Heleno Álvares Bezerra Júnior

(Editor)

POETICS OF DIVERSITY

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN LITERATURE

Poéticas da diversidade

UERJ

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São Gonçalo, RJ – 2024

CONTENTS

Introduction

In recent decades, diversity has become a quintessential word that, by broadening the horizons of literary studies, has opened up a space of visibility for minority voices, encompassing issues of nationality, the blurring of geographical and metaphorical borders, the emergence of culturally hybrid identities in association with colonization in conformity with post-colonial reflections. Likewise, it addresses questions of gender and sexuality in the light of Feminist Theories and Queer Studies, exploring the different nuances that these themes entail. Although diversity seems elusive and random as it functions as an umbrella term, its use in literature, far from being a collection of generalizations and superficialities, presents specific theoretical perspectives and particular political representations, which, once aligned with Cultural Studies, underpin the humanitarian principles presented in this book.

When embracing new trends in contemporary literature, Mark Currie (1988) affirms that what "is required in this new model is an ability to describe the heterogeneity of contemporary narratology, its diverse applications and political uses, its respect for the particularity of narratives" (Currie, 13). After all, diversity offers a range of thematic options as well as literary approaches that, by centering questions of identity in the very fabric of the text, make aspects of culture the main element of metafictional or other manifestations of narrative strategies in contemporary literature (Hutcheon, 2003).

As an object of literary study, diversity highlights post-colonial literary production, including that developed in the former English-speaking colonies, and discusses, from diasporic movements, multiculturalism, the formation of multiple constructions of identity such as cultural resistance, gradual forms of cultural translation, the erasure of an old culture on behalf of conscious assimilation of a new one as well as the presence of the unbelonging, representing people who, once bound by linguistic and cultural borders, are geographically or/and metaphorically located in an intercultural space. In this context of culture, diversity inevitably touches on questions of historicity, as the consequences of colonization are found in the realm of History. As Julie Mallaney (2010) points out in her discussion of post-colonial narratives,

> The development of reading strategies for analysing such events and their effects constitute some of the common ground on which psychoanalysis and postcolonial literatures and theory, as investigative categories convene, yet they are positioned differently in their execution of such tasks, by the diversity of their histories, locations, practitioners and the methods they deploy (106).

These categories within the multiplicity of histories, cultural localities and traditions highlighted by Mallaney allow literature to become a powerful social denunciation of classist, misogynist and ethnocentric ideas rooted in Eurocentric worldviews. Following this rationale, Homi Bhabha (1994) understands that language has become a means of political denunciation and empowerment for those left out of the mainstream. In these terms, he affirms that "the 'language' metaphor raises the question of cultural difference and incommensurability, not the consensual, ethnocentric notion of the pluralistic existence of cultural diversity" (253) since what is at stake in post-colonial discussions is human injustice, a financial disparity between nations, and the dominance of globalized, colonizing cultures that suffocate the smaller ones, rather than the mere variety of cultures spread across the planet presented in an acritical perspective.

Thus, through the metaphor of language, diversity has embraced post-colonial theoretical principles to expose the subjugation of non-whites and denounce otherness, xenophobia, and the harm done to many nations, including Indigenous peoples (Kelly & Black, 2018) who, besides conveying critiques of ongoing genocides and other forms of colonial exploitation, have also invested in literature and other channels of communication to "celebrate the diversity of Indigenous experiences" (6), since there are countless tribes and nations with cultural and historical specificities throughout the Americas that must be respected for all they stand for and the knowledge they have produced through the ages.

In this heterogeneous group of the ex-centric (Hutcheon, 2003), among other equally important identity representations problematized in contemporary literature, I could highlight women of color, who, having suffered historically for being poor, non-white and victims of a sexist colonial structure (Davis, 1983), are largely portrayed in this book as their social profiles perfectly illustrate the notion of 'fragmented identity': a term coined by Stuart Hall (2006) and more recently refashioned as 'identity intersectionality' thanks to Kimberlé Crenshaw (2013),

who, having introduced this expression, has helped us think more didactically about what Hall denominates 'fragmented identity'.

According to this theorist, a person's identity can be made up of multiple mutable cultural references that provisionally represent them socially and psychologically. This susceptibility to change occurs because of the constant interaction of the subject and their social roles with the changing world they inhabit (Hall, 2006, 32). Thus, if we consider that the constituents of one's identity can interact, intertwine, convene or move apart like elements of a combinatorial analysis, depending on the purpose, agency, form of expression, and the context in which they are set, we can understand that the components of one's identity can intersect at some point, justifying the concept of 'identity intersectionality' (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

Such a theoretical aspect of diversity is prevalent in this book, which not only presents the fictionalized experiences of black women in Brazil and the U.S.A. but also includes violence against the female body in India from a feminist perspective, Indigenous writings from across the Americas, and a review of the symbolic representation of homosexuality in Victorian Gothic in the light of Psychoanalysis and Queer studies.

Among the many keywords presented in this volume, gender stands out in all the chapters though its meaning can vary depending on the context and the theoretical perspective applied to the term. Therefore, for the sake of didacticism, gender will sometimes be examined as a corpus separate from other elements of identity, although it will inevitably be analyzed within the multifaceted parts of one's identity. In this case, gender issues, whether from the perspective of Feminisms or under the aegis of Queer Theory, will equally lead us to think about diversity in peculiar and complementary respects.

Regarding the contribution of Feminisms, I could say the feminist waves have proposed different views of what a woman is (Dicker, 2016), not to mention that gender, when flanked by ethnic-racial issues (Smith, 1991), allows us to see that there is no single Feminism, either because of the variety of interpretive questions of an era or because it is not possible to think of cisgender or transgender women from a single perspective these days (Di Niro & Garvis, 2018).

As bell hooks (1984) ponders, Feminism "calls attention to the diversity of women's social and political reality, it centralizes the experiences of all women, especially the women whose social conditions have been least written about, studied, or changed by political movements" (57). In this, hooks emphasizes that "diversity does not mean uniformity or sameness" (57) either within different female identities or between men and women.

Siding with hook's feminist stance, Judith Butler points out that gender, as an ingredient of diversity should be studied contextually, along with or in contrast with other factors of the subject's identity, especially since the term, as slippery as it is, can be conceived and analyzed in different manners and perspectives depending on the context to which it is applied, so that gender turns out to be a culture-specific and inherently political issue. As Butler explains,

> If one is a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate "out" gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (3).

Because of its metamorphic nature, diversity can approach gender beyond (but not necessarily apart from) a feminist scope. For while feminists' debates about gender are usually concerned with the historical imbalance of opportunities for men and women in patriarchal systems, in the light of Queer Studies, the word can also refer, along with sexuality, to self-expression and personal performance that, once constrained by heteronormative conventions, struggles to resist socially imposed demeanors (McIlvenny, 2002). In this manner, diversity is also present in literary works about members of the LGBTQAPN+ (or LGBTQQIP2SA) community, since queer people can be marginalized either because their bodies do not conform to the standard sexuality of many societies, or because they are victims of other social problems such as poverty, bullying, rape, labor exploitation, family rejection, which, together with homophobia, transphobia, etc., can exacerbate the hardships they have to endure to survive in a world of injustice.

Attentive to these problems, Rachel Caroll (2021) reckons that thanks to the collaboration between Feminisms and Queer Studies, “efforts to disentangle heterosexuality as an institution from the diversity of heterosexual desires, identities and practices make it possible to explore the ways in which non-normative heterosexual identities are constructed” (11). Therefore, just as much gender, race and ethnicity coexist in a feminist scope, justifying identity intersectionality, so do sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity in queer perspectives. So much so, that, in the name of diversity, Johnson & Henderson (2005), Johnson (2008), and Johnson (2018) have pointed out the importance of discussing the nexus of gender and sexuality, as well as its variable manifestations, in intersectionalities apart from a white view, giving rise to Black Queer theory, also known as Quare Theory (Johnson, 2018).

Beyond intersectionality, it is possible to problematize diversity from a revisionist perspective that, based on solid evidence, promotes approaches that transcend canonical readings that, under the guise of neutral analyses, have employed a heterocentric gaze for centuries. This can be done by different means. One of the alternatives, for example, is to adopt a semiotic analysis based on diegetic and symbolic elements of the text (Ferber, 1999), and to try to explore them in line with Discourse Analysis (Gee, 2014) and Psychoanalysis (Felman, 1982). Another possibility is to link certain points of the narrative to Literary Life Studies (Maingueneau, 1995), contrasting the work with the author’s life in dialogue with Literature in Context (Rylance & Simons, 2001) and Cultural History (Pesavento, 2003) in order to evaluate possible overlaps between one’s literary production and their lived experiences. Both strategies have been used to renew readings of canonical works and provide fresh literary criticism based on Queer Studies. Indeed, one of the chapters in this volume follows one of these trends, as we shall see.

The crux of the matter is that all these emblematic theoretical branches focused on culture and human rights justify the centrality of diversity in the contemporary literary scene and its dialogue with cinema. After all, the more comparative literature expands into filmography (Bernheimer, 1994), the more the forms of intersection between aesthetics and politics are manifested through intermediality (Schlumpf, 2011; Jain, 2007), amplifying the scope of a poetics committed to diversity.

According to Aristotle ([330 BC] 2008), poetics consists of an "art which imitates by means of language alone and that either in prose or verse" (5). Through mimesis, art problematizes life, reality, history, politics, society, philosophy and unleashes the fantasy and imagination that inhabit the human mind through significant representations. As postmodern literature, coinciding and merging with post-colonial, feminist and queer theories, gives birth to a political agenda that turns its attention to social minorities as far as power relations are concerned (Foucault, 1978), this book, under the title of *The Poetics of Diversity*, encompasses different themes such as:

1) peculiarities of Indigenous literary approaches to poetics and their resistance to cultural hegemony throughout the Americas, and the influence of Native American and Native Canadian literature on contemporary Brazilian Indigenous literary production;

2) the human trafficking associated with the insertion of young girls into prostitution in India and the historical significance of Gangubai Kathiawadi as the Matriarch of Kamathipura in her fight for the human rights of sex workers in early 20th century India;

3) the representation of poor black Brazilian women and their idiosyncratic responses to the experience of motherhood in short stories by Maria Conceição Evaristo;

4) a discussion of the masks of racial segregation in the U.S.A. based on Edward P. Jones's "The First Day", taking into account the unequal opportunities for blacks and whites, based on an imaginary mapping within a city whose spatial cutouts limit the benefits of blacks and delimit the spaces they can travel through in a single municipality;

5) a discussion of different forms of racism against black people based on a policy of Passing and Colorism during the Great Migration in the U.S.A. in the first half of the 20th century, present in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*;

6) a diegetic and semiotic study of the metaphor of the cockatrice: a trope alluding to the repressed homosexuality of one of the characters bluntly described as effeminate in *Wuthering Heights* ([1847], 1975), based on queer gothic theory and psychoanalytic readings of abjection, narcissism, otherness and self-hatred found in what René Gerard denominates "the triangulations of passion", a

romantic narratological pattern widely explored in Emily Brontë's masterpiece (Girard, 1976).

Because of the diversity of themes, the volume has been split into three sections. The first one, entitled "Indian and Indigenous Literatures", juxtaposes these two completely distinct literary universes for organizational and didactic purposes only, in order to facilitate the thematic division of the tome, although the literary production in India takes place in cultural, geographical and historical spheres that are dissociated from what is poetically generated in the Indigenous Nations scattered throughout the Americas.

In the chapter "Telling the Self - Brazilian Indigenous Autobiography" Alba Feldman and Nelci Silvestre, by opening the Section "Indigenous and Indian Literatures", show that contemporary Brazilian Indigenous authors have followed in the footsteps of 18th and 19th-century Native American and Native Canadian writers, whose literary production marks an aesthetic and political movement of transgression against European tradition, sometimes deviating from and sometimes dialoguing with part of the literary formulas established by the colonizers.

Another important aspect of this chapter is Feldman and Silvestre's assertion that, in an act of cultural resistance, Indigenous authors vehemently refute the way whites portray them in literature. An example of this is the treatment that Julie Dorrico (2019), an Indigenous Brazilian writer, gives to Macunaíma, a character created by the Brazilian modernist writer Mário de Andrade, considering that, from her point of view, white people tend to create images of Native Brazilians that do not correspond to their reality and experience (Dorrico, 2019).

Moreover, in the name of diversity, Feldman and Silvestre discuss the importance of recovering and preserving ancestral cultures as well as the impasses that hybrid identities face in their quest to identify with Indigenous traditions after being incorporated into white, urban communities. So much so that, besides presenting women writers among the authors listed, the scholars also tackle the issue of sexuality by including a lesbian writer in their list of prominent Brazilian Indigenous authors.

In doing so, Feldman and Silvestre not only demonstrate the wealth of Indigenous narrative strategies that challenge historiography in poetic, fictional,

and non-fictional production but also reveal a diversity of cultural, gender, and sexual identities among the selected Indigenous authors, making the text a distinctive tool for heralding the literary and cultural production of Indigenous writers in Brazil and abroad.

In the chapter "The Pain of Being a Woman: Gangubai's Life in a Male-Dominated World in *Gangubai Kathiawadi*" (2022), a Movie by Netflix", Renata Cunha e Caroline da Costa introduce Gangubai Kathiawadi, a historical figure who, through her prominence in the chapter "The Matriarch of Kamathipura" in Hussain Zaid, Jane Borges and Ulka Raut's novel *Mafia Queens of Mumbai* (2018), becomes Sanjay Leela Bhansali's heroine in the film *Gangubai Kathiawadi*: A Voice of Empowerment (2022). Through intermediality (Schlumpf, 2011), Cunha e da Costa analyze the filmic adaptation of the novel, building a bridge between two artistic manifestations: cinema and literature.

When writing about the film Gangubai Kathiawadi, Cunha and da Costa revisit India at the beginning of the 20th century and show that, unfortunately, the position of women as autonomous subjects has changed little compared to today. The film begins with a social indictment, showing how deceived girls are taken from their families and sold to brothels, where they are tortured into becoming sex workers.

Next, the scholars draw the reader's attention to issues of imagery, highlighting how the careful staging of scenes is constructed, especially how the contrast between light and shadow intensifies the physical and psychological violence suffered by Gangubai as she is abused by Shaukat Abbas Khan, a sadistic mafia criminal who beats her nearly to death.

Above all, this chapter shows the obstacles Gangubai had to overcome to fight against the mechanisms of oppression in the competitive space in which she lived, how she became the madam of the establishment, was elected the leading prostitute of the district of Kamathipura, and finally made contact with the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru. After all, in a meeting with him, she pleads with him to keep the local brothels open and intercedes on behalf of the prostitutes who would have nowhere to turn to if the brothels were closed. Most importantly, in her speech at the Azad Maidan Esplanade, she calls for the daughters of sex workers not to be excluded from schools and have the right to education. All in all, an example of sisterhood and humanity, Gangubai

Kathiawadi lives up to the name of the film and has gone down in Indian history as a person who fought for the empowerment and dignity of women.

Continuing the series of articles on the representativeness of non-white women in the realm of diversity and opening the second section of the book entitled "Black Women in Brazil and in the U.S.A.". Michela di Candia's "Motherhood in Conceição Evaristo's Short Stories from *Olhos D'Água* [*Watery Eyes*]" presents three short stories written by the black Brazilian writer Maria Conceição Evaristo in her collection *Olhos D'Água*, in which she explores the theme of motherhood from different angles, presenting with great precision several obstacles that a poor black woman must overcome on a daily basis in Brazilian reality.

Considering the hardships faced by black women and what the scholar reveals throughout her text, the reader is led to conclude that motherhood can be much more challenging for poor black women, stating that although being a mother can be a dream come true, in other cases, raising children can be a great responsibility, a constant worry, or even an impossible burden to carry, especially in the case of single mothers.

Before analyzing the short stories, the author of the article gives a summary of the historical panorama of Brazil, showing how humanitarian agendas were intentionally denied to the black population, creating problems related to slavery that crossed the 20th century and continue into the 21st century. Only after discussing how the intersectionality among ethnic, racial, class and gender issues puts black and poor women at a social disadvantage, does the author problematize different situations in which

a) a particular woman does not want to be a mother, even though she is fertile and reluctantly gives birth to children;

b) a certain mother sacrifices herself as much as possible to provide for her children;

c) a very young woman who lives surrounded by criminals is worried about the future of the child she is bearing.

Emphasizing that motherhood is a unique experience based on personal desire, di Candia makes it clear that motherhood cannot be a social obligation, but a consequence of a woman's choice to be a mother, since she must make her

own decisions and have control over her own body. In this, we can see that motherhood is a topic for discussion that does involve diversity.

Next, Geniane Diamante and Érica Alves present "Borders in The Short Story 'The First Day', by Edward P. Jones", discussing issues of racism and spatiality in the North of the United States, which are subdivided into three sections. In the introduction to the text, the authors make preliminary considerations, inviting the reader to reflect on the importance of the delimitation of borders in political issues, and how the topic is very relevant and current, since it is still a fundamental issue in the United States, especially due to the periodic expulsion of immigrants, associated with the views of conservative leaders.

In the first part of the discussion, the scholars present a brief overview of the award-winning career of Edward P. Jones, an African-American writer who has already established himself in the international literary world.

Then, Diamante and Alves problematize the issue of borders from a theoretical perspective based on Post-Colonialism, illustrating the situations presented in the theoretical framework with different literary works that draw us into reflections in which racism and spatiality go hand in hand, as black bodies can only move through particular spaces or frequent certain establishments in a city, creating a geography of raciality in which discrimination may seem subtle, albeit in practice it is fierce and segregating.

When adding that the boundaries of racism can also be metaphorical, the scholars point out that such symbolic borders may (or may not) overlap with geographical ones. As seen, the topic becomes extremely rich for discussions of diversity, and a keyword in post-colonial studies. According to these scholars, the borders within Washington may or may not be available to black people at the convenience of white people in Jones' story. After all, black children can go to white churches but cannot attend the schools white people go to. Thus, the boundaries created for the expansion of colonizing religiosity in the city where the story takes place do not apply to educational opportunities for the black population.

In the following chapter "A Portrayal of American Black Women in Yaa Gyasi's Character Willie: Intersectionality, Colorism, and Racism in *Homegoing*", Fernanda Bortoletto discusses the origins of the problem presented in the previous article, showing that as a result of the unresolved issues of the Civil War

and the years that followed, a large part of the black population migrated from the South to the North of the U.S.A. almost throughout the 20th century, characterizing what we call the Great Migration: a phenomenon that caused geographical and metaphorical demarcations in cities like New York and promoted racial segregation in various forms.

Thus, Bortoletto shows how light-skinned black men who pass for white are treated differently from black women and how stores and clubs limit the opportunities for black women, relegating them to the role of housekeeper, cleaner, or nanny in *Homegoing*. Actually, it is in this niche of skin color that intersectionality becomes a fundamental element in the analysis of the text, for it is precisely because the intersectionality of a light-skinned man's identity does not match the complexion of a dark-skinned woman in the eyes of white people that issues of Colorism manifest themselves, bringing with them various forms of prejudice.

In general, the text depicts the humiliation and stereotypes that white people create to portray black people as stupid and dependent on white domination but it goes beyond outrageous issues. Rather, the scholar alerts the reader to the importance of linking identity to ancestry as a form of empowerment and self-fulfillment, just as it happens to Willie, the character at the center of the discussion.

The only text in the third section titled "Literature and Psychoanalysis", "A Cockatrice in Triangulations: The Treacherous Nature of 'Effeminate' Linton Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights'* is a chapter written by Heleno Bezerra Júnior. Although the text begins with a brief overview of the most prominent studies on questions of gender and sexuality in the Brontë Family in the last 30 years or so, the article moves away from issues related to literary life and seeks diegetic clues that point more clearly and overtly to what is of interest to queer critics.

In fact, Emily Brontë creates a metaphor for the character who is an "effeminate boy' (Brontë, 1975, 374) and "more like a lass than a lad" (Brontë, 1975, 374-5), namely, the cockatrice: a mythological animal with the head of a rooster and the body of a serpent whose behavior oscillates between cowardice and perversity as well as masculinity and femininity due to its hybrid nature (Ferber, 1999). Given this semiotic reading of the character of Linton Heathcliff and the fact that he, like other characters in the novel, finds himself in

triangulations that do not always equate to love triangles. According to René Girard (1976), various romantic works have used and abused what he calls the 'triangulation of passions' in which one person (A) envies the love that a second person (B) has for a third (C). Then, through imitation and envy, A, mirroring B's desire, begins to long for C.

Following this pattern studied by Lacan (2017), Bezerra Jr. shows how Linton Heathcliff, through supposedly unpremeditated and innocent gestures, seems to imitate Catherine Linton's desire for Hareton Earnshaw and tries to prevent an approximation between the other two elements of the triadic scheme from the beginning. Whether humiliating Hareton or defending the peasant, Linton's seemingly fragile but venomous figure fits the description of a cockatrice: an ambiguous, disguised, and malevolent creature. Since Heathcliff's son is a narcissist (Freud, 1995), someone who promotes otherness, and a character who, according to this queer reading, suffers from abjection (Kristeva, 1982) and internalized homophobia (Jagose, 2005), he must die for bourgeois order and morality to prevail, for the heterosexual couple to have a happy ending and for Wuthering Heights to return to the Earnshaw family. In the end, the nonconforming body in a heterocentric world must die because, as a victim of psychiatric hermaphroditism (Foucault, 1978), Linton Heathcliff is both unhealthy and dangerous to society.

Resuming Bhabha's thoughts in our introductory discussion, diversity does not always mean a variety of equal elements in the eyes of society. At least, such equivalence does not apply to what we observe in the literary texts presented here. In this context, diversity is an icon of representation for the unprivileged, the forgotten, the marginalized, those who seek to have a voice and visibility, as well as for those who fight against racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and so on.

By embracing a politicized aesthetics, *The Poetics of Diversity* emerges as a form of resistance against injustice, to show that even if plurality does not always mean equality today, in our struggle for respect for human rights, we will nourish the hope that one day, diversity will be unconditionally and unreservedly synonymous with plurality or a variety of elements with equal rights. Until then, literature of minorities will continue to be more than art for art's sake. Instead, it

will stand out as an art with a purpose, capable of fighting all forms of discrimination and prejudice in the name of equity.

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Indigenous and Indian Literatures

Telling the Self - Brazilian Indigenous Autobiography

Alba Krishna Topan Feldman[1]

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Criteria and history of autobiography

Biographical writings have been published for centuries with the aim of presenting the public life of heroes, saints, or other prominent people. In this approach, public life is no longer considered relevant and worth following, but the works of people once considered obscure and unknown, often haunted by the consequences of colonization, diasporic trauma, enslavement, and genocide, have boomed in the realm of literature. Social, racial, and gender inequalities are highlighted and their questioning permeates first-person literature, gaining the force of a document, of denunciation and resistance. The being itself, previously considered subaltern, questions the official history from which it is usually excluded, creating space for self-expression, social critique, and the recovery of culture with rich and unique aesthetic marks and narratives. With this in mind, this article aims to provide an overview of autobiographical works by indigenous authors in Brazil, with an emphasis on the specific characteristics of each group. The selection criteria, therefore, were works that have a convergence between the narrating self and the author, that are narrated in the first person, and that represent coincidences between the lives, feelings, and narrated experiences of Brazilian Indigenous populations, published in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Firstly, we will discuss some concepts of autobiography based on American and Canadian Indigenous theorists whose ideas on the subject, long established abroad, have become a theoretical contribution and source of inspiration for

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Indigenous writers in Brazil. Thus, we will focus mainly on the theory of Gerald Vizenor (1998) and Deanna Reder (2015) to begin a theoretical discussion.

We will then present some selected authors in chronological order, with brief comments on their autobiographical writings. In this way, we hope to contribute to the dissemination and understanding of Indigenous Brazilians' literary and cultural wealth which, supported by Native American and Native Canadian theorists, have blossomed into remarkable writers.

Autobiography in theory

Given the idiosyncrasies of narrative strategies used in Indigenous writings, I will clarify the definitions of some specific terms in autobiography studies, such as 'testimonio', 'life writings', 'memoirs', among others. Based on Smith and Watson (2010), I will describe some of the definitions associated with autobiography in order to explain what these terms have in common and what the problems in conceptualizing them are, since they present particular characteristics that are not found in the European approaches to story-telling. 'Life Narrative' or 'Life Story', as the name suggests, refers to a biographee's life story, in cases when the narrative is not necessarily told by the biographer. On the other hand, an 'Autobiography' deals with a part of the narrator's life that is mixed with the lived experiences of the author in a broad sense. In all these cases, writing about the self presupposes the importance of the life referred to, self-representation, and the careful selection of the events narrated.

A 'memoir' is a fact or a period in the narrator's life, not necessarily recorded for publication like a diary. Its main characteristic is a lack of concern for the accuracy of the facts, their continuity, or the degree of intensity and attention given to the events. The narrative passes through the filter of the narrator's own feelings, impressions, and memories. The genre brings back reminiscences, i.e., it is generally not very concerned with aesthetics or accurate recording, and its narrative follows a certain chronological order, heavily based on personal experience. Thus, the chronology of the memoir, which is more than just a record, can omit, erase, break, or change the order of events, given that the sequence of the facts presented depends on the emotional importance attributed to them.

The difficulty in capturing time in this situation is that even when a narrated episode passes through the filter of memory and emotion, of historical fact and time, it remains an actual event in the text. 'Literary Memory', in particular, can discuss a theme, a specific happening, or a period of history that, even if erased by personal emotion, can still be identifiable in the text. Thus, the individual, family, and collective aspects of Indigenous history are components of Indigenous autobiographical literature. An example of this narrative stance in Indigenous fiction is *American Indian Stories* ([1921] 2003) by Zitkala-Ša, of the Yankton/Lakota ethnic group, based in South Dakota, USA. In the chapter "Impressions of an Indian Childhood", her mother tells her stories of relatives who died in the forced removals that took place with several Indigenous nations[3], in the 19th century. The narrator's mother is concerned with the deaths of her relatives and other Indigenous people from the disease, a proven historical fact, which the Cherokee nation called the "Trail of Tears" (nu na hi du na tlo hi lu i – the path where they cried), but which encompassed several groups.

However, the narrative is told from the perspective of someone who has experienced these personal tragedies. The mother is a witness and character to these historical events, in which she lost her family and friends and suffered directly from the consequences of the removals. The memories are portrayed poetically and emotionally by the mother, who transcribes the events through the filter of her memories and pain, without citing the facts or numbers, places, or any other historical specifics.

