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ON LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

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whom he has no interest); the mixing up of the truth, when he sees that the man he is to denounce as a criminal is also the officer; the transformation of the innocent into a suspect and the suspect into a criminal, accepted by the innocent person himself, in the depths of the mental disorganization the inquiry has forged in him.

The fulcrum of this process is, perhaps, the moment of the interrogation in which the officer asks the poor devil, already stunned, what his profession is.

"I'm a hydraulic engineer," he replies.

The officer mocks him: "Hydraulic engineer, my ass! Today everyone wants to be something prettier. What you are is a plumber, right? Plumber! Why hy-draul-ic en-gin-eer?"

And the unfortunate one, already without courage or backbone: "Yes, I'm a plumber."

(Not having the script, I cite this from memory.)

We see that the poor man, like everyone in his trade, has adopted a technical designation (*idraulico*, in Italian), which separates him from the craft designation of "plumber" (*stagnaro*, in Italian), thus giving the illusion of a level that is apparently more elevated, or at least more scientific and up-to-date. But the policeman *reduces* him to his previous level, *unmasks* his self-promotion, extracts from him the undesirable *truth*. And, in the end, it is as if he were to say:

"Yes, I confess, I'm not a technician with a sonorous name, which innocently evokes something of engineering; I'm only a poor devil, a plumber. I am reduced to my true *self*, liberated from the *other*."

But, in fact, it was the police who imposed the *other* on him as his *self*. The police effectuated the dismantling of his personality, so arduously constructed, and brought back what the man had overcome. Sinister reductive mentality, which obliges us to be, or return to being, what we don't wish to be; and which shows that Alfred de Vigny was right, when he wrote in his diary:

"I'm not afraid of poverty, nor of exile, nor of prison, nor of death. But I'm afraid of fear."

NOTE

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DIALECTIC OF MALANDROISM

IN 1894 José Veríssimo defined *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* (The memoirs of a sergeant of the militia), by Manuel Antônio de Almeida, as a novel of manners that, because it describes places and scenes in Rio de Janeiro at the time of Dom João VI [king of Portugal, who lived in Brazil from 1807 until 1822], is characterized by a kind of premature realism; in consequence, he praises it, like a man of an era dominated by the aesthetic of naturalism.

Almost nothing further was said of it until 1941, when Mário de Andrade reoriented criticism, denying that it was a precursor. It was, rather, a late continuation, a novel of a marginal type, a deviation from the mainstream of a literary tradition, like that of Apuleius or Petronius, in antiquity, or of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, in the Renaissance—all with antiheroic characters who are differing types of picaresque.

A third step was taken in 1956 by Darcy Damasceno, who approached it from the perspective of a stylistic analysis, beginning with an excellent rejection of these prior positions:

It is not necessary to consider a book picaresque because there is in it a picaresque more apparent than essential, especially if the book lacks the peculiar marks of the picaresque genre; nor would it be historical, even though a certain dose of veracity has served in the creation of types or the evocation of an epoch; still less could we consider it realistic, when the most attentive reading shows us a predominance of the imaginative and the improvised over portraiture or historic reconstitution.

And, after showing how few documentary indications there are, he suggests the designation of novel of manners.¹

I agree with these appropriate and penetrating opinions (unhappily very brief), which can serve as a point of departure for the present essay. My only doubt is in reference to realism, and perhaps not even that, if Darcy Damasceno was referring to the usual concept in literary classifications, which so designates what occurred in the last half of the nineteenth century, while my purpose is to characterize a somewhat peculiar literary type, which is manifested in Manuel Antônio de Almeida's book.

A PICAESQUE NOVEL?

The point of view according to which Almeida's book is a picaresque novel, widely diffused beginning with Mário de Andrade (who, however, did not say exactly that), was stamped as definitive by Josué Montello, who thought he had found its roots in such works as *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and *Vida e hechos de Estabanillo González* (1645).²

Had this been so, it would have resolved the problem of the line of descent and, with that, a large part of the critical characterization. But, in truth, Josué Montello based his argument on a *petitio principii*, taking as proved what was to be proved, that is, that the *Memórias* is a picaresque novel. Beginning with that, he overvalued some fugitive analogies and thought what he wanted to, but not what an objective comparison would have shown. In fact, the analysis of Spanish picaresque literature shows that these two books motivated nothing of importance in Almeida's book, although he might possibly have gotten some marginal suggestions from some other novel, Spanish or written in the Spanish style, which was common all over Europe in the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth centuries. What can give us the best assurance is to compare the characteristics of "our hero" (as the novelist says of his character) with the typical picaresque hero or antihero, minutely described by Chandler in his book on the topic.³

In general, the picaro himself narrates his adventures, which limits the vision of reality to his restricted viewpoint; and this first person voice is one of the enchantments for the reader, communicating a false candor that the author creates skillfully and uses as a psychological resource in characterization. Manuel Antônio's novel, however, is told in the third person by a narrator (first viewpoint) who is not identified, and he varies the secondary viewpoints uninhibitedly—from Leonardo the father to Leonardo the Son, from there to the Godfather and Godmother, then the Gypsy, and so on, in such a way as to establish a dynamic view of the narrated material. From this perspective, the hero is one character among others, though he has a preferential position; he does not establish and is not the *occasion* for the establishment of the fictional world, as are Lazarillo, Estebanillo, Guzman de Alfarache, the Pícaro Justina, or Gil Blas de Santillana.

On the other hand, Leonardo the Son has some affinities with the picaresque narrators: like them, he is of humble origin and, like some of them, is illegitimate. Like them, too, he is set loose in the world, but he is not abandoned, as were Lazarillo or Quevedo's Buscón; on the contrary, his parents have hardly left him to his destiny when he is given a much better father in the person of the Godfather, the good barber who watches over him for the rest of his life and shelters him from material

adversity, so much so that he lacks a basic trait of the picaro: the harsh conflict with reality, which leads him to lying, dissimulation, and robbery, and which is the major excuse for the picaro's "tricks." At the beginning, the picaro is ingenuous; it is the brutality of life that slowly turns him clever and unscrupulous, almost as a defense; but Leonardo, well protected by his Godfather, is born a full-blown *malandro*,⁴ as if this were an essential quality, not an attribute acquired by force of circumstance.

Further: humble origins and being abandoned by destiny lead necessarily, for the protagonist of the Spanish novels and those that resemble them closely, to a servile status. At some point in his career he is a servant, in such a way that it has been mistakenly supposed that the word "picaro" comes from that fact, and would signify an inferior sort of serf, most often a kitchen helper, dirty and ragged. And it is from the fact of being a servant that an important principle of the novel's organization flows, since, passing from master to master, the picaro is always moving, changing his surroundings, varying his experience, and seeing society as a whole. But our Leonardo is so far from a servile condition that the Godfather is offended when the Godmother suggests that he send him to learn a manual trade; the good man wants to see him a priest or trained in the law, and in this sense tries to get him off to a good start, freeing him of any necessity to earn a living. So subsistence never appears as a serious problem, even when Leonardo gets into a scrape and, almost as a game, goes into service in the royal kitchens, which approximates vaguely the condition of the picaro in the sense referred to above.

