

When the Periphery Becomes the Center: New Trends in Contemporary Brazilian Fiction¹

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Abstract: Contemporary literature has always been a dynamic arena for reflecting on and discussing a country's social changes. With the worsening of social problems and the resurgence of right-wing forces in Brazil in the last decade, literature has endured a series of crises, but it has also found new opportunities. The "marginal writers" who attracted attention at the beginning of the century have gradually moved to the center of Brazilian literature. Aside from denouncing the social problems that exist in the periphery, such as violence, discrimination and poverty, they now pay more attention to the inner feelings of the vulnerable. On the other hand, writers who are known for their psychological descriptions have also begun to explore social issues, often maintaining the subjective perspectives of their characters. This essay argues that the merging of the marginal with the center and of collectivity with subjectivity implies the advent of a new type of narrative in contemporary Brazilian literature.

Keywords: Brazilian literature, marginal literature, collectivity, first-person narrative

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In 2006, when analyzing favela literature in Brazil at the turn of the 21st century, João César de Castro Rocha suggested that the "dialética da malandragem" ("dialectic of rascality") defined by Antonio Candido was being replaced by a "dialética da marginalidade" ("dialectic of marginality"), whose most important manifestation is the rejection of social reconciliation and the explicit presentation of the antagonism between different social groups through the portrayal of suffering and violence (23-70). By contrasting these two dialectics, Castro Rocha highlights how contemporary marginal literature, namely *City of God* (*Cidade de Deus*) by Paulo Lins and *Capão of Sin* (*Capão pecado*) by Ferréz, presents and interprets Brazilian society, and he argues that the protagonists of these literary works have begun to supersede Bonidão from *Pagador das promessas* (*Payer of Promises*) and Vadinho from *Dona Flor e seus dois maridos* (*Dona Flora and Her Two Husbands*) to become representative of the new Brazilian reality.

Today, 15 years after the above ideas were elaborated, marginal voices in Brazilian literature have been consolidated: after winning the London Book Fair's Excellence Award in 2016 and Prêmio Jabuti's Fomento à Leitura (Facilitation of Reading) Award in 2020, the Literary Festival of the Peripheries (Festa Literária das Periferias, FLUP), which only dates back 9 years has now been recognized as one of the most successful literary events in Brazil, with its influence reaching other cultural and political

sectors. Besides these voices arising from the peripheries, in contemporary Brazilian literature, other social criticism and reflections have also gone through a period of fermentation and expansion due to the sociopolitical development in recent years. Half a century after the start of the military dictatorship (1964-1988)—at the same time that the National Truth Commission drafted and delivered the final report on the investigation of the violation of human rights from those unforgettable years—a number of works of fiction addressed the same issue, among which Bernardo Kucinski's *K* and Julian Fuks's *The Resistance* (*A resistência*) stand out. Afterwards, particularly after the impeachment of the then President Dilma Rousseff, Brazil has sunken into a series of economic and political crises, which has prompted a new wave of social denunciation by Brazilian writers. A very representative work is *Below Paradise* (*Abaixo do paraíso*) by André de Leones, as it deals, in detailed verisimilitude, with the general corruption of Brazilian politicians.

However, in the last three years, there have been some notable changes in Brazilian literary creation, both in marginal literature and in writings that engage in social criticism. On one hand, as the economic and political problems have worsened, the literary sector has also faced a general crisis. Publishers and bookstores have discovered that it is increasingly difficult to survive while many literary awards and events have lost financial support. One of the turning points of this phenomenon was the closing of *Caros Amigos*, a prominent independent leftist periodical that had been at the forefront of Brazilian social and cultural criticism. Between 2001 and 2004, *Caros Amigos* published three consecutive issues of "Marginal Literature—The Culture of the Periphery" ("Literatura marginal— a cultura da periferia") organized by Férrez. It is clear that the magazine once played an important role in the discovery, support, and circulation of marginal writers. In December 2017, on the occasion of the magazine's 20th anniversary, *Caros Amigos* published a statement on the closure of their print edition, in which it explicitly expressed its discontent with the Brazilian government, showcasing its battle-stance for the last time. However, regardless of whether it was a consequence of governmental irresponsibility, market competition or the emergence of new technologies, the end of *Caros Amigos* can certainly be seen as a warning: reminding us that writing with a single orientation toward protest and social criticism was not attracting enough readers. Transformation was imminent, both for the continuation of the struggle and for achieving greater impact.

