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LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL INTERSECTION IN BRAZILIAN AND PORTUGUESE SHORT STORY CREATION

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Abstract: This article seeks to present some interactions between philosophical thought and short story creation in Brazilian and Portuguese literature. To this end, the research objectives are to survey part of the path of consolidation of Brazilian and Portuguese short story production; list the main aspects; and distinguish different types of reciprocal action between the universes of literature and philosophy, such as anticipation, simultaneity, conditioning, etc. The research was arranged in the thematic axis of “Literature and interdisciplinary studies”, and was carried out through the study of theoretical, critical and literary texts, through which the alternation between the pursuit of fundamental principles and the provisional attribution of propositions was established.¹. As a result of the studies, the emphasis on variations in form, theme and cosmovision, and the prominence of the imbrication between the oscillations of literary creation and the displacements of philosophical thought.

Keywords: Tales, Philosophy, Literature.

“In the face of History, an endless river that drags everything and everyone in its course, the short story writer is a fisherman of singular moments full of meaning.”

(BOSI, 1991, p. 9)

The discussion about the origins, characteristics and boundaries of the short narrative literary modality called short story is controversial, complex and remote. Although the short story has achieved a considerable degree of prestige from the second half of the 19th century with the productions of Edgar Allan Poe (2021), Guy de Maupassant (2009), Anton Tchekov (2014), the situation of mutability and instability in the production and understanding of short story art is a continuum. For, there are not enough common

denominators capable of encompassing and decisively synthesizing the breadth and specificities of this literary configuration.

The textual composition of the short story varies in different ways (constitutive elements, shape, language, theme, etc.) according to the priorities and objectives to be pursued in the writing process. Thus, the textual organization of the short story can: establish dialogues with other genres and subgenres of the literary universe; look for different social and cultural matters; modulate the linguistic expression most suited to a given purpose; to base critical projections to different facts and moments. In this horizon, Alfredo Bosi (1991) highlights the protean character of the short story as its essential peculiarity, because it allows under a single modality to approach propositions and cosmovisions that are often contrary and antithetical. This plasticity and adaptability is an object of esteem and incomprehension, since it covers extremely disparate objects under a terminology.

Under the heading of short story, there are long narratives, such as some novels by Guimarães Rosa and Alexandre Herculano, and, on the other hand, in the same way, some short stories by Dalton Trevisan and Maria Judite de Carvalho; the figure of the author having precedence to define the name to be adopted. In the shadow of the same seal, there is the writing of a more poetic prose, such as that of Raul Brandão, and, on the other hand, the lean elaboration of texts by Graciliano Ramos. Also with the support of the term tale, other variations occur in a very elastic way, in which different techniques are adopted regarding the use of some constitutive elements (narrator and narrative focus), for example, in the predominance of dialogues in Ernest Hemingway’s short stories, or, on the other hand, in the accentuated intrusion of

1. This study was initially arranged in the work “Processes and dynamics of philosophical thought in short story production”, published in the report of the 6th GPLV Seminar, and parts of this text make up a part of a subchapter of the book: “*Ruínas da modernidade*”, written by this author.

the narrator's sphere in certain short stories by Machado de Assis.

No less debated is the question of which origins and demarcations would determine a definitive genealogy of the tale, since they are fragmented into distinct lineages: customary, fruitive, didactic, literary, etc. According to Hermann Lima (1967), in the beginnings of human culture, the first written versions of short narratives had their initial point of propulsion in traditional fables and extraordinary tales of heroic and grandiose deeds. Therefore, they were linked to the propagation of customs and collective social representations inherent to a particular tradition. They are products of this aspect: "as fábulas de Esopo" (2014); the book: *Kalila e Dimna* (1990), Arabic translation of ancient Indian narratives by Ibn Al-Muqaffa; and stories preceding the works: *Ilíada* (2002) and *Odisséia* (2015), of Homero, and "Metamorfoses", of Ovídio (1983).