Like many picaros, he is amiable and cheerful, spontaneous in his actions, and devoted to reality, as it moves him through life. This submits him, like them, to a kind of external causality, to a motivation that comes from circumstances and makes the character into a puppet, empty of psychological ballast and characterized only by the turns of the plot. The sense of a destiny that motivates conduct is lively in the *Memórias*, when the Godfather refers to the *fate* that follows his godson, heaping misfortunes on him and undoing at every step the favorable situations that come his way.

Like the picaros, he lives by the dictates of chance, without plan or reflection; unlike them he learns nothing from the experience. In fact, an important element of the picaresque is this apprenticeship, which matures the protagonist and makes him review his life in the light of a disenchanting philosophy. But, consistent with the vocation of puppet, Leonardo concludes nothing and learns nothing; the book's being narrated in the third person facilitates this lack of awareness, since it falls to the narrator to make little moral reflections, in general a little cynical and always optimistic, in contrast to the acid sarcasm and relative pessi-

mism of the picaresque novels. The Spanish malandro always ends either in a resigned mediocrity, accepting it as a shelter after so much agitation, or more miserable than ever, in a universe without deceptions or illusions, a characteristic feature of Spanish literature of the Golden Age.

Hardened by life, cornered and beaten, the picaro has no feelings, only reflexes of attack and defense. Betraying his friends, deceiving his patrons, he has no standard of conduct, does not love and, if he marries, will marry for profit, ready, like poor Lazarillo, for even the dullest arrangement. Leonardo, while destitute of passion, has more sincere feelings in this area, and the book is in part the story of his obstacle-filled love for the cunning Luisinha, whom he finally marries, after being promoted, retiring, and receiving five legacies, which fall into his hands without his having to lift a finger. No model of virtue, he is nevertheless loyal and commits himself seriously in order not to harm the malandro Teotônio. An antipicaro, therefore, in these and other circumstances, who does not seek out or make himself agreeable to “superiors,” which constitutes the supreme aim of the Spanish malandro.

With such a protagonist, we might expect that the book, taken as a whole, will present the same oscillation between analogies to and differences from the picaresque novel.

Picaresque novels are dominated by a sense of physical and social space, since the picaro goes to diverse places and comes into contact with a variety of social groups and strata, both nationally and internationally, like that of the “Galician Roman” Estabanillo. The fact of being a classless adventurer is expressed in a change of circumstances, whose primary type, established in the first novel of its type, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, is the change of patrons. Servant to a beggar, servant to a poor squire, servant to a priest, the little vagabond moves through society, whose social types the book reviews, in such a way as to make it an exploration of social groups and their customs—something that became common in the picaresque novel, making it one of the models of modern realistic fiction. Though deformed by its satiric angle, its viewpoint exhibits society in its variation of places, groups, and classes—typically seen from the position of the inferiors looking up at the superiors, as is appropriate to the picaro’s eventual social ascent. In this panoramic view, a vulgar moralism appears at the end, but there is little or no real moral purpose, despite the constant protests with which the narrator tries to give an exemplary stamp to the picaro’s tricks. And, in relation to women, he displays an accentuated misogyny. While they are neither licentious nor sentimental, the picaresque novels are frequently obscene and use dirty words freely, appropriately for the milieus described.

Manuel Antônio’s book, on the contrary, has a *clean* vocabulary. It uses no vulgar expressions and, when it does enter the zone of licen-

tiousness, is discreet, or does it in such a caricatured way that the irregular element dissolves in good humor—as is notably the case in the sequence of the misfortune of the priest surprised in the Gypsy’s room in his underwear. But we see that the book has a certain touch of amorous feeling, despite being described with suitable irony; and the satire, visible throughout, never touches the whole of society since, unlike the picaresque book, its field is restricted.

THE NOVEL OF THE MALANDRO

Let us say, then, that Leonardo is not a picaro, coming out of the Spanish tradition; but, rather, the first great malandro to enter the world of the Brazilian novel, coming from an almost folkloric tradition and corresponding, more than it is customary to say, to a certain comic and folkloresque atmosphere of its time in Brazil. He is the malandro who would be elevated to the category of a symbol by Mário de Andrade in *Macunaima*⁵ and who Manuel Antônio probably shaped spontaneously to share, with intelligence and feeling, in the popular tone of the stories that, according to tradition, he heard from a newspaper colleague, a former sergeant commanded by the real Major Vidigal.

The malandro, like the picaro, is one specimen of the larger genre of the clever adventurer, common to all folklores. We have already noted, in fact, that Leonardo engages in cleverness for its own sake (even when he is trying to get himself out of a tight spot), displaying a love for the game itself, which differentiates him from the pragmatism of the picaros, whose rascality almost always looks toward some gain or some concrete problem, frequently injuring third parties in its solution. This being clever for its own sake approximates “our hero” to the classic trickster, even in his zoomorphic incarnations—monkey, fox, turtle—making him less an “antihero” than a creation that may take some features from such popular heroes as Pedro Malasarte. More erudite models, too, may have influenced its elaboration; but what appears to predominate in the book is the dynamism of the clever characters of folklore. For this reason, Mário de Andrade is right to say that in the *Memórias* there is no realism in the modern sense; what is found is something vaster and more timeless, characteristic of this vein of popular humor.

This originally folkloric element perhaps explains certain manifestations of an archetypal stamp—including beginning with the stock phrase of the fairy tale: “It was in the time of the King.” To the same universe belongs the constellation of good fairies (the Godfather and Godmother) and the typical bad fairy (who here is the Neighbor), all encircling the child’s crib and serving the purposes of destiny, the “fate” invoked more than once in the course of the narrative. To this could also

be related the anonymity of various characters, important and secondary, designated only by profession or their position in a group that, on the one hand, dissolves them into typical social categories, but on the other approximates them to legendary paradigms and the indeterminacy of the fable, where there is always "the king," "a man," "a woodcutter," "the soldier's wife," etc. Similarly, Major Vidigal, beneath the historically documented uniform, is a kind of ogre, a devourer of happy people. And to all this, finally, could be related the curious duplication that establishes two protagonists, Leonardo the Father and Leonardo the Son, not only contrasting with the strong structural unity of picaresque antiheroes (at the same time the source of the narrative and its destination), but also revealing one more tie with folk models.

Indeed, father and son embody the two faces of the trickster: foolishness, eventually leading to a desired result, and cleverness, often leading, at least temporarily, to disaster. From this point of view, the half-silly bailiff who ends with his life in order, and his clever son who almost brings disaster on himself, would be a kind of inverted projection, on the level of adventure, of the didactic family of Bertoldo, which Giulio Cesare Della Croce and his followers popularized in Italy beginning in the sixteenth century, inspired by ancient oriental sources. It is hardly worth saying that in the bookstore catalogs of Manuel Antônio's time there appeared various editions and collections of the stories of this famous bunch, such as: *Astúcias de Bertoldo*; *Simplicidades de Bertoldinho, filho do sublime e astuto Bertoldo, e agudas respostas de Marcolfa, sua mãe*; *Vida de Cacasseno, filho do simples Bertoldinho e neto de astuto Bertoldo*. In the *Memórias de um sargento de milícias*, a cultivated book linked only remotely to the archetypes of folklore, the father is a simpleton and the son is clever, having beyond this no vestige of any gnomic prophecies, characteristic of the series of Bertoldos and of the *Donzela Teodora*, another know-it-all very much alive in Brazilian folklore.