On the other hand, many writers traditionally classified as marginal writers are becoming increasingly popular among the big Brazilian publishing houses, and even are beginning to achieve success in the international market. In recent years, they have actively participated in public discussions in Brazil, gradually moving from the margins to the center of the cultural stage. Geovani Martins is a good representative. A favela resident, and a participant of Flup who was a regular at literary and cultural activities of the suburbs of Rio, Martins published his debut work at the age of 26: a collection of short stories entitled *The Sun on My Head* (*O sol na cabeça*), which made him one of the most acclaimed writers in 2018. Aside from dominating the rankings in Brazil, it was also praised by famous writers such as Chico Buarque and Milton Hatoum. On the international market, the book was equally popular, with its copyright sold to nine countries within the first year of its publication, and it has received significant coverage in world media, including *The Guardian* and *The Irish Times*.

It is worth noting that both in Brazil and abroad, when presenting Martins' short stories, similar descriptions of *City of God* and *Capão of Sin* are employed, with an emphasis on the author's identity as a favela resident, his use of peripheral slang, and his literary approach to violence and racial discrimination. However, unlike the irony of "City of God" or the intimidation of "Capão of Sin," *The Sun on My Head* tries to show that besides violence, discrimination, drugs, and crime, life in the favelas also possesses moments of joy and peace. Perhaps it can be said that a new voice has emerged

in contemporary Brazilian literature, different from its predecessors in marginal literature.

1. From the Periphery to the Center

In studying the two books of Sacolinha (Ademiro Alves de Sousa), Leila Lehen is deeply aware of the importance of the representation of daily life in the works of marginal writers. According to Lehen's analysis, the portrayal of everyday life in these impoverished areas can serve multiple purposes, the first of which is to free the area from the its discriminatory stereotype as a completely marginal, criminal, violent, and socially inaccessible place (79-104). By removing this marginality of the place, the author also removes the stigma too often associated with its inhabitants, showcasing that they are essentially not different from middle-class readers, even if their lives are overshadowed by a variety of difficulties and dilemmas. From this point of view, marginal literature can reflect the living conditions of these regional groups more realistically, and is more likely to result in the readers' better understanding as they call for a wider participation in the struggle for basic rights for the disadvantaged.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that among the two of Sacolinha's works analyzed by Lehen, the novel *Graduated in Marginality* (*Graduado em marginalidade*) still mainly emphasizes the criminal and violent side of the peripheries. Compared to previous works like *City of God*, Sacolinha's novel makes it clearer that, when subjected to unfair social system and corrupt authorities, these vulnerable groups are being forced to commit crimes. Put more explicitly, for many favela residents, being a criminal is merely the result of being a victim. As for the positive presentation of daily life and human interactions in these communities, the best examples are in *Like Water from the River* (*Como a água do rio*), Sacolinha's autobiographical work. Sacolinha describes in first person his life and close emotional ties to the community, with particular emphasis on the importance of literary and cultural activities in marginalized areas. Through authentic accounts and apropos photographs, Sacolinha's autobiography sheds light on marginal groups in a sympathetic way and evokes a strong empathy in readers.

