

# Discourse and cities: a study of Cataguases - MG based on the modernistic literature of *Revista Verde*

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## Abstract

The adoption of cities as a research subject in management has become increasingly common, particularly in organizational studies. It is to this field that our paper belongs. Here we aim to understand the dialectical relations between the literary discourse on cities and the issues of material nature that exist in them. Specifically, we analyze those relations in the contents of *Revista Verde*, an important modernistic publication of the 1920s produced in Cataguases-MG. The theoretical and methodological background has as its perspectives the Marxist conception of discourse, the dialectical relationship between base and superstructure, and the ideological character of Brazilian modernism. The findings show that the totally contradictory material relations have been conveniently ignored. As such, the situation has allowed the poets in *Revista Verde* to assign the incomprehension of their texts to a lack of interest by the population ignoring that this detachment has begun in the detachment of the existing social conditions themselves, especially the extenuating work conditions at local factories.

**Keywords:** Organizational studies. Cities. Discourse. Modernism. Marxism.

## *Discurso e as cidades: um estudo sobre Cataguases-MG baseado na produção literária modernista da Revista Verde*

### Resumo

A adoção das cidades como objeto de estudo tem se tornado cada vez mais frequente na administração, em particular no campo dos estudos organizacionais. É nesta seara que nosso trabalho se insere. Aqui buscamos compreender as relações dialéticas existentes entre o discurso literário sobre cidades e as questões de ordem material nelas existentes. De maneira mais específica, analisamos estas relações no conteúdo da *Revista Verde*, publicação modernista importante da década de 20, cujo berço foi a cidade de Cataguases-MG. O pano de fundo teórico-metodológico tem como perspectivas a concepção marxista do discurso, a relação dialética entre base e superestrutura e o caráter ideológico do modernismo brasileiro. Os resultados apontam que as relações materiais inteiramente contraditórias são convenientemente ignoradas. Dessa forma, permite aos poetas da *Revista Verde* atribuírem a incompreensão da produção literária ao desinteresse da população, sem recobrar o ponto de partida para tal distanciamento nas próprias condições sociais existentes, em particular no trabalho extenuante nas fábricas da cidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Estudos organizacionais. Cidades. Discurso. Modernismo. Marxismo.

## *Discurso y las Ciudades: un estudio sobre Cataguases basado en la producción literaria modernista de la Revista Verde*

### Resumen

La adopción de las ciudades como objeto de estudio se vuelve cada vez más común en la administración, especialmente en el campo de los estudios organizacionales. Es aquí donde se inserta nuestro trabajo. En este artículo intentamos comprender las relaciones dialéticas entre el discurso literario sobre las ciudades y las cuestiones de orden material existentes en su interior. Más específicamente, se analizan estas relaciones en el contenido de la *Revista Verde*, una importante revista modernista de los años 20 del último siglo, cuyo lugar de nacimiento ha sido la ciudad de Cataguases-MG. La base teórica y metodológica tiene como perspectiva la concepción marxista del discurso, la relación dialéctica entre base y la superestructura, y el carácter ideológico del modernismo brasileño. Los resultados del estudio muestran que las relaciones materiales integralmente contradictorias han sido ignoradas de modo conveniente. En consecuencia permite a los poetas de la *Revista Verde* atribuir la incompreensión de la producción literaria a la falta de interés de la población local, sin recuperar el punto de partida para este desapego en las propias condiciones sociales existentes, en particular en el trabajo intenso en las fábricas de la ciudad.

**Palabras clave:** Estudios Organizacionales. Ciudades. Discurso. Modernismo. Marxismo.

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## INTRODUCTION

The field of organizational studies has proven useful in administration, by incorporating a thematic diversity that goes beyond conventional organizations. This openness has been increasingly consolidated as a stance, for it includes historically forgotten organizational formats and brings about elements concerning the various implications of the *modus operandi* of capitalist organizations, such as those found in Czarniawska (1997), Mac-Allister (2001), Fischer (1996), Saraiva (2009), Saraiva and Carrieri (2012), among others.

In this context, cities as objects of research have become increasingly frequent in organizational studies. The complexity of approaching a city as an object of study becomes even greater because of the many possible ways of looking into it. Arrangements multiply when we consider the various frameworks, the central elements of complexity, the stances, and the epistemological, theoretical and methodological choices. Or yet, the possible readings to understand certain social relations based on something that is not apparent.

Beyond the theme's state-of-the-art in the fields of organizational studies and administration, thinking of the city and its ways of living has become a somewhat contemporary phenomenon. By doing so, we overcome the dichotomy between global/local to understand how relationships regarded as universal can impact cities (LEFEBVRE, 2009), based on manifestations that while specific, are generalizable in their essence. The motivations of this paper follow these two directions. It aims to contribute to the debate about the city in organizational studies and to establish a reading – among the various possible ones – through the discursive polysemy of cities, in particular of the literary production that refers to and “speaks” of the city.

\* Image: Green Magazine (*Revista Verde*) / September, 1927 – 1st Edition of the Magazine.

It is necessary to emphasize that the convergence between cultural productions and business administration has already been present in the works of researchers such as Saraiva (2009), Ruas (2005) Carvalho and Davel (2005), and Cunha (2005). Despite the efforts already undertaken, the approach adopted here coincides – and at the same time departs from – with the work done by Saraiva (2009). It converges with the understanding that literary production – as expressed in the symbolic representations of Itabira, Minas Gerais, studied by the author in the poems by Carlos Drummond de Andrade – attributes meanings to cities. On the other hand, it distances itself by exploring the discursive potential less as a process of symbolic representation and more as an integral part of a superstructure (art), inextricably linked to other superstructure spheres (such as politics) and a corresponding base (the material relations).

