

An itinerant intellectual: Floriano de Lemos in the São Paulo backlands (1926-1930)

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa a atuação do médico carioca Floriano de Lemos na região Noroeste Paulista, também conhecida como Alta Araraquarense ou Novo Oeste Paulista, na década de 1920. Procura relacionar as suas ações na esfera pública, particularmente seus escritos na imprensa regional, ao processo de transformação capitalista ocorrido naquela parte do estado no período. Ao mesmo tempo, busca situá-lo como personagem possuidor de trajetória emblemática a uma geração de intelectuais que intencionou mapear, analisar e organizar discursivamente o interior do país nas primeiras décadas do século XX.

Palavras-chave: Floriano de Lemos; sertão paulista; intelectuais.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the actions of Floriano de Lemos, a physician from Rio de Janeiro state in the Northwest region of São Paulo state in the 1920's, an area also known as *Alta Araraquarense*, or *Novo Oeste Paulista*. Its objective is to link his actions in the public sphere, specifically texts he published in the regional press, to the process of capitalist transformation which was occurring there at that time. In addition, it is intended to situate him as a person with an emblematic trajectory for a generation of intellectuals whose intentions were to map, analyze and organize the backlands (or *sertão*) of the country in the first decades in the twentieth century.

Keywords: Floriano de Lemos; São Paulo backlands (*sertão*); intellectuals.

THE 1920S IN THE SÃO PAULO SERTÃO (BACKLANDS)

Observing the development of the pioneer zones in São Paulo state in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially the intricate process of the expansion of capitalism in the region known as Alta Araraquarense, which included, in addition to the city of Araraquara, the municipalities of Matão,

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Catanduva, São José do Rio Preto and Mirassol, the geographer Pierre Monbeig² stated that he was studying a society in movement that was difficult to comprehend. An unstable region, where forests, despite being ever more rare, were still intermingled with the crops and pasture that had come to comprise the dominant scenario.

Precisely because of this dynamism, the author referred to the difficulties encountered in working with official statistics related to this place. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, it was very common for the small municipalities which gravitated around the most important cities to change their name and for the state government to create, merge, or even suppress *distritos de paz* (literally districts of peace, a region to which a Justice of the Peace was assigned), villages, entire towns and even *comarcas* (councils). “Everything is in a tumult”, Monbeig found when he analyzed the inexorable process of change in the natural landscape due to the felling of the original forest and the formation of small farms, plantations and towns.

A ‘tumult’ was also what resulted from the population instability caused by the constant circulation of people. Migrants arrived and left in ‘crowded trains’ filled with prosperous and decadent plantation owners, foreign colonists, Brazilians and a countless number of new rural and urban types who became distinctive in a time and space in blatant mutation. Teachers, *grileiros* (land grabbers), lawyers, doctors and other characters became representative of a territory that was radically transformed: all extras in a *sertão* that at the same time was real and imaginary and which grew gigantically in the 1920s and 1930s.³

In an understanding which agrees with geographic concepts without escaping from the etymology of the word, the term *sertão* is used here as a synonym of an isolated region distant from urban centers, a space distant from settlements or cultivated land, in accordance with the usage of Portuguese colonists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in reference to the regions isolated from the coastline, the *desertão* (literally the great desert).⁴ In symbolic terms the word is consistent with its usage in São Paulo historiography at the beginning of the twentieth century in which the west of São Paulo state was designated as *sertão*, which while being mapped by geographers also was being occupied by coffee plantations. This space allegorically became synonymous with a region that was still little known, an empty land not yet occupied by colonization.

Out of economic necessity, the desire for rapid enrichment, the possibility of reconstructing one’s life, or even by chance, out of curiosity, or some illusion, thousands of people were attracted to the *sertão* and to the *march to the new west of São Paulo*, the designation by which the process of occupying

the lands that were not as fertile as those in the *old west* came to be known. In the latter region without a doubt the iconic symbol of those times and of others was the city of Ribeirão Preto, whose nickname of *Petit Paris* revealed at the beginning of the twentieth century the grandiose cosmopolitan pretensions of the local elite.⁵

The self-taught lawyer and anthropologist Antonio Tavares de Almeida was an active participant and observer of this process. In his 1943 work *Oeste Paulista: a experiência etnográfica e cultural* he narrates, without disguising the undeniably triumphalist tone that was characteristic of people from São Paulo at that time, how the *new west* became in those years the ‘patria of all’, including the *old Paulistas* (as people from the state were known) who also flocked there.