The Sun on My Head actually combines these two tendencies from Sacolinha. In this collection of short stories, Martins's accounts come from his own life experience as well as his observations of others around him. The narrative voice also often alternates between first person, third person, and even second person. Even though in "Rolézim" ("Lil Spin"), the first story in the book, one finds plenty of references to crime, drugs, and other things traditionally associated with favelas. The motivation for this story is very simple and devoid of drama: it is nothing more than that the protagonist wakes up feeling too hot at home and wants to go to the beach to play, only to find that the police are on patrol. Although he has not committed any crime, he has to run away from the police because he has heard that "whoever had no money for the ticket was going to the police station, whoever had much more than the ticket was going to the police station, whoever had no identification was going to the police station" ("quem tivesse sem dinheiro de passagem ia pra delegacia, quem tivesse com muito mais que o da passagem ia pra delegacia, quem tivesse sem identidade ia pra delegacia"; Martins 15).

Throughout the conflict between slum kids and the police, Martins accurately apprehends the inequalities suffered by marginalized groups, who are deprived even of the opportunities to enjoy gifts of nature, such as the sea and the sun, on account of the so-called government authorities. However, it is worth saying that this confrontation and injustice is not presented through scenes of indifference, brutality, or even bloody violence, as in Rubem Fonseca's masterpieces, but rather it is interspersed with the love and concern of family and friends. For example, when talking about drugs, although the protagonist and his close friends have been exposed to marijuana since childhood, his older brother earnestly warned him not to snort cocaine, smoke crack, and etc. because one of his friends died

at a young age from an overdose. On the other hand, his mother, like so many mothers, is always careful to educate and discipline her children. However, his brother died on the streets without ever having harmed anyone, and the protagonist himself only managed to escape the police by sheer luck. Through this portrayal, Martins convinces readers to stand with him, as aside from their terrible living conditions, favela residents are not very different from middle-class people. This is particularly important for Brazilian society in recent years, considering that right-wing forces have surged with Bolsonaro's victory in the presidential election in 2018, and ideological divisions in society have widened significantly. Consequently, in addition to hurling accusations and making enemies, marginal writings also need to inspire mutual understanding and create new allies.

The same idea is reflected in "The Story of the Parakeet and the Monkey" ("A história do Periquito e do Macaco"), one of the crudest tales in this book. Although Macaco, which is the nickname of a police lieutenant, is extremely oppressive and violent towards the weak and even the children of the slums, when he was finally killed by an armed bandit, the narrator was sorry to see his children crying. He says explicitly in the book: "For real, even I who hate the police, felt a little sorry at the time, seeing the children in that situation" ("Papo reto, até eu que odeio polícia, na hora senti um pouco de pena, vendo as criança naquela situação"; Martins 43). This sympathy with the children of the police officer echoes the narrator's sympathy with slum children in the earlier passages. In addition to being an attempt to resolve hatred between different social groups, it also demonstrates once again that all classes of Brazilians live in some kind of pain and crisis, thus calling for everyone to join forces and strive for change.

Another story from *The Sun on My Head* that catches my attention is "Spiral" ("Espiral"), which represents a new type of marginal narrative. When dealing with the issues of discrimination and injustice suffered by slum dwellers, the story focuses not only on the inherent social structure and evilness of a specific person or group (such as the police in "Rolézim" and in "A história do Periquito e do Macaco"), but also on the ignorance and cowardice of ordinary people who are akin to any of us. In this tale, the narrator-protagonist states that when he was a child, he did not understand why the people on the street feared him, and others' fear would even give him a glimmer of pride. But as he grew older, he began to realize the great division between slums and rich neighborhoods, which explains why when someone panicked in his presence, he felt deep anger. However, despite growing up in the slums, he is not a violent person. His only way to get back at these people is to approach them deliberately and cause them to panic on account their own prejudices. At the conclusion of the story, the teenager intensified his means of revenge and began to consciously pursue a man who, in their first encounter, had raised his hands and begged for mercy. Thus, with an inquiring intent, the slum teenager silently observed the life of a middle-class citizen, gradually getting to know the man's name and about members of his family. Three months later, when the man realized he was being stalked, he first tried to get rid of the teenager, but he failed. Eventually, a man from a wealthy family came out of hiding and grabbed a gun with which to threaten the protagonist. Upon seeing this, the teenager simply smiled and ended the game, as he knew that: "I will also need a gun if I want to continue playing the game" ("se quisesse continuar jogando esse jogo, precisaria também de uma arma de fogo"; 22).

