


AMAZONIAN LITERATURE: PLOTS, COMPLEXITIES AND REPRESENTATIVENESS IN BRAZILIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The present work aims to foster a discussion about the literature produced in and about the Amazon, discussing peculiar elements of the largest tropical region on the planet, as well as the diversity and cultural plurality characterized by the identity hybridism that makes the region one of the most diverse on the planet. The challenge of discussing diversity, otherness and cultural differences in Amazonian literature requires, therefore, an approach with theorists who suggest this challenge, such as: Homi K. Bhabha (2010), Antoine Compagnon (2007), Marjorie Perloff (2013) Franz Fanon (2008), Walter Benjamin (1994), Antônio Candido (1995), among others who propose the challenge of thinking about difference and cultural diversity. Dealing with literature from a Postcolonialist perspective in the Amazon goes far beyond discussing time and space. Issues of territorialization, borders, and hybrid discourses are paths that point to a new look at the region with the greatest diversity in the Americas. Rivers, peoples, cultures and forests make up the scenario of the Amazonian imaginary, which throughout its colonization had been carefully elaborated from the perspective and interests of the European colonizer. Analyzing Amazonian literature with a decolonization perspective in narratives that demonstrate the reality experienced by those who occupy the Amazonian space has become emerging and of paramount relevance to the literature produced in the region.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity. Difference. Amazonian Literature. Amazon.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of Amazonian literature has gained prominence in recent decades, becoming the object of study of the most diverse researchers from different areas in numerous national and international research institutions. In harmony with Cultural Studies, Postcolonial theories, as well as Comparative Studies, Amazonian literature or Amazonian literature, have gained prominence in the national scenario, and also in international criticism, discussing the role of the largest tropical forest in the world in the fabric of fictional narrative, historical narrative and even psychological narrative as well as, in literature in general.

From a more accurate look, we realize that the fictional prose stands out, efficiently seeking to bring into its plot aspects of the Amazonian space, with all its nuances, diversity, disparities and extremely imposing and conflicting geography. Authors such as Dalcídio Jurandir, Benedito Nunes, Inglês de Souza, Eneida de Moraes, Milton Hatoum, Haroldo Maranhão, Marcio Souza and some others, are highlighted, with works of relevance in the regional and national scenario.

For both national and foreign critics, the Amazon is gradually no longer seen only through the gaze of wonder, of estrangement. The one that provokes the most controversial visions, described in travel reports, travelers' chronicles and fantastic narratives. A place of plural cultures and inhospitable geography, as highlighted by the Pre-Modernist writer and journalist, Euclides da Cunha, in his report *The Margin of History* (1999). Amazonian fiction has gradually been involving elements hitherto neglected in the national literary narrative, constituting itself as a hybrid space, of multifaceted identity, of multicultural formation, capable of transmitting through fiction the countless facets of the Amazonian subject.

About the Amazon, still little known, when describing it, he left the following impressions about the region, he declared:

The dominant impression I had, and perhaps corresponding to a positive truth, is this: the man, there, is still an impertinent intruder. He arrived neither expected nor wanted - when nature was still arranging its vastest and most luxurious hall. And he found an opulent disorder... The same rivers have not yet settled in their beds; they seem to grope for a situation of equilibrium drifting, rambling, in unstable meanders, contorted without "draws", whose isthmus and reverses break and weld together in a desperate formation of islands and lakes of six months, and even creating new topographical forms in which these two aspects are confused; or expanding into "holes" that anastomose, reticulated and completely uncharacteristic, without

knowing whether all that is quite a river basin or a sea profusely cut up of straits.
(CUNHA, 1999)

The graft above, narrated by the writer, places the subject in the condition of an intruder, in a space still little explored and manipulated by man. In this space, nature is imposing, supreme, man is molded to the environment, in an intimate relationship of mutual respect, after all, it is in this scenario that the Amazonian subject lives and builds his thesis of experience and relationship with space.

Literature is constituted and builds its fabric in the images, memories and fragments that are formed in a corpus, which within a space of mimesis, gives life to characters and places capable of building a dialogue with the subject-reader, in this sense the literariness given the narratives produced in the region, has sought in its mimetic construction, portray the daily life of the Amazon, in a given complex game of fictional realism, to represent through his literary conception the unveiling of the social life of man from/in the largest tropical forest on the planet, but who according to Euclides' impressions, is still an intruder in this little-known universe.

