

**The Jewish Amazon by Moacyr Scliar: The Word of the Other as Affirmation of the Noncoincidence of the Other in Oneself / A *Amazônia judaica de Moacyr Scliar: a palavra alheia como afirmação da não-coincidência do outro em si***

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**ABSTRACT**

By analyzing two of Moacyr Scliar's novels, *Cenas da vida minúscula* [Scenes of a Minuscule Life] and *A Majestade do Xingu* [Xingu's Majesty], this paper proposes a trajectory of risk and acknowledgment of the word of the other in permanent transit, for possibly affirming the Jewish imaginary, with the Amazon as background for highly inventive plots by the "gaúcho" (from Rio Grande do Sul) writer. In both novels, there are powerful orchestrating voices, capable of producing labyrinthine dialogical excavations.<sup>1</sup> Such voices refer to the production of several possibilities of affirming the assimilated voice of the other, evoking the projective force of devouring the literary perspective proposed. Understanding the assimilation of the word of the other becomes an essential instrument to contact the complexity of the formation and foundation of many ethnicities that intersected in Brazil.

**KEYWORDS:** Amazonian expression; Jewish expression; The other in Brazilian regionalism

**RESUMO**

*A partir de dois romances de Moacyr Scliar, Cenas da vida minúscula e A Majestade do Xingu, podemos propor um percurso de risco e reconhecimento da palavra alheia em permanente trânsito, para uma suposta afirmação do imaginário judaico tendo a região amazônica como cenário do percurso de enredos altamente inventivos do autor gaúcho. Em ambos os romances, há vozes orquestradoras e poderosas capazes de produzir linhas sinuosas de escavações dialógicas e que se remetem a produzir várias possibilidades de afirmação da voz do outro assimilada, por meio da evocação da própria força projetiva do processo de devoração do veio literário proposto. A compreensão da assimilação da palavra alheia torna-se instrumento essencial para entrar em contato com a complexidade de formação e fundação de tantas etnias que se cruzaram em terras brasileiras.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Expressão amazônica; Expressão judaica; O outro no regionalismo brasileiro*

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<sup>1</sup> TN. The author uses the "excavation" metaphor to refer to the process of identifying the plurality of possibilities in textual analysis.

The Brazilian literature in the Amazonian context has a list of writers who have not necessarily been born in the area. As it was a region of difficult human access in the colonial occupation, it has become a sort of imagination challenge for many curious examinations, whether by those who ventured into its jungles or by those who intellectually tried to domesticate it with the allegorical force of words. Among some prominent fiction writers, who were never actually in the area, are Jules Verne (*Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon*), Conan Doyle (*The Lost World*), Gastão Cruls (*The Mysterious Amazonia*)<sup>2</sup> and Evelyn Waugh (*A Handful of Dust*). This is explained by the great number of accounts that have existed since the sixteenth century, starting with Dominican Friar Gaspar de Carvajal, who joined the first expedition to the so-called “*Rio das Amazonas*” [River of the Amazons]. Such accounts promoted the idea of a mysterious world, oscillating between the paradise of natural resources and the hell of the jungle, with its tropical diseases, annoying insects, aggressive natives, hunger and labyrinthic zones.

Accordingly, we might dare to say that the Amazon was initiated in literature by the accounts and by the amazement of so many travelers who attempted to discursively apprehend it along the centuries, with the help of a dazzled imagination. Such dazzle before the unexpected is something that has been maintained in the twenty-first century. It is still possible to consult books or documents which reflect such persistence to seek the unusual, at any cost, among us. The Amazon has become an extremely flexible object of language, with many different pragmatic and ideological intentions. Specialists from all over the world are eager to express their views of the “great green valley,” even though they have never set foot in the area. On the one hand, predatory human action poses danger to and threatens the ecosystem of the planet; on the other hand, there are those who see foreign interest in the region as an insistent sign of economic imperialist eagerness; there are also those who, from a development perspective, can see it as a space to explore mineral resources in favor of the nation. In all such cases, there is plenty of evidence that the region will always be open to new imaginary speculations of all sorts, as the Amazon, this vast world of surprises unwinding to the insistently curious eyes, seems to behave the same way, since the first Europeans explorers came. We cannot

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<sup>2</sup> Gastão Cruls later “was sorry” for having written a novel not based on reality. He joined a Marechal Rondon expedition and published a journey log called “*A Amazônia que eu vi*” [The Amazon I saw].

address the Amazon without taking into account the contrast among so many forms of behaviors and different views in relation to this kind of “enigmatic object.”

In Brazil, there is a significant number of writers from other regions of the country – there are authors from Portugal too –, who have written about the “great green and human area”; some have taken root here, others have not. Among the most famous names are Alberto Rangel, Ferreira de Castro, Peregrino Júnior, José Potiguara, Antônio Callado, Darci Ribeiro. Since the mid-twentieth century, some writers who were born in the area have become famous nationwide and have proven that a dialogue can be established with more profound spheres, in order to investigate the human soul or the complex depths of our ethnic, economic and political formation. Some names stand out, such as Dalcídio Jurandir, Benedito Monteiro, Márcio Souza e Milton Hatoum.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, there is still a lot more to explore and analyze, and more spaces to be occupied, in literature, but the groundwork has been laid and scholars of national and regional literature will find a great many possibilities of images, for contemporary productions. On the other hand, it is fundamental to notice the profound, radical dialogue between now and then, or how colonial bases were rooted in the Amazon, and the repercussion this has had, in one way or another, in the local literature.

Unfortunately, approximately twenty-five years ago, when I started my studies on literature in the Amazonian context, I did not have deep knowledge of the work of Moacyr Scliar (1937-2011). An author from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, of Ashkenazi Jewish origin, he was also a health physician, and produced a vast and renowned fictional work during his lifetime. In two of his novels, *Cenas da vida minúscula* [Scenes of a Minuscule Life] (1991) and *Majestade do Xingu* [Xingu’s Majesty] (1997), the issues related to the plots are clearly located in the Amazon region. In 2000, *Entre Moisés e Macunaíma: os judeus que descobriram o Brasil* [Between Moses and Macunaíma: Jews Discovered Brazil] was published, written by Moacyr Scliar and Márcio Souza, a writer from the State of Amazonas, of Ashkenazi Jewish origin. Both authors describe their trajectories as writers and as bearers of Hebrew roots in Brazil. Nevertheless, I believe that having a common ethnic ancestry was not the only reason why they wrote the book together. Both of them have the Amazonian region as a space of transit and as an object of attraction,

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<sup>3</sup> Márcio Souza and Milton Hatoum have shown that the Amazonian writers not only can project themselves nationally and internationally, but can also become professionals of literature, without having to perform extra, time-consuming tasks.

even though one was in Porto Alegre and the other one was in Manaus – opposite ends of the country.

The feeling of itinerancy associated with the Jewish is a determining factor for addressing a text of similar peculiarities – one writer who was born a Jew, and the other later identified with Jewish origins, as is the case of Márcio Souza, who sought a more profound imaginary heritage of such feeling of itinerancy. The book *Entre Moisés e Macunaíma* is a strong testimonial literary essay of this process of assimilating possible features. In the beginning, Moacyr Scliar writes: “I never rejected [Judaism]. I could not, even if I wanted to. Judaism is an indissoluble mark” (Scliar; Souza, 2000, p.25).<sup>4</sup> Dealing with the contradictions that move the itinerant subject in a country where there is huge assimilation, such as Brazil, becomes, perhaps, the great motif and challenge for a Jewish writer among us. This would never be experienced by US Jewish writers, such as Philip Roth, Saul Bellow or Woody Allen. In their case, the assimilation process is completely different from ours, as there is no great “risk” that they will become Christians. At any rate, not even agnosticism would eliminate the Hebrew marks in their personalities or in their writing. Moacyr Scliar, more than any other writer in Brazilian literature, was able to explore such segment and his work remains an object of study, especially for this reason.