In Indigenous approaches to narrative strategies, an 'Autobiographical Novel' is when an author uses a fictional character to tell his or her own story. It is not really an autobiography because there is a lot of overlap between fact and fiction in a partly autobiographical narrative in a way that the reader does not know how much of it is eventful and how much of it is imaginary. The difference between this kind of text and the autobiographical novel as we know it is that the 'narrating self' is not exactly the 'character self' or the 'narrated self', although it does provide the reader with the necessary tools to reflect not only on an individual historical account, but also on that of a group or community. An

[3] By Indigenous nation we mean larger groups or ethnicities that include different groups, such as the Lakota/Oyate (also known as Sioux), along with other groups such as the Lakota, Nakota, Dakota, Yankton, Oglala, Santee, and others. In South America and Brazil, the Guarani are a wide-ranging nation that includes the Kaiwá, Nhandeva, Avá, Mbya and others.

example of this narrative mode in American Indian literature is *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* (2007), by Sherman Alexie. The book describes the life of Arnold Spirit Jr, who leaves school on the Spokane reservation in Welpinit to study at a "white" school in Reardan, over 18 miles away. All these facts are consistent with Alexie's biography, in addition to many other events recounted in the book.

A 'testimonio', or 'testimony', is the description of facts, events, places, and historical periods, with the idea of telling a version of the truth that the narrator/author has conceived as a witness. This type of writing becomes particularly important when describing periods of war and other manifestations of human rights abuses, in which survivors or victims recount experiences that would otherwise likely be unknown to anyone who was not involved. An example of this type of writing is *I, Rigoberta Menchú* ([1983] 1992), the autobiography of an indigenous Guatemalan woman who fought the civil war in her country against the military regime. Her autobiography has another specific aspect in Indigenous writing, the so-called cooperative autobiography, when the Indigenous person tells their story to a journalist, sociologist, or anthropologist. The book was written by Elizabeth Burgos, based on interviews with Rigoberta.

A testimonio can also be used to denounce or even show the narrator's point of view on some traumatic events in their history. It is often a subjective and individual perspective of a crucial historical moment, such as the military coup in Guatemala described by Menchú, or in non-Indigenous works, the slave narratives of the 19th century, and the accounts of victims of Nazism during the Second World War. Thus, a testimonio becomes a historical account from the point of view of the oppressed and is also considered a subgenre of autobiography.

In this sense, autobiographical writings can be understood as experiences filtered through fictional and narrative choices and the description of how each person or group deals with such situations. These can range from family and love relationships to loss, maturation and growth, denunciation, or community life in specific historical moments.

Owing to all these factors, Indigenous writing about individuals and their nations has both a strength and a putative weakness in its first-person language. Because of this characteristic, it involves and brings the reader closer, creating empathy and a form of immersion in the narrative in which vivid emotions

flourish through identification. On the other hand, the genre's weakness lies in the same reason: autobiography is often regarded as biased because it is filtered through partiality, subjectivity, and sentimentality. This perceived bias undermines its power as a documentary or historical record, leaving it in limbo. As a result, autobiographies are often not recognized as denunciations, literature, or even as historical or journalistic documents. Indigenous writing, however, serves as a form of resistance and a means of self-expression and identity recovery and reclamation. It seeks to restore minoritized cultures, denounce injustices, and advocate for equity and the right to speak. Not to mention that this writing is enriched by unique and expressive aesthetic and literary qualities, which we will discuss in this article.

Characteristics of Indigenous Self-writing

From the outset, an important aspect of Indigenous literature is the characteristic of orality, of storytelling, which brings together genres, as we will see later. Deanna Reder (2022) stresses the individual and collective importance of telling one's own story, not as a mere copy of the Western autobiographical model, but as a culture-specific traditional practice. As an example, she uses Âcimisowin(a), a term from the Cree language, an ethnic group from Canada, to mean precisely the tradition of telling stories about oneself, in other words, the definition of autobiography long before the term itself existed.

Another specificity of Indigenous autobiographical writing consists of a fine line between mythical and chronological time, among the physical, the ordinary and the spiritual, and between individual and collective history. In the USA and Canada, autobiographical works by Indigenous authors have been published and studied for centuries, each with their distinctive characteristics. These include Conversion Stories such as *Son of the Forest* by William Apess ([1829] 2016), a volume in which conversion to Christianity is interwoven with cultural records and, above all, with denunciations of the colonizers' actions against the Pequot Tribe.

Over the generations, authors such as Zitkala-Ša, Charles Eastman, and many others have written accounts of Boarding Schools in the USA and Residential Schools in Canada. These were schools run by people of a religious or

military nature whose attempt to "civilize" and transform the lives of Indigenous children amounted to a long-term project of cultural genocide. This colonizing practice resulted in trauma and isolation for the surviving students. Since the 1960s, autobiographical works have been published in the form of novels, poetry, and reflections by Indigenous people from the most diverse ethnic groups, such as *Halfbreed* (1973), by Maria Campbell, from the Cree ethnic group in Canada, is one of them. Other examples of this trend include *The Way to Rainy Mountain (*1969), *The Names*: a Memoir (1976); *The Man Made of Words*: Essays, Stories, Passages (1997), *Earth Keeper*: Reflection on the American Land (2020), all written by Navarro Scott Momaday, an author from the Kiowa nation. Likewise, *Storyteller* (1981), and *The Turquoise Ledge* (2010), by Leslie Marmon Silko, from the Laguna Pueblo ethnic group, follow the same genre.

Given the diversity of literary forms in Indigenous writing, Reder (2015) points to three groups of scholars dedicated to the study of Indigenous autobiography. The first consists of anthropologists, historians, and philosophers, who analyze the genre as a source of sociological, anthropological, or cultural pieces. This group of intellectuals points to the "communal being" of Indigenous autobiography, which overrides the "individual being" character of non-Indigenous autobiography. A second group comprises theorists who specialize in the study of autobiography, while the third is composed of Indigenous scholars who study Indigenous autobiography.

The first group followed and based themselves on Arnold Krupat and his famous book *For Those Who Come After:* A Study of Native American Autobiography (1985). As far as this question is concerned, Reder states that although they were pioneers in exploring the differences between Indigenous and European standards of autobiography, they essentialized Indigenous autobiography when they claimed that it boils down to "I am us" rather than the "I am me", typical of European authors. This means that Krupat sees Indigenous autobiography only in the service of a group, tribe, or community, emphasizing the impossibility of the existence of a self-narration before contact with European writing, since autobiography would be a Western genre.

However, as the theorist points out, the act of 'telling the self' is already traditional in many, if not all, Indigenous ethnic groups' narrative stances. For this very reason, the first team of researchers believes that Indigenous writing –

because it is written, i.e. considered the prerogative of the European colonizer, would therefore always be the result of cultural hybridity. This would apply to all Indigenous autobiographies, especially collaborative ones, which would be hybrid in their literary nature. In this, theoreticians like Krupat have neglected the personal and subjective tone of the narrators who disclose stories of their peoples that are told in groups, from family to family, from parents to children, all orally and within the various traditions.

One of the proofs that these autobiographical narratives cannot be considered simple is the plurality of original or imposed voices present in their construction. The original voices come from the community, ancestors, family and ethnic history, spiritual elements and nature, the transmission of a cultural discourse that speaks to the individual, the "narrating self". However, the complexity of multivocality is most evident when the translators and interpreters impose a filtering or amalgamation of voices, transforming polyphony into unison, in their translation from an original language into hegemonic languages – in this case, English and, for the works we are going to mention, Portuguese – and by anthropologists who select which questions and information to privilege and publish, thereby directing the tone of the writing and the narrative. This filtering process is also present in the censorship within and outside the texts by editors, reviewers and others.

Of the second group, Reder notes that they have provided the vocabulary and some analytical tools for Indigenous autobiography since their raw material is the genre itself. In *Reading Autobiography* (2001), Smith and Watson, who belong to this team of scholars, demonstrate and criticize the oversimplification that the first group ascribes to Indigenous narratives. As an example, they cite *Storyteller* (1981), one of Leslie Marmon Silko's autobiographical works, which links individual, family, and community memory. This approach allows the author's Laguna Pueblo heritage, tradition, ethnic and family memory to be creatively and uniquely honored, thus contradicting the notion of a 'community self'. Nevertheless, when Smith and Watson (2001) state that Silko is "a creative and reverential voice bridging multiple cultures" (18), they also consider Indigenous autobiography as a hybrid genre. This is due to its very existence, its use of European conventions such as alphabetic writing and aesthetics, or the genre of autobiography itself. Following Reder, it can be argued that Silko creates

a particularly Indigenous narrative mode based on individual, family, and community memory and orality. Many authors have taken other literary genres, such as essay and poetry, as models to follow, including Native Brazilian authors, as we shall see.

Huddart (2008) demonstrates the difficulty of relating theories of memory and subjectivity (such as the content of memoirs and autobiographies) to the post-colonial subject and, by extension, to the Indigenous narrator. This is because they occupy a transcendental and peripheral position that places them on the border between different cultural universes. On the one hand, there is the individual narrative, but other modes of narrativity, such as community, family, and literary, also exist. Therefore, there are also levels of power relations in this nexus, such as racial, national, historical, cultural, and political, among others. These positions transcend the formal study of literary genres and influence the writing and reading of texts, making the theory of post-colonial autobiography even more complex.

The logic of Indigenous autobiography is also transcendent concerning the structures mentioned above, enriched with the cultural hallmarks of storytellers from the most diverse Indigenous nations. While meaning can be situationally determined, structure and context can be independent of each other or even decontextualized, while still being extremely important elements in understanding the text as a whole. In other words, aesthetics and history come together to create a work of art and also express specific cultural aspects of each identity group.

The third circle of intellectuals studying Indigenous autobiography, which includes Reder, is made up of Indigenous authors. From the theory of autobiography, memoir and testimony, it is essential to appropriate and use certain theoretical terms that function as key elements for us to understand the works. However, Indigenous autobiography must also be analyzed in terms of its own ethnic and stylistic specificities. This team of Indigenous scholars who study autobiography seek these very topics and bring the study of Indigenous autobiography as a valuable genre in literary, subjective, communal, social, cultural, and historical terms.

Despite differences of opinion, the fact is that Indigenous autobiography has broken the long-established discourse of historical truth, the boundaries

between the sacred and the commonplace, imagination and fact, poetry and prose, description and the sensations that support the latter. Above all, this genre has blurred the borders comprising image, orality, and writing, breaking the norms dictated by European models of what autobiography should be. In this way, many of these stories create a sense of intimacy with the reader that is very close to orality.

All these examples indicate that the ways in which people remember past events and record their memories in writing can vary, but will always contain historical, sociological and cultural data, presented in different manners depending on the author. Taking this into account, memory and history can 'play tricks' on those who remember and create tensions in discourses that juxtapose them. However, in Indigenous literature, and especially in autobiography, stories, by bringing out the unexpected and unprecedented in the genre, contribute to building a comprehensive whole that delights, informs and denounces, without neglecting the aesthetic pleasure derived from its subversion.

Two aspects of Indigenous literature make it enticing and seductive: the indices of orality and the recurrence of mythical and symbolic times and spaces linked to the authors' own traditions and cultures. For centuries, community histories have been told through drawings, statues, totems, and engravings on durable surfaces such as buffalo rides, among other resources used by Indigenous groups generally considered agraphic. The symbolism in these community stories, including colors, patterns, and drawings, become powerful resources that continue to mark identity and ensure not only survival but also the continuity of Indigenous traditions. In this domain, the cave drawings and paintings of the first populations are also strong markers of the presence and identity of these groups.

Before the 1960s, few or unknown publications by Indigenous authors existed in Brazil. The first published works were an attempt to recover the stories of origin, a return to Indigenous cosmogony, poems published in individual magazines, and works considered to be for children and teenagers.

Kaká Werá Jecupê, of the Txucarramãe, an ethnic group adopted by the Guarani Nation (Nhandeva People), published *Oré Awé Roiru'a Aa*: Toda Vez Que Dissemos Adeus (*Whenever We Say Goodbye*) ([1993] 2002), a piece which describes his spiritual path as a Guarani medicine man. To our knowledge, this is the first record in Brazil of an Indigenous person telling their story. The work had

repercussions and was published in a bilingual edition, Portuguese and English, in 2002. The book, beautifully colored with photographs of Guarani communities, art and culture, includes important moments in Kaká's life, such as the naming ceremony when the Shamoi, O Pajé (the Guarani medicine man) performs the ritual necessary for his "birth" as a Guarani:

> He was pointing me to the East, the North, the South and the West.
> Through his sacred breath, the 'named spirit' contemplates its last deployment, folding itself on Earth, turning into seed, and it is thereafter that small Earth mother conceives the body of the name in the womb. [...]
> The old shaman then concluded his speech:
> "I tell you this knowledge that is beyond the days, beyond the moons."
> I ascertained with my head.
> "Your Nhandeva name, your soul word is..."
> Putting his hand on my head, he blew the Petenguá smoke, poured water in sacred herbs"...
> "Werá Jecupé.", I shivered.
> "It is no longer a nickname Ka-Ka Txucarramãe. Wait and you will see the confirmation. Kaká Werá Jecupé" (Jecupé, 2002 21).

In 2009, Daniel Munduruku[4], a writer and activist from the Munduruku ethnic group, published *Meu Avô Apolinário*: Um Mergulho no Rio de Minha Memória [*My Grandfather Apolinário*: A Plunge into the River of My Memory], after making a name for himself with works for children and teenagers based on Indigenous legends that boosted his activist profile. A tribute to his grandfather, the book is a journey in search of the Indigenous identity of the author, who appears in the narrative as a boy. To this end, he relies on the help of his grandfather who lives on Indigenous land and teaches him to value his existence as an Indigenous person.

The rage of being Indigenous is presented at the beginning of the narrative: "I was born Indigenous. I wasn't born in a village... I wasn't born in a Uk'a Munduruku. I was born in the city. I think I was born in a hospital. And I was born in a city where most people look like Indigenous: in Belém do Pará" (Munduruku, 2009, 9). Although he is a Native Brazilian, the character does not identify as such because he lives in the city and not in an Indigenous land. In this

[4] It should be noted that many authors create their *noms de plumes* based on their ethnic origins. Just like Munduruku, there is Potiguara, Tabajara, among others.

identity crisis, the character denies his origin because he does not recognize himself as a Member of the Munduruku ethnic group:

> There was only one thing I didn't like: being called an Indian. No. Anything but that! To my dismay, I was born with an Indian face, Indian hair (albeit a little blond), Indian size. (...) And why didn't I like being called an Indian? Because of the ideas and images that this word brought with it. To call someone an Indian was to classify them as retarded, savage, lazy (Munduruku 11)[5].

The awkward situation at school, where everyone thinks the boy is ugly and incapable of impressing a girl, reinforces the identity crisis of the protagonist, who feels excluded and marginalized.

> 'What? You think I'm stupid, don't you? You think I'm going to let go of a hottie like Edmundo for an, an, an... Indian like you? You must have chicken shit in your head. If you want to be my friend, don't bring up this story again, okay? The world came crashing down on me. I was sad and hurt by Linda. But the worst came later. Linda told everyone what had happened and my schoolmates came down on me, repeating everything I didn't want to hear: the Indigenous had been dumped by Linda because he's ugly, because he's wild, because he's Indian. That was the last straw. Luckily it was Friday and my mother had already promised that we would go to the village of Terra Alta for a few days. What a relief! It really was a relief, and also the beginning of a great personal and spiritual adventure. It was there that I started to see the world differently [6]'(Munduruku 23).

The narrative in question takes us back to the Indigenous boy's childhood and recalls the importance of his grandfather Apolinário in his life. In this way, the wisdom of the elder encourages the child to return to his origins and awakens in the infant a desire for cultural and identity reassurance when his grandfather

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[5] From the original in Portuguese: "Só não gostava de uma coisa: que me chamassem de índio. Não. Tudo, menos isso! Para meu desespero, nasci com cara de índio, cabelo de índio (apesar de um pouco loiro), tamanho de índio. (...) E por que eu não gostava que me chamassem de índio? Por causa das idéias e imagens que essa palavra trazia. Chamar alguém de índio era classificá-lo como atrasado, selvagem, preguiçoso" (Munduruku 11).

[6] From the original in Portuguese: "'O quê? Você acha que sou besta, é? Acha que vou trocar o gato do Edmundo por um, um, um... índio feito você? Você tem é titica de galinha na cabeça. Se quiser ser meu amigo, não toque mais nesta história, tá legal? O mundo veio abaixo para mim, desmoronou. Fiquei triste, magoado com Linda. O pior, contudo, veio depois. Linda contou pra todo mundo o que tinha acontecido e meus colegas caíram matando em cima de mim, repetindo tudo o que eu não queria ouvir: o índio levou o fora da Linda porque é feio, porque é selvagem, porque é índio. Foi a gota d'água. Por sorte era sexta-feira e minha mãe já tinha prometido que a gente ia para a aldeia de Terra Alta passar uns dias. Que alívio! Foi realmente um alivio, e também o começo de uma grande aventura pessoal e espiritual. Foi lá que comecei a olhar o mundo de outra maneira" (Munduruku 23).

takes him to behold a river and a flight of birds. The end of the book underlines this acceptance and the building of pride in tradition and Indigenous identity.

The next recorded autobiographical work to be presented was written by Eliane Potiguara, of the Potiguara ethnic group, first published in 2010, a production that clearly demonstrates a mix of genres typical of Indigenous literature. The first part of this book recounts Potiguara's experiences as an Indigenous woman. Her family was driven from their homeland due to murders and other pressures, and forced to live in a big city, struggling to fit into white society and abandon their tradition. The rest of the book contains several poems, including an epic poem about Cunhataí and Jurupiranga, an Indigenous couple who were separated during colonization and finally meet in the present day. The work also contains chronicles and reflections that portray the richness of Indigenous literature and strong biographical moments of the author and her family in her adulthood, searching for her identity as a girl, still protected by her grandmother.

An autobiographical work worth mentioning is the collaborative autobiography *The Falling Sky*: Words of a Yanomami Shaman (2013), published in French and English before the Portuguese version (2015) signed by Davi Kopenawa, a medicine man from the Yanomami ethnic group, who tells his story to the French anthropologist Bruce Albert after a friendship of more than 30 years, captured in photographs by the Swiss photographer Claudia Andujar. The work is curious and peculiar because it was published in France in 2010, then in the US by Harvard University in 2013, and only later translated into Portuguese and released in Brazil in 2015. After the Brazilian edition of the book, Kopenawa was threatened with death for his activism on behalf of Indigenous peoples, particularly in the demarcation of Yanomami land, the book is an autobiographical manifesto by Kopenawa to denounce the destruction of his people and the forest.

Continuing our presentation of illustrious Native Brazilian writers, the next three works show another characteristic of Indigenous literature, the mixing of narrative and literary genres in the form of poetry. In 2014, Graça Graúna, from the Potiguara ethnic group, an educator and theorist of Indigenous literature, published *Flor da Mata*, a book that, like Eliane Potiguara's literary production, challenges labels and enriches Indigenous aesthetics: it is a book of Haikus with

autobiographical tones as well as many reflections on the situation of Indigenous people: both villagers and city dwellers. Lyrical and rich, the small book has vivid illustrations and an engaging tone. Actually, in the first stanza of the Haiku, "With washed soul / I walk the paths / My village resists" (Graúna, 2014, 11)[7], we perceive an attitude and a movement of resistance on the part of the Indigenous peoples, whose struggle against forms of oppression stemming from colonization still lingers. The fourth stanza shows the continuity of this act of resistance, because the presence of a bonfire, where the Indigenous people gather to tell stories, represents a ritual that is part of the tradition of the original peoples. As we read in Graúna's text, "Around the bonfire/memory, history/the world is recreated[8]" (Graúna 14).

The characteristic of orality, a storytelling technique that is so common among Indigenous peoples, reveals a growing sense of belongingness in perfect harmony with the heritage of their people's identity, passed down from generation to generation. The verses: "[On a] November afternoon: /the pink ipê announces / Nina's arrival" (Graúna 21)[9], not only re-signify the past with Nina's arrival but also demonstrate ancestral ties. Nina is the author's granddaughter, and we can perceive that her tradition continues, not only from grandmother to granddaughter but also from mother to daughter, as observed in the following stanza: "Almost at dusk in the cerrado, /chants on roses/ [passed down] from mother to daughter" (Graúna 22)[10]. Thus, we see in the Haikus not only the use of other peoples' aesthetics, and reflections on being Indigenous, but also the retrieval of traditions, ancestry, and traces of resistance.

Interacting with popular Brazilian culture, Auritha Tabajara, from the Tabajara ethnic group, was the first Indigenous woman to be recognized as a Cordelista (Cordel poet), which refers to a style of poetry largely produced in northeastern Brazil and generally associated with the region's oral tradition. Published in the form of colored booklets, Cordel samples are arranged on a clothesline made of string and fastened with clothes pegs. In her 2018 autobiographical cordel titled *Coração na Aldeia, Pés no Mundo*, Tabajara describes her story/history as an Indigenous woman, the position of Indigenous

[7] Original: "De alma lavada/percorro os caminhos/A minha aldeia resiste" (Graúna 11).
[8] Original: "Em volta da fogueira/memória, história/O mundo se recria" (Graúna 14).
[9] Original: "Tarde novembreira:/o ipê-rosa anuncia/a chegada de Nina" (Graúna 21).
[10] Original: "No cerrado à tardinha/cantigas de rosa/de mãe pra filha" (Graúna 22).

women within and outside their communities, what it is like to live in an urban center and what it is like to be away from home. She also mentions other topics, such as her sexual orientation as a lesbian Indigenous woman. Although the poem is told in the third person, the work approaches the author, probably so as not to lose sight of the idea that this happens to many Indigenous subjects:

> Auritha had a secret
> That she couldn't tell
> Only her grandmother
> She encouraged herself to speak
> She didn't like boys,
> With which she didn't know how to deal
> (Tabajara 27)[11].

Finally, also in poetry, Julie (Trudruá) Dorrico, from the Macuxi Nation, describes her life as a woman from this ethnic group in her autobiographical collection of poems *Eu Sou Macuxi e Outras histórias* [I am Macuxi and Other Stories]. In addition to her MA and PhD in Indigenous Literature, Dorrico is an activist on social media. In her autobiographical work, she affirms her Macuxi identity and claims to be the daughter of Makunaíma, the creator of the Macuxi ethnic group, countering the superficial portrayal of the Indigenous Brazilian as a trickster by Mário de Andrade, a canonical writer of Brazilian Modernism, in his novel *Macunaíma* ([1928] 2020). As Dorrico (2019) points out,

> I am the daughter of Makunaíma, who raised my grandmother;
> First wax (but she melted!)
> and after clay: resisting the sun and
> coming into existence forever (Dorrico 17)[12].

By assuming the identity of Macunaíma's Daughter, Julie Dorrico's literary production responds critically to Mário de Andrade and distances itself from the figure created by the modernist author, who, through a cultural appropriation, generalizes and stereotypes an Indigenous cosmogony, especially that of the Macuxi. In this sense, it can be said that the Indigenous author draws on her ancestry, on the stories of her predecessors, to reposition, reinscribe, and give a

[11] Original: "Auritha tinha um segredo / Que não podia contar / Somente pra sua avó / Se encorajou a falar / Não gostava de meninos / E não sabia lidar" (Tabajara 27).
[12] Original: "Eu sou filha de Makunaíma, que criou minha avó; / Primeiro de cera (mas ela derreteu!) / e depois de barro: resistindo ao sol e /passando a existir para sempre" (Dorrico 17).

more realistic representation of Makunaíma in her narrative and poems from a Native Brazilian perspective.

The end of the autobiographical poem is extremely rich, as it also represents the author's encounter with her Indigenous identity, reconnecting with the figure of the Creator and the symbols of tradition, such as 'damorida', a traditional fish broth of the Macuxi people, and feeling comfortable in her own body. In fact, this last autobiographical poem is a powerful discourse that affirms identity and Indigeneity:

> Meeting Makunaíma
> When Makunaíma found me
> I was on the barren asphalt of life.
> In a dream, he called me! (...)
> And now I know:
> I'm pepper
> clay pot
> snake
> damorida
> jaguar
> almond eye
> black hair
> yellow color
> I can finally say it with tenderness,
> that I am Macuxi (Dorrico 100-101)[13].

In cases of purchase or access to free sources of literary materials, the works listed here are easy to find in bookstores, thrift stores, or on the Internet; not to mention that other autobiographical works have been published and republished more frequently in larger productions since 2010. What they all have in common is the fact that the authors in question seek their identities in the communities and traditions of their peoples, leading to healing, or at least personal balance, as we can see in Munduruku and Dorrico's literary productions.

Final considerations

To conclude this chapter about Indigenous autobiographical literature, it is possible to identify some similarities and differences between the works of

[13] Original: Encontro com Makunaíma / Quando Makunaíma me encontrou / eu estava no estéril asfalto da vida. / Em sonho, ele me chamou! (...) / E agora eu sei: / eu sou pimenta / panela de barro / cobra / damorida / onça /olho puxado / cabelo preto / cor amarela / Eu finalmente posso dizer com ternura, / que sou Macuxi (Dorrico 100-101).

Indigenous authors from Brazil, Canada, and the United States. The main similarity is the influence of the oral tradition, the storytelling technique, and a diversity of literary genres that have highlighted autobiographical narratives. In addition, there is a common rhetoric that values tradition and culture, challenges labels and the literary canon, and tells stories of life, resistance, and survival, confronting the official history written by whites that has systematically excluded, misinterpreted, or stereotyped Indigenous peoples. Although the works are diverse and their aesthetics are strongly linked to the individual culture of the Indigenous nation to which each writer belongs, they also portray the modern lives of Indigenous peoples and address private and collective problems. Overall, these narratives approach both the suffering resulting from the colonization process and the search for ways to heal and overcome personal and community problems.

This kind of aesthetics has only recently begun to find a place in the publishing world and is often released after great effort on the part of the authors, often through small, specialized presses. The main difference between what has been produced abroad and what is being developed in Brazil is that most of the publication of Brazilian Indigenous literature took place after the 1980s, and has gained greater strength in the 21st century. In contrast, Indigenous autobiography in the United States and Canada began to appear in the 18th century with a significant increase in publications at the beginning of the 20th century, receiving recognition as literature worthy of reading, consideration, and awards in the second half of the last century.

