

The criticism of the *pingente*¹ intellectual narrator:

João Antônio evokes Lima Barreto

A crítica do narrador intelectual pingente:

Lima Barreto evocado por João Antônio²

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Introduction

In which values and functionalities are the affections mobilized by intellectual activity arranged? What are the purposes of the cultural expression linked to these affections? Such questions can generate many others, in the debate about how the intellectual behaves in his “critical function” — as a type of mediator of the tensions arising from an elementary commitment: the anguish of thought in the face of an uncontrollable external reality.

Based on the assumption that the activity of thinking can be absorbed through the reading of phenomena from this uncontrollable reality, we are interested, here, initially, in understanding the tensions arising from the way of reading the world through the prism of the intellectual. We could call this movement *critical vein*, at first. For this purpose, we will mobilize two writer-journalists, Lima Barreto (1881-1922) and João Antônio (1937-1996).

In 1977, writer and journalist João Antônio³ released the book *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto* (Calvary and drunkenness of the *Pingente* Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto), a sort of collage of statements regarded as real, but handled as fictional, collected

¹ Pingente can be roughly translated as “pendant”, both as noun and adjective, but the term assumes a broader meaning here. In Brazilian Portuguese, the word is also used to name the passenger who travels hanging on the door or window of the tram or another public transport.

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³ João Antônio's professional career is characterized by an intense literary and journalistic activity and by shocking statements about the Brazilian reality and the situation of the national literature. Splitting himself between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the author writes literature and reports for wide-circulation publications (MARTIN, 2008, p.19).

from Carlos Alberto Nóbrega da Cunha, an interlocutor who is held to have traveled with the writer Lima Barreto throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the first decades of the twentieth century — in wanderings, drunkenness, cafes, disappointments. The follow-up of the narrator, Nóbrega — in his testimonial report — is organized, above all, in the construction of an atmosphere of Lima Barreto's *melancholic journey* through city center and suburbs, in which he is represented as a wandering intellectual, traveling in an uncomfortable way across the geography and topography of the city, losing himself and confounding himself with real and fictional characters and narrators, both from his own literary universe and from those of his contemporaries.

Calvary (in the sense of long suffering, martyrdom), drunkenness (in the sense of excesses resulting from alcohol consumption) and *pingente* (the passenger who travels hanging on the door or window of the tram or another public transport) are expressions conditioned by a guiding premise with which the intellectual Lima Barreto presents himself: not only the writer (tormented by his anguish and personal dilemmas⁴), but, fundamentally, the marginal enmeshed in the absorptions of his characters, also marginals, and, above all, in the condition of an urban wanderer suffocated by the intense process of modernization of the city in the years following the abolition of slavery. This is the position taken by the narrative-collage of *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto* — wrapped, it is important to say, by the force of the editing of a testimonial report about the journey of outcast individuals in the day and in the night of a city that is both ghostly and scintillating. The translation of the routes, metaphorized as calvary, evidences a bigger proposition: the reflection around the intellectual disturbed by the delusions of modernity at the beginning of the 20th century, facing the staggering path as a central element of this restlessness about an alleged “civilizing agenda”.

Hence, there is an essential distinction. The path of these wandering individuals is different from the flâneur narrator. The *pingente* seems to be intensely immersed in critical intellectual reflection, since, unlike the flâneur narrator, an acute contact with reality is imposed on him, in addition to the numbness of observation in the face of this same reality. In the presentation of

⁴ [Lima Barreto] portrayed certain politicians and literates as they really were: caricatures of leaders and intellectuals. Using characters-symbols, he outlined in his novels the whole panorama of the bourgeois mentality, prevalent in Brazil in the first thirty years of our republican period. *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* represents the struggle not only against skin-color prejudice, but against mediocrity, against a misconception of press and literature, accompanied by the bitter experience of victory at the expense of compromises of all kinds and of the sacrifice of human dignity. (BARBOSA, In: LIMA BARRETO, 1971, p.13).

Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto, more specifically in the text “Lima Barreto, um pingente”, João Antônio concludes:

Faced with the dignity of his work and life, both *pingentes*, it is unknown what reverence will not be meagre, what homage will not be poor and insufficient. About Lima, today [1977] contemporary and forgotten, distant from our language and literature courses and from our communication schools, I have heard some significant things.... But the oblivion to which his production is thrown tires me. From the calvary and drunkenness of this great suburban, urban, Brazilian and universal *pingente*, it is possible to extract so much, that feel embarrassed ... a suburban Rio even now, as at that time, forgotten; a Carioca rabble that have probably never been heard of again.... Everything by Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto is there, alive, jumping, on the streets, moving, incredibly unresolved (JOÃO ANTÔNIO, 1977, p. 14).