It is evident that the issue of profound, radical otherness, is ongoing in the construction of plots and stories involved in the process of investigating the Jewish roots in Brazil, through the writers. There is a clear dispute of imaginary spaces, due to the ethnic heritage of thousands of years, brought by peoples who had to move from one place to another in the planet. On the other hand, there is a basis of attraction that enables all different forms to be adjusted to a peace-making assimilation into a cultural and national Portuguese-Indigenous People-African unity. In Brazil, the labyrinthine forms that surround us also invite us to dream of convergences and risks of permanence. The travelers’ written words are more than documents among us; they are testimonials of a possible aesthetics, by producing fragments of dynamic significations in a “swampy area” of affirmative sign-related possibilities, which range from looking exogenously at the adjustable object to being the adjustable object, active in its confluence of transits. It is

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<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: “que nunca rejeitei. Não poderia ter rejeitado, ainda que quisesse. O judaísmo é uma marca indissolúvel.”

easy to imagine what moved such an inventive writer as Moacyr Scliar, as he has experienced – since his childhood – the contradictory conditions to affirm himself and to be who he is, when he is, at the same time, forced to face hostility towards original ramifications. The writer Márcio Souza found out about his Hebrew ancestry at an adult age. Even with this anachronistic identification, he cannot deny who he has been henceforth, or what he has always been: a subject who asks permission to pass through identity transits, as if he navigated the large and labyrinthine rivers of the Amazon. As noticed in his work, at a certain point, “the Jew is changed and rediscovered in unsettling manners through his essay” (Carvalho, 2022, p.230).<sup>5</sup> The writings of both Scliar and Souza have a lot of evidence in this regard. There is no way to escape being the one that floats among signifiers<sup>6</sup> which produce fragments to construct new itineraries, whether in the pampas or in the Amazons.<sup>7</sup>

The question raised herein is: to whom does the word of the other – in a sign-related shipwreck<sup>8</sup> – belong? This is one of the great motifs of the plots in Moacyr Scliar’s novels, analyzed in this article. A Bakhtin scholar, exploring the aspects related to the belonging of the “word of the other,” as foundations of the affirmation of a dialogical consciousness, states that

(...) it is not only the noncoincidence with the other, contrary to fusion/identification. If the function of the word of the other is to assign meaning to what needs meaning, in order to be subject, its destiny is to be appropriated and to be monologized, so that it can become foreign again, making the subject “the *other* of the other,” the other of oneself and the other of subject-voices that circulate in the monologized consciousness discourse. But would it not be language itself the author of such an infinite succession of displacements? (Lemos, 1994, pp.42-43).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In Portuguese: “o ser judeu é remexido e reencontrado de maneiras desconcertantes pela sua pena ensaística.”

<sup>6</sup> The metonymy displacement proposed by Lacan can only take place through signifiers that demand a signified which is not entirely supported by the metaphoric anchor, demanding another plunge into the abyss of non-signification (cf. Vallejo; Magalhães, 1981, pp.93-97).

<sup>7</sup> TN. As informed by the author of the article, “Amazonias” in the plural form refers to the variety of contexts within the Amazon. Such differences may be geographic, ethnic, economic etc.

<sup>8</sup> TN. The author uses the “shipwreck” metaphor in relation to Lacan’s theory of desire. Here it refers to an eager search to fill a void.

<sup>9</sup> In Portuguese: “não é apenas a não-coincidência com o outro, contrária à fusão/identificação. Se a função da palavra alheia é dar sentido ao que carece de sentido para ser sujeito, seu destino é ser apropriada e monologizar-se, para se tornar de novo alheia, constituindo o sujeito em “*outro* do outro”, em outro de si próprio e em outro das vozes-sujeitos que circulam em seu discurso consciência monologizada. Mas não seria a própria linguagem a autora dessa infinita sucessão de deslocamentos?”

It is very pertinent to conceive the perspective of the other as an object which can be absorbed and which is in transit. Such question is the core of everything to be developed from issues of otherness that permeate the Jewish author in a country where there is great assimilation, such as Brazil. Judaism is not addressed as one more religion, among so many others which arrived at the “tupiniquim tropics.” Rather, it is addressed as a tool of identitary language, ready to be explored by several branches of the constructive-discursive potential of the imaginary affirmation of the transit itself. The discourse of the other causes a feeling of strangeness, and it ignites the sharpness of the “other ear,” which is tuned in its own difference.<sup>10</sup> The tension is provoked by the friction of languages and imaginations disputing the space of affirming the voice “among voices.” Having one’s own voice is not to have a voice at all, ultimately. What matters is that the voice moves in provocative tensions, in order to achieve its potential own self-affirmation in transit. This is what matters the most for the Jewish imagination to pursue the risk and acknowledgment of “being almost” among frontiers of possible languages.

As already noticed, if Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope is explored, the sense of time and space draws closer to modern physics. The way we observe the object makes us part of the observed object (Sobral, 2008, pp.138-139). Time and space depend on the way they are united in the privileged perception of the other. Assimilating the other or being assimilated is the same, if we consider that what is at stake are the premises that move the intentions of the thing itself. In other words, the object that floats in the intentionalities of what becomes immanent produces the dynamics of signification and, in this case, what is “reality” becomes one more piece in the worlds being discursively reconstructed. In the discussion presented herein, the assimilated Judaism does not eliminate the traces of the origin, as they are translated into itinerant voices and, therefore, they bring the danger of reality<sup>11</sup> in every phase of the self-affirmative challenge of the voice. Accordingly, it is understandable how Moacyr Scliar has struggled, since he was a child, with what his Jewish heritage caused in the fictional/frictional appeal in his imagination, filled with inventions and allegories for the affirmation, by means of

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<sup>10</sup> The other ear, the ear of the other, is the ability to dialogically listen to the distressing formation of any consciousness that speaks silently to the rest of the world.

<sup>11</sup> Reality as something possible, but one that brings, most of the time, the emptiness of the significant dynamics, on the verge of “insignificance.”

literature, of the being in transit. For Márcio Souza, finding out about his Ashkenazi Jewish heritage as an adult allowed for a more dangerous excavation of absence of meanings, because, as an agnostic, he could not merely rely on a soothing religious voice. Instead, he sought a justification to understand the very itinerant being, also as a child, through Amazonian fragments in his trajectory. Claiming his Jewish heritage was a natural step towards diving deeper in the cold waters of so many sign-laden streams, which permeate his trajectory in the shipwreck of different discursive intentions that feed back into themselves.

