

The fantastic in Murilo Rubião¹

Jorge Schwartz

The reality of Murilo Rubião is almost a reality of fiction. In the apartment of Belo Horizonte, a large number of works inspired by his short stories. A picture filled with colorful dragons in the middle of the room. It's the life of a man who cultivates the habit of being alone. Nothing out of place. Every detail is thought, an outgrowth of experience. Watercolors illustrated with his own scripture.

Spanish statuettes and paintings, from the country where he was a cultural attaché for four years. Finally, a book room, the table and the typewriter, indicating battles in the production of the works. Murilo, the case of a writer who was relegated in the history of Brazilian letters. His first work dates from 1947. Pioneer of fantastic narrative in Brazilian literature.

What about the avant-garde aspects of Murilo Rubião? From the geographical temporal point of view, his work appears in an unusual way (as is the very theme of short stories), disengaged from any literary movement in Brazil. Prior to Julio Cortázar, who published the first short stories in 1951 (*Bestiário*), he thematically links himself to the Hispanic-American avant-garde writers, the explorers of the so-called "magical realism" (Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Juan José Arreola, Gabriel García Márquez etc.). In Murilo Rubião, the fantastic is in everyday life. Absence of sudden ruptures in the narrative sequence or suspense effect in the reader. Referentially antagonistic and irreconcilable events are quietly reconciled by the organization of language. Dragons, rabbits and kangaroos speak, but there is no longer the classic "puzzle" to be unraveled at the end.

What about the function of the fantastic account, since the element suspense and consequent final explanation are totally diluted in the scripture? One of the possible explanations is that of fruition as a playful pact with the reader, which would imply reducing the work to mere game of art by art. This is not exactly the case with Murilo Rubião. The fantastic phenomenon of his writing is justified to the extent that there is the perception of the symbolic and allegorical levels of meaning. May the careful reading of "The Dragons" serve as an example. Clear binary opposition scheme: Dragons x Society. Society's struggle to integrate the dragons. Society acts and the dragons are integrated. Active participants in the group life, they end up being corrupted and come to an end. A critique underlying social values and prejudices. The dragons are presented as devoid of any historical or cultural repertoire. At first they represent the neutral, amoral element. They live on the margins of society and symbolize the very dimension of purity, so much so that they can only be understood by children. But social values corrupt them and destroy them. A vicious circle. João, the last of the dragons, had started in card games and had resumed his addiction to drinking. And the dragons don't go back to town anymore. They were disintegrated in the integration process itself. Biblical scripture is the place of reading Murilian tales. In each of them, an epigraph extracted from the Old or New Testament. And just as Adam and Eve miss the chance to continue living in Paradise, men also miss the opportunity to live with dragons. They wait and will wait, and always in vain the return of the dragons...

The critique of society also reverses the values of the fantastic. The extraordinary

¹ SCHWARTZ, Jorge. O fantástico em Murilo Rubião. **Revista Planeta**, n. 25, São Paulo, Sept. 1974.

element is not the presence of dragons in the human environment, but the condition of the environment and the relationships created in it. Here is a possible parallelism with the works of Kafka. In "The Metamorphosis", the fantastic is no longer Gregor, converted into a monstrous cockroach, and fantastic are the reactions of the family to the fact. In Murilo and Kafka, the social code allows ideological reading and it is not a simple recreation in the reading of the fantastic.

In the modern Hispanic-American narrative, other convergences of the themes dealt with by Murilo Rubião. One of G. G. Márquez's last short stories, "Un Señor Muy Viejo Con Unas Alas Enormes" (1968), an angelic being magically appears, (as the title says). Immediately inserted in the consumer society, it is industrialized and exposed to public visitation. The values of society are tested. His sudden disappearance is analogous to the useless wait for the dragons to return.

In Brazilian authors, the same type of thematic organization, narrative can be observed. An abnormal event serves to test society's reactions. In José J. Veiga, in the short story "The Misplaced Machine", an inexplicable machine causes uproar and disarticulates the norms of the small-town population. In the novel *Sombra de Reis Barbudos* an enigmatic and allegorical company calls into question the values of the small local town.

To know Murilo is to penetrate the world of the fantastic. To penetrate the world of the fantastic is to read the Murilian scripture. Murilo, the man who lives in the apartment in Belo Horizonte.