From this point of view, the discourse impregnated in the poems can serve to maintain or overcome the *status quo*, by aesthetically<sup>2</sup> opposing or accommodating not only the literary production that precedes it but also the material relations it discusses. The dual possibility starts from the operation of art not only within its internal dialectic (in its artistic, political, ideological or philosophical relation) or its contradiction with the artistic manifestations that precede it or compete at its time. It necessarily incorporates a positioning in its external dialectics, through the apprehension of the existing conflicts in human life, either by appeasing or opposing them (XAVIER, 2013). The above leads to literary productions that deal with cities as accommodating or refuting the existing material contradictions. This possibility motivates this paper; our objective is to understand the dialectical relations between literary discourse and the material questions involving the city. Specifically, we have analyzed such relationships in the texts of *Revista Verde* (Green Magazine), an influential modernist publication of the 1920s, whose birthplace was Cataguases, Minas Gerais, a *sui generis* city both in its ‘cultural’ and ‘industrial’ inclination.

This work comprises four other sections. In the first one, we focus on modernist literature and its renewing character, given the would-be aesthetic and ideological revolution – which are separated elements in the modernist movement (LAFETÁ, 2000). Next, we discuss the methodological and analytical orientation/operationalization, based on the historical-materialist assumptions of discourse (BAKHTIN, 2009). Subsequently, we present the analysis of the poems published by *Verde* in its relations with the city. In the final thoughts, we recapitulate the most important elements based on the proposed goal.

## MODERNIST LITERATURE OF THE NEW AND THE RENEWAL

The aesthetic renewal of literary production also happens through the changes that the *new* represents in view of the *old*, especially since the traditional means of expression are affected by the power of transformation of the new language proposed, that is, by how new this language truly is. Such artistic production, not only in literary terms, seeks to express the new that reflects the clashes of a new reality (LAFETÁ, 2000; LEFEBVRE, 2001).

The structural aspect of cultural movements is affected and at the same time affects the manifestation of particularities in specific fields such as architecture, literature, music, fine arts, etc. According to Lafetá (2000), to understand the strength of an aesthetic renovation in literary terms, it is necessary to identify the relationships that a movement sustains with the other aspects of cultural life and how the expressions of this movement are part of the broader context of its time. In addition to the need to contextualize the historical moment highlighted by Lafetá (2000), the understanding of the establishment of a cultural movement over its counterparts represents not only the overcoming of this movement, to a certain degree, but also a hegemony that places it as *avant-garde*. Gramsci (1978a) points out that hegemonic relations become explicit within the historic bloc so that they can reveal how cultural domination also represents the domination of a social class over society at a given moment.

To coincide with the need for a stylistic reform based on a new language and with the engagement with other aspects of the cultural and historical context of a given period, Lafetá (2000) points out that every new aesthetic position in literature contains an aesthetic project (linked to the modifications operated in language); and an ideological project, connected to

<sup>2</sup> The aesthetic sense adopted in this study concerns an essentially materialistic aesthetic (LUKÁCS, 1965; 1970). The artistic production is regarded as the elaboration of reality itself, which consequently becomes an instrument that helps overcome the material contradictions. It is necessary to emphasize, however, that art is retrieved as part of a process of historical development that operates dialectically in its internal content – in contrast to other artistic elaborations against which it establishes a conflict – and in its external content, returning to material life itself.

the ideas and views in vogue at a given time and social space. Literature's potential to reflect this reality is vast, as Williams (2011b) emphasizes, for literary production cannot only express socially created meanings but also produce meanings that may transform the previous ones.

Despite the complementary character of the aesthetic and ideological projects, Lafetá (2000) asserts that the aesthetic project in literature already contains the ideological project. For the author, the contrast of the new with the old (and the attack on the ways of saying things) also represent an assault on the ways of perceiving an era and its corresponding subtleties. Men also express their worldviews through language, by reinforcing, legitimizing, sustaining, or disguising their real relations with nature and society, so attacking the forms and contents employed by the old is already attacking the ways of "seeing" and "being" of a given period. The ideological operation of cultural production, as it was in Modernism, aims to develop not only its own art but to attack the artwork that it opposes and the cultural institutions that support them. From that point on, it aims to dispose of all social order culturally constructed for a period which it opposes, by overthrowing powers, taking on a new appearance, and establishing new forms of domination (WILLIAMS, 2011a).

This possibility of transformation would fit perfectly with Modernism. Williams (2011a) emphasizes, when analyzing the word "modern", that it emerges at the end of the sixteenth century as a synonym for "now", used to define the period after the ancient and medieval times. In the eighteenth century, the British author points out that the terms "modernize", "modernism", and "modernist" conveyed ideas of renewal and improvement. The current acceptance, coined in the twentieth century, has "modernism" as the meaning of a cultural movement that established the idea of the modern, the transition, the new in response to its immediate predecessor (WILLIAMS, 2011a).

When analyzing the aesthetic/ideological project of Brazilian modernism, particularly in literature, Lafetá (2000, p. 21) indicates rupture with the traditional language. In turn, from the ideological standpoint, the movement identifies with the search for the country's consciousness, the legitimation of a genuinely national artistic expression and "[...] the class character of its attitudes and productions". Lafetá (2000) also indicates the existence of a curious convergence between the aesthetic and ideological projects of the modernist literary movement, since it breaks with academic language. Artificial and idealized, such language reflected the ideological consciousness of the rural oligarchy that held power until 1920, before the transformations provoked by immigration and the intensification of industrialization, urbanization, and economic crisis.

Along these lines, the modernist literary production would break the barriers of the official language and, therefore, the old worldviews impregnated in the ideology of the agrarian oligarchy. This idea is in agreement with what Williams (2011a, p. 6) highlights as having been the ideological foundation of modernist art: an anti-bourgeois position. The author states that "[...] either they choose the earlier aristocratic appreciation of art as a sacred domain above money and commerce, or the revolutionary doctrines" that point to art as "a liberating vanguard of popular consciousness."

Aesthetically and ideologically, the modernist poetics would break with the academic refinement in vogue, which segregated the popular and idealized the real. From that moment on, characteristics such as the deformation of the supernatural, the inspiration of everyday life and the folkloric character came into force, supported by a language coinciding with the modernity of the twentieth century. However, as Oliveira (2011) points out, even the aesthetic project of modernist literature is not fulfilled, given the tendency of whatever is new to become a tradition quickly.