We have reached the nodal point of the initial questions raised and developed in this article: the word of the other, undoubtedly, depends essentially on the permeabilities to which it is subject in the process of identitary self-affirmation, i.e., it is permanently a phenomenon articulated with the established rules. Therefore, it needs to invest in the voids of permanence, in order to take the trajectory of risk and acknowledgment as the very possibility of permanence. The voice of the other is what it is only because it is shipwrecked when it is perceived as part of a certain group or of an ideological sphere. Bakhtin reminds us, by analyzing Dostoiévski's work, that the idea of the other can only exist if it is represented artistically: "(...) the artistic discovery of the dialogic nature of the idea" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.87).<sup>12</sup> The other voice, or the voice of the other, can only exist in dialogical confrontation; otherwise, it fades and dies, as any other organism. In order to be maintained, it has to generate new ideas in its own movement, which is interactive and fluidic. The possibilities of lack of signification always help conclude the trajectory. Being Jewish in Brazil propels the problematization of the fact that accepting the culture of the other may tie all knots in the trajectory.<sup>13</sup> Fiction is the tool which Moacyr Scliar uses to (re)construct the invisible saga of so many ancestors who were assimilated by several situational plots which disguise the diasporic, shipwrecked scars: "Brazilians are like other Brazilians; Brazilians are unlike other Brazilians; they are depositaries of a different cultural heritage (...). The newly-arrived eye is not the same as the native's; it

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<sup>12</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Since Clarice Lispector, including Rawet and Scliar, and even Laub – the main Jewish writers in our country –, it is evident that the being in transit gains different perpendicularities of viewing the world, or of plenitude, or of exhaustion, in a dialectic design of affirmation/negation, at times searching for an impossible synthesis.

sees things the other does not (...)” (Scliar; Souza, 2000, p.59).<sup>14</sup> In this trajectory, there are several challenges the writer needs to face, in relation to his foundation features. The country he adopts as his is blended with his history, with his geography, along with the searching appeals or the insistent trajectory of his ancestors, which provokes an introspective diaspora that finds, in the objective universe of fiction, the articulatory diversions of a word that is self-affirmed because it knows it is foreign. As this word knows it is the other, it stands out for the difference, because it runs the risk of being a simulacrum of a courage of possible registration.

Assuming that the novel is in the world and is managed along with the world that holds it – but not necessarily coinciding with the author’s ideological vision –, we can resume the concept of the narrator-author in order to distinguish the conditions of the use of the literary word in fiction. Maingueneau’s notion of paratopia (2018, p.50) provides us with such complex insertion of being a writer in the work: “it nourishes its creation in a radically problematic character of its own association to its own discursive field and to society.”<sup>15</sup> Paratopia is a required “displacement” in order for literature to exist in fact, without established prerogatives as something that necessarily has to fit patterns of good taste or adjust to “progressist” needs. The writer creates his own special conditions to act in a space that has been shaped by the needs of aesthetic articulations of the writing process. Accordingly, the word of the other promotes the architectonic propositions for finding a literary form in the moving discourse, which dialogizes to monologize, and then again is open to new intrusions. The noncoincidence of the “other in oneself” is the very literary word which represents all possibilities of the discursive anatomy that expresses the place in the non-place. This construction is the closest notion to verbal potency, as representative of critical points, analyzed by hellish<sup>16</sup> discomforts of the objective world of prose. Fiction indicates the world as reference, and it also releases it to the actions of the narrator-author, who incarnates and reincarnates the roles which go far beyond the “supremacy of the literary word.” In the allegorical trajectories, the details of the

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<sup>14</sup> In Portuguese: “Brasileiros parecidos a outros brasileiros; brasileiros diferentes de outros brasileiros, porque depositários de uma diferente herança cultural (...). O olhar do recém-chegado não é igual ao do nativo; ele vê coisas que o outro não vê (...).”

<sup>15</sup> EDWARDS, Carole. *The Paratopic Imagination: An Encounter with Dominique Maingueneau*. In: *Intertexts*, Volume 22, Issues 1-2, Spring-Fall 2018, pp.40-54. Available on <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337928433>. Access on January 3rd, 2023, p.50.

<sup>16</sup> TN. The author uses the adjective “hellish” in reference to prose being “hell” to the poet, as in this genre he cannot resort to his lyrical, monological world.



displacements are evident, and so are the projective affirmations of the word which imitates the represented object and also withdraws from it. The autonomy of the word renders it conditions for all forms of articulations of the word of the “other” by means of masks or possible incarnations within an intense dialogical dispute.

In the case of Moacyr Scliar’s fiction, there is the issue of being Jewish in transit, in ways which are at times obsessive, but which do not necessarily fully reproduce what the writer thinks of his own position in the world. His literature releases the transits of a highly inventive imagination and his allegories attempt to convince us of his own reality, as if it were only invention. It shares, instead, his commitments with all possible sorts of otherness. The literary is affirmed in this void as a driving force of legacies of cultures and stories, which confirm the untranslatability of the world as the narrator-author intends to project originally. In other words, fiction is fiction because it does not seem like fiction; at the same time, it takes us through other paths where we find and lose ourselves, due to viable identifications of possible inventive ways. Actually, what we have are inaccessible paths among realities that demonstrate more a character of conjectures, rather than a mirroring of expectations a priori social “criticism” of the subject searching for a pre-determined (social or political, for instance) agenda.<sup>17</sup> Its lack of an a priori agenda in fact is what moves this literature and the problems of placing the author’s voice, or the voice of literature itself.

In *Cenas da vida minúscula* (1991), Habacuc, son of wise and lustful King Solomon, becomes God’s rival when he attempts to recreate man, inspired by Sulamita – one of the allegedly daughters of his father – who intends to write or rewrite the Bible. Free imagination allows the narrator-author to reinvent the saga of the Amazons and mix it with the Jewish transit, right in the beginning of the novel:

(...) restless, they decided to combat Troy. Their queen Penthesilea died there. The Amazons then dispersed; some joined the Phoenician expeditions and arrived at those far-off lands. The region where they were located – of huge forests and large rivers – was known by their name: amazons. The fleets designated by David’s successor also arrived there; homage was paid by using the name of the largest river in the land of the amazons: Solimões, Solomon’s River (Scliar, 2003, p.11).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Reducing any fictional work to an objective of social content is in fact to render it an arbitrary role which it would be supposed to play in the world, a priori criticism.

<sup>18</sup> In Portuguese: “(...) inquietas, resolveram guerrear Troia. Lá morreu sua rainha, Penteseleia. As Amazonas então se dispersaram; algumas integraram-se às expedições fenícias, e assim chegaram àquelas

This typically Brazilian mixture represents a need of extraordinary integration of the very diasporic condition of the Jewish with other original sources, besides those from the biblical narrative. The approximation of the dispersion of the Amazons, the women warriors, and the feeling of the Jewish itinerancy, is not random in the articulated allegorical configuration. The tension between the text already written and the action of writing raises the temperature and the friction along different times, which can be noticed in Sulamita's voice: "(...) for me this Joseph character had problems with women. Now I can't talk about this. I have to report his triumphs, the interpretation of the pharaoh's dreams, that thing about the fat cows" (Scliar, 2003, p.20).<sup>19</sup> The authority of the written word, even though Sulamita initially despises it, gives Habacuc a freedom to adapt, according to her: "God is omniscient, but I am more omniscient than God, as I know what he thinks. He will not defeat me, Habacuc, He nor his representative Solomon. He created heaven and earth, but I created the text where he lives (Scliar, 2003, p.21).<sup>20</sup> Then the chances of articulation present themselves – by force of the word which places Habacuc, now a wizard, on a privileged position of creator, paying homage, a posteriori, to Sulamita, now deceased. Accordingly, the displacement of transits of writers, or recreators, provides the position of the narrator-author with an extraordinary eagerness to write. The mirroring process allows the roles to present themselves inside the inventive process, in order to affirm the literary word, above all. It also allows the adopted roles not to be more than *personae* in an inevitable narrative continuance. The question raised is: what is the role of the Amazon in this case? As I see it, it will receive the fictional material as repository of centuries of stories inspired by the Jewish saga in Scliar's writing.

Writing, as already mentioned, gives Sulamita a divine power, which is transferred to Habacuc. He tries to generate a new man, which can also make him God's rival: "I want to create a living being (...)" (Scliar, 2003, p.26).<sup>21</sup> Instructed by Solomon, his

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terras longínquas. A região onde se localizaram – de imensas florestas e rios caudalosos – ficou conhecida por seu nome: amazonas. Ali chegaram também as frotas comissionadas pelo sucessor de David, homenageado na denominação do maior rio da terra das amazonas: Solimões, rio de Salomão."