Well, if we contextualize João Antônio's production, starting in the early 1960s, during the philosophical urgency of the “moving street”, more specifically when the collection of short stories *Malagueta, Perus e Bacanaço* (1963) was released, we will notice, in dedications, mentions, tributes and quotes, that the presence of Lima Barreto in his work carries a kind of obsession for reproducing, via intellectual assimilation, certain routes in the cities — São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, mainly. This incorporation is elaborated by / in the figure of the *pingente*, as a being in close contact with the precarious reality of the “moving street”. Two representations emerge from this meeting: a) the social pariah, the “hand-to-mouth” from the urban broth; b) the rancorous resentful one, which does not adapt to the winds of the urban space “modernization”.

In *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto*, the montage made by João Antônio, with fragments of the literary and journalistic texts by Lima Barreto, shows a mosaic of comprehension of one type of narrator: the *pingente* narrator. If we are stating that there is an ethical and aesthetic incorporation between these authors, we would also need to move cultural criticism — as a concept and manifestation — on the impacts and meanings of this view to the field of literary, artistic, communicational and media activity, whose premise seems to be the position of the intellectual regarding the *world* around him. In this sense, it is interesting to look at what Coelho (2006) tells us about the limits of the so-called intellectual engagement: “The existence of ‘class’ limits, ideological impediments to the action of a bourgeois intellectual, even when sincerely committed to fight for justice and for truth, is a truism” (COELHO, In: NOVAES, 2006, p. 112).

The maxim of “Sartre's literary commitment”⁵, also contextualized by Coelho (2006), is a necessary component for the discussion about a possible function of art, in different contexts. The

⁵ The idea of “literary commitment and engagement”, present in the work “What is Literature”, by Jean Paul Sartre, is brought up in Marcelo Coelho's essay to strengthen the discussion about the role of the intellectual activity in the post-World War II period.

self-reflection-like obsession leads us to the ties of Lima Barreto's production as a moral and stylistic guide to João Antônio's intellectual (and literary) stance.

Lima Barreto and the Urban Route: the *Pingente* Narrator

About the chronicler Lima Barreto⁶, Beatriz Resende (2004) says: Lima Barreto's trajectory through the Rio de Janeiro press ends where it has started: in the defence of the city, in the criticism of the powerful, in the distrust towards the changes imposed on the geography of the city (RESENDE, In: RESENDE; VALENÇA, 2004, p. 22).

What moves the physiognomy and countenance of the writer / journalist is the figure of the sad melancholic, affected by his racial condition, antisocial behaviour and excessive alcohol consumption, in the constant struggle between the acceptance and the rejection of the intellectual spaces of the society of his time. The characters and narrators of Lima Barreto⁷ seem to move in this world that is inadequate to the air of an alleged modernization (of the customs and social structure of the city), in which the outcome of the coexistences, almost always irascible, form the *critical vein*. His most personal statements revolve around the realisation of the intellectual criticism as a proposal for cultural manifestation. The discomfort with belletrism (pompous writing), for example, present in many of his texts, molds an ironic cultural nature, that observes the conditioning aspect of the country's intellectual development and reports the self-projected emotional education of this intellectual, which we could call organic and marginal. In the midst of this, the social and intellectual life needs to be incorporated into the wanderings, the routes, the crowded trams, whose revelation configures the formation of the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the First Republic — in addition to the official landmarks — besides the cruel perception of the fragility and of the condition of the suburban intellectual. This is the most compelling criticism of his literary manifestation. So, the Brazilian intellectual is also an outsider.

⁶ The antagonism that Lima Barreto establishes between his writing and that of Coelho Neto for “making dessert gifts, to the satisfaction of the wealthy” corresponds to the antagonism that grows between the “aristocratic”, “civilized” neighbourhoods, of “fancy people”, and the suburbs, with their bourgeoisie and workers that the clannish, clientelist society have expelled, in the name of the progress of their “postcard” scenario, to a periphery neglected by the State. In this context, the real actors of modernity — such as the working class or the renewing artists — are unable to define their identity as characters of the civil society (RESENDE, 2016, p.19).

⁷ The violence of the Brazilian society, which, due to prejudice, restricts the possibilities of life for black people and their descendants, is present in the entire work of Lima Barreto. However, the paradigmatic character of this condition is, without a doubt, Isaías Caminha. With this novel, Lima Barreto intended to show that “a boy in Isaiah's condition, with all the dispositions, can fail, not because of his intrinsic qualities, but beaten, crushed, pressed by prejudice (MACHADO, 2002, p. 57).