An interesting point presented by Lafetá (2000), with immediate effect in the ideological project, is the adhesion of the modernist artistic production by a refined portion of the Brazilian rural bourgeoisie, which held riches generated by coffee production. Although clearly linked to a transformation that followed the country's new stage of development, (industrialization), the modernist artistic production was not financed by industrialists – particularly in São Paulo. On the aesthetic level, however, Lafetá (2000, p. 23) emphasizes that modernist literature communes with industrialization "[...] both regarding its themes and procedures (simultaneity, speed, arrangement techniques, economy, and rationalization)".

Such contradiction finds resolution in Williams (2011a; 2011b). In the view of the author, the cornerstones of Modernism are the growth of the major urban areas and the migratory movement driven by industrialization. These factors change literary production completely, and despite the insertion of city estrangements (alienation) as a theme, it insists on a universal character of modernist production, of a new language, which already removes Modernism from the actual differences manifested in the artistic creation itself. Thus, universality would represent the denial of differences, the relief of reason, the maintenance of the aesthetic and ideological standards in the hands of few.

According to Lafetá (2000), the explanation for this apparent contradiction lies in the plainly capitalist nature of the agrarian production relations in São Paulo, as much as in the fact that it originated from the agrarian bourgeoisie itself, which financed industrialization with profits arising from its activities. This bourgeoisie was educated in Europe and adapted to the modern European style so they could not stay away from art. Thus, it is readily understandable why the bourgeois *ethos* adopts modernist art, which confronts the old style of the agrarian oligarchy, while not completely breaking with the old, both aesthetically and ideologically.

Bourgeois art shows some contradictions that distinguish the modernist movement. Williams (2011a) emphasizes that the term bourgeois carries ambiguity depending on the position of class at a given historical moment. For the court and the aristocracy, the bourgeois was at the same time “[...] mundane and ordinary, socially pretentious yet narrow, moralistic and spiritually limited”. In the view of a working class in formation, the bourgeois individual was central; they had a “[...] mixture of self-interested morality and selfish comfort” (WILLIAMS, 2011a, p. 34) and formed the employer class that controlled capital and labor. Artists did not align themselves unrestrictedly with a particular class since they could take labor causes as a theme or defend the interests of a rising bourgeoisie.

Aesthetically, the cosmopolitan reference becomes absent in Brazil, while the local character of the modernist poetics remains (LAFETÁ, 2000). Ideologically, the relationship with the landowners was usual and frequent, so the modernist poets were present at the sumptuous banquets and festivities promoted by the aristocracy. This aspect is pointed out by Mario de Andrade (1942) in “The Modernist Movement”; also, Lafetá (2000) describes it as the union of the cult of international modernity with the practice of the Brazilian tradition, promoted by the Modernism artists together with the coffee barons.

The ideological project of the modernist poet is the maintenance of a power group, which merely transmutes its sphere of domination from the rural to the industrial activity, in a subtle adaptation to the economic contingencies after the coffee crisis in the late 1920s. Hence, the modernist literary movement remains as the creative force of an artistic production that does not undo its bourgeois ties, rendering innocuous any possibility of an artistic praxis that may bring art closer to the ordinary. This approach is forged and incorporates the construction of a national identity that our tortuous historical formation has deprived us of (FREYRE, 2003; HOLANDA, 1995). Redeeming the popular element in modernist literature would enable the modernists to not only confront the academicism in force but also substantiate the ideology of the progressive Brazilian men (CHAUÍ, 1987), according to the operationalization pointed out by Gramsci (1978b, p. 90). In this view, the popular element is presented in literature together with “[...] a certain intellectual and moral content that is the elaborate and complete expression of the deepest aspirations of a particular public, that is, of the nation-people at a certain stage of their historical development”.

Once again, the outline of an artistic production that would break with the *status quo* impresses the convergence between two groups almost always operable for a single purpose. The proximity of the modernist group with the ruling class leads us to what Gramsci (1978a) characterized as the mediation of hegemonic relations. That is, a social class has at its service a group of intellectuals who consubstantiate essentially material practices, instituting a bond between the organic mode of production and the superstructures, through social hegemony and the construction of ideologies. “Social groups, which are born from the way the economic production is structured, organically create one or more layers of intellectuals, which give the class ideological, social and political homogeneity” (SCHLESENER, 2007, p. 37).

The modernist movement members were very close to the bourgeoisie, which only shifted their means for capital accumulation from agricultural to industrial and sought legitimacy for the rural-urban transition. However, Lafetá (2000) points out that other constituent factors of the urban life and the industrialization process reinforced the need for an aesthetic and ideological modernist move (although there were doubts about the latter). For the author, the growth of the salaried mass resulting from a process triggered by the abolition of slavery, the arrival of the immigrants, the outbreak of industrialization, the proletarian class in the cities, and the rise of a bourgeoisie, create the scenario that complicates the political and the cultural spheres. In the political field, despite the remarkable growth of the industrial bourgeoisie, the maintenance of an oligarchic political structure helped sustain privileges, such as the protectionism of the coffee production. In the cultural field, one observes the search for aesthetic changes based on specificities that the bourgeois art demanded, under the mantle of an apparent rupture with the artistic manifestations that left ordinary men to the margin.

Although both the aesthetic and ideological projects have been approached in their specificities, any attempt to disassociate or deny their various implications would constitute an insoluble problem. Resuming the assertions by Lafetá (2000) and Antonio Candido (2006), the aesthetic project already contains the ideological project, for it represents different worldviews through a new language and poetic content. Strictly speaking, modernist literature expresses the aspirations of other classes when it criticizes the archaic institutions resulting from long oligarchic domination. However, the modernist aesthetic and ideological projects are limited by the very aspirations of the once dominant bourgeoisie. Left-wing ideology is absent in the works of the heroic phase of modernist literature, hence the few denouncements about the people's living conditions were accompanied by an awareness of the possibility or necessity of a proletarian revolution (LAFETÁ, 2000).

