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## COMPARATIVE LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF “QUARTO DE DESPEJO” BY CAROLINA MARIA DE JESUS

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*Roberta Mendonça Natário*

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**Abstract:** Comparative literature, a field of study dedicated to identifying connections between different literary works, offers a valuable perspective for analyzing “Quarto de Despejo” by Carolina Maria de Jesus. This article explores the importance of this work in the context of Brazilian literature, highlighting its ability to give a voice to the marginalized and to reveal realities neglected by society. Using a comprehensive methodology, we analyze Carolina’s work in the light of comparative literature, identifying connections with other literary works that address similar themes of marginalization and social inequality. By establishing parallels between “Quarto de Despejo” and works such as “Angústia” by Graciliano Ramos and “Os Sertões” by Euclides da Cunha, we reveal how these narratives address the complex issues of inequality and social injustice in Brazilian society. Carolina Maria de Jesus challenges dominant narratives and, through her powerful and direct writing, provides an authentic look at the experiences of the marginalized in São Paulo’s favelas in the 1950s. Through comparative literature, this article highlights the fundamental role of “Quarto de despejo” in expanding our understanding of the segregation issues that shape Brazilian society. Carolina Maria de Jesus continues to be an inspiring voice and her work is a testimony to the power of literature to bring about social change and give a voice to the subaltern, as discussed by theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha. “Quarto de Despejo” remains an important work in Brazilian literature, a resounding call for social justice and a reminder of the struggles and resilience of the marginalized.

**Keywords:** Inequality; Comparative literature; Marginalization; Carolina Maria de Jesus.

## INTRODUCTION

Literature can be seen as a mirror that reflects the complexities of society, giving voice to often neglected human experiences. In this context, “Quarto de Despejo”, “Diário de uma Favelada”, by Carolina Maria de Jesus, emerges as a work that not only describes, but also denounces the raw and impactful realities of life in the Canindé favela, in São Paulo, in the decade 1950. This article seeks to explore “Quarto de Despejo” in the light of comparative literature, establishing connections with post-colonialism and other literary works that share themes related to marginalization, social exclusion, inequality and representation of subaltern voices.

To achieve this objective, we adopted a comprehensive methodology that involves identifying literary works that relate thematically to “Quarto de Despejo”. This selection is based on criteria that consider the social issues present in the work of Carolina Maria de Jesus. Furthermore, the in-depth analysis of these works will allow the exploration of themes, styles, historical and cultural contexts, identifying common elements and notable differences. The historical and cultural contextualization of these works will be fundamental to understanding this article, including the context of the 1950s in Brazil and the literary movements of the time.

As we investigate the language, writing style and narrative structure of “Quarto de Despejo” in comparison to the selected works, we will be able to understand how author Carolina Maria de Jesus expresses the experiences of the marginalized. Furthermore, by utilizing relevant theories, such as Homi K. Bhabha’s perspectives on cultural negotiation in literature, we will be able to deepen our analysis.

We will identify the specific connections and contributions of “Quarto de Despejo” to the field of comparative literature, highlighting

how the work challenges dominant narratives and expands the understanding of subaltern experiences. Our critical analysis will also be based on other theories that explore the crucial role of literature in representing marginalized voices. Finally, we will discuss the findings and conclusions from this comparative analysis, emphasizing the continued importance of “Quarto de Despejo” in the context of Brazilian and international literature. We will highlight how the work enriches our understanding of complex literary relationships and how Carolina Maria de Jesus, through her vivid narrative, remains an invaluable voice that gives life and voice to the marginalized, illuminating the depths of social and cultural inequalities. Throughout this article, it will be demonstrated that “Quarto de Despejo” is not just a literary work, but a fundamental piece in the dialogue about social justice and empowerment of silenced voices in literature.

## METHODOLOGY

To analyze “Quarto de Despejo” by Carolina Maria de Jesus in the light of comparative literature and establish connections with other literary works, we will use a comprehensive methodology that will encompass the following steps: initially, we will identify literary works that are thematically related to “Quarto de Despejo” and that allow comparative analysis. This selection will be based on criteria such as themes of marginalization, social exclusion, inequality and representation of subordinate voices. For this stage, it will be essential to consult relevant and specialized bibliographic sources in comparative literature and Brazilian literary studies, such as Damrosch (2016).