THE COMPLEXITY OF LITERATURE WRITTEN IN AND ABOUT THE AMAZON: TRUTHS AND MYTHS ABOUT THE REGION

Amazonian literature, Amazonian literature, or literature about the Amazon? Well, this discussion is not new and probably will not be answered here, but we cannot fail to reflect on this situation that has long filled the spaces of academic debates and national criticism, for some, these terms, these predominances, can push us, to the alley of marginality, Brazilian literature or Amazonian literature, what can be understood within this conception of literature? Can we understand Amazonian literature as a regional literature, given its peculiarities, singular characteristics, or can we hypothesize it as Brazilian literature that has not yet managed to occupy its space in the great "lists" of Latin American national literature, the literature of the great novelists of the Brazilian canon, given its geographical position, its lack of social development?

One thing is certain, Amazonian literature has not yet taken its place, its space on the national scene as we imagine, we still do not know the sins committed, so far, but the interpellations will continue.

For the journalist and lawyer, president of the Pará Academy of Letters of the state of Pará, Amarílis Tupiassú (2015, p. 299), there is a great complexity about the writings in the Amazon, the social isolation, imposed by the difficulties, the poverty of the peoples, the poorly planned migration process, the exploitation of natural resources in an irregular way, all these elements generate an inconcreteness in the thought of the Amazonian writer, who tries, when writing, to convey in his literature an image of the Amazonian universe, read:

As can be seen, to the understanding that expands from the stronghold of decisions, the Amazon and palliative are combined. The Amazon of excesses has long been exploited with meager profits for itself. Despite a non-mythical Amazon, populated by legions of very poor Brazilians and which keeps in its culture, physiognomy and intimacy with the elements of the forest, the living memory of the ancestral Indian, today the almost Indian or almost nothing, the wanderer of the villages embedded in the depths of the forest, on margins without record in any chart, on the banks of rivers, streams; yesterday detribalized with violence, deculturated, today the stray, hovering in a time without calends, the people of the braided greens and waters, flows of the superlative Amazon River. It is this Amazon of scarcity that coexists with the real El Dourado, of fauna, flora, wealth, whose inventory accounts had never been closed. (TUPIASSÚ, 2005, p. 299).

For the researcher, something has not yet fit. It is impossible to talk about the Amazon without forming a panoramic natural image of the region, gigantic rivers, exuberant flora, animals and people living almost in a spatial universe, indigenous, white, black, migrants and caboclos gathered celebrating "something", in fact, something really, because in these five hundred years of colonization, there is still little to celebrate in the Amazon.

The truth is that the Amazon is not only forests, rivers, animals and dusty roads that turn into mudflats and become impassable in the rainy seasons, periods that are not small, for those who are not familiar with the region, understand well, there are only two seasons in the year, the period of torrential rains, from five to six months, and the rest of the year with less rain and plenty of sunshine.

In the Amazon, large metropolises have developed, where development seems to have achieved its objective, Belém, which is accentuated as the capital of the Amazon, Manaus, driven by the economic development of the Free Trade Zone of Manaus, Boa Vista and Palmas, the latter, the newest of the regional metropolises, which no longer brings the same ethnic and cultural predicates of the large urban centers mentioned above, more for geoeconomic reasons, it is also part of the region.

However, violence and a constant in the region, the dispute over land, land grabbing and the struggle for the conquest of one's own land, has bathed the Amazonian soil in blood, as well as land disputes between indigenous people and farmers, have once again been the subject of recent news in the national media scenario, the illegal exploitation of wood and precious minerals, continues to occupy a good part of the journalistic chronicles, a demand that seems to have no end, or is not of interest in having an end.

Child prostitution, illegal mining, exploitation of child labor, men and women, entire families, communities abandoned to their fate, on the distant islands in the middle of the tropical forest, far from everything and everyone, only nature as a protector, the same nature that welcomes, is also the same that devours, often devastated by terrible tropical fevers, shipwrecks and attacks by wild animals.