The revolution of 1930 represents a turning point in modernist literature. In the political-partisan context, a moment of transition is established, when the growth of the ideological struggle was observed, such as the rise of fascism, Nazism, and communism. In Brazil, the political clash involved communism, integralism, and the labor populism of Getúlio Vargas. In times of political-partisan confrontations, modernist literature finds itself before the consolidation of its aesthetic project since changes in language and poetic construction were already established.

It is necessary to emphasize that the modernist literary movement creates a clear separation between the aesthetic and the ideological projects. In spite of conditioning the consolidation of the modernist movement to the process that contemplated both the aesthetic and the ideological rupture, the primacy of aesthetic change would suspend the ideological trace, appropriately adapted to a period that required the "support" of the new industrial bourgeoisie, which manifested through criticism against the old oligarchies. After the Revolution of 1930, would not the rise of labor issues and of a populist government agenda that flagged these same issues pose a new convenience, a return to the ideological project that would bring social denounce to the forefront?

Bueno (2004), while investigating the aesthetic and ideological projects, stresses that it is complex to admit the continuity of the projects from one generation to another. That is, from the modernist literary movement as it was during the Modern Art Week to the modernists who emerged after the revolution of 1930 since the emphasis of each generation was in disagreement. For Bueno (2004), in the first moment, the idea of a new country prevailed, which is replaced by the concept of an underdeveloped country to be addressed by the generation of the 1930s. The ideological plan of the 1920s generation, of the new country, plunges into a utopia of an artistic avant-garde project that thinks of the present and anticipates the future (WILLIAMS, 2011a), while the 1930s generation, taking the reference of an underdeveloped country to itself, proposes to discuss the present time.

The direction adopted by the modernist literary movement turns the attention to social protest novels and militant poetry, of struggle. The attention once paid to the shift of the country's cultural scene to a more modern reality was now directed to revolutionize this very reality, to modify it profoundly, by overcoming the bourgeois position and including the proletarian in the core. The idea of a convergence between the aesthetic and ideological projects is even more fallacious when Lafetá (2000) offers the hypothesis of a transition from the heroic phase – the aesthetic consolidation of modernist literature – to the revolution phase – the retaking of the ideological project, when political awareness and a protesting, participant literature "colors" the aesthetic project. Despite the introduction of new possibilities for literary production, it is necessary to consider its deviation from its course of broad artistic experimentation, hence destroying "[...] the most intimate sense of modernity" (LAFETÁ, 2000, p. 34).

## ANALYSIS MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is strictly qualitative and comprises the analysis of the poems published in the literary journal *Verde* by poets from Cataguases and other towns, who addressed the city directly or indirectly. By analyzing the lyrics, we aim to understand how the poets addressed the stage of economic development of the city based on the increase in industrial activity since modernist literature required not only aesthetic (stylistic) but ideological changes as well (LAFETÁ, 2010).

Six issues of the journal published from 1927 to 1929 were examined. Among them, nine poems were selected. The documents were analyzed in the light of historical materialism of the Marxist variant, which constitutes the methodological and

analytical framework of this paper. The materialist conception of history must be regarded as the base for historical explanation, but not as the historical explanation itself (HOBSBAWM, 1998).

In historical materialism, the multiple determinations between base and superstructure are apprehended through dialectics, while the development of human productive forces – the base – is central. It is necessary to reinforce the dynamic character evoked in the dialectical movement of base and superstructure so as not to denote a deterministic function to historical materialism, but rather a dialectical one, which consequently inculcates dynamicity. One must, therefore, consider in each reality the apprehension of its contradictions, its internal dynamics, and its transformations (LEFEBVRE, 2006).

The data analysis employed in this article is strictly qualitative and based on the Marxist conception of language and discourse developed by Mikhail Bakhtin. The importance of discourse arises from the development of bourgeois philosophy through the role of words (BAKHTIN, 2009). Ideology in discourse must be perceived as part of reality and as a way of reflecting or refracting that very reality. The ideological component brings along a meaning that refers to something outside itself. Therefore, the signs present in discourse are fundamental to the apprehension of ideologies, given their intersubjective character (BARROS, 2005). It is important to highlight that such ideological process, which manifests itself through the signs, only becomes an ideological creation in the consciousness in its connection with reality, as much in the production on the part of the dominant class, as in the apprehension/resistance on the part of the dominated one. According to Bakhtin (2009, p. 35), that which is ideological can only be explained by the “[...] social material of signs”.

The material character attributed to discursive ideology can only be understood in the relation between base and superstructure (BAKHTIN, 2009). For the author, the explanation of a relationship between the base and any isolated phenomenon can only represent cognitive value if this event is inserted in its ideological context. Similarly, the dialectical content of the superstructure only allows the understanding of an ideological transformation through a direct relation with the changes taking place at the base. Such dynamicity does not assure the deterministic character, but rather the transformations operationalized within ideology, through its internal dialectic and its contradictions, in consonance – but not necessarily synchronized – with the material relations through the external dialectics.

## LITERATURE AND THE CITY: CATAGUASES AS DEPICTED ON *REVISTA VERDE*

Two historical aspects make Cataguases, in the state of Minas Gerais, a *sui generis* city. The first, of an economic nature, is characterized by early industrialization, particularly in the textile sector, fueled by the generation of electricity since the first decade of the last century. Another factor concerns the local *cultural scene*, reverberated in the first cinematographic productions by Humberto Mauro, in the modernist architecture, and in the modernist literary production of *Revista Verde*.

