gênio, arvorando-se Legisladores do Parnaso. Depois que Homero, inspirado pelo seu Gênio, sem apóio de alheia crítica, elevou-se à grandeza da Epopeia, criação sua, e Píndaro pelo mesmo caminho à sublimidade da Lírica, vieram então, os críticos, e estabeleceram as regras. Convém estudar os Antigos, e os modelos dos que nas diversas composições poéticas se avantajaram, mas não escravizar-se (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 158).

At the same time as he theorized about Romanticism, he began to practice it. In this sense, we are particularly interested in the preface of his book of poems *Suspiros Poéticos e Saudades*, entitled “Lede”, which tries to summarize the expedients of romantic art but, in doing so, reveals an oscillation between the classical and the romantic. As noted by Manuel Bandeira (2009, p. 46) in his *Apresentação da Literatura Brasileira*, while Magalhães “despediu-se das ficções de Homero não despediu-se totalmente da velha retórica”

Pede o uso que se dê um prólogo ao Livro, como um pórtico ao edificio, e como este deve indicar per sua construcção a que Divindade se consagra o Templo, assim deve aquelle designar o caracter da obra. Sancto uso, de que nos aproveitamos (...) (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 1).

The first paragraph refers to a model to be emulated, the adequacy of a genre, or usage: “Pede o uso que se dê um prólogo ao livro”. Poetry is equated to the building, perennial, recovering the classical topic of *Exegi Monumentum*,<sup>1</sup> on the one hand, the imagery is pagan: as the gate should allude to “a qual divindade o templo se consagra”, on the other, the preface, with the words “ Santo uso “ refers to the Catholic sphere. Magalhães proposes, in this first paragraph of “Lede,” a reform that is prudent and concerns the neoclassical building. He continues:

É um livro de poesias escriptas segundo as impressoens dos logares; ora sentado entre as ruínas da antiga Roma, meditando sobre a sorte dos impérios; ora no cimo dos Alpes, a imaginação vagando no infinito, como um átomo no espaço; ora na gothica catedral, admirando a grandeza de Deos, ora entre os cyprestes, que espalham suas sombras sobre os túmulos; ora enfim reflectindo sobre a sorte da Pátria, sobre as paixoens dos homens, sobre o nada da vida. São Poesias de um peregrino, variadas como as scenas da natureza, diversas como as phases da vida, mas que se harmonisam pela unidade do pensamento, e que se ligam pelos annéis de uma cadeia. Poesias d’alma, e do coração, e que só pela alma, e o coração, devem ser julgadas (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 2).

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<sup>1</sup> The first traces of this topic, consecrated by Horace in his *Ode* 3.30, are already seen in the *Sixth Olympian Ode* of the late-archaic Greek poet Pindar, in which he compares the opening of his poem to a gate with gold pillars placed as the front of a well-built chamber, forming an extraordinary palace, and in which he states the beginning of the work must be given a likewise glistening front.



His poems will be “escritos segundo a impressão dos lugares”: it is an immersion in a world mediated by the Self, the quintessential territory of romantic subjectivity; the poet meditates on the fleetingness of everything (“nas ruínas da Antiga Roma”) and the sublime (sometimes terrible, “no cimo dos Alpes”, sometimes magnificent, “a gótica catedral”); but at the same time, he expresses concern about the unity of the work (the unity of thought harmonizes everything), a neoclassical relapse that is soon countered with another image: these are “são poemas da alma e do coração, e que só pela alma, e o coração, devem ser julgadas”. Magalhães intends for his poems to be a sigh that harmonizes with the sigh of his reader, recovering the idea of subjective and almost elusive identification.

From then on, the classic becomes romantic: his book ceases to be the building mentioned at the beginning of the preface to become “folhas que lançamos hoje aos pés” (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 3) or even a “folha no meio da floresta batida pelos ventos do inverno” (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 8-9). The classic idea of the permanence of the work alternates with images of its fleetingness and transience, which are one of the favorite themes of Romanticism. Although the book is a sigh – an echo in the realm of the ineffable that corresponds to the undivided manifestation of the poet’s interiority – Magalhães will rationally state that “para bem se avaliar esta obra, três cousas releva notar-se: o fim, o gênero e a forma” (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 3), referring to a classic model of generic production, in which each circumstance possesses its specific poetic genre, formally structured and targeted.

It seemed necessary to indicate the precepts of this aesthetic that landed in Brazil, and that was already being left behind in Europe, but by rapidly listing the romantic topics that were only gradually developed in Europe, Magalhães shows his oscillations between the neoclassical language in force and the recently arrived romantic one.

This uncertainty and this oscillation are acknowledged thirty years later; Magalhães calls romantic lyricism a “desalinho”, stating that its only law is disorder, and places his work between the classical and the romantic. That is what he expresses in 1865, in the publication of his *Tragédias*, only one year after the second edition of *Tamoios*. Perhaps apprehensive because of the previous controversy surrounding his epic, he warns in *Tragédias*:

Frios censores, críticos impassíveis, juizes parciaes e imparciaes, amigos e inimigos, a vós me entrego. Não faltarão accusações em todos os gêneros. Talvez tenham razão, sobre tudo si quizerem medir esta obra com o compasso de Aristóteles e de Horacio, ou vel-a com o prisma dos Românticos. Eu não sigo nem o rigor dos Clássicos, nem o desalinho dos segundos; não vendo verdade absoluta em nenhum dos systemas, faço as devidas concessões a ambos; ou antes, faço o que entendo, e o que posso (MAGALHÃES, 1865, p. 7).

These arguments seem enough to locate *A Confederação dos Tamoios* within the poetic project of Gonçalves de Magalhães and this “Romantismo de primeira hora”. To a great extent, this conception of his work eliminates the criticism the poem received in the controversy initiated by José de Alencar with his *Cartas sobre a Confederação dos Tamoios*. As shown by Neiva (2017, p. 7-8), Alencar focuses his criticism on two aspects: the technical ineptitude of Gonçalves of Magalhães and the inadequacy of the poem as an epic. The scholar observes that this inadequacy is part of a corollary accepted by Alencar that the epic was an outdated genre. Outdated because it is no longer possible to strictly adopt the rules inspired by the models in this new literary moment. It is for not following the models and for using, in the epic, images typical of other genres – there is a twist on the idea of the classic *decorum* – that Magalhães will be criticized. I quote the excerpts mentioned by Neiva (2017, p. 8):

Perguntaria se não é extravagante que um poeta, destinando-se a cantar um assumpto heróico, invoque para este fim o “sol que esmalta as pétalas das flôres”, como faria um autor de bucólicas e de idyllos? [...] [...] A invocação do poema do sr. Magalhães, por qualquer lado que a consideremos, não satisfaz; como arte, como fórmula da epopéa, é contra as regras e exemplos dos mestres (ALENCAR, 1856, p. 65-66).

Neiva (2017, p. 9) shows that the conception of epic by Magalhães dialogues with the conceptions of epic from the past and is more dynamic than the view by Alencar. In a warning to the second edition of his epic, Magalhães conceived the epic as “encerrando todos os gêneros de poesia” (2008, p. 855) – a renaissance point of view – at the same time as he aims at updating the genre: he claims to abandon the Camonian *ottava rima*, a measure consecrated for the genre since it was too conventional and inappropriate to the taste of the time.

We add to Neiva's theses that Magalhães operates this renewal of the epic objectively, proposing an interaction between the matter of his poem and the classical substrate and imagery, never entirely abandoning them, but rather dialoguing with them<sup>2</sup>: they are still the throes of a poetic representation which sees art as imitation, but this imitation is now completely new, detached from European models and injected with an atmosphere of nationality.

An example of this expedient, in *Confederação*, is in the use of the simile. This rhetorical-poetic resource is determinant in classical epic, which makes it possible for Magalhães to compare figures of the classical framework with the originality of Brazilian scenes, characters, and landscapes. This is the case of the simile that characterizes the poem's hero, Aimbiré, in his first appearance (II, v. 48-53). There, the Indian is compared, respectively, to Hercules, to the god Mars and the Greek statuary of Phidias, in a profusion of Greek-Roman topics:

De vultu hercúleo, soberano o porte,  
Olhar dominador, severo o rosto,  
Bela estátua de bronze parecia,  
Qual a de Marte modelara um Fídias.  
(MAGALHÃES, 2008, p. 882).

The Amazon River, in verses 60 to 63 of the first book:

Ressupino gigante se afigura,  
Qual outro Briaréu, mas verdadeiro,  
Que estende os braços para arcar a terra!  
(MAGALHÃES, 2008, p. 861).

The work itself already tells us that it would be programmatic to put side by side such images to highlight their new aesthetic intentions, revealing the game that seems to be predominant in the poems of Magalhães (I, v. 132-138):

Oh vós da Grécia deleitosos campos  
Onde o Alfeu e o Eurotas serpenteiam,  
E em cujas margens dríades habitam!

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<sup>2</sup> This becomes clear in the figure of other poets that Magalhães considers as mentors. Souza Caldas, called by him as "primeiro dos nossos líricos" (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 4), reiterates, in his content, the religious theme by appropriating biblical modes of expression and breaks with the arcadian imagination; however, he transposes the psalms into fixed forms, such as the cantata and the ode.

Montes, que dais abrigo em vossos topos,  
De loureiros à sombra, às castas Musas;  
Vós não assoberbais a majestade  
Destes montes brasílios, destes bosques!  
(MAGALHÃES, 2008, p. 863).

Magalhães will find this dialogue between originality and model not only in Arcadian predecessors who portrayed the Indian – such as Santa Rita Durão and, above all, Basílio da Gama, who, however, he does not refer to directly – but also in romantic contemporaries, especially Odorico Mendes, who he directly referred to, as we will see now.

Only one year before the publication of *A Confederação dos Tamoios*, the *Eneida Brasileira* was printed in 1854; the epithet was not fortuitous. With this title, Odorico emphasized not only his act of pouring all Virgil into Portuguese (a project completed in 1858), but also marked a position that distinguished his *Eneida* from that of the Portuguese translators João Franco Barreto (in the 17th century, who adopted the *ottava rima* and Camonian lexicon) and José Victorino Barreto Feio, in the 19th century.

It is possible that the translation of Odorico might have influenced the conceptualization of epic in Magalhães, as can be seen from an essay published by Magalhães in the issue of *Revista do Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro* published in the first quarter of 1860. In it, Magalhães treats Odorico as an *auctoritas* of the Brazilian epic in a tone that appears to be a covert replica of the controversy of five years earlier:

Os feitos dos indígenas oferecem argumento simpático à nossa poesia nacional. E como bem notou o Sr. Odorico Mendes: os selvagens, rudes e de costumes quase homéricos, podem prestar belos quadros à epopeia. O parecer de tão abalizado crítico, que nos deu Virgílio em português, e luta para interpretar Homero, é de tanto peso, que decide só por si qualquer dúvida (MAGALHÃES, 1860, p. 63).

The Brazilian Latinist Paulo Sérgio de Vasconcelos (2007, p. 39), in an analysis of the translations by José Vitorino Barreto Feio and Odorico Mendes, notes that, although both translators sometimes “filtrem Virgílio pelo viés camoniano”, Odorico “se impregna do estilo virgiliano e escreve à maneira virgiliana, empregando certas características do estilo do poeta latino”, such as archaisms, hyperbatons, and poetic compounds. Professor Brunno Vieira (2010, p. 144) shows how, in parts of the Magalhães’ epic,

there are allusions to the *Eneida* by Odorico in intertextual key. He quotes, as an example, a passage that marks the beginning of the story in *A Confederação dos Tamoios* (I, vv. 46-48): “Baliza natural ao Norte avulta/ O das águas gigante caudaloso, /Que pela terra alarga-se vastíssimo” (MAGALHÃES, 2008, p. 860), which is compared to verses 20-22 of *Eneida Brasileira* by Odorico Mendes: “Colônia Tíria no ultramar, Cartago, / Do Ítalo Tibre contraposta às fozes/Houve, possante empório, vastíssimo” (MENDES, 1854, p. 7).

According to Vieira, both works share poetic and rhetorical resources that refer to a Latinizing inheritance, if not precisely Virgilian:

O início da epopeia e da tradução brasileira são correlatos. Notem-se a digressão geográfica (lá o Amazonas, cá Cartago), o hipérbato latinizante (“o das águas gigante caudaloso” // “do ítalo Tibre contraposta às fozes”), a amplificação na descrição (a concatenação de epítetos e adjetivos e a coincidência dos superlativos finais “vastíssimo” e “aspérrimo”), a economia nos artigos no primeiro verso que deixa lapidar o português (VIEIRA, 2010, p. 145).

A comparison, also quoted by the Brazilian scholar (2010, p. 145), to the Portuguese translation by José Vitorino Barreto Feio, also from the 19th century, can elucidate the proximity between Magalhães and Mendes:

Longe da foz do Tibre, olhando a Itália,  
Uma cidade antiga houve, Cartago:  
Colônia foi de Tírios; opulenta,  
E na escola da guerra endurecida.  
(FEIO, 1846, p. 4).

But it is not only by language and form that the relationship with *Aeneid* is observed. It is also seen in the reupdating or emulation of commonplaces of the epic. In Book VI of *Aeneid*, Virgil imitates a scene already seen in Homer’s *Odyssey*: the descent into the hells. In this episode, Aeneas rejoins his father, Anchises, who shows him the souls that will incarnate in the bodies of Roman heroes still to be born. It is the moment when Virgil pays a compliment to Rome, showing how great the future of the Romans will be, heirs of Troy (*Eneida Brasileira*, Book VI, vv. 778-781):

Eia, a glória que os Dárdanos espera,  
Do ítalo tronco os descendentes nossos,  
Que a fama ilustrarão de seus maiores,

Hei de explicar-te, e aprenderá teus fados.  
(MENDES, 1854, p. 207).

At this moment, Aeneas has a vision of his distant descendant, Gaius Octavius, who will restore peace comparable to the Golden Age, the “satúrnios séculos dourados” (*Eneida Brasileira*, Book VI, vv. 816-819):

Eis, eis o promettido, Augusto César,  
Diva stirpe, varão que ao Lácio antigo  
Há-de os Satúrnios séculos dourados  
restituir (...) (MENDES, 1854, p. 208).

There is no “descent into hells” in *A Confederação dos Tamoios*. But just as Aeneas sees the glorious future of his people configured in a Rome of the times of Virgil, in *A Confederação dos Tamoios*, Magalhães also heralds a future of glories to the heroes of his epic.

After a confrontation with cacique Tibiriçá, the Tamoio hero Jagoanharo receives the visit of Saint Sebastian in a dream, who offers him a vision of the future. The saint shows, in this future, among other events, the foundation of Rio de Janeiro (the place of climax for the narrative of *Confederação*), the independence of Brazil, and the end of the conflict narrated in the poem, praising the Brazilian emperors and Christianity. Thus, Magalhães follows the Virgil model in the sense that the future in the context of the narrative is, extradiegetically, a praise of the present through the elaboration of the matter of the past. In this way, Pedro I is portrayed and praised as a peacemaker hero in terms of Caesar Augustus by Virgil. José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva is depicted as the patriarch of independence (Book VI, vv. 224-227):

Ei-lo, egrégio mancebo de alto porte,  
A quem glória imortal o céu destina,  
Dos filhos do Brasil já ladeado,  
E desse sábio Andrada, que se ufana  
Co'os ilustres irmãos de ter nas veias  
Sangue de Tib'riçá, e dos tamoios.  
(MAGALHÃES, 2008, p. 976).

On the one hand, *A Confederação dos Tamoios* ends with the defeat of the Indians by the enemy. On the other hand, in the figure of Andrada, there is a glimpse of a future reconciliation, constituting a national past.

The same happens in Virgil's *Aeneid*, when the Trojan hero, Aeneas, founds a new city that will appease the wrath even of gods that used to be enemies.

In conclusion, two elements make it possible to recover *A Confederação dos Tamoios* and call it “exemplary.” First, as we have already mentioned, there is the complete adequacy of the work for the poetic program of Magalhães, that not only sees the epic as dynamic (NEIVA, 2017, p. 9), but also seeks the synthesis of the formal and classic image frameworks with national themes, in a clear effort for emulation, without entirely abandoning them. This seems to be the answer that Magalhães found to deal with the adequacy of ancient forms in the face of emerging romantic aesthetics.

Second, considering the importance and authority of Odorico Mendes, noted by Magalhães himself, for the conception of epic, we might think of an affiliation of the Brazilian poet to a Virgilian mold or to a certain forgotten “vertente latinizante” of Brazilian poetry, one that, as the scholar Paulo Franchetti (2008, p.1103) defines it, is

Uma vertente que talvez só agora possa ser encarada de modo compreensivo, com a queda da hegemonia do padrão de gosto modernista e com o conseqüente esbatimento do vetor teleológico da descrição histórica elaborada em meados do século XX, que apagou ou como monstrosidade ou apanhado de tolices, tudo aquilo que se afastava da linha ideal de progresso em direção à coloquialidade expressiva posta a serviço da investigação ou do retrato da vida social (FRANCHETTI, 2008, p. 1103).

These elements seem important for *A Confederação dos Tamoios* to be considered and studied more, getting past the controversy that nourished its reception.

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# Transformations of epic heroism in *A Independência do Brasil*, by Teixeira e Sousa<sup>1</sup>

*Marcos Machado Nunes*

Any researcher who tries to write a history of epic poetry in 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazil based solely on literary history and criticism might conclude that the history of this genre can be reduced to two chapters: one on the controversy surrounding *A Confederação dos Tamoios* (1856) by Gonçalves de Magalhães (1811-1882), and another on *O Guesa* (1867-1888?) by Sousândrade (1833-1902). Magalhães's poem is often discussed in terms of the critical debates that followed its publication, which allowed the rise of José de Alencar (1829-1877) and his prose fiction in the Brazilian literary world in its early years. In the other hand, *O Guesa* is perhaps the only example from this period of an epic text that has reached canonical status, albeit at a later time and sometimes occupying a marginal position. Beyond these two works, we would only find a few other titles and, at most, brief judgements condemning most of these works to obscurity. However, by reading these works (as well as others that are not even mentioned), we can see that the history of epic poetry in Brazil is more complex and rich than these two chapters suggest, provided we are willing to set aside any hope of reviving texts that may not aesthetically appeal to a contemporary reader without mediations.

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<sup>1</sup> This text was presented at the XI International Congress of Lusitanists, which took place in Mindelo in 2014. It presents an early result of research conducted as part of a project entitled "Das Epos unter den Bedingungen der Romantik: Transformation un Reflexion einer unmöglichen Gattung in der Iberoromania" ("Epic poetry under the conditions of Romanticism: transformation and reflection of an impossible genre in the iberoromanic space"). The project, coordinated by Prof. Dr. Roger Friedlein, was financed by the DFG and took place between 2014 and 2017 at Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

It is not our aim here to analyse this critical and historiographic ellipse. However, it is important to note that it is somewhat connected to the establishment of a more general trend in literary studies (not only in Brazil) that originated from the Hegelian tradition that diagnosed the decline and death of the epic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the replacement of the genre, deemed incompatible with modern aesthetics, by the novel. Two pillars of this well-known tradition were the works of Lukács (2009) and Bakhtin (1981) in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, a number of more recent works<sup>2</sup> have attempted, from different premises and focusing on different periods since the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and diverse national and/or transnational traditions, to give a new configuration to the history of the genre, which, though considered dead, reproduces itself in the critical discourses of the period and establishes connections with a great number of texts. One thing that these works have in common, which can be easily observed, is the fact that epic poetry crosses the 19<sup>th</sup> century being transformed in different senses and degrees, in addition to continuities that remain ambiguous or not always evident. For example, for Johns-Putra (2006), the thesis of the end of epic poetry corresponds to a limited understanding of literary genre as a phenomenon, which, according to her, implies intentionality and reception, making it impossible to establish strict borders between epic and non-epic texts. The thesis of the end of epic poetry, according to Johns-Putra, “recognises the impact of historical shifts in thought on the epic, but is unfortunate in its refusal to pursue the relationship between modern works and the epic tradition that precedes them, even when they show every intention of participating in that tradition” (Johns-Putra, 2006, p. 9).

In the following paragraphs, I discuss how the dynamics of transformation and continuity play out in a particular text, *A Independência do Brasil* (1847 and 1855) by Antônio Gonçalves Teixeira e Sousa (1812-1861), with a focus on an aspect that is central to the epic tradition: heroism.

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<sup>2</sup> To mention only a few of the most relevant ones: Moretti (1996), Nikolova (2002), Christians (2004), Labarthe (2004), Johns-Putra (2006), Neiva (2008), Tucker (2009), Krauss e Mohnike (2011).

Upon analysing the poem's reception at the time of its publication, we can see that it faced criticism for both transgression and anachronistic reproduction of epic patterns. This observation will serve as the starting point for a brief examination of one formal aspect of this paradoxical situation in the poem. Next, I will focus on the construction of the hero of the poem, Prince Regent Pedro (Pedro de Alcântara, 1798-1834, who became Emperor Pedro I of Brazil after Independence). I will argue that Pedro represents an ethical ideal that does not align with the traditional epic model of the martial hero, and instead presents different nuances as he distances himself from that model. Submitted to a divine plot, the hero refuses to engage in warlike actions and instead acts through the spoken word, whether as an instrument of political articulation and mediation in conflict situations or as performative instances of narration. At the same time, the collective dimension of heroic action is constructed through the mobilization of emotions proper to family contexts, and the new model of heroism represented by Pedro is dependent on acceptance of a pact and subjected to divine will, making it contingent, conditioned, and reversible. Before beginning my reading of the poem, I would like to provide some background information about its author.

Teixeira e Sousa was an Afro-Brazilian of poor origins who was born in Cabo Frio, on the coast of Rio de Janeiro. By 1840, he settled in the capital, Rio de Janeiro, where he came into contact with the Afro-Brazilian editor, translator, and author Francisco de Paula Brito (1809-1861). In the beginning of his literary career, he had the support of Januário da Cunha Barbosa (1780-1846) and Gonçalves de Magalhães himself, and later on became close with literary critic Santiago Nunes Ribeiro (182?-1847) and the young Machado de Assis (1839-1908), who was also a member of Paula Brito's circle. Teixeira e Sousa worked with Paula Brito in his editorial business and later on became a school teacher. Having poor financial resources, he tried twice between 1848 and 1855 to secure a position as a public servant and eventually began working as a registrar in the town of Macaé, also on the coast of the Province of Rio de Janeiro, northeast of the capital. In a letter to Joaquim Norberto (1820-1891), he confessed that he was unable to find the conditions to create, being "an ex-poet and today a

stupid and ignorant registrar” in his new job because “between the four walls of the registry office, midst the prosaic materiality of the registers, there is no inspiration” (Silva, 1876, p. 214). In the final years of his life indeed, until 1861, when he died at the age of 49, he almost stopped writing altogether. The bulk of his production is concentrated in the period between 1840 and 1855, when he published more than ten titles in different genres<sup>3</sup>. His production as a novelist, in particular, was poorly appreciated by critics and historians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Oliveira, s.d.), but is credited as a decisive contribution to the rise and establishment of the novel in 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazil. Teixeira e Sousa also had considerable success with the reading public<sup>4</sup>. He was referred to by 19<sup>th</sup> century literary critics on the side of José de Alencar and Joaquim Manoel de Macedo (1820-1882) as one of the founding fathers of the novel in Brazil, despite a lack of common understanding regarding the value of his works (Silva, 2004).