This is how the life of the man of the Amazon is conducted, a universal paradox of contrasts between heaven and hell, the perfect setting for the novels that have been produced in the last two centuries of Amazonian literature, to literatize the problematic of social life in the Amazon. We can say that these have been the "mimesis" and the "muthos" of Amazonian literary production.

WEBS AND PLOTS IN AMAZONIAN LITERATURE: VOICES, SOUNDS AND IMAGES

When we mentioned the complexity and paths of literature written in/from the Amazon, we imagined a literature loaded with assumptions about the region, marked by different views on all this, which may have generated a constant search for the construction of an identity that represented literature in such a way as to be called Amazonian literature. The polyphony of voices imbricated in the novels written in the last two centuries, by writers from the region, has demonstrated how much regional elements are present in this literature, but this does not make them more or less regional, or less national. For one of the writers who has participated most in this discussion, the guiding element of this question is precisely how the writer will choose the narrator, and the narrator, to unveil such rudiments of the region through his characters. About this hypothesis, that of discussing regional literature, Amazonian literature or any other denominations, Marcio Souza writes:

And please, don't take this Amazonian literature business too seriously, just as don't take this story of regionalism seriously. An Amazonian literature seems to be something as unlikely as a regionalist literature. (SOUZA, 2104, p. 21).

The specific objective here is not to discuss whether the literature written in and about the Amazon should receive this or that denomination, but to dialogue about the guidelines of how this plot on the literature written in the region has been unfolding, Marcio Souza (SOUZA, 2014, p. 29), warns about such codifications. "What we need is to escape the risk of letting ourselves be captured in ghettos, where the parameters of reception of our works are not of literary excellence, but the result of condescension because we are poor and live far away." the fact that the literature produced here has not yet reached its prominent place in the national canon, except for some writers, such as the Pará native Inglês de Souza, the Amazonian Milton Hatoum, and a few others, is not due to the fact that it is attached to the idea that we have a regionalist literature, with peculiar traits of the region, For him, the issue goes far beyond that, the author emphasizes:

In the case of literature, it can no longer be seen as social capital and as a by-product of individual vanity. Literature has to be made to be read, the writer has to establish a commitment to the readers, because there is no literature without readers. The rest is language adventure, which may eventually serve as material for some university thesis, but will be disposable and perishable. (SOUZA, 2014, p. 29).

Perhaps this is part of an answer we are seeking, or perhaps it only sharpens our curiosity about what has been happening all these years with literature written in the region, perhaps the literary production has not yet conquered its reader, although the Amazonian novel, or the novel written in the Amazon, as you prefer to call it, has had a preponderantly outstanding role in the last century. Souza deduces:

If our past is rarefied and our traditions inconsistent, we have the strength to overcome. The Amazon has already shown signs that it can produce quality authors with national and international projection, what needs to be done now is the construction of a real option for artists in the region (SOUZA, 2014 p.30).

Márcio Souza reminds us that the literature of the Amazon has already shown signs that it can produce great literary works, without giving itself "the luxury" of worrying about codifications and denominations. For example, we have the saga of the writer from Pará, Dalcídio Jurandir, when he wrote "The Cycle of the Middle North", an incredible collection of novels, awarded by national critics, in the second half of the twentieth century, about the author, Amarílis Tupiassú wrote:

He spent more than ten years rewriting a masterpiece, his novel *Choves nos campos de Cachoeira*. He mastered all the registers of the Portuguese language. It is said that it is impossible to get to know the Amazon in depth without diving into the Amazon built in his books. Believe me: the extremely poor Amazon, that of fears and damnations, in contrast to another, that of the excesses and ostentation of the rich, evokes poetry for his novels. He did not accumulate any wealth, no vanity he cherished in life, despite his novels awarded by national critics. He dedicated the refinement of his speech to the writing of eleven novels, ten of them composing the saga of the far north. (TUPIASSÚ, 2005 p.53).