Alongside the first productions of Humberto Mauro, the period from 1927 to 1929 stands out for the publication of the six issues of *Verde* bringing together various literary figures of the city – Enrique de Resende, Rosário Fusco, Guilhermino César, Francisco Inácio Peixoto, Martins Mendes, Ascânio Lopes, Christophoro Fonte-Bôa, Oswaldo Abritta, Camillo Soares –, supported by writers of Belo Horizonte, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Juiz de Fora. Among these, the contributions by Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Pedro Nava, Murilo Mendes, Marques Rebelo, Sérgio Milliet, and Carlos Drummond de Andrade stand out.

The introduction in the first issue of *Verde* makes it clear that the purpose of the journal was to strengthen the foundation of genuinely Brazilian poetry, which broke with European poetic reproduction, particularly French. The autonomy of the Brazilian modernist literature is highlighted in the journal as part of the formation of the Brazilian identity trace, whose natural wealth and industrial progress would reverberate in the “new poetry.” The text by Enrique de Resende reinforces the importance of Cataguases in this process of “aesthetic renewal”, emphasizing that Minas Gerais follows São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and that the state production is not restricted to the cities of Belo Horizonte and Juiz de Fora: it also reverberates in the small town in the mesoregion of *Mata Mineira*.

Two traits of the aesthetic content mentioned by Lafetá (2010) are evidenced in the purposes of the poets published by *Verde*. First, the clear opposition against the European influence in Brazilian literature, so that the break with the academic language would represent the beginning of a genuinely Brazilian style, while also founding an identity that until then did not exist,

due to European cultural determination. Also, despite the interest universalizing the Brazilian way of being, local aspects are inserted when they project the city or the state, as well as the very themes dealt with in the poems.

In the introduction, the Minas Gerais incursion is treated as one more move in the struggle for what once was political freedom, in a clear allusion to the *inconfidentes* (members of the Minas Gerais conspiracy). As of now, the goal was having freedom of thought, since the modernist writers regard themselves as the creators of a Brazilian Literature that is independent from Europe. This alleged emancipation is intimately connected to the idea of a rupture with the economic and cultural dependence, making it necessary to create a sense of nation and identity, which would establish a bridge with the developmental policy initiated in 1930 by the Estado Novo, but that had already been rehearsed in the 1920s by Modernism.

### The City and Some Poets

(*A Cidade e Alguns Poetas*)

*Enrique de Resende*

Here is a rather old thing: we, the Brazilian poets, except for a few masters with an impaired taste, are already tired of receiving art sent to us through the Paris courier [emphasis added].

Yet, despite this very old thing, there has not been a national poet until now, particularly in the past twenty years or more, who has not imitated, reproduced, or even copied Mr. Albert Samain – this melancholic Frenchman who has been watering without interruption, with his inevitable fountains, the desolate gardens of Brazilian poetry.

If it were not Samain, with his respective fountains and tanks, almost always made of polished marble, it was Rodenbach, bent over, whimpering over the canals of Bruges, or Mallarmé, with his ancient brass chimes.

And when we walked away from Mallarmé, Rodenbach, or Samain, we would unwillingly come across Mr. Paul Verlaine<sup>3</sup>, as he prayed his rosary at the back of some church in Paris.

Oswald, in case we come to believe in Paulo Prado, “dazzlingly discovered, on a trip to Paris, from the top of an atelier at the Place Clichy – the navel of the world – his own land.”

He then came back and founded this funny thing called *Brazilian modernist poetry*.

Moreover, while, after him, we welcomed Blaise Cendrars to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Oswald, Mário, Graça, Ronald, Guilherme, Ribeiro Couto and others confirmed the existence of this new literature, a rather nationalistic commodity. They asked Cendrars to shout, from the top of that very atelier at the Place Clichy, for all of France to hear, that we already had the raw materials for the manufacture of *our* literature, completely *freed* from the massive judgment of others.

As one can see, the Brazilian reaction was born of remorse: remorse of having imitated, pitied, and reproduced, for so many years, when we should have been a new model for a new literature.

Among the many good things that modernism has brought us, the freedom that we always dreamed of certainly stands out.

[...]

We no longer dream of Bruges-la-Morte with their chimes and canals.

[...]

Today we speak what is ours with words. The *Green* of our woods and the mystery of our jungles. The splendor of our fields and the brute force of our waters. The abundance of our crops and the gold of our mines. The metallic glow of our mountains and the work of our factories creaking.

[...]

Minas Gerais accompanies São Paulo and Rio in all their modern aesthetic manifestations, not denying, therefore, that it has always been, is, and shall always be the cradle of those who battle for the supreme aspirations – yesterday, political freedom and today, freedom of thought.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Verlaine [author's note].



However, the modernist movement in Minas is not limited to that of Bello-Horizonte and Juiz de Fora. Coming from a center of intellectuals, I lived here for two and a half years while completely ignoring the fact that “the lyrical vagrancy of the spirit” was also cultivated in Cataguazes, my hometown... (RESENDE, 1927a, p. 9-11).

The second issue of *Verde* features 24 texts. In *Toy Literature (Literatura de Brinquedo)*, Enrique de Resende draws attention to the impact that the journal caused in the “little town.” Resende points to the difference between the content of *Revista Verde* and the current publications that turned to the members of the local political power, as well as the works in progress in the city. The counterpoint to the political *status quo* implies that the journal escapes from the logic of the traditional political families of Minas Gerais, which represent an agrarian oligarchy, similarly to the idea of the nationalist modernist literary movement.

The reception of the journal, on which the futurist character emphasized by Resende rested, refers to the stylistic innovation transmitted by the poets, causing strangeness in the readers. Resende reacts with irony to the estrangement of the Cataguazes natives faced with the publication, highlighting in italics the city as “educated and progressive.” This linguistic resource apparently operates an attempt to question the reader’s ability to receive what was being produced, as well as to deconstruct the idea of an educated and progressive city. In contrast, Enrique de Resende resorts to the approval of Drummond to emphasize that the poems published by *Verde*, despite the blushing of the Cataguazes natives, are in tune with the “aesthetic renewal” proposed by the modernist literary movement, in particular by the participation of prominent figures of the national scene. The city’s guilt for being reticent about *Verde* is reinforced when Resende points out that the “great newspapers of the country” have given due credit to the publication and implicitly points out to the lack of education of the local readers and the provincialism that the “educated and progressive” Cataguazes displayed.