<sup>19</sup> In Portuguese: "(...) para mim o tal José tinha problemas com as mulheres. Agora: não posso falar disso. Tenho de relatar os triunfos dele, a interpretação dos sonhos do faraó, aquela coisa das vacas magras e das vacas gordas."

<sup>20</sup> In Portuguese: "Deus é onisciente, mas eu sou mais onisciente do que Deus, eu sei o que ele pensa. Ele não me derrotará, Habacuc, nem ele, nem seu preposto Salomão. Ele criou o céu e a terra, mas eu crio o texto que ele habita."

<sup>21</sup> In Portuguese: "Quero criar um ser vivo (...)."

father, to find the perfect woman, Habacuc goes on pilgrimage around the world. Influenced by Pythagorean mathematicians, he plunges into mysterious secrets that allow him to pass his father's dream on. In a few lines, he gets to the Middle Ages: "The Book is then speaking of towers and castles, knights with armors and servants working on the farms: medieval Europe. The saga of the ancestors continues" (Scliar, 2003, p.52).<sup>22</sup> It is the moment of the affirmation of writing. The imbroglio is a pretext for the narrator-author to be consolidated as the one who oscillates between risk and acknowledgment, in the search for welcoming in the possible transits narrated or to be narrated. What especially matters is the continuance of the trajectory. Narrative is nourished from its own impasses, when it tries to translate a possible diasporic Jewish saga in the West.

What is at stake are the narrator-author's resources to tell stories that dare to continue beyond the initial premises of the sacred narratives themselves. The Jew in transit is the one who makes itinerancy a tool for enriching contacts:

(...) and lived in the ideal setting and time. Sixteenth century Europe was an extraordinary place: there were alchemists, cartographers, astrologists, astronomers, witches, cabalists, geometers, utopians, artists, wizards, sailors, mystics, financiers, healers, architects. Canyons knocked down medieval walls, press divulged new knowledge, boats navigated seas in the search for unknown lands; through telescopes, eyes gazed at the sky, searching for secrets of the infinite, whereas the mechanical watch, one of the gadgets of the period, inexorably measured time (Scliar, 2003, pp.53-4).<sup>23</sup>

Enumeration as rhetorical device tries to cope with the endless references which occupy the universe that the Jewish saga undertook in the world. The modern world is ready to receive the itinerant being and such being is still open to apprehend the signs that give him transit conditions. The dream of creating a "living being" is kept, and this can already be understood as a powerful metaphor of the itinerant being's adaptation: "(...) linking philosophy to cabala. [The character] believed in a web of hidden connections

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<sup>22</sup> In Portuguese: "É desta forma, o Livro está falando em torres e castelos, em cavaleiros com armaduras de servos trabalhando nas glebas: a Europa medieval. Nela, continua a saga dos antepassados."

<sup>23</sup> In Portuguese: "(...) e viveu o cenário e na época ideais. A Europa do século dezesseis era um lugar extraordinário: ali pululavam alquimistas, cartógrafos, astrólogos, astrônomos, bruxas, cabalistas, geômetras, utopistas, artistas, feiticeiros, navegadores, místicos, financistas, curandeiros, arquitetos. Os canhões derrubavam as muralhas medievais, a imprensa difundia novos conhecimentos, barcos sulcavam os mares em busca de terras desconhecidas; através das lunetas, olhos percorriam a abóbada celeste procurando os segredos do infinito, enquanto o relógio mecânico, um dos engenhos da época, marcava inexoravelmente o tempo."

spread in the universe” (Scliar, 2003, p.54).<sup>24</sup> Joining historically important names such as Agrippa Von Nettesheim, Pico della Mirandola, Saint Augustine, with almost legendary ones like Johann Faust (who inspired great dramatic works), who taught Habacuc to invoke “Mephistopheles,” we are faced with an alchemical jumble that nourishes the very fictional force towards the principles that permit the dream of the new man: plant the mandrake seeds with the semen of a man on death row and then ask a witch for help. In this search, Habacuc contracts syphilis and seeks an impossible cure by contacting new historical figures: the doctor Girolamo Fracastoro, the writer François Rabelais, the astrologer and seer Nostradamus, the alchemist Paracelsus – a series of characters who join other characters and reveal privileged conditions of the plot which makes the writing itself the being in construction. At a certain point in the novel, there is no doubt that literature itself, with its inventive freedom, provided by the ironic tune of the narrator-author, produces the formula that maintains the stimulus for the narrative continuance. Such narrative is a tribute to all writers and thinkers inspired by the Bible, with its new platonic philosophical-religious, Aristotelian, gnostic, mystic parameters – a range of dialogical references which feeds an extraordinary symbolic hunger.

Beside Paracelsus, mixing cabala and alchemy, Habacuc is almost the Man-God, the one who is ready to generate a new living being, the tiny man. Then, disappointed at doctors and alchemists, he turns to the Jewish tradition and to the studies of the Talmud, without leaving the cabala. He contacts other important figures such as Talmudist Rabbi Löw, the Dominican Campanella, the politician and philosopher Machiavelli, the protestant theologian Luther, and the catholic thinker Thomas More. In the face of so many utopian appeals, the conclusion is that Europe is too corrupt to allow for the creation of a tiny man. Everything now points to the New World, with news of Columbus and Vespucci. The narrative recalls the encounter with Francisco de Orellana, the first explorer to cross the river of the Amazons:

[Orellana] described to Habacuc, using abundant figures of speech, huge forests, gigantic trees; flowers of unique colors; strange animals; birds flying continuously, laying and hatching eggs in the air. And the amazons! Yes, the amazons: he described thoroughly the famous warriors: tall, strong, beautiful. They had one amputated breast: there

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<sup>24</sup> In Portuguese: “(...) unir a filosofia à cabala. Acreditava numa rede de ocultas conexões estendida por todo o universo.”

the arc was sustained, with which they shot deadly arrows at their enemies (Scliar, 2003, p.78).<sup>25</sup>

Due to the appeal of the narratives, Habacuc starts to see truth in all this. The atmosphere is favorable for dreaming of the Eldorado land, and everything invites to an inevitable inventive situation, even though Habacuc and his group are lost in the woods: “Exuberance was what Habacuc had before him, pure, innocent exuberance” (Scliar, 2003, p.81).<sup>26</sup> The Amazon is projected as the welcoming land of the primeval signs. Habacuc, around his people who are full of expectations, becomes the wizard-prophet who can give meaning to everything, by creating the tiny man and the tiny woman, despite, on the other hand, disappointing his followers. As he is threatened, he is compelled to escape with his creatures and, like a god, pronounces them husband and wife, before he dies as a centenary (much more than that, actually, since about two thousand years have passed after Habacuc was assigned, by his father, the mission to find the perfect woman). A population of tiny people, then, appears in the middle of the Amazon Forest. As a legacy of a trajectory, there is Habacuc’s Book of Origins. Everything can become a legend or a truth, i.e., History, or almost that, as time goes by. The narrator-author, considering himself a descendent of this search process, articulates the war of overlapping references:

Centuries went by. Kings were born and died, generals came and died, artists, wisemen, craftsmen came and died in a timely manner. New machines were invented: enhanced vessels went up the Amazon. Indigenous people were expelled; new settlers in the region found minerals, even gold – but never found Eldorado, nor the women warriors, let alone the tiny creatures of whose existence no one ever suspected. Hence, my ancestors never saw them (not even their shadows in the horizon – horizon is something that does not exist in the jungle); likewise, they never saw the headless mule (mula sem cabeça), which spews fire through its nostrils; nor the Uiara, the fascinating mermaid of the Amazon; nor the mapinguari, a hairy giant, with its lips tinted with its victims’ blood, and whose only vulnerable part is the navel; nor the Curupira, which hits tress with its penis, nor the Caapora, a one-eyed goblin, who travels the woods mounted on a wild pig. I am truly sorry my people never met the Saci, the mischievous one-legged

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<sup>25</sup> In Portuguese: “A Habacuc, descrevera com arroubos de linguagem, imensas florestas, de árvores gigantescas; flores de inusitado colorido; animais estranhos; aves que voavam sem cessar, que punham os ovos no ar e no ar chocavam. E as amazonas! Ah, sim, as amazonas: descreveu minuciosamente as famosas guerreiras: altas, fortes, lindas. Tinham um dos seios amputados: ali firmavam o arco com que disparam flechas mortais contra seus inimigos.”