The same fate would not befall his epic poem. In the second semester of 1847, the “typographic services” of Paula Brito, his publishing house, announced the publication of the first volume of *A Independência do Brasil*. The luxury edition contained the first six books (“cantos”) of the poem, totalling 782 ottavas rimas, or 6,256 verses. The second volume was published in 1855, containing the remaining 887 ottavas (7,096 verses) of the final six books of the poem. The publication in 1847 received significant attention from the press at the time: the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, the *Ensaio Literários* in São Paulo, and *Correio da Tarde* all highlighted the release. However, the opinions, though acknowledging the publication as a remarkable achievement, received it with strong reserve, and the critical judgement

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<sup>3</sup> They are *Cantos líricos* (1841, poetry), *Os três dias de um noivado* (1844, narrative poetry), *Cornélia* (1844, drama), *A Independência do Brasil* (1848 and 1855, epic poem), *O cavaleiro teutônico, ou a freira de Mariemburg* (1855, tragedy in verse), and the novels *O filho do pescador* (1843), *Tardes de um pintor* (1847), *Gonzaga, ou a conjuração do Tiradentes* (1848), *Maria, ou a menina roubada* (1852-1853), *A Providência* (1854), *As fatalidades de dous jovens* (1856) and *Paulina e Júlia* (unpublished, manuscript lost).

<sup>4</sup> An advertisement for the magazine *A Marmota*, edited by Paula Brito, published in February 1853 in the pages of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, presents the feuilleton *A menina*, by Teixeira e Sousa, as the magazine’s main attraction, making a peculiar commentary: “This beautiful novel by Mr. Teixeira e Sousa is becoming more and more interesting, and is as asked for as cinnamon in a drugstore!” (*Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 1853, p. 4).

expressed in *Correio da Tarde*, in a series of five articles that took up the whole space of the feuilleton of this newspaper in the beginning of 1848, was devastating. Joaquim Norberto, in a testimony that somewhat romanticizes the figure of the poet, tells us that the publication of the poem caused great frustration:

Que de desgostos e de decepções lhe acarretaria a publicação de seu poema epico! Recompensavam-n'o com um emprego de malsim, e um poeta eminente desceu de seu throno de gloria e veiu por sua vez azedar-lhe a já tão amargurada existencia, imprimindo em uma das folhas d'esta côrte apreciações baseadas na mais flagrante injustiça (SILVA, 1876, p. 208).

According to Norberto, the poet attempted to secure employment as a public servant with the publication of the first volume of his poem. However, when the job was finally proposed to him, he refused it, considering the position “questionable.” The “eminent poet” who signed the articles in *Correio da Tarde* with the pseudonym “Optimus Criticus” was Gonçalves Dias<sup>5</sup> (1823-1864), who, at the beginning of 1848, would be more correctly described as “ascending”. I will return to the question of the reception of the poem and make some remarks on the dynamics of conservation and transformation in the poem, contextualizing my analysis of the transformation of heroism in the text. Before that, though, it is important to have an overview of the poem.

Proposition, invocation and dedication occupy the poem’s first fifty stanzas, introducing the simple (though not always clear) narrative line, which contains few action, that closely follows the canonical historiography of independence. Another plot is overlaid on this one, building up the marvellous of the poem, which is an allegorical and religious version of the historical events: The Daemon of Despotism fights against the Angel of Brazil. A series of episodes, catalogues, and descriptive panels give substance

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<sup>5</sup> Both Norberto (Silva, 1876) and Innocência Francisco da Silva (Silva, 1867) attribute the authorship of the articles to Gonçalves Dias, but do not provide any information about their sources. Lopes (1997, p. 294) mentions that Gonçalves Dias revealed his identity as the author of the articles to his friend Alexandre Teófilo Leal in a letter from 1848. As Lopes observes, it should be noted that only the last two articles of the series are signed with the pseudonym “Optimus Criticus”.

to the text, whose narrator hands over the word to different characters for extended passages.

The narrative begins with Prince Regent Pedro on his way to Minas Gerais (which is then fully described), where he travels in an attempt to persuade the inhabitants not to align with the Portuguese Courts (the Constitutional Assembly or “Congress” in the text, which had decreed, among other measures, that the Prince must return to Lisbon. As Pedro walks through a forest, he is led by an angel to the company of an old hermit who was a hero of the *Inconfidência* movement and makes prophecies about Pedro’s role in the independence of Brazil. When Pedro returns to his fellow travellers, he proposes that they pass the time by telling stories and his companions encourage him to tell them the history of America. The hero’s discourse spans the final 20 stanzas of the first book and the entire second book, in a vast historical, ethnographic and geopolitical panel.

In Book five, the narrator Pedro tells the story of the private conflict between a Portuguese soldier and two Brazilian friends, which is interrupted by the arrival of the travellers at an inn. At this point, the voice of an heterodiegetic narrator brings the marvellous narrative to frontstage: Despotism travels to hell to seek assistance in his plans to conquer Brazil. This accompanies a descriptive panel of hell and a catalogue of demons is portrayed, which fills also the first stanzas of Book six. This book, the last one of the first volume, ends with the Angel of Brazil seeking help from the Virgin Mary, who, through the Angel Gabriel, announces her intention to protect Brazil.

On their way back to Rio, Pedro and his followers encounter Thomé, an old indigenous man descended from Tibiriçá, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century indigenous leader who was allied with the Portuguese in the region that is now São Paulo. Pedro asks Thomé to tell them a story, and Thomé relates the history of João Ramalho (1493-1582), his shipwreck and association with the indigenous people in São Paulo, and how his son was saved from the Tamoio people, the enemy, by divine intervention. In Book nine, the Daemon of Discord flies over the northern provinces of the colony, where Bahia resists Portuguese rule. The Angel of Brazil returns to heaven seeking help, and a

celestial panel convenes, larger than the one in the first volume. It is revealed that the events in Brazil are part of a divine plan for the Christianization of the New World.

Near Rio de Janeiro, Pedro tells a foreigner the legend of Sumé (also referred to in the poem as Thomé) and how indigenous people, despising his heavenly lessons, were punished by means of the Conquest. In book ten, deputies, angels and demons intervene in the Courts and, upon the request of Clemente Pereira, Pedro agrees to install a Constitutional Assembly in Brazil. In Book eleven, the tensions become stronger and war is declared. On his way to São Paulo, on the banks of the Ipiranga river, Pedro has a dream in which he is tempted by Despotism to assume “absolute Majesty” with Portugal and its dominions, but he is dissuaded by the angels of Brazil, Memory and History, to choose to be remembered as a hero of freedom by declaring the independence of Brazil, which he does soon after. In the last book, Pedro is led in a dream to the Angel of Destinies, who shows him a vision of the future in which, in return for independence, he is crowned Emperor, but under the condition that he enters a pact in which he subjects himself to the ideal of freedom incarnated in a constitution. The vision includes difficult times in the future until complete happiness comes, but Pedro will not be able to remember the vision because everything will be deleted from his memory and he will be left to his free will.

There is a curious oscillation in the history of the critical readings of the poem: at times, the qualities of the text (regardless of whether they are viewed as positive or negative) are attributed to its excessive orthodoxy, while at other times they are attributed to its innovation. For instance, Gonçalves Dias, in the articles published in *Correio da Tarde*, ironically states that the poem by Teixeira e Sousa cannot be evaluated according to the canons of the past because it represents a new poetics:

Não me lembrarei das regras de Horacio, que já caducaram, nem de nenhum epico conhecido. – Que valem eles? – Foram bons para o seu tempo, muito bons se o quiserem; mas o romantico! oh! o romantico! ... Não hei de pois comparar o Poema do Sr. Teixeira e Sousa com nenhum outro clássico. O clássico!... ora pelo amor de Deus!... Iremos aos modernos – aos modernissimos – aos poetas de hoje, – d’esses poetas havemos de escolher os épicos, dos épicos escolheremos o que mais se assemelhar ao Sr. Teixeira e Sousa no assunto, linguagem, estilo e metrificacão (Anônimo, 1848, p. 1).

On the other hand, the reviewer in the *Guanabara* magazine says that the poem's adherence to traditional genre conventions is one of its weaknesses, and that more bravery could have been expected: “O respeito para com as regras, que tão bem compreendera, levou o Sr. Teixeira e Sousa a seguir um caminho já muito trilhado, e do qual se se quisesse afastar, mui belas cousas ter-lhe-ia inspirado o seu gênio inventivo” (Anonymous, 1855)<sup>6</sup>. However, the same reviewer also criticizes the use of religious allegories instead of classical gods and the inclusion of too much modern historical material:

O emprego dos seres alegóricos, como o Despotismo, a Liberdade, a Discórdia etc, enfraquece um pouco a ação do poema, e torna-o porventura menos interessante: mas que poderia fazer o nosso poeta, discípulo da escola romântica, e a quem era vedado o lançar mão das divindades mitológicas, que digam o que quiserem os modernos críticos, são muito mais poéticas? (Anônimo, 1855).

If we disregard the evaluative aims of these judgements and consider them as a whole, we will notice that the oscillation in direction they present (briefly presented here) situates the poem in the midst of a dynamic of epic transformation and conservation, present both in the epic texts and in the discourses about them at the time. This dynamic has been noticed in the poem's short reception, in which we observe the oscillation, though it has not been explicitly formulated. It involves the elements mentioned above (the use of religious figures that are also political allegories, the use of a contemporary historical subject) as well as others, such as the multiplicity of narrators, the frequent use of broad descriptive panels where the description of nature predominates and the representation of the subjectivity of the characters<sup>7</sup>.

Even the usage of ottava rima, considered by Gonçalves Dias as a simple appeal to the authority of Camões (1525?-1580), and to which the reviewer of *Guanabara* partly attributes the monotony of the poem, is often forced into other forms of literary expression, without, however, ceasing to

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<sup>6</sup> The same view is also expressed by Antonio Candido. According to Candido, the poem conforms “aos moldes mais ortodoxos: um herói, um grande feito, narrações retrospectivas, profecias, disputa de entidades sobrenaturais que protegem ou combatem o herói” (Sousa, 1997, p. 69).

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately we do not have the space here to delve into all these topics.



impose itself as a pattern of rhythmic iteration. Let us examine the following stanzas of the first book of the poem, in which Pedro meets the hermit:

LXXVI.

Apenas Pedro o vê, ligeiro pára!  
Sem temer, mas assás maravilhado,  
Com elle rosto a rosto firme encara!...  
O velho, sem mudar de ponto ou estado,  
A Pedro diz com voz robusta e clara,  
– Bem vindo, sê, ha tanto suspirado!...  
O Anjo do Senhor não me-enganava,  
Vem, Mancebo, que ha muito eu te-esperava.

LXXVII.

Pedro.  
– Quem és ? porque aqui estás, misero ente?!  
Serás um peccador, que compungido,  
Neste sombrio serro penitente  
Choras peccados teus arrependidos? –  
Velho.  
– Dentro deste rochedo pro'minente  
Ha annos trinta e tres vivo escondido:  
E então dos meus sessenta estava perto,  
Quando me recolhi neste deserto!

LXXVIII.

– Sou um desses da misera sociedade,  
Que em Minas hastear já quiz outr'hora  
O Pendão da suprema Liberdade,  
[...] (SOUSA, 1847, p. 28-29).

The hermit's discourse continues for four more stanzas, until Pedro responds with a stanza introduced by his name in small caps, as in a drama<sup>8</sup>. The mention of the name does not correspond to an isolated verse, nor is it absorbed by the meter of the lines, creating an additional, parallel instruction, such as the numbers of the stanzas. The dialogue continues in this way up to stanza XCVII, with sometimes changing interlocutors occurring in the middle of a stanza. This phenomenon can be described as a modal conversion: the text shifts from the narrative to the dramatic mode, without any metatextual indication and, at the same time, without any diegetic

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<sup>8</sup> Transgressions and hybridization of genre in 19<sup>th</sup> century epic poetry is one of the tendencies highlighted by the research project in Bochum. This phenomenon can also be found in other texts of the period.

indication or any alteration to the metric structure or the division into stanzas. In this passage, as in many throughout the poem, to a greater or lesser extent, a process of hybridization with drama occurs at the textual level, without interrupting the metrical flow of the epic tradition.

At this same textual level, the presence of other genres takes on yet another form. Four times, both in the heterodiegetic narration and in the narrations performed by characters, we are given an indication that parts of the metrified discourse constitute or contain autonomous poetic units. Let us consider the following example:

CVI.

[...]

Mil vozes de prazer aos ceos subiam  
Cheias de gratidão, doces, festivas!

[...]

E por onde contentes vão passando  
Este hymno liberal dizem cantando.

CVII.

Hymno liberal.

Primeiras vozes.

“– Termine para sempre a edade amara  
Que ao Brasil só causou mortal desgraça!  
Mostremos á Ullisséa ingrata, avara  
Que calcamos aos pés sua ameaça!  
Viva a Religião, e a Patria cara!  
Viva o povo, que os ferros despedaçã!  
Choro.

Viva a Constituição! viva a Egualdade!

Viva o rei! viva Pedro! e a Liberdade! (SOUSA, 1855, p. 188-189).

After the decision to convene a constitutional assembly in Brazil, a hymn is sung in the streets, which the poet transcribes into the metrical discourse without changing the rhythmic pattern of the poem. Here we have the incrustation of a “Liberal Hymn”<sup>9</sup>, presented with the indication

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<sup>9</sup> The hymn continues for two more stanzas, which are also divided into “first voices” and “chorus”. The other hymns that are presented in the same way are the “Liberal Hymn of the Colombians” (Book two, LV-LVI), “Hymn of the Colombian Indians” (Book two, LXXI-LXXVII) and the “Hymn to the Independence” (Book eleven, CXXXVI-CXLI); there are two other hymns, also in ottava rima (one sung as a prayer by the hermit in book one, and another one sung by the Tamoio warriors in Book eight), which do not have any indication exterior to the metric discourse.

of the distribution of the singing voices by a narrative instance that occurs externally and parallel to the metrical flow.

These phenomena (the inscrustation of dramatic and lyrical forms) calls into question, from a formal perspective, the accusations of both orthodoxy and radical transformation. On the one hand, meter and stanza construction follow the Renaissance tradition of the ottava rima, which was maintained in spite of the presence of elements external to this tradition. On the other, such elements transform the construction of the text, creating space for a new narrative instance, parallel to the metrical discourse.

One of the innovations criticized by Gonçalves Dias is evident in a verse of the poem's proposition: "Canto um Heroe, um Pae, um 'Sposo canto !'" (SOUSA, 1847, p. 16). According to Gonçalves Dias, this verse contains a gradation that implies the mixture of genres in terms of its thematic content: following this gradation, we move, in a single verse, from epic poetry to the idyll, and then to the epithalamium. Gonçalves Dias' text is full of sarcasm:

Um heróe he menos que um pai, ninguem o nega – sobre tudo em um Poema epico, que em um Idylio mudavam as coisas de figura.

Um pai he menos que um esposo: para prova lêa-se qualquer epithalamio: outra prova ainda maior he que na proxima edição que sahir do Virgilio se ha de mudar o character do Padre Eneas, como defeituoso que he, no quadro em que está. Eneas não ha de carregar com o pai as costas; andará catrafilado ás saias de suas querida Lindoya, e que venham os Troianos accommettel-a! (Optimus Criticus, 1848b, p. 2).

If we compare the proposition to the development of the narrative, we can say that it does not correspond to the core of its action, to its main event or chain of events (the relationship with Leopoldina is mentioned in a single episode). Although it does not get to the point, Gonçalves Dias' critique indicate a deep transformation in a thematic element strongly associated with the epic: heroism<sup>10</sup>. What Gonçalves Dias sees as a genre displacement may help us to notice how the heroism constructed in the text has a transgressive dimension, in terms of genre expectations.

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to genre transgression and hybridization, our research project focused on heroism, subjectivity and, autoreflexivity in the texts.

To some authors, heroism defines epic poetry as a genre. For instance, Labarthe, considers that “en un sens, l'épopée ou les fragments épiques ne sont autres que les récits dans lesquels s'exprime le désir d'heroïsme” (2007, p. 311). Telling us about the self-proclaimed, inherent moral and ethical superiority of warrior aristocracies (Miller, 2000, p. VII), epic poetry converts a warrior into a hero when it associates his action with a collective destiny: “les actions menées dans les grandes épopées historiques du monde entier engagent toujours le destin de toute une société” (Dérive, 2002, p. 145). In this way, the hero becomes an ideal image that is capable of forging identities. According to Madelénat, the epic hero “polarise les énergies d'une société en gestation [...], transforme un agrégat en communauté, voire en communion” (1986, p. 57).

The collective dimension of Pedro's heroism in *A Independência do Brasil*, stems from its connection to freedom. This is the most evident meaning of the heroism constructed in the poem and is repeatedly depicted. Pedro embodies the paradigm of the liberator of the Fatherland in the context of the processes of decolonization in America<sup>11</sup>. This primary meaning constitutes an updating of the meaning of collectivity in epic poetry on its own, as it identifies that collectivity with a modern nation in its process of constitution. At the same time, it expands the scope of the collectivity as it presents freedom as a universal value.

However, in addition to this main aspect of heroism in the poem, other meanings may be apprehended, which may not be less important, and make Gonçalves Dias' critique resonate. Although the main narrative tension of the poem is the impending war for independence, Pedro is not a warrior hero. Despite “Nascido para ser grande na guerra” (Book first, XXXIX), Pedro is, on the contrary, the great peacemaker:

CXXI

– No entanto se-empenhar n'uma pejeja  
 Entre o povo, e o luso amotinado  
 O mui prudente Pedro não deseja;  
 Não porque tema della o resultado,

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<sup>11</sup> In the case of Brazil, a society based on slavery, freedom has a meaning limited to Brazil as a political entity considered in its relation to Portugal.

Que o povo impaciente a guerra almeja;  
Poupar porem intenta acautelado  
Uma scena funesta, e dolorosa  
De uma guerra civil tão desastrosa (SOUSA, 1847, p. 201).

When Pedro takes the decision to start a war, he does so to uphold the oath that had made him the “Defensor perpétuo” of Brazil and to prevent conflict between factions:

XXXVII.  
“Era pois defensor eu deste Estado,  
Elle sua defesa me-exijia:  
Tal recusando, havia atraído  
Minha promessa, a propria monarchia!  
Quem poria barreiras d’outro lado  
Aos males da Discordia, e d’Anarchia?  
A lueta porfiosa dos partidos,  
Das facções os embates desmedidos!?” (XI, p. 37).

In the work of mediation and political articulation, “prudência” is a virtue repeatedly attributed to Pedro by the narrator – and to the entire process of independence as well –, which goes hand in hand with his “serenidade”. Another crucial virtue is eloquence, shared also by other heroes in the poem, such as the Brazilian deputies in the Courts in Lisbon. Eloquence and knowledge are virtues presented in the poem as superior to warlike values:

LXXXIV.  
Áquelles que, seguindo dura sorte  
Das bandeiras de Marte sanguinoso,  
Cercados de perigos, e da morte  
Se-illustram no combate pavoroso,  
Direito mais real não deu Mavorte  
Á um nome celebrado, e glorioso,  
Que aquelle, que Minerva concedêra,  
Á Tullio, que de egregios dons enchêra!

LXXXV  
Não foi só pelas armas que afamado,  
Ó Cezar te-fizeste n’outra idade!  
Si tanto foi teu nome celebrado  
O-deves a mais nobre qualidade:  
É que era o teu esp’rito cultivado  
Por essa das sciencias Divindade;  
Pois quem governa eternamente o mundo  
É somente o saber, saber profundo! (SOUSA, 1855, p. 181).

These stanzas, which present knowledge as a quality superior to weapons, appear in the text shortly after the speeches of the Brazilian deputies in the Courts. “Tullius”, mentioned in the first quoted stanza, may refer to Servius Tullius, a king and reformer of Rome who introduced social regulations, but it may also refer to Marcus Tullius Cicero. Although the skills with weapons and words are part of classical *areté*, and return in the Renaissance as ethical ideals, the former was not considered superior to the latter. In the case of warlike heroism, the word is sometimes used as a means of verbal aggression, as an extension or preparation, but not as a substitute, to physical violence (MILLER, 2000); in Teixeira e Sousa’s poem, on the other hand, it is presented as the foundation for the construction of power.

Pedro’s verbal dexterity and knowledge may be seen not only in the speeches given in the poem (or sometimes, as is the case when the riots in Minas are averted, in the result of a discursive action), but also in his narrative skills. As a narrator, Pedro is, like Varela’s Anchieta, a verbose hero who surpasses the heterodiegetic narrator quantitatively in the first volume of the poem. He draws the grandiose historical and geopolitical panels of the first volume and leads the large narrative of independence from the French Revolution to his journey to Minas (he is even able to make the end of his narration coincide with the end of the journey), narrates episodes of the conflict between groups for and against the decisions taken in Lisbon, as well as the Tomé legend. An important aspect of his heroism lies in his ability to fit “Tanto saber em tanta mocidade” (SOUSA, 1848, p. 107).

In spite of the characterization of the hero by means of his association to some romantic motifs (youth, solitude, closeness to nature, oscillation between euphoric and dysphoric states), what prevails in his construction as a serene articulator, master of knowledge and eloquence, is the image of an enlightened monarch, in a 19<sup>th</sup> century key. However, a new element reconfigures this image, giving a new dimension to the image of an enlightened monarch that seems closer to Romanticism. It is precisely this element that makes Gonçalves Dias’ sarcasm, when discussing the characterization of the poem’s hero, resonate. If it is true that the proposition that announces Pedro as “um Heroe, um Pae, um ‘Sposo” does not correspond to the narrative line of the poem, there is no doubt that it indicates

relevant features for the characterization of the hero, which may still be scattered throughout the narrative and be closely related to the construction of the hero as a hero of politics, knowledge and discourse. A series of textual passages, sometimes developing into long episodes, shows us how affection is used as a category that goes hand in hand with the construction of the hero in the poem.

That is the case of Pedro's rhetorical abilities (and perhaps also his hyperbolic discursive breath...):

VII.

“Não penseis que de mim tenhaes ouvido  
Palavras com afan so procuradas;  
D'altas cogitações nada é nascido.  
Não são pomposas phrases estudadas!  
Por nobre amor da Patria o mais subido  
As minhas expressões foram dictadas!  
Pois eu sinto nesta hora augusta, e calma

Sobre meus labios se-entornar minha alma!” (SOUSA, 1855, p. 212).

Affection is also presented as a pillar of the connection between the monarch and the collectivity. At the moment when news of the annulment of the Regent's decisions by the Courts and persecution of Brazilian deputies arrives in Rio de Janeiro and the situation escalates to the brink of a conflict on the streets, Pedro considers whether taking up arms might not be the best solution:

CII.

Oh grande coração ! Elle sabia  
Que os monarchas dos povos são feitura !  
Tinha animo de heroe, mas não queria  
Sel-o, custando ao povo uma amargura !  
Que um throno, o grande Pedro compre'endia,  
Não firme em corações, tem pouca dura !  
Si assim pois, como heroe não podeis vel-o,

Quem no mundo haverá que possa sel-o ? (SOUSA, 1855, p. 187).

Pedro forgoes warlike heroism if it causes suffering for the people. The narrator presents this choice as being driven by affection, as the product of a “coração”. The second part of the stanza is particularly significant because Pedro recognises that power must be “firme” in the hearts of those who are governed, or else a government will only rule for a short time.

Leading Brazil to war with Portugal what, considering the “partido português” in Brazil, would imply a civil war, could break the affection ties necessary to legitimize the monarch’s power.

As a narrator, Pedro has already told, in Book seven, the story of Marina and her sons, Belgrado and Leonido. Each son belongs to one of the two opposing parties<sup>12</sup>: Belgrado to the Portuguese and Leonido to the Brazilian. Belgrado takes part in an armed militia that attacks Brazilian partisans, and one night his group kills Leonido. When Belgrado realizes that the victim was his own brother Leonido, who asks him not to tell their mother about the participation of his brother in his own murder, he is placed in a dilemma about whether to confess his complicity in the murder and ends up committing suicide. Soon after narrating the moment when Marina learns about the episode, Pedro makes a remark to the foreigners who are listening to his history: “”Ponderae, estrangeiros piedosos, / O coração de mãe quanto soffrêra!” (Sousa, 1855, p. 11). The suffering of Marina and her sudden death upon seeing the dead bodies are presented as an argument for the need to avoid a civil war:

Oh! possa um dia tão funesta imagem  
Aos homens recordar tão triste sorte !  
Para um exemplo tal purgar da terra  
Os negros males d’intestina guerra (SOUSA, 1855, p. 12).