### Toy Literature

(*Literatura de Brinquedo*)

*Enrique de Resende*

Verde was a delightful scandal in its little – countryside – town. But it could not have been otherwise. Nobody expected the anticipated magazine to arise as it did. What? A magazine without pictures of local politicians? Without snapshots of the extravagant ladies leaving the church mass, or gloomily scattered over the gardens of the urbs? Without a single sight of the New Hospital? Without this. Without that. That is everything but a magazine! It is a mere booklet with futuristic sonnets, such as the one written by Mr. Carlos Drummond de Andrade, which is nothing more than a ridiculous plagiarism of the Internal Regulation of the Vehicle Service Agency.

[...]

And the respectable public is triumphantly delighted: now, the futurists...

[...] And the little town, educated and progressive – as the countryside towns usually are, according to their weekly papers, – all blushed with the publication of Verde.

But then came the news of the great newspapers of the country. Verde was acclaimed with high honors. Other names that have long prevailed in the literary world, now offer Verde the labor of their pen. All are amazed, stunned. There is a natural embarrassment. The comments slacken. Or sometimes they change.

Now we are the ones who smile.

And what do we do now? This shall not be our audience yet. The resulting bitterness of an everyday, moldy principle shall pass. Condescending silence shall come. But the applause, not yet. Maybe it never will. (RESENDE, p. 7, 1927c, emphasis added).

Besides *Toy Literature (Literatura de Brinquedo)*, in the second issue of *Verde*, Enrique de Resende publishes another poem set in Cataguazes. In *The Chant of the Green Land (O Canto da Terra Verde)*, Resende no longer blames the city for its indifference to local poets; instead, he emphasizes its growth, driven by the workforce of the slave descendants. It is this very workforce that allows Cataguazes to overcome the isolation that the woods imposed on it, with the opening of roads. In a larger





is reinforced, while industrialization is incorporated as a theme. It is necessary to emphasize that the set of poems analyzed until then operate both the internal and the external dialectics. Internally, they oppose European cultural determination, so that the modernist national production represents a way out of cultural colonialism. Externally, they retrieve at various moments the direct relationship with the stage of economic development, reinforcing the contrast between the latter and the activities that preceded industrialization. In short, the idea of rupture is strongly present, eliminating the historical process of development of both literature itself and the productive activity. In this separation, opposing elements such as rural/urban, agricultural/industrial production, foreignism/nationalism, operate together.

Published in December 1927, the issue #4 of *Verde* features 26 texts, including poems, short stories, criticism, and notes. The distinctive trait that differentiates it from the previous ones is the presence of two critical texts. The first, by Francisco Ignácio Peixoto, turns his lens to the arduous work of the men in the city's quarries. The other, by Enrique de Resende, refers to the ill-treatment of slaves by his grandfather in his property.

In *Quarry (Pedreira)*, Francisco Ignácio Peixoto describes the efforts of the local quarrymen. The author points out that by "throwing sparks" from the friction of the piercing objects and from the stone itself, the workers find themselves before "their primitive shadows," an apparent allusion to the primitive form of obtaining fire by the friction of rocks and other materials. In addition to characterizing the work of these men as belonging to a remote past, Peixoto emphasizes the lack of perspective for these workers, bound to remain in this activity, although they keep their hope for change alive.

An unsuspecting look at Peixoto's poem might allow us to infer that it is a critique of the primitivism of such labor and the conditions that this type of activity imposes. Besides the character of denouncement, this criticism also operates a sense of positivity as for the industrial activities going on in the city; in fact, it must be noted that the poet's family concentrated the most important industries in town in their hands. Thus, Francisco Ignácio not only exempts industrial activity from criticism but also reinforces his family industrial action as the transition from rudimentary to modern labor, which, in a certain way, also marks the transition to a "new age."

### **Quarry** (*Pedreira*)

*Francisco Ignácio Peixoto*

Hanging in space,  
they stay in there all day  
throwing sparks  
drilling holes in the huge quarry  
that reflects, like a mirror,  
their primitive shadows.

In the afternoon, a rumble is heard  
and the echo repeats the laughter of the stones  
that came rolling down the mountain.

The men with roasted skin  
then come down from their hiding places  
and walk back to their homes  
slowly  
disappointed  
holding with their calloused hands  
the tools with which they have searched  
for many years  
the secret that may bring them a new revelation of life. (PEIXOTO, 1927, p. 11)

The second poem, *Senzala*, by Enrique de Resende, portrays the author's memory, marked by the "atrocities" which slaves were subjected to at his grandparents' farm. The author conditions the remembrances to the existence of a *senzala* (a slave house or quarter) on the property, revealing his belief that the memories may fade when the stick-a-pike structures collapse. Going further, through a more extensive analysis of the published poems, *Senzala* is the only poem that criticizes the conditions imposed by those who held power in the city.

### **Senzala**

*Enrique de Resende*

O senzala of my grandparents' farm!  
Little by little  
your stick-a-pike walls and your secular roofs shall crumble.

However, as you collapse, you still represent  
the agonizing remembrance of my grandparents' atrocities.

O senzala!  
Your ruins are still impregnated with the bruised blood  
of the black men who groaned, tied to your posts,  
under the threatening whip of the white farm keepers.

But all this must disappear someday.

Your stick-a-pike walls and your secular roofs  
— ruins still impregnated with the blood and sweat of slaves —  
remind us of the groans lost in your cubicles;  
and the tears that rolled over your beaten, earthen floor;  
and the triple-braided whips of the cruel foremen;  
and the painful screams that pierce the horror of your darkness;  
and the dull spot left on the *brauna* wood of your posts.

However – blessed be God! – your ruins shall disappear someday  
in the distant haze of history.