Intending to preserve local cultures, Gerald Vizenor (1998) coins 'Survivance' a process of recovery, survival, and continuity, an ability to adapt to colonizing patterns and promote cultural translation as long as the forms of resistance committed to the cultural preservation of Indigenous traditions, beliefs, philosophies, religiosity, and lifestyles also allow for some degree of dialogue and revision in their interaction with contemporary elements from the outside the villages. In this way, what might be considered the most culturally fragile and debilitating aspect of Indigenous autobiographical writing is actually its greatest strength, as it represents the continuity of Indigenous ways of thinking, acting, and narrating their personal and community histories/stories.

In light of the above, we might dare say that the fabric that weaves Indigenous narratives is itself an act of resistance, as it incorporates centuries of practices, values, wisdom, and experiences of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. By rewriting history, Indigenous writers shed light on current and past aspects of their respective communities, contributing to the recovery of memory, including myths, traditions, customs, life stories, etc., and at the same time introducing innovation, as a growing number of works appearing in Brazil have presented a literary refinement and aesthetic of their own, incorporating genres from other cultures, such as Haikai and Cordel, to put into words different formats of Indigenous culture and ways of life. Unfortunately, there are still few studies on this type of literature, and research on Brazilian Indigenous biography is scarce or practically non-existent. Therefore, this prolific artistic and political phenomenon known as Brazilian Indigenous literary production is a rich field of research for future studies and publications.

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The Pain of Being a Woman: Gangubai's Life in a Male-Dominated World in *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022), a Movie by Netflix[1]

Renata Cristina da Cunha[2]
Caroline Firmo da Costa[3]

Preliminary thought

> No matter what you think, we're women of integrity (*Gangubai Kathiawadi*, 2022)

The epigraph that opens this section is from the 2022 Netflix film *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, entitled "The Voice of Empowerment". The story is about Ganga Jagjivandas Kathiawadi, a woman who went by the name Gangubai Kathiawadi, the Queen of the Mafia after she was deceived by her supposed boyfriend Ramnik and sold to a brothel in Kamathipura, India. As soon as she arrives at the brothel, she begins to feel devalued, inferior, subordinate, and completely hopeless. Throughout the film, we see the multiple forms of violence she suffers until she emerges as a feminine icon, a woman of integrity who does whatever it takes to defend and protect the girls who work for her as well as other coworkers, as the epigraph reveals. The film has a 91% approval rating on the review aggregator site *Rotten Tomatoes* and is considered one of the most successful productions of 2022. Indeed, it is not only a film that criticizes and denounces violence against women but also a literary object that entertains, especially thanks to its female protagonist.

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By the way, the literary aspect of this work of art comes from the fact that the movie is based on "The Matriarch of Kamathipura", a chapter of a multi-author novel called *Mafia Queens of Mumbai* (2018), written by Hussain Zaid, Jane Borges, and Ulka Raut. Therefore, we present this article on film as a visual narrative in line with comparative literature through intermediality, a concept according to which a literary study of a film based on a novel can be conducted in the light of comparative literature. According to Erin Schlumpf (2011), "comparative intermediality can be applied to understand and view [...] films" (Schlumpf, 2011, 3), as literary representations, especially if they are based on literary texts. Complementing this view, Jasbir Jain in *Films*, *Literature and Culture* (2007), by juxtaposing these three elements, affirms that since Antiquity, one art form has interfered with another in such a way that literature can influence films as much as the latter can inspire the former in specific cultural contexts:

> Aristotle in Poetics established the interconnection between different art forms. [...] Modern art movements move freely from painting to sculpture, to films and music, and architecture and literature. Yet, each art form chooses itself different mediums and different ways of producing meaning. Literature depends mainly on words, but makes use of sound, rhythm, form and suck-like methods; film works on their own medium specifics with the camera eye using language, music, perspective, space, composition and the human body in particular cultural realms (Jain 1).

This audiovisual production of *Gangubai Kathiawadi* fulfills its cathartic role by moving and impressing the audience with a plot that holds their attention from beginning to end. This is because, among other things, Gangubai reassures that no matter what position a woman finds herself in, she always has the value and strength to fight against the obstacles she encounters along her journey, denouncing the violence caused and imposed by the male world. Considering the dimension of the problem at hand, that is, to reveal the violence suffered by the protagonist for being a woman in a world dominated by men, we chose Feminist Studies as a theoretical basis.

In this sense, this article seeks to answer the following question: What difficulties and obstacles does Gangubai Kathiawadi experience and face in a male-dominated world in the Netflix film Gangubai Kathiawadi (2022)? In order

to answer this question, the following general objective was outlined: To problematize the hardships Gangubai Kathiawadi experiences and faces in a male-ruled world in the Netflix film Gangubai Kathiawadi (2022) according to feminist studies based on Tyson (2006), Butler (2006), Adichie (2014), among others. Then, to achieve the general objective, bibliographic exploratory research with a qualitative approach was carried out in this study.

In terms of structure and organization, this article is divided into two sections, in addition to initial and final considerations. In the former section of the development, we will briefly discuss literary criticism and feminist studies, fundamental to the analysis of the dialogues from *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022) selected in this article as a prerequisite for understanding the violence suffered by the protagonist before she became an icon in Kamathipura, India, presented in the second section of the text.

The path is made by walking: literary criticism and feminist studies

> When women are the embodiment of power, wealth and intelligence, what makes these men feel so superior?
> *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022)

Indeed, in the epigraph that opens this section, Gangubai asks why men feel superior when women are a symbol of power and strength. The answer to her question is obvious: men feel in control because they have built the world for themselves. In addition to the concern highlighted, we are asked daily about the conditions historically imposed by majorities, i.e. rich, white, CIS-heteronormative men, among others, on minorities, i.e. women, queer people, people of African descent, among others, of the most diverse natures, who are usually victims of prejudicial manifestations such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia, among others.

In this sense, literary criticism is a way of identifying and responding to the problems of the world through different literary works and objects (Tyson, 2006), which in turn provide profound critical readings of modern societies. According to Culler (1997), literary criticism is a necessary tool for questioning and restricting a particular literary content under scrutiny so that historical and

social factors, cultural backgrounds, and other implications related to the theme under analysis are adequately portrayed according to the intended purpose. These constant debates and confrontations on the subject are fundamental because as society changes, literary studies follow suit from a critical perspective. As a broad field of knowledge, Literary Criticism is organized into different literary currents that are essential for us to educate ourselves and future generations about the issues addressed in the content we consume daily so that we can ultimately debate the consequences of humanity's actions and conflicts (Tyson, 2006). According to Bonnici and Zolin (2009), the literary currents are Psychoanalytic Criticism, Marxist Criticism, Queer Criticism, Afro-American Criticism, Post-colonial Criticism, and Feminist Criticism, among others, theoretical paths that can be chosen as the epistemological lens for this study. Each of these currents leads us to question, defend, and recover every thought and ideology that a work or literary object can raise (Bonnici and Zolin, 2009).

Regarding Literature, Eagleton (2006, 11) emphasizes that "we could say, therefore, that literature is a 'non-pragmatic' discourse; unlike biology manuals and messages left for the milkman, [as] it has no immediate practical purpose, referring only to a general state of things". This, however, is not the only definition of what can be comprised in the universe of literature, since any work with fictional nuances or traces of poetry in a society that contributes to cultural production can be considered literature, including songs, series, and films (Candido, 2004).

From this perspective, we can draw on different literary currents to problematize diverse works and objects of literature. Since fiction can be considered a distorted mirror of reality, the daily life experience of a female character in fiction tends to be the same as that of women who are inserted in patriarchal systems in real life, so reading a book and/or watching it on a screen materializes representation through symbols and events (França, 2021).

However, before discussing feminist studies, even briefly, it is important to emphasize that through the feminist movements, women have fought tirelessly to achieve and guarantee their rights and duties. The word 'feminist' defines a person who believes in gender equality, whether political, social or economic, (Adichie, 2014) as a field of resistance against socially imposed ideologies in a male-dominated world.

Regarding feminist agenda, Alves and Pitanguy (1985, 9) outline that they must "rethink and recreate gender identity from a perspective in which the individual [...] does not have to adapt to hierarchical models, where 'feminine' qualities or 'masculine' are attributes of the human being as a whole"[4]. This is how everyone should live: as equal beings in contemporary society.

The demonstrations of the first wave of the feminist movement occurred at the end of the 19th century and early 20th centuries, led by upper-class women, known as suffragettes, who demanded the right to vote and an end to forced marriages, and the right to formal education. A second wave of demonstrations marked the 1960s, demanding gender equity in the workplace so that women and men should receive equal pay. The third wave of feminist demonstrations echoed the fight for civil rights in the United States in the 1990s, focusing on the sexual revolution for the freedom of the female body. The first two decades of the 21st century have been a reference for the fourth wave of feminism, which has since been called Feminisms, in order to encompass all the intersectionalities of women's identities, whether racialized, lesbian, transsexual, poor, among others (Alós and Andreta, 2017).

Despite the centuries-long struggle of thousands of women for equal rights, duties, and opportunities, even today, in the 21st century, they are still subjugated and treated as inferior beings, including intellectually, by a large part of contemporary society that opposes women's desire for freedom and autonomy. These discriminatory practices are a reflection of a patriarchal society that believes, defends, and works tirelessly to ensure that women remain the "weaker sex".

Minayo (2005, 24) explains that male chauvinism causes an increase in cases of violence from the moment the aggressor feels that he owns the woman, because of "the cultural practice of what is considered 'normally masculine' and how his position as a 'social man' feeds his violent attitudes and supports his

[4] Original: "repensar e recriar a identidade de sexo sob uma ótica em que o indivíduo [...] não tenha de adaptar-se aos modelos hierarquizados e onde as qualidades 'femininas' ou 'masculinas' sejam atributos do ser humano em sua globalidade".

dominating role, read as 'corrective acts[5]'". In this line of reasoning, MacDonald (2013) reiterates that violence against women occurs in all four corners of the world, and this type of violence has its roots in discrimination and the view that women are fragile and submissive beings to men.

All in all, feminist studies seek to understand how literature deals with issues of social and psychological coercion suffered by women. According to Tyson (2012, 83), "broadly defined, feminist criticism examines the forms in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines women's economic, political, social, and psychological oppression". This mechanism of control and oppression suffered by women is the scope of the work of several authors, including de Beauvoir (2012, 198), who highlights that "patriarchalism is defined as a form of control and oppression of women by male society and seems to be the most important historical form of social division and oppression[6]".

In the 1970s and 1980s, Feminist Studies had a significant impact on both literary and academic institutions as soon as the works produced by women began to be recognized in both fields, despite suffering from many prejudices, especially for defending the feminist movement (Moreira, 2019). Nevertheless, this recognition allowed a greater union of women from different social classes, who began to use literature to propagate and defend feminist ideals.

During this period, literary studies on women's writings greatly expanded. With the assistance of the Social Sciences, plural studies exploiting different aspects of women's studies revealed that the view of women as readers and authors was completely different from the male view, leading to an appreciation of texts produced by women so that they could serve as a guide for research in Feminist Studies (Moreira, 2019). Since then, there has been a boom of different literary objects, such as poems, films, songs, among others, that began to be composed and analyzed from women's perspective.

In conclusion, Feminist Studies have, therefore, proposed to examine the economic, psychological, social position and oppression that a woman suffers

[5] Original: "No caso das relações conjugais, a prática cultural do "normal masculino" como a posição do "macho social" apresenta suas atitudes e relações violentas como "atos corretivos"
[6] Original: "o patriarcado é definido como uma forma de controle e opressão das mulheres pela sociedade masculina e que parece ser a forma histórica mais importante de divisão social e opressão".

both in literature and in other cultural manifestations (Tyson, 2006), as the different literary works and related objects of investigation reveal and denounce multiple manifestations of violence that women have endured in real life.

Being a woman in a man's world

> As we speak, some girl is being sold off or someone is buying her. The seller and buyer should be punished, but who gets the punishment? That innocent girl
>
> *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022)

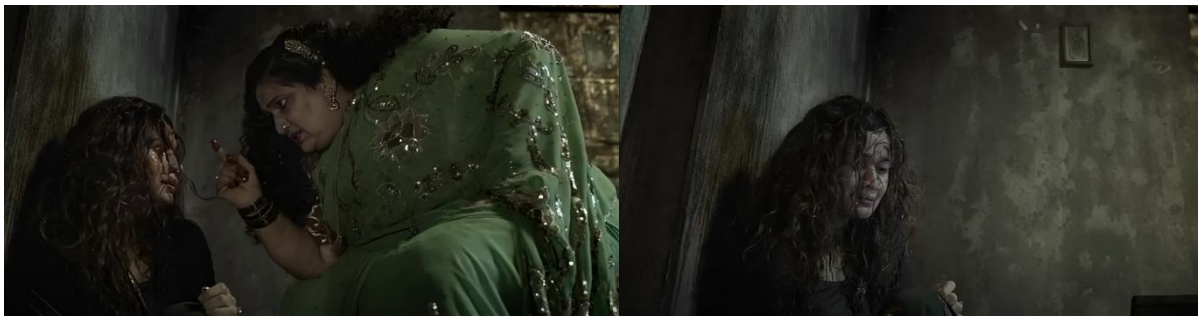
In *Mafia Queens of Mumbai*, the novel that inspired the movie under analysis, we learn that Ganguabi was once a historical figure who appears as a fictionalized personality in the novel in the way that the narrative presents a hybrid genre that oscillates between fiction and biography. In the chapter "The Matriarch of Kamathipura", Ganguabi is presented as a heroine who lives in the memories of Mumbai's residents as the courageous brothel owner who asked the Prime Minister in New Delhi to legalize prostitution, give the children of sex workers the right to education, and not to close down the assignation houses in Kamathipura in exchange for her support in the upcoming elections. In the epigraph mentioned above, Gangubai not only explains to a minister that women are sold and exploited, but also reveals that they are the ones who end up being punished instead of the real culprits, the traffickers and buyers of women. This is one of the abject realities denounced in this two-hour-and-thirty-three-minute Bollywood production, a Netflix-signed film written and directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, which captivates the audience with a strong and impactful plot.

The audiovisual narrative centers on a captivating character who faces obstacles and difficulties simply because she is a woman. Despite experiencing so much violence as a trafficked child with no opportunities and becoming a marginalized prostitute at an early age, she becomes an influential figure in Kamathipura who goes to great lengths to help herself and the other 4,000 women living in the district mostly made up of brothels. If the film portrays, in a relative way, the abuse and violence that Gangubai suffers after being sold to the brothel, it also confirms that the protagonist, having overcome many barriers in

her life, becomes an icon among initially unknown women who grew to be her people, and demonstrates that, regardless of their color, caste or birth, girls and women forced into prostitution are all righteous and must be respected, no matter the social environment in which they are placed. This is the reason why this film was chosen as the literary object of this study since the situations experienced and reported by Gangubai are a cruel portrait of what happens to women from all corners of the world on a daily basis.

After eloping with Ramnik, her alleged boyfriend who promises to make her a film star, Gangubai finds out in the 18th minute of the film that he has sold her to a brothel in Kamathipura, a place run by Aunt Sheela, the pimp who bought several women and set them up in that place. After discovering that she had been ambushed, the poor girl was locked in a closed room without food or water. Only a few days later, the whoremaster opens the prison to offer her some water. As the protagonist refuses, she impulsively throws water in Aunt Sheela's face. Having lost patience with Gangubai, the madam reveals that she has paid 1,000 Indian Rupees for the girl, who should therefore obey her orders, otherwise, she will be exposed to men who will force her to submit to physical and psychological torture in order to subdue her.

Image 1 – Aunty Sheela reveals that Ramnik trafficked Gangubai for prostitution



Source: Netflix, *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022)

> AUNT SHEELA: "Your beloved sold you off for R$. 1,000... This is Sheela's brothel, and she's the boss here!... Understood?... You have two days to decide and comply. Or else, there are people here who will use force and pay for it too." (*Gangubai Kathiawadi*, 2022 00:18:06 – 00:18:30)

This dialogue in this scene is about human trafficking which, according to Jesus (2003, 8),

> means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to
>
> obtain consent for one person to have control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs[7].

If we relate this quote to the film, we can understand that Gangubai was a victim of human trafficking when she was sold to be exploited in the world of prostitution far from home to live in a place ruled by strangers. The pimp then gives Gangubai two days to decide whether or not to cooperate with the brothel of her own free will, pointing out that the girl now has no options left because the moment Ramnik sold her for 1000 Indian rupees, she went from being a human being to becoming a commodity, an object to be bought and sold, with a value determined by the supply and demand of the prostitution market.

To better understand the protagonist's precarious situation, 1000 Indian rupees are equivalent to R$ 58.90 in today's Brazilian currency. In other words, if she had been trafficked today. Gangubai's body would have been sold for less than 60 reais[8].

Aunt Sheela then threatens Gangubai, saying that if she does not agree to join the other women in the brothel peacefully, the men will take her by force and pay the madam as much as she has invested in the girl in exchange for her sexual services. The threat to Gangubai's body is clear, but she refuses to prostitute herself because rape goes far beyond the penetration of a person's body without their consent. This form of assault not only violates a person's integrity but also imposes a state of grief and numbness on the mind and body. Rape is therefore often used as a weapon of power against another person's body (Brownmiller,

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[7] Original: "explica que isso inclui o recrutamento, o transporte, a transferência, o alojamento ou o acolhimento de pessoas, recorrendo à ameaça ou ao uso da força ou a outras formas de coerção, ao rapto, à fraude, ao engano, ao abuso de poder ou de posição, ou à entrega ou aceitação de pagamentos ou benefícios para que uma pessoa tenha controle sobre outra pessoa para fins de exploração. A exploração também inclui a exploração da prostituição ou outras formas de exploração sexual, trabalho ou serviços forçados, escravidão ou práticas semelhantes à escravidão, servidão ou remoção de órgãos".

[8] Indian Rupee/Brazilian Real conversion rates on July 31st, 2024.

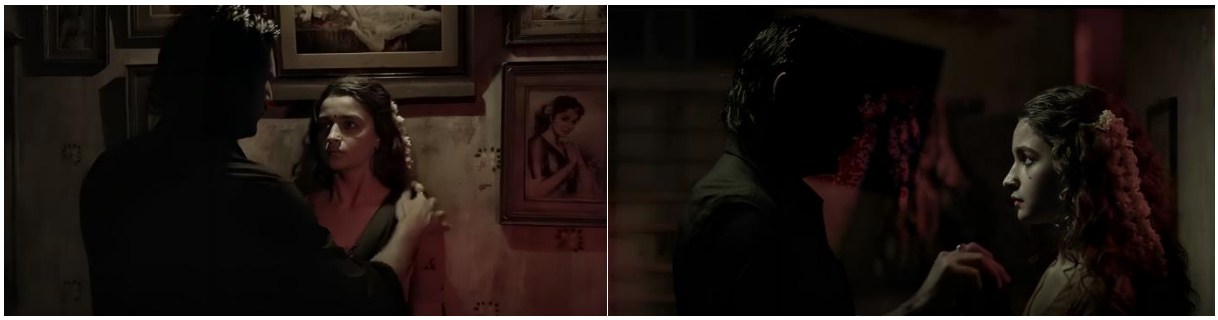
1975). In Gangubai's case, Aunt Sheela knew that if she were raped, she would voluntarily obey her superior's orders.

Aunt Sheela adds that Gangubai could not return to her family because she had already lost her value as a woman by staying in the brothel, even against her will. In this regard, Butler (2006) outlines that in a male-dominated world; women undergo oppression through gender laws that dictate that all women must perform a feminine role of subservience to conform to the dominance of patriarchy. India, where the story is set, is a country where women already undergo various social impositions and sanctions. And Gangubai, despite being a victim of trafficking, would no longer be welcomed into her own home, by her own family, for having eloped with a man, for having lost her virtue as a woman, for having interacted and mingled with other women from the underworld of prostitution. Now, under duress, the girl is compelled to accept a degrading lifestyle against her principles.

In image 01, the protagonist is confined as if she were being tamed. We see her lying on the floor of a dirty room. The dark-colored walls framed in the scene seem to sap her energy, showing how low Gangubai has fallen, being treated as a commodity and banned from returning home in another city. According to Guimarães (2000), it is possible to infer that this scene was created to demonstrate the state in which Gangubai finds herself and to make the viewer feel part of the film set, as the colors used seem to have a language of their own that, at certain moments, helps the spectator grasp what is not said in words.

By the 29th minute, Gangubai has been working in the brothel for a year. At this point in the story, she receives a visit from Shaukat Abbas Khan, a mafia criminal who demands to meet her. Aware of his ultimatum, Aunt Sheela welcomes him and orders the guards to go out and buy something that can only be found far away from Kamathipura, leaving the brothel women unprotected for a long time. Obeying the pimp's orders, Gangubai enters the room as usual. However, when Shaukat Abbas, her attacker, touches her in a strange way, she tries to escape and cries out for help to the security guards who they are not in the house. Completely alone and unprotected, she realizes what is about to happen. So, she tries to escape but is stopped by him, just before his attacks on her begin, as seen in the following image:

Image 02 – Gangubai suffers physical violence in the brothel



Source: Netflix, Gangubai Kathiawadi (2022)

> AUNT SHEELA: "Bloody scoundrel! Open the door! Are you going to kill her?"
> GANGUBAI: "Help! Aunt Sheela!"
>
> KAMLI: "Why is Gangu screaming?"
> (*Gangubai Kathiawadi*, 2022 00:29:00 – 00:31:11)

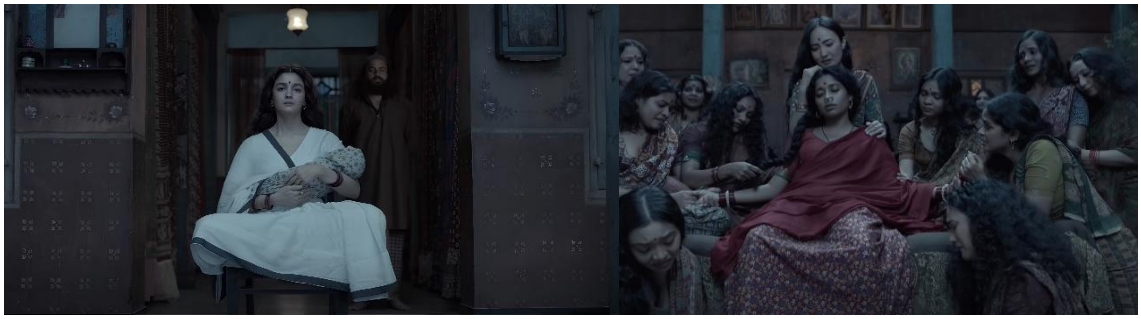
The dialogue in this scene is interrupted when Gangubai, screaming in despair, implores Aunt Sheela and the household servants, who have just returned, to open the door and let her out. According to The World Health Organization (OMS, 2002), violence is an exercise of power in which one person attacks and/or threatens another, resulting in consequences, trauma, and/or death. In the criminal world, violence is often used to mark bodies and demarcate territories, that is, to determine which men are vigorous enough to be part of this underworld, based on the principle of power imposition, similar to the animal kingdom, where the strongest of all will be the one who commands (Minayo, 2007). When Gangubai suffers violence at her workplace, she is physically and psychologically scarred by the criminal who comes to the brothel and emotionally wounded by Aunt Sheela, who puts money before life and shows no sense of sisterhood. Even though the pimp knows what he is going to do to the girl, she allows him to enter and facilitates his aggression against the woman who is being injured and humiliated. Another possible interpretation is that the brothel owner decides to please him because he is a cruel and dangerous man who can harm her and the other women in the establishment. Concerning this scene, I highlight that Shauak's abject pleasure from violent practices seems to be a standard practice in Kamathipura, as he went to the brothel not only to meet Gangubai, but also to harm her in a game of power between the male and female genders. In the criminal world, a cult of violence in male environments is prevalent, as many men

need to feel strong, masculine, virile, and superior to women as a strategy to compensate for their inferiority complex before other men who belittle them (Machado, 2004). In this specific case, we can understand the violence that Gangubai suffers as a patriarchal attempt to domesticate a woman because by raping her, the aggressor controls her body, causing it to be subjugated through oppression and constant aggression so that the afflicted person obeys everything that is requested of it (Foucault, 2011).

Once again, Gangubai is trapped in a room with Shaukat, reliving the scene from Figure 01. This time, however, the film's photography is different, as a red light defines the atmosphere, letting go of the dull ambiance created by the predominance of gray tones in the previous scene. Very common in brothels, a red light is related to sex, and, at this moment, the colored lens seems to symbolize the pleasure Shaukat takes in physically assaulting her. According to Holtzschue (2011), hues aim to attract people's attention when used for specific purposes; and in this particular case, red can stand for a mixture of pleasure and fury, indicating that something cruel or inhumane is about to happen.

In the scene presented at minute 122, image 03, Kamli, a friend Gangubai made in the brothel, is stricken with an illness after giving birth to her daughter. Despite the care of the protagonist and the hired doctors, Kamli dies, and while the other women who live in the place prepare the character's body to be placed in the Ganges River, Gangubai reminds them of one detail: to bind Kamli's legs well before her departure into the water, so that her body, though dead, will not be violated by any man.

Image 03 – Gangubai asks Kamli's legs to be tied well



Source: Netflix, Gangubai Kathiawadi (2022)

GANGUBAI: "Come on, it's time to take her away. And... Tie her legs tightly. Men cannot be trusted... Not even with a dead body." (*Gangubai Kathiawadi*, 2022 02:01:46 – 02:02:36)

In the scene presented at minute 122, Image 03, Kamli, a friend Gangubai made in the brothel, is stricken with an illness after giving birth to her daughter. Despite the care of the protagonist and the hired doctors, Kamli dies, and while the other women who live in the place prepare the character's body to be placed in the Ganges River, Gangubai reminds them of one detail: to bind Kamli's legs well before her departure into the water, so that her body, though dead, will not be violated by any man.

Since ancient times, men have seen their genitals as a weapon to be used against women, thus characterizing one of women's greatest fears: being raped (Brownmiller, 1975). In this scene, in which Gangubai holds Kamli's daughter in her arms while her body is being prepared for immersion in the waters of the Ganges, we can also feel the fear that the protagonist feels among her friends. She knows that a woman's body can be violated, no matter what condition it is in. In this specific case of rape, necrophilia materializes through a man's desire to have sexual relations with a woman's dead body. Patriarchy always keeps women on a state of alert concerning the integrity of their bodies, since they are always armed, i.e. in possession of their penises, and ready to attack whenever they are willing (Brownmiller, 1975). What is made clear is that there is no place where a woman is safe as long as the world is made by men and dominated by them.