With the above plot, Martins manages to invert the "periphery versus center" dichotomy on several levels. First of all, it is worth noting the change in positions between the observer and the observed. Usually, marginal groups are treated as objects of description. Even in works whose author is a slum dweller, this tendency remains, and the only difference is that they are observed by themselves. In "Espiral," however, the teenager from the favela is always looking at the Brazilian middle class, discovering cowardice and irrationality in their behavior. In this manner, Martins also manages to present the inner complexities and sensitivities of favela residents. For even if middle-class people do

not harm them physically or verbally, mere subconscious demonstrations of fear are enough to make the marginalized feel humiliated. Even more surprisingly, it is not the favela teenager, who is often seen as violent by the general public, who takes the gun, but rather it is the frightened rich man who first starts to threaten violence. In this way, Martins achieves a reversal of status between the aggressor and the victim. Notwithstanding that, in public opinion marginalized people are more likely to choose a violent and criminal path, while they are actually more likely to be victims of violence and crime.

In *The Flip-Side of Skin* (*O avesso da pele*), published in 2020, Jeferson Tenório takes this inversion of status between those who aggress and those who suffer even further. Through a heated and poignant writing style, the book casts perspicuous indictments on the injustices that black and mixed-race children suffer in Brazil. Narrated in second person, the novel can be read as a monologue from Pedro, a black man, to his deceased father. Pedro's father was a public-school teacher who died accidentally in an encounter with the police. After the tragedy, Pedro returned to the house where his father lived, organized his father's old belongings and recovered memories of the past.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator explains his reason for returning to this house: "I didn't just want his absence as a legacy. I wanted a kind of presence, albeit a painful and sad one" ("Eu não queria apenas a sua ausência como legado. Eu queria um tipo de presença, ainda que dolorida e triste"; 13). In fact, it is through objects in the apartment that he has reorganized his memory. Tracing an *ocutá* (a sacred stone in the Candomblé religion), an *orixá* (saint-deities in Candomblé), some inkless fountain pens, mismatched socks, students' exams and essays, Tenório vividly sketches the image of his father in life: a public school language teacher with a modest income and a believer in Afro-Brazilian religion.

The narrator Pedro's memories of his father flow smoothly, and the reader is easily drawn into the story of this public teacher, learning about his difficult marital life, empathizing with his helplessness when faced with his students' mischief, agreeing with his description of *Crime and Punishment* as a murder story in order to increase his students' interest, and resenting the racism he encountered. In fact, the teacher had been questioned by the police several times before he was mistakenly killed, no doubt because of the color of his skin and the way he dressed. When the young man was playing soccer with his classmates, when he was going to a rich colleague's house to play a video game, when he was waiting for his girlfriend in an affluent neighborhood, or even when he was reading on a bus, a policeman would appear and ask him who he was, where he lived, and why he was there. This kind of discrimination was everywhere and followed him like a shadow. Had it not been for the tragedy that eventually took his life, these discriminatory acts might not have been noticeable. However, it is the portrayal of these everyday trifles that most impresses the readers of *The Flip-Side of Skin*. Despite the absence of any emotional catharsis or dramatic conflict, Tenório's writing convinces the reader that being black requires having to accept that the police would approach you all the time without any reason, that security guards would cast suspicious looks at you, and that people nearby would be afraid of you. This is because, if people of color are not careful, they can be treated as criminals or even killed, just like Pedro's father as well as the protagonist and his brother in "Rolézim."