Pedro projects the importance he places on family affection onto a political level. The episode is narrated in Book seven, in the middle of the poem, alongside the episode of Dona Leopoldina, his wife, and the death of their son. The value the text places on family affection is also reinforced by the episode of João Ramalho, told by the indigenous old man Thomé in Book eight. In this episode, we see how warlike heroism, now embodied by the indigenous people, is surpassed by the heroism of Ramalho, which is based on family affection. Indians who are allies of Ramalho imprison the son of the Tamoios’ chief, who in response kidnaps the young son of the Portuguese. To the Tamoio chief, the son’s death in an anthropophagic ritual

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<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that both the Portuguese and the Brazilian “parties” were not organized institutions. The term “party” was used to indicate the political choice between supporting the measures of the Courts or the Regent and his followers.



is an honour; to Ramalho, rescuing the child is mandatory, which he only succeeds in doing with divine intervention.

Likewise, João VI, onboard the ship taking him back to Portugal, reveals paternal concerns that are associated with collective concerns:

XLIX.

– Sem que tirar pudesse da lembrança  
De Santa-Cruz a terra afortunada,  
O triste rei da casa de Bragança,  
Com sua alma de angustias traspassada,  
Pelo longo futuro a mente avança;  
Vem-lhe á memória a vida já passada;  
Até que afflictiva ausência lhe-depára  
Com seu filho tão caro, e o qual deixara!

L.

– Senhor dos altos ceos (clama de novo).  
Teus olhos volve brando, e apiedado,  
A este de Bragança alto renovo !  
Vela sobre meu filho, que hei deixado  
Entre este amigo, generoso povo !  
Faze que do Brasil sendo prezado,  
Viva justo, e inteiro em doce calma  
Este doce pedaço de minha alma!

LI.

– Si mais de ver não tenho o filho caro,  
Faze que os males invencível dome,  
Que por seus feitos tenha inda preclaro  
Entre os illustres um illustre nome !  
Que zombando do olvido, sempre avaro.  
Ao tempo, e á morte vença o seu renome,  
Fazendo de seu povo a f’licidade

Por onde um rei caminha á Eternidade! (SOUSA, 1847, p. 129-130).

João wishes “Eternity” for his son, a traditional attribute of the hero<sup>13</sup>. However, it can only be achieved through a model of relationship with the “povo” that is based on affection (“do Brasil sendo prezado”). The repetition of the presentation of the family situation emphasizes the importance of

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<sup>13</sup> Some other characteristics of the traditional epic hero are associated with motifs that also appear in *A Independência do Brasil*, with different degrees of transformation: the journey, the dream, the divine revelation, the wrath, the noble ancestry and, the political foundation (in this case, the foundation of a new political order). For further study of heroism in Brazilian and Portuguese 19<sup>th</sup> century epic poetry, see Brunke and Nunes (2018) and Nunes (2020).

relationships based on affection as a paradigm for the political relationship between the monarch and the collective:

A mim, o filho de seu rei chamaram,  
Cuja lhes-penhorou santa amizade!  
A mim, que amo o Brasil, por minha vida,  
Como o filho dilecto á mãe querida! (SOUSA, 1855, p. 221).

One final aspect of the transformation of the heroism in *A Independência do Brasil* relates to the hero's role as a mediator between the world and a divine sphere. According to Dérive (2002), the epic hero has socio-political objectives, and transcendence either helps or hinders these aims. In Teixeira e Sousa's poem, the hero's role as a mediator between history and divinity takes a unique configuration.

A divine level determines the action on the human level, but no human agents are aware of this fact. The Angel of Destinies reveals God's project for Brazil and its future to Pedro, but the memory of this revelation is erased. The interaction between divine and human levels is unidirectional. The hero materializes a divine plan, but he does not contribute to its elaboration, which does not depend on his will. He may also perform a historical function and do so according to his free will, but he can only achieve this condition through a will that is superior to his own:

“Consumou-se o Querer da Divindade,  
Que tinha a tua sorte assim marcado;  
Pois p'ra Heroe da Brasilea liberdade  
Tu foste ha longo tempo destinado! (SOUSA, 1855, p. 288).

Above all, as we see in the last scene of the revelation, not only is the hero's will subjected to the divine plan, it must also be subjected, secularly, to a pact with Brazil, which establishes mutual obligations that will be defined in a liberal constitution. In return, Brazil will give the crown to Pedro, who has given the land its freedom: “Si, heis feito tanto pela patria gloria, / Hade a Patria zelar vossa memoria!” (SOUSA, 1855, p. 319).

The reciprocal oaths in the pact place the hero under a condition, and the silence of the text about the historical future of the historical Pedro, who later imposed an illiberal constitution on the country, may suggest that his qualification as a hero is reversible. Tempted, at first, by despotism, as the poem tells us, Pedro resisted. However, the poem's ellipsis about the next

scene of temptation leaves it up to the poem's audience (including Pedro II, his son, to whom the poem is addressed at the end) to fill in the gap.

The text presents Pedro, therefore, as a political hero who refuses military action, and not only prioritizes the use of words as a substitute to such action, but also accepts it as the foundation of the relationship between the hero and the collective, through a consensual written rule based on universal principles, that is, an enlightened monarch. This is something that he would later prove not to be, but was expected of his son, Pedro II, in the 1840s and 1850s. This expectation is reinforced by the fact that the other foundation of the relationship between hero and collective – now one of a romantic profile – is affection, a category to which the family is presented as a model and that could have a strong appeal to the young Emperor, Pedro II. The emphasis on family affection mobilizes the affective memory of the monarch in power, which could favour a positive reception of the poem by the Emperor. Moreover, family affection could also act as a driving force directing Pedro II to a model of political action.

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# Narrator and poet in Fagundes Varela: *Anchieta ou o Evangelho nas selvas (1875)*

Roger Friedlein

## Introduction

*Anchieta ou o Evangelho nas selvas* (posthumous edition of 1875),<sup>1</sup> by Luís Nicolau Fagundes Varela (Rio Claro, RJ, 1841-1875),<sup>2</sup> is a largely overlooked text that has had poor critical reception, despite representing an ambitious project to poetize the encounter of the original inhabitants of the Brazilian territory with the Christian mission, and simultaneously relating the life of Jesus Christ in a sacred poem of epic dimensions. The poem was published at a time when epic poetry was already undergoing significant transformation due to Romanticism. The poem was reprinted several times, particularly within Varela's complete works, which are mostly lyrical with the exception of the narrative poem in question and some prose narratives.<sup>3</sup>

Focusing on the figure of José de Anchieta, the poem explores the epic potential of the founder of São Paulo, a theme which had already been addressed before, for example by José de Alencar, as noted by Maria Aparecida Ribeiro in her comprehensive work on the literary representations of the missionary priest (Ribeiro, 2003, p. 28-29). The poem depicts the early days of the Piratininga mission,<sup>4</sup> an embryonic rural nucleus of colonial

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<sup>1</sup> We will use the first edition, published soon after the poet's death in 1875. In addition to the reissues within the complete works of the poet, there is a popular Fluminense edition from 1939 (21957), prefaced by the poet Murilo Araújo (Fagundes Varela, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> Fagundes Varela's biography had its first contribution in the form of a biographical review, translated from the *Anglo-Brazilian Times* for republication in the first edition of *Anchieta*. See the more recent biographies by Barros (1965), Azevedo (1966) and the following note.

<sup>3</sup> The Academia das Letras published a biobibliography of its member (Lima, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Explicitly mentioned in the poem, canto I, st. 4. Cantos and stanzas are both numbered with Roman numerals in the first edition.

society that was affected, even from a distance, by the conflict between Indian communities, the Portuguese and the French in the Rio de Janeiro region. However, unlike Gonçalves Magalhães' *Confederação dos Tamoios*, Fagundes Varela's poem does not seek to become an identity epic for the young Brazilian nation, in the vein of the *Aeneid* or *Os Lusíadas*. Rather, it belongs to the tradition of the sacred epic, as evident in its explicit references to Dante and Milton, and, moreover, to Thomas de Kempis, author of the *Imitatio Christi*.<sup>5</sup> Even though it is an epic poem formally quite distant from both of the two traditions, secular and religious, that conform to the epic genre, it establishes however clear intertextualities in this sense and, for an adequate reading, it must be seen within this same tradition. Before turning to the specific topic of this paper, namely the question of its self-reflexive content, it is worth noting the poem's two most salient epic intertextualities.

Narrative poems from the Romanticism and beyond often continue and expand upon the tradition of epic poetry, but tend to omit the use of epic *proemia*, a typical feature of classic epic poetry that includes the elements proposition, invocation, and dedication. Instead, these narrative poems often begin with the narrative diegesis without these preliminaries.

Not so *Anchieta*: the poem is divided into ten parts, or cantos, composed of irregular, unrhymed decasyllabic stanzas in blank verse, and the first three stanzas of the first canto, comprising 58, 50, and 13 verses respectively, serve as an epic proem and introduce the narrative diegesis, which begins in the fourth stanza. Varela demonstrates originality in the use of the first two stanzas for two complementary invocations of the allegorical trees of the Bible. The first, addressed to the despised 'Tree of Science' (*Árvore da Ciência*), is met with exclamations of disgust by the poetic voice. However, at the foot of the second, the 'Tree of the Cross' (*Árvore da*

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<sup>5</sup> "Oh! de Milton e Dante augustas sombras! / Genio de Kempis!... governai meu estro!" (I, 3). Gonçalves Dias is the only national name mentioned in the poem, not as an author of epic or sacred poetry, but as a stylistic model (I, 10). – Thomas a Kempis (ca. 1380-1471) was from the city of Kempen in the Lower Rhineland and was the author of the *Imitatio Christi*, which is the most representative example of *devotio moderna* and, with about a thousand editions in Latin and several vernacular languages, the most printed Christian book after the Bible. Written in Latin verse and divided into four parts, it is not a narrative but consists of thoughts and advice on Christian devotion.

*Cruz*), the poetic voice pledges to celebrate the miracles, teachings and martyrdom of Jesus Christ, while evoking his own childhood memories with an account of the “maravilhas que aprendeu, creança, / Dos santos labios de ministro santo, / Nas amplas solidões do Novo Mundo!” (I,2).<sup>6</sup>

The third and final, shortest stanza of this proem-like canto invokes the “Celeste Musa! Socia immaculada / Dos profetas hebreus!” (I,3), and equates the poetry of the Hebrew poets with Dante, Milton and Thomas a Kempis. The presentation of Dante, Milton, and Thomas a Kempis as capable of guiding the poetic voice’s journey beyond the celestial spheres imbues the poem with a mystical character. In contrast to the acquisition of knowledge through the journey of the poetic “I” in the cited models, particularly in Dante, the poetic voice in *Anchieta* presents its poem as opposed to any portrayal or ‘staging’ of knowledge. This type of *mise-en-scène* of knowledge not only characterised the depiction of the afterlife in the *Divine Comedy*, but also became, in its mundane variant, a hallmark of many secular epic poems since Camões’ *The Lusíads*, in which it is realized through a cosmographic episode that can be called an epic ‘cosmovision’ (Friedlein, 2015). While Vasco da Gama’s vision of the *Máquina do mundo* serves as the climax of *Os Lusíadas*, Fagundes Varela inverts this motif in *Anchieta*. After the proem, the poem’s second intertextual connection with the epic tradition can be found in the second canto, which relates the temptation of Jesus in the desert. According to the poem, the devil tries to lure the young Jesus into his evil plans by disguising his attempt as a fantastic cosmovision of the world’s geographical regions, starting with Asia, moving through Europe and Africa, and ending in the promised land: the Americas. The devil takes Jesus on this panoramic flight over the continents to show off the wealth of the material world that Jesus could dominate if he submits to the devil. As *Anchieta* confirms, Jesus resists the temptation and forces the devil to land in Jerusalem. The motif of the epic cosmovision, which signifies the climax of the sailors’ journey and the acquisition of knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> In this case, it is worth mentioning that Fagundes Varela, who was born in Rio de Janeiro, spent his early childhood in the municipality of Catalão, in the distant province of Goiás, where his father held a civil service position.



in the episode of the *Ilha dos Amores* in Camões' *Os Lusíadas*, is thus taken up and invalidated by Fagundes Varela to highlight the anti-scientific bias of his poem and to simultaneously distance it from the tradition of the secular epic and its portrayal, or staging, of knowledge.

In the proem and cosmovision of *Anchieta*, we see that (post-)epic poems of the 19<sup>th</sup> century frequently may not present themselves as part of the epic tradition, but can only be fully understood when viewed within that context. These passages not only demonstrate *Anchieta's* connection to the epic genre, but also show literary self-reflexion as they convey and formulate ideas about the nature of poetry.

### **The *Confederação dos Tamoios*, a point of comparison**

To better understand the concept of self-reflection in Fagundes Varela, it can be helpful to compare it to Gonçalves de Magalhães' *Confederação dos Tamoios* (1856). This work serves as an effective point of comparison not only because it is a well-known Brazilian epic text from the same time period, but also because both poems feature José de Anchieta as the protagonist, though they present him in different ways. By analyzing the different ways that Anchieta is portrayed in these two poems, and the different role that is assigned to the poet in them, we can identify two different *poetologies* (to use a term from German literary theory), inherent in the literary works themselves, rather than being formulated in external poetics.

The *Confederação dos Tamoios* relates the events surrounding the revolt of a coalition of indigenous tribes led by Chief Jagunharo against Portuguese settlers in the Guanabara Bay region, within the larger context of the conflict between Portuguese and French settlers. The Portuguese participate in this conflict with troops led by Eustácio de Sá, soon supported by his uncle Mem de Sá, and are allied with other indigenous communities. The decisive battle leads not only to the destruction of the French fort of Coligny, but also to the defeat of the Tamoios and the foundation of the city of Rio de Janeiro. José de Anchieta, who was present and involved in these events, later wrote an epic poem in Latin called *De gestis Mendi de Saa* (1563), which is known today as South America's first epic poem. However, Anchieta's

epic was not widely known until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite the existence of a 16<sup>th</sup> century Coimbra edition<sup>7</sup> and mention of it in Simão de Vasconcelos' biography of Anchieta.<sup>8</sup> While the epic could have provided opportunities for intertextual references in the 19<sup>th</sup> century epics about the missionary, neither Gonçalves de Magalhães nor Fagundes Varela recognized Anchieta's epic poetry. For them, and for the literary history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a whole, Anchieta was known for his Portuguese, Spanish and Tupi lyric poems, plays, letters and reports in prose, and an extensive Marian poem in Latin called *Carmen de Beata Virgine Matre Dei Maria*, or *Poema marianum*. This last composition could be considered a potential candidate for a sacred epic,<sup>9</sup> but it would be difficult to see Anchieta fashioning himself as an epic poet in this poem, especially in comparison to the clearly epic *De gestis Mendi de Saa*.

In spite of his ignorance of the Anchieta epic, Gonçalves de Magalhães undertakes the poetological mission of making Father Anchieta appear in the *Confederação dos Tamoios* not only as a missionary and political negotiator, but above all as a founding figure of Brazilian poetry, and even in its epic facet.<sup>10</sup> He presents Anchieta as the one who built a bridge between the indigenous oral literary tradition, intimately linked to Brazilian nature, and the Christian literary tradition, which he brought to the Americas. In the *Confederação dos Tamoios*, Anchieta appears as a poet with clear romantic traits, inspired by God as much as by Brazilian nature, and in artistic exchange with the representatives of autochthonous poetry. Starting with Anchieta as the founding figure, the *Confederação dos Tamoios* mentions a number of Brazilian poets, preferably those with epic work, which ends

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<sup>7</sup> The Coimbra edition (Conimbricæ: apud Ioannem Aluarum Typographum Regium, 1563) does not include the author's name. A facsimile version is available from the Biblioteca Nacional of Rio de Janeiro (Anchieta, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> The poem has sparked some interest in recent German criticism. In addition to Lestringant (1996), see the studies by Briesemeister (2002), Jaeckel (2007), and Arias-Schreiber Barba (2011), as well as the bilingual editions by Armando Cardoso (Latin-Portuguese; Anchieta, 1986) and J. M. Fornell Lombardo (Latin-Spanish; Anchieta, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> For information on Anchieta's work, see Fonda (1972) and Anchieta (1988). See also the first biographies in Caxa/Rodrigues (1988).

<sup>10</sup> Maria Aparecida Ribeiro, following José de Alencar, observes that Anchieta never speaks in his own voice in the poem, resulting in a lack of liveliness in his character (Ribeiro, 2013, p. 28-29).

with two contemporary poets, epic and national: Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre and Gonçalves de Magalhães himself. This self-reflexive prolepsis from the colonial setting of the poem to the 19<sup>th</sup> century becomes possible through a prophetic vision of Brazil's poetic future, realized in a digression of the narrator.<sup>11</sup> From the self-reflexive point of view, the essence of the *Confederação dos Tamoios* is the fact that the poem attributes to itself the function of continuing and updating a national poetic tradition. It builds on and contributes to a series of national epics, and this effort can be viewed as the poets' contribution to the construction of the nation as a historical entity. This objective was in fact shared by both factions of the polemic concerning the *Confederação dos Tamoios*, divided between the supporters of Gonçalves Magalhães on the one hand and those of José de Alencar on the other. In the present context, however, the most important point is the foundational position attributed to *Anchieta* by the *Confederação* in the historical construction of a national epic tradition: it is *Anchieta* who for the first time combines the natural art of the indigenous inhabitants of the country with the Christian art of the Portuguese newcomers. The narrator of the *Confederação dos Tamoios*, even without knowledge of *De gestis Mendi de Saa*, aspires to occupy a place in the tradition stemming from him.

### ***Anchieta ou O Evangelho nas selvas*: content and narratology**

Compared to the epic poetry of Brazilian *Indianismo*, the self-reflexivity of *Anchieta or the Gospel in the jungles* unfolds in a different way. To understand the modalities of its self-reflexivity, it is useful to first analyze the narratological structure of the poem, since the two are in a relationship of mutual determination, with one influencing the other.

Immediately following the epic introduction, the first canto of the poem opens a diegesis whose protagonists are the young missionary priest, *Anchieta*, and the Indians living in the surroundings of the mission village of Piratininga. Every Sunday, they gather to pray and listen to the Gospel story, which they find fascinating. These scenes form the central part of

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<sup>11</sup> The poem's self-reflexive tenor is examined in more detail in Friedlein (2018).

each of the nine cantos, except the tenth and last, which functions as an epilogue. After each of Anchieta's intradiegetic narratives of the Gospel, the narrative frame is closed, and the canto ends with a brief scene of prayer and farewell to the Indians or, occasionally, with a more elaborate scene. The poem is thus formed by nine evening assemblies in Piratininga and an epilogue set ten years later in Espírito Santo at the time of Anchieta's death. On the first evening, Anchieta tells his audience of the birth of Jesus and the visit of the Magi; on the second of his childhood and temptation in the desert. The following sermons include, among others, the Sermon on the Mount, the death of John the Baptist, the parables preached by Jesus, the miracle of Lazarus, Jesus' visit to the temple, the Last Supper, and the Passion, thus following the narrative known from the Gospels. After the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the ninth canto is the only one that ends impressively without closing its narrative frame.

The first level of diegesis begins in the first canto when the Indians, including the young girl Nahyda, go to the missionary's hermitage. In the second canto, an open-air mass is held the following Sunday. A week later, in the third canto, a flood hinders but does not prevent the gathering of the faithful. In the next two cantos, the diegesis focuses on the announcement and the account of a premonitory nightmare of Nahyda, in which a bloody fratricide is announced with apocalyptic images. Consequently, in the next canto, the village is attacked by a group of pagan Indians. After the burial of the dead and the missionary's evening assembly, a new attack results in new victims among the faithful. In canto seven, Anchieta has a vision of the Portuguese battle of Alcácer-Kebir in Morocco, after a nostalgic memory of his native island of Tenerife. At that point, a messenger arrives from the Bay of Guanabara with news of the death of Eustácio de Sá in Niterói, and Nahyda's illness becomes apparent. After meeting the chiefs at the end of canto VII, Anchieta decides in the next canto to send warriors on a rescue mission to Guanabara, including Jadir, a young man loved by Nahyda. Already in her agony, Nahyda takes part in the evening assembly in which Anchieta relates the Last Supper and the beginning of the Passion of Christ. In the ninth canto, when Jadir returns from the battle, Anchieta can do no more than accompany him to the tomb of Nahyda. In the last canto, with

the missionary settlement now flourishing, Jadir accompanies Anchieta in his own hour of agony, now in the region of Espírito Santo. The death of the missionary priest is accompanied by a prophetic vision of the great future of Brazil, in which justice and the rule of law will thrive.

In the following scheme of the poem (Figure 1), the three phases of each canto correspond to one row in the table.

	1 - <b>diegesis</b>	2 - <b>evangelical intradiegesis</b>	3 - <b>diegesis</b>
<b>I</b>	Proposition and invocation – no to the Tree of Science – yes to the Tree of the Cross – invocation of the sacred muse Diegesis – Indians head for the hermitage	Anchieta's account (st. 13-39) – Genesis – the magicians abandon their books – birth of Jesus, flight to Egypt	Diegesis – nature in the morning – prayer of the faithful crowd – Nahyda and baby Jesus
<b>II</b>	Digression: Ode to Sunday Diegesis – Anchieta reads the Bible – open-air mass and banquet	Anchieta's account (st. 8-14) – Jesus' infancy and baptism – attempted seduction by the devil, cosmovision and flight to Jerusalem	Diegesis – prayer and farewell
<b>III</b>	Digression: Ode to the Sun Diegesis – a flood does not prevent meeting of the faithful	Anchieta's account (st. 5-36) – miracles and apostles – Sermon on the Mount Digression: Hymn to nature's beauty – Maria Magdalena	Diegesis – prayer and farewell
<b>IV</b>	Diegesis – Anchieta contemplates nature of Terra de Sta. Cruz, which is without God – Nahyda announces her dream – the faithful celebrate the arrival of Anchieta	Anchieta's account (st. 3-29) – Jesus in Mary's house – Hail Mary of Anchieta – new narrative thread: dance of Herodias' daughter, death of John the Baptist – Jesus appears to the apostles as True God	Diegesis – farewell
<b>V</b>	Digression: Nature is the way to God Diegesis – three parts of Nahyda's dream: appearance of the devil, Cain in the desert, village flooded with blood – Anchieta's tears – magnificent night in the Americas	Anchieta's account (st. 4-14) – Jesus walks on the waters – parables (Prodigal Son)	Diegesis – sunset; Anchieta withdraws

VI	Diegesis – assault of pagan Indians – burial of the dead heroe	Anchieta's account (st. 3-13) – Lazarus	Diegesis – arrival of newly assaulted Indians – a dead man in prayer position
VII	Diegesis – memories of Tenerife – the Angel of Death – vision of Alcácer-Kebir – a messenger: attack of the tamoios on Niterói, death of Estácio de Sá – Nahyda's illness	Anchieta's account (st. 5-17) – Jesus in the temple – curse of the fig tree	Diegesis – Anchieta's meeting with the chiefs
VIII	Diegesis – departure of the warriors to Guanabara – Nahyda in agony takes part in evening assembly	Anchieta's account (st. 2-11) – Judas Digression: invocation to the muse – Easter Celebration – Last Supper Digression: invocation to Christ – beginning of the Passion	Diegese – death of Nahyda
IX	Diegesis – Jadir returns from battle – Jadir with Anchieta at Nahyda's tomb	Anchieta's account (st. 1-20) – Passion of Christ Digression: invocation of the Christian muse – Passion of Christ and Resurrection	—
X	Diegesis – ten years later, blossoming of the missionary settlement – Anchieta in Espírito Santo, accompanied by Jadir – death of Anchieta, vision of the future of Brazil	—	—

Figure 1: Content and narratology of *Anchieta ou o Evangelho nas selvas*

However, Varela's narratological construction was not well received by critics. Antonio Candido criticizes the lack of correspondence between the two narrative levels:

A concepção é defeituosa, não havendo relação necessária entre a matéria central (vida de Jesus) e o pretexto de imaginá-la narrada aos catecúmenos por Anchieta, que aparece no começo e no fim de cada canto, em cenas que servem apenas de tributo ao sentimento nacional. A narrativa poderia desenrolar-se, sem o menor prejuízo, na China ou no Congo (CANDIDO, 2006, p. 581).