And then that day, in my memory,  
the agonizing remembrance of my grandparents' atrocities shall fade too... (RESENDE, 1927e, p. 20).

Although this text is a point outside the curve when compared to other writings published in *Verde*, the relation established in this poem with *Small Sentimental History of Cataguases* (*Pequena História Sentimental de Cataguases*), written by Enrique de Resende (1969) 42 years later, signals changes in the way he perceives slave labor on his ancestor's farm. In his work, Resende exempts his ancestors from the responsibility of mistreatment against slaves, attributing a certain plainness to such behavior, in "[...] accordance with the uses and customs of that ignominious block of the Brazilian life" (RESENDE, 1969, p. 27).

Issue #5 makes a direct reference to Cataguases. In *The Discovery of Cataguases* (*Descoberta de Cataguazes*), Ribeiro Couto reinforces the idea of the city being recognized at the national level due to the endeavor of the creators of *Verde*. To strengthen the importance of the Cataguases poets writing for *Verde*, Couto resorts to the old founders, recognizing their merits, but clearly emphasizing that the evidence of the city is only made possible by the members of *Verde*. In addition, Couto presents in his text the "understanding" of a town that ignores the legacy of its inhabitants, explained by its provincialism when the locals are compared with those who live the fervor of modernity and, since they live in the great urban centers, stand before the ample understanding of the cultural movements and the importance of *Verde*.

### **The Discovery of Cataguazes (fragments)** (Descoberta de Cataguazes)

*Ribeiro Couto*

[...]

So, Cataguazes. Astolpho Dutra was the President of the House of Representatives, in vain. Astolpho Resende is, in vain, one of the most fascinating figures in Brazilian law: along with personal kindness, he holds the bright light of culture and rich intelligence. Were they born in Cataguazes? But where is Cataguazes?

Suddenly comes «*Verde*»: it is a slap in the national literary atony. Poetry.

[...]

How much life in the pages of your journal! I do not know the opinion of the town mayor, nor do I know if the other sensible people in the locality believe in «*Verde*»! It may happen to them as with the mist: we do not see it when we are inside of it. We, however, who live in the vastness of the country (residing along other railroad branches), we know — in secret — that «*Verde*» has integrated Cataguazes into the attainable national reality. (COUTO, 1928, p. 10-11, emphasis added)

The sixth and last issue of *Verde*, published in May 1929, is widely dedicated to Ascânio Lopes, who died in the same year, a victim of tuberculosis. Ascânio Lopes' death is treated as a transitional period, since this particular issue has a reference on its cover, stating that it belongs to the journal's "second phase." In addition to the long texts addressing the brilliance of Ascânio Lopes, the sixth issue features a text by José Américo de Almeida, which refers directly to Cataguazes. In *Message to the Verde Group* (*Mensagem ao "Grupo Verde"*), the author reinforces the position outlined by the text of Ribeiro Couto, previously analyzed, corroborating the idea that the members of *Verde* are directly responsible for the notoriety of Cataguazes at the national level. The author points out that, as a counterpart, the city denies recognizing *Verde*, staying irreducible to those who become more important than itself.

### **Message to the Verde Group** (*Mensagem ao "Grupo Verde"*)

*José Américo de Almeida*

I dreamed of you: all of Brazil were looking at Cataguazes and Cataguazes were turning their backs on you. Small towns are like that. They get angry at those who get bigger than them.

You, the poets of the little town (group n. 4) made Cataguazes a big town. Because everything that is seen from a distance looks great, including certain small things.

Wish well for Cataguazes, though it shall not wish you back. Cataguazes is small, but you are only great because you are poets of Cataguazes. (ALMEIDA, 1929, p. 3).

The uneasiness in the words of José Américo de Almeida demands a return to the intrinsic contradictions that make the poets of *Verde* educated ones, because when they position themselves as avant-garde, with a literary production representing an aesthetic rupture, the members of *Verde*, as much as of the modernist writers, remain distant from the same daily tensions whose absence in previous literary productions was criticized. They find refuge in a stylistic rupture that aims to overcome the academism that had been in vogue hitherto, without questioning the material base of the factors that create it – in this case, not necessarily the academic character, but the clear division between labor and capital, between the occupation of the body and the mind.

This vanguard path of the Cataguazes that is controlled by the powerful economic and political groups is controverted even in the field of literature, in the five volumes of *Inferno Provisório*, by Luiz Ruffato<sup>6</sup> (2005a; 2005b; 2006; 2008; 2011), a

<sup>6</sup> Luiz Ruffato is a writer born in Cataguazes, having published novels, short stories, and poetry, as well as essays and collections. Among his publications *Eles eram muitos cavalos*, *Estive em Lisboa e lembrei de você*, and the five volumes of *Inferno Provisório* stand out. The existence of a cultural version of Cataguazes, only recognized when Ruffato leaves the city, illustrates the guiding line of his work, in which he addresses the Cataguazes of the factory workers, far from the culturally inclined Cataguazes. The daily life of workers and factories is dealt with in his books, and this reflects Ruffato's background: he is the son of a popcorn seller and a laundress and has been a worker in the local textile industry himself.

Cataguases native himself. Oliveira (2011, p. 30) emphasizes that the narratives of *Inferno Provisório* are presented as counter-hegemonic, for they reveal

the tension between the “structured structure” of the cultural signs, since it is set in the same Cataguases of modernist “avant-garde” in architecture and literature, and the “structuring structure”, in which the dismantling of the consensus gives rise to the aberrant mismatch of a “mask” that has always concealed the elements responsible for its own “ruin”, if not aesthetically, at least socially and politically.

Despite the freshness of those times, the late 1920s also brought the decline of the apparent cultural efflorescence that had taken over Cataguases<sup>7</sup>. We define it as “apparent” for it was a restricted and restrictive movement, which set the boundaries between the representatives of the city and those on the margins of all manifestation. However, the end of domination based on artistic production did not put a stop to the basic economic rule in Cataguases, so that the power groups would remain as such.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

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In this article, we have sought to understand the dialectical relations between literary discourse and material questions. More specifically, we analyze these relations regarding *Revista Verde*, an important modernist publication of the 1920s, whose production was based in the city of Cataguases, Minas Gerais.