2. A Subjectivized Collectivity

Although *The Sun on My Head* and *The Flip-Side of Skin* are very different in narrative tone and linguistic style, there are a few biographical affinities between the favela boys from Rio de Janeiro and the public school teachers from Rio Grande do Sul. Since the two works deal with similar themes, such as discrimination and oppression due to skin color and poverty, it is difficult to distinguish between the

two, given the structural racism and social immobility in Brazil. Another common and quite remarkable feature is that both books abandon the omniscient third-person narrator in a conscious attempt to combine collectivity and subjectivity. This is a new trend in Brazilian novels from recent years. A year before the publication of *The Flip-Side of Skin*, Paulo Scott's *Brown and Yellow* (*Marrom e amarelo*) already discussed the issues of racism in Rio Grande do Sul. While in *The Flip-Side of Skin*, it is "you" (i.e., the narrator's father) that shares more traits and experiences with the author Tenório; in *Brown and Yellow* it is the narrator that has more similarities with real-life experiences of the writer Paulo Scott. In addition, *Crooked Plow* (*Tordo arado*)—winner of the Jabuti Award in the "Literary Novels" category and the Oceano Award—also demonstrates this trend of first-person narration. Unique to this book, the novelist Itamar Vieira Junior creates a total of three narrators who are respectively responsible for each of the three parts. Through the narrations of Bibiana, Belonisia and an entity from the local religion of Jarê, *Tordo arado* presents to the reader the near-enslaved life of the Bahian people, addressing issues of poverty, gender, and race.

It is worth pointing out that the four aforementioned writers, Martins, Tenório, Scott, and Vieira Junior, are all Afro-descendants. When talking about marginal literature, it is common to emphasize collective consciousness and the potential to make political reform, and neither *The Sun on My Head* nor *The Flip-Side of Skin* is an exception in this regard. However, focusing on collective consciousness does not necessarily mean psychological simplification, despite the fact that in the history of Brazilian literature there has been a clear distinction between social literature and psychological literature. Upon his induction into the Brazilian Academy of Letters, Jorge Amado attributed the former to José de Alencar and the latter to Machado de Assis (web). According to Karl Eric Schøllhammer's *Contemporary Brazilian Fiction* (*Ficção brasileira contemporânea*), Brazilian writers still seem divided into two groups in their search for the social or the psychological "real." The first group, represented by Marcelino Freire, Luiz Ruffato, Marçal Aquino, Nelson de Oliveira, and Fernando Bonassi, is characterized by their dedication "in the perspective of a reinvention of realism, in search of an impact on a certain social reality, or in the search to remake the relationship of responsibility and solidarity with the social and cultural problems of their time" ("na perspectiva de uma reinvenção do realismo, à procura de um impacto numa determinada realidade social, ou na busca de se refazer a relação de responsabilidade e solidariedade com os problemas sociais e culturais de seu tempo"; 15). The other group is represented by Rubens Figueiredo, Adriana Lisboa, Michel Laub, and João Anzanello Carraschoza for "evoking and dealing with presence becomes synonymous with subjective awareness and a literary approach to the most quotidian, autobiographical, and banal, the material upholstery of ordinary life in its minutest details" ("evocar e lidar com a presença torna-se sinônimo de consciência subjetiva e de uma aproximação literária ao mais cotidiano, autobiográfico e banal, o estofado material da vida ordinária em seus detalhes mínimos"; 15).

From 2018 onwards, there have been a large number of literary works that seek to reflect social issues through subjective perspectives in Brazil, many of which were well received by both the public and critics, and such a phenomenon itself deserves critical attention. Moreover, it would be wrong to consider the combination of social cause with subjectivity as a technique exclusively adopted by young writers. Luiz Ruffato, for example, despite his categorization as a socially engaged writer by Schøllhammer, published in 2019 *Late Summer* (*Verão tardio*), a novel that mixes family disagreements with social conflicts. Although the writer denies that it is an autobiographical novel, both the first-person narrative and the portrait of the city Cataguases (Ruffato's hometown) give the work a confessional and touching power. At the same time, the book's allegory is very clear, since the three brothers belong to three different social classes: the middle class, the lower class and the rich class. The

disagreements between them represent the divisions between different social groups in Brazil.