<sup>26</sup> In Portuguese: “Exuberância, era o que Habacuc tinha diante de si, pura, inocente exuberância.”

black boy (they did not even know what “black” meant); they ignored the fact that, while they ran freely in the woods, slaves were brought from a continent of jungles, Africa, in order to work in the plantations). We would have things in common with the Saci. From what is known, the boy never resented the absence of a lower limb, never suffered the phantom of amputated people, never saw, in dreams or nightmares, the hypothetical leg jumping around; never had nostalgia for what he never had. Similarly, we did not long for the height we did not have. We did not accuse History or Destiny, nor the bad spirits, of having stolen from us the height we could have had, but did not have: we did not believe in bad spirits, Destiny was out of the question. As for History, it did not exist for us (Scliar, 2003, pp.97-8).<sup>27</sup>

The eagerness for symbolic transfers brings an urgency which is very emblematic of the long excerpt reproduced above. Yesterday and today are intertwined in a way that allows for a profound, radical dialogue with the discursive remains of so many trajectories that intersect in America and, particularly, in the Amazon. The diasporic destiny reveals the plots of language as the only refuge for extending the narrative process of the references at stake. Therefore, the allegorical issue that presents itself places the Jewish in a situation of irremediable transit. The novel aims to bring to the scene a legendary trajectory in order to affirm the word which is in permanent shipwreck. The Amazon is proper space for the appropriation of the word of the other to become possession, without an a priori agenda. The condition of tiny beings (invisible?) produces the spectrum of transit as a factor which is necessary for affirmation in a foreign environment, where all imported signs are possible. We shall remember that the Amazon is the ultimate space

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<sup>27</sup> In Portuguese: “Séculos se passaram. Reis surgiram e morreram, generais surgiram e morreram, artistas, sábios, artesãos surgiram, e no devido tempo morreram. Máquinas novas foram inventadas: embarcações mais aperfeiçoadas subiam o Amazonas. Os índios foram expulsos; os novos povoadores da região acharam minerais, até ouro – mas nunca encontraram o Eldorado, nem as mulheres guerreiras e muito menos as minúsculas criaturas de cuja existência ninguém jamais suspeitou. De outra parte, meus antepassados nunca viram (nem mesmo seus vultos no horizonte – horizonte é algo que não existe na selva); assim como nunca viram a mula sem cabeça, que bota fogo pelas ventas; nem a Uiara, a fascinante sereia do Amazonas; nem o mapinguari, gigante peludo, os beijos tintos do sangue de suas vítimas, cujo único ponto vulnerável é o umbigo; nem o Curupira, que bate nas árvores com o pênis; nem o Caapora, duende de um olho só, que percorre a mata montado num porco selvagem. Quanto ao Saci, lamento sinceramente que minha gente não tenha conhecido o travesso menino negro de uma perna só; (nem sabiam o que era “negro”); ignoravam que, enquanto corriam livres pela mata, escravos eram trazidos de um continente de selvas, a África, para trabalhar nas plantações). Com ele, teríamos afinidades. Que se saiba, o moleque nunca se ressentiu da ausência do membro inferior, nunca padeceu a dor fantasma dos amputados, nunca viu, em sonhos ou pesadelos, a hipotética perna pulando a seu redor; nunca sofreu a nostalgia do jamais possuído. De forma equivalente, não suspirávamos pela estatura que não havíamos alcançado. Não acusávamos a História, ou o Destino, ou os maus espíritos de nos terem roubado a altura que poderíamos ter, mas não tínhamos: não acreditávamos em maus espíritos, o Destino não entrava em nossas cogitações, e quanto à História, para nós não existia.”

that still protects the expectation of the imagination of conquests in the world. Since ancient times, it may be waiting, as a promised land, for a potential sign of iridescence of several possible forms. This is what makes it and the people who seek refuge there always fascinating. The transformation and adaptation of the Jewish people is inevitable: “(...) the traits somewhat semitic of my ancestors gave way to indigenous features – biology is not Destiny” (Scliar, 2003, p.98).<sup>28</sup> The Amazon is the space to be appropriated, but also one of appropriation by the voice of the other. The “in oneself” preserves the multiplicity that ensures the return to the origin: “We, the pure ones, remained faithful to Habucuc’s spiritual legacy. For such reason, the Book of Origins was in our possession” (Scliar, 2003, p.99).<sup>29</sup> The “holy text” is the very device for the affirmation of the word in the sign-related shipwreck, in which the “invisibility” of the people can project itself in its fragmentary fullness. The novel moves on and gets to contemporary times, when a “tiny woman” is kidnapped by a tourist, and a tiny member of the community, the very narrator-author, is forced to go to São Paulo to look for her. Hence, he ensures a sense of perennial transit and adaptation as a challenge of permanence, now in the urban reality.

In *A Majestade do Xingu* (1997), the almost legendary figure of the doctor Noel Nuttels stands out. A Russian Jewish, he emigrates to Brazil in 1921 and becomes devoted to the indigenous cause as a doctor for that forsaken population. The narrator-author meets Noel in the emigration ship. Many Jews fled the Bolchevik Revolution, fearing new systematic persecutions, such as pogroms, approved by the new communist authorities. The narrator-author has an extraordinary imagination, by means of a fictional enthusiasm rarely seen, but lives a mediocre and uneventful life in São Paulo. These parallel lives move the narrative in the novel. In the hospital bed, already dying, which indicates the narrative would be possibly ready, he starts to tell his doctor about his life and Noel Nutel’s life. The confrontation takes place by a series of identifications that almost initiates as it traces the rigid frontiers between the self and the other – an action which is so precious to the survival of the Jews along the centuries:

When the goy reached out his big hand towards our head – was it meant to stroke us or to strike us? When the goy showed his teeth – was he

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<sup>28</sup> In Portuguese: “(...) os traços algo semitas de meus antepassados deram lugar a feições indiáticas – biologia não é Destino.”

