
Introduction

Hybridisms in Contemporary Luso-Brazilian Fiction

Doi

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Contemporary Luso-Brazilian novels, especially between the mid-twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, have displayed, in their construction and conception, different forms of expansiveness that transcend the boundaries of the literary or could be termed, as some critics put it, as literatures outside themselves. This approach in fiction stems from an expansion of narrative writing beyond its own field, with contemporary prose writers deconstructing the binary distinctions of reality versus fiction and truth versus simulacrum. In works by recent authors, the perspective of Derrida's *jeu* [play] in *écriture* [writing] is incorporated into fictional texts, allowing them to take on other formats and functions, resulting in what Wander Miranda (2014, p. 135–136) has termed “mutant forms.” These multiform texts go beyond rigid literary categories like “author,” “work,” “style,” “text,” and “meaning.” They are hybrid; they are and are not literature, just as they are fiction as well as reality, insofar as they produce new conditions of production and circulation that modify ways of reading.

As for the notion of hybridity, Wladimir Krysinski (2012) stresses that the twentieth century saw a strong movement towards the de-

canonization of the hegemonic colonial discourses—a questioning in which hybridism played a tactical role. This concept, originally from the life sciences, was appropriated by literary theory and criticism to explain different ways of writing that involved “mixing, crossing, joining, or blending” (Krysinski, 2012, p. 233). Within the realm of fictional narrative, hybridity refers to compositions that break through hierarchical genre boundaries and subvert the structural norms established in classic literary theory handbooks.

More recent fictions display a miscellany of heterogeneous dictions that reveal different heterotopias—other places and spaces where the idea of fiction as autonomous and independent is supplanted by different art forms that take shape as part of the world. This opening of the fictional heterocosm to multiple fields of knowledge often gives rise to unclassifiable creations, built on a form of montage that involves “cuts [...], migrations, and the survival of the ‘figures’ into which the narrated events are transformed” (Kiffer; Garramuño, 2014, p. 13). If we consider this tendency toward expansiveness, which is such a feature of recent Luso-Brazilian and Portuguese-language African fictions, from a perspective of post-autonomy, we can see it as proposing an abandonment of the traditional or even rigid exegetical categories with which literary theory and criticism largely occupied itself, especially until the mid-1900s.

This shift toward the post-autonomous nature of fiction has roots that run deeper, especially if we turn to two founding texts of twentieth-century literary criticism: “The Death of the Author” (1968), by Barthes, and “What Is an Author?” (1969), by Foucault. In fact, under the influence of deconstructionism, both already emphasized reception, the plurality of meanings, and the unfinished nature of the work over the authority of the external author. What these problematizations by post-structuralist thinkers gave rise to—and what the very latest Portuguese-language fiction reveals—is a proliferation of extremely hybrid, unruly narratives that borrow liberally from other forms and media.

Alongside hybridism, we can also reflect on the same phenomena through the lens of post-autonomy, as theorized by Josefina Ludmer (2007) in “Post-Autonomous Literatures.” In this essay, Ludmer highlights the ambivalence of fictional texts produced in recent decades that are simultaneously situated both inside and outside what is traditionally termed “literature” or “fiction.” These are texts with extremely porous boundaries and linguistic constructions that defy the limits that once circumscribed certain genres, drawing on a non-specificity and hybridity of genres, discourses, and dictions. It could even be argued that the notions of “installation” and “literature” are intermingled in this type of fiction, since it is often composed of fragments, photographs, and/or discourses from different knowledge domains, turning the fictional into installation. So there is no way to distinguish between what is true and what is simulacrum. That said,

interwoven with this personal indistinction is also the indistinction or indifferenciation between the fictional and the real, as if in these texts—as in many other such practices of unbelonging—the refusal to operate in a closed way and to set boundaries between reality and fiction were a way of erasing the dividing lines between the autonomous world of the work and the outside world in which the work is read or perceived. (Garramuño, 2014, p. 21)

In these hybrid texts, we come across an interplay of different text types used to “fabricate realities” through discourse. Crucially, post-autonomy is a perspective that essentially highlights the “dissolving of boundaries (or the recognition that they never existed but as a fiction needed to bolster the paradigm) between literary genres, between reality and fiction, between the inside and outside of the text, between literature and other forms of expression” (Andrade et al., 2018, p. 168).