Breaking the paradigm of predominance of the transmission of values over the tendency of artistic fruition, the production of short narratives at the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Renaissance in Europe saw the emergence of a new conformation of short stories. According to Nádia Battella Gotlib (2002), with the creation of some works by Boccaccio, Chaucer and Cervantes, even though the inflection of the oral story is maintained, primacy is given to the aesthetic character as it is based on artistic elaboration as the main guideline, not privileging the customs transmission process. In a different way, already giving space to the disposition and design of specification of the literary work, in the 19th century, the art of short narratives saw the specialization of the figure of the short story writer grow. Notably, the propositions and achievements of the writer and literary critic Edgar Allan Poe are erected, as Gotlib says:

The fact is that the elaboration of the tale,

according to Poe, is also the product of an extreme mastery of the author over his narrative materials. The short story, like any literary work, is the product of a conscious work, which is carried out in stages, according to this intention: the achievement of a single effect, or total impression. Everything comes from painstaking calculation. (GOTLIB, 2002, p. 34)

With this, by pointing out some peculiarities in the production of the written short story, general conditions are provided for the impulse of the short story art. Poe sets as a goal the search for unity of effect, that is, the maintenance of the same tone, time and space throughout the narrative. This way, the writer indicates as a hierarchical superiority or as a personal idiosyncrasy the predilection for short stories that sustain an internal unity with the development of tension in the narrative. Despite the exclusivity of the propensity to a tendency chosen by Poe, from that moment on, the short story reaches a degree of robustness in its formal constitution and recognition in literary modalities.

In addition to the discussion about the origins, characteristics and literary boundaries, the establishment of the examination of the differences, similarities and relations of the tale with the way of thinking of a social group, nation or historical circumstance makes it possible to know some intricacies of its narrative production. More specifically, certain interactions between philosophical thought and storytelling. This way, the confluence of literary and philosophical knowledge pointed to different forms of relationship, of which we highlight anticipation, simultaneity, conditioning, confrontation, transposition, etc. In Portuguese and Brazilian literature, the path of consolidation of short story production is closely linked to the unfolding of different types of reciprocal action with the universe of philosophical thought.

In the Iberian Peninsula, part of the

emergence of short narratives is associated with the development of one of the European literary ramifications, which is based on the displacement, reuse and transformation of Greek, Arabic, Jewish, Persian and Hindu texts and works. This way, Massaud Moisés (1991) points out the didactic aspect reconfigured and initiated by the doctor, writer and astronomer Pedro Alfonso de Huesca. His main work: "*Disciplina clericalis*" (MOISÉS, 1991), is a collection of examples or exemplary tales written in Latin, in which texts of Greek, Arabic and Hindu origin are translated and reused for the Christian medieval context of the twelfth century, and whose main sources are philosophers' proverbs, fables, moral sentences and examples. . This collection by Alfonso de Huesca influenced a large number of writers in the following centuries, such as Boccaccio, Chaucer, Don Juan Manuel, Shakespeare and Cervantes.

In Portugal, the first stages of development of one of the archaic forms of tales took place with narratives that had their roots in the use of fables, in the presentation of the lineages of noble families and in the exposition of ascetic doctrines through collections of examples. Thus, in the Christian medieval conjuncture, these writings had as their philosophical paradigm and principles of action the propositions of Neoplatonism and Scholasticism. Massaud Moisés highlights the compilation of some medieval texts, such as *Nobiliários*, by Alexandre Herculano, and the collections: "*Horto do esposo*" (century XIV) by anonymous author, and *Castelo perigoso* (century XIV) of unknown authorship (MOISÉS, 1991). In a relationship of a priori conditioning of narrative activity, these texts were based on the didactic character to explain a certain intellectual elaboration, a conception of the world and certain rules of conduct.

The Renaissance period was very fruitful for the development of literary modalities in

Portugal. Among several exponents of the changes, the outline of the writer Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso emerges, considered the first Portuguese short story writer. In his work, traces of Boccaccio's and Don Juan Manuel's literature and Plutarch's philosophy are highlighted. However, he developed a writing style closer to the orality of his time and inclined to the events and recurrent cases in the Iberian peninsula. Although he adopted a moral and didactic approach, Trancoso discusses everyday life in its peculiarities, thus differing from the previous tradition of examples regarding the collection of the initial material for the composition of the narratives, as pointed out by António José Saraiva and Óscar Lopes:

The simplicity of its writing, in which there is a great insistence on syndetic coordination, many direct speeches with popular phraseology, proverbs, the naive realism of certain details, denote a popular culture [...]. Many of the tales are located in bourgeois homes on Portuguese lands, with such particularization that the social history of the 16th century must necessarily resort to their testimony (SARAIVA; LOPES, 2000, p.539).