Since we have no reason to mistrust the story that the material of the novel came, at least in part, from the reports of an old police sergeant,⁶ we can acknowledge that the first level of the novelist's stylistic work consisted of extracting from the facts and the people a certain element of generality, thus bringing them closer to the underlying paradigms of folk narratives. Thus, for example, a certain judicial official, perhaps called Leonardo Pataca, was trimmed, simplified, reordered, and fictitiously reminted, getting rid of his flesh and blood, in order to transform him into a specific instance of a type, the unlucky lover, and, beyond that, of the butt of everyone's joke. In other words, the fiction writer would first have had to reduce the facts and situations to general types, probably because their popular character allowed him to build an easy bridge to the universe of folklore, giving these oral transmissions the solidity of folk tradition.

We could, then, say that the integrity of the *Memórias* arises from the intimate association between the plane of what was created consciously (the representation of customs and scenes of Rio) and a plane that is perhaps in greater part involuntary (semifolkloric features, manifested above all in the tenor of acts and incidents). An ingredient in this integrity is a spontaneous and commonplace realism, based in the feeling of the social dynamic of Brazil in the first half of the nineteenth century. And in this probably resides the secret of the book's strength and of its durability.

There are also, clearly, some learned influences and features related to the literary currents that, at that time, joined with the tendencies peculiar to Romanticism to create a more complicated picture than the one suggested by schematic classifications. In this way, it intersects with the forces at work in Brazilian literature of the time, whose consideration clarifies it as much or more than the invocation of foreign models, and even of a folk substratum.

In fact, to understand a book like the *Memórias* it is worth remembering its affinity with the comic and satiric production of the Regency and the first years of the reign of Emperor Dom Pedro II—in journalism, in poetry, in visual art, and in theater. Written in 1852 and 1853, the book followed a trend that began in the thirties, when small comic and satirical papers began to flourish, such as *O Carapuço*, of Father Lopes Gama (1832–34; 1837–43; 1847) and *O Novo Carapuço*, of Gama e Castro (1841–42). Both were occupied with political and moral analysis through the satire of customs and portraits of characteristic types, dissolving the individual in the category, as Manuel Antônio tended to do. This line, which comes from La Bruyère, but also from the old Portuguese and Brazilian comic poem, above all the example of Nicolau Tolentino, still shows itself in the veritable mania for the satirical portrait, drawing typical portraits from everyday life that, under the name of "physiology" (for which read "psychology"), increased rapidly in the French press between 1830 and 1850 and from there passed to Brazil. Balzac had cultivated this form with great talent, but it is not necessary to go back to his influence, as a recent study has done,⁷ to find the ultimate source of a fashion that was the daily fare of the newspapers.

At the same time, the political caricature appeared in the first drawings of Araujo Porto-Alegre (1837)⁸ and then, from 1838 to 1849, in the theatrical activity of Martins Pena, whose conception of life and of literary composition resembled that of Manuel Antônio—the same light touch, the same penetrating sense of typical traits, the same suspension of moral judgment. A lover of the theater like our author could not have been at the margin of a tendency so well represented, one that would still appear, modestly, in the novels and theatrical work of Joaquim Manuel Macedo, full of infrarealism and caricature.

The poets themselves, whom we think of today as a tearful collection of professional mourners, wrote comic poetry, obscene and crazy, at times with great grace, like Laurindo Rabelo and Bernardo Guimarães, whose work has lasted until today. Álvares de Azevedo was an amusing poet, and some latecomers maintained the tradition of good-humored social satire, as is the case of *A festa de Baldo* (1847), by Alvaro Teixeira de Macedo, whose old-fashioned language does not entirely hide a choice perception of provincial customs.

DOCUMENTARY NOVEL?

To say that Manuel Antônio de Almeida's book is eminently documentary, a faithful reproduction of the society in which the action develops, would perhaps be to commit again the fallacy of *petitio principii*—it would then still have to be shown, first, that it reflects the Rio de Janeiro of the era of King Dom João VI and, second, that the book owes its character and its value to this reflection.

The novel of the realistic type, archaic or modern, always communicates a certain vision of society, whose aspect and significance it seeks to translate in terms of art. It is more doubtful that it gives an informative vision, since generally we can only evaluate the faithfulness of the representation through comparisons with the data we take from documents of some other kind. Having said this, there remains the fact that Manuel Antônio's book suggests the lively presence of a society that seems to us quite coherent and existent, and which connects us to the Rio de Janeiro of the beginning of the nineteenth century, so that Astrojildo Pereira has come to compare it to the engravings of Debret, as a representational effort.⁹

Nevertheless, the panorama it traces is narrow. Restricted spatially, its action occurs in Rio, above all in what are today the central areas and at that time comprised most of the city. No character leaves this ambit, and only once or twice does the author take us to a suburb, as in the episode of the Caboclo [a person of mixed Indian and European descent] of Mangue and in Vidinha's family party in the country.

The action is also circumscribed socially to the kind of free people of modest position who we would today call *petit bourgeois*. Beyond this, there are a rich woman, two priests, a chief of police, and, in a brief glance, a superior officer of the army and a nobleman, through whom we glimpse the world of the Royal Palace. This new world, recently superimposed on the peaceful capital of the Viceregalty,¹⁰ was then a great novelty, with the presence of the King and his ministers, the installation (filled with episodes, half picturesque, half loathsome) of a nobility and a bureaucracy ferried over in refugee ships, surrounded by machinery

and crates of books. But of this lively and relevant world, not a word; it is as though Rio had continued to be the city of the Viceroy Luis de Vasconcelos Sousa.

There was, also, an older and more important element affecting daily life, which formed a major part of the population, which no one lived without: the slaves. Now, as Mário de Andrade notes, there are no "people of color" in the book—except for the Bahians in the procession of the Goldsmiths, a mere decorative element, and the servants in the house of Dona Maria, mentioned in passing in order to frame the Master of Prayer. Only the free mulatto Chico-Juca is treated as a character, as a representative of that fringe of disorderly and marginal people which formed a sizable part of the Brazilian society of the time.

The book is a restricted documentary, then, which ignores the ruling classes, on the one hand, and the labor force, on the other. But perhaps the problem should be put in other terms, without trying to see the fiction as a duplication, a frequent attitude in the naturalist criticism that has inspired most of the commentaries on the *Memórias* and that had a conception of realism we could call mechanical.

In truth, what interests the literary analyst is to know, in this case, what role was played by historically localized social reality in constituting the structure of the book, that is, a phenomenon that could be called the formalization or structural reduction of external data.

For this, we must begin by verifying that Manuel Antônio de Almeida's novel is made up of several discontinuous, but discernible, threads, arranged in a manner whose effectiveness varies: (1) the facts narrated, including the characters; (2) the social practices and customs described; and (3) the judgments made by the narrator and some of the characters. When the author organizes them in an integrated way, the result is satisfactory and we sense the reality. When the integration is less happy, we seem to see a more or less precarious juxtaposition of elements that, though interesting and sometimes enchanting as isolated pictures, are insufficiently blended. It is in this last case that the customs and usages appear as *documents*, ready for the files of the folklorists, the curious, and the practitioners of *petite histoire*.