In the following citation it can be noticed that in the construction of the symbology of the superiority of the state in relation to the rest of the Brazilian federation – a movement as symptomatic in that period as the occupation of the final frontiers of the state – *Mineiros* (as those from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais were commonly known), the first colonizers of Alta Araraquarense, are also identified as the ‘returning *bandeirantes*,’ in other words heroes returning to their original soil. At the same time the ‘music of the felling axes’ composed the soundtrack to the irreversible civilizing process then underway:

From the various corners of the world people hastened to the opening of the patria to everyone. At the front can be seen the *Mineiro*, the returning *bandeirante*. Afterwards come the fearless Bahians. And the music of the felling axes starts. The pyres burn and to keep the modesty of the naked land, in generous promises of harvests, they covered it with the green mantle of coffee plants. Here and there were traced plans for villages, which still humid from the forest already became a city.⁶

In those times when deforestation was celebrated in the name of progress, a new communications network was also born, consisting above all of railways and roads which reactivated and multiplied old communication routes, previously known only to Indians and *sertanistas* (frontiersmen). These roads inexorably collaborated to the continuous motor into which that society in construction was transformed.

In addition to the trains, cars, buses and coaches which came to easily link places and people along old and recent roads, also notable was the ease of

communication created by the diffusion of the telegraph and later of telephones.

Nevertheless, extrapolating in an unequivocal form, and in different degrees of coverage from the coverage provided by roads, telephones and telegraphs, was the proliferation of newspapers and magazines of all types and ideological orientations, which were created in the towns and cities in the region. Much more than just informing, these communication vehicles sought, above all, to *form* the inhabitants of those parts. All of this collaborated in the emergence of a new style of life in São Paulo.

The newspapers, especially the morning papers *A Notícia* (1924-1965) and *O Município* (1917-1930) – also media in *movement* par excellence in the 1920s, as well as the actual frontiers of Alta Araraquarense where they circulated –, were transformed into the ideal vehicles for local groups of literati, similar to what was going on in the rest of the country, and became types of *enlightened sertanejos* which sought to ‘shed the light’ of knowledge and of civilization over their readers.⁷

Using these publications on a daily basis, these groups sought not only to occupy the *sertão*, a space that was symbolically empty of the signs of capitalist development, education and culture – but above all to *civilize* the rest of the population, as determined by the shared canons of progress and modernity.

Issues dear to the intellectuals of the period – such as the need to teach everyone to read and write; the imperious evolutionary ascension of the country towards European or American standards; the cultivation of the ideologies of whitening and nationalism in a country of miscegenation; the pact with the certainties that emanated from the field of science and the praise of technology, reason and hygienism – all appeared, without exception, on the front pages of newspapers in the *São Paulo new west*.

The excerpt below is representative of the belief in the power of the press in the education/civilization of the local population:

In intellectual life as in the material process of peoples, the press appears as one of the most powerful levers to lift them up to the level of real civilization. In scientific and literary instruction, as in the moral education and economics of nations, the press is one of most valuable factors of those who act in the organization of the basic elements of these institutions ... The press is a superhuman power that overcomes all obstacles, destroys the strongest buildings and raises the broken spirits transforming them into robust and beneficial energies. Ah! The press! How its importance is far from being understood! (*A Notícia*, 1927)

Among the intellectuals who sought to divulge the scientific tastes produced by western culture in the regional press, scrutinizing and at the same time civilizing the heterogeneous population of Alta Araraquarense through the intermediation of newspapers, without a doubt the most outstanding was the emblematic figure of a doctor from Rio de Janeiro, Floriano de Lemos, who was an almost omnipresent figure in the cultural life of the region in the 1920s.

FLORIANO DE LEMOS: AN INTELLECTUAL IN MOVEMENT

Like the pioneering São Paulo frontier analyzed by Monbeig in the 1920s and 1930s, and like the regional press in which he wrote on an almost daily basis, Floriano de Lemos can be identified as an intellectual *in movement*. As Lima⁸ said in relation to one of the famous expeditions led by Rondon or by scientists from the Oswaldo Cruz Institute in the initial decades of the Republic into the interior of the country, “*Sertão* and travel, the latter seen as civilizing expeditions, are terms that interpenetrate each other.”

Floriano was not part of these expeditions, but like his peers of the greatest rank on the national scene he moved through the *sertões* of São Paulo, Mato Grosso and Minas Gerais as a federal health inspector, a teacher in primary and secondary schools, vocational schools and universities, as a man of letters, and uninterruptedly as a doctor and journalist.⁹

In São Paulo state between 1926 and 1930, which was then in the middle of the effervescence experienced in Araraquarense, Floriano de Lemos settled in Mirassol and in São José do Rio Preto, recognized at that time as the *entrance to the sertão* because of the simple fact that it was the last point reached by the railway. There he had a short, though significant, public performance, principally as a contributor to local newspapers.