Perhaps Antonio Candido is not entirely convincing on this point. Upon closer examination, the points of contact between the Gospel, which is intended to be universal, and its narrative context, situated in the early colonization of Brazil, become evident. In her premonitory nightmare, Nahyda is clearly affected by the biblical language she hears in the evening assemblies, as she imagines the flood of blood caused by the fratricidal Cain. Stricken by disease, she will die at the very time of the evening in which Anchieta tells of the Last Supper and the beginning of the Passion of Christ. While the Passion of Christ brings salvation to the human race, the death of Nahyda inaugurates the blossoming of the new Brazilian community. A further correspondence between the diegesis and the story of the Gospel can be seen in the burial of the victims of the attack, which takes place on the day when Anchieta tells in full the episode of Lazarus resurrected from his tomb.

### **Self-reflexivity in the instances of speech: Jesus Christ, Anchieta, the voice of the poet**

The self-reflexivity in *Anchieta* manifests itself through various instances of speech and in different modalities. First, the voices of the author and of several contemporaries, such as the editor E. G. Possolo and Ferreira de Menezes, a childhood friend of Varela and journalist at the time, express themselves in the various paratexts. However, the poem lacks some other types of paratexts frequently encountered in epic poetry such as, authorial footnotes, marginal, or endnotes.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, in the poem's proemial stances as well as in various digressions, the voice of the poet becomes apparent and could be called the narrative "I" or poetic "I". In other examples of epic poetry, this instance would be called the epic narrator, but here we will avoid the term in the case of Varela's poem, not because it is inadequate, but because it could lead to confusion when discussing to which instances of speech in the poem narrativity and poeticity can be attributed.

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<sup>12</sup> Since the paratexts are not particularly relevant to self-reflexivity in *Anchieta's* case, they will not be further analyzed in this paper. For discussions of paratexts in epic poetry, we refer readers to Marcos Machado Nunes (2020, p. 248-252).

In the third place, Anchieta, as well as the characters in his evangelical diegesis, with Jesus Christ at the centre, could potentially articulate self-reflexive contents in their speeches. However, these two instances of self-reflexivity are more relevant in their actions rather than in their utterances. In the following passages, we will focus on the extent to which Anchieta is staged as a poet in his speech acts. From the triple distinction of speech instances arises the question of the interrelation between them: the author, the voice of the poet-narrator, and the diegetic and intradiegetic characters.

The final level of self-reflexivity to be considered is intertextuality in the sense of reference to discourses outside the text, as already seen in the proem and in the cosmovision with their reference to the epic tradition.

Of these levels of manifestation of self-reflexivity, in *Anchieta*, as in so many other examples of epic poetry influenced by Romanticism, the voice of the poet is undoubtedly the most prolific instance, occupying spaces and exploring modes of articulation which were less explored before the emergence of Romantic subjectivity.<sup>13</sup>

Differentiating between the instances of speech leads us to note, firstly, the existence of three temporal moments, with their corresponding characters: in intra-diegesis, Jesus Christ at the time of his life and Passion; in diegesis, José de Anchieta in the times of Brazil's early colonization; and in extra-diegesis, the voice of the poet situated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As far as Jesus Christ is concerned, the self-reflexive contents are relatively infrequent and do not go beyond what could be expected. Jesus as a young man is depicted as eloquent, a revealer of teachings, gentle in gesture, and sweet in speech:

A doçura / Da palavra eloquente, os gestos meigos [...] (II,9).  
Movidias [as gentes] / Pela eloquente voz, pelas doutrinas / Desse inspirado e ríspido  
mancebo, / E mais ainda pelo santo exemplo / Do santo proceder [...] (II,11).  
A fama de seu nome, e das doutrinas / Santas e luminosas que professa, / Das  
sublimes acções, e da doçura / Do trato, das palavras, vòã, passa / Além das  
cordilheiras (III,11)

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<sup>13</sup> For discussions on the potentialities of subjectivism in 19<sup>th</sup> century epic poetry, see Brunke 2019.



The adult Jesus is depicted in his rebellion against the hypocritical knowledge of the Pharisees, as well as in the simplicity of his parables:

[...] parabras singelas / Que resumem a lucida doutrina / Simples, mas palpitantes de verdade (V,12).

As formosas parabras, ungidas / Da mais suave e doce poesia, / Os singelos paineis, onde a verdade, / Simples como a expressão da natureza, / Os mais rudes espiritos cativa, / A linguagem concisa, porém bella / Do divino pastor, melhor ensinam / Do que das Synagogas orgulhosas / As extensas lições, e os vãos discursos (V,14).

Unsurprisingly, the ideal of beauty is found in the first place in the simplicity of Jesus' discourse, which is the transmitter of doctrines and truths without the academicism of the institutions of knowledge of his time.

Does the poetology of the text reflect what is said here in praise of simplicity in poetry, and does it become an ideal of the poem itself? Alfredo Bosi would likely answer in the negative:

Embora não seja difícil colher exemplos felizes de notação do mundo agreste [no *Anchieta* de Fagundes Varela], o tom edificante do conjunto acaba toldando a solene pureza da mensagem evangélica, que se desfigura quando tocada pela retórica. Mesmo que esta venha de uma alma emotivamente religiosa como a de Fagundes Varela. (Bosi, 1985, p. 131-132)

According to Bosi, Varela would not make the discursive ideal of Jesus Christ's simplicity his own, but would transform it with irritating doses of rhetoric. A true substantiation would require stylistic analyses which are beyond the scope of this article. However, the voice of the poet and Jesus Christ in *Anchieta's* account undoubtedly share their anti-academic and anti-bookish impulse.

The character of *Anchieta* will prove to be more decisive for the self-reflexive tenor of the poem. In the first place, the voice of the poet seems to exalt *Anchieta* as a fellow poet by mentioning his *Poema marianum*:

Alma inspirada de *Anchieta* illustre, / Espírito do apóstolo das selvas! / Sabio e cantor, luzeiro do futuro! / Tu, que [...] traçaste os versos / Do poema da Virgem, e ensinaste / Aos povos do deserto a lei sublime / [...] Ensina á minha musa timorata / A linguagem celeste que fallavas / Dá-lhe a doce expressão, a graça infinda, / A força, a eloquencia e a verdade / D'essas singelas narrações que á noite / Fazias nos outeiros, nas florestas, / Ás multidões que ouvindo-te choravam, / e pediam as aguas do baptismo (I,10).

Observing this passage carefully, we may notice, however, that the poet does not invoke Anchieta requesting a poetic voice like that of the *Poema marianum*. Rather, he wishes to imitate the characteristics “d’essas singelas narrações que fazias nos outeiros” (“those simple *narratives* that you told on the hills”); that is, he does not aspire to imitate or follow the poetic language of the poet Anchieta, but to shape into poetry the oral language of Anchieta the preacher and narrator.

Several other facts concur with this observation. To begin with, Anchieta is continually referred to as a ‘narrator’. In his evening assemblies, he himself uses the verb to *tell* when addressing his neophyte audience: “Tentações de Satan, – deveis lembrar-vos, / Irmãos, repete o narrador, – contei-vos, / No passado serão; direi agora [...]” (III,5). Or: “E o santo narrador assim lhes falla: [...] Eu acabava, irmãos, de relatar-vos / O milagroso caso [...]” (IV,3).

Outside his assemblies with the Indians, Anchieta is shown twice “folheando a Bíblia” (leafing through the Bible) (III,4; IX,1), but never engaged in the intellectual work required to write the texts that the historical Anchieta actually wrote. Thus, Varela’s Anchieta chooses in his first evening assembly to relate the story of the three magi in full. They are depicted as astrologers dedicated to the science of nature, which they abandon when transported by the celestial music which compels them to follow the star. At the end of this first assembly, Nahyda is delighted by the infant Jesus, and Anchieta comments positively on her naïve reaction: “os sabios todos / Si *assim* pensassem quando os livros volvem, / E buscaram monumentos no passado, / E perdem-se em audazes conjecturas, / Mais felizes seriam!” (I,42).<sup>14</sup> It is worth mentioning that the anti-bookish image of the missionary depicted by Fagundes Varela refers to a historical author who wrote, among other things, a grammar of Tupi. The biographers of the priest took a completely different approach, usually depicting him as a great scholar, even under the precarious conditions of his rural mission, and attributed to him

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<sup>14</sup> The same anti-intellectual impulse is demonstrated in a scene of natural beauty: “Quem se despir da frivola sciencia / Das vaidosas escolas das cidades, / E, filho amante, repousar a frente / No regaço feliz da natureza [...]” (III,34).

the title of ‘second Adam’, due to the enormous knowledge that would make Anchieta equal to the biblical patriarch who gave names to all things. Even the village of Piratininga is usually depicted as a ‘college’ where great practices of erudition were developed: research, reading, writing and dramatic representation, in addition to the practice of singing, by Anchieta and his disciples.<sup>15</sup> Varela’s Anchieta is not shown engaging in any of these activities and hardly appears *as a poet* in the poem. His lyrical side, although not entirely neglected, is clearly marginalized. Finally, compared to the extraordinary number of miracles and beneficial actions reported on Anchieta by biographers, in Varela’s poem, where no miracles occur, Anchieta is rarely shown practicing *imitatio Christi* in his actions. In view of so many absences, we are bound to conclude that Fagundes Varela’s Anchieta is above all something else: he is the *narrator* of Christ.

This characteristic of the missionary becomes particularly obvious at a moment in the text when Anchieta interrupts his gospel account, uncertain how to continue. He launches a request for inspiration which in principle could be proper to a poet:

Cala-se o narrador. Alguns momentos / Conserva-se, indeciso e pensativo / Como buscando um fio, que approxime / Dois afastados, diferentes factos. / O penoso labor do entendimento / Nas austeras feições se manifesta. / – Espirito dos tempos que passaram! [...] Inspira minha voz, minh’alma inspira! (IV,10).

However, Anchieta’s hesitation turns out to be that of a narrator telling a story, rather than a poet seeking inspiration. To continue his story, he adopts a prosaic solution by simply changing the subject:

Deixemos o Senhor [...] Voltamos ao Baptista o pensamento (IV,10).

Despite using the verb *inspirar*, Varela does not depict a poet seeking inspiration in a moment of creative challenge, but rather a narrator who is lost among the threads of his story.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The biography of Anchieta written by Simão de Vasconcelos is a representative example: it describes the missionary’s work without mentioning any lectures like those given by Varela’s Anchieta (Vasconcelos, 1672, liv. I,5, p. 26-27). Instead, Simão de Vasconcelos attributes the gift of eloquence to Anchieta’s disciple Gaspar Lourenço who is described as a “rio de eloquencia Brasilica” (ibid., book I,8, p. 44). Vasconcelos also credits Anchieta’s disciple Gregório Serrão with holding assemblies with the Indians (ibid., p. 43).

<sup>16</sup> See in the same sense the Ave Maria uttered by the voice of the narrator at the hour of Jesus’ return home to his mother (IV,9). This does not have the form of a poem inserted in the narrative

It is also worth noting that the passage demonstrates how the narrator, Anchieta, relates the events in the Gospel using his own words and style. He does not simply *recite* the Bible, but rather tells it to his audience using his skills as a narrator. However, his account does not include concessions for the indigenous audience, such as explanations for cultural differences between the world of the Gospel and the American world of the audience. This absence can be seen as another indication of the universality claimed by the evangelical message. From a narratological perspective, the lack of concessions to the audience can be interpreted as a reminder that Anchieta's discourse, even if it is articulated in direct speech, is also an enunciation of the voice of the poet. In other words, the Anchieta in Varela's fiction did not address his audience with the verses we read. The voice of the poet stylistically unifies the passages of Anchieta's speech with its own. However, the text itself makes it clear that the instances of the narrator and the poet are overlapping but separable:

[o missionário] As gentes abençoa, e então começa / Da Redenção a historia  
sacro-santa, / Que a musa do poeta ornou de flôres, / Tristes flôres sem viço e sem  
perfumes (I,11).

This observation prompts us to analyze the voice of the poet more closely. If Anchieta is depicted solely as a narrator and yet the poem is clearly poetic, this poetic quality must come from the voice of the poet. The characteristics of this voice are the following:

1) Firstly, the voice that speaks in this narrative poem presents itself as a *poetic* voice, rather than a narrator. Therefore, it uses the imagistic resources of traditional poetics, such as invocations and requests for inspiration, or the recurring metaphor of the muse to describe one's own work, which appears seventeen times throughout the poem in formulas like "Ensina á minha musa timorata / A linguagem celeste" (I,10) or apostrophes such as "Tu soluças? / Tu escondes o rosto, ingenua musa? / Oh! continúa e chora" (IX,9) and the exclamation "Musa, silencio!" (VI,4). The paratexts also emphasize the poeticity of the text by calling its parts 'cantos'.

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discourse, but is instead converted into narrated discourse. Anchieta does not sing this Ave Maria to his public, but rather *tells* it.

2) The adjectives chosen by the narrator to describe his work and himself convey *humility*, given the context of the sacred poem: “Não; não entoarei meus pobres hymnos / À Sombra tua [da Árvore da Ciência] que Satan protege” (I,6) or, addressing the Cross: “Permitte que o mais rude entre os cantores, / O mais rasteiro sêr que te ha beijado” (I,2). However, the narrator does not give up hope that his verses will endure beyond his death:

Oh! não! não morrereis, meus pobres cantos! / Não passarás nas trevas,  
deslembada, / Musa cristã... Passarás ao porvir, oh! casta Musa! (I,12).

3) In addition to these motifs, which are not unexpected in a sacred poem, the voice of the poet presents itself as explicitly *anti-erudite*, *anti-academic*, and *anti-bookish*, as can often be found in mystic poetry. The three proemial stanzas of the poem declare a vehement ‘no’ to the ‘Tree of Science’ and a heartfelt ‘yes’ to the ‘Tree of the Cross’. This feature, which can already be seen in Varela’s *Jesus Christ and his Anchieta*, is effectively shared by all instances of speech. If *Anchieta* praises Nahyda’s naïve understanding and condemns the unfortunate knowledge of books, the voice of the poet plays on the same string, condemning books and history in favor of his simple verses: “Homens que lêdes estes rudes cantos, / Viandantes de um valle de infortunios, [...] Não busqueis nas lições das grandes sabios, / Nem nos padrões da historia, a luz brilhante / Que desvenda os mysterios de além mundo!” (X,4).

4) While the poet does not seek inspiration from books, he does present two alternative sources of inspiration. Firstly, his poem recreates a *childhood memory*. It sets out to relate “As maravilhas que aprendeu, creança, / Dos santos labios de ministro santo” (I,2) and thus an individual experience that is remembered under the guidance of the “Christian muse” (“musa cristã,” IX,11).

5) The second source of inspiration is the *nature of Brazil*, evoked as the “Musa da criação” (V,1) with a hymnic tone in several digressions throughout the poem. While in poems like the *Confederação dos Tamoios*, privileged contact with Brazilian nature as a source of inspiration is reserved for indigenous singers, in *Anchieta* it is the poet who invokes and receives inspiration from it.

6) The *invocations* and explicit poetological reflections in the poem deserve careful attention because their attribution to speech instances is not always clear and yet crucial for our analysis. Overall, it seems that the explicitly poetological passages and the invocations to the poetic muse can all be attributed to the poet's voice, rather than to the narrator Anchieta. For example, when the betrayal of Judas is related, Anchieta is affected by the gravity of the subject and pauses for a moment; then, he invokes an unknown muse to describe the unprecedented facts. This invocation is not attributed to the narrator Anchieta, but to a different instance – the poet in the form of his 'muse': "Aqui tristonho, / Aqui turbado, o narrador calouse: / Aqui *também* suspiras e emmudeces, / Pobre, singela musa!" (VII,2; my italics).<sup>17</sup>

When we consider these features together, it is clear that the speaker of the text is portrayed as a *poet*, distinct from the *narrator* Anchieta. In this way, the three instances of speech of the poem, at their moment in time, each possess their own dominant speech act: Jesus preaches, Anchieta narrates, and the poet 'sings' poetically. Jesus Christ has the simplicity of his parables and sermons; Anchieta has the magic of his narration, and the poet has poetical inspiration. In contrast to other sacred poems, this narratological triplicity does not seem to form a series of prophets, as has been suggested in the exegesis of Dante's *Divina commedia* for the figures of Virgil, Jesus, and Dante. Neither is Fagundes Varela's Anchieta portrayed as a messianic figure,<sup>18</sup> nor does the voice of the poet, and by extension Fagundes Varela, aspire to be a new Anchieta in a historical sense or in the sense of biblical *typologia*. The three instances of speech are each confined to their own worlds and do not form a unified *history*, either of salvation or of poetry.

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<sup>17</sup> The other cases: the invocation to Christ must be attributed to the voice of the poet and his fatigue, since it is also this voice that closes the previous stanza (VIII,7). The attribution of the invocation that occurs in the middle of the Passion is more doubtful. The fact that it occupies an entire stanza, separate from what comes before and after, makes it possible to attribute it to the voice of the poet, as in the rest of the poem when it deals with matters of poetry (IX,11).

<sup>18</sup> Maria Aparecida Ribeiro agrees that the Anchieta of the poem should primarily be seen as a saint and apostle, rather than a poet, but sees some indicators that allow for understanding him as a *figura Christi* (Ribeiro, 2013, p. 30). However, Varela does not depict Anchieta performing miracles or surrounded by twelve disciples, as Anchieta's biographers do.

## Conclusion

Comparing the *Confederação dos Tamoios* and *Anchieta*, it is clear that there is a significant difference in the key concepts of their poetologies. While both poems belong to romantic Indianism and aim to positively portray the early colonial period, Gonçalves de Magalhães' heroic epic focuses on the combative aspect of the encounter, while Varela portrays a *Golden Age* of Brazil ("Idade de Ouro", X, 3) initiated by the Christian mission in an untouched natural environment, characterized by the simplicity of original times. However, unlike Gonçalves de Magalhães', Varela's Brazilian Golden Age is not the birthplace of poetry. In *Confederação dos Tamoios*, both pagan and neophyte Indians, the Portuguese, and even the disliked French, and most of all José de Anchieta himself make poetry, sing or dance. None of this occurs in *Anchieta*. Varela's Indians, whether already Christianized or still 'savages', are never shown practicing their own cultural traditions or the newly acquired ones. All that is said about their cultural life is resumed in the poet's observation that they have abandoned their tradition and started to sing only Christian cantos.<sup>19</sup> Be that as it may, in any case the portrayal of Piratininga's cultural and artistic life is not Varela's focus. In his poem, poetry resides exclusively in the "ego" of the poet.

Gonçalves de Magalhães aims to establish a tradition of national poetry beginning with the poet Anchieta, and aspires to take his place in it. For him, poetry is a collective and historical phenomenon. Its origins can be traced back to the natural arts of the Indians, and its defining moment in the arrival of Anchieta and Christianity, as well as the continuation of this line of national poetry by contemporary writers who choose autochthonous topics and poetic styles, including Gonçalves de Magalhães himself.

For Fagundes Varela, poetry lacks a historical dimension. It takes place in isolation within the poet's "ego" and in the present moment, without the contribution of the Indians or the national poets following in the footsteps of Anchieta. In fact, even the sacred poets mentioned in the poem are not summoned as models for imitation. They may be predecessors in the same

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<sup>19</sup> "[...] as moças cantam / Não as lendas das tabas bellicosas / Mas da Musa Christã saudosos hymnos" (II,7).

mission, but they do not provide the poetics that Varela's work follows. Poetry is perceived as an individual and instantaneous creation, rather than a collective and historical phenomenon. Fagundes Varela abandons historicist thinking and individualizes the poetic act. It can thus be affirmed that his poem moves from historical self-reflexivity to a 'presencist' self-reflexivity. While the union of Brazilian nature with Christianity, which bears the fruit of Brazilian poetry, occurs in Gonçalves de Magalhães in the historical time of Anchieta, in Fagundes Varela this union happens in his own person or, more precisely, in his text. Its two narratological levels signify the encounter of Brazilian nature (diegetic) and the Gospel (intradiegetic). Fagundes Varela seeks to poetize this encounter of nature and Gospel as a moment of naive compenetration. He elaborates the poetization of this moment not for the sake of the nation and its history, but as a contribution to universal sacred poetry, as could happen, in the words of the master mentioned above, in the Congo or in China.

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Epic poetry,  
object of debate

# ***Os Lusíadas* according to Joaquim Nabuco: the debate over the poem's nationality in the press of 1872**

*Regina Zilberman*

## **A book and an article**

In 1872, having recently obtained a law degree by the school of Recife, the then 23-year old Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910) publishes a work on the poet Luís de Camões (c. 1524-1580?) and the epic *Os Lusíadas* (NABUCO, 1872). The book, printed by Tipografia do Imperial Instituto Artístico, must have gone into circulation at the end of August of that year, judging by the news published in periodicals of Rio de Janeiro: *Jornal do Comércio* announces the launch on August 30 and releases a review on September 1; *A Reforma* discusses the author's theses on the 3rd; and *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* addresses the topic in the Sunday edition of that month, on the 22nd.

The manuscripts of the book were delivered to the printed press in early April 1872, as reports *A Reforma* on April 11:

**Publicação importante** – O nosso ilustrado amigo Dr. Joaquim Nabuco entregou ao prelo um trabalho notável, que é produto de esclarecido e profundo estudo.

O livro do jovem escritor é sobre *Camões e os Lusíadas*, análise séria pelas questões literárias que avanta e pelo aprimorado do estilo.

Crítico notável, e alma de artista, o Sr. Dr. Joaquim Nabuco vai dar às letras pátrias um volume de real valor.

Dando a público esta boa nova, declaramos que, no escritório da nossa folha, podem se inscrever as pessoas que desejam possuir essa importante obra (PUBLICAÇÃO IMPORTANTE, 1872).

The piece of news is rich in adjectives, aiming to value both the author and the work: it is considered “um trabalho notável” and a “produto de esclarecido e profundo estudo.” The “jovem escritor,” in turn, is responsible

for a “análise séria” and refined style. He is also a “crítico notável”, with “alma de artista,” who makes a contribution of “real valor” to the “letras pátrias.” The third paragraph has pragmatic content: the newspaper announces to stakeholders that they can anticipate the acquisition of the volume in production by means of enrollment in a list “no escritório da nossa folha”.

When releasing his debut book, Nabuco follows the protocols of the production system of his time: he hires the services of a typography, that of the Imperial Instituto Artístico, a private company owned by Henrique Fleiuss (1824-1882), who was the director, editor and printmaker of *Semana Ilustrada*. Instituto Artístico had been created by Fleiuss, in partnership with Carlos Linde (c. 1830-1873), with the objective of offering instruction to “meninos carentes” (PEREIRA, 2015, p. 91), with a focus on teaching xylography. The intention was not fully realized; in any case, the company, already called Imperial,<sup>1</sup> established itself in the field of typography, supporting the issuing of *Semana Ilustrada* and of isolated publications. It is in this context that the opening of enrollment for subscribers who wish to purchase the book by Nabuco is announced, ensuring that the final product is sold in advance and, therefore, financed.