Through the analysis of the six issue of the journal, published between 1927 and 1929, it was possible to identify that the alleged aesthetic rupture of the modernist literature proposed by *Verde* was restrained to the stylistic sphere, as an alternative to the academicism in vogue until then, without questioning the material basis of the factors that generate the very elitist trait present in the previous literary productions. And in this case, it is not about necessarily questioning the academic character, but the clear division between labor and capital, between the occupation of the body and the mind, which makes this rupture innocuous in the face of any possibility of understanding the ideological dimension that goes beyond the sphere of art; something that could break with the concrete conditions that very agrarian oligarchy imposed on ordinary citizens.

The decision of starting from the base, on wholly contradictory material relations, is conveniently ignored. This allows us to attribute to casuism the incomprehension, on the part of the “provincial town,” of the local cultural production and of the “avant-garde character” that the *Verde* movement imputed to the city. The texts associate the local “ignorance” to the reception of the content produced, concurrently with the merits of the arduous work involved in the productive activities that reduce the gap between the city and Brazilian civilization, denying any mutual implication between the two phenomena. The departure and arrival of the literary content do not allow any amplitude of the aesthetic reflex that concerns the working conditions of local laborers since the contradictions of the material life are neglected. In this case, a fact is ignored: before the absence of meaning of such literary production for the town’s inhabitants, there is a process of industrial production that controls all productive capacity, which Marx and Engels (2007) classified as the division of material and spiritual labor.

When invited, the city is narrated based on the precepts guiding the construction of a Brazilian type, based on literary or metaliterary productions that create epideictical narratives<sup>8</sup>. Once again, the contradiction between intellectual and manual labor is present among those who devote their time to cultural production and those who dedicate to conventional productions, so that the dialectical movement of base and superstructure guarantees the appropriation and use of manual labor, generating more intellectual work and accentuating the superstructural aspects of domination.

<sup>7</sup> The decay of the cultural activities in the city was mainly caused by the premature end of *Verde*, motivated by the death of poet Ascânio Lopes, at age 23, in 1929. In addition, in the same year Humberto Mauro migrated to Rio de Janeiro to continue his film productions.

<sup>8</sup> According to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (1985), the epideictic genre or ceremonial oratory were discourses concerning celebrations and solemnities, marked by the appraisal of values and virtues. In the approach by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1996), the epideictic genre acquires central importance in the art of persuading: in addition to reinforcing and providing the necessary premises to legitimize the arguments of other branches, it has a significant influence on human actions and dispositions. From this point of view, it is possible to say that the epideictic genre has the following functions: (i) to allow identification with the audience, (ii) to reinforce values, (iii) to incite emotions and (iv) to trigger actions.

Similar is the need to relate the superstructural elements constituted in Cataguases with their correspondents at the national level since several convergences compose the purposes of the modernist moves, far beyond the idiosyncrasies. In the case of Modernism, we start from the idea that the aesthetic (stylistic) renewal complemented a genuine creation of the Brazilian spirit, of the founding characteristics of a people that until then had faced the contradictions of colonization, slavery, and indigenous exploitation processes. Hence, Modernism operates, in the artistic scope, the replacement of a literary production of predominantly European influence. At the base, the formation of the Brazilian type corresponded to the substitution of agricultural work, still marked by the legacies of slavery, by industrial activity, which would supposedly put an end to Brazilian dependence on other countries.

In the superstructure, the cultural and political fields operate based on multiple determinations. It is precisely the incorporation of various artistic manifestations into a single aesthetic plan (style) that makes it robust and guarantees legitimacy in the process of representing the ideals of a country, of a post-revolution political project, and of an industrial economic model. In short, of a unitary sense of nation. In the case of Cataguases, the unitary sense of city can be perceived as a microcosm of Brazil, observed not only in the link between *Verde* and the writers of Brazilian modernism, but also because it is the symbol of an inflection point in the history of the city, marked by industrial activity, whose side effects must be understood under the conservatism of the social domination forms.

Returning to the dialectical and materialistic conception to shed light on the text, we must point out two essential categories for understanding the city based on the poems of *Verde*: ideology and naturalization of events. Assuming the need to draw a line that crosses all the poems, this would bring along the founding moment of a new era, which detaches itself from an imprisoning past, both in economic and literary terms. Ideology is present not in the sense of false consciousness, or partial apprehension of reality, but precisely because it supports the concrete relations that are fundamentally contradictory and therefore more readily accepted if accommodated in other instances beyond the productive ones.

It is reasonable to say that the texts are constructed considering contradictions between the past and a series of future transformations by the poets. Although present, this contradiction remains at the macro level as a point of departure and arrival, while legitimizing itself in opposition to European colonialism and the empiricist stigma of an agrarian and rural country. Consequently, the arrival at the macro level is precisely the overcoming of these two stages, in the field of literature and even in the economy itself. When we reflect on the relationship between the totalizing aspect of the texts and the micro level, since what we seek here is to grasp the city from its literary production, we understand that the conformist character prevails, precisely by obliterating all contradiction, naturalizing the processes of domination and social division of labor. In fact, such division detaches the disinterest of the population in the literature of the participants of *Verde* from the need to deliver the productive forces to enterprises.

We believe that the notes published here contribute to the organizational studies in certain aspects. The first concerns the maintenance of the city as an object of analysis, due to the multiplicity of existing meanings and concrete contradictions, which must necessarily be analyzed in its relation with the macro. Another important aspect, for which many researchers in Organizational Studies keep a firm position, is the maintenance of objects full of singularities, even in the face of constant demands to produce universalizing knowledge, which may suppress objects that tend to exoticism<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> For a better understanding of the universal character of science and the risks of neglecting the singularity of objects, which is inherent to the Human and Social Sciences, see Barros and Xavier (2015).



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