The work of writers started to be guided not only by these de-hierarchizations of the boundaries of fiction writing, which gained momentum as of the 1960s, particularly in the contemporary Portuguese novel, but also by certain characteristics of the era of globalization. In his seminal *O romance português contemporâneo (1950-2010)* (The contemporary Portuguese novel (1950–2010)), Miguel Real (2012) identifies some key categories that can be used to interrogate the contexts that allow us to reflect on the intense hybridity within the landscape of contemporary novels. These are:

1. The internationalization of the content of novels as authors and their readers become part of a globalized society, meaning that fiction “no longer portrays a Portugal closed in on itself, but a European, global Portugal with social trends and psychological problems similar to those of Europeans” (Real, 2012, p. 19);
2. Changes in the author’s social status, since the new writer, reflecting the feral individualism seen in Portuguese society since the 1980s, is viewed more as a “social idol (a literary star), a cultural icon, with a website and a group of ‘fans’ on Facebook, than as a lucid intellectual whose work and words might serve as seismographs of the social and moral reality in the community” (Real, 2012, p. 25);
3. Calls for a new canon, with a cultural openness to the predominance of a playful, cosmopolitan, European literature, realized fully through the work of new authors coming of age in the 1980s and 1990s (Real, 2012, p. 30).

Considering these features inherent to the fiction produced especially since 1950, which directly influence the work of contemporary writers, this issue of *Revista Convergência Lusíada*, entitled *Hibridismos na ficção contemporânea luso-brasileira* (Hybridisms in contemporary Luso-Brazilian fiction), has received important contributions that examine the many and varied manifestations of Luso-Brazilian and Portuguese-language African literature, focusing on various forms of hybridity, whether in the connections between

en fiction and self-writing, or in the intersections between fiction and essay, fiction and history, and fiction and other arts. The papers draw upon analyses of works by leading figures in contemporary Afro-Luso-Brazilian fiction, such as José Cardoso Pires, Maria Isabel Barreno, Teolinda Gersão, Valter Hugo Mãe, Isabela Figueiredo, Stephanie Vasconcelos, Miguel d'Alte, and Mia Couto. Let us now present the texts that make up the dossier.

This issue, on Luso-Brazilian hybridisms, opens with the article “*Autobiografia não escrita de Martha Freud*, de Teolinda Gersão: ‘A vitória contra a morte e o apagamento’ ou ‘A iluminação como metáfora do que se descobre’”. Ou autobiografia “inventada” ilumina a escuridão”¹ (Martha Freud Freud’s unwritten autobiography, by Teolinda Gersão: Victory over death and erasure or Enlightenment as a metaphor for what is discovered. Or invented autobiography lights the darkness), by Ângela Beatriz de Carvalho Faria, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. In it, Carvalho Faria offers a thought-provoking reflection on Gersão’s 2024 novel. It is a work of hybrid fiction based on cultural memory and the art of archiving—the outcome of Gersão’s three-and-a-half-year-long reading of the correspondence between Sigmund Freud and those closest to him. As Carvalho Faria points out, in using first-person “self-writing,” Gersão chooses the theme of the double, taking on the identity of Martha Freud, in an endless, seductive game of mirrors that ultimately desacralizes the eminent figure of the “father” of psychoanalysis. Carvalho Faria further notes that with its blurring of the traditional genre of autobiography, the narrative is grounded in the act of thinking, in which the inner world and space of affect must be articulated in order to exist and escape censorship.

¹ Original title of a lecture given at the Faculty of Letters, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in October 2025, for the full professorship in Portuguese Literature.