Between the delivery of the manuscript to the print shop and the releasing of the work, Joaquim Nabuco made another move: in *A República*, a journal that claimed to be the “órgão diário do Partido Republicano”, he published a two-column article, entitled “Camões e *Os Lusíadas*,” which was the same name as the book in printing phase. The article appeared on June 3, although dated April 10, 1872 (NABUCO, 1872).<sup>2</sup> It was probably ready when Nabuco finished the book, and the journal most likely decided to publish the text during the celebrations of the poet's birthday, scheduled for June.

We may consider that the article pinpoints the beginning of the trajectory of interpretations that Joaquim Nabuco dedicated to Camões

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<sup>1</sup> Renan Rivaben Pereira observes that the “condição [de Imperial] era obtida mediante solicitação do interessado, serviços prestados ou mesmo pagamento ao Estado.” (PEREIRA, 2015, p. 96).

<sup>2</sup> The excerpts brought here are extracted from this issue. Spelling was updated to current Portuguese rules.

and his epic. Next came the book of 1872, the speech given by the author in 1880, on the occasion of the third centenary of the poet's death, and the three conferences held in English in 1908 and 1909 (DRUMMOND, 2012). But this was not the first manifestation of a Brazilian intellectual or artist about the author and the theme.

In fact, Camões is a frequent figure in the imagination of artists and in the readings of national critics and literates already in the first half of the 19th century. Some examples of admirers of the Portuguese author are: the poet Gonçalves de Magalhães (1811-1882), especially in his collection of verses *Suspiros poéticos* and *Saudade*, from 1836; the playwright Luiz Antônio Burgain (1812-1876), who, in 1837, stages *Glória e infortúnio* or *A morte de Camões*, a play printed in 1838 by the typography of J. Villeneuve; and the poet and historian of literature Joaquim Norberto de Sousa Silva (1820-1891), author of the ballad "O mendigo," published in 1844 in *Minerva Brasiliense*, and of "Camões – Episódio do poema – Brazil", verses of epic inclination published in *Revista Popular* in 1859. In these, and also in references made to him by Álvares de Azevedo (1831-1852) and Casimiro de Abreu (1839-1860) at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century, it is possible to observe the impact of the interpretations of the poet's biography, realized in chronologically close works, namely the epic *Camões*, from 1825, by Almeida Garrett (1799-1854), the narrative *Camões e José Índio*, from 1823/4, and the *Resumo de História Literária de Portugal*, from 1826, the last two by Ferdinand Denis (1798-1890).

Gonçalves de Magalhães, in the preface to the 1864 edition of *A Confederação dos Tamoios*, seems to be one of the few who dispute the epic creation of the Lusitanian bard, reprehending the employment of the *ottava rima*:

A oitava-rima, composta de dois quartetos ligados, terminando pela rima-pareilha, de todas a mais retumbante, e a mais insuportável, se bem que ofereça mais largo espaço às descrições, constrange contudo o pensamento, como em um leito de Procrusta, ora a estirar-se, ora a encolher-se fora de propósito, e a estalar sempre metodicamente por suas pancadas consoantes; o que tem alguma coisa de cômico; e por isso mais adequada às composições satíricas, e burlescas, em que o poeta, não tendo em mira a verdade, e a bela natureza, procura com brinquedos de palavras, e exagerações, alegrar o estilo, e provocar o riso. (MAGALHÃES, 1864, p. XV. Spelling updated to current Portuguese rules).

This attitude perhaps derives from the fact that the writer from Rio de Janeiro wishes to secure the originality of his epic in the face of a consolidated tradition that dated back to the Renaissance; but the criticism is scathing, because it denies, in a text in which the commitment to the epic seems so evident, the content of epicness proper to that genre. Magalhães, in the preface in which he justifies his metric choices, refers to the author of *Os Lusíadas*, and also from that angle distinguishes himself from his contemporaries, who, most of the time, orbit around the biography of the poet, emphasizing the fact that the Portuguese artist was responsible for the creation of a masterpiece that, unfortunately, was not recognized in his time, an image that the subsequent reception has consecrated since the 17th century and that Almeida Garrett and Ferdinand Denis, in their respective works, have polished, achieving repercussion among Brazilians. Moreover, by denying the poet the status of executor of a masterpiece, Magalhães could not be impressed by the fact that his work did not obtain proper praise at the time of its creation.

### **A thesis and a provocation**

Joaquim Nabuco, in choosing Camões and his most notorious creation, *Os Lusíadas*, did not seem to innovate the way in which the theme was being received among the national literates. However, the young lawyer from Pernambuco exposes a very personal thesis in the opening of his book, which is perhaps why he wished to anticipate it in the article released in *A República* near the three-hundred-year anniversary of publication of the Portuguese epic.

The thesis is simple, but provocative: in his view, and in his words, “os *Lusíadas*, como obra-prima de nossa língua, serão a obra-prima de nossa literatura”. And adds, “escolhendo, pois, os *Lusíadas*, acredito que não saí do terreno da literatura nacional”.

The simplicity of the statement does not hide the precepts that it faces and from which it tries to extricate itself. The first and most important precept concerns the nationality of the Brazilian literature, which should be based on the difference it was supposed to assert with regard to foreign literature, especially European literature and, in particular, Portuguese literature.

In 1872, this debate had been going on for almost fifty years if we consider that the chronological milestone is the work “Bosquejo da história da poesia e língua portuguesa,” published by Almeida Garrett as a prologue to *Parnaso Lusitano*, in 1826, a collection of Portuguese poems written since the Renaissance and organized by literary genres in six volumes. In the introductory text, Garrett examines the work of poets born in the American colony, announced with the following observation: “Mui distinto lugar obteve entre os poetas portugueses desta época Cláudio Manuel da Costa: o Brasil o deve contar seu primeiro poeta, e Portugal entre um dos melhores.” (GARRETT, 1998, p. 56). He then highlights his sonnets, which, in his opinion, match those of Metastasio.

In the subsequent paragraph, he notes that “agora começa a literatura portuguesa a avultar e enriquecer-se com as produções dos engenhos brasileiros”, considering that the production originated from the poets born in America is part of the metropolitan literature, according to an organic set. He points out, however, that:

Certo é que as majestosas e novas cenas da natureza naquela vasta região deviam ter dado a seus poetas mais originalidade, mais diferentes imagens, expressões e estilo, do que neles aparece: a educação europeia apagou-lhes o espírito nacional: parece que receiam de se mostrar americanos; e daí lhes vem uma afetação e impropriedade que dá quebra em suas melhores qualidades (GARRETT, 1998, p. 56-57).

The paragraph is dubious: after incorporating authors from the 18th century, as Cláudio Manuel da Costa (1729-1789), and then Santa Rita Durão (1722-1784), to the Portuguese canon, he claims that those authors lack “espírito nacional” because of their disregard for the majestic nature and their “educação europeia.” A similar requirement is expected from Basílio da Gama (1741-1795), author of *O Uraguai*, who, according to Garrett, “mais nacional foi que nenhum de seus compatriotas brasileiros”, which makes his poetry “verdadeiramente nacional, e legítima americana”. (GARRETT, 1998, p. 58).

The greatest warning befalls Tomás Antônio Gonzaga (1744-1810), in a paragraph later hotly debated in different stages of Brazilian Romanticism:



Gonzaga, mais conhecido pelo nome pastoril de Dirceu, e pela sua Marília, cuja beleza e amores tão célebres fez naquelas nomeadas liras. Tenho para mim que há dessas liras algumas de perfeita e incomparável beleza: em geral a Marília de Dirceu é um dos livros a quem o público fez imediata a boa justiça. Se houvesse por minha parte de lhe fazer alguma censura, só me queixaria, não do que fez, mas do que deixou de fazer. Explico-me: quisera eu que em vez de nos debuxar no Brasil cenas da Arcádia, quadros inteiramente europeus, pintasse os seus painéis com as cores do país onde os situou. Oh! E quanto não perdeu a poesia nesse fatal erro! Se essa amável, se essa ingênua Marília fosse, como a Virgínia de Saint-Pierre, sentar-se à sombra das palmeiras, e enquanto lhe revoavam em torno o cardeal soberbo com a púrpura dos reis, o sabiá terno e melodioso, – que saltasse pelos montes espessos a cotia fugaz como a lebre da Europa, ou grave passeasse pela orla da ribeira o tatu escamoso, – ela se entretivesse em tecer para o seu amigo e seu cantor uma grinalda não de rosas, não de jasmims, porém dos roxos martírios, das alvas flores dos vermelhos bagos do lustroso cafezeiro; que pintura, se a desenhará com sua natural graça o ingênuo pincel de Gonzaga! (GARRETT, 1998, p. 57-58).

Gonzaga, widely read by the Portuguese-speaking public, is reprehended for ignoring the American landscape when painting the picture where his beloved Marília is located. However, Garrett does not place him in the Brazilian literature, but as a component of the “Parnaso Lusitano” that lends its name to the collection of verses.

Also from 1826, year of “Bosquejo da história da poesia e língua portuguesa,” is the book by Ferdinand Denis, *Résumé de l'histoire littéraire du Portugal, suivi du Résumé de l'histoire littéraire du Brésil*, published in France in its original language. Denis reproduces Garrett's demands, advising the poets to get inspiration from the surrounding nature rather than copying worn European models:

Que os poetas destas regiões contemplem a natureza, que se animem de sua grandiosidade, em poucos anos tornar-se-ão iguais a nós, talvez nossos mestres. Esta natureza, tão favorável aos desenvolvimentos do gênio, espalha seus encantos sobre todos, circunda mesmo os centros urbanos com suas mais belas produções; e não é como em nossas cidades, em que é ignorada, onde muitas vezes não a podemos conhecer (DENIS, 2018, p. 351).

However, Denis declares his demands in a part of the book dedicated exclusively to the literature of Brazil, as he proposes in the title and manifests as a purpose in the opening chapter: “uma nação nova reclamava a história

de sua literatura, e tentei traçar suas linhas principais.” (DENIS, 2018, p. 60). Therefore, there is no contradiction in the historiographical proposal of the French scholar: the literature of an independent country, even if recent, has its own characteristics—it is, therefore, national; and it will be even more national if it extracts from nature its themes and images.

Apparently, Denis had solved the problem; but he paved the way for another one: what should we do with the set of works of literature produced in Portugal which collaborated to the formation of our canon? One of the answers to this question appears in a new stage of the debate, occurred in the early years of the 1840s, and by which Joaquim Nabuco’s thesis is influenced.

In January 1842, José da Gama e Castro (1795-18750), a Portuguese then based in Brazil, published two articles in *Jornal do Comércio*, from Rio de Janeiro, claiming that many Portuguese inventions, all of great importance, are attributed to third parties, people belonging to other nationalities. He seeks to correct what he believes to be an injustice by drawing attention to Portuguese wise men who deserve global recognition. Among many of them, he mentions Bartolomeu de Gusmão (1685-1724), creator of the “passarola,” a model of operational aerostat, a transportation means unknown until then.

A few days later, *Jornal do Comércio* prints the replica signed by “O Brasileiro,” contesting the position of the ill-tempered Portuguese publicist. He observes that this author practiced what he himself condemned, since the feat of Bartolomeu de Gusmão – one of the examples of wrongful appropriation – concerns Brazilians, not Portuguese usurpers, because its author was born in Santos. To reinforce his argument, he poses the question: “Porventura diremos nós que Cláudio Manuel da Costa, ou Fr. Francisco de S. Carlos são lite-ratos portugueses, ou que as obras de qualquer deles pertencem à literatura portuguesa?” “O Brasileiro” himself answers: “Cuido que não”, and adds: “Pois se os escritos destes dois homens (por não estar agora a falar de muitos outros) fazem in-contestavelmente parte da literatura brasileira, claro está que também os inventos do padre Bartolomeu Lourenço de Gusmão fazem parte dos inventos dos Brasileiros” (O BRASILEIRO, 1978, p. 121).

Gama e Castro retaliated. In the section “Correspondência” of *Jornal do Comércio* of January 29, 1842, “Um Português” publishes “Satisfação a um escrupuloso,” a text dated January 24, the day which “O Brasileiro” raised his objections to the ideas of the Portuguese journalist:

Fala-se de literatura brasileira por hábito, por vício, talvez por excesso de patriotismo; mas a verdade é que, em todo o rigor da palavra, literatura brasileira é uma entidade que não só não tem existência real, mas que até não pode ter existência possível (CORRESPONDÊNCIA, 1978, p. 124).

In the case of literature, the question is of a conceptual order, according to Um Português: “a literatura não toma o nome da terra, toma o nome da língua; sempre assim foi desde o princípio do mundo, e sempre há de ser enquanto ele durar” (CORRESPONDÊNCIA, 1978, p. 124). For Gama e Castro, this is an undisputed point, like it or not.

And Santiago Nunes Ribeiro (?-1847), editor of *Minerva Brasiliense*, must not have liked it. He publishes, in the section “Literatura” of the first volume of the journal inaugurated in 1843, the article “Da nacionalidade da literatura brasileira.” The author might not have been from Brazil; originating from the “América Hispânica (há controvérsias se é natural do Chile ou do Peru)”, he migrated “ainda jovem para o Brasil” (BESSONE, 2016, p. 56). His position, however, is openly favorable to the recognition of the unique identity of the Brazilian literature against its Portuguese co-sister:

Agora perguntaremos se um país, cuja posição geográfica e constituição geognóstica, cujas instituições, costumes e hábitos tanto diferem da sua metrópole de outrora, não deve ter sua índole especial, seu modo próprio de sentir e conceber, dimanante destas diversas causas, modificadas umas pelas outras; se, numa palavra, não deve ter caráter nacional (RIBEIRO, 2014, v. 1, p. 176).

To this question, he himself answers: “Ora, se os brasileiros têm seu caráter nacional, também devem possuir uma literatura pátria.” Later, he emphasizes: “A poesia do Brasil é filha da inspiração americana” (RIBEIRO, 2014, v. 1, p. 189). Soon after, he frowns upon the images fixed by Gonçalves de Magalhães, who, in “Ensaio sobre a história da literatura do Brasil (Estudo preliminar),” in the first volume of *Niterói*, from 1836, accused the poetry of Brazil of not being a “indígena civilizada”, but rather

uma grega, vestida à francesa, e à portuguesa e climatizada no Brasil; é uma virgem do Hélicon, que, peregrinando pelo mundo, estragara seu manto, talhado pelas mãos de Homero, e sentada à sombra das palmeiras da América, se apraz ainda com as reminiscências da pátria, cuida ouvir o doce murmúrio da Castália, e o trépido sussurro do Lodon, e do Ismeno, e toma por um rouxinol o sabiá, que gorjeia entre os galhos da laranjeira (MAGALHÃES, 1836, p. 146).

In the image of the thrush mistaken for a nightingale, Magalhães seems to paraphrase Almeida Garrett, who condemns Tomás Antônio Gonzaga for the missing bird in his verses, as well as the “cardeal soberbo” which would confer nationality to the liras of *Marília de Dirceu*. Santiago Nunes Ribeiro goes against these assertions, validating the thesis that the poetic production of Brazil is autonomous and self-sufficient:

Assim em vez de considerar a poesia do Brasil como uma bela estrangeira, uma virgem da terra helênica, transportada às regiões do novo mundo, nós diremos que ela é a filha das florestas, educada na velha Europa, onde a sua inspiração nativa se desenvolveu com o estudo e a contemplação de ciência e natureza estranha (RIBEIRO, 2014, v. 1, p. 190).

A few months later, another article contributes to Ribeiro’s position. It is signed by Januário da Cunha Ribeiro (1780-1846), pioneer in the historiographical studies in Brazil, as he organized between 1829 and 1830 the two volumes of *Parnaso brasileiro*, a pioneer collection that brings together poets born in Brazil, and founder of Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, together with general Raimundo José da Cunha Matos (1776-1839).

The article by Januário da Cunha Barbosa, published in January 1844, adopts a unique strategy that must have yielded good results: instead of speaking on his behalf, he reproduces a speech by Édouard Mennechet (1794-1845), “lido no Congresso Histórico reunido em Paris neste ano de 1843 sobre a nacionalidade da literatura”. Thus, he resorts to the use of authority – a prestigious foreign authority – with the aim of collaborating, as he writes, to clarify an “suscitada pela Minerva, e de que muitos literatos se ocupam, sem contudo assentarem as verdadeiras bases em uma satisfatória definição” (BARBOSA, 1844, p. 168).

By outsourcing the debate, Januário can then state that “a natureza e o clima de um país, a religião, os costumes, as leis e a história dos povos que o habitam, têm uma influência constante e absoluta sobre sua literatura; e

que a literatura é nacional quando está em harmonia com a história, com as leis, com os costumes, com a religião, com o clima e com a natureza do país em que nasceu” (BARBOSA, 1844, p. 168).

The debate did not fade away the following years, and one of its main spokespeople was Joaquim Norberto de Sousa Silva, also a member of Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro and, in a certain way, the successor of Januário. His more consistent and organic manifestations appear starting from volume 6 of *Revista Popular*, published in 1860. This journal came into existence in 1859, sponsored not by an association of friends, like *Minerva Brasileira*, but by the company owned by Baptiste-Louis Garnier (1823-1893), which advanced his ascendant course in the editorial universe of Rio de Janeiro. It brought together a group of hegemonic intellectuals working in the Court, following the example of Joaquim Norberto, who worked with Joaquim Caetano Fernandes Pinheiro (1825-1876) and Joaquim Manuel de Macedo (1820-1882).

Joaquim Norberto, in the series of articles called “Nacionalidade da literatura brasileira” and in a segment of the planned “História da literatura brasileira,” operates under an assumption mentioned in the first paragraph of the text:

A nacionalidade da literatura de qualquer povo demonstra-se por si mesma como a expressão de sua inteligência; é ela quem patenteia o espírito e a tendência de suas diversas fases, marchando em progresso ou decadência, segundo as modificações de seus costumes, de seus usos, de suas leis e de seu caráter. Negar essa nacionalidade por haver outro povo, que fale idêntica língua, e em virtude dos vínculos, que uniam os dois povos, é condená-lo à condição de escravo, que ainda depois de liberto tem por destino produzir em benefício de outrem; tal foi porém o que se pretendeu não há muitos anos a nosso respeito em referência a Portugal. (SILVA, 2002, p. 63).

Joaquim Norberto probably believed that his postulation prevented any objections. But the fact that Joaquim Nabuco brings the question to the foreground of his interpretation of the epic poem by Luís de Camões shows that the debate was not closed. However, he could provoke responses that took a singular course, considering not only the article of the lawyer from Pernambuco anticipating the content of the work on the author of *Os Lusíadas*, but also the position expressed by Machado de Assis (1839-1908)

in his “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira. Instinto de Nacionalidade,” from 1873.

### **The new generation**

The group of literates mentioned so far was born between the last decades of the 18th century (Januário da Cunha Barbosa, Gama e Castro, Almeida Garrett, and Ferdinand Denis) and the first ones of the 19th century (Joaquim Norberto). Joaquim Nabuco was born well after – in 1849 –, when Brazil was not only an independent nation, but was also organized in a relatively solid imperial regime, with full control over the revolted provinces from the Regency period. Closer to him is another Joaquim: Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, born in 1839, who, since the mid-1850s, was active in the editorial media of Rio de Janeiro.

The writer from Rio had expressed his thoughts on the national literature in 1858, in *A Marmota*, a journal directed by Paula Brito (1809-1861). The article, entitled “O passado, o presente e o futuro da literatura”, is divided into three parts. The first starts with a reflection on the country’s colonial past and examines the situation of the poet, who faces a “bem mesquinha” society, prone to “inocula[r] nas fibras íntimas do povo o desânimo e a indiferença” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1.002-1.003). When referring to poetry, he paraphrases Almeida Garrett’s positioning:

A poesia de então tinha um caráter essencialmente europeu. Gonzaga, um dos mais líricos poetas da língua portuguesa, pintava cenas da Arcádia, na frase de Garrett, em vez de dar uma cor local às suas liras, em vez de dar-lhes um cunho puramente nacional. Daqui uma grande perda: a literatura escravizava-se, em vez de criar um estilo seu, de modo a poder mais tarde influir no equilíbrio literário da América. (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1003).

He thus recognizes the “influência poderosa da literatura portuguesa sobre a nossa”, which “só podia ser prejudicada e sacudida por uma revolução intelectual” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1003). He makes one exception, *O Uruguai*, by Basílio da Gama, reproducing once again Garrett’s assessment when saying that, “sem trilhar a senda seguida pelos outros, Gama escreveu um poema, se não puramente nacional, ao menos nada europeu” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1003). After reproducing the judgment of the Portuguese poet,

Machado de Assis adds to it, making his voice count, explaining why he does not consider *O Uruguai* a national poem:

Não era nacional, porque era indígena, e a poesia indígena, bárbara, a poesia do boré e do tupã, não é a poesia nacional. O que temos nós com essa raça, com esses primitivos habitantes do país, se os seus costumes não são a face característica da nossa sociedade?" (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1003).

Machado de Assis, therefore, assumes a unique position: when he states that the Portuguese literature influenced "our own," he recognizes the separation between the two of them, agreeing with the representatives of *Minerva Brasiliense*. But he does not accept that the Indianist side, which goes back to the epic of Basílio da Gama, is expressive of what he understands as "national poetry." Especially since he does not accept any affinity between "nós" – the nation – and the "primitivos habitantes do país," since their customs do not constitute "face característica da nossa sociedade."

In order to check the validity of the, in theory, politically incorrect statement of the young Machado, it is worth pointing out that the author remained consistent from the beginning, with "O passado, o presente e o futuro da literatura," from 1858, up to fifteen years later, with "Notícia da atual literatura brasileira," from 1873. This article was published in a journal produced in New York, *O Novo Mundo*, directed by José Carlos Rodrigues (1844-1923), with whom the Brazilian writer had exchanged letters in 1872, after the criticism that he had made of the then recently launched *Ressurreição* (ZILBERMAN, 2017).

The opening of the article seems to establish a dialogue with the previous study, although the style is more moderate:

Quem examina a atual literatura brasileira reconhece-lhe logo, como primeiro traço, certo instinto de nacionalidade. Poesia, romance, todas as formas literárias do pensamento buscam vestir-se com as cores do país, e não há negar que semelhante preocupação é sintoma de vitalidade e abono de futuro. [...]. Interrogando a vida brasileira e a natureza americana, prosadores e poetas acharão ali farto manancial de inspiração e irão dando fisionomia própria ao pensamento nacional (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1.203).

In the following paragraph, the argument goes in the opposite direction by drawing attention to the extremism demonstrated by some creators in the face of national productions:

Sente-se aquele instinto até nas manifestações da opinião, aliás mal formada ainda, restrita em extremo, pouco solícita, e ainda menos apaixonada nestas questões de poesia e literatura. Há nela um instinto que leva a aplaudir principalmente as obras que trazem os toques nacionais (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1203).

Pulling away from this group, the critic seems to update his judgment on the work of Tomás Antônio Gonzaga, who he rejected fifteen years earlier. He notes that perhaps what he calls “juventude literária” had not “meditado os poemas de Uruguai e Caramuru com aquela atenção que tais obras estão pedindo”; yet “Basílio da Gama e Durão são citados e amados, como precursores da poesia brasileira”. In his view, this appreciation has narcissistic residues, for “a razão é que eles [a “juventude literária”] buscaram em roda de si os elementos de uma poesia nova, e deram os primeiros traços de nossa fisionomia literária”. Meanwhile – and it is at this point that Machado seems to contradict his opinion expressed at the end of 1858 – “outros, Gonzaga por exemplo, respirando aliás os ares da pátria, não souberam desligar-se das faixas da Arcádia nem dos preceitos do tempo. Admira-se-lhes o talento, mas não se lhes perdoa o cajado e a pastora, e nisto há mais erro que acerto” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1203).