These are narratives in which it is possible to find experiences referring to various social categories and social strata, such as pavers, disliked neighbors, widowed mothers, hermit priests, notaries, merchants, etc. Although he had the intention of confirming and proposing a past model of life, Trancoso combines his cosmivision with written practice in a different way, by adopting the corporeality of the daily hustle of social vibrations.

Notwithstanding this initial literary influx that continued in subsequent periods, the activity of short-story composition in Portuguese lands reached a larger scale of production only in the 19th century. In this century, the increase in the generation of short narratives took place through the

advancement of typographic techniques, the increase in the readership and the growing prestige of prose writers. Massaud Moisés (1991) highlights two main strands, in which the production of short stories bifurcates with the works of Rodrigo Paganino, Camilo Castelo Branco and Júlio Dinis (popular current), and with the narratives of Alexandre Herculano and Rebelo da Silva (historicist current).). We emphasize the works of Paganino and Herculano as exponents, predecessors and influencers of these two aspects.

The stories created by the doctor and journalist Rodrigo Paganino are segmented through a world view supported by a rural way of life and the preservation of Christian traditions, and are limited by the simplicity of the vocabulary, the recurrence of cases and the establishment of a simulation of an intimate and pleasant coexistence between the short story figure Tio Joaquim and the other characters.

Alexandre Herculano's literature oscillates between the adoption of a stoicism, which advocates the renunciation of an individual destiny in favor of the homeland and religiosity (VECHI, 1994), and the preference for platonizing theories of manifestation of ideal archetypes (SARAIVA, LOPES, 2000). This way, Herculano records his narratives under the bias of the exaltation of the spirit of nationality, in circumstances located in different moments of the past, such as the wars of reconquest, the conflicts between the monarchy and the papacy, the emergence of the Portuguese kingdom. To this end, he makes use of wonderful and fantastical components, widens the temporal and spatial demarcation, hybridizes literary genres, approaches the organization of the novel, emphasizes some eccentricities of medieval customs and idealizes the courage and courage of the characters. For example, in: *Lendas e narrativas* (2008), the tale: "A dama pé-de-

cabra", set in the period of the reconquest wars, it tells the story of an Iberian nobleman's passion for a mysterious woman with forked feet, similar to those of a goat. In addition, the narrative is divided into three parts, alternates two stories, instituting setbacks and advances in time, and intersperses narrative moments with passages in verse and with several digressions by the narrator.

In the last four decades of the 19th century, narrative composition with a realistic and naturalist flavor predominated in Portuguese short story production, as in the works of Eça de Queirós, Fialho de Almeida, Trindade Coelho and Abel Botelho (SARAIVA; LOPES, 2000). These are narratives that are based on Tainean, Proudhonian and Comtean postulates, such as the conditioning of literature to extratextual factors, the predominance of a utopian political doctrine and the search for a positivist systematization of writing. In the tales "No moinho" and "Singularidades de uma rapariga loura", of *Eça de Queirós* (2008), e "A velha" e "A ruiva", of Fialho de Almeida (1991), it is possible to observe this preponderance of philosophical and scientific propositions about the arbitrariness of literary composition. Despite the tendency towards an apriorism of the realistic and naturalist cosmivision, the short story production is consolidated as an autonomous and organic literary modality, according to Moisés:

Taken as a whole, realistic production in the area of the short story reveals, above all, an acute stage of literalization of form: the short story [...] now reaches its literary maturity. [...] the realistic tale, even when subordinated to scientific precepts, in vogue at the time, aims at clearly aesthetic targets, both in its themes and in its style. It acquires, so to speak, forums for the noble expression of art, alongside the novel and poetry, and is now seen by writers not as a stage for the creation of a more complex and voluminous work, but as an end in itself.. (MOISÉS, 1991, p. 19)

Thus, in this period of time, the writing of short stories in Portugal reaches and adopts a set of procedures that allow delimitations and contours of literary expression: the notion of narrative unity is sought, the importance of constitutive resources (narration, description, dialogue), and it is possible for the clash of universal attribution to give way to the conflict of the character.