Although Dalcídio has conquered his space in the national literature scene, the same did not occur with Pará literature in general, as I have mentioned before, especially Inglês de Souza who became the main representative of Naturalism in Brazil, as well as the Manaus Milton Hatoum, who gained prominence in the national and international panorama, with the novels *Dois Irmãos* and *Cinzas do Norte*, that bring scenes from the day to day of life in the Amazon, told from a universal perspective, this made Hatoum one of the writers widely read and discussed in the academies, in recent decades, the subject of thousands of theses and dissertations. In this way, we can corroborate the idea asserted by Professor José Guilherme dos Santos Fernandes (2014), when he wrote in his article, entitled "Brazilian literature of Amazonian expression, literature of the Amazon or Amazonian literature?", read:

[...] We need to find the "in-between-place", and I say, find the "intermingling" of our discourse, in the fluent game that starts from colonizing and ethnocentric universality to the truth of differential universality. The point of departure and arrival, in this question, is to find the "sweet point", a place where our epistemological difficulties in characterizing the literature produced in and for the Amazon as being the bearer of either a more local or a more universal expression are acute. My hypothesis is that the national or regional character of Amazonian or Amazonian production is less a conceptual question and more a methodological exercise, even though the distance between theory and practice is the same, and my orientation is the philosophy of praxis (FERNANDES, 2014, p. 112).

It seems that Hatoum found the nerve center or, we can say in popular language, the "jar of candy", at the end of the rainbow, as narrated by the storytellers, or "stories", the writer of *Dois irmão* and *Cinzas do norte*, among others, managed to gather enough elements in his works to encompass the complexity of Amazonian literature, thus making

his literary production a literature that starts from the local to the universal, thus narrating the family dramas, the intrigues between brothers, the migration and exploitation of cheap labor, and the urban problems of the largest city in the Amazon region, Manaus, so it also did not leave out, the drama of inland life, in the infinity of islands scattered throughout the Amazon River basin, The sexual exploitation of minors and child prostitution are part of the author's novelistic composition, in a kind of denunciation of the situation experienced by the Amazonian people, where fiction and reality seem to merge. What José Guilherme points out, about the literature written in the region, has strength in the speech of SANTIAGO (1982), let's see:

Universality is either a game of the colonizer, in which the Western uniformization of the world is gradually achieved, its totalization, through the imposition of European history as universal history, or it is a differential game in which cultures, even those in an inferior economic situation, exercise themselves within a larger space, so that the shocks of the actions of domination and the reactions of the dominated are accentuated (SANTIAGO, 1982, p. 23-24).

If it is a game, it seems that this game is still very far from changing, or literature would need to gain new airs of conceptualization, even with the advent of Post-Modernity, "the cunning" is still valid, more distant, poorer and less developed regions, tend to be reduced to a smaller literature, without great expressiveness, compressed to academic discussions, objects of study of theses and dissertations, falling into the valley of oblivion shortly after, we still cannot say, in fact, what makes a text gain greater or lesser literary projection, given the circumstances of its production, good writers and few readers, bad writers and demanding readers, good writers and bad narrators, in short, this is a discussion to dedicate years of research and studies, but we cannot close our eyes and pretend that everything is fine, that all this is normal, the discussion between the local and the universal, needs to be resumed and better clarified, when it comes to the Amazon, a region that has always been at the top of geopolitical discussions, it needs to have a prominent literature that represents not only its sociocultural dimensions, defined by identity issues, but which in fact, can represent its magnitude of cultural plurality, Afro-descendants, indigenous, whites, immigrants, peoples of all cultures make up this interracial scenario, a more than sufficient contribution to the mimesis of a literary construction capable of concentrating all the elements of the narrative, in the interest of making a literature to be read, because as Marcio Souza (2014) said "[...] literature needs

to be made to be read... because there is no literature without readers". Therefore, we need to continue to discuss the Amazon, its plots and complex chains of intertwining that, with the region, is increasingly accentuated on the stage of contemporary dialogues.

AMAZONIAN LITERATURE: THE APORIAS OF TIME AND THE REMNANTS OF A COLLAPSED AMAZON

The characters of literature written in the Amazon or by writers from the Amazon, are always in transit, persecuted by restlessness, fear and restlessness, they are eradicated by the human condition, startled by the weight of withdrawal, in the face of the gigantic force of nature that is the forest, which often makes them part of it, others, absolutely insignificant next to it. Displaced characters, it seems to be a constant, a mark, so we can say, in the literature written in the Amazon, characters without social identity, without a face, without a name, remnants of a colonial Amazon "... what is left of the vassalage of the old descents, today still a nightmare in process, not only a thing of memory that hurts" TUPIASSÚ (2005).