We will carry out an in-depth analysis of the selected works, exploring themes, styles, historical and cultural contexts. We will identify common elements and notable differences between “Quarto de Despejo” and comparative works. We will contextualize

the works within the history and culture in which they were written. This will include the 1950s in Brazil, the literary movement of the time and relevant social events that may have influenced the works. The contextualization will be based on historical and cultural sources, as well as critical analyses, according to Brito (2005).

We will investigate the language, writing style and narrative structure of “Quarto de Despejo” compared to the chosen works. This will allow us to understand how the author expresses the experiences of marginalized people. Linguistic and stylistic aspects will be addressed in light of relevant literary theories, including Bhabha’s (1994) perspectives, as mentioned previously, on cultural negotiation in literature.

We will identify the connections and contributions of “Quarto de Despejo” for comparative literature, highlighting how the work of Carolina Maria de Jesus challenges dominant narratives and expands the understanding of subaltern experiences. The critical analysis will be based on theories that explore the role of literature in representing marginalized voices, as discussed by Lima (2012).

Finally, we will discuss the findings and conclusions of the comparative analysis, highlighting the importance of “Quarto de Despejo”. We will address how the work expands our understanding of complex literary relationships.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In “Quarto de Despejo”, Carolina Maria de Jesus describes the harsh reality of life in the Canindé favela, in São Paulo, in the 1950s. During this period, the country was under the government of Getúlio Vargas, and due to various political changes, the country was in the process of urbanization and modernization accelerated, however,

this economic modernization was far from benefiting the population as a whole.

The rapid growth of cities resulted in the formation of favelas, such as Canindé, where Carolina Maria de Jesus lived. In these communities, the lack of basic infrastructure, such as sanitation and adequate housing, was evident, and social inequality deepened, as did racial segregation in this post-colonial period. In a striking passage, she writes: “Misery is worse than leprosy, because leprosy only destroys the body, and misery destroys the soul of the people” (Jesus, 1960). This quote reflects the raw way in which the author addresses poverty and social inequality in her work.

The work can be compared to other literary creations that explore similar themes and contexts. One of these works is “Angústia” by Graciliano Ramos, a Brazilian modernist novel that also investigates the lives of the marginalized and the social inequalities of the time (Candido, 1970). Both “Quarto de Despejo” and “Angústia” expose the harsh reality of poverty and the social consequences of inequality, although in different literary styles. In this work, the protagonist Luís da Silva declares: “I am alone and confused in a world that I did not ask for” (Ramos, 1936). This quote illustrates the main character’s alienation and anguish, reflecting the way in which Graciliano Ramos’ work addresses existential issues and social inequality in an urban context.

Another work that can be linked to “Quarto de Despejo” is “Os Sertões” by Euclides da Cunha. Although the setting and context of the two works are different, both shed light on the social and racial inequalities that plague Brazilian society (Schwarz, 2003). An emblematic quote from this book is: “The countryman is, above all, a strong man” (Cunha, 1902). This statement by Euclides da Cunha highlights the resilience of the

country people in the face of adversity, but it also highlights the deep inequalities that characterized Brazilian society at the time.

When comparing these works, we can note that they all explore the consequences of social inequality, although in different contexts. “Quarto de Despejo” focuses on urban favelas, “Os Sertões” on rural areas and “Angústia” on a more abstract scenario, but equally marked by social alienation. These quotes highlight the voices of the characters and authors, revealing the issues present in the three works, contributing to a broader understanding of the complexities of inequalities in the Brazilian context.

Bhabha argues in “The Site of Culture” that cultural representations can reveal tensions between different identities and social groups. “Os Sertões” explores the conflict between the poor and the elite, while “Quarto de Despejo” focuses on the struggles of the poor favela dwellers. As Sandra Nitrini discusses in her studies of comparative literature, literary works can serve as reflections of tensions between different identities and social groups (Nitrini, 2006).