“Notícia da atual literatura brasileira” was printed in 1873, and circulated not only in New York, but also in Brazil, since the author disseminated the article in the liberal press led by the newspaper “A Reforma,” published in Rio de Janeiro and other provinces of the country (BERGAMINI, 2013). He reaffirms, in a way, his early position from 1858, according to which, in Brazilian literature, the “instinct of nationality,” which he points out in the subtitle of the article, predominates. He reiterates his rejection of the principle that “national” is related to the representation of the Indigenous culture, as he writes further on: “é certo que a civilização brasileira não está ligada ao elemento indiano, nem dele recebeu in-fluxo algum; e isto basta para não ir buscar entre as tribos vencidas os títulos da nossa personalidade literária.” By that, he does not mean that the subject should be excluded from art, as “tudo é matéria de poesia, uma vez que traga as condições do belo ou os elementos de que ele se compõe” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1204).



Unacceptable, for Machado, is the thesis, of ideological content, not the theme. So much so that, two years later, he launches a book containing Indianist poems: *As americanas*, in 1875. But, in a frequently reproduced passage, he bases his criterion on another principle: “o que se deve exigir do escritor antes de tudo, é certo sentimento íntimo, que o torne homem do seu tempo e do seu país, ainda quando trate de assuntos remotos no tempo e no espaço” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1205). Valid or not, this principle guided most of his literary work.

Joaquim Nabuco seems to partake in these ideas, but adds others, some tuned to issues discussed at his time. The first of these concerns the thesis, according to which *Os Lusíadas* belongs to the Brazilian literature, as noted before. Thus, he reverses the equation typically used to approach the topic of the belonging or non-belonging of the representative works of a national literature: it is not these works that are part of the Portuguese literary repertoire, but the opposite, Camões should be incorporated into the Brazilian heritage. With this proclamation, Nabuco seems to wish to close a debate of almost fifty years; however, he expressed other controversial manifestations.

These transpired in the second thesis of his article, when the author exposes his total rejection of the Indianist project, stating that “a vida no Brasil começou em 1500.” Before this date, “existia o seu solo, mas com outro nome e povoado por outra raça”, which, in turn, disappeared, “barbaramente perseguido(a), é certo”, having sought refuge “no interior ainda virgem do país”. He considers the race as extinct, which is why they left no legacy:

Nada ficou sobre o solo, atestando a antiga existência das tribos primitivas: nenhuma forma de sociedade estável havia entre elas, enquanto no Peru os incas tinham o seu trono firmado no coração de uma raça, cujos monumentos e construções maravilharam os conquistadores.

On the other hand, he recognizes that an author was able to tell

da vida errante, que povoasse o deserto de ilusões, que pusesse no coração de nosso índio os sentimentos mais ternos do seu, que fizesse-o muitas vezes eco de suas próprias dores, que lhe desse a eloquência de um tribuno e a imaginação de um poeta.

According to Nabuco, this procedure could originate “uma obra da mais verdadeira e ideal poesia”, like *O Uruguai*. Nevertheless – and this is

his point, resonating with Machado de Assis' claim in his 1858 article –, in doing so, “o poeta, por maior que fosse o seu gênio, não faria um poema nacional.”

One of the reasons for this impossibility is that the creator cannot be “o poeta de uma raça que não é nossa”. Literature, in his view, expresses the society, and the Brazilian society “substituiu, no gozo deste país, os seus habitantes primitivos.” Therefore, at the end of the second paragraph, he poses the question: “o que tem a sociedade brasileira com as tribos indígenas?”, a formulation that also appears to echo, in a more polished way, the question raised by Machado de Assis in his text published in *A Marmota*.

The second reason, according to Joaquim Nabuco, stems from the fact that the “local color” does not guarantee “the originality of the literature.” He draws on the verses of Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864) to illustrate his statement: the writer from Maranhão wrote what he called “American poems,” but according to the critic from Pernambuco, this does not make him an Indigenous poet: “suas poesias indígenas seriam menos facilmente da poesia tupi do que seriam do cancionero espanhol suas sextilhas de Fr. Antão”. He complements the reasoning that the “local color” does not represent originality – and, by extension, nationality – with an argument that is not limited to the literature in Portuguese: “Se a cor local bastasse para isso, Gonçalves Dias seria andaluz do tempo dos sarracenos, Byron seria veneziano ou grego, e Shakespeare seria ao mesmo tempo bretão, romano e mouro.”

It is important to note that the argument is fallacious, because it confuses the nationality of the artist – in terms of the place of birth – and the originality of his work; however, Nabuco seeks to reflect on the nationality content that a literature may contain. His starting point, stated in the opening sentence of the article, is resumed in the third paragraph: for a literature to be national, it “precisa expressar o estado da sociedade que nela se reflete,” at this point anticipating Machado de Assis' statement regarding the possibility of the artist translating “certain intimate feelings,” enabling him to present himself as a “man of his time and of his country, even when he deals with remote affairs in terms of time and space.”

However, what Machado only indirectly alludes to, Nabuco declares loud and clear. After reiterating that “no Brasil não há por ora originalidade alguma, nem de artes, nem de construção, nem de costumes, nem de vida”, he exposes what he considers effectively “novo e original” – and here he states his third thesis, according to which one of the main marks of our national society is “a escravidão,” “digamo-lo para nossa vergonha.”

He recognizes that,

há sempre nas obras dos escritores, que querem ser nacionais, traços, reflexos, sinais dessa deplorável instituição. O que constitui nos seus livros a particularidade de nossas cenas familiares, de nossa vida campestre, são os quadros do cativo humano.

And he concludes that “a nossa vida é a mesma dos outros países, com a diferença que entre nós há a escravidão de mais”.

It is the enslavement that, according to Nabuco, brings originality to Brazil. Its representation in the literature follows different paths: it can be painted in a odious way; alongside those who do so, there are those who prefer the polemic over the novels or the poetry, and there are also those who, in their view, “confundem insensivelmente os dois estados.” Thus, putting the “cor local do país a suas obras, trazem uma lembrança do cativo, sem indagarem se isso não é um estigma, que eles imprimem, em vez de uma honra que fazem a seu país.”

This aspect, in his view, constitutes “a exata pintura da sociedade de hoje.” However, as enslavement is “destinado a perecer”, making disappear with it the society in which it is present, the literature that depicts it will not remain alive. According to Nabuco, Brazil is living a transitional period, and “os quadros em que ela vê hoje sua imagem” will disappear with the extinction of the servile work.<sup>3</sup>

Extricated from, at least, three assumptions that supported the theory of Brazilian literature – first, that it was part of the Portuguese literature; second, the validity of Indianism; and third, the presence of local color, which would supposedly guarantee the nationality and originality of our

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<sup>3</sup> The Free Womb Law was passed in 1871, with the expectation of gradually extinguishing slavery in Brazil. The law's legislator was José Tomás Nabuco de Araújo (1813-1878), father of Joaquim Nabuco.

artistic heritage – and supported by the notion that cultural identity arises from the existence of enslavement (temporary for the time being), Nabuco now invests against another assertion, which until then had been regarded as certainty. According to the author, Brazil not only does not produce original literature, but also does not have an authentic epic poetry.

Thus, after observing that the efforts to provide the country with a national literature were sterile, either because the literature that was produced lacked “relação com a raça, as tradições e a história do país” which, therefore, could not be considered Brazilian, or because “traçaram as raias de nossa nacionalidade moral com a escravidão, condenada a desaparecer”, he examines the epic poetry project of Domingos Gonçalves de Magalhães to guarantee the place of *Os Lusíadas* as “obra-prima de nossa literatura”, thus returning to his starting point.

In order to achieve this result, he first claims that the goal of “tornar-nos independentes de Portugal, literária, como nos tornamos politicamente”, is “preconceito.” According to Nabuco, these are issues of a different nature and cannot be considered as equivalent. He also rejects the idea that Magalhães operated the “nacionalização das letras pátrias”, because, in his judgment, that author’s poetry lacks “cor, movimento, harmonia, comunicação, vida e rima”.

In another formulation, an epic poem, to be recognized, requires artistic quality, which is not the case in *A Confederação dos Tamoios*.

The rejection of Magalhães’ work occupies few lines in the article by Nabuco. Arguing that he does not intend to comment on living authors, he is economical in his words. But his moderation is still a way of enunciating in a few words what the wise would interpret in full. After all, in the preface of 1864, Magalhães opposed the author of *Os Lusíadas* in order to affirm the validity of his own epic Indianist project, whereas on his part Nabuco admires the Lusitanian poem and its creator. It is no surprise, therefore, that he rejects *A Confederação dos Tamoios* as an example of the realization of an original Brazilian epic capable of representing its nationality.

Dated June 3, the two-column article is succeeded by the book of over three hundred pages. The work opens with an introduction which includes, from page eleven to the end, the text published in *A República*.

Perhaps Nabuco wanted to anticipate the reaction that his book would provoke, because the passage made public is what explicitly translates his vision of the Brazilian literature and of its relations with society, condemning the lack of originality of the former, announcing the transitory nature of the regime of enslavement and, above all, proclaiming the symbolic belonging of *Os Lusíadas* to the national literary heritage.

Following the publishing of the book, reviews were released in high-profile newspapers of the time. The issue of August 30, 1872, of *Jornal do Comércio* announces the publishing of the work and praises its content, emphasizing above all the author's intention to celebrate the third centenary of the poem (IMPRENSA). On September 1, in the section "Altos e baixos," the publication is once again celebrated, drawing attention to the stylistic virtues of Nabuco and his commitment to value the Camonian creation at a time when the poet seemed forgotten by the public (ALTOS E BAIXOS).

Two days later, it is the turn of *A Reforma* to speak about the volume by Nabuco. Here too, the tone is still complimentary to the point that the critic observes that "o estudo crítico biográfico de Camões, que acaba de ser impresso no Brasil, não encontra es-tudo igual na pátria do cantor de Vasco da Gama" (LITTERATURA). However, the reviewer, after pointing out that the "jovem escritor" produces a critique that is "erudita e sem afetação", being endowed with a "florido" style, with "sonoros, harmônicos e ordenados sem esforço", manifests his disagreement with the thesis that there is no Brazilian literature, because we lack "elementos para a sua criação." The critic comments:

Não se pode negar que o Brasil tenha uma tradição sua. Essa tradição, os aborígenes aniquilados pelos colonizadores, a teogonia indiana, os costumes extravagantes dos indígenas, o espírito aventureiro dos primeiros exploradores, a variedade da nossa fauna e da nossa flora, tudo isso parece-nos fundamento para a nossa emancipação literária.

And he continues:

esta imensa zona territorial, onde viveram e foram exterminadas tantas nações guerreiras, pitorescas nos seus ritos e usanças; que neste enorme país onde o sol e os horizontes engrandecem o pensamento do homem; onde lutaram colonos e íncolas, modificando aqueles os seus hábitos europeus, não acreditamos que a este gigantesco Brasil faleçam elementos para uma literatura nacional.

To ensure the validity of his ideas, the columnist uses “dois ilustres estrangeiros”, Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) and Ferdinand Denis, the latter especially in his *Scènes de la nature sous les tropiques et de leur influence sur la poésie*, which “robusteceram ainda mais a nossa crença”. However, he does not disagree with the proposal of Nabuco, according to which the author, “*escolhendo os Lusíadas não saiu do terreno da literatura nacional*” (author’s emphasis); after all, according to him, “a grande epopeia portuguesa pertence-nos por mais de um motivo:

Além da nossa história entroncar na desses heróis que partiram da ocidental praia lusitana, falamos a mesma língua que eles, e se o assunto do poema não é brasileiro, não temos melhor modelo do que esse.

In the review of the book by Nabuco, the journalist reverses the reasoning of the author of *Camões e os Lusíadas*. For him, the poem is linked to the national heritage, because in a certain way our literature is “estrangeira,” except when it addresses the enslavement, a theme, according to Nabuco, that will disappear when the servitude is extinguished. However, the absence of a national literature is not depressing, because the gap is occupied by Camões. Furthermore, for the scholar from Pernambuco, the nationality of the creator does not matter, nor what he translates into verse and prose, but his artistic quality. Gonçalves de Magalhães is Brazilian and wrote an epic; but he is a bad poet; so it is best to incorporate the Portuguese bard, who produced an exemplary work.

The chronicler of *A Reforma* takes another path: *Os Lusíadas* “pertence-nos”, because it tells of our past, uses the Portuguese language and is a model for later creations. The national nature is still the parameter for evaluation, a filter through which the works that constitute the history of the Brazilian literature can pass, including the alternative of an epic poem with a local theme.

In the year following the publication of *Camões e os Lusíadas*, Machado de Assis will continue the debate when publishing his “Notícia da atual literatura brasileira.” The proximity of dates and perspectives points to a concern, that, without having been developed at the time, or in subsequent decades, remained as a skeleton in the closet of the Brazilian historiography, always alert to manifestations of originality and nationality, without, however, finding them.

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# **Brazil and the River Plate: critical intersections and possibilities of the epic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

*Dirk Brunke*

## **Intercultural relations between the River Plate and Brazil in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

When the Argentine intellectual Domingo Faustino Sarmiento first arrived in Bahia de Guanabara, the spectacular nature of Rio de Janeiro caused him to experience a tropical fever. In his autobiographical book *Viajes* (1845–1847), one can read that upon seeing Sugar Loaf, Botafogo beach and Corcovado, “facultades de sentir no alcanzan a abarcar tantas maravillas” (SARMIENTO, 1886, p. 72). Beyond the amazement and admiration, the traveller feels threatened by the tropical sun, this “astro matador [and] tirano sobre cuya faz no es uno osado de echar una mirada furtiva” (SARMIENTO, 1886, p. 67).

This stereotypical image of Brazil articulated by the most influential Argentine intellectual of the 19<sup>th</sup> century does not seem to have been conducive to stimulating a wave of tropical tourism. It would also be incorrect to characterise the political relations between Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as being favourable to the development of friendly relations between these neighbouring countries. After independence, outstanding republicans from the River Plate, such as Juan Bautista Alberdi, condemned Brazil for maintaining its monarchical form of government. Slavery was also strongly criticised. And last but not least, Brazil’s expansion southward created an anti-Brazilian climate (PREUSS, 2011, p. 35; Shumway, 1991, p. 236). Nevertheless, Brazil, and especially Rio de Janeiro, gradually became, from the 1840s onwards, a

point of spatial and ideological orientation for many Rioplatense romantics. Above all, when the dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas was established (1835), Brazil, along with other Latin American countries, will become a 'safe haven' to which many romantic exiles from the La Plata region fled. Some of the displaced romantics even developed more favourable opinions about the capital of the Brazilian empire, even reflecting deeply on the literature of the nascent nation. And, finally, the Triple Alliance later attests that the relationship between the three countries changed significantly since the 1850s.

The various points of contact and diverse relations between the two cultural spaces have been the focus of research in recent years. In most cases, the exchange of political theories is described, comparing the two political spaces (republic vs. monarchy) and their different dynamics in the nation-building process. In addition, Gaucho literature and the condition and writings of exiles from the La Plata countries are the main research areas (for example: CHIAPPINI 2004; PAGNI, 2007; AMANTE, 2010; PREUSS, 2011; CROCE, 2016). Apart from the valuable studies of Moreira (2011; 2013; 2015; 2018), there have been few studies on the relations between authors of epic poetry until today. This is surprising considering that in the 19th century, Brazil and the Río de la Plata assumed a central position in Latin America regarding the epic genre: the polemic on the *Confederação dos Tamoios* was accompanied by the publication of a large number of poems, exceeded only by the even greater number of epic poems published in Argentina and Uruguay.

In the following, we will demonstrate that the cultural relations between Brazil and the River Plate were intensified, leading to a dialogue about the possibilities and impossibilities of the epic genre in the context of Romanticism and nation-building processes. This dialogue can be considered as one of the first examples of the emergence of a Latin American discursive community. To support my thesis, I will analyse two theoretical texts: "Un poema brasileiro. *A Confederação dos Tamoios*, poema por Domingo Gonçalves de Magalhães" (1857) by Juan María Gutiérrez and "Indagações sobre a literatura argentina contemporânea" (1844) by Joaquim Norberto de Souza Silva. In addition, I will also analyse the epic poem *Cantos del peregrino* (1846/57) by José Mármol.

### **Inter-epic echoes: *A Confederação dos Tamoios* (1856) on the River Plate**

It is undeniable that the *Confederação dos Tamoios* played a central role in the theoretical discourse on Brazilian epic poetry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, there has been little focus on the reception of the text in other regions of Latin America, particularly on the River Plate, despite the fact that Argentine and Uruguay epic poetry clearly show influence from the Brazilian epic tradition. For instance, the work of Alejandro Magariños Cervantes (1825–1893), the founder of Uruguayan literary history, exhibits a strong connection to Brazilian literature. His gaucho novel *Caramurú* (1850), as the title suggests, is a réécriture (retelling) of the eponymous epic poem by Santa Rita Durão, published in 1781 (BURGUEÑO, 1998). Additionally, Magariños Cervantes published a brief study of this 18<sup>th</sup> century epic poem stating that the conquest of America offers more material for epic poetry than the entire history of ancient Europe. Furthermore, Magariños Cervantes later characterised Uruguay's national epic poem, Juan Zorrilla de San Martín's *Tabaré* (1888), as a successor text to the *Confederação*. In his own epic poem *La cruzada argentina* (1846), he includes annotations praising Magalhães' descriptions of American nature. Overall, Magariños Cervantes' work testifies that the Brazilian Indianist and his epic texts are unexpectedly prominent among the Romantics south of Brazil (MAGARIÑOS, 1888, pp. 289 and 477).

In terms of the presence of Brazilian epics on the River Plate and the theoretical discourse surrounding epic poetry, the most significant figure is Juan María Gutiérrez (1809-1878), the founding father of Argentine literary historiography. He published an edition of the epic poem *O Uruguai* by José Basilio da Gama and incorporated extensive use of verse epigraphs from Santa Rita Durão's *Caramuru* in his own lyrical poetry (for an analysis cf. AMANTE, 2010, p. 518ss). In 1857, he published his concise but influential treatise "Un poema brasileiro" on the *Confederação dos Tamoios*. Before discussing this text in detail, it is worth mentioning the following anecdote, which illustrates the impact of theoretical texts between Brazil and the River Plate: even though Gonçalves de Magalhães' epic poem was at the centre

of Brazilian discussions and debates on the epic genre, the author himself “nunca se defendeu ou se pronunciou sobre sua obra” (MOREIRA, 2018, p. 74). There is only one exception: in 1872, Magalhães sent a letter to Gutiérrez from Paris (1872), the “única manifestação do poeta sobre sua obra” (MOREIRA, 2018, p. 74).

The epic poets of the Río de la Plata, therefore, are not only aware of the exemplary epic texts of the European tradition, from Antiquity to the foremost Romantic epic poems, but they also extend their view to the epic production in the Brazilian Empire, with Magalhães and his *Confederação* at the centre of the discussion. This discussion takes place, on the one hand, by using epigraphs, footnotes or glossaries at the end of the respective texts – all intertextual techniques highly valued by the Romantics. In addition to the paratextual apparatus, the dialogue between epic authors is also maintained through non-fictional texts in which they explicitly articulate theoretical contributions in a more explicit way, with Juan María Gutiérrez’s treatise having the greatest impact.

Juan María Gutiérrez published “Un poema brasileiro” in January 1857 in the journal *El Orden* in Buenos Aires. He uses the “epopeia de seu colega brasileiro para discutir sobre a história da literatura latino-americana, apontando as diferenças de produção históricas e culturais entre uma e outra nação” (MOREIRA, 2015, p. 237). The different political and socio-historical conditions of both cultural spaces are at the centre of his argument because the “estado político do Brasil e da Argentina é (...) distinto: entre os argentinos, a ditadura de Rosas afasta os intelectuais; no Brasil, a monarquia de Pedro abre espaço para a manifestação de homens da cultura e da literatura” (MOREIRA, 2015, p. 231). While Argentine Romanticism emerged as a literary and cultural movement in exile, always against and in confrontation with political power, the Brazilian Romantic programme emerged more or less in harmony with the political elite, “instaurando entre el poder y [los] artistas una relación de mecenazgo a través de un sistema de favor” (AMANTE, 2010, p. 218). Gutiérrez understands the socio-political conditions of Brazil as an indispensable factor for epic poetry. In other words, Magalhães lived at a historical moment when the prerequisites for epic poetry were fulfilled. What does Gutiérrez define as these prerequisites?

First condition: Affirmation of the Brazilian epic tradition. In contrast to the La Plata region, Brazil has a significant epic tradition, and Brazilian epics should be connected to the literary production prior to independence. Romantic epic, therefore, would not be a creation *ex nihili*. This aspect of Gutiérrez's theory implicitly acknowledges the fact that it was impossible to fulfil this prerequisite on the River Plate: there simply was no epic tradition. The only epic poem from colonial times – *La Argentina* (1602) by Martín del Barco Centenera – was only published in 1836. The text did not go unnoticed, but, due to its ironic-burlesque tone, it could only serve to a limited extent as a foundational text for a tradition of epic-heroic poetry (GAMBETTA, 2016; BRUNKE, 2020). The founding text of epic poetry on the Río de la Plata was not published until 1837, namely *La cautiva* of Esteban Echeverría (BRUNKE 2016), who is also considered the founding father of Romanticism in Latin America.

The first condition for Brazilian epic poetry – affirming the national epic tradition – points to the continuity between colonial literature and nascent Brazilian literature. This continuity was possible because Brazilians had a positive relationship with their colonial past – the second condition for Brazilian epic poetry. There was not, as on the River Plate, a definitive break between the colonial period and the post-independence period. In Argentina and Uruguay, political independence marked a definitive rupture, dividing the region's history into two sections: the Spanish colonial past and the time after the Wars of Independence, which marked the beginning of the new national epoch, with the creation of a new political system and a broad cultural reorientation. The initial national discourse on identity favoured a position of rejection towards the time of Spanish domination. It was not until the 1850s that the discourse on national history and literature began to view the past in a positive light. This meant that, in the first half of the 19th century, the colonial past did not serve as material for epic poetry and was almost always portrayed in a negative light. In addition to the lack of an epic tradition, the Rioplatense Romantics of the first half of the century had no epic material at hand drawn from the nation's history.

Although the relationship with the national past is different, Gutiérrez emphasizes that the “ponto comum entre elas [the two nations, Argentina

and Brazil] reside na questão colonial e na necessidade de afirmação original de seus processos” (MOREIRA, 2015, p. 237). This affirmation of colonial times is essential because the constitution of a national literature requires epic poetry, and epic poetry requires the inclusion of the heritage of the past. That is why Gutiérrez focuses on the socio-political conditions that influence and facilitate epic poetry. When he points to the continuity between the Brazilian present and colonial times, emphasising that the harmonious coexistence of politicians and artists made it possible for an intellectual field to be constituted, he highlights the fundamental difference with the situation in his homeland. The relationship with the colonial period is much more problematic in the River Plate countries, and the intellectual field could only be formed in exile. The diaspora of intellectuals and the conflicting relationship with the national past and the present make it almost impossible for the Romantics to write epic poems. In short, Gutiérrez portrays Brazil as a model space for American epic poetry.

It is important to note that Gutiérrez exclusively focuses on the thematic aspect of epic poetry and that he favours the national past as the preferred topic of any epic poem that aims to represent national values. He does not mention anything about the structure or formal aspects of Romantic epic poetry. Now, Brazilian Joaquim Norberto de Souza Silva goes a step further and theorizes the importance of time and distance for epic poetry. In his “Indagações sobre a litteratura argentina contemporanea”, published in the *Minerva Brasiliense* in 1844, he already theorizes that would be called ‘epic distance’ by Lukács and Bakhtin.