This is what happens, for example, in chapter 17 of part 1, "Dona Maria," where the constitutive elements are not integrated. We have in this chapter a description of customs (the procession of the Goldsmiths); the physical and moral portrait of a new character, who gives the chapter its name; and the current action, which is the debate about the young Leonardo, in which Dona Maria, the Godfather, and the Neighbor participate. Though interesting, everything in the chapter is disconnected. The procession earlier described as an autonomous focus of interest is not the procession-in-fact, that is, a specific procession,

concrete, localized, detailed, and made part of the narrative. Though it is linked to the current action, it only functions this way for an instant, at the end, and what dominates the chapter is the procession-as-custom, a nonspecific procession, having the character of picturesque information, of the kind generally considered as constituting Manuel Antônio's strength, when in truth it is the weak point of his composition.

But if we move back to chapter 15 of the same part, we will see something else. It deals with the "Estralada," the Gypsy's amusing party birthday, which Leonardo upsets, paying the *capoeira* Chico-Juca to create disorder and denouncing everything beforehand to Vigidal, who intervenes and makes public the sin of the Master of Ceremonies.

In this chapter, there appear again some *documentary* elements, including the *capoeira* fight, associated with the physical and moral portrait of the *capoeira* and a sequence of facts. But here the *document* does not exist in itself, as in the previous case: it is a constitutive part of the action, in such a way that it never seems that the author has been informing us or diverting our attention to a feature of society. Within the traditional norms of composition, which Manuel Antônio follows, the second of these is the right thing; the first, if not a mistake, is imperfect in a structural sense.

The book's ability to convince us essentially depends, then, on certain devices of its construction, which organize the *data* on the surface of the narrative. These data must be seen as elements of composition, not as information arranged by the author, for to do that would be to reduce the novel to a series of descriptive pictures of customs of the time.

Manuel Antônio's book ran this risk of such a reduction. The criteria suggested above permit it to be read in a more illuminating mode, perhaps because one can see that it succeeds as a novel to the degree that it gives up being a collection of curious types and picturesque customs, which predominate in the first half. It is possible, and even probable, that the composition of the book took place a little at a time, in accordance with its serial publication;¹¹ and that the sense of unity grew progressively, to the degree that the master line of the hero's destiny was consolidated, emerging from the host of anecdotes. For this reason, the first half is more of a chronicle, while the second is more a novel, strengthening what came before, preserving what was colorful and picturesque in everyday life, without putting it excessively in the foreground.

This duality of stages (which are like two coexisting narrative orders) becomes clear if we note that in the first half Leonardo the Son is still not distinguished from the other characters and that the novel can be thought of as having both him and his father as its principal figures. The

facts related to one and the other, and also to the characters associated directly with them, run like alternate lines, while beginning with chapter 28 the line of the son absolutely dominates and the narrative, going beyond static description, diminishes the effect of the frequent inclusion of usage and custom, dissolving them in the dynamic of events.

This being so, it is probable that the impression of reality the book communicates does not come essentially from the relatively limited amount of information it contains on the society of Rio in the time of Dom João VI. It derives from a more profound, though instinctive, vision of people's function or "destiny" in that society; so much so that the real acquires its full force when it becomes an integral part of the act and a constituent part of situations. Manuel Antônio, despite his simplicity, has one thing in common with the great realists: the capacity to see, beyond the fragments described, certain constitutive principles of the society, a hidden element that acts as totalizer of partial aspects.

A REPRESENTATIVE NOVEL

The popular nature of the *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* is one of the sources of its widespread appeal and, therefore, of the effectiveness and durability with which it acts on the imagination of readers. Imagination almost always reacts to the stimulus caused by archetypal situations and characters, endowed with the ability to evoke resonances. But beyond this kind of generality lies another, which reinforces and, at the same time, determines it, restricting its meaning and making it more fitting for the specific ambit of Brazil. In other words: there is in the book a primary universalizing stratum, where there exist archetypes valid for the imagination of a wide circle of culture, such types as the trickster or such situations as those born of the caprice of "fate"; and there is a second universalizing stratum of a more restricted stamp, where one encounters representations of life capable of stimulating the imagination of a smaller universe within the cycle: the Brazilian.

In the *Memórias*, the second stratum is constituted by a dialectic between order and disorder, which express human relations concretely at the level of the book, for which they form the system of reference. This dialectic's character as a structural principle, which generates the supporting skeleton, is due to the aesthetic formalization of social circumstances that are profoundly significant as modes of existence; and for this reason they contribute to the book's reaching readers deeply.

This conclusion can only be clarified by the description of the system of relations between the characters, which shows (1) the construction, in the society described by the book, of an order connected to the disor-

der that surrounds it on every side; (2) the book's profound correspondence, much more than documentary, to certain aspects of the relationship between order and disorder in Brazilian society in the first half of the nineteenth century.

We will thus see that, elementary as its conception of life and characterization of characters may be, the *Memórias* is a book acute with perception of human relations taken as a whole. If he was not fully conscious of it, there is no doubt that the author had sufficient mastery to organize a number of characters according to intuitions sufficient to the social reality.

We take, to begin with, the central character of the book, Leonardo the Son, imagining that he also occupies a central position in its social space; on the right is his mother, on the left his father, all three on the same plane. With a minimum of arbitrariness we can place the other characters, even some vague figures, above and below the equatorial line they form. Above them are those who live according to established norms, with their great representative, Major Vidigal, standing at the apex; below the line are those who live in opposition to, or at least dubiously integrated with, those norms. We might say that there is, in this way, a positive hemisphere of order and a negative hemisphere of disorder, functioning as two magnets that attract Leonardo, having already attracted his parents. The dynamic of the book presupposes a seesaw of the two poles, with Leonardo growing and participating now in the one, now in the other, until he is finally absorbed by the conventionally positive pole.

From this point of view, father, mother, and son are three nodes of relations, *positive* (the pole of order) and *negative* (the pole of disorder), the first two constituting a kind of prefiguring of the destiny of the third. Leonardo Pataca, the father, is, as an official of justice, on the side of order; and, despite its illegitimacy, his relation with Maria da Hortaliça is common and almost normal according to the customs of his time and class. But, after he is abandoned by her, he enters a more suspect world, because of his love for the Gypsy, who takes him to the forbidden witchcraft meetings of the Caboclo do Mangue, where Major Vidigal surprises him and puts him in jail. For the sake of the Gypsy, too, he creates a scene at her party, hiring the ruffian Chico-Juca, which causes Vidigal to intervene again and expose the picturesque shame of a priest, the Master of Ceremonies. The Gypsy later comes to live with Leonardo Pataca, until finally, now mature, he established a stable relationship with the Godmother's daughter, though one equally deprived of religious blessing, as (we repeat) would have been almost normal at that time among people of modest means. Thus Leonardo the Father, representing order, descends through successive circles of disorder and even-

tually returns to a relatively sanctioned position, plagued by the patient and brutal interventions of Major Vidigal—a character who actually existed and must have been of great importance in a city where, according to an observer of the time, “one had to avoid going out alone at night and had to be more attentive to one's security than anywhere else, because robberies and crimes were frequent, even though it was as easy to find police there as to find sand at the beach.”¹²

The life of Leonardo the Son is, similarly, an oscillation between the two hemispheres, with a greater variety of situations.