We can easily identify this in Hatoum, Dalcídio Jurandir, Haroldo Maranhão, in the short stories of Maria Lucia Medeiros and even in the poetry of Élson Farias. Perhaps due to a strong naturalistic or even realistic influence, his characters carry within themselves, the most disturbing traits of the dark side of the region, fear, isolation, lack of social identity, a search for the uncertain place, perhaps the search to find oneself.

This displacement can be understood as the search for survival, but we can also understand this search as someone who seeks belonging, the configuration of an identity, since almost always this character is displaced, outside his zone of identification, the drama of decimated indigenous peoples, the emigrant who finds himself far from his homeland, The distancing from the family, these paradigms makes the Amazonian subject distant from his dignity, makes him deculturated, his knowledge shattered, detribalized, in many cases, reduced to the pejorative. We can understand the need for belonging as something of human nature, independent of any other characters, for research professor Dionei Mathias (2023), it is a yearning to identify oneself as a subject in the sphere of discourse, in the human condition.

The need to belong, however, is not restricted to minority groups or those excluded from the right to participate. It is a yearning that seems to characterize the human condition, having its beginning in the relationship between mother and baby and that is infinitely repeated in the different modalities of interaction, woven along the

existential path, under different masks. In this search, there is a constant yearning for confirmation of the affection radiated by the maternal figure. This confirmation of the self transmitted through the semiotics of the body, in the first phase of life, provides the being with confidence and order, in the face of the complexity inherent in the reality of the world. The search is repeated, but the willingness to invest in affection on the part of the social actors that surround the individual changes. In fact, the scope of this investment will depend on a series of factors that, if not met, tend to trigger exclusion and, with it, the denial of this main existential resource that is belonging. (MATHIAS, p. 3, 2023).

It seems to reinforce our understanding, in a given discursive game of polyphony of voices, multiple or parallel voices, which intersect in the novels and narratives that portray social life in the Amazon, the flow of characters in transit, can be accentuated by the need to search for belonging, something inherent to the human being, as we saw in the hypothesis pointed out by Dionei Mathias, in the previous quotation. In the case of Hatoum, this search for belonging is very strong in *Dois Irmãos*, the family war between the brothers (twins) Yaqub and Omar, translates a scene of enormous anguish, uncontrolled desire to find his place within the family, to be loved, respected in Manaus society, the dispute for a girl, all this triggers a series of consequences that cause the tragedy, the murder of his brother.

The sense of belonging rarely becomes an object of problematization, as long as the individual does not experience its negation. Belonging becomes the content of perception, at the moment when the subject questions himself about the reasons that trigger rejection or exclusion, continuously. (MATHIAS, 2023)

Here the idea of belonging becomes more perceptible, and is concurred with the undulations and with an Amazonia that afflict them, I speak of the characters of Amazonian writers, who seem to reflect the transcultural thought of the post-modern writer writing about his universe, in which his characters are inserted in the sphere of historical reference, but also as an agent of the plot in the sphere of the constituent allocation of the plot. Although the discussion here is not exclusively focused on these issues, we could not fail to address them to try to understand a little more about the literature written about and in the Amazon.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

LITERATURE, IDENTITY, HYBRIDISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM IN BRAZILIAN AMAZONIAN LITERATURE

For a more accentuated debate on the subject, we need to delve deeper into the theories that encompass literary, comparative and post-colonialist studies to understand how literature in the Amazon region has changed the focus in the way of narrating the aporias of time, of individual and collective life in the Amazon, in a society in which for centuries the gaze of the colonizer prevailed, that is, art and literature observed from the perspective of Europeanization, from the outside perspective. Little by little, the views on the region have been reformulated, even if slowly, but it is still a significant advance. Discussing hybridism, identity and cultural diversity in the literature produced in the Amazon needs to take into account the great debates produced in the twentieth century in Latin America, the migration processes that occurred in the continent, in order to understand the Amazon space as a hybrid space, we first need to understand the Amazon as a new look, to leave the traditional, exotic look and start to perceive it as a discursive place of negotiation, the place where cultures meet, and mix and reinvent themselves.