### **Joaquim Norberto de Souza Silva: “Indagações sobre a litteratura argentina contemporanea” (1844)**

The text by Souza Silva – one of the most important and prolific intellectuals at the time – is the first theoretical and historiographical treatise on River Plate literature, preceding even the publications of Juan María Gutiérrez, the father of Argentine literary historiography. Echeverría, who introduced Romanticism to the Río de la Plata countries, commented that “ni siquiera en nuestro país se había hecho un análisis tan serio de toda una

época de la literatura argentina” (quoted in WEINBERG, 1961, p. 18). This comment highlights the significance of the treatise as the starting point for a dialogue between the two cultural spaces: Souza Silva was motivated by the “Certámen poético” of 1841 in Montevideo (MOREIRA, 2015, p. 231) and the “Indagações”, in turn, were read by the rioplatenses. A letter from Esteban Echeverría from December 1844 testifies that the “artigo publicado na Minerva teve repercussão imediata” (MOREIRA, 2013, p. 83). In the letter, Echeverría writes to a friend who was in Rio de Janeiro at that time, saying: “Procure relacionarse con el autor de esse artículo y estimúlele a continuar sus indagaciones. Nos conviene mucho el juicio (que no puer ser sino imparcial) de los extranjeros” (WEINBERG, 1961, p. 26). The friend to whom Echeverría is writing is Juan María Gutiérrez, who actually met Souza Silva and provided him with plenty of new material so that he could indeed continue his *Indagações*. While this marks the beginning of the dialogue between the two cultural spaces, it is hitherto unknown why Souza Silva did not finish the second part of his *Indagações*. Nonetheless, the meeting between the two intellectuals was crucial for the exchange between the two young nations regarding the epic genre.

In his *Indagações* Souza Silva analyses the numerous ‘cantos épicos’ which take the martial events of the Wars of Independence on the River Plate as their subject topic. As Souza Silva writes, “o triumpho das armas argentinas em assignaladas batalhas despertaram o entusiasmo” (SILVA, 1844, p. 295) in the authors, who, in turn, “impunharam a lyra da liberdade, [e] ergueram com seus hymnos hum monumento à independencia” (SILVA, 1844, p. 295). Focusing on the Wars of Independence, Souza Silva sees this period of River Plate history as the ‘fertile soil’ which stimulated the emerging national literature of Argentina and Uruguay. It is not without reason that he focuses on this historical moment, as it is particularly well-suited to epic poetry: battles and wars, heroes who sacrificed their lives and fought for the national cause, etc. Such events have been considered ideal material for epic poetry since ancient times.

But Souza Silva complains that all texts written during the wars or that thematize the Wars of Independence are merely brief compositions, written for a specific historical moment, and, above all, they still adhere to

European models. His complaints go so far that he states that all of the emerging Argentine literature is nothing else but a “cega e não estudada imitação” (SILVA, 1844, p. 295). He continues his criticism by referring to Esteban de Luca, an author nowadays completely unknown:

Se D. Estevan de Luca concebesse hum poema sobre as regras épicas e o desenvolvesse segundo as idéas modernas em voga, certamente que seu talento se patentearia em maior escala com mais brilhantismo, recursos que não offerece a poesia lyrica, e lhe forneceria materia em que seu genio podesse dispôr de toda a força; o entusiasmo, porém, apenas inspirava composições ligeiras, e febricitantes, quaes meteoros que scintillam no horror das trévas e desapparecem de subito; eram obras para o momento da exaltação dos animos, e todo o seu dominio pertencia á poesia lyrica (SILVA, 1844, p. 297).

It is likely that Souza Silva does not use the conditional – “se patentearia” – by chance: he aims to emphasise that Argentine poetry of the time is the product of a historical moment considered “epic”, meaning that the ‘raw material’ for epic poetry is available, but the transformation of this material into epic poetry has not yet occurred. In very explicit words, Souza Silva laments what Gutiérrez only hinted at: the fact that the time for Argentine epic poetry had not yet arrived. The Rio de la Plata did not yet have its own Magalhães.

According to Souza Silva, the main problem is the “enthusiasm” of the authors, producing nothing more than casual poetry: “pois que, passados os momentos da febre do entusiasmo, o seu merito intrinseco he nullo per si mesmo para entrar na analyse da critica nos momentos sosegados da leitura” (SILVA, 1844, p. 298). The Brazilian excludes brief compositions from the potential canon of national literature. Essentially, Souza Silva contrasts lyric poetry with epic poetry. While lyric poetry is based on the affectivity and emotiveness of the author, who lives in a historical moment considered epic or favourable for epic poetry, this principle of subjectivity does not serve to stimulate epic poetry. Therefore, epic poetry requires a temporal and/or emotional distance between the author and the historical matter he wants to write about, between the moment of poetic creation and the historical moment of the diegesis.

A more precise definition of this distance becomes evident when Souza Silva compares the poetic work of Esteban Echeverría with that of



Magalhães, highlighting the similarities between them. Both Magalhães and Echeverría thematize the distant national past. Magalhães writes about the time of the Portuguese conquest, while Echeverría stylizes the conflicts between Europeans and natives as if they were part of the distant past, despite the historic facts. Whereas the Brazilian epic actually uses the remote past as the topic of his poem, the Argentine Romantic only stylizes the events of his fictional text as if they belonged to the remote past. In both cases, as it seems, the historical distance between the fictional events described in the text and the reader seems to be of fundamental importance. It is not until the early twentieth century that the most prominent theorists of epic poetry, G. Lukács and M. Bakhtin, will address the significance of historical distance, which they call 'epic distance'. According to their argument, this distance is a fundamental condition of epic poetry. They define it as the insurmountable distance between the narrator of the epic poem and the world of the epic diegesis.

Thus, for Brazilian Souza Silva it is unquestionable that the canon of any national literature should include epic poetry, and he almost demands epic poetry for the young American nations. However, the realisation of epic poetry seems impossible and unfeasible, as the immediate past or the present is not suitable for epic poetry, and therefore the prerequisite of 'epic distance' cannot be fulfilled.

Joaquim Norberto de Souza Silva and Juan María Gutiérrez compare the situation of the two nascent literatures in Brazil and Argentina and both search for an Argentine author of epic poetry. They believe that epic poetry should play a fundamental role in the formation of national literature and that American history should provide the material for epic poetry. Therefore, American history becomes a source of epic inspiration for both the Brazilian and the Argentine. In this sense, their binational dialogue on the possibilities and impossibilities of epic poetry includes a discourse on the conditions of the epic genre in America in general. The intellectuals articulate a "conciencia continental" (SOLA, 1968, p. 69).

**José Mármol: *Cantos del peregrino* (1846–1857)**

The Argentine exile José Mármol takes up this continental consciousness in his epic poem *Cantos del peregrino* which is considered the most romantic text of River Plate literature, because it exemplifies the programme of romantic subjectivity. In the poem, Mármol introduces an autobiographical narrative line, describing his exile in Brazil (1843–1846) and his impressions of the tropical nature, combining it with the familiar romantic motif of the Byronian wanderer. The hero of the poem, who is Mármol's alter ego, is an individual without a home, homeland, or love. This strong focus on the epic hero's subjectivity is accompanied by an explicit Americanism, which is unusual for Argentinian literature of the time (WEINBERG, 1997).

Thus, the following passage is just one of many in which the epic hero expresses his awareness of the purpose of his epic song. It not only serves to express his subjective individuality, but also has to represent the collective destiny of all Americans:

América es la virgen que sobre el mundo canta  
profetizando al mundo su hermosa libertad; [...]  
No son dorados sueños de mi alma americana;  
son leyes que promulga para los pueblos Dios,  
escritas en las cosas donde la mente humana  
estudia y desenvuelve profética la voz (MÁRMOL, 1917, p. 27ff.)

Alongside the national Argentinian and subjectivist individual perspective, the poem has a much broader geographical and historical perspective, focusing on the region between the River Plate and the city of Rio de Janeiro. In Guanabara Bay, the epic singer discovers the 'things' ("las cosas") he mentions: tropical nature becomes the epic singer's initial point of inspiration. This is significant because the tropical landscape is never placed in a political context. This is a means of contrasting Brazil's inspiring nature with the nature of the epic singer's homeland: in most of the passages in which he thematises Argentinian nature and landscape, the epic narrator uses the arid plain of the pampa or the River Plate to illustrate the political misery of his home country (e.g. canto XII, p. 235ff.). In contrast to the politicised pampa, the tropical landscape of Guanabara Bay is a space

free of political context in which the epic poet, gifted with genius, can indulge in his poetry and use his prophetic voice to uncover the sublime of American nature. In this self-reflexive passage from the *Cantos*, the epic singer describes the conditions of the genesis of the poem itself. Implicitly, like Gutiérrez and Souza Silva, the singer also needs a distance to make epic poetry possible. While theorists Souza Silva and Gutiérrez define a temporal distance, Mármol's epic singer needs a spatial distance.

In the penultimate canto, which is exclusively dedicated to Brazil, the epic voice once again draws his and the reader's attention to this spatial distance. It extensively thematizes the wonders of tropical nature and, like Sarmiento, Mármol's singer is also dazzled by the tropics and the lush nature of Guanabara Bay. After a detailed description of the forests and the hills, he uses the metaphor of the 'safe haven' because the topography of the bay protects the city from the wild sea just as it protects the displaced Romantics from political persecution. Guanabara bay is put on the scene as a heterotopia that makes, as we have seen, epic poetry possible.

The description of nature in the penultimate canto covers more than fifty stanzas and gives the song the form of a "himno a la desmesura de la creación" (AMANTE, 1998, p. 76). It finally culminates with the singer exclaiming: "el mundo / nada tiene más rico ni fecundo / que tú, bello y magnífico Brasil" (MÁRMOL, 1917, p. 180). The heterotopian image of the tropics causes unease for the epic hero, who struggles to deal with the excessiveness of its nature. As it seems, he even reaches the limits of his poetic capabilities, prompting self-reflexive comments on the aesthetics of his text (AMANTE, 1998, p. 77). In doing so, he includes footnotes elaborating on the text's poetology, specifically the depoliticization of the Brazilian landscape:

A veces nos extendemos a consideraciones históricas, a otras puramente políticas y que parecen ajenas a la poesía; pero esto proviene de nuestro modo de comprender la época y la misión de sus poetas en América. [...] Los poetas americanos tienen más que nadie el deber, triste pero imperioso, de introducir con la música de sus palabras, con el corazón del pueblo, la verdad de las desgracias que éste desconoce, y el ruido de las cadenas que no siente. Además, no podríamos escribir de otro modo, porque no hay fibra de nuestro corazón que no esté herida por las espinas de nuestra época (MÁRMOL, 1965, p. 348ff.)

In this commentary, the author apologises for introducing contemporary politics into the epic text, either through reference to his home country or in the form of footnotes. Mármol is struggling with the epic genre because the inevitable choice of subject matter of current politics exceeds the limit of the genre's thematic scale. The excessiveness of the tropical landscape, which the epic narrator cannot capture in his text, is then transferred to the poetic creation, causing it to transgress the boundaries of the epic genre (AMANTE, 1998, p. 77). Mármol's epic poem is a contribution to the discourse on the possibilities or impossibilities of epic poetry in the 19th century and in the context of Romanticism. The subject matter is at the heart of the discussion for Mármol as well. His apologetic tone reveals his strong understanding of traditional genre expectations and his awareness that the situation of epic poetry is becoming more complex and complicated.

### **Conclusion**

The analysed texts that the Romantics, in addition to their strong national perspective, which is a key aspect of Romanticism in general, had a significant interest in poetological and political issues that transcend national borders and are of interest to the Americas as a whole, particularly with regard to the epic genre. The authors discussed have a shared idea of which genres should be part of the emerging national literature, with the epic being a crucial contributor. Interestingly, there is no mention of form in these texts, such as verse, stanzas, metric, rhyme etc. Instead, all the authors focus on the question of subject matter, arguing that the distant national past should be the privileged material for epic poetry. A theoretical discourse on the possibilities and impossibilities of American epic poetry emerges, incorporating comparative perspectives that span the River Plate and Guanabara Bay. The literature of one country is used to describe the literature of another to get a clear picture of the emerging national literature and the role played by the epic. These factors illustrate the emergence of a Latin American perspective on literature and the epic genre.

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## **In the middle of this prose, an epic poem**

*Antônio Marcos Vieira Sanseverino*

Hegel defines the novel as the bourgeois epic. From then on, the novel is established as a genre capable of representing reality entirely, either by distancing or constructing a broad and complex fictional world. Two issues can be interlinked in the 19th century – the relevance of new epic poems and the consolidation of the novel. The first is supposedly fit to represent the national heroes and tell a nation's history. An emblematic work, the epic poem should be able to account for the origin of the national character. The second allegedly has a popular origin, linked to the prose (a way of writing without the care of the epic verse, without the formal elevation), close to the newspapers and industrial production. When considered under the Hegelian tradition, the novel has the potential to fulfill the role of the epic. However, the criteria for construction and evaluation change to account for this prosaic form.

Machado de Assis, an active critic and an attentive reader of literary tradition, accompanies the emergence of the literary works of the time (novels, poetry, plays). In this paper, we will look at how he analyzed the presence of the epic in the Brazilian literature of his time. There had already been an intense debate about the publication of *A Confederação dos Tamoios* by Gonçalves de Magalhães. José de Alencar had attacked the work on different fronts, but in the present text, it is essential to highlight the inadequacy of the historical matter gathered for a Brazilian epic. The subsequent choice of the novel form and the popularity of the works by the writer from Ceará contribute to a tension between attempts at epic poetry and novelistic prose. This debate is present in the Machadian work. It is worth tracking how the epic appears in the Machadian fictional prose. In the first part of the paper,

we will study his critical work in which Machado studies local production. Next, we will analyze the chronicle and, finally, the fiction in novels and, mainly, in short stories.

### **A critic and the possibility of epic poetry**

In June 1866, Machado de Assis observed that the completion of an epic poem is a miraculous fortune, as seen in a critical comment after the publishing of *Colombo*, an epic written by Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre. The following fragment condenses the problems to be analyzed in the present text: the place that the discourse on the epic poem occupies in a time when the press, the prose, and the novel were dominant.

*Um poema épico, no meio desta prosa atual em que vivemos, é uma fortuna miraculosa. Pretendem alguns que o poema épico não é do nosso tempo, e há quem já cavasse uma vasta sepultura para a epopeia e para a tragédia, as duas formas da arte antiga. Não fazemos parte do cortejo fúnebre de Eurípedes e Homero. As formas poéticas podem modificar-se com o tempo, e essa é a natureza das manifestações da arte; o tempo, a religião e a índole influem no desenvolvimento das formas poéticas, mas não as aniquilam completamente* (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1158, my emphasis).

The critical comment by Machado de Assis points to a historical conception of poetic forms, which implies permanence (tragedy) and temporal variation (Greek, French, Shakespearean.). This critical view allows us to understand the presence of epic poetry in the 19th century and its historical variations.

In November 1866, in a letter to Machado de Assis, Joaquim Serra also commented about *Colombo*, stating he expected to read the critical evaluation, which he probably had yet to take notice of. The interest in bringing the word of this poet from Maranhão is that he sparks once again the debate on the “desejo dos que ambicionam uma epopeia nacional” (2008, p. 181), mainly because he considered the epic of Porto-Alegre—in two tomes and forty chants—not only as an epic but also as a “simples roteiro de viagem” or “quase que um drama biográfico” (p. 180). He also mentioned the need for the “modern epic” to seek a new path to treat the marvelous.



In January of the same year, 1866, Machado de Assis, in a review of *Iracema*, by José de Alencar, states that “as tradições indígenas encerram motivos para epopeias e para élogos, podem inspirar os seus Homeros e os seus Teócritos” (ASSIS, 2008, p. 1112). From a historical argument, Alencar wrote a prose poem to elaborate a legend and tell the foundation of Ceará. There are great warriors like Poti, but the poem does not take the course of the epic. Alencar “limita-se a falar do sentimento, vê-se que não pretende sair fora do coração”. While Gonçalves Dias opted for the epic form in *I-Juca Pirama*, Alencar makes another use of the historical argument and chooses to build a romantic heroine who does not “resiste à invasão de um sentimento novo para ela, e que transforma a vestal em mulher” (p. 1113). These two examples show Machado’s care in seeking “ver se o autor atendeu a todas as regras da forma escolhida, se fez obra de arte ou obra de passatempo” (p. 1107).

It is also worthwhile to note an exchange of open letters between Faustino Xavier Novais and Machado de Assis to this reflection. In April 1868, Faustino made a public questioning, as done earlier by José de Alencar<sup>1</sup>, and wrote an open letter to Machado about an epic poem that had just been published, *Riachuelo*, which covers one of the crucial battles in the campaign against Paraguay.<sup>2</sup> Not only does the letter spark the debate on the epic form, but also lists poems that make up a tradition in Portuguese: *Ulisseia*, *Ulissipo*, *Caramuru*, *O Afonso*, among others. Faustino says: “e o poema, no fim de tudo, merecia aceitação mais lisonjeira para o laborioso poeta, que se deu a um trabalho árido e fatigante para coligir dados” (2008, p. 244). In the reply, after a lengthy introduction, Machado says that the author faced the difficulties of the epic and made use of

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<sup>1</sup> In early 1868, José de Alencar also wrote an open letter introducing Castro Alves and demanding an evaluation from Machado de Assis about the quality of *Gonzaga*. “O Senhor foi o único de nossos modernos escritores, que se dedicou à cultura dessa difícil ciência que se chama a crítica. Uma porção do talento que recebeu da natureza, em vez de aproveitá-lo em criações próprias, não duvidou aplicá-lo a formar o gosto e desenvolver a literatura pátria.” (ALENCAR, in ASSIS, 2008, p. 130)

<sup>2</sup> It is worth pointing out that there was no historical distance from the chosen matter, considering that the battle was recent and, more than that, the war had not yet ended. The theme is war and the warrior deeds, which is a matter elevated by the form of the epic, but the work does not contain a typical organization of an epic.

the *ottava rima* and that his poem had many defects that did not diminish its value. Finally, he exalts one of the great qualities of the work, its sincerity: “Tem este livro uma qualidade valiosíssima – é sincero; respira de princípio a fim a emoção do poeta, o entusiasmo de que ele está possuído.”

In this curious debate, the attention and study that Machado de Assis dedicates to the epic form are clearly shown. He demonstrates an essential knowledge of the epic tradition, carefully read by him, but this gesture also comes together with a questioning of the possibility of the epic in modernity. Machado does not deny the validity or permanence of the epic but shows how its form changes over time. In other words, an epic poem written in Brazil during the 19th century should incorporate the transformations that come with modernity and inquire into the local conditions for a national epic. When rereading Machado de Assis’ critical work, one can observe the recurrent and pervasive reference to tradition as a basis for analyzing his era’s poetry, drama and narrative.

In 1875, Machado de Assis, in *Americanas*, builds a work with several narrative poems. Some of them, such as *Potira*, aspire to an epic dimension, which dialogues with Western (Ariosto) and local (Gonçalves Dias) traditions. The analysis of this work will not be undertaken here, but it helps to understand how the critical debate dialogues with the Machadian literary creation. In 1870, Luís Guimarães criticized the lack of Brazilian elements in *Falenas*. In a way, “Notícia do estado atual da literatura brasileira” (1873) and *Americanas* can be read not only as a response to the critic but mainly as an effort to deal with the transformation of literature and narrative poetry under the conditions of the place (Brazilian) and the time (modern).

### **The chronicler, between a fortnight historian and a candy vendor**

In *Ilustração Brasileira*, between 1876 and 1878, Machado de Assis published forty chronicles. These are the *Histórias de quinze dias*, in which, under the pseudonym of Manassés, Machado wrote his intervention in the daily life of Brazil, often using the information in the newspaper. In this series, he builds a dialogue between two women who are neighbors and who speak of the heat and then of their male neighbor. This is the origin of

the chronicle, a trivial and daily conversation about other people's lives. However, at the same time, it is more than that. It is an intervention in the current day.

O que é específico na crônica, pois, é a natureza de sua indeterminação. Sua particular ligação ao tempo vivido, como mostrou Machado de Assis na caracterização de suas origens, faz com que dependa dos acontecimentos com os quais busca interagir, movendo-se e transformando-se de acordo com eles. (...) o cronista está sempre sujeito ao imponderável do cotidiano (CHALHOUB; NEVES; PEREIRA, 2005, p. 15)

In the chronicle, a genre growing in consolidation in the Second Empire of Brazil, we have a space of experimentation in the press, subject to the pressures of deadlines, which leads to formal indetermination. For someone so attentive to apprehending the rules of each genre, it is important to observe how Machado de Assis works. He uses the pseudonym, Manassés, the son of Joseph of Egypt, the one who makes us forget, to pose as a historian with a displaced look at daily life. In *Histórias de quinze dias*, there is a similar process. Machado de Assis rereads a piece of news in an epic key, as we see in the following example. Councilors from a city hall have been suspended for taking advantage of public money. The same night, the City Council was invaded, and the documents that could prove the crime were burned. Hence the chronicler, against the opinion of most people, regards the councilmen as worthy of an epic, as they “foram direto a Tróia, armados em Guerra” (p. 137).

In the same series, Machado de Assis parodies once again the epic poetry:

Tocou a vez a Rocambole. Este herói, vendo arrasado o palácio de Príamo e desfeitos os moinhos da Mancha, lançou mão do que lhe restava e fez-se herói de polícia, pôs-se a lutar com o código e o senso-comum.

O século é prático, esperto e censurável; seu herói deve ter feições consoantes a estas qualidades de bom cunho. E porque a epopéia pede algum maravilhoso, Rocambole fez-se inverossímil; morre, vive, cai, barafusta, some-se, tal qual como um capoeira em dia de procissão.

Veja o leitor, se não há um fio secreto que liga os quatro heróis. É certo que é grande a distância entre o herói de Homero e o de Ponson de Terrail, entre Tróia e o xilindró. Mas é questão de ponto de vista. Os olhos são outros; outro é o quadro; mas a admiração é a mesma, e igualmente merecida (ASSIS, 2009, p. 157, my emphasis).

That is Part II of the chronicle of January 15, 1877, and, as Sá Rego (1989) points out, it is ironically characterized by the hero of our time. Manassés declares not having read anything other than the comments, yet he thinks Rocambole would be a character superior to us, with extraordinary and admirable capacity. He would have everything to synthesize the values that define our times. He would be our mediator between everyday life and universal values. However, humor undermines the statement. We noticed this in the terms used, such as *xilindró*, *barafusta*, by the simile *capoeira em dia de procissão*. It is also worth mentioning the emphasis given by the chronicler to the lineage that unites Achilles, Aeneas, Don Quijote, and *Rocambole* through the admiration of readers stressing that the marvelous trait of the epic has become implausibility. In the selection of the cited authors, in chronological order (Homer, Virgil, Cervantes, and Ponson du Terrail), there is a passage from the epic verse into the novelistic prose. Cervantes is part of the list considering a rereading of Chivalry novels, marked by the isolation of the central character. With *Rocambole* of Terrail, we would enter the order of an adventure novel, trivialized by the feuilleton, in which the novelistic prose incorporates the speech of the press. In the comical dimension, the chronicle inserts the novel as a continuity of the epic, as a rupture of the poetic form, which can lead to the loss of the heroic. It is also worth noting that this is a hero of the 19th century, the present time. Without national marks, *Rocambole* can be considered the hero of the bourgeois civilization.

Part III of this chronicle, *Stomach suppression*, comments on an advertisement by someone who claims to have invented a panacea that could replace the stomach. The chronicler then speculates upon the panacea that would replace the brain, freeing us from the arduous task of thinking. Thus, there is an association between the subliterate of the time (which does not need to be read to be known) and the misleading advertisement (which promises to eliminate the need to digest). *Rocambole* would be the implausible hero, the panacea that would fill the void of his time, devoid of heroes and credible ideals. By humor, meaning is reversed, and the impossibility of an epic hero, a synthesis between the universal and the particular, is put forward. By association with the newspaper, the epic narrative gains the same falsehood as an advertisement in which the impossible is promised.