In Brazil, the origins of short narratives are found in cases, stories, folktales, fables, legends, stories and anecdotes (ROMERO, 1985). Most of the time, these narratives come from different social groups, with problematic geographical origins and oral expression. In addition, the diversity of autochthonous, Eurasian and African descent, and the longevity of its themes, contribute to highlighting its features. On the other hand, the principle of short stories in Brazilian written literature is limited to a much more recent period and to a much more restricted socioeconomic framework. In this delimitation, it is possible to establish the beginning of the short story production in the first half of the 19th century, and in the dissemination carried out in periodicals of the time. In his studies on the Brazilian short story, Herman Lima (1997) indicates that the initial process of the first short stories written in this period still does not register specifics specific to the modality, as they still do not reveal a literary quality in their narrative making. Furthermore, part of these tales is similar to the novel, in terms of length, as in the case of fiction writer, poet and historian Joaquim Norberto de Souza e Silva; and, on the other hand, it approaches the chronicle, regarding the determination of the plot, as in the production of short narratives by the journalist, translator and essayist Justiniano José da Rocha.

Notwithstanding these initial projects, Lima (1997) places the strengthening of short

story production in Brazil in the unfolding of romantic fiction. For this, the critic establishes the set of narratives of the work: "*Noite na taverna*", published in 1855, by Álvares de Azevedo, and the book: "*Lendas e romances*", by Bernardo Guimarães, released in 1871, as initial representatives of the elaboration of the Brazilian short story. Regarding that fictional work by Álvares de Azevedo, the essayist highlights the compositional procedures:

The importance of this book stems from the fact that the various stories that compose it, some of perennial literary beauty, such as Bertram's tale, already obeyed the requirements of a refined composition, with a defined plan and balanced proportions, despite the delirious conception of its characters and of their situations in permanent paroxysm (LIMA, 1997, p. 47)

This way, the critic places this work by Álvares de Azevedo as a watershed of short narratives in Brazilian fiction in terms of aesthetic elaboration, and as a course of absorption and transformation of the works of Alfred de Musset, Lord Byron and José Cadalso. On the other hand, Lima also highlights the paroxysmal bias of the circumstances in which the characters are arranged, taken by a tragic bent, however, conversely, without the designs and edifying purposes of heroic destinies.

First in newspapers, then in books, Machado de Assis' short story production also began in this period of unfolding romantic fiction in Brazil. However, after the first two books of short stories, in the so-called mature phase of his work, his works reach a unique level of development, as they show skill and sagacity in this literary modality (ASSIS, 1994). For, the writer provides both the production of tales of atmosphere and the elaboration of tales of episodes; in addition to providing narratives with very different themes, contexts and times, made with a subtle layer of irony and humor. Echoing this breadth, José Guilherme

Merquior (1996) highlights some subdivisions in Machado de Assis' short-story production: "anecdotal" tales, based on singular events; the tales of characterological analysis, focused on psychological detail and moral design; the tales of women's studies, the so-called "eternal feminine"; and the philosophical tales, related to universal inquiries of the human being, with express or tacit recurrences to philosophers or philosophical currents, in particular, to the postulates of Schopenhauer and Pascal.

After having highlighted and exposed some of the stages of emergence and consolidation of Portuguese and Brazilian short story production, we selected some short stories from the book: *Papéis avulsos*, of Machado de Assis (1994), of the book: *Serão inquieto*, of António Patrício (2000), to observe some aspects related to the interface between literature and philosophy in these writers.