Born in 1885 in the cultural and political capital of Brazil, the chronicler of the press was part of the same cultural broth which formed the first republican intellectual scientists. Values linked to scientificism, Spencerian evolutionism, and heterodox positivism were recurrent in his repertoire, as well as in those of his peers. Above all, he shared with that group the feeling of fulfilling a ‘mission’ in the public space by clarifying for people who lived far from state capitals the medical, sanitary and moral precepts which should be shared by all citizens, irrespective of social class.

The analysis of the peculiar evolution of the Brazilian race occurring in the region of Araraquarense revealed much about the evolutionary concepts of the author. According to him the modern world stimulated – sometimes in a

perverse manner – the rapid evolution of the local population. Electricity, capitalism and the class struggle shuffled in the heat and the dust of the *far west* were producing ‘nervous’ and also genial ‘neurasthenics’, though ones that were equally intelligent. “It has already been said, with some category, that genius borders on madness: every very intelligent individual has something unbalanced,” he stated on the front page of *A Notícia* in 1926 – and explained the possible causes of this strange condition of the children in the region.

The local reason is this: the child reflects the environment. This city developed under the shock of bitter fights fought in all spheres and moved by the need, by interest, by the irrepressible desire for progress. The extremely tense state of nerves in of the parents influenced the health of the children born at that time. Another cause in general can be found in the following: all of humanity appears to live subject to fever and convulsions. Rare is the person we meet in the street who appears normal and tranquil, satisfied with life...

It is true that there has been great spiritual progress of the species, within the referred to degeneration ... It is a fact of common observation that the children of today, when they reach one year of age, already precociously do what only much bigger kids used to do. Grandmothers say that in their time babies would only open their eyes a week or two after being born; we know that nowadays, still tied to the umbilical cord, they serenely look at the electric light of the delivery room. In the pediatric area doctors register everyday nervous anomalies: the infant holds their head over their neck much before the third month, which is positive proof of a lamentable nervous advance.

Starting with the supposition that intellectuals are “cultural producers who are invested with responsibilities in social life,” who are historically presented as “tutors of the truth and objectivity, exponents of the respective specializations” and as “trustees of universal cultural values,”¹⁰ Floriano de Lemos is perceived as a ‘cultural man’ connected to the groups of literati of his time, using writing – especially in the press, with both large and small circulations – as the principal channel for the expression of ideas and as a tool for convincing *the other*.

As was not rare among the literati of his generation, he sought to educate the Brazilian population, using institutionalized spaces clearly destined for this purpose, as was the case of the primary and secondary schools, vocational schools, teacher training schools and universities where he was a teacher. However, when he lived in Alta Araraquarense, and despite have been one of

the idealizers of the elite secondary S. Joaquim de São José do Rio Preto, to which the children of the local aristocracy went, without a doubt his educational crusade most especially took place through the occupation of the front pages of the newspapers *A Notícia* and *O Município*. In the latter, as well as being an assiduous contributor, in 1929 he was also the editor-in-chief.

Very well connected with the local elites, he valorized as much as was possible the unequivocal symbolic capital that he had and which he was not afraid of presenting: coming from Rio de Janeiro, he was the correspondent of the respected newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, as well as a professor in the Faculty of Medicine. He was also an illustrious connoisseur/participant of the cultural life of the capital, having experimented *in loco* life in the principal European cities.

For all these reasons Floriano was celebrated as a real breath of modernity who arrived at places so far from the state capitals.¹¹ *O Município*, a paper subsidized by the *Partido Republicano Paulista*, announced on its front page his arrival with a mix of joy and provincialism. In the same way *A Notícia* boasted of the fact of having him as its contributor, publically extolling his figure.

Mr. Floriano de Lemos has opened his clinical consultancy in this city after transferring his residency from Mirasol to Rio Preto. A brilliant journalist he will now be one of our collaborators, lending to our newspaper the brilliance of his effulgent pen. (*O Município*, 1926)

Dr. Floriano de Lemos, an illustrious man of letters, a talented official orator of the Society of Medicine and Surgery of Rio Preto and a well known specialist in children's diseases, celebrates his birthday today.

Today's celebrant, who has a splendid children's clinic in our city, is without a doubt a very educated and very studied doctor who in his specialty has achieved great triumphs.