The characterization of identity is corroborated by the similarity of elements, customs and traditions that are united by identity traits, that is, groups or individuals that have certain singularities, which together form the whole, for (HALL, 2005), to think about identity is to think about the transit, the relationship with difference, to identify the other, to identify oneself, in this way, he understands it as "a moving celebration". according to this thought, there is that of the theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1998), who understands that to think about identity is to think about the fissures, in the negotiation with the other, in this sense, identity processes are built on the border, what they come to call hybridization, where exchanges take place, cultural differences start to be negotiated in a process of cultural exchange, the local and the external are mixed and produce new symbols, already in a new discursive definition. For Tadeu Tomás da Silva, identity and differences "are determined by the discursive and symbolic systems that give them definition (SILVA, 2008, p.78). In this context, we understand that identity and difference are not linked to nature, but to issues of cultural and symbolic elements that society produces, so identity and difference must be thought of in a social relationship.

The reflection presented here seeks to discuss issues of identity and hybridism in Amazonian Brazilian literature or Amazonian literature, or even Amazonian literature as

many prefer to call it. The concept of hybridity in the literature produced in the Amazon draws attention to the voices that alternate in the literature produced here, for the researchers, Gilson Penalva and Liane Schneider (2018), do not see the concept of hybridity as a negative connotation, on the contrary, they see it as a break with the idea of homogeneous culture:

Another concept that we resort to in the process of discussing cultural identities in the Amazon is hybridism. From the perspective of this research, this concept does not have any negative connotation, but presents itself as a strategy of rupture with parameters of purity in the cultural field. Hybridism is being understood here as a form of knowledge conducive to understanding the numerous issues that involve dialogues and cultural exchanges that take place in the Amazon from the times of its colonization to the present day and that interfere in the processes of construction of its cultural identities. (PENALVA & SCHNEIDER, p.22, 2018).

This understanding of cultural differences deconstructs the colonialist thought of cultural supremacy, that only what came from outside was culture, the denial of local culture caused years of backwardness to fall on the region, the various productions of the last century have always been in the outside look at the Amazon, the exotic, amazed look that gave rise to several productions, but which contributed little to actually show the reality of social life there. The critic Silviano Santiago (2000, p. 16) has long been calling attention to the need for artists, writers and intellectuals to oppose the colonialist's thought, that Latin America only has what was offered by the European. The hypothesis consists of rediscussing Amazonian literature from a perspective of Post-colonialist theory and criticism that takes into account the crossings, encounters, and disagreements of peoples, all voices, where the formation of identity takes place, which (SANTIAGO, 2000) calls in-between-place.

The notion of identity should be understood, in this premise, as something not fixed and homogeneous, but something that is built in inconcreteness, in incoherence, in the cracks of two or more cultures, in mobile spaces, such as in the periphery and center, village and urban, which can be very well observed in the novels of Dalcídio Jurandir, and Milton Hatoum, These meetings are interesting and fundamental to discuss homogeneous concepts of culture or the vague existential impression of them. The diversity of characters and the polyphony of voices in Amazonian literature draws our attention and brings to the debate the truth that nothing is closed and finished, that cultures are always colliding and

meeting. In this great intercultural, post-colonialist debate, the Amazon has been seen as the place of enunciation of emerging voices, the place where cultures meet and mix.

The idea that is built here is not that one culture suppresses one discourse for the sake of another, but rather that it becomes the place of cultural exchanges, of negotiation; Migrants, immigrants, colonizers, Indians and forest peoples, share this space and have made it this place of cultural exchanges with different national and world cultures. The point of discussion here is the Amazonian literature that escapes the traditional gaze, from the colonizing perspective, in which the focus of the narration is on the European world - the genesis here consists of problematizing the place of this literature in the construction of the Amazonian identity - and in this way, escaping from conventional models in the formation of the new imaginary of the Amazon. A broad discussion that should go a long way in the coming years.

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