Accordingly, characters from his fictions, such as Policarpo Quaresma, Clara dos Anjos, and Gonzaga de Sá, assume uncomfortable interactions in social ties, amid the conspicuous pressure of the intellectual life in the halls, academies of letters, social standards, and elitist encounters. Such characters are molded to another social broth, in this kind of symbolic demarcation of distinction in the work of Lima Barreto, when describing the inhabitant of the suburbs, the peripheries, the hills of Rio. The inevitable confusion between the margins of the social coexistence and the production centre of a “legitimated” culture brings out the anguish and prejudices suffered by the individual-author, in intimate relation with the narrators-characters who are deprived, excluded. Moreover, his work highlights the pain of the journeys (both the spatial and temporal ones), by means of a self-reflective narrative process, based on reminiscence and testimony, which may be personal, social or essayistic.

The *pingente* narrator, in the work of Lima Barreto, we reinforce, contrasts with the flâneur narrator. This can be noticed if we give attention to the denominations of the concept / expression found in Benjamin's readings of the work of Charles Baudelaire (2018):

The street leads the flâneur towards a vanished age. For him, every street is steep. It goes down, if not towards the Mothers, at least towards a past that can be so much more enthralling because it is not his own past, his private past. However, it always seems like a childhood time. But why the time of his lived life? In the asphalt on which he walks, his footsteps awaken an astonishing reverberation. The gaslight that falls upon the pavement casts an ambiguous light over the double floor. A drunkenness takes over the one who, for a long time, wanders aimlessly through the streets (BENJAMIN, 2018, p. 702).

A person who may have manifested this essence, the Benjaminian spirit of the flâneur's drunkenness, was João do Rio (Paulo Barreto), one of Lima Barreto's contemporaries, who, in *A Rua* (2008), proposes an essay synthetized in the following observation: “the flâneur wanders and watches the street with an idle spirit”.

In Lima Barreto's work, the troubles of the modern city are measured in other concerns than just the “delirium”, the “spell”, the “drunkenness”, the “seduction” of the images. In the urban chronicles examined by Resende and Valença⁸, it is possible to observe that the *pingente* journey anticipates a discussion about journalistic reporting, differently than the “idle” look, recommended by João do Rio as the narrative focus of an intrepid reporter. In addition, an understanding of reality through an intellectual position of intimate contact can be identified. Now, if these tensions, revealed by means of distinctions and contacts with social life, guide the narratives, the uncovering of the

⁸ RESENDE, Beatriz; VALENÇA, Rachel. Lima Barreto: Toda Crônica. volume 1: 1890-1919. Rio de Janeiro: Agir, 2004.

environment occurs almost always in an unstable way, since the inadequacy of the journey, by itself, shapes the narrative path and affirms the discourse as a social *critical vein*. Therefore, it is not just about a journey numbed by a flâneur's disinterested observation.

The example of the *pingente* narrator's philosophical idea of "commitment", in Lima Barreto, can be seen in the adventures of the narrator Isaías Caminha, from *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha*, originally published in 1908. The novel about the young man who comes from the countryside and faces a hostile universe, due to his origin as a shy and introverted boy, elucidates a series of questions inherent to the expanded meaning of his life journey.

The entire human fauna, especially the environment of O Globo newspaper's newsroom, which the narrator deals with, demonstrates intellectual activities corrupted in the ambience of public and private relations, and highlights the journalist as a mediator — and legitimizer — of other social actors in the First Republic, based on the nature of these matches and mismatches, established in these force relations. The narrator Caminha describes the advance of the devouring capitalist world, draining his aspirations step by step, and demanding his downfall, as if his resignation was imbuing his life journey with a marginal and *pingente* attribute. In this sense, the narrative structure of the novel is that of the mournful redemption. Thus, Caminha finds himself enmeshed in overcoming and disruption stages: the "holed-up me", the "wishful me", the "repressed me", the "satirical-narrator me", the "critical me", the "resigned me" (BOSI, 2002).

The process of this *pingente* narrator, in his profession, in contact with his opponent and allied interlocutors, is anchored in social life and in his games of retaliation and distinction: the legitimized versus the destitute. The internal view of the intellectual activity, or the narrator's urge for life, placed Caminha as a critic of the examination of his contemporary intellectuals — the literates, the journalists, the economic elite, the "doctors" — describing them as figures moved by cronism and belletrism. In *Os Bruzundangas*, published posthumously in 1923, a kind of satirical essay on the Brazilian society, the narrator provokes:

The literates, strictly speaking, those in good clothes and affected gestures, do not give importance to oral literature, although they do not totally despise it. On the contrary: all of them almost do not have written works; their background resides in conferences, poetry recited in rooms, maxims pronounced privately to friends, speeches given at baptisms, weddings, big-shot feasts or school ceremonies; their work being written, most of the times, on story booklets for children, collections of small newspaper articles, or in a big lesson book, sold, in our currency, at the rate of fifteen or twenty milreis per volume. These are even the most esteemed and representative writers, especially when they use obsolete words and are doctors with a large customer base (LIMA BARRETO, 1998, p. 16).