Ángel Rama, in his work «The City of Letters» (1985), also highlighted the importance of urban literature and the representation of marginal realities in Latin American literature. Rama argued that works that explore the urban environment offer valuable insight into the complexities of cities and the experiences of marginalized populations.

Carolina Maria de Jesus’ legacy as a writer and social commentator continues to inspire and provoke reflection, reminding us of the power of literature to bring about social change (Schwartz, 2017). “Quarto de Despejo” remains an important work in Brazilian literature, a testimony to the resilience and strength of the marginalized and an urgent call for social justice, as highlighted by Bhabha in

his discussions on cultural representation and the voice of the subaltern.

The work can also be seen within the context of postcolonial literature, as such studies examine the influences of colonialism, as well as the experiences and identities of colonized populations after independence. In this sense, postcolonial literature often explores the social, economic and cultural inequalities resulting from the colonial legacy.

Elena Brugioni, in her study “Margins of Writing: The Testimony of Carolina Maria de Jesus” (2009), analyzed the work of Carolina Maria de Jesus, including “Quarto de Despejo,” from the perspective of literary testimony and discussed how these narratives contribute to understanding the experiences of marginalized people. The author examines how testimony literature can be an effective tool for giving a voice to subaltern communities and revealing social injustices.

Furthermore, an important reference in postcolonial literature is the work of Edward Said, in particular, “Orientalism” (1978). Said argues that literature and other cultural representations can be used to perpetuate stereotypes and inequalities. Although “Quarto de Despejo” focuses on the Brazilian context and not on the analysis between East and West that Said addresses, the critical analysis between social and racial inequalities also has relevance for the discussion in this post-colonial context, as it addresses issues of representation and Power relations.

L. Perrone, in his work “Literature for All” (2008), discusses the importance of democratizing access to literature, especially for marginalized communities, where there is no incentive for their stories to be told or heard. Perrone argues that literature can serve as a tool for empowerment and social inclusion. Something that we can see happening with Maria Carolina, who experienced social ascension after the success of her diary, and

as mentioned previously, became a symbol of resistance that inspires several studies like this one. However, the consequences of the colonial period remain, because even after the social ascent that Maria Carolina achieved, the elite still questioned her writing, her purpose and always criticized her as not belonging to their long-awaited new reality.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we explore the work “Quarto de Despejo” by Carolina Maria de Jesus in the light of comparative literature and establish connections with other literary works that share themes related to marginalization, social exclusion, inequality and representation of subordinate voices. Throughout this study, we highlight the importance of “Quarto de Despejo” in the context of Brazilian and international literature, as well as its contribution to expanding the understanding of the complex literary relationships with post-colonialism.

Through the comprehensive methodology used, we identify literary works that are thematically related to “Quarto de Despejo” and carry out in-depth analyzes of these works, exploring themes, styles, historical and cultural contexts. This allowed us to establish significant connections between “Quarto de Despejo” and works such as “Angústia” by Graciliano Ramos and “Os Sertões” by Euclides da Cunha, even though they are located in different contexts.

When comparing these works, we observe that they all address the consequences of social inequality, although in different contexts, reflecting the tensions and social concerns present in Brazilian realities. Carolina Maria de Jesus, in “Quarto de Despejo”, stands out for her ability to give a voice to the marginalized and expose the social contradictions and inequality that permeate Brazilian society, in a direct and unfiltered way.

The theoretical foundation enriched our analysis, highlighting how theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Sandra Nitrini and Ángel Rama contribute to the understanding of cultural representations and the importance of subaltern voices in literature. Furthermore, postcolonial literature and the theories of Edward Said have also shed light on the relevance of “Quarto de despejo” in the broader context of discussions about representation, power, and stereotypes.

Finally, this study reinforced the importance of democratizing access to

literature, as argued by L. Perrone in “Literature for All”, and how literature can serve as a powerful tool for empowerment and social inclusion, especially for marginalized communities, whose Voices are often silenced.

In short, “Quarto de Despejo” remains a landmark literary work that not only illuminates the lives of the marginalized, but also challenges dominant narratives, broadens understanding of the complex social and cultural issues of Brazil and the literary world, and reinforces the power of literature to bring about significant social change.

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