If we analyze the system of relations in which he is involved, we see first the actions of those who try to set him on the road to order: his protectors, the Godfather and the Godmother. Through them, he comes into contact with Dona Maria, a woman well placed in life, who is linked in turn to a rich intriguer, José Manuel, served by a blind man, the Master of Prayer, who teaches religious doctrine to children; Dona Maria, who is linked above all to her niece Luisinha, a well-provided-for heiress and Leonardo's future wife, after first marrying the already mentioned José Manuel. We are in a world of alliances, of careers, of inheritances, of people of settled position: at a modest level, the Godfather, a barber, and the Neighbor; at a more elevated level, Dona Maria. They are all on the *positive* side that the police respect and whose parties Major Vidigal does not keep an eye on.

Seen from this angle, the story of Leonardo the Son is the old story of a hero who passes through many dangers to reach happiness, but expressed through a peculiar social constellation, which transforms it into the story of a youth who vacillates between the established order and transgressive conduct, in order finally to be integrated into the first, after having had plenty of experience of the other. The special stamp of the book consists in a certain absence of moral judgment and in the cheerful acceptance of “man as he is,” a mixture of cynicism and good nature that demonstrates to the reader a relative equivalence between the universe of order and that of disorder, between what would conventionally be called good and evil.

In the construction of the plot this equivalence is represented objectively by the state of mind in which the narrator displays the moments of order and disorder, presented as being on the same level to a reader incapable of judging, because the author has removed the scale necessary for that. But there is something more profound, which supports the more superficial levels of interpretation: the equivalence of order and disorder in the very economy of the book, as can be verified in the descriptions of situations and relations. We will take only two examples.

Leonardo has liked Luisinha since he was a boy, since the beautiful episode of “Fire in the Field,” when he sees her shy little peasant face

transfigured by the emotion of the colored rockets. But since circumstances (or, in the terms of the book, "destiny") have separated him from her through her conventional marriage to José Manuel, Leonardo, who has no capacity for suffering (since, despite what the narrator says, he does not have his father's amorous character), moves easily to other loves and to the enchanting Vidinha. She evokes, by the spontaneity of her behavior, the little brunette who was "friendly" with the cattle driver, who eased the stay of the German mercenary Schlichthorst in Rio at that time by singing popular songs, sitting on a mat together with her complacent mother.¹³

Luisinha and Vidinha constitute an admirably symmetric pair. The first, on the plane of order, is the bourgeois young girl with whom there can be no viable relationship outside of marriage, since she brings with her an inheritance, family, position, and obligations. Vidinha, on the plane of disorder, is the woman whom one can only love, but with whom neither marriage nor obligations are possible, since she brings with her nothing beyond her charm and her curious family, which recognizes neither obligation nor sanction, and in which everyone behaves more or less according to the promptings of instinct or pleasure. It is during the phase of his affair with Vidinha, or soon after, that Leonardo gets himself into more serious and more picturesque fixes, now that he is freed of the respectable projects his godfather and godmother have planned for his life.

But, when "destiny" once more brings him near Luisinha, now providentially a widow, and he begins again the courtship that will lead directly to marriage, we note that the tone of the account is not more approving and, on the contrary, that the sequences with Vidinha are warmer and more charming. Like Leonardo, the narrator seems to be approaching marriage with due circumspection, but without enthusiasm.

At this point, we compare the situation to everything we know of the beings in the universe of the book and cannot help making an extrapolation. Given the structure of that society, if Luisinha could become a faithful, home-loving wife, what is most probable is that Leonardo would follow the norm for husbands and, descending happily from the hemisphere of order, again make the descent through the circles of disorder, where Vidinha or her equivalent waits for him, so that they could together form a supplementary household, which he will unmake in favor of newer arrangements, according to the customs of the traditional Brazilian family. Order and disorder are, therefore, extremely relative, and connected in innumerable ways, which make the official of justice a fomenter of riots, the professor of religion an agent of intrigue, the Cadet's sin the source of the Lieutenant colonel's goodness,

illegitimate unions honorable situations, and proper marriages excused irregularities.

"Tutto nel mondo è burla" [Everything in the world is a joke] sing Falstaff and the chorus, to summarize the confusions and unforeseen events of Verdi's opera. "Tutto nel mondo è burla," the narrator of the *Memórias de um sargento de milícias*, a novel that has traces of opera buffa, seems to say. So much so that (and here we come to the second example) the happy ending is prepared for by a surprising opinion of Major Vidigal, who in the book is the incarnation of order, being a manifestation of an exterior conscience, the only kind imaginable in his universe. In fact, the conventional order to which people's behavior is obedient, but to which, finally, consciences remain indifferent is here more than in any other place like the policeman on the corner, that is, Vidigal, with his prudence, his vigilance, his whip, and his relative fair play.

He is the representative of a world only glimpsed during the narrative, when the Godmother starts a campaign to obtain Leonardo's freedom. As everyone knows, she goes to ask for the protection of the Lieutenant Colonel, a member of the grotesque guard of old officers, who dozes in a room in the Royal Palace. The Lieutenant Colonel, for his part, seeks the interest of the Fidalgo (who lives with his cape and his clogs in a cold and ill-furnished house), so that he will speak to the King. The King, who does not appear but hovers overhead as the source of everything, will speak to Vidigal, the instrument of his will. More than a picturesque character, Vidigal embodies order; for this reason, in the structure of the book, he is the keystone of the vault and, from the dynamic aspect, the only regulatory force of a disorganized world, pressuring it from above and reaching, one by one, the agents of disorder. He catches Leonardo the Father in the house of the Caboclo, and the Master of Ceremonies in that of the Gypsy. He patrols the party for the baptism of Leonardo the Son and intervenes many years later in his brother's birthday party, a consequence of the father's new love affairs. He persecutes Teotônio, breaks up Vidinha's picnic, tramples Toma-Largura, and pursues and then catches Leonardo the Son, forcing him to join the army. People fear him and flee at his name.

This being the case, when the Godmother resolves to obtain a pardon for her godson it is to Vidigal that she turns, by means of a new series of mediations which are very significant in the dialectic of order and disorder suggested here. Of modest social position, troublemaking and complacent, she strengthens herself by association with the prosperous Dona Maria, who would be a strong recommendation for the representatives of the law, always accessible to well-placed property owners. But Dona

Maria easily changes her course and goes to a woman whose ways had been easy, as was said when such things were still difficult. And it is with pure order, embodied in Dona Maria, on one side and, on the other, disorder made into apparent order, embodied in her picturesque namesake Maria Regalada, that the Godmother sets out to assail the intractable citadel, the hobgoblin, the killjoy Major.