We realize that Lima Barreto's work is hence oriented on the following characteristics: a) criticism on belletrism; b) reflective and personal anguish; c) marginal attitude; d) condition anchored outside intellectual spaces; the street, fundamentally.

The last item seems to summarize the aesthetics of the *pingente* narrator, but this component, the street, can only be examined if united with the other three. In other words, the *pingente* narrator is a being conditioned by the violence of the “urban hell”, which endorses his marginal and reflective attitude.

What João Antônio puts together on his *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto* is, therefore, a synthesis of these characteristics, elaborating a type of nuance control of the intellectual, critical and aesthetic discussions. In João Antônio's reading, we find an understanding view of Lima Barreto's work, which asserts, in a complimentary way, the condition of the *pingente* narrator:

Like the others, he would stay, at most, from three to five in the afternoon at the little bar on Sachet Street. Then they would take their itineraries. But he was punctual to Coelho Cavalcanti's circles, since he would hand over his collaboration directly to Careta. He'd take off from Sachet Street, take Rio Branco Avenue, usually by himself, as he was the only suburban in the Sachet circle Most were from Catete, Cidade Nova or neighbourhoods such as Santa Alexandrina, São Cristóvão, Itapagipe, Itapiru, Rio Comprido, Matoso. And not a few would cross the bay all the way from Niterói. Most lived in neighbourhoods accessible by electric trams. Lima would take the train at Central, get off at Todos os Santos and head over to Inhaúma (JOÃO ANTÔNIO, 1977, p. 30).

The evidence of this *pingente* narrator is linked, in our view, to the inconsistencies of his own journey to the distant suburb, which certainly requires him to immerse in a harsh projection. In the specific case of Lima Barreto, this translates into personal experiences (the misunderstood writer, the critical and scathing journalist) when the reflective journey to his address in Inhaúma is reflected in the lines of this perception.

Inserted in a moment and space on the periphery, in which the formation of the capitalist society is consolidated, Lima Barreto promotes... the self-certification of this peripheral and late modernity through the prism of literature. The development of a new language emerges here, like in the original spokespeople: a language that suits the soul and body of Brazilian modernity much closer. Like Baudelaire, Lima Barreto was interested in developing a language more adequate to the reality of his time. But, unlike the French poet, he did not want a language adapted to the lyrical impulses of the soul, or to the modulations of the dream, or to the twists and turns of consciousness. Understanding literature as an instrument of communion and union among men, he wanted a language that would expose the social obstacles to human reconciliation (MACHADO, 2002, p. 91).

A description made by Machado (2002) clarifies, with more elements, the distinction between the flâneur and the *pingente*, as it evinces that the marginality of social life is also observed /

perceived by the narrator. And if this narrator is conditioned to that hell of mismatched proportions, he is required to have a *pingente* perception: the street noise, the herd, the social deterioration.

In this sense, the intellectual activity would be dimensioned in the critical tension of the *pingente*, as a kind of silent, but no less incisive, observer. According to Antonio Cícero (2004):

For the intolerant, the tolerant or relativist intellectual, who acts this way [like a silent observer], is nothing more than a weak person, who lacks character, conviction or faith. It is not difficult to see that the consequences of this could turn out to be catastrophic, in a world in which religious fundamentalisms have become increasingly common (CÍCERO, In: NOVAES, 2006, p. 204).

From Cicero's observation, we can take a next step, in an attempt to describe the elements of the configuration of what would become the "*pingente* intellectual" in his connection with the *pingente* narrator.

***Pingente* Intellectual: Anguishes, Projections and Resistance**

The "samoiedas" [a group of pompous literati] are satisfied with literary appearances and banal simulation of notoriety, sometimes due to a failure of intelligence, sometimes due to insufficient or flawed instruction, almost always, however, due to a lack of true poetic talent, of sincerity, and they need, therefore, to disguise defects with intellectual magic tricks and gimmicks (LIMA BARRETO, 1998, p. 17-18).

The public that reads us, they don't know how exhausting and ungrateful this journalist's life is; how much energy it requires and how it takes away the best moments of leisure and the best minutes of pleasure. We live for the others, so to speak; and those who live for the others, undoubtedly, very little can live for themselves (LIMA BARRETO, 1971, p. 169).

In these two fragments (the first taken from *Os Bruzundangas*, the second from *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha*), we can observe that there is a willingness, on the part of the narrators, to express their disappointments with the intellectual activity. This positioning results from a certain resentment, the premise of which needs to be addressed as a mediating instrument for the various meanings surrounding the intellectual activity.