In addition to the theme addressed in the aforementioned dialogue, we highlight the unity of the women exposed in the film scene. On this occasion, all the women in the brothel gather to prepare Kamli's body, braiding her hair and cleaning her body: feminine practices that recur throughout the film and are necessary to maintain the image of beauty and desirability in their work. The scene of Kamli's communion shows that even in death the character is not alone, as her friends/sisters are united with her, confirming the feminine practices of Sorority, which, according to Fernandes (2021), is a word considered new for the modern world, understood as the political and loyal union between women, therefore without hierarchy.

Provisional thoughts

> Mr. Fezi, write in tomorrow's newspaper... Gangubai made a speech at

> Azad Maidan not with her eyes downcast, but with her head held high!"
>
> *Gangubai Kathiawadi* **(**2022)

After her speech on the Azad Maidan Esplanade, we may say that Gangubai's discourse represents the people of the Kamathipura underworld. At this point in the story, she makes sure that she speaks looking everyone in the eye and with her head held high, showing that despite the obstacles imposed by the sexist society in which she lives, she has managed to denounce them and represent her equals.

This part of the discussion brings us back to the general aim of this article: to problematize the difficulties and obstacles experienced by Gangubai Kathiawadi in a world created and dominated by men in the Netflix film *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022), according to feminist studies. In this, we emphasize that the physical and psychological violence experienced by Gangubai is recurrent in today's world, so one of the purposes of analyzing the three selected scenes is to find ways to condemn such practices and to show the reader how women need to be strong to succeed in life, as patriarchy imposes several obstacles on them that prevent them from being who they are.

Finally, we hope that this article will contribute to future research in the field of feminist studies and that Gangubai's role as a woman who once defied forms of oppression against Indian women will inspire those who feel unmotivated, whether in their academic or personal lives, to understand that no matter what difficulties they go through, their efforts will not have been in vain.

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Black Women in Brazil and in the U.S.A.

Motherhood in Conceição Evaristo's Short Stories from *Olhos D'Água*

Michela Rosa Di Candia[1]

Social difference has constantly been racialized by dynamics shaped by structural oppression. In Maria Conceição Evaristo's literary work, the writer demonstrates how women have developed strategies to confront and denounce the harsh reality of racism, gender, and class oppression. Coining the term "escrevivência", which means lived experience in writing, Evaristo captures the conflicts of black people, especially women, whom the male figure or institutions have silenced. In an interview with Brazilian scholars Claudia Maria Fernandes Corrêa and Irineia Lina Cesario, Evaristo recalls that "her 'escrevivência' is born and crafted by what Black women are". After all, the narratives of Black women "cannot be read as stories that lullaby those from the Master's house; on the contrary, these are stories made to bother them in their unjust sleep" (Corrêa & Cesário, 2012, 168). In this sense, Evaristo translates the experiences of the oppressed and marginalized by focusing on how poverty has shaped their lives. Her act of writing can be seen as a political and social practice based on a humanizing perspective, following the words of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2007), and the words of Afro-Brazilian writer Miriam Alves, who argues for the importance of showing the face, history, and skin of black women to remove the mask of invisibility that has been imposed on them (Alves, 2005, 13). In light of these views, the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian women's voices in prose literature is both a "political act" and an "act of resistance" through the writer's practice of "escrevivência". In *Olhos D'Agua* [*Watery Eyes*], a collection of short stories first published in 2014, Evaristo writes about the experience of being a black woman in Brazilian society. Through fifteen

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short stories, she discusses the multiple identities assigned to women and provides images of the social and sexual dilemmas faced by women in urban spaces, especially the marginalized 'favelas', equivalent to slums or shantytowns.

The colonial past of slavery marked as "exotic" the bodies of black women who were sexually abused and subjected to the power of white men. Sexualized and reduced to the status quo of reproductive bodies, these women were expected to produce as many children as possible. By giving birth to enslaved children as property, women assign agency to keep the cruel system of injustice alive. Slaveholders always benefited from the regulation of women's reproductive lives and from a slave market where their bodies were purchased, sold, or rented. Historians writing on this issue state that in slave societies "motherhood was a particular site of conflict because of the compounded exploitation of women's labour with oppression through the most intimate aspects of their lives." (Cowling *et al.*, 2017, 224). Mothering other (white) children, nevertheless, became a common practice. When separated from their original families and children, women could not always take care of their descendants.

Even after the end of slavery in Brazil (1888), blacks were relegated to the margins of society. Struggling to survive, they did not have the same opportunities and were not able to occupy the center of power. Real opportunities for social mobility and economic prosperity through education and health care were not provided equally. Social inclusion was not for them. What was seen as different from the dominant center was positioned in a lower and inferior status. Also, the idea that the country had developed a multicultural approach, the so-called racial democracy, proved to be a false belief in the early decades of the twentieth century. The relationship among blacks, whites, and Indigenous people was not peaceful and harmonious. Although racism was not institutionalized as in the South of the United States with the Jim Crow Laws, Brazil was not immune to racial discrimination. Prejudice as well as gender inequalities were hidden behind the illusionary colorblind narrative.

At the end of the period of military rule from 1964 to 1985, there was a national struggle for democracy and women were also responsible for drawing up the Federal Constitution of 1988. Although the Brazilian government tried to create policies to promote human rights and help achieve a dignified life as well as physical, psychological, sexual, and economic security, violence continued to

be a part of black women's daily lives. As a result, poverty, when associated with this specific group, has not only been racialized but also feminized. After all, poverty, womanhood, and blackness, together forming a triple oppression, have unfortunately acted as a stigma for these bodies, which, once subjugated over time, have come to be thematized by Afro-Brazilian authors such as Conceição Evaristo.

Owing to this, race, gender, and class are inseparable elements in the construction of these women's identities and social experiences. In the asymmetrical Brazilian scenario, the specificities and differences among categories of women must be considered. It is not possible to consider the group of women in a unified, monolithic way. As Judith Butler mentions in *Gender Trouble* "the insistence upon coherence and unity of the category of women" (Butler, 1990, 14) refuses to see political intersections, cultural and social aspects. Thus, I believe that the framework of intersectionality is crucial in dealing with the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that women face.

My aim in this paper is to show how 'escrevivência' digs into the lenses of prejudice and racism, illustrating how everyday practices of racialized violence regulate the bodies of black women characters. Particularly interested in the short stories "How Many Children Did Natalina Have?', "Maria", and "Ana Davenga", I argue for an intersectional approach to discussing how gender, class, and race shape Afro-Brazilian motherhood. Through a close reading of some excerpts from the selected stories, I highlight the importance of understanding how the interlocking systems of oppression constitute the struggle of (non)mothers to survive in a marginalized urban space such as the 'favela'.

Motherhood as a Choice

The first story to be considered, "How Many Children Did Natalina Have?" shows the dilemma of women who do or do not pursue motherhood. Natalina, a black woman who works as a housekeeper for a rich woman, has been pregnant four times. However, motherhood and starting a family have not been not Natalina's project of happiness. In fact, she is too young to think about the possibility of conceiving and raising a child. Nevertheless, Natalina's employer, a barren married woman, struggles for the chance to get pregnant, save her

marriage, and fulfill her dream of having a child. In this context, becoming a mother is a way of asserting womanhood.

The point is that Natalina is pregnant at fourteen years old, for in the Brazilian social context, many teenage girls experience pregnancy. In the story, the character under analysis does not want to tell Bilico, her first boyfriend, about the child because she does not want to put an end to a pleasurable game they both play almost every night when discovering and touching each other's bodies. In her mind, her first pregnancy would destroy her great sexual power. So, she denies her first pregnancy from an early age. As you can read in the text, "She couldn't stand the sight of her body getting bloated, distended, heavy and swollen, and that stuff moving inside her. Her heart was full of hatred. (...) No, she didn't want it. She had to get rid of that thing" (Evaristo, 2016, 43-44)[2]. Natalina's hateful feelings about her changing body reinforce the idea that pregnancy can be a locus of oppression. Becoming a mother at her age represents the loss of independence and an autonomous self. Therefore, she assumes that her body cannot be reduced to an object of procreation. Unfortunately, Natalina's unwanted pregnancy may represent the social reality of women from poor families who are unable to financially and emotionally support a child. As the protagonist ponders, "How would they raise another child? (...) At home, there were so many people. (...) And now her daughter's baby?"[3] (Evaristo 44). She could have chosen the maternal experience, but instead, she decided to drink abortion teas to interrupt her pregnancy, and she refused the help of Sá Praxedes, the neighborhood midwife, who would have solved her 'problem'.

It should be stressed that in Brazil, under the influence of Catholicism, abortion has been considered a hidden policy. It has to do with the fact that, since the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, this practice has been a crime. By not changing the law, the government has shirked its responsibility to provide safe health care for women. Thus, this outrageous issue remains invisible in the eyes

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[2] Original: "Não aguentava se ver estufando, estufando, pesada, inchada e aquele troço, aquela coisa mexendo dentro dela. Ficava com o coração cheio de ódio. (...) Não, ela não queria, precisava se ver livre daquilo".
I chose to translate the literary excerpts of the three short stories in this study. Translating Evaristo's short stories is not an easy task due to the ambiguities of the Portuguese language as well as the verbal and poetic tone of the writer's words. My lenses when looking at the original texts may (not) convey the beauty of Evaristo's words. This article was written as part of my research at the Five College Women's Studies Research Center in Massachusetts in 2024.

[3] Original ""Como haveria de criar mais uma criança? (...) Na casa já havia tanta gente! (...) E agora teria o filho da filha?"

of legislators, especially now that a wave of conservatism has washed over the country. As a result, women who undergo induced abortions and doctors who perform them illegally are imprisoned.

Although Natalina struggles with her thriving fertility, she resists having a clandestine abortion. Hence her decision to drink abortion tea. From the very beginning, the story foreshadows that the protagonist is doomed to reproduce. After all, her name means *natalis* in Latin, suggesting that she will give birth. But carrying a child does not mean accepting motherhood, because becoming a mother is a woman's individual choice and agency. The understanding of motherhood as an important signifier of womanhood is contested by the protagonist's words and actions. When the baby boy was born, a nurse wanted the boy. Consequently, "the young mother left the hospital with empty hands" (Evaristo 45)[4] as if she had received "a doll that she didn't want and gave the toy to someone who desired it"[5] (46). Natalina challenges the boundaries of patriarchal restrictions by speaking for herself and making decisions about her own body and her child's life. In enabling motherhood for the other, Natalina clearly shows that maternal desire is not something innate or natural, though this idea has been socially constructed and cultivated. Given that this theme sounds controversial, the reader may even question her decision, judge her, and see her as a bad mother, but I argue that if the female character has never considered herself a mother, how can she be a bad mother?

Just as the protagonist has consistently refused to play the role of mother, her story is evidence that not all women want to be mothers. When the second baby was born, Natalina and her partner Tonho had a verbal agreement. "She liked him, but she didn't want to live with him. Tonho cried and returned to his homeland without understanding Natalina's rejection…A house, a husband, and a son…he came back with the unwanted baby"[6] (Evaristo 46). Here, the reader is aware that Natalina does not want to engage in the journey of motherhood. After all, why does she need to become a mother? What is the purpose of motherhood?

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[4] Original: "A menina-mãe saiu leve e vazia do hospital!"
[5] Original: "uma boneca que não desejasse e cedesse o brinquedo para alguém que quisesse".
[6] Original: "Ela gostava dele, mas não queria ficar morando com ele. Tonho chorou muito e voltou para a terra dele, sem n unca entender a recusa de Natalina … Uma casa, um homem, um filho … Voltou levando consigo o filho que Natalina não quis".

Contrary to convention, the character under scrutiny will not retain the primary responsibility for the child. She will not be responsible for the body of a child who needs protection, nourishment, care, and love. Her choice is to be free from the social construction of gender, according to which a woman is responsible for the care of her offspring. The protagonist does choose herself over her devotion to a child or a family. Thus, Tonho, her second male partner, is officially assigned the primary parental duties for their child. Again, power is in the hands of the woman. This closure of Natalina and Tonho's relationship opens up possibilities for thinking about the reversal of gender roles, formulating new routes for their existences.

In discussing the profile of a good mother according to predominant social norms, feminist Andrea O'Reilly (2004) criticizes the patriarchal ideology of motherhood, which establishes that only the biological mother can properly care for her children. From this perspective, she must be available to them twenty-four hours a day. The offspring's needs, which are met under the guidance of experts, always take precedence over those of the mother, so that the progeny's demands and longings can be "fully satisfied, fulfilled, and completed in motherhood" (O'Reilly 11). Finally, the mother must devote time, and spend energy and money on rearing children: a form of self-sacrifice that Natalina absolutely rejects. As a teenager, she gives birth but does not identify with motherhood. She will rely on the kindness of a nurse who, despite being a stranger, will mother her child in a way she never would. The reasons for abandoning her second child are not so well explained in the narrative. However, the reader is informed that she does not want to tie her life to a child and a family.

Her third pregnancy was the result of an arrangement between Natalina and her employee, a rich woman who cannot conceive a child but is obsessed with motherhood. Not being a mother seems to be a major problem for the unnamed female character. Her lack of a name in this narrative may be a sign of her invisibility. Without a proper identity or a child, she may be reduced to nothingness in the pattern of a happy, rich family. Adrienne Rich's words in the context of this short story seem to be true when the feminist critic realizes that "a woman as a childbearer [is] the test of her womanhood … motherhood [is] the enforced identity for woman (Rich, 1976, 26). In her classic book *Of a Woman Born*, she introduces the distinction between motherhood, as an institution and

practice. The former inhabits the private and apolitical perspective defined by the male figure and is linked to a reproductive goal, therefore constituting a deeply oppressive institution to women. However, the act of mothering empowers women through their experiences, voices, and emotions. The political setup is mainly centered on women's daily practice.

In this short story, the unnamed female character clearly fights for the fabrication of an institutionalized family. Suffering in her childless marriage, she counted on Natalina, who "was the only one who could help her"[7] (Evaristo 47). The nameless character is ashamed of being childless because her condition can lead to the end of her marriage. In her article "A Lesser Woman?: Representations of the Childless Woman", Enza Gandolfo states that a childless woman is the other of the other, doubly lacking as a woman and as a non-mother (not fully a woman). By being unable to have children, they are believed to be "damaged", and "abnormal", therefore constituting what is denominated "the other of the other" (Gandolfo, 2005, 113).

Afflicted by the maxims on married women to become mothers, Natalina's body, as an object of procreation, will solve her problem. The infertile character will no longer struggle with the social pressure to become a mother. If her body is unable to conceive a child, Natalina's body will bear the desired child, because "a husband's child with Natalina could be deemed hers" (Evaristo, 2016, 47)[8]. In other words, the protagonist is compelled to beget a baby and give it away. As the narrator describes, Natalina "donated her fertility so that the other could be the inventor of a creation, and became the custodian of someone else's child"[9] (Evaristo, 2016, 48), clearly playing the role of a gestational surrogate or carrier. Although she is a progenitor, she has no affection for what she carries in her womb. Nevertheless, her new function, in an agreement between employer and employee, makes room for a new way of life for Natalina, since her health and well-being are under her employer's control. Under these circumstances, it is important for her to maintain a healthy body during her pregnancy. For this reason, she is easily released from the usual household chores around the couple's home. So much so that they even hire another person to do Natalina's work.

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[7] Original: "Só Natalina poderia ajudá-la".
[8] Original: "Um filho do marido com Natalina poderia passar como sendo seu".
[9] Original: "doou sua fertilidade para que a outra pudesse ser inventora de uma criação, e se tornou depositária de um filho alheio".

However, if Natalina decided to continue her pregnancy on her own, she would not have access to the same health resources that she has with the financial support of her employer. The differences and inequalities between these two female characters must be considered. Being a poor black woman shapes her health experiences and outcomes in very different ways. And by observing this situation, we can clearly see that the structural condition of racism and social class defines and reserves a lower place for the poor bodies of Afro-Brazilian women.

Last but not least, her last pregnancy was the result of rape. Even though this form of physical violence is described at a terrible moment of pain, Natalina wants to go on with her life. As the narrator explains:

> The man got out of the car, pulled her violently, and threw her on the floor; then, he untied her hands and asked her to cuddle him. Natalina, with mixed feelings of hatred and terror, obeyed his orders. At a certain point, when the man was almost at his climax[10], he removed the blindfold from her eyes. She trembled, with her body and her head bursting in pain. (...) He enjoyed it like an infuriated horse on her. After, he fell asleep. When she tried to shift her body to move away from him, she bumped into something on the floor. She thought it was his gun. The movement was quick. The shot was straight and so close to her that Natalina thought she was killing herself too. She ran away and kept everything to herself. (...) She kept more than the satisfaction of retaking her own life. She kept that man's invasive seed inside her. A few months later, Natalina found herself pregnant. She was happy. Her child would come out into the world at any moment. She was anxious to look at that child and not see anybody's resemblance, even her own. (...) Very soon, she would give birth to a child. A child conceived in between the fragile borders of life and death (Evaristo 50)[11].

[10] The expression "almost at the climax" refers to "na hora, quase na hora do gozo" in the original text.

[11] Original: "O homem desceu do carro puxou-a violentamente e jogou-a no chão; depois desamarrou suas mãos e ordenou que lhe fizesse carinho. Natalina, entre ódio e o pavor, obedecia a tudo. Na hora, quase na hora do gozo, o homem arrancou a venda dos olhos dela. Ela tremia, seu corpo, sua cabeça estavam como se fossem arrebentar de dor. (...) Ele gozou feito cavalo enfurecido em cima dela. Depois tombou sonolento ao lado. Foi quando, ao consertar o corpo para se afastar dele, ela esbarrou em algo no chão. Pressentiu que era a arma dele. O movimento foi rápido. O tiro foi certeiro e tão próximo que Natalina pensou estar se matando também. Fugiu. Guardou tudo só para ela. [...] Guardou mais do que a satisfação de ter conseguido retomar a vida. Guardou a semente invasora daquele homem. Poucos meses depois, Natalina se descobria grávida. Estava feliz. O filho estava para arrebentar no mundo a qualquer hora. Estava ansiosa para olhar aquele filho e não ver a marca de ninguém, talvez nem a dela. (...) Brevemente iria parir um filho. Um filho que fora concebido nos frágeis limites da vida e da morte."

In this excerpt, the sexual abuse is emphatically described. Natalina's movements are controlled by a male figure who has power over her body, a tool for his male dominance and sexual pleasure. The aggressor is not described as a man but as a horse. He has been dehumanized by the brutality of his actions. She does not cry out in pain. However, when he falls asleep, she reacts by killing the abuser. In this excerpt, the sexual abuse is emphatically described. In a sudden movement of enlightenment, she exercises her fulfillment by destroying the roots of violence. His death marks the beginning of a new cycle, and her choice to keep the baby alive functions as a subversive act of agency. In choosing motherhood as a result of the sexual experience, Natalina becomes the subject of her own life. She could have rejected this child, but she decides that she can build resistance through motherhood. In becoming a mother, she leaves behind the object position of a victim of sexual abuse by exercising power as her own subject. Natalina becomes a mother not only by giving birth but also by embracing motherhood. Interestingly, this short story does not explore Natalina's practice of motherhood, as she avoids raising her children.

Motherhood as Interrupted Cycles

"Maria", the name of the protagonist, also gives title to a short story with a third-person narrator who mingles his perception of Maria's life with her thoughts in such a way that the free indirect speech intertwines the narrator's words with Maria's spontaneous voice. Through this omniscient narrator, the reader is aware of what both the speaker and the character are thinking.. In between the lines, Maria expresses her fears and feelings about fighting for her children. She is a strong, tenacious woman who works as a domestic servant for a rich family in order to provide for her children. The social context to which she belongs is clearly introduced at the very beginning of the story, as the following excerpt shows:

> Maria had been standing at the bus stop for over half an hour. She was tired of waiting. She could have walked if the distance was shorter. She had to get used to walking. The bus fare was getting higher and higher! Besides being tired, her bag was heavy. The day before, on Sunday, there had been a party at her boss's house. She took home the leftovers. The pork shank bone and the

> fruit had decorated the table. She got some fruit and a tip. Her boss would throw the shank bone away. She was happy even though she was tired. The tip was welcome. Her little children had caught a cold. She needed to buy cough medicine and something for their nasal congestion. She could afford a can of Toddy. The fruit was really good and there was melon. Her children had never tried melon. Would the boys like melon?[12] (Evaristo 39-40).

Looking closely at the paragraph above, Maria's poor social condition is blatantly described. Her daily battle is justified by her responsibility to her children. As a single mother who is the breadwinner of the family, she has to provide them with food and medicine. So, in order to save money, she thinks about the possibility of walking home, since her salary may not be enough to meet all their needs. Although exhausted, the narrator says that Maria is happy. But how can she be content when she feeds herself and her children on leftovers? How can she be glad in this scenario of poverty? In her harsh reality, she gives up her free time with her children. When she works on Sundays, she does not get paid for a long day's work in the kitchen, but only a tip, fruit, and a pork bone. The words of Patricia Hill Collins (1994) seem to illustrate Maria's condition in the story. For the feminist Collins, "even though women worked long hours to ensure their children's physical survival, the same work ironically denied mothers access to their children" (51).

This is what happens to Maria as the narrator portrays the protagonist's journey from work to home rather than the shared moments of intimacy between mother and children. The complexities and difficulties of black motherhood leave no room for the exploration of joy in this scenario of poverty. In her article "Shifting the Center, Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing About Motherhood", Collins also mentions that women of color's struggle for maternity is based on three dimensions. The first is about a mother's struggle to control her children's "bodies in order to preserve choice over whether to become a mother at all"

[12] Original: "Maria estava parada há mais de meia hora no ponto de ônibus. Estava cansada de esperar. Se a distância fosse menor teria ido a pé. Era preciso mesmo ir se acostumando com a caminhada. O preço da passagem estava aumentando tanto! Além do cansaço, a sacola estava pesada. No dia anterior, no domingo, havia tido festa na casa da patroa. Ela levava para casa os restos. O osso do pernil e as frutas que tinham enfeitado a mesa. Ganhara as frutas e uma gorjeta. O osso, a patroa ia jogar fora. Estava feliz, apesar do cansaço. A gorjeta chegara numa hora boa. Os dois filhos menores estavam muito gripados. Precisava comprar xarope e aquele remédio de desentupir nariz. Daria para comprar também uma lata de Toddy. As frutas estavam ótimas e havia melão. As crianças nunca tinham comido melão. Será que os meninos iriam gostar de melão? "

(Collins, 1994, 53-54). The second refers to a mother's sacrifice to keep the children she wants. The third alludes to a mother's power to set the tone of her upbringing by avoiding assimilation into the mainstream standard. Although Collins has focused on the American context, her words also help us understand how Afro-Brazilian motherhood is shaped. In both the United States and Brazil, these women cannot be seen as "powerless in the face of racial and class oppression" (Collins, 1994, 55). Nonetheless, what is interesting about Maria is that she does not realize how powerful she is as she strives to sustain her offspring, considering that she has chosen the right to raise her children even though she faces the harsh reality of poverty.

The differences between social classes are reinforced in the story when Maria accidentally cuts off the palm of one of her hands while handling the pork bone, and the narrator states that "a laser knife cuts even life!"[13] (Evaristo, 2016, 40). Did anyone in the house help her after this domestic accident? Did the people in the residence realize that she needed to see a doctor to stitch up her wound? No, they didn't. Maria's health condition does not matter. The knife Maria used is not an ordinary one. Her rich boss can afford the latest household appliances to make life easier, but they ironically make the protagonist's kitchen work harder. From a symbolic perspective, the powerful blade in question opens our eyes to the inequalities between the worlds of the rich and the poor and establishes a large gap between the visible and invisible people within Brazilian society. Besides, a future scar on Maria's palm will remind her of a cut on her skin. Regardless, Maria does not seem to be worried about herself, but about her children. Would they like melon? This question lingers in her mind.

When she finally gets on the bus, she is surprised to meet the father of her first son, who is now eleven years old. When he sees Maria, he immediately pays for her bus fare and sits next to her. Maria travels back in time and remembers the good times they once spent together. The feeling of nostalgia pervades her mind as she says to herself, "How much I missed him! How difficult it was to go on with life without him. (...) She recalled the past. The man lying down with her. The two of them living in a shack. Her first nausea. (...) His happiness. Good! A boy was born! (...) Why didn't things turn out differently? Why couldn't they be

[13] Original: "faca a laser corta até a vida"

happy?[14]" (Evaristo 40). Without saying a word, Maria just listens to what he whispers to her: “And the boy, Maria? How is he? Do you know that I miss you? There is a hole in my heart! I am alone. There is no one, I didn’t want anyone else. Do you have other children? (...) Maria, I’ve never forgotten you! Everything here is a void in my heart”[15] (Evaristo 40). Maria does not reply and the narrator intervenes by presenting what comes to her mind. She looks down as a sign of regret for not staying alone and having more two children. “It was so difficult to stay alone! And as a result of some crazy last one-night stands, two younger kids were born”[16] (Evaristo 40).

This unexpected encounter evokes a sense of nostalgia in both characters. Despite living apart, the two feel affection for each other and miss the past when they were together. The idea that Maria should be alone still resonates throughout the narrative. When she becomes a mother, should Maria devote her life entirely to her first child? The idea of giving up her sexual life is reinforced by the question: Do you have other children? Why couldn’t she have a sexual life and more children after her relationship with her first son’s father ended? In addition, Maria mentally confesses that her subsequent children were not planned and resulted from casual dates. The protagonist does deserve to have a sexual life even though she does not have a partner. The fact that she has had unplanned children shows another facet of the reality of many Brazilians who do not rely on contraceptive methods or are not educated on how to use them properly.

Maria could not listen to him carefully, but she tries to guess his words to their son, “a hug, a kiss, a caress on his child"[17] (Evaristo, 2016, 41). After that, he quickly gets up, points his gun at the passengers, and announces a robbery. Everyone is frightened while the other thief collects the personal belongings of the commuters, except Maria’s. It is the first time she has witnessed a robbery on a bus. She thinks, “My God, what could her children’s lives be like? What if the

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[14] Original: “Quanto tempo, que saudades! Como era difícil continuar a vida sem ele. (...) Ela se lembrou do passado. Do homem deitado com ela. Da vida dos dois no barraco. Dos primeiros enjoos (...) e da alegria dele. Que bom! Nasceu! Era um menino! E haveria de se tornar um homem.. Maria, viu sem olhar que era o pai de seu filho. (...) Por que não podia ser de outra forma? Por que não podiam ser felizes?”