At the same time, Michel Laub, who used to represent the school of psychological writing, is increasingly concerned with social issues, but without his abandoning the exploration of the complex nature of the human mind. Indeed, in this time of confusion and misunderstanding, it is only by capturing divergent ideologies and ways of thinking that it is possible to reveal the underlying causes of social rifts and to conceive possible solutions to them. This was an important motivation that led him to write *Two-State Solution* (*Solução de dois estados*). In this new novel, Laub also draws on the animosity between brothers as a metaphor for the schism between different social groups in Brazil. However, unlike *Late Summer*, Laub does not choose a single narrator to observe and reflect on the issue, but gives each side the opportunity to speak and discuss directly.

Two-State Solution originally refers to the political proposal for the peaceful coexistence of Palestine and Israel, while in the novel it is the title of a series of documentaries filmed by the German director Brenda. Alexandre and Raquel are siblings who were chosen to be interviewed because the latter had been publicly assaulted by an acquaintance of Alexandre at a public event in 2018, which reignited the old feud between the two. In order to show different opinions, prejudices and confrontations between the two, Laub's novel consists of three main types of text: pre-edited material, raw material, and miscellaneous extra materials. The pre-edited material eliminates the interviewer's questions and directions, leaving only the words of Raquel or Alexandre. In the raw material, the reader is able to see the dialogue between the director and each of the two interviewees. The miscellaneous extra materials occupies few pages and consists mainly of public speeches or news reports.

On the whole, it appears that *Two-State Solution* unfolds its narrative in constant alternation between the perspectives of the two characters. However, even with regard to the pre-edited material, the figure of the German director does not become completely invisible, but rather appears as an interlocutor in the narrative of the siblings. In fact, during the first half of the novel—the first stages of the interview, when most of the material has already been edited—both interviewees were actively seeking the support of the director, who played a mediating role in the dialogues, guiding the siblings in responding to each other and presenting new arguments. In the second half of the novel, the director herself had to face questions and provocations from the two, and was forced to explain her opinions. Since the three protagonists have extensive experience in media and advertising and understand the importance of discourse, their questions and answers are well crafted, carefully worded and with acute perspicacity. At the same time, each character is not completely at liberty in the narrative, but can be interjected upon and interrupted at any time, which extends the topics discussed in the book from brother-sister conflicts to a range of debates about Brazil's political and economic problems, the electoral system, patriarchal culture, crime, violence, and more recent issues such as the rise of evangelicalism and the ubiquitousness of foreign cultures.

It is clear from the book that the director and the two interviewees are typical representations of the current society. Brenda lived in Brazil for eight years before her husband was killed by robbers in Rio de Janeiro. After that she began to travel to various other countries to make documentaries related to violence. Raquel is a performance artist who studied and has lived in Europe for many years. Before going to Europe, she had been discriminated against, bullied and ostracized because of her obesity. In her performance videos, she appears naked and beaten by male actors to raise awareness about violence. Alexandre, on the other hand, is the owner of a chain of gyms and is friend with a Protestant pastor. In short, Raquel can be seen as a radical left-wing egalitarian artist; Alexandre is part of a right-wing evangelical group; and director Brenda represents, to some extent, an intellectual who wants to understand Brazil's problems. In an interview, Michel Laub acknowledged that when he started writing

the book, Brenda seemed like an alter-ego of his, but as the writing progressed, he gradually realized that Brenda's opinion is not impartial either. With this self-critique, Laub recognized the importance of exposing the different angles of perspective, directly showing the conflicts without making judgments.