Thus, in order to understand the minutiae of this process of categorizing the *pingente* intellectual, we need to follow two paths. Apparently, in this discussion, there is an inseparability between the intellectual author, involved in the internal criticism of the literary apparatus, and the dynamics of recognizing reality as part of a desire to question cultural belletrism.

If we can assess criticism as the mainstay of the recognition of intellectual mediation, we are evidently attributing a value (and a functionality) to this disposition, whose neutrality also has to be

questioned. We find, for example, both in the satire *Os Bruzundangas* and in the novel *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha*, a kind of search for intellectual understanding, by means of an internal criticism of the caricature of the intellectual world of the First Republic, which overlays the *pingente* narrator as an aesthetic category, as a guarantor of the current anguish resistance: the marginal writer's inadequacy and unsuitability for certain social circles.

From the highlighted issues in the work of Lima Barreto, it is possible to note that the *pingente* intellectual is guided by a correlation of forces, mediating the symbolic present in the means of transport, in communication, in literature, and in the relevance of the intellectuality materialized in the city. We can observe this in the chronicle “Quem Será, Afinal?”, published in the ABC newspaper on January 15, 1919:

I fully understand this policial or customary state of mind, in view of the scarcity of life and of the needs faced by the man of letters who wants to find fame for saying nothing, being well-dressed and being part of the court of some political “Cunhambemba”. I am not one of these and I know that I irritate the high spirits of the intellectual mannequins, when they see my name through any *nom de plume*. I guess what they say; and the best ones, the less bad ones, will reflect with themselves: ‘This Barreto guy is crazy!’ (LIMA BARRETO, In: RESENDE; VALENÇA, 2004, p. 450)

We establish here the restlessness of the location of time and space of the *pingente* intellectual, who manifests himself in the chronicler imbued with the feeling of projection: the misfit marginal madman.

The conclusion of the discussion around intellectuality in Lima Barreto, in our view, undertakes, in an original way, an internal criticism of the values of a given formal cultural production. In another chronicle, “As Escoras Sabichonas”, published in April 1919, he says:

Where to get him [the scholars]? In the Senate? In the House? No. He was vulgar. He searched for him among the literati. Ah! The literati! Everyone disdains them and everyone wants their glory. They receive from the serious and wise men the worst epithets and qualifications. The less important ones are wanton, drunk and ignorant ... But there is no individual who has learned to read, who has written a letter to his girlfriend, who has written a complaint in the newspapers, who does not consider himself a man of letters, a godson of the Muses (LIMA BARRETO, In: RESENDE; VALENÇA, 2004, p. 511).

If we do not look at the subtleties of the thread tension of this embittered *pingente* intellectual, we may not recognize the value of criticising an intellectual attribute. In other words, to be a *pingente* is to be gauche in life, to be on the margins of the ritualistic encounter of the intellectual activity itself, in short. If Benjamin invests in the melancholy visage for identifying the appearances of the flâneur's modern verve, it is precisely because of this paradox that we could distinguish the main values revealed as criticism in the disposition of the *pingente* intellectual.

In Lima Barreto, there is certainly an opposition to João do Rio (the flâneur). The reading of João Antônio as a mediation (in *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto*) attributes, from this distinction, a praiseworthy condition to the figure of the *pingente*, and synthesizes the criticism of the so-called civilizing modernity, evoking a certain puerile traditionalism (his personal childhood memories of soccer and choro gatherings). The intellectual criticism projected on the *pingente* is the affirmation of a condition (the staggering marginal on the street).

So, in the extension of what we are developing as a central notion of mediation, the way in which João Antônio elaborates the *pingente* narrative with the criticism, by evoking Lima Barreto, is a central part in the dispute around intellectual activity. The reported martyrdom of the deponent character Carlos Nóbrega, in *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto*, is the thread of mediation, in this sense. It is as if mediation developed, first, the spatio-temporal description, and later established a sort of systematization of the *pingente* intellectual activity.

Therefore, João Antônio's reading understands criticism as a fundamental component, always. What *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto* seems to validate is precisely the literary power undertaken by Lima Barreto in his time: as a corrosive author of the early 20th century, assimilated in a condition of resistance by the Brazilian intellectuals in the 1970s.

A short digression is needed here.

Scott (2018), in a text published by *Serrote* magazine, says:

The great falsifier of critical judgement is time. This is just another way of saying that the surest way to be wrong is to say anything at all. A critic committed to sniffing out the new is by definition dazzled by the present. The glare of the freshly seen work can be blinding, and what may come to seem a cheap and tacky façade of novelty may look, in the flush of enthusiastic discovery, like the revolutionary real thing. Or, contrariwise, its apparent drabness will turn out to be a temporary patina obscuring its true lustre, which will reveal itself only to future eyes (SCOTT, 2018, p. 201).