A Notícia which now includes him in the list of its best and most appreciated contributors is very happy to publically congratulate him. (*A Notícia*, 1926)

The announcements of the arrival of the doctor in Araraquarense in 1926, published in *O Município* and *A Notícia*, emphasized his vast curriculum, his specialization in childcare and 'ladies illnesses,' as well as his verve as a lecturer. Rapidly his lectures on music, poetry, health, patriotism and various other subjects came to be reported on the front pages of various newspapers in the São Paulo *sertão* (commonly called the *sertão Paulista*).

Lectures were a practice that was very common among Brazilian literati at the turn of the nineteenth century. It can even be stated that they became the fashion in Rio de Janeiro at those times, similar to what was occurring in European capitals, especially in Paris. In addition to being spaces of sociability between peers, they were also seen by the literati as a form of educating the listening public in relation to relevant literary and scientific subjects.¹²

DR. FLORIANO DE LEMOS
MEDICO

Membro titular da Academia Nacional de Medicina, da Sociedade de Medicina e Cirurgia (de Rio e S. Paulo) e da Sociedade Brasileira de Pediatria. Docente-livre da Faculdade de Medicina do Rio. Ex-director Technico da Escola de Pharmacia e Odontologia de Ouro Fino, ex-medico dos Hospitales do Rio e ex-inspector sanitario do Districto Federal

Acaba de fixar residencia em **Miracrol**, onde attende a chamados, tanto na cidade como para fóra, em visitas e conferencias.

Figure 1 – *O Município*, 1926.

DR. FLORIANO DE LEMOS
Membro Titular de Academia Nacional de Medicina

Especialidade: Doenças das crianças - Partos

Acaba de remodelar o seu consultorio, á rua 15 de Novembro n. 53, nesta cidade, para attender a qualquer serviço medico-cirurgico, especialmente das crianças.

Corrige os defeitos phisicos das crianças: anormalias de nascimento, lingua presa, pés tortos, hernias, amígdalas crescidas, vegetações adenoides, tumores, guêta de lobo, fracturas de ossos, etc.

Para as intervenções de alta cirurgia, dispõe de todo o material operatorio do dr. Cenobellino de Barros Serra, com quem trabalha como assistente effectivo

Accepta chamados para fóra da cidade. — TELEPHONE 138

Figure 2 – *A Notícia*, 1926.

It should be noted that the ‘effulgent pen’ of Lemos was not only a ‘diletante pen.’ Despite being a well-known doctor, this intellectual, as a contributor to the press, received a fixed salary to publish his texts on a daily basis in *A Noticia* and *O Município*, which was a common practice among the literati of his time. As shown by Maria de Lourdes Eleutério,¹³ Coelho Netto, Monteiro Lobato, Olavo Bilac and many other lettered men received a monthly salary for their collaborations with the national press.¹⁴

In the pages of those newspapers the author concerned himself with publicizing scientific discoveries about Brazilian fauna and flora, as well as about the different regions of the country he visited. He discussed regional disparities from the national type, especially in regard to children. While the young children in Caxambu (in the state of Minas Gerais) for example, lived in a infant’s paradise due to the quality of the environment which was favorable to their physical and moral development, in his opinion the *Paulistas* from Alta Araraquarense, as we have seen, were described as ‘degenerates’ and ‘neurasthenics’ thanks to the different type of colonization of the soil, the climate, and principally the ‘state of spirit’ of the parents.

Anyone who has seen *Parque das Aguas* in Caxambu, full of children like an enchanted nursery and a giant garden, where thanks to humanity in its phase of birds and flowers, will feel infinite pity for the boys and girls who have never seen the delicacies of this child’s paradise. (*O Município*, 1928)

An attentive observer of the customs and speech of the ‘common man’, ‘illiterates,’ and ‘rednecks,’ in other words those who could not even imagine the meaning of the verb *regurgitate*, he would occasionally reflect on the linguistic variations he identified in the different social groups that composed Brazilian society – and which would possibly have difficulty in recognizing the Parnasian tone in his writings. In a clear movement of approximation and distancing in relation to the *other*, he reveals the anthropological bias of his perspective:

In its regional vocabulary São Paulo has something interesting. This expression, for example, is very curious:

— *De a meia*. (By of a half)

Or these similar ones:

— *De a pé; de à cavallo...* (By on foot; By on horse)

Note: it is not just illiterates, the more or less redneck colonists, who use two

prepositions at the same time. In general everyone constructs sentences like this in the West of São Paulo. Days ago I was speaking with a very educated man who exercises a position with a certain amount of social responsibility:

— I was late because there was no machine. I had to come *by on foot*.