The second text in the dossier, “Ironia romântica e contemporaneidade: o jogo ficção e realidade em ‘Uma simples flor nos teus cabelos’, de José Cardoso Pires” [Romantic irony and contemporaneity: The game of fiction and reality in ‘A simple flower in your hair,’ by José Cardoso Pires], is authored by Camila da Silva Alavarce, from the Federal University of São Carlos. The analysis of Cardoso Pires’s short story examines the way its narrative is structured and the concept of romantic irony, emphasizing key features of the work’s construction, such as the meaning effect of simultaneity and the ambiguity in the interplay between fiction and reality. Silva Alavarce further highlights how romantic irony is used to draw a tension in the story between reality and fiction—an interplay that Cardoso Pires heightens through his use of *mise en abyme* (Dällenbach, 1979). She argues that the mirroring and reflexivity fostered by the nested narrative structure augment the meaning effect of the romantic irony, amplifying the room for ambiguity by placing narratives, characters, and situations not just “side by side,” but “one inside the other,” and that these, once set in mutual interplay—a classic device for irony—oscillate between similarity and dissimilarity, proximity and distance, reality and fiction.

The next article, “Representações da infância no Rio de Janeiro no início do século XX: diálogos entre as crônicas de João do Rio e a atuação do médico Arthur Moncorvo Filho” [Representations of childhood in Rio de Janeiro in the early twentieth century: dialogues between the chronicles of João do Rio and the work of physician Arthur Moncorvo Filho], is by Marcele dos Santos Ribeiro Malaquias (State University of Rio de Janeiro), Suely Campos Franco (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), and Viviane da Silva Vasconcelos (State University of Rio de Janeiro). The authors searched the Real Gabinete Português de Leitura archives using the keyword “childhood,” which yielded, among other things, records of the chronicler João do Rio (1881–1921), particularly his text “Children Who Kill,” and also the physician Arthur Moncorvo Filho (1871–1944), who wrote

Histórico de Proteção à Infância (1500-1922) (History of child protection (1500–1922)). The analysis contained in the article confirms the hypothesis that when these works were written, there was an urgent need for social care for children, underscoring the importance of research in this field.

The fourth article, “Na pele nova não será inscrita a experiência verde e limosa’: a escrita inventiva de Maria Isabel Barreno em *Os outros legítimos superiores* (1970)” [‘On new skin, the green and mud-died experience will not be inscribed’: the inventive writing of Maria Isabel Barreno in *Superior, legitimate others* (1970)] is coauthored by Jorge Vicente Valentim and Penélope Eiko Aragaki Salles, from the Federal University of São Carlos. Their analysis reveals how Barreno’s 1970 text can be understood through the prism of what Eduardo Prado Coelho (2004, p. 70) refers to as the “mental logic of the 1960s: the enclosure of an infinite labyrinth or the metatextuality of an eternally bifurcating text,” which Coelho himself sees as one of the creative paradigms of that decade. Valentim and Aragaki Salles agree that in this work, fragmentation, stream of consciousness, the non-naming of spaces and characters, the assailing and hijacking of the characters’ thoughts, blending them with those of the narrator themselves, foster this labyrinthine atmosphere in *Os outros legítimos superiores*, juxtaposing distinct aesthetics and genre categories, and even making use of hybridization.

The fifth and sixth articles are titled, respectively, “O ódio como meio de sobrevivência em *O apocalipse dos trabalhadores*, de Valter Hugo Mãe” [Hate as a means of survival in *The workers’ apocalypse*, by Valter Hugo Mãe], by Adriana Girão Campiti Braga, from the Federal University of Fluminense, and “Representação de gênero: uma análise comparada da narrativa Paiteir Suruí ‘As primeiras mulheres’ e o conto ‘Lenda de namarói’, de Mia Couto” [Gender representation: a comparative analysis of the Paiteir Suruí narrative “The first women” and the short story “Legend of Namarói” by Mia Couto,], by Luana Gomes Pagung, from the Federal University of