It is interesting to note that the critic — understood here as those ones who work in the media, but also the academics, the writers — is the interlocutor of the cultural production halls, in their different webs of relationship and reception. Scott examines, in short, the power of the inevitability of making mistakes and the ideal critical urge based on that, in the appreciation of the artistic or cultural object. Scott's definition of the ideal criticism is slightly curious. We believe that this disposition is similar to the tension involved in the path of the *pingente* intellectual, in his self-reflective “imperfection”, in time and space.

Returning to the topic: it is possible to observe that the narrators of Lima Barreto's work, identified in *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto*, are moved by the

limit between the dignity of identity and the suffocating projections of that identity. And that happens in the urban journey, in the path (spatial and temporal). This movement is, first and foremost, errant, but not in an oneiric way, like that of the flâneur. Such understanding is important for us to perceive the urging aspect of the *pingente*. As a result, we notice, in addition to the naturalist-realistic evidence and the revealed social criticism, the comprehension of the sign of a *pingente* intellectual criticism.

Is the *Pingente* a Critic?

For Silva and Soares (2013):

In media criticism, values are dynamically transformed within the repertoires it develops and through the reappropriation of such repertoires according to popular taste, aiming at forming opinions. In the tensions between the establishment of “values” and the constitution of “repertoires”, therefore, old distinctions of “taste” (erudite, popular, massive, mediatic) are challenged through contemporary criticism, like the contributions of theorists who highlight the importance of such interactions (SILVA; SOARES, 2013, p. 832).

Based on that, we can say that media criticism can be addressed — in this state of the art, from João Antônio's reading of Lima Barreto — to the very will of the possibilities of metacriticism, for example, and to the reappropriations of the repertoires. If we consider the work of the two authors, put into dialogue here, we notice that a wide tradition of Brazilian cultural production, in literature, journalism, popular music, etc., carries the tension of intellectuality as a self-reflective cultural critic.

It would be no exaggeration, therefore, to think of the *pingente* as an original “media critic”, as he moves along with a certain social contestation spirit among the aspirations present in the halls or in the mass media. Here is an excerpt from *Recordações do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* that seems to synthesize such “critical spirit” on the part of the narrator:

I was making a hundred milreis a month. I was satisfied and my ambitions seemed to wane. It was not just past misery that had done this to me; it was also the hostile environment, the certainty that a step forward would cause me great pain, severe humiliation, terrible offences. I remembered my previous life; I still felt very open the wounds caused by that confrontation with the world. Not being able to, consciously, find them fair, I cowered before the prospect of new sufferings and I panicked at the image of new tortures. I considered myself happy working as an office boy at O Globo newsroom. I had crossed a long arm of the sea, held on to an islet, and I did not have the courage to swim back to the land that barred the horizon a few hundred meters away. Seafood was enough for me and my skin was already too thick for the bugs (LIMA BARRETO, 1971, p. 117).

In these elucubrations, we could return to the nature of the *pingente* narrator (the criticism of belletrism, the personal reflection and the marginal attitude) and compose a framework of criticism based on function, judgement and value (SILVA; SOARES, 2013).

So, we come to an essential attribute in our examination: there is no way to identify the *pingente* narrator if dissociated from the critical activity inherent to the social function of the intellectual, whether *pingente* or not. Literary and artistic commitment, therefore, is an indisputable part of this postulation. Journalism, when closer to literature, reveals a cultural value, in the specific case of the narrator Isaías Caminha: the frivolity of information production, the small field of entertainment, artistic life and its seduction traps, etc.

The anguish of the narrator Caminha hence resembles Lima Barreto's own journey as a public individual, in the *pingente* transit: hanging, fragile, weakened by the hegemony of the cultural capital of the belletrists. In this regard, Resende (2016) notes that:

The issue of fragmentation [of the city], in fact, concerns the organization of the city as it persists today. The city is fragmented into different spaces, keeping differences between them as great as different cities would keep between them. Inside the city that the educated try to organize, two cities grow, the ideal city and the real city. The ideal city, that of the postcards and illustrated magazines, wants to hide the real city, pushing undesirable extras into the hills and suburbs (RESENDE, 2016, p. 99).

The urban fragmentation aspect designed by Resende enlightens João Antônio's readings of Lima Barreto's works, regarding the "fragmentary city" (at the end of the 20th century). But, before that, it is necessary to affirm a propositional idea. The criticism of the *pingente* intellectual is the observation of reality and the discourse of the intellectual production derived from the tensions of this active observation. Concerning Lima Barreto's work, we are interested in undertaking an extension, which necessarily has to do with the echoes of João Antônio's reading of Lima Barreto.