The scene is worthy of an age that produced the comedies of Martins Pena. Everyone remembers how, to the surprise of the reader, Vidigal is declared "an idiot" and melts with pleasure among the skirts of the three old ladies. Lest he resist, encased in the intransigence of the conscientious policeman, Maria Regalada calls him to the side and whispers something to him, alluding to some pleasing relation in the past, with, who knows, possibilities for the future. The fortress of order collapses and not only frees Leonardo, but gives him the post of sergeant, which will appear in the title of the novel and with which he, retired from the service, will marry Luisinha triumphally, bringing together five estates in order to give greater solidity to his position in the positive hemisphere.

His position in this hemisphere is now so firm that, as we have suggested, he will fall eventually into the agreeable world of disorder, now that he has the supreme example of Major Vidigal, who yielded to the petition of an "easy" lady supported by a capitalist lady, in a smooth collusion of the two hemispheres, on the initiative of a third lady, who circulates freely between the two and could be called, like Belladonna in Eliot's poem, "the lady of situations." Order and disorder are therefore articulated solidly; the world, hierarchized in appearance, is revealed as essentially subverted, when the extremes meet and the general lability of characters is justified by the great slipperiness that brings the Major from the sanctioned heights of the law to a dubious complaisance with the strata he had so endlessly repressed.

A delicious feature blends, symbolically, these confusions of hemispheres and this final subversion of values. When the women arrive at his house (Dona Maria in a sedan chair, the others panting at her side), the Major appears in a cotton print dressing gown and wooden clogs, in a slovenliness that contradicts the uprightness he has displayed throughout the narrative. Perplexed by the visit, dissolving in the smiles and chills of senile eroticism, he runs inside and returns arrayed in his uniform dress coat, properly buttoned up and shining in his gold braid, but with his everyday trousers and the same clogs pounding on the floor. And thus we have our severe dragon of order, the ethical conscience of the world, reduced to a lively image of the two hemispheres, because in that moment when he transgresses his own norms in the face of the seduction of his old and, perhaps, new lovers, he has really become the equal of any of the malandros he has persecuted: of the two Leonardos,

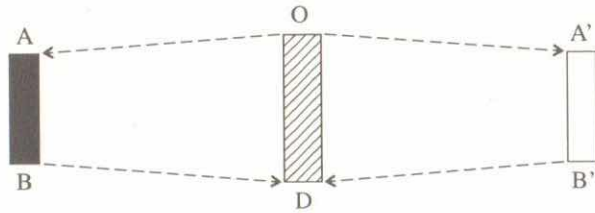
Teotônio, Toma-Largura, or the Master of Ceremonies. Just as the Master of Ceremonies, who, appearing contradictorily in priestly skullcap and underpants in the Gypsy's room, mixed the majesty of the Church and the delights of sin in comic symbols, the Major is now in uniform from the belt up, in informal clothing from the belt down—arming reason in the standards of the law and easing the solar plexus in amiable disorder.

This stroke gives the deep meaning of the book and of its capricious balancing of order and disorder. Everything has been arranged on a plane more meaningful than that of the conventional norms; and we remind ourselves that the good, the excellent, Godfather, "took care of himself" in life by perjuring, betraying his word given to a dying man, robbing the heirs of the gold the man had entrusted to him. But didn't this gold serve to turn him into an honest citizen and, above all, to care for Leonardo? "Tutto nel mondo è burla."

It is a joke and it is serious, because the society that swarms through the *Memórias* is suggestive, not so much because of the descriptions of festivities or indications of behavior and places; but because it manifests on a deeper and more effective plane the dialectic game of order and disorder, functioning as a correlative of what existed in Brazilian society at that time. Order imposed and maintained with difficulty, surrounded on every side by a lively disorder, which opposed twenty situations of concubinage to every marriage and a thousand chance unions to every situation of concubinage. A society in which only a few free people worked and the others abandoned themselves to idleness, reaping the surplus of parasitism, of contrivance, of munificence, of fortune, or of petty theft. Eliminating the slave, Manuel Antônio eliminated labor almost totally; eliminating the ruling classes, he eliminated the controls of power. What remained was the gamelike air of this feeble organization fissured by anomie, translated into the dance of the characters between licit and illicit, in such a way that we cannot say which was the one and which the other, because they all, finally, circulate from one to the other with a naturalness that recalls the mode of formation of families, prestige, fortunes, and reputations in urban Brazil in the first half of the nineteenth century. A novel profoundly social, then, not by being documentary, but by being constructed according to the general rhythm of the society, seen through one of its sectors. And above all because it dissolves what is sociologically essential in the twists and turns of literary construction.

In fact, it is not the representation of particular concrete data that produces the feeling of reality in fiction, but rather the suggestion of a certain generality, which sees the two sides and gives consistency as much to the specific data of the real as to the specific data of the fictional

world. In the diagram, let OD be the general phenomenon of order and disorder, as indicated; AB the particular facts, whatever they might be, of the society of Rio in the time of Dom João VI; A'B' the particular facts, whatever they might be, of the society described in the *Memórias*.



OD, the dialectic of order and disorder, is a valid principal of generalization, which organizes in depth AB as much as A'B', making them intelligible, being at the same time real and fictitious—a common dimension in which the two meet, and which explains one as much as the other. AB does not directly give rise to A'B', since the sense of reality in a fiction presupposes the data of reality but does not depend on them. It depends on the mediating principles, generally hidden, which structure the work and thanks to which the two series, the real and the fictitious, become coherent.

At this point, we realize that the structure of the book expresses the tension of the two lines that constitute the author's vision and translates them in two narrative directions, dynamically interrelated. On the one hand, the stamp of the popular introduces archetypal elements, which bring with them the presence of what is most universal in cultures, pulling it toward the legendary and the unreal, without recognizing the particular historical situation. On the other hand, the perception of the social rhythm pulls it toward the representation of a concrete, historically delimited society, which anchors the book and intensifies the realism infused in it. To the uncharacteristic and conformist realism of common sense and popular irreverence is joined the realism of the social observation of the universe described. Perhaps we could say that the peculiar characteristics of the *Memórias* are due to the reciprocal contamination of the archetypal and the social: the almost folkloric universality evaporates much of the realism; but, in compensation, the realism gives concreteness and effectiveness to the uncharacteristic patterns. There derives, from the tension between the two, a curious alternation of eruptions of the picturesque and reductions to socially penetrating models—avoiding the accessory character of anecdote, the banal excesses of fantasy, and the pretentious affectation that compromised the greater part of Brazilian fiction of that period.

THE WORLD WITHOUT GUILT

Unlike almost all Brazilian novels of the nineteenth century, even those making up the small minority of comic novels, the *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* creates a world that seems free of the weight of error and of sin. A universe without guilt and even without repression, except for the external repression that weighs on everyone all the time through Vidigal and the results of which we have already seen. The perception of the human appears in the book as a kind of superficial curiosity, setting in motion the interest of the characters in one another and of the author in his characters, creating a web of relations lived and described. To this curiosity corresponds a very tolerant, almost charming, vision. People do things that could be described as reproachable but do other things worthy of praise, which compensate for them. And, since everyone has defects, no one merits censure.