[15] Original: “E o menino, Maria? Como vai o menino? Sabe que sinto falta de vocês? Tenho um buraco no peito, tamanha a saudade! Tou sozinho! Não arrumei ninguém. Você já teve outros ... outros filhos? (...) Maria, eu não te esqueci! Tá tudo aqui no buraco do peito”.

[16] Original: “Era tão difícil ficar sozinha! E dessas deitadas repentinas, loucas, surgiram os dois filhos menores”.

[17] Original: “um abraço, um beijo, um carinho no filho”.

thieves had not been those guys? I would have given them a bag full of fruit with a pork shank bone and my one-thousand-cruzeiro tip"[18]. (Evaristo, 2016, 41). She did not have a wristwatch or a ring. Nothing valuable. When they get off the bus, a loud voice says: "Slutty nigger, you can be one of them"[19] (Evaristo, 2016, 41). Somebody else shouts. "Hold on! If she were with them, she would have gotten off the bus. Another voice suggests that she was with the thieves as they did not take anything from her: "That motherfucker, that slutty nigger was with the thieves". (Evaristo 41).

Maria is afraid. She does not know any thief, but the father of her son. The fearful atmosphere increases and a man slaps her face. Another man shouts "Lynch' er! Lynch' er! Lynch' er!". The bus driver pulls over and tries to help her by saying "Calm down! This is insane! (…) She takes my bus almost every day. She is coming from work to raise her children. If she had been one of them, she would have gotten off the bus[20]" (Evaristo 42). Nobody listens to him. Nothing could stop the passengers from creating an uproar. Their voices get louder and louder: "Lynch' er! Lynch' er! Lynch' er!" In the midst of the chaos, with blood trickling from her mouth and nose, Maria thinks of her children. Would they like melon? She has to get home to tell her firstborn the words of his father.

However, the group of insurgents on the bus decide to take justice into their own hands and now Maria's life and her children's future are threatened by metaphorical 'laser knives' that can tear her to pieces. Paralyzed in the face of such verbal and physical aggression, Maria is cruelly beaten to death. When the police arrive at the end of the story, her body has been "torn apart and trampled". In this case, motherhood is violently interrupted out of sheer prejudice. But the question that won't go away is: Would the passengers stop lynching her if she were a white woman? Here, structural violence marginalizes and terminates a black body because, according to tradition and folk belief, Maria is undoubtedly a member of the gang of thieves for she and the thieves are of the same color. In the end, the injustice of her death is deeply rooted in racism.

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[18] Original: "Meu Deus, como seria a vida dos seus filhos? (…) Se fossem outros os assaltantes? Ela teria para dar uma sacola de fruta, um osso de pernil e uma gorjeta de mil cruzeiro"
[19] Original: "Negra safada, vai ver que estava de conluio com os dois".
[20] Original: "Calma, pessoal! Que loucura é esta? (…) Todos os dias, mais ou menos neste horário, ela toma o ônibus comigo. Ela está vindo do trabalho, da luta para sustentar os filhos. Se ela estivesse com eles, teria descido do ônibus".

The effects of racial and gender oppression are also seen in "Ana Davenga", the third short story in this study. The reader is introduced to Ana, a black woman who lives in a favela with her partner, Davenga, a powerful criminal. He and his coworkers regularly meet in his shack to plan their actions against people and plot bank robberies. The short narrative focuses on how quickly the couple's relationship developed. He remembers the day they first met when he was fascinated by how Ana danced, shook her body at a 'roda de samba' [a samba gathering], how he could not keep his eyes off of her and thought back then: "It would be great if that woman wanted to stay with him, live with him, be in his life"[21] (Evaristo 26). Thus, his desire is accomplished when the reader suddenly sees Ana living with him at his place and becomes Ana Davenga, "a girl completely dumb about his business"[22] (Evaristo 22). A submissive partner, she soon learns what he does for a living, chooses to remain silent, and uses his last name, which reinforces the idea that she has become his property and is now a part of his life. As the narrator says: "She wanted the sign of her man on her body and her name"[23] (Evaristo 27).

It would not be long before she was totally aware of his illegal lifestyle, and that she was not safe there. Yet, she believed that "any life is risky and a major risk would be not trying to live"[24] (Evaristo 26). But as time passes, she is gripped by uncertainty and haunted by the possibility of facing bad news: "When the men were chasing him"[25] (Evaristo 24), she missed him. Therefore, the knock on her door at the beginning of the story builds an atmosphere of tension:

> The knocks on the door announced the samba rhythm. Ana Davenga's troubled heart became calm at almost midnight. She jumped out of bed and opened the door. The men surrounded Ana. Women who had heard the sounds came to her shack. Suddenly, the world fit into that tiny space. (...) Another knock, hurried knocks, would mean something bad[26] (Evaristo 21).

[21] Original: "Seria tão bom se aquela mulher quisesse ficar com ele, morar com ele, ser dela da vida dele".
[22] Original: "cega, surda e muda no que se referia a assuntos dele".
[23] Original: "Ela queria a marca do homem dela no seu corpo e no seu nome".
[24] Original: "qualquer vida era um risco e o risco maior era o de não tentar viver".
[25] Original: "homens estavam atrás dele".
[26] Original: "As batidas na porta ecoaram como um prenúncio do samba. O coração de Ana Davenga naquela quase meia-noite, tão aflito, apaziguou um pouco. Tudo era paz, então, uma relativa paz. Deu um salto da cama a abriu a porta. Todos entraram, menos o seu. Os homens cercaram Ana Davenga. As mulheres, ouvindo o movimento vindo do barraco de Ana foram também. De repente naquele minúsculo espaço coube o mundo. (...) Um toque diferente, de batidas apressadas dizia de algo mau".

She does not understand why her man is away. “Oh my God, where is Davenga? What’s that? That’s a party!”[27] (Evaristo 29). At this moment, the reader is led to ask themselves about the reason why strangers have come to the Davengas’ house late at night. Deep down, Ana is worried not only about her partner but also about the future of their unborn baby, which can be seen in the contours and movements of her body whenever she caresses her belly. By making an association between what her child’s father is doing in the present and what her descendant might do in the future, she is also concerned with the path her baby will walk when he/she becomes an adult. Would he/she follow in his father’s footsteps or would he/she be a decent person?

When Davenga arrives and announces her birthday party, she is truly surprised because, by becoming a wife, she forgets herself and her life. Living in a dangerous and conflicting space, she has become invisible and the livelihood she had when she danced samba is gone. However, the pleasant atmosphere of the birthday celebration does not last long, as the police invade Davenga’s place, pointing a machine gun, and turn her birthday into the day of her demise. Meanwhile, on television, people cry over the death of a policeman, neglecting that Ana’s partner used to define her life and decease. In the favela where they live, Davenga’s friends mourn Davenga and Ana’s executions, but they do not appear on television. As we read in the short story, she died “on her bed, machine-gunned, protecting with her hands a life and a dream that she carried in her womb”[28] (Evaristo 30). Unfortunately, Ana’s murder may represent the death of many women in the same situation. She thus becomes visible in the story when she is reduced to a statistical number as a victim of violence. Trapped by the context in which she lives, Ana is denied the experience of motherhood.

Coming to a Possible Conclusion?

In the three stories analyzed, the female characters do not have time to ruminate and reflect on the impasses and challenges of motherhood. The brevity

[27] Original: “Cadê Davenga, [...] meu Deus? O que seria aquilo? Era uma festa!”
[28] Original: “na cama, metralhada, protegendo com as mãos um sonho de vida que ela trazia na barriga”.

of the narratives, as well as the characters' fast-paced lives filled with hurried actions, leave no room for 0061 healthy development of the relationships between mother and child. Importantly, the intersections of class, gender, and race have permeated the experiences of black female characters. In the words of black feminist Patricia Hill Collins "intersectionality provides an interpretative framework [and] shapes any group's experience across specific contexts" (Collins, 1990, 208), including female identities in Brazil. After all, in Brazilian urban spaces, racism has also circumscribed women's social lives in such a way that physical or psychological violence stands out as a contemporary source. Although the three characters have different experiences of motherhood, they are poor black female characters who are aware of the boundaries created for blacks and whites, rich and poor, men and women. As representatives of unprivileged black women, their existences are shaped and constructed by an intersectionality of identities that includes gender, race, and class: elements that certainly intervene in the way Natalina, Maria, and Ana Davenga face and come to terms with motherhood.

In "How Many Children Did Natalina Have?", the protagonist exercises her free will in choosing the right time to become a mother. Her choice represents her reproductive and bodily autonomy. Through her act of resistance, she fights against the unjust system of gender oppression. Natalina decides to raise her child, conceived through an act of rape, without any connection to a man. In fact, the issue of class difference is particularly considered when I look at the forms of inclusion/exclusion and access to basic services, health, and wellness for rich and poor black women. Interestingly, the unnamed rich woman who would be able to raise and provide a comfortable life for her offspring is barren. Not only race and gender, but more importantly, social class, have paved the way for negotiating the path of motherhood. Throughout this narrative, as this study shows, black bodies have been socially constructed in distinct forms.

Nevertheless, the different but similar bodies of Maria and Ana Davenga in the second and third stories are also framed by the constraints of racism. These fictional women, who inhabit the poor and marginalized urban space, do not have the chance to enjoy the experience of motherhood. Victims of racialized violence, Maria and Ana Davenga, for example, do not survive. "Maria" and "Ana Davenga" illustrate the broken journey of Brazilian mothers who have been denied a

humanized perspective on life. Like the enslaved women of the colonial past, their experiences of motherhood have been marked by loss, doubt, grief, or death.

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Borders in the Short Story "The First Day", by Edward P. Jones

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Introduction

Debates about segregation, separation, and borders have become increasingly intense. This is because the construction of such barriers has been in the news in various countries in recent years. After colonization, which redrew the map of the world, we now see other and geographical lines being rewritten. During the European expansion, ethnic groups were joined together, without the consent of their people, of course, and cultural boundaries were drawn around what belonged to each invading country. Today, contradictorily, we see the same countries building barriers against immigrants.

We can mention Syrians throughout Europe, but, above all, about former colonized peoples returning to metropolises that once not only invaded their lands, but also subjugated their minds, culture, language, and religion. It is, therefore, not surprising to note large numbers of Algerians in France or Indians in England, for instance.

Later, even countries that were not colonizers in the 16th and 17th centuries are now building walls against immigrants.

For example, many of the votes received by then-candidate Donald Trump for the presidency of the United States each time he ran for election were given by voters who favor and support the construction of a wall between Mexico and Anglo=Saxon America.

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Taking this example into account, what we want to point out is that, unfortunately, this is a subject that has not yet been exhausted, since the proposal to segregate people remains as explicit or has become even more explicit than before. Thus, in this study, we will discuss the metaphorical boundaries present in the literary work under analysis, as they are blatantly evident in it but before we get to the main topic, we will make a brief introduction to the author's biography, focusing mainly on his literary production in Part 1.

Since this issue of borders is such an important topic of social discussion, it is not surprising that literature, perhaps the best cultural representation of society, does not shy away from problematizing it. Hence, we could cite countless examples, especially among the stories that lend themselves to a post-colonial analysis, of works that highlight and scrutinize the issue of borders; but, given the limited scope of this research, we will mention only a few of them in Part 2, "Boundaries in Literature", because, as we have said, they are not only physical but also, and perhaps especially, metaphorical, which is the case of the short story that this chapter will examine. Last but not least, based on the discussion made in Part 2, we will talk about the theme of borders in the target short story in Part 3.

Thus, this study proposes to analyze the short story "The First Day", one of fourteen in the collection *Lost in the City*, by award-winning American writer Edward P. Jones, by using a theoretical foundation based on the studies of Reis (2004), Kalra, Kaur & Hutnyk (2005), Brah (2005) and Hall (2006), among others, for the literary analysis of the story. Afterward, the reader will find the final considerations and a bibliography in case of interest in further research.

1. The author, his works, and the short story

Edward Paul Jones (1950) was born and raised in Washington, D.C. He was a guest professor of creative writing at George Washington University and later became a professor in the Department of English at the same institution. *Lost in the City* is his first book, published in 1992. The author then wrote *The Known World* (2003), a novel, and *All Aunt Hagar's Children* (2006), another book of short stories. His first and last fictional productions are connected as they share characters and situations.

For all his works, the author has been nominated and received numerous literary awards. In 1992, the book under scrutiny, for example, was nominated for the *National Book Award*. In 1993, Jones was awarded the *PEN/Hemingway Award*; and in 1994, the *Lannan Literary Award for Fiction*.

Lost in the City is a collection of 14 short stories in which the author, taking inspiration from James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1993), is a story about ordinary people who live in the city of Washington. Interestingly enough, the book opens with the youngest character and ends with the oldest, which may indicate his concern with an approach to aging as his stories unfold.

"The First Day" is the story of a five-year-old black girl on her first day of school. In searching for a school for her daughter, the character/narrator's mother tries to cross some borders in the city where she lives. In this way, the story is told from her perspective.

The story begins with a description of her getting ready, focusing on fixing her hair, her clothes, and her new shoes. As the story progresses, we learn that the narrator and her mother went to the wrong school and must go to a different one to get the child enrolled. The first educational institution they go to is new and is presented as the school of the girl's dreams, opposite the church that they attend. However, mother and daughter are sent to an old school in a different neighborhood. Once there, the mother has to pay someone to fill out the registration papers because she is illiterate. The story ends with the girl hearing her mother's footsteps moving away.

2. Borders and Borders in Literature

With the advent of colonization by European countries and later globalization, the concept of borders has taken on different contours. Lines, limits, or boundaries constitute spaces in which social and individual constructions take place. When it comes to metaphorical borders, we need to think about them from a conception that is anchored in territoriality and unfolds in politics in the sense of a power game. It is through this perspective of understanding the border that the perception of otherness and identity is confronted because it is in these places that we can observe more flagrantly socio-spatial segregations – divisions and separations of social groups based on class

and race. It is interesting to note, however, that these are considered "[...] 'peripheral' workers but whose labor is in fact central to the functioning of the global economy" (Brah 196).

As anticipated, the issue of constructing and crossing borders – whether physical or metaphorical – as well as living in contact zones has taken up a large part of academic debates in different fields of knowledge. Law focuses on the right to the city, Architecture studies hostile elements of separation, Social Sciences are concerned with peripheral communities, and Geography highlights more severe impacts on marginalized populations, to name a few. Interest in the issue seems to have increased, perhaps because borders are not just a place for people to pass through, but "[...] they are now recognized as significant conduits for the flow of money" (Kalra, Kaur & Hutnyk, 2005, 23). The truth is that with globalization,

> there are no such barriers to the mobility of capital. [...] The new intersections between global flows of capital and transnational circuits of migrations interrogate the boundaries presupposed by such concepts as core and periphery, centre and margin, rural and urban, or First and Third World (Brah 199).

However, according to Hall (2003), despite globalization, the system is not global because the phenomenon is not uniform. Globalization maintains deep inequalities and continues to exacerbate these instabilities. The borders within cities and countries clearly show this. In a case study of the presence of Latin Americans in the United States, Michelle Reis (2004) shows how they have exerted political, economic, social, and cultural pressures in that country that have challenged the boundaries that separate cultures and ethnicities. For example, Latinos have demanded more favorable policies in the U.S. and have also influenced the media, the marketplace, and so on.

In this way, Literature, as a free form of art, evidently deals with this issue. In fact, it appears prior to other sciences, due to freedom of expression, mobility of language, and the multiplicity of genres it contains. Well, long before we coined the term ecocriticism in literature, we were already familiar with the theme in works such as *Vidas Secas* ([1938] 2024), a novel by the Brazilian author Graciliano Ramos, and *Why I am not a Pagan* (1902), an essay by the Native American author Zitkala -Ša, for instance.

Likewise, we can cite different literary works that will point to borders as a possible theme worth discussing in literature. In *Americanah* (2013), by the Nigerian author Chimamanda N. Adichie, we find (in)visible borders in a dialogue between Ifemelu, the protagonist, and a beauty salon attendant:

> "Hi, I'd like to get my eyebrows waxed."
> "We don't do curly," the Woman said.
> "You don't do curly?"
> "No. Sorry."
> (Adichie 361)

In this case, the imaginary or metaphorical boundaries show how entrenched prejudice is in a social design that keeps people and places worlds apart when there is no curly eyebrow. The situation presented in the quotation clearly shows that the establishment simply refused to serve black people. Through this illustration, we can observe that these symbolic borders, though arbitrarily constructed, are metaphors for division and exclusion. As we see in the example above, they exist not only between countries but also within them, as in the case of a beauty salon where whites are welcome whereas blacks are not.

According to Brah (2005), borders are

> […] arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against […] outsiders, aliens, the others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgressions; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership – claims to 'mine', 'yours' and 'theirs' – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over (194).

Another literary example of this phenomenon can be found in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013), a novel in which the English build a golf course for themselves in India. The idea of a club exclusively for members of the metropolis and/or colonizers is symbolic. This case is particularly interesting because the borders of the club are both physical and metaphorical. So much so that Udayan, one of the characters living around the club, questions: "Udayan called it an affront. People still filled slums all over the city, children were born and raised on the streets. Why were a hundred acres walled off for the enjoyment of a few?" (Lahiri 29).

In *The Vanishing Half* (2022), by the African American writer Brit Bennett, an entire city where light-skinned people live apart from blacks and whites; a situation that is not delimited by geographical boundaries as it figuratively shows how violent racial segregation can restrict people's freedom and self-esteem. In *Torto Arado* (2019), by Brazilian author Itamar Vieira Junior, a debate about territoriality is promoted, as the marking of property is a concern for a landowner and farm workers. Among other things, the novel shows how the spaces of the rich and the poor are physically and symbolically separated, serving as a good example of what we are theoretically presenting.

In addition, *Homegoing* (2016), by the Ghanaian writer Yaa Gyasi, is the story of seven generations of the same family that is divided by the Atlantic Ocean which works as a border between the United States and the author's home country. Such a division brings with it the lack of something, given that the diaspora once destroyed their dream of living in a safe space: "In the relationship between 'home and away' that marks out diasporic understandings, 'away' means some sort of loss [...]" (Kalra, Kaur & Hutnyk, 2005, 11).

Finally, we can also mention *The Hate U Give* (2017), by African American author Angie Thomas, a story in which the protagonist Starr lives in a conflict between neighborhoods: an upper-class one where she studies and a suburban one where she lives. Unsure of where she belongs, the character must play different roles as she crosses boundaries within the city.

In fact, these are just a few examples of how borders and symbolic divisions have stood out as important literary themes. Because of this, in this study, we will focus on borders in Jones's short story, which we will see below.

3. Borders in "The First Day"

Several aspects deserve our attention when analyzing the short story, such as the value of education, how families (especially those of minorities) strive to achieve education, how the community/school judge families, and finally, how the theme of border is approached in the literary text.

This is one of Literature's riches. It opens up on so many fronts that sometimes, even after many analyses made from different perspectives, the text is not exhausted. Thus, given the immensity offered by Literature and our

smallness in the face of it, we have chosen to deal only with the question of borders in “The First Day”.

As mentioned in Part 1, this short story is about a five-year-old black girl experiencing her first day at school, hence, the title of the text. This is an extremely important day for her, as the reader can tell from the first few lines: “I am wearing a checkered-like blue-and-green cotton dress, and scattered about these colors are bits yellow and white and brown. My mother has uncharacteristically spent nearly an hour on my hair that morning, plaiting and replaiting, so that now my scalp tingles” (Jones, 1992, 27). Almost an entire page is devoted to describing her shoes, socks, etc., reinforcing the idea that this is a very special day that has been long awaited. The narrator/character states that even her underwear is new and that she has been sprayed with perfume, the last gift her father gave her before disappearing.

It is also interesting to note at the beginning that neither the mother nor the daughter has a name and that, as we have seen, there is no father in the picture. This shows that they are representative of thousands of people in a similar situation.

The story begins in *media res*, with the narrator telling a girl’s first day of school, as mother and daughter walk down New Jersey Avenue in Washington, D.C. Not coincidentally, this avenue crosses the center of the city at a certain point and is flanked by museums, parks, and Judiciary Square, and the Capitol itself is in the vicinity. Many street names are mentioned in the story so that the reader can easily locate, with the help of a map, where the characters are walking in the capital of the United States: “At I Street, between New Jersey Avenue and Third Street, we enter Seaton Elementary School [...] across the street from my mother’s church, Mt. Carmel Baptist.” (Jones 28).

Obviously, the author maps the city so well on purpose. It is also no coincidence that the narrator’s mother attends a church near the first school they visit. Just as she was promised a happy life in heaven while attending church services, the spot in the city gave her hope for a bright future for her daughter. While going to church, the mother once dreamed of the day when she could enroll her child in the school they bypassed on Sundays: “For as many Sundays as I can remember, perhaps even Sundays when I was in her womb, my mother has

pointed across I Street to Seaton as we come and go to Mt Carmel. 'You gonna go there and learn about the whole world'" (Jones 29).

However, there is a foreshadowing of what is to come. While walking along the avenue, the girl observes: "In my neighborhood, I have many friends, but I see none of them as my mother and I walk" (Jones 28). In other words, she is an outsider being in the "wrong" place from the start, metonymically representing thousands of others who, like the members of her community, are being pushed to the outskirts of the city.

On their long-awaited day, the secretary who sees the mother and daughter at the desk dismisses them, saying that the girl does not fit the school's profile in a way that they are sent to a school in another area. "[...] she shakes her head and says that we are *at the wrong school* [...]. The woman continues to act as if she has known me all my life, but she tells my mother that we live *beyond the area* that Seaton serves" (Jones 28, our emphasis).

It is noteworthy that the girl is allowed to attend church but not school in this region of the city. In other words, her mother and she may serve, but not be served. This can be seen in large cities, where public transportation does not effectively reach high-class neighborhoods, except for a few routes at certain times to take employees to and from that region. As we read in the novel:

The girl ends up being enrolled in a school that "[...] is not across the street from my mother's church, her rock, one of her connections to God, and I sense her doubts as she absently rubs her thumb over the back of my hand." (Jones 29).

At this moment, we need to talk about belongingness. The protagonist's mother thinks she is part of the community where the church she attends is located. Still, she is later surprised that this is not the case with the news that her daughter is not welcome in such a neighborhood, hence her nervousness when she goes to the school where her daughter is sent. The church, her rock, in the narrator's words, ends up crumbling under her feet when the girl's enrollment is denied. In this way, the woman learns the difference between the feeling of belonging and the politics of belonging that Yuval-Davis (2006) problematizes, according to whom,

> It is important to differentiate between belonging and the politics of belonging. Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling "at home." [...] The politics of belonging comprise specific

> political projects aimed at constructing belonging to (a) particular collectivity/ies which are themselves being constructed in these projects in very specific ways and in very specific boundaries (Yuval-Davis 197).

The description of the schools and the people who work in them does not go unnoticed, either. At Seaton, the institution they first visited, "The Woman who greets us has pearls thick as jumbo marbles that come down almost to her navel" (Jones, 1992, 28). Whereas, at Walker-Jones, the other school, there is no proper reception area, but many old chairs where people sit to fill out a pile of paperwork. There is confusion, with children screaming and many people walking back and forth. "Strewn about the floor are dozens and dozens of pieces of white paper, and people are walking over them without any thought of picking them up. And seeing this lack of concern, I am all of a sudden afraid." (Jones 29).

Such 'lack of concern' does not exactly come from the people who work or go to school, but from the government itself, which exempts itself from its responsibilities when it comes to the peripheral population. The government cares about the center and the people who live there, guaranteeing their comfort, safety, leisure, and so on, which perfectly illustrates what Yuval-Davies (2006) argues about belonging: "The boundaries that the politics of belonging is concerned with are the boundaries of the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into 'us' and 'them'" (204).

It is also important to underline that this school has a racial divide in addition to a class divide. The author provides an overview of those present: "The woman's hair is set in a mass of curlers [...]. The girl's hair is arrayed in curls" (Jones 29). It is not surprising that the author's description of the people from the second school focuses on their hair, something so political for the black population.

In the end, the mother "has learned that money is the beginning and end of everything in this world" (Jones 31). However, despite recognizing the class divide, she may not have identified the racial intersection, a new chasm that will open up within her at some point when she crosses another significant line in the city.

Now the child is going to study in an undesirable school that the social system has determined for her. As a result, just as the mother's heart was broken on her daughter's first day of school, the girl feels sad every time she remembers

her parent walking silently to the sound of her own footsteps. As we read in the story: "even when the teacher turns me toward the classrooms and I hear what must be the singing and talking of all children in the world, I can still hear my mother's footsteps *above it all*." (Jones 31, our emphasis).

Since the mother is forced to register her daughter in an unwanted institution, one can realize that

> This 'dirty business of boundary maintenance' that underlies the politics of belonging is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them' (Yuval-Davies 204).

The "mother's footsteps", previously of her own free will, now go in a different direction, one that is imposed upon her: something that is likely to happen to the daughter in the years to come.

Final considerations

In this study, we have seen that the issue of borders can be quite complex. This is because they are arbitrary, often built by oppressors, and range from physical to metaphorical barriers, since they may be geographical or/and symbolic, delimiting not only countries but also boundaries within a single city.

Actually, the issue is very current: a refusal of people of color and/or immigrants is on the political and economic agenda of several heads of state. It is therefore not only an issue of human relations or multiculturalism, but also of financial and political nature.

As a result, different fields of knowledge have appreciated this topic. In Literature, our area of interest, we have been able to see how both theoretical and literary works have dealt with the subject in question.

After all, we have seen that borders become especially problematic when people from a group that is tacitly understood as not belonging to the other side cross them and reach spaces that the Establishment does not allow them to enter. We have also seen that such barriers are somewhat invisible and are built on structures of racial and class prejudice.

In the case of "The First Day", analyzed in this article, the character/narrator's mother tries to break through these boundaries but is unable to do so. Furthermore, it is frustrating for the character to discover that she, like her mother, is only accepted in a particular area of the city under certain conditions.