<sup>29</sup> In Portuguese: “Nós, os puros, nos mantivemos fiéis ao legado espiritual de Habucuc. Por esta razão, o Livro das Origens estava em nosso poder.”

smiling or trying to devour us? For us the goy mind was unfathomable, an impenetrable mystery. Dark cave. Dense forest. Vast sea, full of strange creatures, octopuses and big fish, ready to eat prophets or their substitutes. In the goy face, we searched, anxiously, for a soothing signal – the smile – or the ominous: smile (Scliar, 2009, pp.50-1).<sup>30</sup>

In such case, the other is a metamorphic perception, necessary for the strangeness of the voice in a new space, upon arrival in Brazil, a foreign land to the emigrant. There was the challenge of adaptation, but there were plenty of previous memories:

It was a painful journey, that one on *Madeira*. Not as painful as the journey of the indigenous people, naturally, and not as long. Thousands of years before us, thousands of years before Columbus, thousands of years before the Vikings, thousands of years before the King Solomon's ships reached the Amazon searching for gold and precious woods for the temple of Jerusalem. Anyway, thousands of years before history, tribes had left Asia and, moved by hunger or by a mysterious tropism, had first gone to the Northwest, Siberia today, and then, crossing where today is called Bering Strait, had come to where today is called Alaska, going down to the South and spreading along where today is called America (Scliar, 2009, p.42).<sup>31</sup>

The comparison of trajectories give indigenous peoples an extraordinary symbol of origin, which makes their voice a sort of first signifier<sup>32</sup> in the possible relation created from the native people then and the Jewish, the latter newcomers in an initially foreign land, awaiting the strangeness of new signs. All memories have a legendary burden, which is why they are more truthful in the uncontrollable urge that devours new images and meanings. There is reference to Scliar's novel *Cenas da vida minúscula*, which is easy to notice and understand, since both books relate when they propose an excavation of the other in oneself, having the Amazon as background. The indigenous issue, in this

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<sup>30</sup> In Portuguese: “Quando o góí estendia a mãozorra em direção à nossa cabeça – era para nos acariciar ou para nos golpear? Quando o góí mostrava os dentes – estava sorrindo ou querendo nos devorar? A mente góí para nós era insondável, um mistério impenetrável. Escura caverna. Densa floresta. Vasto mar, cheio de criaturas estranhas, polvos e grandes peixes prontos a devorar profetas ou substitutos. Na face góí procurávamos, ansiosos, um sinal tranquilizador – o sorriso – ou ominoso: sorriso.”

<sup>31</sup> In Portuguese: “Viagem penosa, aquela no *Madeira*. Não tão penosa quanto a viagem dos índios, naturalmente, nem tão demorada. Milhares de anos antes de nós, milhares de anos antes de Colombo, milhares de anos antes dos vikings, milhares de anos antes que as naus do rei Salomão chegassem à Amazônia em busca de ouro e madeiras preciosas para o templo de Jerusalém, enfim, milhares de anos antes da história, tribos tinham saído da Ásia e, movidas pela fome ou por misterioso tropismo, tinham se dirigido primeiro para o noroeste, para o que hoje é a Sibéria, e depois, atravessando o que hoje é o estreito de Bering, haviam chegado ao que hoje é o Alasca, descendo para o sul e se espalhando ao longo do que hoje é a América.”

<sup>32</sup> Or master-signifier, in Lacan's terminology, or what causes the metonymic chain.



case, will be ingrained in an idiosyncratic manner into the narrator-author, in order to perceive itself in a new geographical space, external and internal, which has to be apprehended one way or another so that the transit never stops:

Because I, deep down a little Russian Jew, had things in common with the anthropophagic Indigenous people. I had not come, like them, through the Bering Strait. I had come on the *Madeira*, but there was a certain identification, which was at least psychological, if not atavistic. What was I, a doctor, but a potential cannibal, capable of devouring, even metaphorically, people around me? (Scliar, 2009, p.66).<sup>33</sup>

Accordingly, the questions posed turn to a profound, radical reading of the presence of the other as element of symbolic value, changeable to the heart's content of the narrator's imagination. This is the great artifice for the narrator and his voice to affirm themselves in a new possibly harsh environment: the conditions to use the word depend on the way they present themselves from the perspective of a world which is always in construction. There is no way out except in the transit. The devouring metaphor will award those who can collect their own traces in the perceptive, privileged, uncontrollable urge of the other, or the stranger who is no longer alien outside himself, but already duly apprehended in the course of the very narrative that projects the uncontrollable urge for survival due to the extraordinary hunger for new signs, identifiable in a scope which is always metamorphic.

Separated from Noel Nutels, after arriving in Brazil together, the narrator-author will have information about his friend only in the news and will follow all the ideological sanitarian trajectory of the famous Jewish doctor, now naturalized as Brazilian: "Only later on, when he became famous and people started to write about him, was I able to reconstitute his trajectory" (Scliar, 2009, p.77).<sup>34</sup> The development of the novel is connected with the imaginary variables that could give color and glow to the trajectory of the Indianist doctor. Uncapable of taking a concrete action to get away from his little bourgeoisie accommodation, the narrator-author can only appreciate, from a distance, all

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<sup>33</sup> In Portuguese: "Porque no fundo eu, judeuzinho russo, tinha afinidades com os índios antropófagos. Eu não tinha vindo, como eles, pelo estreito de Bering, tinha vindo com o *Madeira*, mas havia uma certa identificação, se não atávica, pelo menos psicológica. O que era eu, doutor, senão um canibal em potencial, capaz de devorar, ainda que, metaforicamente, as pessoas a meu redor?"

<sup>34</sup> In Portuguese: "Só mais tarde, quando se tornou famoso e começaram a escrever sobre ele, pude reconstituir sua trajetória."

the political movement of the 1930s, when Noel Nutels became an enthusiastic left-winger: “Did I say I admired the communists? No: I envied them. Not because of their ideas, which I could not care less about, but because of the conviction with which they defended such ideas, because of the fraternity that bound them” (Scliar, 2009, p.85).<sup>35</sup> Here an important ideological frontier is established, which will make the voice highly dialogical, by means of a clever observer of the possibilities of the very narrative continuance. The questions present in the historical context would not be sufficient for such continuance. Therefore, this allows for a plunge into a choice of apprehension and autonomy, so that the other in oneself can always speak louder. The narrator-author, however, needs the trigger of a confrontation between himself and Noel Nutels; – himself, the sedentary, the one who settled for a situation, and Noel, the adventurer. Hence, there is also an opposition between the regions: “Why would Noel have to march westward? (...) In such an underdeveloped country as Brazil, the East was the civilization (...). The West was a village (...)” (Scliar, 2009, p.96).<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, the stimulus that moves the imagination of the narrator-author comes exactly from the diverging perspectives of two worlds: “I, the coward, motionless; Noel, the courageous one, moving. In constant and dynamic movement (...). Noel did not stand still: he moved forward, shifting deeply into the woods, increasingly deeper into Brazil, increasingly Brazilian, as Brazilian as the paca, as Brazilian as the jaguar, as Brazilian as the saci” (Scliar, 2009, p.97).<sup>37</sup> The resources are given by the situation described, even more by the possibilities that the voice of the novel may predict as to its development involving the mythical role the narrator-author can project onto his possible rival.

The integrative-mythical process will make Noel Nutels an insubordinate passenger in the upcoming narrative plot, as the confrontation is increasingly bigger between one lifestyle and the other. All willingness to continue gathering information,

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<sup>35</sup> In Portuguese: “Eu disse que admirava os comunistas? Não: eu os invejava. Não por causa das ideias, que a mim pouco importavam, mas pela convicção com que defendiam tais ideias, pela fraternidade que os unia.”

<sup>36</sup> In Portuguese: “Por que Noel teria de marchar para o Oeste? (...) No país atrasado que era o Brasil, o Leste era a civilização (...). No Oeste era uma aldeia (...)”