The Godmother makes a false accusation against José Manuel but does so in order to help the good cause of the lovers; and, in any event, José Manuel is a scoundrel. The compensation comes with his reaction through the intercession of the Master of Prayer, a petty intriguer who succeeds in putting an end to the calumny. Things get straightened out, but we ask ourselves if it would not have been better to leave the calumny alive . . .

As we saw, the Godfather has "taken care of himself" through perjury. But the narrator only tells us this after our sympathy for him is already assured by the dedication he displays to his godchild. For us, he is so good that this bad trait cannot compromise him. This is so much so that the evilly acquired gold is in no way cursed and becomes part of the inheritance that will guarantee Leonardo's prosperity.

One of the greatest efforts of societies, through their organization and the ideologies that justify them, is to establish the objective existence and real value of antithetical pairs, between which it is necessary to choose, expressed as licit or illicit, true or false, moral or immoral, just or unjust, the political left or right, and so on. The more rigid the society, the more strictly defined the terms and the more constrained the choice. For this reason, accommodations of a casuistic type are developed in parallel, which make hypocrisy a pillar of civilization. And one of the great functions of satirical literature, of demystifying realism, and of psychological analysis is to show, each in its own way, that these pairs are reversible, not watertight, and that, beyond ideological rationalizations, the antinomies coexist in a curious twilight zone.

From what we have seen, the moral principle of the *Memórias* seems to be, exactly like the facts narrated, a kind of balancing between good and bad, balanced at every instant by each other but never appearing as

a whole. From this derives the idea of symmetry or equivalence that, in a half-chaotic society, continuously reestablishes the normal, so to speak, position of each character. The extremes negate each other, and the morality of events is as balanced as the relations of men.

Everything gives off an air of freedom, a relaxed view of customs, which may or may not coincide with what occurred "in the time of the king," but which lies at the base of the society established in the *Memórias*, as the product of a coherent perception of the mode of life of men. Remorse does not exist, since actions are evaluated according to their effectiveness. Only a secondary character, the old Lieutenant Colonel, has a heavy conscience because of bad behavior of his son, the Cadet, in relation to the mother of "our hero"; and this heavy conscience is amusing in contrast.

If that is so, it is clear that moral repression can only exist, as was said, outside of conscience. It is a "police question" and is concentrated entirely in Major Vidigal, whose comic slide into the sphere of transgression ends, at the conclusion of the novel, by confusing definitively the relation of the planes.

In this, and in all of this, the *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* contrasts with Brazilian fiction of the times. A young society, which seeks to discipline the irregularity of its vigor in order to make itself the equal of the old societies that serve it as models, normally develops certain ideal mechanisms of containment, which appear in every sector: in the juridical field, as rigid and impeccably formulated norms, creating the appearance and illusion of a perfect organization that does not exist and for that very reason constitutes the idealized target; in literature, as an accentuated taste for repressive symbols, which seem to control the expression of impulses. It is what we see, for example, in the perception of the corruption of love, so frequent among the ultra-Romantics. It is what we see in Peri, the heroic Indian, who suppresses in himself, to the point of negating, the aspirations that could realize him as an autonomous being, in a renunciation that permits him to construct in compensation an alienated, automatic self, identified with the ideal patterns of colonization. In *O Guarani*, the strength of the vital impulse, the naturalness of feelings, only occurs as a characteristic of villains or, sublimated, in the exuberant picture of nature—that is, the forces that must be controlled by civilization and the morality of the conqueror, of whom D. Antônio de Mariz is a paradigm and the Romantic Indian a homologue or an ally. (Remember the "torchholding Indian. The Indian son of Maria, godchild of Catherine de Medici and son-in-law of D. Antônio de Mariz," of the *Manifesto antropófago* of Oswald de Andrade.) A mutilating repression of personality is still what we find in other novels of Alencar, those called urban, like *Luciola* and *Senhora*,

where the woman oppressed by patriarchal society confers on the plot a penumbra of suppressed energies. In the midst of all this, the almost magical liberty of the fictional space of Manuel Antônio, free of guilt and remorse, of repression and interior sanctions, colors and mobilizes the firmament of Romanticism, like the rockets in "Fire in the Field," or the Bahians dancing in the processions.

Thanks to this, it differentiates itself from the habitual superego of Brazilian fiction, effecting a kind of demystification that approximates the spontaneous forms of social life, connecting to them in a more profound way. Let us make a parallel that may help.

In the historical development of the United States there was, from very early on, a constricting presence of law, civil and religious, that shaped groups and individuals, limiting their behavior through the punitive force of exterior penalties and the internalized feeling of sin. From this arose a *moral* society, which finds expression in such novels as Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, and which created the setting for such dramas as the witchcraft trials of Salem.

This hardening of the group and individual confers a great strength of identity and resistance on both; but it dehumanizes relations with others, above all with individuals of other groups, who do not belong to the same *law* and therefore can be manipulated at will. Alienation becomes at the same time a mark of rejection and a punishment for the rejected; the stern biblical model of an elect people, justifying its brutality toward the nonelect, the *others*, reappears in these communities of daily readers of the Bible. Order and liberty—that is, internal and external policing, arbitrary rights, and violent action against the stranger—are formulations of this state of affairs.

In Brazil, neither groups nor individuals ever effectively encountered such forms; they never had an obsession with order, except as an abstract principle, nor with liberty except as caprice. The spontaneous forms of sociability operated with great ease and thus mitigated the collisions between norm and conduct, making conflicts of conscience less dramatic.

The two diverse situations are linked to the mechanisms of the respective societies; one that, under the assertion of a deceptive fraternity, sought to create and maintain a group that would be, ideally, monoracial and monoreligious; the other that in fact incorporated racial and, later, religious pluralism into its most intimate nature, despite certain ideological fictions that might have been postulated to the contrary. With no desire to constitute a homogenous group and, in consequence, no need to defend it strongly, Brazilian society opened itself broadly to the penetration of dominated and foreign groups. And gained in flexibility what it lost in integrity and coherence.

The deep meaning of the *Memórias* is linked to its not being related

to any of the ideological rationalizations then reigning in Brazilian literature: Indianism, nationalism, the grandeur of suffering, redemption through pain, pompous style, etc. In its more intimate structure and its latent vision of things, this book expresses the vast general accommodation that dissolves the extremes, confuses the meaning of law and order, manifests the reciprocal penetration of groups, of ideas, of the most disparate attitudes, creating a kind of moral no-man's-land, where transgression is only a nuance in the spectrum that runs from norm to crime. All this because, not manifesting these ideological attitudes, Manuel Antônio's book is perhaps the only one in Brazilian literature of the nineteenth century that does not express the vision of the dominant class.