Although the direct impetus of this interview is that someone related to Alexandre assaulted Raquel, it is hard to cast blame on just one person, on account of the fact that the conflict between the two started in their adolescence. Both of them have their own sufferings and sacrifices, each hurting the other from misunderstandings and juvenile impulses. As for Brenda, despite not supporting either of them, she is unable to be completely neutral on the issue because violence took her husband's life. At the same time, how artists and journalists sponsored by foreign organizations can present an authentic Brazil is one of the main questions explored in the novel. It is due to the complexity of the issue itself that by the end of the novel, despite having made each character's opinions clear, none of them is able to convince any of the others. Just as in the international political arena the two-state solution has not resolved the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Laub is also unable to offer an elixir for the country's problems. However, he still believes in the power of literature, as he stated at the end of 2020: "The optimism I managed to have was to release a book believing that someone will be interested in it. . . . Believing in the possibility that art can still be the space where these things can be discussed in a not so dogmatic way. The happy ending of the book is perhaps this. That I wrote it" ("O otimismo que consegui ter foi lançar um livro acreditando que alguém vai estar interessado nisso. . . . Acreditar na possibilidade de a arte ainda ser o espaço onde essas coisas podem ser discutidas de maneira não tão dogmática. O final feliz do livro talvez seja esse. Eu ter escrito"; Porto web).

3. The Emergence of a New Type of Narrative

In the studies conducted in recent years on first-person narratives, two conclusions can be drawn. The first is directed toward traditional autobiographical literature, in which the protagonist narrates his or her own experiences, anguish, or delusions in order to consolidate the uniqueness of the self-narrator. In this case, first-person narratives do not always enjoy more credibility compared to third-person ones, as readers understand that the narrator tends to justify his own actions and his accounts are not always true (Lissa et al. 43-63). The second engages in a new type of narrative whose readers may empathize or even identify with the narrator. This technique is also common in movies or video games, so that speculators or gamers can see from a character's perspective, thus having a more immersive experience (Denisova and Cairns 145-148). It partly explains this shift in contemporary literary narrative, a phenomenon that Italian scholar Filippo Pennacchio refers to as "Enhanced 'I's," arguing that in recent years first-person narrative voices have increasingly incorporated features previously thought to be exclusive to third-person narrators, such as the description of another's mental activities or of scenes where the narrator was not present (21-42). Today, people who watch movies and play video games are already used to this omniscient first-person perspective, which enables the emergence of a new type of narrative.

With regard to changes in literary production in Brazil in recent years, the popularity of the Internet, especially video sites and applications (e.g. YouTube, Tik Tok), has played an ineluctable role. Telling a story is no longer the privilege of the writer or journalist, or someone who can read and write, because now even an illiterate person is able to express their point of view in front of a camera. Therefore, more and more people are starting to tell their own stories, especially those who have suffered or are still suffering, because they know that there are people with similar experiences, as evidenced by the "Exposed" movement in Brazil in 2020. The internet is capable of disseminating a singular story of domestic violence, encouraging thousands of more victims to speak out and gain public support.

Recently, many successful books also contain similar characteristics: those who have experienced these stories have the right to relate their own feelings and construct the images of others as they saw them. These images may not be accurate, but that does not diminish the sincerity of the narrator, because this is exactly how each of us understands the world. And the most important thing is to let the unfavorable speak and express their innermost feelings, just as Michel Laub's protagonist says:

It's different for you to speak on behalf of a black man, an Indian, a one-hundred-and-thirty-kilogram woman, being paid by the Bridges Bank to do this in a luxury hotel, in front of people who find these good intentions very admirable, and actually being a black man, an Indian, a one-hundred-and-thirty-kilogram woman. (59)²

It is this sense of letting the "character" be the "author" rather than mere "reporter" that provides greater freedom to the first-person narrator, because their credibility does not depend on objective impartiality, but on their sincere desire to get involved. In present society, it is preferable to see narratives of people who have personal experiences rather than neutral journalistic texts. And Brenda's story indeed shows us that journalism is not always impartial. While giving more exposure and voice to these previously marginalized groups, this new change has also prompted other writers to combine the social cause with personal search for meaning, for it is only through exposing the most intimate that literary texts find most empathy and solidarity.

Notes

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2. Original text: "É diferente você falar em nome de um negro, de um índio, de uma mulher de cento e trinta quilos, sendo paga pelo Banco Pontes para fazer isso num hotel de luxo, em frente a pessoas que acham muito admiráveis essas boas intenções, e ser de fato um negro, um índio, uma mulher de cento e trinta quilos."

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