<sup>37</sup> In Portuguese: “Eu, o covarde, imóvel; Noel, o corajoso, em movimento. Em constante e dinâmico movimento (...). O Noel não parava quieto: ele ia avançando, embrenhando-se mato adentro, cada vez mais dentro do Brasil, cada vez mais brasileiro, brasileiro como a paca, brasileiro como a onça, brasileiro como o saci.”

between risk and acknowledgment of accidents of the trajectory of images, will give the narrator-author the necessary boundaries for his idealized descriptive power:

Noel was turning into an indigenous. A Jewish indigenous, but an indigenous. A frantic indigenous, more frantic than the indigenous people themselves. A restless indigenous, continuously going through the paths of Central Brazil. Paths that could lead anywhere, but that could never go past a store named A Majestade. Our paths have drifted apart forever (Scliar, 2009, p.97).<sup>38</sup>

The narrator's territory has a definition which is spatially well established. Undoubtedly it cannot fit in his boring writing space. He will travel through the imaginary roads so that his own world is nourished by the projection of his distant adventurous friend, and that his store can become, at last, the "Majestade do Xingu," in order to trigger his own narrative-devouring power:

One night Noel would open the door of his modest house in the middle of Xingu. He would stay there, motionless, smoking his pipe of the tropical night. Of such darkness, eyes would gaze at him, shiny eyes. Cannibals? Maybe cannibals. Jaguars? Maybe apes. Maybe the caapora, hairy and giant, head of the boars. Maybe the curupira, king of forests, a small tapuio with his feet turned backwards. All of them gazing at him. Among the jaguars and the boars, among the caapora and the curupira, among the cannibals – me. Invisible for the jaguars and boars, invisible for the caapora and the curupira, invisible, fortunately, for the cannibals – me, motionless, gazing the immovable Noel. The invisible friend looking at him, sad, nostalgic. Still (Scliar, 2009, pp.97-8).<sup>39</sup>

In the middle of the jungle, the references are present, in order to make the best of the privileged perspective of the narrator-author, who just wants to observe the adventurous friend and provide him with refinements of his insubordinate, idealized

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<sup>38</sup> In Portuguese: "O Noel estava virando índio. Índio judaico, mas índio. Índio buliçoso, mais buliçoso do que os próprios índios. Índio inquieto, a percorrer sem cessar as trilhas do Brasil central. Trilhas que poderiam levar a qualquer lugar, mas nunca passariam por uma loja chamada a Majestade. Nossos caminhos tinham se afastado para sempre."

<sup>39</sup> In Portuguese: "Uma noite Noel abriria a porta de sua modesta casa no meio do Xingu, e ali ficaria, imóvel, fumando seu cachimbo da noite tropical. Dessa escuridão, olhos o mirariam, olhos brilhantes. Canibais? Talvez canibais. Onças? Talvez bugios. Talvez o caapora, peludo e gigantesco, chefe dos porcos-do-mato. Talvez o curupira, deus das florestas, pequeno tapuio de pés voltados para trás. Todos a olhá-lo. E entre as onças e os bugios, entre o caapora e o curupira, entre os canibais – eu. Invisível para as onças e bugios, invisível para o caapora e o curupira, invisível, felizmente, para os canibais – eu, imóvel, a mirar o imóvel Noel. O amigo invisível a olhá-lo, triste, saudoso. Imóvel."

imagination, filled with realities and fantasies. The narrator behaves as a voyeur who tries to translate his own anxieties of the non-accomplished:

I had nothing to do with monkeys, nor with ants, nor with the boa constrictor. I had to do with books I read at the store; I had to do with literature, with words; in case such books dealt with Indigenous people, and many times they did deal with Indigenous people, I read what was written, but I refused the images evoked by the words, I refused to see the Indigenous people, even in photos, even in imagination – didn't I have anything to do with the Indigenous people? How was it that Noel, born in Russia like me, Jewish like me, emigrant like me – how was it that Noel had everything to do with the Indigenous people? I could not understand. I could not understand Noel in the woods, I could not understand the woods, strange thing, mysterious thing (Scliar, 2009, pp.98-9).<sup>40</sup>

As we can notice, the narrator-author finds himself involved by an exogenous voice, and his discomfort is exactly to assimilate such voice in order to orchestrate the conditions to use the word, as an articulator of ghosts which he insists to harbor in his physical spatial trajectory towards the unlimited use of his imagination. Being the other is now the task of the autonomy of the voice, the one that owns the word of the other, by any means, so that the narrator's presence is noticed by himself in relation to the image he has of his distant friend. Therefore, everything is the projection of the word of the other that provokes the presence, or the delayed truth: "what was going to be said was kept in the package of imaginary letters (...)" (Scliar, 2009, p.99).<sup>41</sup> Or, later on, the narrator attempts to configure a dramatic situation of an encounter in the middle of the jungle, disguised as the very *personae* of the mechanism of the word of the other, which feeds back into itself: "(...) Noel, (...) Noel, it is your friend from *Madeira River*, I dressed as a bugre<sup>42</sup> to mock you. Noel laughs out loud and holds me, and invites me to spend a few days in Xingu with him (...)" (Scliar, 2009, p.100).<sup>43</sup> With all the apparatus of images

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<sup>40</sup> In Portuguese: "Eu nada tinha a ver com os macacos, com formigas, com jiboias. Tinha a ver com os livros que lia na loja; tinha a ver com as letras, as palavras; e acaso tais livros falavam em índios, e muitas vezes falavam em índios, eu lia o que ali estava escrito, mas recusava as imagens que as palavras evocavam, recusava-me a ver os índios, mesmo em fotos, mesmo em imaginação – eu não tinha nada a ver com os índios? Como é que o Noel, nascido na Rússia como eu, judeu como eu, emigrante como eu – como é que Noel tinha tudo a ver com os índios? Eu não entendia. Não entendia Noel no mato, não entendia o mato, coisa estranha, misteriosa."

<sup>41</sup> In Portuguese: "(...) o que iria dizer-lhe ficou no rol das cartas imaginárias (...)."

<sup>42</sup> A pejorative name for the Brazilian native.

<sup>43</sup> In Portuguese: "Noel, é seu amigo do *Madeira*, me vesti de bugre para gozar com a sua cara. O Noel cai na gargalhada e me abraça, e me convida para passar uns dias com ele no Xingu."

generated from his routine work at the Majestade store, the narrator-author becomes a devourer of fragmented trails that are painfully retranslated by his imagination, every time Noel's presence is evoked; on the other hand, he will also be devoured by the very obstacles imposed on him by the assimilated word.

In the jungle, with the indigenous people in Xingu, Noel Nutels gains the autonomy of the projection of the assimilated – and in transit – word by the narrator-author, who can now dominate, at his discretion, the trajectory of his friend in foreign lands. Nutels's trajectory has to be outstanding, when he contacts the first natives, when he produces the first cure with penicillin, becoming almost a “white god” amongst those remote people. He will face enemies, like the jealous shaman, or even the scrutinizing eyes of the local *jagunços*:<sup>44</sup>

Now João Mortalha does not understand anything anymore: a Russian Jew leaves his homeland, graduates from medical school – to end up in the middle of the woods, taking care of Indigenous people? What does that mean? He has never seen a Jew, but he pictures them in stores, making money. I have always thought Jews liked easy money, not Indigenous people, he mutters. Noel laughs out loud: here you are looking at a different Jew, a poor and stupid Jew (Scliar, 2009, p.121).<sup>45</sup>

The great craft of the narrator-author is try to capture the key moments that redefine the position of Jews in the world, through the character Noel Nutels. The feeling of foreignness penetrates the narrator's world of indigenous people all around. The Jew is the foreign element in Xingu, and he deals with indigenous people who are seen as pariahs in a civilization that moves forward and displaces them in their own home environment. The word of the other that is assimilated is the one that will legitimize the conditions of language transit, for the affirmation of both the Jew and the indigenous people, by means of the abilities to be developed for their survival. What is left for the narrator-author is the privileged and orchestrating position of observation: “It is our dream, Noel, the dream we had in *Madeira*, I kind of gave up this dream, but you didn't, you won, Noel, you are

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<sup>44</sup> Author's note for this English version: A *jagunço* is generally known as a bodyguard or a protector of a colonel in the Brazilian Sertão. The word “colonel” in this context does not refer to a military rank. Instead, it refers to a person with political and economic power in a certain region.