Finally, we understand that Literature denounces spatial transgressions that become political problems, even though different countries make policies of reception and diffusion to project a multicultural image that in practice is not always as inclusive as it seems, presenting metaphorical borders built on power structures, especially race and class, that keep certain subjects in peripheral zones.

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A Portrayal of American Black Women in Yaa Gyasi's Character Willie: Intersectionality, Colorism and Racism in *Homegoing*

Fernanda Favaro Bortoletto[1]

Introduction

Discussions about identity intersectionality as a tool for analyzing society in the political, economic, social, and educational spheres have gained ground since the 21st century. This term, adopted by different areas of the academic community, has emerged as an attempt to elucidate social functioning and in the search for equitable rights for the different groups within society.

A novel that can represent characters traversed by various forms of identity intersectionality is Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016). The novel is a debut by the Ghanaian writer, who moved to the United States as a child and returned as an adult to her home country where she was inspired to write her novel. The story depicts the life of a family over the centuries, starting with the separation of the sisters Effia and Esi.

Each sister follows a destiny. Effia becomes the wife of a slave master, whereas Esi is captured and enslaved. The family's trajectory reveals how marks of the slavery period resonate in the lives of its members to this day. In an alternating approach, each chapter recounts the stories of each sister's next generation. In particular, this article focuses on Willie, one of the characters who live at the beginning of the 20th century, as the temporality of the book suggests.

Willie, like every other female character in the story, also suffers from the historical and social effects of slavery after it allegedly ended. Her father, identified only by the initial H, is a former coal miner who was exploited for much of his life and, after his freedom, began to defend the rights of black workers. Willie marries Robert and together they have Carson, nicknamed Sonny. After

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difficulties in their hometown of Pratt City, the couple decides to move to Harlem, New York City, where they believe they will find better living conditions. However, the young couple faces several challenges such as racism, prejudice against women of color, difficulty in finding jobs, and financial problems, especially living in a house that would not be spacious enough to accommodate the three members of the family.

Therefore, in this study, we propose to reflect on the position of low-income black women in American society during the Great Migration of African Americans in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* through the character of Willie. To achieve this end, we will use the chapter of the book entitled "Willie" to analyze the condition of the character to which it refers based on theories that address the reality of the individuals who migrated from the South to the North of the United States, studies on some of the effects the period of slavery prolonged until today, bearing in mind the concepts of colorism and identity intersectionality.

An intersectional approach to Willie's cultural identity

The biggest challenge in reading and analyzing Yaa Gyasi's novel is the omission of specific dates in the story. Many episodes in the novel are temporally fluid, leaving the reader to infer temporal markers that place events historically and geographically, including parts of the chapter on Willie's life story examined in this study.

In such a chapter, the reader is induced to believe that Willie and her husband moved from Pratt City, Alabama, to the North of the United States sometime at the beginning of the Great Migration, a historical event characterized by the exodus of six million African Americans from the South to the North of the United States in search of better economic and social conditions from the 1910s onwards (Wilkerson, 2016).

This historical phenomenon is portrayed in the story at the moment Willie and Robert move to Harlem, staying in the home of Lil Joe, a famous character in the narrative: "Everyone knew someone who was headed north, and everyone knew someone who was already there. [...] The building that Lil Joe lived in was full of nothing but black folks, nearly all of them newly arrived from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas" (Gyasi 205-206).

Historically, James Gregory (2005) argues that migration to the North was a hope for African American Southerners for the rights, freedom, and dignity the South had always denied them. Hence, in search of dignity and better economic conditions, Willie and Robert move to Harlem, as seen in Robert's speech: "We should move. Go north, somewhere I can learn a new trade. Ain't nothing in Pratt City for us now that your folks are gone" (Gyasi 205).

However, "wherever black Southerners went, the hostility and hierarchies that fed the Southern caste system seemed to carry over into the receiving stations in the New World, as the cities of the North and West erected barriers to black mobility" (Wilkerson n. p.). Therefore, as seen, the expectations of Southern black travelers were often not met, as they found conditions in the North similar to those they had experienced in their hometowns.

According to Isabel Wilkerson (2016), many Southerners were forced to take very dangerous and low-paying jobs and were prevented from renting property in many areas of the cities they arrived in. When they did get housing,

> they were confined to the most dilapidated housing in the least desirable sections of the cities to which they fled. In densely populated destinations like Pittsburgh and Harlem, housing was so scarce that some black workers had to share the same single bed in shifts (Wilkerson n. p.).

As Wilkerson points out, during the Great Migration, African Americans (2016) encountered adverse conditions on their journey, as they had to confront a social and political structure characterized by the ideology of the white racial superiority and, consequently, by racial segregation. The chapter on the character of Willie reflects the reality of these people who migrated North with the hope of a new beginning but were surprised by adversity in their new location.

When the couple in question arrives in Harlem, they start looking for a job for Robert, but the prejudices they encounter on their way into the unknown hamper their search for employment. Unfortunately, they are met with hostility at the very first establishment that offers him a job:

> "You married to a black woman?" the store clerk said, his eyes never leaving Willie's.
> Robert looked at Willie. Robert spoke softly. "I worked in a store before. Down south."
> "No job here," the man said.

> "I'm saying I have experience with—"
> "No job here," the man repeated, more gruffly this time (Gyasi 206-207).

According to Willie, everyone around her believes that Robert, her husband, is a white man who is married to a black woman: something that the white communities they interact with condemn when they move North. In fact, in retrospect, the protagonist realizes that her spouse's skin tone was considerably lighter than hers from the moment they met, as seen in the excerpt:

> Willie wasn't coal black. She'd seen enough coal in her lifetime to know that for sure. But the day Robert Clifton came with his father to the union meeting to hear Willie sing, all she could think was that he was the whitest black boy she had ever seen, and because she thought that, her own skin had started to look to her more and more like the thing her father brought home from the mines, under his fingernails and dusting his clothes, every single day (Gyasi 201).

A similar reaction is expressed by Willie's younger sister, who also asks Robert if he is white. The girl's perception of her brother-in-law reflects American society's notion that a man like him deserves to pass for a Caucasian. This situation makes us think that society views black people with judgmental eyes based on Colorism, an idea that stems from racism, according to which the whiter a person is, the easier it is to pass as white and be socially accepted. According to Brazilian lawyer Alessandra Devulsky (2021), colorism is a complex social phenomenon associated with the establishment of a racial hierarchy system, largely based on the belief in white supremacy.

Moreover, sociologist Najara Lima Costa (2018) discusses this issue, arguing that black people with lighter skin end up facing racial discrimination with less intensity than those with darker complexions. This is evident in Gyasi's text, as we can see that society's gaze validates Robert's skin color because it is not as dark as Willie's while condemning the union between a supposedly white man and a black woman.

As the episode unfolds, racism and colorism are on display when Robert's qualifications and experience for the job are less important to the store manager than the fact that he is married to a black woman. This passage in the novel shows that white supremacist logic places black women at the bottom of a racially

ranked society in which the white subject makes a point of reassuring his sense of social control.

Another clear example of this fact is seen in the novel after the aforementioned incident when the couple concludes that they cannot be seen together in public anymore or Robert will never get a job:

> Being here meant they no longer walked together on the sidewalk. Robert always walked a little ahead of her, and they never touched. She never called his name anymore. Even if she was falling into the street or a man was robbing her or a car was coming at her, she knew not to call his name. She'd done it once, and Robert had turned, and everyone had stared (Gyasi 208).

Taking this quote into account, unless a man is white or married to a white woman, he will not be able to have a good position in the labor market. So when Robert changes his strategy and pretends not to know Willie, he easily gets a job in a predominantly white workplace.

These excerpts from *Homegoing* confirm the historical reality of African Americans that Wilkerson (2016) discusses

. Indeed, through the displacement of these characters to the North, the novel shows that the persecution of the black migrant subject was overwhelming. So much so that, in the story, the employment search cruelly affects the relationships of a couple who, once mistaken for biracial, have to sacrifice their expressions of affection in order to adapt to the conditions of a racist economic scenario in the North of the United States.

The disadvantage in the economic system is exacerbated when we consider the social placement of the black woman represented by Willie in this part of the narrative because if Robert cannot be hired by a company because he is in a relationship with her, her chances of being employed are much lower.

Nevertheless, Willie manages to get a job as a housekeeper in the home of a wealthy black family, cleaning and managing the entire house. According to North American philosopher Angela Davis (1983), domestic service was the field of work that black women were forced to take on in the post-slavery period. The author explains: "if white women never resorted to domestic work unless they were certain of finding nothing better, black women were trapped in these occupations until the advent of World War II" (58), which brings us back to

Willie's case. No establishment will accept her services, leaving domestic work as the only way to provide for her family. However, Willie clearly has a dream for her life and makes plans for a professional career as a singer. Actually, she often goes to clubs in an attempt to be accepted as a singer but everywhere she goes, the answer is the same:

> "Too dark," he said. Wille shook her head. "But I can sing, see." She opened her mouth and took a deep breath, filling up the balloon of her belly, but then the man put two fingers to her and pushed the air out.
> "Too dark," he repeated. "Jazzing's o "Too dark," he repeated. "Jazzing's only for the light girls."
> "I saw a man dark as midnight walk in with a trombone."
> "I said girls, honey. If you were a man, maybe" (Gyasi 209).

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2020) reflect on how diverse questions of identity place people differently in society. The authors elaborate on this topic by conceptualizing identity intersectionality by presenting it as an analytical tool that "views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – among others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another" (17). As such, this tool would be a way to explain and understand complex manifestations of the human condition in society.

Based on this definition, such authors provide examples of how intersectionality can be used as an analytical tool, observing intersectional power relations, while discussing how this cultural phenomenon is present in economic and social inequalities. Based on Collins and Bilge (2020), we are particularly interested in investigating the growth of social problems in the world, driven by inequality in income distribution. After all, according to the same authors,

> [...] intersectionality provides a framework for explaining how categories of race, class, gender, age, and citizenship status, among others, position people differently in the world. Some groups are especially vulnerable to changes in the global economy, whereas others benefit disproportionately from them (Collins and Bilge 26).

This argument demonstrates that social inequality does not affect women, children, people from the LGBTQIA+ community, Indigenous groups, and people of color with the same intensity. People whose identities encompass one or many

of these elements are disadvantaged in the economic system and are treated differently in the labor market when it comes to rights, wages, and hiring practices.

In fact, identity intersectionality, a relatively new term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), is rooted in Stuart Hall's (2003) concept of fragmented identity, which, having emerged in the late 1960s, discusses how a person can be divided into different sectors in terms of cultural representation, combining psychological, social, historical, and symbolic elements. Therefore, identity can interweave many forms of manifestations that abide us, ranging from name, class, worldview, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, among other icons.

Thus, as far as identity is concerned, intersectionality can be used as an intellectual tool for sociological analysis of the human experience, which, by the way, perfectly applies to this reading of Willie, a character who, being socially prejudiced because of her identity conjunction of gender, race and class, does not benefit from the same job opportunities and rights as people from other social groups due to oppressive forces that, emphasizing colonial, sexist and elite values, deprive her of thriving and standing as an empowered woman. Through her experiences in New York, this character begins to realize that people treat her differently than the way they address her husband: "If she were Robert, Willie thought. Robert could have any job he wanted" (Gyasi 209).

As Collins and Bilge (2020) propose in their work, in an analytical study of the situation of women of color like Willie, we should not treat the problem only through the "singular lenses of gender, race, or class" (p. 17). Instead, we should examine these three categories as interconnected factors that simultaneously influence the way she is socially projected and directly interfere in her social, economic, and political condition.

As a black woman without a privileged position in society, Willie is unable to pursue her dreams because she is concomitantly poor, dark-skinned, and a woman. Considering a triadic combination of intersectional elements that contributes to understanding the dynamics of the character's identity, her limited space in society, and the fact her shortcomings mirror the hardships faced by many black women out of the literary sphere. Willie is a representation of thousands of low-income women of color who have struggled to have a place in

the sun but have been denied the job opportunities and social treatment that upper-class white women or men receive.

Furthermore, by investigating the experiences of a poor black woman in the period in which the novel is set, we can see that the circumstances of this group of women are not much different today. These women are still placed in the lowest positions in the American social hierarchy, continue to be given fewer opportunities for formal education, and be doomed to jobs that pay less than those of white men, or even occupations that are not the ones they desired and dreamed of. Unfortunately, this is what happened to Willie. In pursuit of her dream of becoming a singer, she is offered the task of cleaning the Jazzing Club at night, thus falling back into the fate of black women proposed by Angela Davis (1983), relegated to domestic service and/or occupations such as cooks, laundry workers, housekeepers, or maids, just to be close to the milieu in which she wishes to be.

In fact, the Jazzing Club was a place that only wealthy white men attended and an environment where musical acts and theatrical productions created by white men were performed by "tall, tan, and terrific [casts]" (Gyasi 212) that staged an untrue reality of the South in which the black community was thankful to have been enslaved. As the narrator points out, the show

> was meant to be a portrayal of the South. The three male actors, the darkest Willie had ever seen in the club, picked cotton onstage. [...] They started singing a song that Willie had never heard before, one about how grateful they should all be to have such kind masters to take care of them (Gyasi 212).

In disbelief at what she had seen, Willie knew that the real South was not as it was portrayed, for even her parents had never experienced slavery in the American cotton fields. Despite this fact, the audience seems to enjoy racism as entertainment since the play in vogue was designed to glorify white men as well as marginalize and animalize black bodies. Deep down, the aim of the show was not to depict the essence of the actual atrocities of slavery but to reaffirm to the audience who had been in power in American society for centuries. In doing so, the play reinforces negative stereotypes about black men linked to intellectual limitations as seen in the following excerpt:

> In one of the shows, an actor had pretended to be lost in an African jungle. He was wearing a grass skirt and had marks painted on his head and arms. Instead of speaking, he would grunt. Periodically, he would flex his pecs and pound his chest. He picked up one of the tall, tan, and terrific girls and draped her over his shoulder like she was a rag doll. The audience had laughed and laughed (Gyasi 212).

Antiracist theorist bell hooks (2004) states that black men are "seen as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers" (10), stereotypes that also determine and influence the way black men see themselves and are seen by whites. In Yaa Gyasi's book, we can notice the bestialization of black bodies in an attempt to make the audience laugh. This kind of caricatural construction favors the permanence of the white man at the top of a racial hierarchy. This is why the club's clientele is made up of people who, in line with hook's description of a Caucasian patriarchy, want to pay for shows that emphasize the animalistic aspects of a black, allegedly made to serve and amuse them through its degradation.

Another derogatory stereotype about black men pointed out by hooks (2004) is intellectual inferiority, registered in the narrative in the performance of black actors picking cotton on stage. As we read in the novel, "one of the actors started complaining. He said that the sun was too hot, the cotton too white. He sat on the edge of the stage, lazily swinging his legs back and forth, back and forth" (Gyasi 2012). Once again, a black persona is designed to be mocked by the audience, so much so that the man portrayed in this quotation is presented as a hooligan or an indolent person with a limited intellectual capacity to form complex sentences and actions.

As seen, passages from the shows at the club denounce how racist American society was in the early 20th century, as the plays on the stage of the Jazzing Club seem to revolve around the need to establish the white man as superior and the holder of economic and political power in a plantation system based on slavery as a reminder that he continues to control a modern capitalist structure.

By reinforcing white male power, the atmosphere of jazzing also encourages these men to be agents of sexual exploitation. As Davis (1983) demonstrates in her study, "the sexual abuse they had routinely suffered during

the era of slavery was not halted by the advent of emancipation" (54), as women of color continued to be preyed upon by white men for several decades afterward.

In Yaa Gyasi's novel, we see the depiction of sexual exploitation in some episodes related to the protagonist Willie. One example is when Robert finally finds a job in Harlem but quits it after a week when a white customer asks him "how he could resist taking any one of the Negro women who frequented the store for himself" (Gyasi 208).

In this passage, the power of this white man becomes a threat to the clerk because the client can jeopardize Robert's ability to work in Harlem, especially when the customer talks about black women with an air of superiority, leading one to believe that he has the right to take advantage of them as if they were properties, available for purchase, or simply worthless objects to be picked up at his whim.

A similar situation occurs with Willie when Robert discovers that she is working at Jazzing shortly after one of his co-workers realizes that the couple is married:

> "You still have cleaning to do," he said. He caressed her face. His hands started to move down her body, but before it could reach her breast she spit in his face.
> "Willie, don't!"
> The two suits turned to look at Robert, the gray suit wiping the spit from his face. "You know her?" the blue suit asked, but the gray suit was two steps ahead of him. Willie could see him collecting all the clues in his mind: the dusk of Robert's skin, the thick voice, the nights spent away from home. He sent Robert a withering look. "She your woman?" he asked.
> Robert's eyes had started to fill up. His skin was already sallow from his being sick, and he looked like he might be sick again any minute. He nodded. "Well, why don't you come over here and give her a kiss?" the gray suit asked. He had already unzipped his pants with his left hand (Gyasi. 214-215).

Robert's coworkers treat Willie as if she were a property to be sexually used as they please, perpetuating a legacy of the slavery times, when "white male slave owners wanted enslaved black women to passively accept sexual exploitation as the right and privilege of those in power" (hooks 1990, 27). Feeling insulted, Willie attacks the man, defending herself against the unwanted touching, which the stranger finds amusing. Then, in a form of retaliation, he humiliates the

couple and turns them into a private spectacle, knowing that by belittling the woman, he would also degrade her husband.

Trying to escape poverty, Robert is willing to do anything to keep his job, including accepting a white man's sexual assaults on his wife, but when his co-worker's teasing ends, Robert is fired. This episode illustrates how easily the white man will exercise power over individuals deemed inferior and marginalized in order to maintain his leading position in a social pyramid. Unfortunately, as a result of slavery, this form of sexual abuse persists to this day (Davis, 1983), making Willie's suffering emblematic of black women's reality today.

After the events at the club, Robert abandoned his family, leaving Willie alone with their son, Carson. Willie kept working at a low-paying housecleaning job, which made it impossible to afford a decent place to live and hire someone to look after the child while she worked. The only solution she found to the problem was to leave Carson home alone, "making sure to shut the windows and lock the doors and hide the sharp things. At night she would find that he had put himself to sleep, the mattress soaked with his ever-present tears" (Gyasi 216).

Looking at the character again from an intersectional perspective, we can see the reasons why her life seems so difficult. The social structure in which she finds herself establishes Willie's position and dictates how she will be treated in society. Any prospect of a job or salary will be affected by the fact that she is a poor black woman who is now a single mother.

This chain of events led to the character losing her voice, both literally and figuratively. Willie spent years unable to sing because she no longer had the confidence and strength to let her voice be heard. So whenever she auditioned to be a singer, "she would get onstage, feeling confident. Her mouth would open, but no sound would come from it, and soon she would be crying, and begging the person in front of her for forgiveness" (Gyasi 216).

She lived in this situation for years, even after she met another man and later had another daughter, Josephine. We believe that all the anger, fear, and shame she experienced during her time in the new city undermined her self-esteem to the point that she gradually lost her voice and blocked her potential to sing. At this phase of her life, she recalled her past in Pratt City, aware that things were different, while "here, in Harlem, she could not move. She had to lie there, still, with the rumbling, the falling, the terror" (Gyasi 211).

Her last night with Robert at the Jazzing Club years before remains branded in Willie's mind and triggers negative feelings towards the place where she lives. So, every time she goes on stage, memories of humiliation and fear flood back into her head, paralyzing her. Due to her emotional wounds, the character never flourishes as a star as a consequence of her traumatic scene in the Jazzing bathroom. Since then, the character does not feel comfortable singing with a microphone and being in the spotlight as this scenario reminds her of the danger and complete debasement she once experienced.

As far as history is concerned, Willie and Robert stand as fictional examples of what has happened in New York since 1910. Over the years, Harlem's population has become majority black with the migratory flows caused by the Great Migration, and, in the story, the contrast between the neighborhood and the rest of the white-dominated city is clear. In the face of adversity, including sexism in black communities, a large number of single mothers is also a historical fact, so much so that many children had to deal with issues of safety not only in their homes, but especially on the streets (Wilkerson, 2016). The following excerpt illustrates the fear and insecurity of being in a white environment when Willie crosses the boundaries of the neighborhood on a walk with her son:

> Willie and Carson were nearing the limits of Harlem. Carson crunched on his cone and looked up at her skeptically, and she just smiled back reassuringly, but she knew, and he knew, that they would have to turn soon. When the colors started changing, they would have to turn. But they didn't. Now there were so many white people around them that Willie started to feel scared. She took Carson's hand in hers. The days of Pratt City mixing were so far behind her, she almost felt as though she had dreamed them. Here, now, she tried to keep her body small, squaring her shoulders in, keeping her head down (Gyasi 220).

Actually, she did not dare cross the boundaries of the "black sea of Harlem [to enter the] white rush of the rest of the world" (Gyasi 220) because she now understood how the dynamics of society work. In the context of the story, there is a millimeter-defined symbolic frontier in New York that pushes black individuals to the edge of an imaginary line and expects them not to overstep it. Willie had become aware of this line in her first years in the new place and had had enough traumatic experiences to never surpass it.

However, one day, she decided to take a step forward and face a crowd of white people. On that occasion, the character wishes she could walk until she could feel happy and "be able to forget how she'd wound up in Harlem, away from Pratt City, away from home" (Gyasi 201). This walk did not take her back in time, nor was it the solution to lifelong happiness, but it was the key to understanding how to move forward with her life from that moment on. At a crossroads, Willie saw Robert with a new family for the first time since the incident at the club. Her reaction is described as follows: "Willie smiled at Robert, and it wasn't until that smile that she realized she forgave him. She felt like the smile had opened a valve, like the pressure of anger and sadness and confusion and loss was shooting out of her, into the sky and away. Away" (Gyasi 220).

This moment sparked a kind of epiphany in the protagonist, symbolizing what we believe to be Willie's realization that, just like her, Robert was a victim of this society. In this interpretation, the character sees that her ex-husband has completely assimilated into the white world erasing his black identity by crossing the line between the 'two worlds' and building a white family according to the preestablished social standards. After this realization, Willie seems to free herself from this period of hiding who she once was and turns to herself and her past, finally reclaiming her voice in society. She is aware of the life story of her father, H, and how hard he once fought for better conditions for the black miners who had been exploited with long hours and low wages for many years.

Seeing Robert, possibly adapted to a white environment, made Willie perceive how much her life has changed since she moved to Harlem and how she has been trapped in a reality where she always has to conceal her black identity and go unnoticed. Then, she eventually realizes that she cannot continue to live this way, as seen in the following excerpt: "No, Carson. We can't go any further. I think it's time we go back" (Gyasi 221).

From then on, she returns to her cultural background and is able to speak out, drawing strength and inspiration from her deceased father. The following passage demonstrates this when Willie sings in the church choir and thinks of her parent:

> Willie was standing in the back of the choir holding the songbook when her hands began to tremble. She thought about H coming home every night from the mines with his pickax and his shovel

> […] He used to say the best part of his day was when he could put that shovel down and walk inside to see his girls waiting for him (Gyasi 221).

At this moment, Willie spots her daughter Josephine in the pews and, like her father, longs for her children to know their history and recognize their identity. Now the character can regain the strength she inherited from H, to sing powerfully and be proud to be a black woman.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined episodes about Willie, one of the characters in Yaa Gyasi's debut novel, *Homegoing*. Based on an intersectional analysis of cultural identity that intertwines aspects of gender, class, and race, we analyzed Willie, the protagonist at the center of the selected chapter, while observing the impact of the Great Migration and the racist and patriarchal social structure on her trajectory in the novel.

We investigated how the ideology that judges black people based on their skin tone influenced her relationship with her husband Robert, whose complexion was considered light enough for him to be mistaken for a white person. As a consequence of Robert's view of himself as a white man, he struggled to find a job because he was married to a black woman. In addition, we noticed that as a consequence of colorism, Robert's black identity seems to be completely erased as he begins to want to be seen and act as a white man.

At the same time, we analyzed Willie's impossibility to be hired for a job not related to housekeeping and cleaning as a reflection and legacy of slavery. Based on these ideas, we developed a study aimed at understanding how the categories of gender, race, and class influence the way the character is seen in society as inferior and as a sexual object of the predatory white man.

Because of her growing awareness of social reality, the character in the episode develops negative feelings such as fear and anger toward society and her husband, who leaves her in the face of sexual harassment to be on good terms with white men. The episode climaxes with the loss of the character's voice, as she can no longer sing or feel self-confident after what has happened.

However, her voice thrives the moment she realizes that Robert is also a victim of the social structure dominated by power relations that place the white man in a privileged position. At this point, Willie ruptures with the paralyzing fear that makes her conceal her identity and cultural background. By remembering and mirroring her father and his love for his daughters, Willie finds the strength and inspiration to raise her voice, sing, and take charge of her own existence.

Lastly, we can conclude that all of the events discussed here about Willie's life also apply to the reality of contemporary black women. By addressing issues that can represent their experience from the past to the present, Yaa Gyasi's novel gives the character a chance for a new beginning in which she makes peace with herself, although she will likely continue to endure prejudice, injustice, and suffering for having an identity whose intersectionality has been subjected to for five centuries.

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Queer Studies and Psychoanalysis

A Cockatrice in Triangulations: the treacherous nature of 'effeminate' Linton Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*

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One of the most enigmatic works of British Romanticism, *Wuthering Heights* is an open narrative, leaving unanswered questions and a few loose ends throughout the plot. As such, the novel raises many questions in the reader and has become the subject of countless investigations. After all, various types of studies have suggested a connection between Emily Brontë's life and the composition of her masterpiece, including Queer Theory.

With the emergence of such studies in the 1990s, a critical trend has shed new light on *Wuthering Heights*, by juxtaposing biographical references with literary evidence that has kept Emily Brontë's sexuality and her literary production in the spotlight for the past 30 years or so. In this new arena, Camille Paglia's (1990) queer critique of the writer's poetry and fiction, Stevie Davies's (1994) analysis of Lockwood's obsession with Heathcliff and Jean Kennard's famous article "Lesbianism and the Censuring in *Wuthering Heights*" (1996) about Emily's burned letters and Anne Lister's likely influence on her have triggered many discussions about the former's mysterious literary production. Likewise, I could not help but mention Brontë Schiltz's "It is Unutterable": Sexual Transgression in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*" (2021), a text about the repression of desire, which along with the aforementioned articles, has become a seminal reference in queer criticism to this day.