Echoes of the *Pingente* Intellectual Narrator: Lima Barreto in João Antônio

In the essay "Corpo-a-Corpo com a Vida" (1975), João Antônio proposes:

Do we need literature? We do. But a literary art, like theatre, cinema, journalism, that would cut, penetrate, understand, expose, flay our life domains (...). The path is clear, and therefore difficult — without great mysteries and schools. A hand-to-hand encounter with Brazilian life. A literature that dives into the facts rather than remaining on the surface. In this lies its main mission — to be the stratification of a people's life and to participate in the improvement and modification of that people. Hand-to-hand. This is the fight. Or none. (JOÃO ANTÔNIO, 1975, p. 145-146).

The idea of the hand-to-hand combat with life is interesting to complete the concept of literary resistance present in the *pingente* narrator. If not, let's see. João Antônio, in his journalistic-literary production, from 1963 to 1996, worked on the literary — and journalistic — engagement to themes and universes related to the underprivileged (“a literature that grows on the facts”). Thus, his universe guides the figure of the intellectual as a marginal: “His work [Lima Barreto's] is still a punch, heavy and close, in our apathy, malevolence, knavishness, omission, indifference, pharisaism, laxness and mockery of the foreign models — equally *pingente* qualities” (JOÃO ANTÔNIO, 1977, p. 14).

Now, in this surrender, around the hand-to-hand combat with life, there is an idea measured by physical contact, whose north is Lima Barreto. In the short story “Abraçado ao meu Rancor”, originally published in 1986, perhaps the most direct narrative in terms of the ideas proposed by João Antonio's reading of Lima Barreto, we come across a journalist narrator who is tired of making the city news coverage for the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo, bored with the small world of cultural production in the city of São Paulo; this individual moves from one field to another in the city, towards an end (in this case, the route from Pinheiros to Morro da Geda, in Osasco): to visit his mother. In this other “calvary”, the hand-to-hand aspect is evidenced as follows:

I'm afraid to lay down, fall asleep, miss the stop. It was the last train; what if I slept? It is crowded, so we lean on each other, we swing on the sway of the curves. The *pingentes* outside take a cold wind in the face. Not being able to hold on to anything, we try to stay steady on our feet, without falling, despite being thrown by the train, and we arrive at Lapa. One of the trains stops. Stuck and delayed. Folks get impatient. They pick up some rocks from the ground. They could turn the whole junk upside down. Those with any sense will get out of the way of these people. Don't be a fool (JOÃO ANTONIO, 2001, p. 121).

It is possible to say that the theoretical-methodological bases, let's say, of the *pingente* behaviour, are diluted in the melancholic chant of João Antônio, in “Abraçado ao meu Rancor”, in this journey from street to street, from train to train. This biographical orientation is placed in parallel with the figure of Lima Barreto, as a projection of his own identity. So the characterization of his personality is established in the mapping of some themes related to a certain nocturnal marginalia (snooker players, prostitutes, former soccer players), always in the evidence of the melancholic journey of these actors.

The reflection of the narrator of “Abraçado ao meu Rancor” is suggestive in this aspect, because it comprehends the expectations of the *pingente* intellectual in other texts. This self-reflexive conception is painful, as we can see in the following excerpt:

I went through my tough childhood here, in these grimy and crowded trains and queues. Look, it hurts me. I've left here, wandered around the world. When I come back to the hill, sometimes, I climb up like a wary kid, leery, kind of guilty, for, like... but also with joy, because people say, looking at my clothes, bad as things are for them, that I am happy as hell (JOÃO ANTÔNIO, 2001, p. 122).

Becomes evident, therefore, the sedimentation of the *pingente* intellectual criticism as an aesthetic proposal, that gathers the marks present in the literature of Lima Barreto as a moral basis, a mainstay. João Antônio's encounter with Lima Barreto thus materializes in the following findings: a) the *pingente's* painful contact with social reality; b) the anguish inherent in the intellectual marginal; c) combative melancholy.

Appropriating Martin (2002), the melancholy combativeness, if we associate it with the nuances established in *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto*, is that of a *pingente* intellectual, outlier of modernity and its crises: urban increase, precarization of life, lack of understanding in the representations of the apparatus of mass cultural production, etc.

These bases dictate the *melancholy combativeness* procedure, so to speak. We find in *Calvário e Porres do Pingente Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto*, therefore, an extension of the idea of a hand-to-hand combat with life. The synthesis of the construction of the text and the observation of the confidant Carlos Nóbrega establish a methodological model of the procedures (external and internal) of the *pingente* intellectual, whose narrative guides are observation, flow, perception and action.

The purpose here, obviously, is not to establish a definitive classification of the narrators' most subjective intentions, but these general data corroborate the objectives of the journalistic and literary production of the 1970s — context of João Antônio's essayistic propositions about literature and journalism (the report-novel phenomenon, more precisely). This dispute over the sense of reality — or realism — is anchored in basic mediation or in criticism as an instrument to verify a deteriorated national reality.