<sup>45</sup> In Portuguese: “Agora João Mortalha não entende mais nada: um judeu russo sai de sua terra, forma-se em medicina – para acabar no meio do mato, cuidando de índios? Que história é essa? Nunca viu um judeu, mas só os imagina em lojas, ganhando dinheiro. Sempre pensei que judeu gostasse de grana fácil, murmura, não de índio. Noel solta uma gargalhada: pois aqui você está vendo um judeu diferente, um judeu pobre e burro.”

an important man in this country” (Scliar, 2009, p.122).<sup>46</sup> The evidence indicates that the transfer of a meaningful dynamic should be apprehended by the projection of an ideal through a lonely discourse, but one inflated by evocations of affirmations. The subject that dusts the store and opens a book every day, and waits for customers who never come, is the orchestrator of the discourse. In order to exist and resist, this subject must recreate the heroic mythical figure of the friend who will have an outstanding trajectory to represent the adaptation of all Jews, even in environments which are hostile to the non-indigenous civilization.

Later on, a series of hypothetical encounters are evoked by the narrator-author, with different historical references to help understand the Amazon and its mysteries. With his adventurous and heroic personality, Noel Nutels will meet Rondon, Villas-Boas brothers, Darcy Ribeiro, Percy Fawcett and the lost city, i.e., the devouring discursive uncontrollable urge will promote all kinds of speculations in the transit process, so that the narrator’s space – the store in São Paulo – can gain its dialogical autonomy. Such projective urge is challenged by the very self-consciousness of the creative process at stake, which, as mentioned, depends on a highly inventive feature in order to make the everyday life monotony a dynamic of everydayness that can be transferable to other events.<sup>47</sup> Carlos Alberto Faraco (2008, p.47). addressed such issue when he emphasized the artistic-formal value of the self-consciousness of Dostoievski’s characters, based on Bakhtin’s dialogical theories. The process of narrative construction depends on the narrator-author’s capacity of self-assimilation. This happens in a quite balanced way in the novel *A Majestade do Xingu*, in which an orchestrating voice is overloaded with heuristic responsibilities as a bridge linking yesterday and today: “In the store, I walk over the dead. Over skulls and vertebrae, over femurs and ribs, over fibulas and phalanges. Over dreams and terrors. Not only me, of course: who knows about the evil hiding under the floors of Brazilian houses?” (Scliar, 2009, p.176).<sup>48</sup> With the word of the other properly self-assimilated, nothing is strange to this narrator who ventured wherever he

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<sup>46</sup> In Portuguese: “É o nosso sonho, Noel, o sonho que a gente tinha no *Madeira*, eu meio que desisti desse sonho, mas você não, você venceu, Noel, você é um homem importante neste país.”

<sup>47</sup> Everydayness differs from everyday life, as it contains the reminiscences that can survive in a perceptive and privileged memory, according to Heidegger.

<sup>48</sup> In Portuguese: “Na loja, caminho sobre mortos. Sobre caveiras e vértebras, sobre fêmures e costelas, sobre perônios e falanges. Sobre sonhos e terrores. Não só eu, claro: quem sabe do mal que se esconde sob o assoalho das casas brasileiras?”

wanted, with his imagination following the hypothetical steps of his possible idol, or rival, Noel Nutels, a historical figure that gains heroic and mythical projections by capturing a realistic trajectory of a country that tried to get to know itself from the inside, by means of its non-Indian explorers.

Both in *Cenas da vida minúscula* and in *A Majestade do Xingu*, the trajectories are similar in inventive terms, as to the retranslation of the transit of the Jews in the world and in Brazil, particularly with the Amazon as background to capture the itinerant proposals of acknowledgment, from the leftovers of the dialogical transit, from so many crossed eras. In the former novel, the trajectory explores the fantasy genre, in order to outline ancestry in a more ambitious way. In the latter novel, however, the limits between reality and fantasy are very well traced, and the acknowledgment process takes place in the frontiers established by the narrator-author's eagerness for idealization in relation to the image of a non-Indian explorer. In terms of narrative balance, I notice that *A Majestade do Xingu* is much more interesting, but both novels use the Amazon as a reference which is highly adjustable to the projective, uncontrollable urge for historical affirmation of the Jewish situation. Absorbing the word of the other is the great challenge for the Jewish communities in the world, spread by means of several diasporas, which makes them reinvent themselves permanently, from the perspective of the other through a voice that is theirs and – at the same time – is not; or a place that is theirs and is not. Such diasporic meaning finds in the Amazon, by means of Scliar's fiction, a stepping stone for all forms of conditions for using an insubordinate imagination, or an imagination that makes the unknown a motif for affirmation, from the other in oneself, in a permanent dialogical-monological transit, between risk and acknowledgment of sign shipwrecking, in the search for a possible imaginary "safe" haven by means of the word of the other.

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## **Research Data and Other Materials Availability**

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

## **Reviews**

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* [*Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies*] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

## **Review I**

The title, The Jewish Amazon by Moacyr Scliar: The Word of the Other as Affirmation of the Noncoincidence of the Other in Oneself, is adequate and coherent in relation to the article. The purpose of the paper is to, from the word of the other, analyze the novels *Cenas da vida minúscula* and *A Majestade do Xingu*, by Moacyr Scliar, in order to demonstrate a possible affirmation of the Jewish imagination, having the Amazon region as background for Scliar's trajectory in the narratives. The analyses presented in the article show a retranslation of the Jewish transit in the Amazonian region, "as a reference which is highly adjustable to the projective, uncontrollable urge for historical affirmation of the Jewish situation." Therefore, there are explanations of the purpose of the paper and



coherence in its development. The theoretical frame, about the word of the other, does not present Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas; it is based on readers of his theory. On the other hand, there are important discussions on the absorption of the word of the other by Jewish communities, especially those shown in Scliar's novels. Accordingly, the paper presents, by means of singular diasporas, a reinvention from the perspective of otherness, i.e., other voices and other places. One of the conclusions of the study is that the diasporic meaning finds in the Amazon, through Moacyr Scliar's fiction, "a stepping stone for all forms of conditions for using an insubordinate imagination, or an imagination that makes the unknown a motif for affirmation, from the other in oneself, in a permanent dialogical-monological transit, between risk and acknowledgment of sign shipwrecking, in the search for a possible imaginary 'safe' haven by means of the word of the other." Finally, there is clarity, accuracy and adequacy of language in a scientific paper. Therefore, we are in favor of its publication. However, we strongly suggest the insertion of Bakhtin's theory of understanding the word of the other, found in several of his works and in the Bakhtin Circle, such as Problems of Doitoevski's Poetics, The Dialogical Imagination, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION WITH SUGGESTIONS [REVISION]

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Reviewed on December 11, 2022.

## Review II

I deem the title "THE JEWISH AMAZON BY MOACYR Scliar: THE WORD OF THE OTHER AS AFFIRMATION OF THE NONCOINCIDENCE OF THE OTHER IN ONESELF" adequate. It is my opinion the article should be published. However, I suggest proofreading, to correct minor grammar problems, such as agreement etc. Moreover, there are parts that could use some explanations. I am attaching the original text with highlight excerpts, which, in my view, need to be revised. ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION WITH SUGGESTIONS [REVISION]

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