Transcending the pioneering production of the 1990s, Deborah Morse's meticulous biographical research into the Brontës shows how the family used personal experience to produce literature in "Queer Charlotte: Homoerotics from

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Mina Laury to *The Professor*" (2016), a text that has broadened horizons for further investigation of Emily, Charlotte, and Branwell Brontë from a queer perspective.

Departing from another angle, Richard Kaye (2016) also shows how both the Brontë siblings and some of the characters they created have been fictionalized in late 20th and 21st-century re-readings, in such a way that this family so dear to English literature, also participates, directly or indirectly, in contemporary literary production and discussions.

Although the proliferation of criticism on the subject tempts us to read this branch of Cultural Studies as a current fad in Literary Theory, prone to producing unfounded and sensationalist revisionist readings of past writers, the fact is that much earlier than the 1990s, biographical works had explored assumptions about Emily Brontë's veiled sexuality and alleged masculine expression, based partly on an ambiguous comment registered in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1998 [1857]) by Elizabeth Gaskell, an authoritative reference in Brontë studies, and partly on biographies such as Romer Wilson's *All Alone*: The Life and Private History of Emily Brontë (1928), Charles Walter Simpson's *Emily Brontë* (1929) and Virginia Moore's *The Life and Eager Death of Emily Brontë*: A Biography (1936) – tomes according to which Emily Brontë may have become reclusive in her adult life because the dwellers of Haworth, a village where she spent most of her life, criticized her boyish behavior, her refusal of four marriage proposals and her love for an effeminate man called George Henry Lewes (Moore, 1936, 67-70).

Judging by the content of such biographies, I am inclined to believe that Wilson, Simpson and Moore's accounts of Emily Brontë may have been constrained in academic circles in the early 20th century because homosexuality was then regarded as a mental disorder (Dowling, 1996). Therefore, portraying the author as a lesbian may have been considered outrageous and disrespectful at the time. This may explain why controversial passages from Wilson, Simpson, and Moore's works were suppressed for too long, even though more discreet Brontë biographers such as Winifred Gérin (1971) and Katherine Frank (1990) will revisit the three of them decades later.

Another explanation for the scant attention paid to Wilson, Simpson, and Moore's works about Miss Brontë may lie in their use of anonymous interviews, adopted in Oral History, an area of Historiography formalized only in 1948

(Ritchie, 2005). Nevertheless, these three biographers' exploration of the private aspects of Emily Brontë's life testifies to how the author seems to have lived in the memory of the people of Haworth.

As speculative as Wilson, Simpson, and Moore may sound, Marie Campbell (2001) and Lucasta Miller (2007) point out that their perspectives on the author of *Wuthering Heights* are plausible, complementary, and interrelated, offering pieces of a single jigsaw puzzle that make up a unique story set in the same historical moment, according to which Emily Brontë would have been too masculine for Victorian gender norms, regardless of whether she was a lesbian or not. Of course, this subject is a very sensitive issue for different reasons.

First and foremost, one cannot categorically affirm that the writer was a homosexual. Second of all, even if she was a lesbian, it is important to stress that what female homosexuality consisted of in the 19th and early 20th centuries differs considerably from what we understand nowadays. So much so that Judith Bennet (2000) says that women could be referred to as 'lesbian-like' and not lesbians as we know them today.

Given that 19th-century religious and scientific discourses usually depicted women as asexual beings, female homosexuality was then made invisible and mostly associated with a strong friendship between women (Bennet, 2000). However, Steidele (2020) shows that 19th-century women could be voluptuous. So much so that biographies like Steidele's account of Anne Lister or TV shows such as Wainright's *Gentleman Black* (2019-2022) about the same remarkable woman have revealed, for example, torrid love affairs between ladies, deconstructing the idea that 19th-century women were not interested in sex.

As for Emily Brontë, given the lack of distinction comprising sex, gender, and sexuality before the 1960s (Jagose, 2005; Kennard, 1996), she could have been considered a lesbian or bisexual, since gender expression, as personal performance, was not yet included in the early 20th-century European cultural scenario (McIlvenny, 2002). On the other hand, her empowered figure and wish to be an independent woman may likely have been ambiguously associated with the firmness and austerity of the men of her time. In this case, Brontë's supposed masculinity may have been a metaphor for her authority rather than a manifestation of her desire for another woman.

The point is that just as Kennard makes us think of Emily Brontë's homosexuality in the abstract, the scholar also gives us reason to think otherwise, especially when she tells us that Anne Lister, a woman who, by wearing men's attire and literally marrying Ann Walker in Holy Trinity Church in York, 1834 (Steidele, 2020), seems to have been a source of inspiration for Emily Brontë at least in terms of women's autonomy (Kennard, 1996). After all, the author worked at Law Hill School, an institution funded by Walker, Lister's wife (Steidele, 2020).

Even though these facts are historically proven, there is no confirmation that the writer was close to the school's patrons. The most that can be said is that long before her literary career thrived, Emily Brontë, the daughter of a clergyman, was aware of the possibility of love and devotion between two women, apart from the religious condemnations she constantly heard.

Linking this piece of information to Marie Campbell's (2001) recovery of Wilson's (1928), Simpson's (1929), and Moore's (1936) comments about the writer's boyishness and further details, queer Brontë studies have blossomed, becoming a point of departure for deeper research into Emily Brontë's life and artistic production.

As analyses of this nature tend to explore the relationship between literature and lived experiences, fields of study such as Literature in Context (Rylance & Simons, 2001) and The Authorship Theory (Maingueneau, 1995) in line with Historical and Cultural Studies have been of great help to new queer readings, supporting, for example, Campbell (2001), Davies (1994), Kennard (1996), Miller (2007), Morse (2016), Paglia (1990), and Schiltz's (2021) assumption that Emily Brontë was a lesbian.

In light of all that has been said so far, it is possible to see that a prolific output of queer criticism has been built up around the themes presented, and that, although I will not address the question of Emily Brontë's homosexuality in this text, it seems coherent to present it before moving on to the main theme of the chapter, in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the author's socio-cultural context and to show that this discussion of homosexuality in *Wuthering Heights* through the metaphor of the cockatrice is not something far-fetched, but a subject that the author writes about subtly, as she was minimally familiar with it.

Having made these preliminary comments to contextualize my point of view about the novel, I will introduce my analysis by explaining that in this article I expect to deviate from these critically acclaimed works and examine another aspect of *Wuthering Heights*, focusing on diegetic elements, overlooked subplots, subliminal messages, and the sidestepped metaphors that can open doors for a new niche for queer readings of the novel, such as the fact that Linton Heathcliff, blatantly described as 'effeminate', is also compared to a cockatrice, a mythological creature of sexual ambivalence (Bondeson, 1999, 167; Breiner, 1979, 34; Ferber, 1999), someone who, due to his androgynous behavior and evil nature, is subtly associated with the image of a sodomite: an umbrella term used centuries ago to describe sexually inverted and perverted people (Foucault, 1981). After all, according to Maria Conceição Monteiro (2013), subtle transgressions of established norms operate in gothic narrative subplots (42), which is the case to be approached.

Focusing on the metaphor of the cockatrice, I will explore details of Linton Heathcliff's personality by intercepting specific concepts from Narratology, Psychoanalysis, and Cultural Studies that, in conjunction with Foucault's premises on *The History of Sexuality* (1981), may be of interest to Queer Theory in order to show how a 19th-century narcissist character who transgresses gender roles, by experiencing abjection, may also promote otherness to a subaltern while repressing his hypothetical homosexual desire.

To do so, I will allude to: a) René Girard's (1976) concept of 'triangular desire' or 'triangulations of passions'; b) Jean-Paul Sartre's (1966) definition of 'otherness'; c) Julia Kristeva's (1982) approach to 'abjection'; d) Melissa Fegan's (2008) analysis of Linton Heathcliff; e) Jan Bondeson's (1999), Laurence Breiner's (1979) and Michael Ferber's (1999) mythological explanations of the cockatrice; f) psychoanalytical key concepts according to Sigmund Freud (1995) and Jacques Lacan (2017); g) Michel Foucault (1981) and Andréa Linhares's (2010) depictions of homosexuality in 19th-century science; h) other theorists whose ideas endorse my reading of Emily Brontë's symbolic representation of a homosexual character based on passages from the novel and Victorian scientific discourse.

Most scholars agree that Emily Brontë's masterpiece, far from being a love story, is a narrative of Heathcliff's suffering and revenge over time. From this

point of view, Catherine Earnshaw's transient existence in the storyline justifies the novel's main trope of rejection, abandonment, and grief, as much as it foreshadows the protagonist's madness, expressed in his yearnings for his beloved to haunt him. As the reader focuses on this couple's unaccomplished desire, other characters are bypassed, and along with them, queer evidence in the narrative goes unnoticed and has remained cloaked.

Historically, writers have incorporated culture-specific elements into their production in order to communicate with their contemporary reader (Maingueneau, 1995; Rylance & Simons, 2001). In this vein, when alluding to homosexuality, past authors have sometimes softened the way they have approached the subject in deference to historically established moral codes based on the taboos of the times in which they lived. And it is precisely this niche that I will now explore, for the cockatrice is actually a powerful but underappreciated metaphor that, after being neglected for far too long, deserves better attention in the novel, and especially in a queer critique of *Wuthering Heights*.

Although a gay psychoanalytic reading of a nineteenth-century text may sound far-fetched or ahistorical, in fact, it is not. According to Ehsan Azari (2008), Lacan acknowledges that poetics can illustrate complex manifestations of desire, even if what is presented in the literary corpus was created prior to the advent of psychology: "For Lacan, a creator of a literary text, therefore, knows to posit desire in language without needing to master psychoanalysis; and a poet knows far better than anyone else about the representational expression of desire in language" (Azari 59).

Taking this quote into account, we may infer that Emily Brontë, in comparing Linton to a cockatrice, addresses the vision of sexuality from a Victorian perspective, even before psychoanalysis would name it. Moreover, by describing Linton Heathcliff as "effeminate" (Brontë, 1975, 374) and symbolically comparing him to a tricky and sexually ambiguous animal such as the cockatrice (Bondeson, 1999, 167), the author proves that she is in tune with the nineteenth-century scientific discourse, according to which a homosexual was a "psychic hermaphrodite" (Foucault, 1981, 101). To understand how this happens in the text, let us highlight a narrative strategy whose dynamic runs through *Wuthering Heights*: the triangulation of passions in the light of René Gerard, according to

whom passion is not love but an exacerbation of feelings (Gerard, 1976, 33) that can potentially destabilize a character's emotional frames.

In *Wuthering Heights*, different triadic combinations of characters, including but not limited to the structure of a love triangle create various forms of tension throughout the story. Of course, Catherine's impasse over choosing Heathcliff or Edgar as her husband leaps out at us. Nevertheless, there are other triangulations in the plot in terms of characterization. For example: 1) Heathcliff's uncomfortable position between Mr. Earnshaw's empathy and Mrs. Earnshaw's rejection; 2) the troubled relationship comprising Mr. Earnshaw's siblings and the gypsy boy; 3) Catherine's suffering towards Isabella and Heathcliff; 4) Isabella as Hindley's protegee and as a victim of Heathcliff's violence; 5) Linton stuck between Heathcliff and Edgar's rivalry; 6) Catherine Linton/Heathcliff trapped in a conflict between her father and her father-in-law; 7) Ellen Dean caught between Edgar's interests and Heathcliff's stratagems and, last but not least, 8) a triad involving Catherine Linton/Heatcliff, Linton Heathcliff and Hareton Earnshaw.

In fact, in the second generation of *Wuthering Heights*, Hareton Earnshaw, Linton Heathcliff, and Catherine Linton/Heathcliff form the second most relevant triadic group in the story in which Isabella's son, realizing a subtle connection between the other two youngsters, may imitate the girl's attraction to the rustic young man and envy her, thwarting her attachment to Hareton as an attempt to prevent her from having a sexual experience he will never fulfill.

Thus, endeavoring to overcome his repressed desire for the male servant, Linton humiliates his rival to conceal his fascination with the 'other' and marries Catherine not only because his father ordains him to do so, but also because he wants to punish her and himself with celibacy for desiring, consciously or unconsciously, someone unworthy of their affection or far below their social position.

First of all, Ellen Dean, one of the main narrators, bluntly describes Linton Heathcliff as a "pale, delicate, effeminate boy" (Brontë, 1975, 374) soon after he appears in the narrative. Later in the text, when Hareton is annoyed by the young master's behavior, the farmhand says that the London youngster is "more of a lass than a lad" (Brontë, 1975, 374-5). In another passage, Ellen Dean is sorry for Linton's "distorted nature" (401). Besides, because of his mannerisms and his

androgynous timbre, Heathcliff also rejects Linton. As Ellen Dean points out, his father "had an antipathy to the sound of his voice and could not do at all with his sitting in the same room with him many minutes together" (380) because he found his son repulsive.

In addition to being a clear victim of his father's prejudice, Linton realizes that Hareton does not reciprocate his sexual interest. So he irritates Hindley's son as much as possible, expecting the other man to touch him, even if only out of anger: something better discussed in a later part of this text. What can be said for now is that, as expected, the narrator subtly foreshadows that Catherine and Hareton will be a future couple.

After all, when they first meet, they both play a discreet, puerile game of seduction suggesting that they have a penchant for each other. Though Catherine avoids staring at him, she takes a glimpse at him when he is gazing away, and even though they talk little, they observe one another coyly in the intervals between their remarks. As you read in the novel: "Earnshaw had his countenance completely averted from his companion. […] Catherine took a sly look at him, expressing small admiration. She then turned her attention to seeking out objects of amusement for herself […] to supply the lack of conversation" (Brontë 383-4).

Nevertheless, before Catherine and Hareton can break the ice and become more comfortable with each other, their initial interaction is brutally interrupted. Although Linton is not sexually attracted to Catherine, at the first sign of chemistry between Hareton and the girl, he gets up from the hearth, where he sits with his head bowed to prevent his cousin and the plowman from becoming intimate.

As soon as Linton notices that Catherine is engaging in conversation with her other cousin, he feels uneasy with the situation, walks over to them, and immediately disqualifies Hareton by calling him an illiterate country bumpkin so as to prevent Catherine from approaching her impoverished cousin.

Curiously enough, this is the first time that Linton rushes to intervene in an event in the house, and he only interrupts his constant lethargic behavior to impede the young couple's approach. After all, in this new generation, Linton Heathcliff takes over the privileges of Hareton Earnshaw, Hindley's son, and occupies Heathcliff's former subordinate position, akin to that of a slave since the gypsy becomes the master of Wuthering Heights. Knowing that Hareton could

have been in his place, Linton tries to belittle him whenever possible. According to the narrator,

> Linton gathered his energies, and left the hearth. The lattice was open, and, as he stepped out, I heard Cathy inquiring of [Hareton,] her unsociable attendant what was that inscription over the door. Hareton stared up, and scratched his head like a true clown.
> 'It's some damnable writing', he answered. 'I cannot read it'.
> Linton giggled: the first appearance of mirth he had exhibited.
> 'He does not know his letters', he said to his cousin. 'Could you believe in the existence of such a colossal dunce?' [...]
> Linton repeated his laugh, and glanced at Hareton tauntingly; who certainly did not seem quite clear of comprehension at that moment. (Brontë 384).

As we have seen, Linton mocks Hareton for speaking a West Yorkshire dialect and for not being able to read the inscription on the frontispiece of the house, which says "Hareton, 1500", a reference to the founder of the manor and the year it was inaugurated. On the other hand, once provoked, Hindley's son, feeling humiliated before the girl to whom he is attracted, wants to retaliate against the young master and chases the weak boy upstairs. However, contrary to expectation, Linton changes his tune when he explains to Joseph what has happened. To everyone's surprise, the cockatrice accuses Catherine of causing the disturbance in the house and claims that Hareton is innocent. Resentful of Linton's unexpected siding with Hareton, Catherine says the following to Ellen Dean:

> Earnshaw burst the door open: having gathered venom with reflection. He advanced direct to us, seized Linton by the arm, and swung him off the seat.
> '"Get to thy own room!", he said, in a voice almost inarticulate with passion; and his face looked swelled and furious. "Take her there if she comes to see thee: thou shalln't keep me out of this. Begone wi' ye both!"
> 'He swore at us, and left Linton no time to answer, nearly throwing him into the kitchen;[...]
> Ellen, he [Linton] has such an unhappy temper. And what quite confounded me, when he did open his mouth, it was to utter the falsehood that I had occasioned the uproar, and Hareton was not to blame!" (Brontë, 1975, 399).

From then on, a strange triangulation ensues, in which Linton behaves suspiciously because, faced with these facts, it is not clear to what extent he wants

to gain Hareton's trust just because he fears physical violence, or because the young master, in a Freudian slip, abandons the maiden and takes the side of the other man, even if only for a while. Regardless of the reason, this passage begins to reveal how treacherous Heathcliff's son is, how he will continue to humiliate Hareton, and how much he will strive to keep Catherine away from her maternal cousin.

Whatever may have happened to Linton in the past, his manners do not go unnoticed in the politics of gender when he emerges in the narrative after his mother's death. In addition to Ellen Dean's description of Linton as 'effeminate' and someone of a 'distorted nature', Hareton suggests that he is a 'lass' in fury. As the story unfolds, Linton progressively teases his opponent, reminding him that on Heathcliff's orders, young Earnshaw must never retort to his superiors. So, in his provocations to the farmhand, Linton asks: "'Where is the use of the devil in that sentence?' tittered Linton. 'Papa told you not to say any bad words, and you can't open your mouth without one. Do try to behave like a gentleman, now do!" (Brontë, 1975, 384).

Hareton, in turn, confronts Linton, saying that he will not retaliate against young Mr. Heathcliff as an equal because the latter is more of a girl than of a boy: "'If thou weren't more a lass than a lad, I'd fell thee this minute, I would; pitiful lath of a crater!'" retorted the angry boor, retreating, while his face burnt with mingled rage and mortification! for he was conscious of being insulted, and embarrassed how to resent it" (Brontë 385).

Of course, Hareton's comment sounds like a callous remark in self-defense, just as Linton's refined London background may be the reason why Ellen Dean describes him as 'delicate' and 'effeminate'. However, there seems to be more than sophistication in Linton's behavior, for although he resembles his uncle physically and culturally, Edgar Linton is portrayed as a gentleman and not 'effeminate', let alone 'a lass'.

Transcending a binary gender code, Linton Heathcliff's manners deviate from the dichotomous Victorian gender standard and the other characters seem to assume he is a homosexual because of his girly behavior. Considering that sexuality and gender were not recognized as two distinct categories in the 19th century, (Kennard, 1996), Linton's delicacy and mannerisms are indicative of his inverted sexuality: something that might explain Ellen Dean's intriguing

comment: “I WAS so sorry Linton had that distorted nature” (Brontë, 1975, 401) [original emphasis], insinuating that he is sexually inverted.

As Kennard explains, as far as *Wuthering Heights* is concerned, sexual inversion is not only a question of desire, of the choice of sexual object, “but implies a much wider range of cross-gender behavior” (Kennard, 1996, 19). Except for Catherine Linton, his cousin, he is not seen as fully masculine, as if his gentle gestures would compromise his masculinity (Sundén, 2002). About sex/gender intercrossing, Paul McIlvenny (2002) states that

> The so-called prediscursive ‘sex’ is a result of the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by gender [...] Indeed, the implied correlation or distinction between sex and gender [...] serves to enforce compulsory heterosexuality. Gender difference is the product of a series of normative regulatory practices that work to secure a binary model and to marginalize other forms of desire or object-choice (McIlvenny 123-124).

As there was no differentiation between gender and sexuality in 19th-century England, masculinity and femininity were discussed as separate categories grounded in biological morphology. Therefore, androgyny was perceived as a pathology (Foucault, 1981). When Heathcliff is to force Linton and Catherine to marry, Ellen Dean refers to Linton as a cockatrice (Brontë, 1975, 411), a legendary creature with a rooster’s head and a snake’s tail, which, by embodying hybridity in ontological and physical aspects, also presents an ambiguous sexuality (Bondeson, 1999). In light of this panorama, let us first examine the symbolism of the cockatrice and then learn what physicians used to say about people with ambivalent gender behavior.

According to Bondeson (1999) and Breiner (1979), a mythical creature, a cockatrice is associated with power, leadership, and chaos in the late Middle Ages. Legend has it that the cockatrice is a bizarre hybrid creature, first produced on a farm, which transgresses sexual norms and the division of species. It is therefore an undefined creature whose essence oscillates between male and female, reptile and bird, as if it were a stage in the evolution between these species. After all, it comes from an egg laid by a rooster and hatched by a snake. As a demonic being that fuses male and female references, the cockatrice is also believed to have been the serpent of the Garden of Eden in Jhon Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (Bondeson, 167).

Also according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1996), a cockatrice and a basilisk are similar but not precisely the same. The former, hatched by a snake, has more avian characteristics, and the latter, hatched by a chicken, has more reptilian traits. Yet, in terms of symbolism, they may represent the same concept or not, depending on the context in which the cockatrice and the basilisk are found (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999 [n. p.]).

Furthermore, Michael Ferber (1999) and Laurence Breiner (1979) say that the basilisk, mentioned in ancient Greek and Hebraic texts, was translated into English by John Wycliff as 'cockatrice' in the Middle Ages given that "Jerome [Stridon] translated *basiliskos* here and in most other passages into the *Vulgate* as 'regulus', [...] but [John] Wycliffe and his followers translated [it] into English as 'cockatrice'" (Ferber 18).

In his description of a basilisk, which he equates with a cockatrice, Juan Eduardo Cirlot (2001) makes more illuminating references to Linton's symbolic embodiment of a hybrid monster in the novel, since, according to the theorist, the three-pointed crest of a basilisk (or cockatrice) represents a diabolical trinity, an interesting point to be woven into Girard's theory of triangulations. After all, the cockatrice appears in a triadic representation, which is the case of Linton Heathcliff, Catherine Linton/Heathcliff, and Hareton Earnshaw. According to Cirlot, a basilisk is

> A fabulous animal with a snake's body, pointed head, and a three-pointed crest. In medieval descriptions, it was said to be born of a yolkless egg laid by a cock and hatched by a toad on a bed of dung and to have a three-pointed tail, glittering eyes, and a crown on its head. Its glance was believed to be lethal so that it could only be destroyed while its assailant was watching it in a mirror. This belief is related to the myth of the Gorgon's head. In the East, its body was supposed to be a mixture of cock, snake and toad. According to Diel, this projected image of the human psyche is clearly infernal in character, as is shown by its threefold attributes (its three-pointed crest and trifurcated tail) since they are an inversion of the qualities of the Trinity (Cirlot 23)

As noted, Cirlot's description of a basilisk/cockatrice adds further elements to this analysis in which Linton stands in symbolic triangulations in different respects; because, if, on the one hand, he imitates Catherine's feelings for Hareton in Girard's concept of 'triangular desire', on the other hand, Linton, like a diabolical creature with a three-pointed crest, will do everything in his

power to make life a living hell for the other two people involved in the same evil triangulation.

Among other things, Linton's androgynous condition seems to explain why he is a cockatrice in *Wuthering Heights*. So much so that when Ellen Dean, who had previously called him 'delicate' and 'effeminate', subtly suggests that Catherine be aware of the man to whom she will be bound for life because, as a cockatrice, he may not satisfy her sexually. It is true that the ambiguity of this hybrid animal to which Ellen Dean alludes is not limited to questions of sexuality. To such an extent that Heathcliff, Linton's father, an icon of masculinity in the novel, is described as a man with basilisk eyes, meaning that his nature oscillates between good and evil (Brontë 364), but not that he is an effeminate man. This focus on the dubious personalities of father and son explains why Ellen Dean tells Heathcliff: "'Show his [Linton's] resemblance to yourself'" (Brontë 411).

Yet, other factors about the son do not apply to the father, such as the fact that Linton is a frail, girlish young man with an unpleasant voice and a distorted nature: clues that allow us to read him as a homosexual since the appearance of a cockatrice is much more fragile than that of a basilisk.

Aware of the differences in question, Brontë compares the father to a beast with the ferocious traits of a reptile but a more docile essence of a rooster. Calculatedly, Heathcliff is not fully compared to a basilisk but is portrayed as someone with the eyes of such a creature.

Linton's symbolic monstrosity, on the other hand, is something more intense and inherent in being, as he is portrayed as the cockatrice itself: a hybrid animal with the feeble appearance of a chicken but the evil essence of a reptile; an aberration whose malevolence can be linked, among other things, to both his gender ambiguity and his resemblance to his father's personality.

That is why Ellen Dean insists that Heathcliff tell Catherine about the snare that she has fallen into, and admonishes Heathcliff to talk about his son's 'defects': "'[Heathcliff,] explain your son's character [...] and then, I hope, Miss Cathy will think twice before she takes the cockatrice!'" (Brontë 411). Once he does not tell the girl the risks she is running, she eventually marries Linton.

According to Melissa Fegan (2008), there is a strong suggestion that Linton is considered a symbolic miscreant because he was conceived in violence, and is the fruit of an unnatural union in which his mother and father hated each

other. Grossly speaking, the boy embodies the monstrosity of rape, being a defective and distorted creature. As Fegan affirms,

> Linton Heathcliff is an abomination, a child conceived and born in hate. Nelly compares him to a cockatrice, a mythic animal with a cock's head and a serpent's tail, highlighting the unnatural splicing of Heathcliff and Linton's traits in his creation. His very name is an oxymoron, a reminder of the utter incompatibility of Linton and Heathcliff's genes. Linton is the embodiment of the worst aspects of his parents. He is, from the outset, 'an ailing, peevish creature; none of the Lintons are noted for their physical strength (even Catherine is 'puny' when she is an infant), but Linton takes this to extremes. [...] There are constant reminders that Linton's nature is 'distorted', his character, 'defective' (Fegan 102-103).