It is important to highlight, therefore, that there is an echo of the manifestations around the proposal of a *pingente* intellectual narrator criticism. João Antônio's reading of Lima Barreto's work can be understood in the articulation of other contemporary analyses. The various character types

appreciated in *Os Bruzundangas* and in *Memórias do Escrivão Isaías Caminha* reappear in João Antônio, in order to establish the belletrist intellectual as an antagonist of the *pingente* “causes”.

In this sense, it is curious to observe one of the most appropriate phrases from “Abraçado ao meu Rancor”: ‘the city is another one’ (the city which the narrator travels through and observes is not the city he recalls, that one purified by a conception of rascality, communion).

The face of a vanishing humanity emerges from the perception of phantasmatical presences, of people with whom the narrator has lived with. This naive nostalgia is often a trace of biographical rumination, in some cases⁹.

It is not inaccurate to say that the bitterness of the narrator Caminha, for example, is anchored in the bitterness of the journalist narrator of “Abraçado ao meu Rancor”. This design of the arrival point with no home — the wandering — is a device of the narration that cannot be ignored. In this sense, anti-redemption is a decisive attribute in the development of so much critical presence in the 20th century, in which the *pingente* intellectual narrator appears.

We can affirm that there is a need for a broader mapping of such manifestations — on several fronts — whose main emblem, we launch here, at the end of our text, is the *train*: the railway and the locomotive involved in the idea that permeates and contaminates cultural production, since modernity, throughout the twentieth century: in cinema, literature, journalism, popular music. We believe that this category, the train, can give us consistent observation elements so that, by means of its symbolic anchorage, we can identify something essential in the transit of the confrontation with reality, that is: critical perception less like the ethereal and lyrical realisation of the plunge into modernity, and more like a shout of complaint from the critical practice itself, in the reeling of the times and places of this modernity.

In this sense, the *pingente* narrator is a kind of precious metacritical being, in permanent fruition, tension and pulsion, since it brings possible responses to affections mobilized by the intellectual activity. The encounter of Lima Barreto and João Antônio is an example of this.

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⁹ We understand that autobiographical texts are part of the author's literary work. They play a decisive role in his constitution as a writer and, finally, also express João Antônio's literary limits, which are linked, as it could not be otherwise, to issues in his biography (ZENI, 2016, p.32).

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Abstract

We intend to assess manifestations addressed to 'narrador intelectual pingente', from literary and journalistic texts of Lima Barreto (1881-1922). The critical echo of such assessment can be seen in the work of the writer and journalist João Antônio (1937-1996), especially in *Calvário* and *Porres do pingente* Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto (1977). We intend to articulated such texts by means of description, discussion and critical analysis established as a crucial element to the proposal of this 'narrador intelectual pingente', considering the aspects of mediation and values in the dialog between the two authors. For this, we use theoretical references which can provide clues about the reflections on criticisms as an intellectual, communicational, artistic and mediatic phenomena.

Keywords: Criticism. Narrador Intelectual Pingente. Lima Barreto.

Resumo

Pretendemos examinar as manifestações expostas pelo narrador intelectual pingente, a partir de textos literários e jornalísticos de Lima Barreto (1881-1922). O eco crítico de tal exame pode ser percebido na obra do escritor e jornalista João Antônio (1937-1996), especialmente em *Calvário* e *porres do pingente* Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto (1977). Nosso percurso pretende articular tais textos por meio da descrição, discussão e análise da crítica firmada como elemento decisivo para os propósitos desse narrador intelectual pingente, considerando os aspectos de mediação e de valores culturais no diálogo entre os dois autores. Para isso, utilizaremos referenciais teóricos que possam nos dar pistas sobre a reflexão da crítica como fenômeno intelectual, comunicacional e artístico.

Palavras-chave: Crítica. Narrador Intelectual Pingente. Lima Barreto.

Resumen

Este artículo investiga las críticas expuestas por el "narrador intelectual colgante", desde los textos literarios y periodísticos del escritor Lima Barreto (1881-1922). El eco crítico de tal examen se puede encontrar en el trabajo del escritor y periodista João Antônio (1937-1996), especialmente en el "*Calvário e porres do pingente* Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto" (1977). Nuestro analisis busca articular dichos textos a través de la descripción, discusión e interpretación de la crítica establecida como un elemento decisivo para los objetivos de este "narrador intelectual colgante", considerando aspectos de mediación y valores culturales en el diálogo entre los dos autores. Son utilizadas referencias teóricas que ofrecen pistas sobre la reflexión crítica como un fenómeno intelectual, comunicativo y artístico.

Palabras clave: Crítica. Narrador Intelectual Pingente. Lima Barreto.