When discussing formal experimentation, it is unavoidable to reference the year 1878 and Machado de Assis' publications in the newspaper *O Cruzeiro*. Next to the "fantasies," texts that did not fit any precise definition of genre, Machado adopted the pseudonym Eleazar to write the section of chronicles *Notas semanais* from June to December 1878. In a carping comment on the national reality, the chronicler uses a radical formal experience. Lúcia Granja and John Gledson, in their introductory study, define the series' compositive strategy: "se a história verdadeira não pode ser contada, ele ressalta o fato ao contar outro obviamente falso, em que sua ironia é plenamente exercida, particularmente na justaposição entre Roma e Macaúbas" (GLEDSON, GRANJA, 2009, p. 52). As the two commentators show, fictionalization is used in the chronicle to set everyday life in Rio de Janeiro and, more specifically, render the incongruities comical, such as the leveling of Rome to Macaúbas. That is important to consider how the chronicle made the epic discourse reach Rio de Janeiro.

The same gesture identified by the critics is studied by Roberto Schwarz (2012), when he analyzes a chronicle of *A Semana*, in which the chronicler retrieves Lucrécia's story to examine a piece in a newspaper. It is about Martinha, who killed João Limeira, who had threatened to violate her: "Não se aproxime, que eu lhe furo'. João Limeira aproximou-se, ela deu-lhe uma punhalada, que o matou instantaneamente." The chronicler compares how the two women defended their honor and shows that Lucrécia's fate gains the pages of the History while Martinha's fades into oblivion. Schwarz analyzes the chronicle to show the need to consider the Brazilian matter for a critical reading of Machado de Assis. He points out how the chronicler-narrator depicts the unease of the Brazilian intellectual, who uses Western tradition to incorporate peripheral matter, but in doing so, disqualifies this same matter.

From 1883 onwards, Machado de Assis participated in a collective project in which different chroniclers occupied almost daily a space of *Gazeta de Notícias* under the name *Balas de estalo*. Machado adopted the pseudonym Lélío. On July 15, 1883, one of his most remarkable chronicles was published.

Está achada a *epopeia burguesa*. Não confundam com a tragédia burguesa; essa está achada há muito. Refiro-me à epopeia, o mais difícil, porque *o heroísmo na vida pacata do século não era a mesma coisa fácil de aparecer*. E apareceu; e aqui o tenho nas mãos, nestas poucas linhas que os jornais acabam de imprimir e divulgar:

ATENÇÃO

“Ontem o Sr. José Mendes de Abranches comprou-me objetos no valor de 60\$000.

“Por lapso de soma, porém somente cobrei 50\$00, por cujo motivo o dito Sr. Abranches, conhecendo o meu logro, veio horas depois dar-me os 10\$ que de menos eu havia recebido. *Um ato de tanta probidade não merece ser esquecido*, por isso assim o faço público. – O dono da Camisaria Especial, Ed. Sriber, Rua dos Ourives n. 51, porta imensa, corte.”

Vejam bem o sentimento poético e a insinuação do Sr. Sriber: “*Um ato de tanta probidade não merece ser esquecido*”. *Isto e convidar os Homeros da localidade é a mesma coisa*; portanto, acudo com o meu esboço de poesia, que porei em verso, se merecer a animação da crítica.

CANTO I

*Musa, canta a probidade de Abranches*, escrupuloso nas contas, exato nos pagamentos. Que as trompas do século repitam aos séculos futuros este lance extraordinário.

(...)

CANTO II

A Camisaria Especial é o ponto do universo onde os trocos, quando são demais, não são restituídos ao dono da casa. O camiseiro põe todo o cuidado em contar o dinheiro; conta, reconta, soma, diminui, multiplica, divide, unta cuspe nos dedos para não perder nada; é o seu método. (...)

CANTO III

*Mas o Abranches não quer só camisas, quer também colarinhos e punhos*. Paciente como Penélope, o Camiseiro sobe e desce a escada, para servir o herói. Este inclina-se, palpa, examina, inquire e compra; enfim o Camiseiro diz-lhe o preço. *Abranches, econômico, regateia; depois, manda embrulhar tudo*.

(...)

*Então, o deus Cálculo chama um dos seus Erros, e diz-lhe*: “Vai, vai ao Camiseiro da rua dos Ourives, e faz com que ele se atrapalhe na conta”. O Erro, fiel à ordem, desce, entra na loja, e atrapalha o Camiseiro, que em vez de dar ao herói trinta e dois mil réis, entrega-lhe quarenta e dois. Nem ele adverte o engano, nem o Abranches conta o dinheiro; pega das camisas, colarinho e punhos, cumprimenta e sai.

CANTO IV

Entretanto, a Probidade, amiga do Abranches, vê a aleivosia, e pensa em salvar o herói. “Não, brada ela; isto não pode ficar assim; *é preciso um exemplo grande, raro, nobre, épico*; é preciso que o Abranches restitua os dez mil réis”.

E, tomando a figura de uma viúva pobre, aguarda o Abranches no corredor da casa deste; mal o vê entrar, lança-se-lhe aos pés. “*Divino Abranches, sou uma*

*viúva desvalida; dá-me de esmola o que te sobrar do troco que recebeste*". O herói sorri; como pode sobrar alguma coisa do troco? Dócil, entretanto, saca o receptáculo, descinta-o, conta, reconta; é verdade, dez mil réis de mais. Então a deusa: "Em vez de os dares a mim, vai restituí-los ao Camiseiro". E, súbito, desapareceu no ar. *Abranches reconhece o prodígio; algum deus benéfico lhe falou por aquela boca*. Depositada a caixa em casa, e, rápido como um raio de Febo, voa à Camisaria Especial.

O Camiseiro, encostado ao balcão, refletia *na estrada do Madeira e Mamoré, quando o Abranches lhe apareceu*, dizendo que vinha restituir-lhe dez mil réis, que recebera de mais. *O Camiseiro não acreditou; deu de ombros, riu, bateu-lhe na barriga, perguntou-lhe como ia da tosse*; mas o herói teimou tanto, que ele começou a desconfiar alguma coisa; examina a caixa e reconhece que lhe faltam dez mil réis. *A preciosa nota é recebida como o filho pródigo; o Camiseiro beija-a, enche-a de lágrimas*. O Abranches, comovido pela própria grandeza, deixa a Camisaria, e, teso, alucinado pelo albor de uma consciência imaculada e augusta, caminha impávido na direção da posteridade e da glória eterna" (ASSIS, 1998, p. 40-43, my emphasis).

The chronicler claims to have found the matter of the "bourgeois epic," the probity of Abranches, the mark of the heroism of a quiet life. His starting point was a newspaper note published by the owner of the Sribber Shirt Shop, who wanted to praise the honesty of a client who returned the change to him. Machado de Assis writes, then, the chronicle quoted, which triggered an outraged response by the shirtmaker and became a joke among other "baleiros" (literally "candy vendors"), the other chroniclers of *Balas de Estalo*. Cernic Ramos shows that the indignation of Sribber and the effect of this chronicle was such that Lélío became known because of the story of Abranches.

In the opening, it is announced that the bourgeois epic will sing the "heroism of a quiet life." Then follows the transcription of the note by Sribber that makes the gesture of Abranches public, who returns to give back the money received in excess, "An act of so much probity that does not deserve to be forgotten." This is the epic matter, an elevated historical event, a great deed to be remembered by the poet and sung for the community. The "Homer of the region" writes his first sketch. It is worth observing the comment by Lélío, who awaits the critical reception to decide whether he should put the story into verse. Then follow the four chants, written in prose. Despite its precariousness, it is possible to recognize the daily urban life of a modern city, but the language used is elevated. The gods are integrated

into everyday life and compete with each other. God “Calculation” calls “Mistake” and asks him to make Sribier accidentally give ten thousand réis in excess to Abranches. On the other hand, Probity takes the form of a widow, a beggar, to save the probity of Abranches. In the end, Abranches returns to the Sribier Shirt Shop to return the money. As in *Notas Semanais*, the chronicle transcends the mere daily record and extends into imagination. To comment on the bourgeois modernity—calculus, business, tiny daily life—the chronicle applies an epic tone to narrate trivial actions, devoid of adventure, and the great deed becomes the small change.

Machado de Assis incorporates a 19th-century debate presented in Hegelian aesthetics. Hegel, in his *Curso de Estética*, stated that the novel is a “moderna epopeia burguesa” (2004, p. 147). Also, Georg Lukács, in *A teoria do romance* (2000), has a similar definition: “O romance é a epopeia de uma era para a qual a totalidade extensiva da vida não é mais dada como evidente” (p. 55). The hero becomes problematic, ironic, and melancholic, of demonic psychology, and bears the marks of the conflict of the intellectual of the time, a time without gods. In turn, Erich Auerbach (1987) articulates the ordinary matter of daily life as a serious representation through a mixed style. For him, the focus is on seriousness, which makes room for the great deed and the tragedy of ordinary men, not only nobles or lords.

The critical debate of the 1860s and 1870s, in which the possibility of the epic is called into question, reverberates in Machado’s chronicle. In an ironic tone, he turns the epic into adventure, into an industrial novel, undermining the possibility of seriously representing a synthesis of the community values. Here, in the act of Abranches, the small sum, the change of 10 thousand réis, becomes the index of honesty, the value to be celebrated. In such a way, the announcement is demeaned in each of the four “chants,” written in prose, highlighting the emptiness of daily life, the triviality of business, and the lack of epic matter. The movement is the opposite of the novel, instilling the adventure into urban and bourgeois daily life. There is a search for quality values and a whole identity, either through love or honor, in a revolutionary struggle. In the Machadian chronicle, about the routine of the city, the movement is the opposite: it shows the absence of struggle for the epic and honor.



This parodic incorporation of the epic into the chronicle does not allow us to define Machado de Assis' position regarding the possibility of epic poetry. Just as in his critical production of the 1860s and 1870s, the chronicle enables us to observe the modern complexity of 19th-century literature, in which several literary forms coexist, compete with each other, and define themselves by the tension between them. In a way, up to now, we can observe how much the reflection on the epic discourse, at least in Machado de Assis, demands a dialogue with the other literary forms at the time.

### **Remains of a negative epic and a collection of several undated stories**

Regina Zilberman (2012), in a reading of *Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*, shows how much Machado de Assis has incorporated and subverted the journey as an epic theme. More specifically, Brás Cubas shows the opposite of Aeneas: a city-founder hero capable of placing his mission above the love for Dido. The moral strength, exemplary of the hero, leads to choices that define a purpose for the actions. Brás Cubas, the devil boy, indulges in his immediate satisfaction. The demeaned parodic inversion incorporates an encyclopedic dimension. Examples include the opening of *Aeneid*, which appears, as written by the character, *Arma virumque cano (Arms and the men I sing)*, and *The Divine Comedy*, which traverses the plot of the novel with various interruptions, as a new way of conceiving the world of the dead, from Hades to Hell. As for the novel, we could mention numerous signs of the epic presence in the Machadian prose, but we will close the cycle of the epic – and Dantesque – references with *Esau e Jacó*, in which the external narrator incorporates the quotation of Aires as the epigraph of his book: *Dico que quando l'anima mal nata*. Alternatively, yet, the nexus made by the same Aires between the Homeric heroes and the twins: Paulo, as Achilles; Pedro, as Ulysses.

In a way, the novelistic prose, for Machado, takes on the task of articulating the epic dimension of composing an extensive totality, in which the hero synthesizes the exemplary traits of a community in a way that history and fiction intersect in the composition of this founding hero. Brás

Cubas brings these touches of foundational hero in a demeaned key (ZILBERMAN, 2012). At the same time, the decomposition of the corpse, the falsification of the family origin by the father, the ethical fragility, the surrendering to immediate desires, and the lack of purpose show how Machado took the matter of his time and place to point the impossibility of the epic, except as mock.

Is it possible to say that Machado de Assis renounces the possibility of representing reality epically? In a way, criticism shifts to allegory or figurative (when Brás Cubas becomes an image of Brazil or a foundational hero) or to a formal principle (the unreliable narrator). Specifically, in the second case, in Roberto Schwarz's reading, there is a revelation of the narrator's enunciation, approached from its class dimension. Brás Cubas, who is part of a slavery elite, brings to his discourse the marks of a slave owner's attitude mixed with a patina of civilization and literary quotations – a satirical dialogue with Western tradition. The novel is broken down into parts that do not integrate into a totality. It would be essential to observe the principles of disaggregation of this epic ambition.

In the short stories, there are apparent references to epic language, such as the opening of the short story "Capítulo dos chapéus": "Musa, canta o despeito de Mariana, esposa do bacharel Conrado Seabra, naquela manhã de abril de 1879." (ASSIS, 2018, p. 522) After the confrontation with her husband, Mariana leaves her house. Guided by Sofia, she walks the streets of the city, is tempted by the encounter with her ex-boyfriend in a waiting room, goes to the Chamber of Representatives, and returns home, determined to keep everything as it was. This concise summary shows the ambivalence of this brief narrative. On the one hand, trivial and everyday matters would be invalid for the epic dimension. Moreover, besides the character not having magnificence, by choosing the middle class, the narrator adopts language that reveals the distance between the elevated style and the narrative discourse of ordinariness. At the same time, the short story reveals a sphere of women's lives as glimpsed power even though despised by her husband.

In addition, there are numerous references to the epic tradition: authors (Homer, Virgil, Dante, Torquato Tasso, Camões); heroic characters

(Ulysses, Achilles, Aeneas, Cacambo, Dante); and memorable passages. The quotation procedure varies according to the position of the narrator, but the comical tone predominates as mock epic. In the rereading done so far, the serious nature is crossed by some irony, which becomes more and more corrosive. The ironic humor crosses the narratives. The epic quote serves as a point of reference to show the triviality of everyday life.

Georg Lukács characterizes the novelistic hero as isolated and seeking a sense that escapes him in prosaic life. There is a discrepancy between the subjective ideal and the world of its action. This division appears in Machado's short stories, causing the lack of dignity of action. The gesture does not reveal the character's vision. The action masks an intention that is hidden from him. When the character makes a heroic gesture or rises above ordinary life, he isolates himself and approaches insanity.

Let us look at a common character, Rangel, the protagonist of the short story *O diplomático*, with a heterodiegetic narrator. *In media res*, the short story opens with Rangel reading people's fortunes during the June festivities in the house of a notary scribe. These are predictions of an uncertain future. The narrator presents the previous story of a 41-year-old official copyist who aspired to a marriage above his class and ended up single and diminished.

Era solteiro, por obra das circunstâncias, não de vocação. Em rapaz teve alguns namoricos de esquina, mas com o tempo apareceu-lhe a comichão das grandezas, e foi isto que lhe prolongou o celibato até os quarenta e um anos, em que o vemos. Cobiçava alguma noiva superior a ele e à roda em que vivia, e gastou o tempo em esperá-la. (...) Também era certo no saguão do paço imperial, em dia de cortejo, para ver entrar as grandes damas e as pessoas da corte, ministros, generais, diplomatas, desembargadores, e conhecia tudo e todos, pessoas e carruagens. *Voltava da festa e do cortejo, como voltava do baile, impetuoso, ardente, capaz de arrebatara de um lance a palma da fortuna.*

O pior é que entre a espiga e a mão há o tal muro do poeta, e o Rangel não era homem de saltar muros. *De imaginação fazia tudo, raptava mulheres e destruía cidades. Mais de uma vez foi, consigo mesmo, ministro de Estado, e fartou-se de cortesias e decretos. (...) Cá fora, porém, todas as suas proezas eram fábulas.* Na realidade, era pacato e discreto (ASSIS, 2018, p. 710-711, my emphasis).

The short story begins in *media res*, on Saint John's Eve of 1854, with him reading the fortune of the girls at the party. The narrator interrupts the

narrative to introduce him. A man inclined to marry, still single at the age of 41, Rangel “in his imagination did everything.” However, he could not go over the wall that separated him from the desired object. On this night of 1854, his hope lies in Joanhina, daughter of the house, to whom he writes a letter. This is the day of action, a day to reveal his affection. Rangel struggles to hand over his statement to the young woman, but he cannot overcome prudery. Queirós, a young employee of the Santa Casa Hospital, arrives at the party and starts courting Joanhina. Rangel is defeated by Queirós. In the end,

*Só consigo, foi-se-lhe o aparelho da afetação, e já não era o diplomático, era o energúmeno, que rolava na casa, bradando, chorando como uma criança, infeliz deveras, por esse triste amor do outono. O pobre diabo, feito de devaneio, indolência e afetação, era, em substância, tão desgraçado como Otelo, e teve um desfecho mais cruel (ASSIS, 2018, p. 718, my emphasis).*

This is a story in which the character can only act within the expected social standards, within normalcy, crossed by kindness. He does not break with his bashfulness. Only in the intimate sphere of his room, he becomes a “energúmeno,” explodes, frees his imagination, and manages to perform significant actions without leaving the place. Machado de Assis explores the double sense of the word “energúmeno” (crazed madman) in Portuguese: that of the possessed man, who is possessed by pain, and that of a man deprived of reason and capacity for action. The confrontation with Queirós or his love for Joanhina did not even exist outside Rangel as an action, for neither of them knew of his motivations. Neither the anger he felt for Queirós nor his loving desire for Joanhina came to light. It was his inner, dreamlike universe that turned into action. In the end, Rangel was the best man at Joanhina and Queirós’ wedding. The conciliation was there, but it was reserved only for the others.

### **The broken threads of the epic**

As one observes the Machadian prose (chronicles, novels, and short stories), written starting from the mid-1870s, it is possible to see to what extent the Machadian narrative shows the attentive and critical reading of the epic tradition. Still in the 1860s, Machado de Assis, as a critic, questions

the presence of the epic poem in the middle of the surrounding prose. He advocates its historic transformation but still firmly believes in its possibility.

In poetry, *Americanas* (1875), Machado de Assis tests the possibility of epic poetry, historically transformed but still achievable. In this book, he establishes a dialogue with the epic Western tradition to deal with Brazilian matters. The epic elevation moves away from the chronicle (in the press), from his incursion into the novel and the short story. At the elevated level of epic Brazilian history, in the actions of resistance, Machado de Assis finds the heroic gesture. For example, they are made by anonymous characters, like the ones in the Jesuit chronicle. This appears in poetry, with an elevated and severe tone, in the figure of Potira, a Machadian contribution to the representation of the Indians in the epic Brazilian tradition. By naming an anonymous and briefly quoted person in the historical chronicle and moving away from the religious dimension of the Jesuit, the narrator focuses on the human tension of Potira. She abandoned her tribe, married a white man, and lived in Rio de Janeiro. Kidnapped by the Tamoio chief, she remains faithful to her husband and makes the ultimate sacrifice to maintain the purity of her ideal.

In the prose, however, also in the 1870s, but especially after 1880, when something comes close to a heroic gesture, it is crossed by the irony of a narrator who acts as if he were superior to the poor, women, and slaves. In the chronicle, the narrator uses a pseudonym to evoke the epic tradition to contrast with ordinary characters or deeds allusively. The hero of our time would be Rocambole, who comes from the police station and the feuilleton to represent his time. Money is at the center in the case of corrupt councilmen and the mockery celebration of Abranches' honesty. The cunning Ulysses turns into a "hero" of probity. In these cases, the epic is used in the discourse of the chronicler-narrator to reveal the mediocrity of urban daily life.

Machado de Assis, especially from the 1870s, experiences the possibilities of the modern short story. The short story breaks free from tradition. It is no longer an exemplary narrative or a moral demonstration. It is a short narrative published by the press (magazines or newspapers) in tension between works of art and production for entertainment, which is

an indirect expression of the relationship between art (autonomous production) and commodities (trade-oriented publication). It is in this context that the incorporation of the epic is given an ironic sense. Machado de Assis restricts the epic to the conventional marks used by his intrusive narrators to tell trivial stories. The opening of “Capítulo dos chapéus” is an example of this mismatch between the narrator’s speech (“Muse, please sing the resentment of Mariana”) and the narrated matter (the wife who asks her husband to change his hat). We see the distance between the elevated discourse of the narrator, proper to the epic, and the prosaic life of the characters. The unworthiness of everyday matter has no power to become an epic subject.

This paper did not intend to emphasize the analysis of the Machadian novel. However, it is important to mention that, as a complex totality, it seems to be the summing of the ironic incorporation of the epic. We have the extensive totality, but the fragmentation and discontinuity of the actions of Brás Cubas deflate the epic dimension. The narrator’s speech does not achieve the seriousness that dignifies the narrated matter.

Therefore, it should be asked, even if it is in a negative form, about the contribution of the reflection on the epic to understand Machado de Assis’ work.

A forma, não apenas da poesia moderna, mas também de outros gêneros literários do século que se escoou desde então, é dificilmente imaginável sem *As flores do mal*; a marca da influência de Baudelaire pode ser encontrada tanto em Gide, Proust, Joyce e Thomas Mann, como em Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Rilke e Eliot. *O estilo de Baudelaire, a mistura que tentamos descrever, continua tão vivo quanto antes* (AUERBACH, 2007, my emphasis).

When we move from criticism to literary creation, we see that the Machadian prose (chronicles, short stories, and novels) not only ironically incorporates the epic to show its impracticability in modernity or Brazil but also that the epic becomes an element of discursive tension between the effort of discursive elevation of the narrator and the precariousness of the narrated matter. This discourse falls into the void, either by the prosaism of the slight change in the scene of Abranches (or the resentment of Mariana), by the demeaned nature of the Brazilian daily life, or by the inability of a character to act.

Thus, reflecting on the epic helps to understand the search for an appropriate way to narrate the Brazilian matter. In a modern gesture, Machado de Assis chose the mixture of discursive elevation and the demeaning of the narrated matter. This mixture, however, is subject to tension all the time by the Brazilian gesture of the elite narrator, who tries to disentangle from a supposedly unworthy matter. In this way, the narrator's discourse demonstrates his knowledge of the epic Western tradition. This mastery of the literary lettered tradition will, rather than elevate, further demean the ordinary merchant (Sriber), the inert official (Rangel), or the resigning wife (Mariana). In the middle of the road, the Machadian prose, the epic discourse, not only intermingles with the narrated matter but also accentuates the abyss between the elevated universe of the narrator and the precariousness of the represented reality. The tension may be the result of the narrator's incapacity to recognize the greatness in the gestures of ordinary people.

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In nineteenth-century Brazil, epic poems might appear to belong to a literary genre that has already left behind the high points of its history, namely the colonial-era epics *Caramuru* by Santa Rita Durão and *O Uruguai* by Basílio da Gama. In addition, in the context of the cultural transformations of Romanticism, the very idea of literary genre appears problematic. Pillar of a literary practice based on authority and norm, literary model and imitation, the old system of genres is constituted by the use of stable referentials that ensure the reception and communicability. But this logic of creation and circulation of literature will no longer make sense with the emergence of new aesthetic and literary values like the autonomy of the creative subject (and, by extension, of the literary field as a whole), the imagination as a source of creation, dismissing the norm and the model, and originality, imposing each creator the construction of his own path to follow. In the passage from the 18th to the 19th century, we have a scenario of radical transformations in literature accompanying a wider context of transformations in culture and society, on a global scale. However, as in many of the transformations that mark this period, the past cannot be fully supplanted.

In the case of epic poetry, traditionally conceived as narrative poetry with an elevated style, heroic subject matter and a discourse inclined to approach a fictional universe in a totalising manner, the tendency towards innovation was counterbalanced, at that moment, by the logic of the formation of national literary canons.

Attempts form a set of texts that contradict the classical thesis of the death of the epic and its replacement by the novel. Marked by innovation, by transgression and, equally, by the intention to dialogue with a millenary literary tradition, a series of epic texts will be published or remain in fragment or project, with different degrees of ambition and canonicity. This publication presents a collection of studies that deals with the situation of epic poetry - between tradition and innovation - in Brazil in the nineteenth century, both in the texts and in the debate they trigger.

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