Being inherently bad and effeminate "Linton had that distorted nature" (Brontë 401) and a "defective character" (Brontë 376), becoming the epitome of a human oxymoron resultant of incompatible parents, he retains within himself the abnormality of a homosexual, then deemed a person with psychic hermaphroditism. As Foucault posits, although 19th-century scientists blatantly rejected religion, the Victorian scientific discourses paradoxically absorbed religious morality, as the term sodomite, of biblical origin, was adopted into the scientific language in the 18th century, and coined again in the following one, thus, perpetuating a stigma of unbelongingness for the homosexual time after time. Ergo, in the 19th century, homosexuality was not only seen as an abomination but also as a form of physical and mental disorder. That is why Linton is so unhealthy, unhappy, and unlively. Because of his atypical nature, he proves to have an anomaly in his body and soul, typical of a sodomite. As Foucault (1981) points out,

> The extreme discretion of the texts dealing with sodomy – that utterly confused category and nearly universal reticence in talking about it made possible a twofold operation: on the one hand, there was an extreme severity (punishment by fire was meted out well into the eighteenth century) without there being any substantial protest expressed before the middle of the century and, on the other hand, a tolerance that must have been widespread (which one can deduce indirectly from the infrequency of judicial sentences, and which one glimpses more directly through certain statements concerning societies of man that were thought to exist in the army or in the courts). There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century

> psychiatry, jurisprudence, and the literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, perversion, pederasty, and 'the psychic hermaphrodism' made possible a strong advance of social control into this area of 'perversity' (Foucault 101).

Actually, the sodomite was a confusing category in the 19th century because, according to physicians from those times, his supposed psychic hermaphrodism was a consequence of his degenerate mind and physical deformities rooted in the morphology of his brain and skull, in such a way that a homosexual had not only a mental disorder but further health problems. After all, the defects in the fabric of his ontological constructions would be reflected in his body. Thus, in theory, a person who mixed masculinity and femininity was sick and doomed to a short life.

Indeed, Linton's distorted nature foreshadows that he will die very young so that a heterosexual couple can have a happy ending. As the story unfolds and an enemies-to-friends dynamic develops between Catherine and Hareton, it is implied that they will end up as husband and wife. Given that Catherine is a mimetic representation of her mother, just as Hareton passes for a new Heathcliff, the reader is led to root for them to be together and restore the social order of Wuthering Heights. After all, as Haggerty (2006) affirms, "Gothic resolutions repeatedly insist on order restored and (often) on the reassertion of heteronormative prerogative" (10).

Resuming questions about the sodomite, Andréa Linhares (2010) posits that, by the end of the 18th century, the moral behavior of the subject was used as a parameter to measure normality, so that deviations from standardized heterosexual behavior, for example, would signal mental disorders. These theories, based on primary studies of anatomy and heredity, were extremely judgmental and led to many people being segregated in asylums in the 19th century. As Linhares (2010) notes,

> in the 18th and 19th centuries, illicit sexual practices are often approached from a medical perspective. This new approach nonetheless inherits a moral norm, which regularly infiltrates one's attitude to these kinds of sexual behavior, which are generally understood as unhealthy. [...] As for the strictly medical discourse, starting from the 18th century we see the emergence of theories where the body and sexual practices mutually influence each other. Two epistemologically opposed conceptions describe

> the relation between anatomy and sexual practices: the first argues that the body in a way determines sexual phenomena. Anatomical abnormalities would thus be the cause of deviant sexuality. The second maintains the opposite: deviant sexual practices can disfigure an individual's body and sexual organs. The sexual instinct is no longer a mere consequence of anatomical disposition but it is itself capable of transforming the body. One finds here again the idea that using the body in ways that oppose nature can if not destroy it then at least deform it or disfigure it. In trying to explain abnormal sexual behavior, the "first conception", i.e. considering sexual practices as a kind of bodily product or "secretion," will thus constantly be looking for anatomical foundations (Linhares 297).

For all these reasons, Linton, who embodies the stereotype of the cockatrice, is gender ambivalent, weak, and ergo, inherently wicked. Actually, Linhares's words lead us back to Fegan's analysis of Linton Heathcliff, allowing us to juxtapose gothic symbolism with scientific discourse. Having been fecundated in a violent environment, he inherits the worst in Heathcliff and Isabella, becoming an evil creature who will disrupt the lives of Catherine Linton/Heathcliff and Hareton Earnshaw as long as he lives (Fegan, 2008). Thus, because of his villainous nature, Linton will set up mechanisms of oppression to manipulate the other elements of an atypical love triangle that Girard defines as 'triangular desire' or 'triangulations of passions'.

Although Heathcliff's son never explicitly desires Hareton, he is indifferent to Catherine, possibly marries her at his father's behest, and seems to use his breathing problems as an alibi for not consummating his marriage. Moreover, even though Linton himself never confesses to anything that might even amount to a clear homoerotic comment, his contemptuous remarks, obsessive derision of his rival, narcissistic impulse, and veiled jealousy of Hareton seem to prevent Catherine and her other cousin from getting closer.

According to Sigmund Freud, one's impulse to mock the other can be linked to narcissistic behavior, which can mask the libido. After all, the self cannot admit to desiring the other. In this context, Freud says that the elements involved in narcissistic situations "are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other" (Freud, 1995, 751). Applying Freud's words to Linton and Hareton, I would suggest that, on a hypothetical level, the former's unrequited desire for the latter could be extremely distressing since Hareton has eyes only for Catherine, leaving Linton no choice but to suppress it. On the other hand, his disdain for Hareton

may confirm a triangular structure involving both of them and young Catherine, since the delicate boy's jealousy of her does become a key element in what René Girard denominates 'triangular desire' or 'triangulation of passions'.

According to Girard (1976), in 19th-century romantic novels, when a character interacts with someone with whom he/she identifies, he/she can also take on some of the other's characteristics such as passion, love, hate, etc. From this perspective, desire can be disguised, hidden, sublimated, or transformed into other manifestations such as anger, contempt, and so on "but never reveals its actual mechanism" (Girard 43). Once concealed, desire can manifest itself as envy or jealousy. As the theorist reckons,

> Jealousy and envy imply a third presence: object, subject, and a third person toward whom the jealousy or envy is directed. These two vices are therefore triangular. However, we never recognize a model in the person who arouses jealousy because we always take a jealous person's attitude toward the problem of jealousy. Like all victims of internal mediation, the jealous person easily convinces himself that his desire is spontaneous. [...] But true jealousy is infinitely more profound and complex. It always contains an element of fascination with the infinite rival (Girard 36).

Apparently, Linton has no reason to be jealous of Hareton because of his social superiority, but since the new heir of Wuthering Heights is weak and debilitated, and Hindley's son is described as "a great strong lad of eighteen" (Brontë 371), as well as an "athletic youth, good-looking in features, and stout and healthy" (Brontë 373), it is likely that Linton can both envy and desire his rival's strength and vigor if he unconsciously imitates Catherine's attraction to Hareton.

Indeed, Linton's arrogance, hypothetical jealousy, and sense of otherness towards Hareton may be more complex than it seems because, according to Girard (1976), when the self participates in a triangular desire, it does not immediately desire the other. First, through jealousy, it transfers to itself and mimics the mediator's desire for a third element in a triadic structure. In Brontë's novel, Catherine plays the role of Linton's mediator, that is, the envied person: someone who "is there [...] radiating toward both the subject and the object" (Girard 21). Then, by looking at the mediator, the self begins to mirror the former's desire and finally focuses on the other, creating a "special metaphor

which expresses this triple relationship [...]: the triangle [of passions]" (Girard 21).

According to VanderBos (2015), what Girard calls a mimetic process is also known in psychology as 'mirroring', that is, a particular situation in which the individual copies an older person's behavior, consciously or unconsciously. In the novel, Linton is actually a little younger than Catherine, and his demeanor seems to fit the following definitions of mirroring presented by VanderBos, according to whom,

> 1. reflecting or emulating speech, affect, behavior, or other qualities in psychotherapeutic contexts. A therapist may adopt the movements, speech style, or locutions of a client, and vice versa, to indicate comprehension of what is being said or to reflect bonding, either nonconsciously or with the intent of empathizing. 2. the positive responses of parents to a child that are intended to instill internal self-respect. (VanderBos 657).

While processing mirroring, the ego follows a mimetic modus operandi, projects the mediator's yearning, begins to pine for the other, becomes jealous of it, and decides to prevent the mediator from coming close to the other. However, the self denies its longing for the other, especially because this process is not spontaneous.

As Wolfgang Palaver (2011) says, "Girard postulates that human desire is not based on the spontaneity of the subject's desire, but rather the desires that surround the subject. He argues that humans do not themselves know what to desire; as a result, they imitate the desires of others" (35). Therefore, when Linton duplicates Catherine's desire, he is recalcitrant in this emulative process because he cannot accept that he ogles Hareton since the farmhand is a forbidden body.

According to Jean-Paul Sartre (1996), when the self becomes aware of its projection into the other, it immediately rejects such a manifestation. In this case, Julia Kristeva (1982) postulates that when the other arouses desire and the longing for this forbidden thing or person causes repulsion, abjection erupts from the unconscious and manifests itself, bringing painful experiences. As Kristeva (1982) brilliantly summarizes,

> Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful – a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus,

> that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself (Kristeva 1)

In this process, the ego finds itself adrift in a sea of emotions oscillating between libido and repulsion. For this reason, abjection is merciless because it turns the self's world upside down, defies its cultural references and makes the ego aware of its unexpected longing, even as it continues to yearn for something it struggles against. As a result, the self begins to disgust its object of desire, unable to accept its identification with the abject body. In the end, the ego represses its forbidden passion, and its self-hatred is extended to the other until the object of desire is ultimately punished. After all, the self prefers to sustain a binary opposition that justifies its sense of superiority over the other.

If we consider Linton's reactions when he decides to keep Hareton and Catherine worlds apart, it is possible to infer that he mocks the peasant to hide his desire for the latter and make sure that the girl whom he mirrors does not get romantically involved with the third element of the triadic structure.

On top of it all, Linton is angry because he sees Hareton as the abject body and hates himself and the other for not surrendering to forbidden desire. He, therefore, struggles with internalized homophobia and practices otherness, as his humiliation of Hareton disguises his unwilling sexual attraction to a subaltern as well as his self-hatred.

According to Lacan (2017), the ego's inability to acknowledge that it is repressing a desire forces it to create a mask in order to maintain social appearances. As the psychoanalyst postulates, repressed volition is…

> a desire that the subject excludes insofar as he wants it to be recognized. As a desire for recognition, it's perhaps a desire, but, at the end of the day, it's a desire for nothing. It's a desire that is not there, a rejected, excluded desire. This twofold characteristic of unconscious desire, which, by identifying it with its mask, turns it into something different from anything that can be directed towards an object – we must never forget this (Lacan 307-8).

Thus, taking Lacan's words, Gerard's mimesis, and Kristeva's abjection into consideration, it is possible to assume that Linton wears a 'mask' that conceals his dissatisfaction because his desire is impossible to achieve, so he

unconsciously envies Catherine's yearning for Hareton not only when he leaves the hearth to ridicule Hareton and hinder an approximation between the farmhand and the girl. It also happens in a scene already presented in this text when Linton peevishly irritates Hindley's son but unexpectedly defends him before Joseph not only out of fear but also to evoke a sense of partnership between him and Hareton. It seems that the cockatrice first annoys the yeoman to get his attention and draw him nearer, for in the end Linton, in a controversial and cowardly act, shows solidarity with the other young man. As time passes and Linton and Catherine begin to have problems in their marriage, the cockatrice complains to Ellen Dean that Catherine beats him, but that Hareton never touches him: "Hareton never touches me: he never struck me in his life" (Brontë, 387).

Although 'touching' in this context clearly refers to 'beating', the cockatrice's comment might also have additional meaning, as though he were complaining on an unconscious level about not being touched by the man he secretly desires. The burning question is whether Linton's constant harassment of the farm laborer is a deliberate or unconscious way of forcing Hareton to touch him even if it is through the use of violence. After all, he comes face to face with the cockatrice during their first struggle for power.

Therefore, if we read touching as a strategy for enabling physical contact between two men, I wonder to what extent Linton is unsuccessfully inciting Hareton to touch him violently to compensate for an affectionate stroke that he will never receive from the other man. Given that Hindley's son does not succumb to his rival's provocations because he is both faithfully obedient to Heathcliff and uninterested in his young master's misguided allure, the cockatrice remains frustrated.

As Lacan adds, in "the psychological dimension that unfolds a following frustration, [...] you can pick out this relationship between dissatisfaction and the mask in their very declarations, and this would mean that, up to a point, there would be as many masks as there are forms of dissatisfaction" (2017, 334). By repressing an impossible desire, Linton seems to have no sexual contact with his wife, tries to trample Hareton underfoot and, in this process of emotional self-mutilation, he somatizes pent-up feelings until he collapses.

In fact, abjection is an offshoot of otherness which can be defined as a feeling of strangeness experienced by the self towards a subject it perceives as different. Ostracized and deprived of privileges, the abject body becomes the 'other', and an outcast detached from the so-called Mainstream or the Establishment: an elitist epicenter of cultural production that perpetuates intolerance and discrimination through social, cultural, ethnic-racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies for political purposes. Otherness, as an umbrella term for prejudice, then emerges from a psychological sphere to intervene in social contexts through political measures that turn prejudice into law and, consequently, into social norms.

According to Jean-Paul Sartre (1966), in a class-based society, otherness can also appear as an unintentional identification of the self with the other. As the ego struggles to deny its involuntary affinity with its object of prejudice, the self creates resistance to dangerous experiences and chooses to enslave the other in order to validate its sense of superiority. As he affirms,

> Everything which may be said of me in my relations with the Other applies to him as well. While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. [...] Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others" (Sartre 304).

All of these factors seem to apply to Linton's bias against Hareton. Genealogically, both were on equal footing. After all, Linton descends from the wealthy Linton family and, as for young Earnshaw, he would have been the rightful heir to Wuthering Heights had his father not fallen into debt and Heathcliff not usurped Hindley. Even knowing that young Earnshaw could have inherited the farm, Linton patronizes him and abuses his power, reinforcing the idea that Hindley's son should be treated as a servant. So much so that he emphasizes the plowman's poor command of standard English as evidence of cultural inferiority. In doing so, Linton not only belittles him in front of Catherine but also makes it clear that a farm laborer should not speak to those of a higher rank unless summoned. In short, Linton benefits from otherness to impose his authority on his subordinate and to keep Hareton in a state equivalent to what Sartre calls 'enslavement'. Strategically, by insisting that young Earnshaw should

not be viewed as a member of Catherine's family, Linton also undermines any approximation between Catherine and Hareton.

Acting like a cockatrice, he proves to be a coward in both senses of the word: at times pusillanimous and at times heartless. After all, he taunts people, does not fight his intimidators face to face but stabs them in the back when they turn around. In fact, this alternation between fright and perversity is very common in his complex demeanor. More avian in its appearance, and bred by a snake, this hybrid creature instinctively knows when and how to attack its victims. In *Wuthering Heights*, Linton may appear as spineless as a chicken, embodying this popular term used to denote cowardice. On the other hand, with a father as venomous and tricky as a serpent, Linton fearfully obeys his progenitor in exchange for protection and out of convenience. As such, he can be weak as a chicken but also sly and cunning when it suits him to strike like a viper. That is why Ellen Dean says that Linton resembles his father.

Indeed, Linton's cold-blooded side manifests itself in his abuse of power over his wife. If we follow Gerard's train of thought and assume that the cockatrice is jealous of her, he seems to punish Catherine for desiring the man he also craves. Never in the story does Linton show her compassion. In a narcissistic impulse, he watches her suffer indifferently while having his usual drink by the fireplace. Out of sheer perversity, in Chapter XXVIII, Linton is determined to subjugate Catherine by forbidding her from seeing her moribund father at Thrushcross Grange:

> 'He [my father Heathcliff] says I'm not to be soft with Catherine: she's my wife, and it's shameful that she should wish to leave me. He says she hates me and wants me to die, that she may have my money; but she shan't have it: and she shan't go home! She never shall! – she may cry, and be sick as much as she pleases!'
> He resumed his former occupation, closing his lids, as if he meant to drop asleep (Brontë, 1975, 413).

But when Catherine rebels and begins to attack him physically both for failing to play his role as a husband and reducing her to a domestic prisoner, Linton does not behave as a treacherous snake but as a coward chicken. On such occasions, he criticizes his wife and even praises Hareton's good behavior, switching sides again in a triangulation of passions.

In this vicious process, the cockatrice will do his best to prevent Catherine Linton/Heathcliff and Hareton Earnshaw from being happy together, just as Hindley once fought to keep Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff apart. After all, the character that epitomizes a hybrid creature will never find happiness or satisfaction in his brief existence. Thus, in his discontent, Linton Heathcliff uses his power to support an egomaniacal mechanism through which he humiliates Hareton and strives to sublimate a desire that will never be fulfilled. On his mask of prejudice and frustration, he also seeks to validate the otherness within himself, show his cruelty, and manifest an apparent indifference to demonstrate a sense of superiority over Hindley's son, because narcissism can involve, among other things, narcissism may include mirror transference and a wish to do perversity to the other (VanderBos, 2015, 686).

For all these reasons, Ellen Dean does not see the boy as a victim. As she says, “Linton can play the little tyrant well” (Brontë, 1975, 411). Also to fuel his narcissistic impulses, Linton does not hesitate to marry his cousin despite his sexual disinterest in her. After marrying her, Linton reveals how ruthless he can be and becomes even more jealous of Hareton and Catherine because, as the cockatrice in a triangulation of passions, he will not leave the other two in peace.

In terms of power relations, marriage gives Linton control over Catherine and Hareton as much as it feeds his jealousy of them. Therefore, in a narcissistic modus operandi, he gains her attention and keeps the plowman away. In this manner, Linton stands as an obstacle between Catherine and Hareton and somehow passes for a home-wrecker in the sense that he stands in their way and becomes an obstacle to the couple’s approach.

Although he unconsciously absorbs Catherine’s attraction to a strong young man, Linton seems to somaticize his repressed feelings, aggravating his lifelong health problems. If we consider somatization in the novel (Togerson, 2005), Linton’s illnesses may stem not only from his ‘deformed nature’ but also from his sense of guilt. Considering that, while he represses his mirroring of Catherine’s desire, he blames himself and suffers from his nurturing of abjection towards his object of desire, promoting otherness towards Hareton and experiencing what Georges Bataille (1986) calls ‘limited sensuality’. In doing so, Linton maintains an internal conflict derived from guilt that can affect both his mind and his body. As Bataille posits,

> Limited sensuality with its permitted aspects covers up the mortal aspects that are seen in the flight of the drone or the temptation of the religious, whose meaning is more remotely evident in morose delectation. What is true is that the kind of genital activity intended by God, limited to marriage, and more generally the sort of sexuality thought of as natural and normal, as opposed on the one hand to unnatural deviations and on the other to experiences considered as guilty and sin-laden, and having a harsher flavor because of that – the lure of the forbidden fruit (Bataille 238).

In the light of Bataille, I would dare say that Linton's restrictions on sex in heterosexual marriage prevent him from indulging his desires. Hence, he not only inflicts suffering on Catherine and Hareton but also punishes himself through forced celibacy. This mechanism brings us back to narcissism, which VanderBos describes as "1. excessive self-love or egocentrism. 2. […] the taking of one's own ego or body as a sexual object or focus of the libido or the seeking or choice of another for relational purposes on the basis of his or her similarity to the self" (VanderBos, 2015, 686).

As we can realize, VanderBos's conceptualization of narcissism matches the condition of the cockatrice who, by focusing his interests on a triangulation of passions, proves us to be an egomaniac, making everything that happens in the house about him, and pitying himself for not getting what he wants in life.

By establishing a dialogue with Benshoff's (1997) scrutiny of Gothic movies through intermediality, Matt Cardin (2017) shows how queer references in Gothicism contribute to my reading of Linton Heathcliff. According to Cardin, the Gothic tradition involves transgression through sexual deviance in the construction of monstrosity, which is the case with the gender and sexuality of the cockatrice in *Wuthering Heights*.

As the scholar affirms, "Benshoff examines how queer monsters continue to come out of the closet, and these days in much greater numbers. Studies like Benshoff's are important, for without the use of a queer studies lens, these developments might have remained hidden from horror studies" (Cardin, 2017, 183).

Indeed, queering past characters is possible because the Gothic is, among other things, about transgression and inner conflict. As Maria Conceição Monteiro (2013) points out, in this vast literary genre, "the displaced subject sees

him/herself in a state of chaos, of rupture and disintegration, as a necessary form of knowledge, while rejecting a model saturated with fixed norms, both social and sexual, thus seeking to deconstruct ideologies and conventions[2]" (44) [My translation]. Also according to Monteiro, the Gothic problematizes desire. Through metaphors and allegories, it symbolically represents reality and does not evade it, in such a way that the Gothic is disruptive and defies dominant ideologies:

> The Gothic [...] uses tools that escape the prevailing literary and social ideologies to express the imaginary, desire, the conflict of being; therefore, representation can work differently in this genre, that is, the Gothic discourse does not seek to escape reality, on the contrary, it only deconstructs it (Monteiro 43)[3] [my translation].

Like the cockatrice in *Wuthering Heights*, the Gothic is ambivalent and contradictory, and thanks to the broad scope of this genre, we can delve into Linton Heathcliff's complex identity, and his existential conflicts, and suggest that his monstrosity is rooted in 19th-century studies of psychic hermaphroditism.

Considering Monteiro's (2013), Cardin's (2017), and Benshoff's (1997) explanations about the Gothic tradition, it is possible to infer that Linton's monstrous essence oscillates between the polarities of masculinity/femininity and the dichotomy of cowardice/perversity as such dualities metaphorically reflect the ambiguous nature of a cockatrice, which is used as a trope to symbolically describe Linton as a delicate effeminate young man. After all, as Brontë Schiltz (2021) explains, Gothic itself struggles with "conventions which have come to double as both Gothic tropes and tropes within the language of sexual deviance" (2).

In fact, the sexual deviance that Linton embodies, once transformed into hatred, contempt, and celibacy within a triadic configuration, results in different

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[2] You read in the original language: "o sujeito deslocado vê-se em estado de caos, de ruptura e esfacelamento, como forma necessária de conhecimento, rejeitando, ao mesmo tempo, um modelo saturado de normas fixas, tanto sociais quanto sexuais, buscando, desse modo, descontruir ideologias e convenções."

[3] You read in the original language: "O gótico [...] usa ferramentas que fogem das ideologias literárias e sociais vigentes para manifestar o imaginário, o desejo, o conflito do ser; daí a representação pode operar de forma diferente neste gênero, ou seja, o discurso gótico não busca a fuga de uma realidade; ao contrário, apenas a desconstrói."

forms of punishment for the three characters involved. As for Hareton, in the triangular configuration under discussion, he is forbidden to approach Catherine. Otherwise, he will be despised, scorned and abashed. After all, otherness, once created in a narcissistic context, feeds Linton's ego, a privileged person in a class-based society where hierarchy is overvalued and emphasized. Catherine suffers as well, unable to find love or sex in her marriage or to visit her moribund father. Lonely and outraged, she has become a domestic prisoner.

Given the heteronormativity of his society and the fact that Ellen, Heathcliff, and Hareton's behavior corresponds to what is now known as homophobia, Linton, as a delicate effeminate man who looks like a lass, cannot talk about his feelings for fear of his life. Therefore, he clings to narcissism as a survival strategy and a failed attempt to sublimate his repressed desire for Harton as well as his sexual indifference toward Catherine.

Consequently, by taking pleasure in tormenting the other, Linton, by repressing desire, also tortures himself, and his experience of abjection leads to internalized homophobia. Although the term is historically new and was created long after the sociohistorical context in which Emily Brontë is circumscribed, it is not a problem to suggest that Linton endures internalized homophobia if we accept Lacan's premise that events in a literary work can precede theoretical discussions. After all, "homophobia relies and thus partakes of an ideological labor complicit with heterosexual supremacy" (Jagose, 2005, p. 8), one which Heathcliff vehemently defends and from which Linton, his son, suffers.

From this perspective, Linton struggles with internalized homophobia as a result of his assimilation of Catherine's feelings and his projection of abjection onto Hareton. In the end, like a self-destructive cockatrice, Linton Heathcliff dies weak, lonely, and probably celibate. His symbolic snake-like poison, in the form of somatization, atrophies and sickens him, leaving him impotent. Compared to a hideous ambiguous creature, which is sometimes seemingly harmless but capable of great evil, Linton passes almost unnoticed as a petty and insufferable minor character who has no right to redemption because his effeminateness does not fit into Victorian society.

As Nicolas Marsh (1999) affirms, *Wuthering Heights* is a novel about "repression, denial, unconscious mental events [...] familiar to modern psychoanalysis" (70), and, thus, on the basis of this concluded discussion of the

effeminate cockatrice in Emily Brontë's novel, I would venture to say that there is substantial evidence for reading Linton as a homosexual, given the way he is portrayed in the novel and how he fits into the dynamic of a triangulation of passions, according to René Gerard. In the end, Linton must be eradicated from society so that the bourgeois mentality of Victorian England, in which Emily Brontë is set, can prevail. After all, like any monster in a Gothic story, the cockatrice must die in *Wuthering Heights* so that the heterosexual norm is restored (Haggarty, 2006), Hareton and Catherine end up together, and the farm returns to the Earnshaw family.

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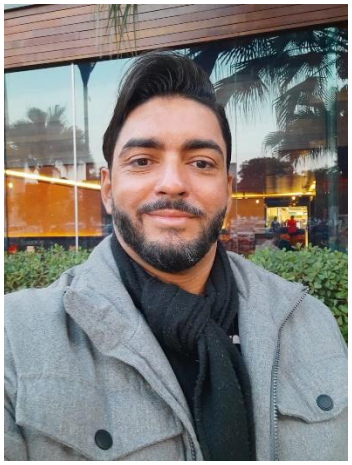

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POETICS OF DIVERSITY

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN LITERATURE

Focusing on the representation of minority groups in literature, the Poetics of Diversity seeks to give projection to politically silenced voices, presenting art as an instrument of resistance, humanization and sensitivity, encompassing diverse themes such as women, motherhood, racial prejudice, diasporic issues such as xenophobia, cultural hybridity, fragmented and transitional identities, as well as gender and sexuality issues in the light of postcolonial theory, feminist studies, corporeality or those related to queer theory. In this way, the poetics of diversity aims to open our eyes to problems that disturb human beings in the historical, social, ethnic-racial, political-geographical, representational, emotional and identity spheres, as well as in the field of desire. For this reason, in this book, we discuss these issues, so dear to humanity, which is still plagued by injustices, wars motivated by greed and other forms of social oppression such as homophobia, heteronormativity, sexism and institutional racism: concepts which must be fought through critical and conscious reflection in the field of symbolic and metaphorical language, so that they function as intellectual weapons that inspire changes in thinking, attitudes and social mobilizations, based on the study of culture from a critical perspective, in such a way that the aesthetic, aligned with the political, creates ammunition for a fight against prejudice, injustice and taboo.

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