This fact is evidenced in its style, which distinguishes itself from the preferred language of the novel of the times, searching for a tonality that can be called colloquial. Because he was a novice, with no commitments to established literature, and protected by anonymity as well, Manuel Antônio was free, and open to the influence of popular rhythms. This brought with it a kind of irreverent common sense, which is precritical, but which, reducing everything to the comprehensive scale of "human nature," becomes in the end more demystifying than the almost militant intent of an Alencar, marred by the style of his class. Being neutral, Manuel Antônio's charming style is translucent and shows the other side of each thing, exactly like the balancing of certain sentences. "The Godmother was a woman of the lower class, excessively fat, goodnatureed, simple or stupid up to a certain point, and sly up to another." "The old Lieutenant Colonel, despite being virtuous and good, had on his conscience a few regular sins." From this flows the equivalence of opposites and the nullification of good and evil, in a discourse deprived of mannerism. Even in a book so willingly critical and *social* as *Senhora*, Alencar's style in the end closes the door on reality, because it inclines to the conventional language of a restricted group, committed to a certain vision of the world; and, in so doing, carries the weight of its times, remains too much imprisoned in the contingencies of the moment and of its social class, preventing the facts described from acquiring sufficient generality to become convincing. Now the language of Manuel Antônio, detached from what is fashionable, makes the details of reality seem comprehensive, significant, and exemplary, because they are immersed in the flow of the popular culture—which tends to kill place and time, putting the objects it touches beyond the frontiers of social groups. It is thus on the level of style that we can best understand the detachment of the *Memórias* from the ideology of the dominant classes of its time—so present in the liberal rhetoric and florid style of the "belletrists." This

is a liberation, which functions as if the moral neutrality corresponds to a social neutrality, stirring the pretensions of class ideology indiscriminately in the pot of popular irreverence.

This is connected to a broader, and very Brazilian, attitude of corrosive tolerance, presupposing a reality not regulated by norm or law, and at times manifesting itself in literature in the form of devastating jokes, which betray paradoxically a vague nostalgia for more legitimate values, while attacking those traits that, stiff and crystallized, threaten that flexibility which is one of the fruitful dimensions of our cultural universe.

This sense of humor, avoiding the sanctioned spheres of bourgeois norms, moves instead toward the irreverence and amorality of certain popular expressions. It manifests itself in Pedro Malasarte at the level of folklore and finds in Gregório de Matos glittering expressions, which reappear periodically—reaching their maximum in Modernism, with *Macunaíma* and *Serafim Ponte Grande*. It smooths the edges and makes room for every manner of accommodation (or negation), which at times make us seem inferior in the face of a vision stupidly nourished by puritan values, like those of capitalist societies; but which will facilitate our entrance into an eventually open world.

With much less virulence and stylization than the two books cited, Manuel Antônio's belongs to a branch of this line, which takes various forms. It is not surprising that only after Modernism did his book finally find the glory and the favor of readers, with a rhythm of publication that in the last twenty-five years has gone beyond one printing a year, in contrast to an earlier time, when it had one every eight years.

In the limpid transparency of its universe without guilt, we see dimly the outlines of a world without definitive or irremediable evils, ruled by a charming moral neutrality. There one does not work, one leaves necessity behind, every trouble is taken care of. The parasitic and indolent society, which was then that of the free men of Brazil, was very much like that, thanks to the brutality of slave labor, which the author elides along with other forms of violence. But since he aims at the type and the paradigm, we glimpse beyond the concrete social situations a kind of archetypal world of legend, where realism is counterbalanced by elements that are unobtrusively fabulous: an adventurous birth, tutelary spirits, dragons, pilfering of the economic order, the failure of chronology, the absurdity of relations. For this reason, we must take with a grain of salt the idea that the *Memórias* is a documentary panorama of Brazil in the time of Dom João VI; and after having suggested that it is rather its ghostly anatomy, much more totalizing, better to think nothing at all and let ourselves be lulled by this realist fable composed in tempo allegro vivace.

NOTES

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1. José Verissimo, "Um velho romance brasileiro," *Estudos brasileiros*, 2nd series (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, 1895), pp. 107–24; Mário de Andrade, Introduction to Manuel Antônio de Almeida, *Memórias de um sargento de milícias*, Biblioteca de literatura brasileira, I, (São Paulo: Martins, 1941), pp. 5–19; Darcy Damasceno, "A afetividade lingüística nas *Memórias de um sargento de milícias*," *Revista Brasileira de Filologia* 2 (December, 1956), 155–77, especially 156–58 (the citation is from p. 156).

2. Josué Montello, "Um precursor: Manuel Antônio de Almeida," *A literatura do Brasil*, Direção de Afrânio Coutinho, II (Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Sul Americana S.A., 1955), pp. 37–45.

3. *The Literature of Roguery*, 3 vols. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907). See also Ángel Valbuena Prat, "Estudio preliminar," *La novela picaresca española*, 4th ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1942), pp. 11–79, the edition of the principal Spanish picaresque novels used in this essay.

4. ["Malandro" (pronounced "mahl-AHN-droo") is a classically untranslatable word, referring to a cultural conception common in Brazil, but nonexistent in North America. It is often translated as "rogue" or "scamp" or "rascal" or "trickster." If I had to choose, I would, using contemporary idiom, say "hustler." But each of these leaves something to be desired, and I have chosen to leave the word in Portuguese and let the reader fill in its meaning contextually, since the essay is in some ways devoted to explaining what it means. HSB]

5. "It is in this mode that Manuel Antônio de Almeida described the character Leonardo, which results in a *hero without any character*, or better, one who represents the fundamental traits of the stereotype of the Brazilian. Manuel Antônio de Almeida is the first to fix in literature the national character of the Brazilian, which then will have a long life in our literature. . . . I believe that we meet in Leonardo the ancestor of *Macunaíma*." Walnice Nogueira Galvão, "No tempo do rei," in *Saco de gatos: Ensaios críticos* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1976), p. 32. This beautiful essay, one of the most penetrating on our author, first appeared, under the title "Manuel Antônio de Almeida," in the "Suplemento Literário" of the *Estado de São Paulo*, March 17, 1962.

6. Marques Rebelo, *Vida e obra de Manuel Antônio de Almeida*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Martins, 1963), pp. 38–39 and 42.

7. Alan Carey Taylor, "Balzac, Manoel Antonio de Almeida et les débuts du réalisme au Brésil," summary of a paper, *Le réel dans la littérature et le langage*, Actes du Xe. Congrès de la Fédération des Langues et Littératures Modernes, published by Paul Verneis (Paris: Klincksieck, 1967), pp. 202–3.

8. Herman Lima, *História da caricatura no Brasil*, 4 vols. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1963), vol. 1, pp. 70–85.

9. Astrojildo Pereira, "Romancistas da cidade: Macedo, Manuel Antônio and Lima Barreto," *O romance brasileiro (de 1752 a 1930)*, Coordenação etc., de

Aurélio Buarque de Holanda, (Rio de Janeiro: O Cruzeiro, 1952), pp. 36–73. See p. 40.

10. [This refers to the move of the court of the Portuguese king from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, the royal court thus taking over from the previous colonial administration. HSB]

11. Marques Rebelo, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41.

12. T. von Leithold e L. von Rango, *O Rio de Janeiro visto por dois prussianos em 1819*, translated and annotated by Joaquim de Sousa Leão Filho (São Paulo: Editora Nacional, 1966), p. 166.

13. C. Schlichthorst, *O Rio de Janeiro como é, 1824–1826 (Huma vez e nunca mais) etc.*, translated by Emy Dodt and Gustavo Barroso (Rio de Janeiro: Getúlio Costa, n.d.), pp. 78–80.