The tales: "Teoria do medalhão" and "O espelho – sketch of a new theory of the human soul", coming from the third book of short stories by Machado de Assis, take place under the constellation of a supposedly fortuitous contrast between the magnanimous posture adopted by the characters and the ridicule provided by their actions. Arranged in a dramatic way, that is, only through dialogues, the tale: "Teoria do medalhão", in the interval of sixty minutes (between 11 pm and midnight), he reports a conversation between father and son about the imperative of being a medallion. The conversation evolves towards the precautions to be taken and the attitudes to be avoided in order to achieve this aim. Among which, we highlight the weakening of the virtualities of philosophy when it is dimensioned as mere adornment:

- No philosophy?
- Let's understand each other: on paper and in no language, in reality nothing. 'Philosophy of history', for example, is a phrase you must use often, but I forbid

you to reach conclusions other than those already found by others. Avoid anything that can smack of reflection, originality, etc., etc. (ASSIS, 1996, p. 17)

This way, the text makes a scathing critique of the general notions that governed the vacuity of the average intellectual in the second half of the 19th century, and establishes a relationship of implicit solidarity with philosophical studies. In "O Mirror" (ASSIS, 1996) the composition is effected by the alternation between narration and dialogues. Also involved at night, the narrative is constituted through a metaphysical and transcendental debate between four or five initial characters. They are lords of prestige profiting from so-called insoluble questions of the universe, until the debate reaches the demand on the nature of the soul. At this point, Jacobina, a character averse to discussions, exemplifies her conception of the duality of the soul (exterior and interior). To this end, a second narrative unfolds, at a time when this character was named ensign of the national guard. Jacobina narrates his subordination and dependence on the privileged way in which others saw him as an ensign, therefore, the predilection and preponderance of the outer soul over the inner. Thus, in the short story, when representing denying, the mirror embodies an intrinsic need (acceptance) and scales an iterative misfortune (fragmentation).

Benedito Nunes (2012) places the composition of some short narratives by Machado de Assis within the scope of the re-elaboration and transformation of the skeptical philosophy of Aenesidemo and Agrippa, by associating them with recurring thematic segments:

In the thematic composition of the plots, interruptive motives of certainty enter, which have the force of conviction to that of the tropes related by the skeptics, as special reasons for the suspension of assent.

We will highlight some of the ones that stand out in the stories: the mirroring of the Self, which reflects the exterior, social pose, in the interior, personal identity, in 'O espelho', of *Papéis avulsos*, and the counterpart of the emptying of personal identity by isolating the individual from the gregarious mirroring in 'Só, de *Outros contos*; the sovereignty of opinion, a 'boa solda da instituição doméstica', or the power of language generating the authority and truth of current ideas and the evidence of metaphysical ideas and metaphysical noses, as in 'O segredo do Bonzo'; production of commonplaces and phrases made in 'O anel de Polícrates' e 'Evolução'. (NUNES, 2012, p. 134.)

In this list of Machadian tales, Nunes points out the dialogue with some tropes of the ancient skeptics. However, according to the critic, in Machadian literature the suspension of assent does not lead to imperturbability or ataraxia, but, on the contrary, leads to restlessness and humor.

The tale "Diálogo com uma águia", by António Patrício (2000), is included in the book: "*Serão inquieto*", in a collection of five short stories and a collection of aphorisms. The narrative is instituted through the alternation between narration and dialogues. However, the emphasis is given to the unusual conversation between the narrator-character and the eagle, to the diminished importance of external action, and to the primacy of the theme of the chaining of human desire. With the title of an excerpt from: "*Assim falava Zaratustra*", of Friedrich Nietzsche (2009) – "Écris avec du sang et du apprendras que le sang est esprit" –, the tale outlines a series of criticisms made by a caged eagle to the shy and guilty behavior (in terms of desires and impulses), and venal (in terms of the destruction of natural resources) of the human being. Reverberating topics from vitalist philosophies of fruition of life and aesthetic creation, the eagle's exposition

takes place in such a way as if its postulates were a projection of the narrator-character's expectations in relation to the world. However, the situation is reversed and the narrator-character demands coherence from the eagle when he suggests releasing it so that it can accomplish what he proposes. At this point, it comes as a surprise, the eagle has also resigned itself to the safe life it leads and, sarcastically, laughs at its interlocutor. In this vein, the short story ironically concretizes the radical distinction of the philosopher's role in relation to the preacher's instance, when distrust and doubt are reiterated in the narrative as central paradigms of philosophical and literary action.

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