Rondônia. The former article contains an analysis of Valter Hugo Mãe's novel *O apocalipse dos trabalhadores*, published in 2008. According to Campiti Braga, although the day laborers Maria da Graça and Quitéria are the protagonists, the behavior of the Ukrainian immigrant Andriy has a profound impact on the reader from the very beginning. Displaced from his homeland by poverty spawned of political conflicts and the resulting humanitarian crisis, Andriy migrates to Portugal, more specifically to Bragança, a border town in the former province of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro. Campiti Braga further stresses that this outflow of Slav migrants (from Ukrainian, Russia, and Bulgaria), which has intensified since 2000, is driven primarily by the need to survive, forcing the migrants to take whatever work they can in civil construction and agriculture—both sectors that exploit cheap labor. Following this, in her article Gomes Pagung makes a comparative analysis of the thematic intertextuality that permeates two narratives from distant and yet culturally analogous continents: the Americas, with “The first women”—a text of collective authorship from the oral tradition of the Paiteer Suruí people in Brazil, collected and translated by Betty Mindlin in *Vozes da origem* (Voices of origin); and Africa, with the short story “Lenda de Namorói” (The Legend of Namorói), by Mia Couto, in the collection of short stories *Estórias abensonhadas* (Dreamed stories)—a narrative inspired by Mozambican oral tradition. Through this comparison, she examines how the feminine and the masculine are symbolically constructed in the two cosmogonic narratives and how they are articulated as determining factors in gender relations and the appropriation of social space.

Continuing the exploration of hybridisms in recent Portuguese-language fiction is the study by Milena Maia, from PUC São Paulo, and Renan Henrique Messias de Paulo, from the Federal University of São Carlos, titled “O espaço como destino em *A origem dos dias*, de Miguel d’Alte” (Space as destiny in *A origem dos dias*, by Miguel d’Alte). In their proposed reading, they highlight the interplay be-

tween space, landscape, and metafiction for interpreting the narrative under study. In light of the tension between literary creation and reality, the reading of the novel brings forth the ways in which the narrative develops an existential geography marked by the continuous displacement of the protagonist, Tomás Franco, between rural and urban spaces beyond the borders of Portugal. For the authors, these places function as instances of meaning that shape states of consciousness, affects, and ways of being and perceiving the world.

In the following article, “Novíssima literatura portuguesa: narrativa e personagens fragmentados no romance *A tua melanina*, de Stephanie Vasconcelos” [The very latest Portuguese literature: fragmented narrative and characters in the novel *A tua melanina*, by Stephanie Vasconcelos], Sandra de Melo Silva and Maria Jodaílma Leite, both from PUC São Paulo, draw on the hybrid tendencies of contemporary narratives in the most recent Portuguese literature. Furthermore, the plot of the novel chosen as the corpus is of great intense emotional and poetic density, marked by fragmented dialogues, polyphony, intertextuality, metafiction, and self-referential games, in which fiction and reality intermingle, transcending a language centered on the self to attain a collective dimension.

The final article in this dossier is “Meu corpo é minha casa: visita ao romance *A gorda*, de Isabela Figueiredo” [My body is my home: visiting the novel *A gorda*, by Isabela Figueiredo], by Rosemary Gonçalves Afonso, from the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro. In this article, Gonçalves Afonso reports that the female protagonist faces difficulties related to being overweight, falling victim to the oppression exerted by an almost always unattainable standard of beauty in an exclusionary, fat-phobic society. And because the specific elements used to demean an individual must be understood not in isolation, but in combination, taking an intersectional perspective, Gonçalves Afonso argues that overweight is associated with the state of womanhood, particularly that of the “returnee,”

since the character is one of the thousands of Portuguese men and women who “returned” to Portugal in the 1970s in the wake of the struggles for independence in Portugal’s last colonies in Africa, but were received with hostility and suspicion by the metropolis-dwelling population.

This issue of *Convergência Lusíada* also features two reviews. The first is by Ana Marques Gastão, a Portuguese poet, fiction writer, and essayist, who presents the book *Recurso e pobreza* (Resource and poverty), by the contemporary poet Tatiana Faia. The second review, by António José Borges, from the Centre for Global Studies, at Universidade Aberta, Portugal, presents the collection of short stories *A nuvem no olhar* (Clouded gaze), by the highly acclaimed Portuguese writer João de Melo, marking the fiftieth year of his literary career.

We would like to conclude by noting that the studies contained in this dossier, *Hybridisms in Contemporary Luso-Brazilian Fiction*, will serve as a valuable resource for research on the topic, with the great diversity of subject matter, forms, and styles that permeate contemporary Portuguese-language narrative. We wish you an excellent read!

Paulo Sales

Federal University of Goiás

Jorge Vicente Valentim

Federal University of São Carlos

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