Machine: this is another thing that is entirely local. No one here in the west says car or automobile or taxi; they say *machine*. When they reach the house of a customer, they are asked:

— Did you bring the *machine*?

In Matto Grosso I was asked the same thing once, but what was meant was “did you bring the syringe for the injections?” In São Paulo the expression is used for automobiles. (*A Notícia*, 1928)

Floriano de Lemos’ notes on the various meanings of the word ‘machine’ observed in different parts of Brazil showed how much this was still something extraordinary in people’s lives, whether they were in São Paulo, where they asked if the ‘machine’ had been brought, meaning the admirable automobile, or in Mato Grosso, where the ‘machine’, was a syringe, in other words an artifact that was possibly as new for certain social groups as cars for some *Paulistas*.

Between one anthropological reflection and another, between observations about different uses of Portuguese, and at a time when the sciences and arts were in a process of strong institutionalization in Brazil, Lemos marked his space for action: he founded cultural and scientific groups, aiming to bring together colleagues from his profession and to impose order on the medical profession. For example, this is the case of the Society of Medicine and Surgery of São José do Rio Preto, an entity which during the 1920s and 1930s played an important role in the idealization and implementation of regional public health policies. As well as having been a respectable center for interlocution between doctors living in Alta Araraquarense and in other places, the society published in full the most important speeches given during the solemn sessions in *A Notícia* and *O Município*.

In a speech given at the founding of the society, Floriano proclaimed at the same time a singular and a collective profession of faith. A profession of faith that represented the *ethos* of an entire generation of intellectuals, as shown by Oliveira,¹⁵ Hershmann and Pereira¹⁶ and Luca,¹⁷ amongst others. The essence of the speech revolved around the colossal work to be carried out by the group in its reconstruction of Brazil.

The doctor is currently a professional who needs a vast preparation of science, alongside an restless capacity for work. He does not just have to know everything, from the physiological mysteries of the body to the psychological unknowns of character; he also has to do everything, catechize the patient so he will treat himself, insist with the government that they carry out and support large prophylactic crusades. In his ministry in favor of the welfare of others, the doctor has to use all the weapons of practical action: personal efforts, requests, propaganda in the press, the daily and continuous fight with patients, discussions in academies and scientific societies like the one we have just founded. It is a never ending list of exhaustive work. Therefore, we say that the first condition of being a doctor is being healthy. Health is having courage. (*A Notícia*, 1926)

Oliveira (1990; 1997) refers to this process of acting in public life experienced by intellectuals of all types and with different degrees of reputation as a collective struggle undertaken by them in the first decades of the twentieth century with the aim of modernizing the country. These men of culture – whose *performance* in the public space was closely related to journalism – was transected by an extremely positive self-valuation linked to their gifts of spirit and intelligence, and also by a great desire for power, both real and symbolic. They sought to justify their works and public actions with the confidence in the image of being the bearer of answers for the anxieties of society in general, since they believed they had the obligation to fulfill a civilizing mission, which could not be avoided. In relation to this, Luca (1996, p.7) says that

Thus, the intellectual elite presented itself at different moments as invested with the mission of revealing the true face of the nation and tracing its lines of strength for the future. Accreditation for the task would come from its supposed qualification in unmasking the rules of social functioning and in this way formulate, based on objective data and criteria, policies for action. This right always appeared to be something evident to them and any attempt at justification was dispensed with.

It is interesting to note that Floriano also acted outside the large urban centers as a musician, poet, author of plays and a speaker in conferences, as noted in the announcement of his arrival. He published dozens of books on medicine, short stories and poetry and also actively participated in the beginnings of radio programs aimed at a child audience, which was a great novelty in the 1930s. The advertisement disguised as a news report published in *A Notícia* in 1926 revealed his artistic and cultural businessman aspects.

Next Tuesday we will have in Eden Park an enchanting show, so anxiously awaited by us. This is the presentation of the two act review entitled 'The Mystery of Rio Preto' written by the talented man of letters Dr. Floriano de Lemos. For this Dr. Floriano de Lemos entered into negotiations with the Alvaro Fonseca Comedy Company, who are now working in Eden, and thus the presentation of the review was entrusted to the stupendous group that forms the company, of which the well known comic actor Alvaro Fonseca is the director.

It is not necessary to say much about 'The Mystery of Rio Preto,' the author's name is enough. And the performance will be excellent due to the artistic value of the group who will now visit us. Therefore, on Tuesday night we will have an enchanting show and since it is a purely local review, the Eden will be too small to hold all those who will go there to watch a show that is new for this city. (*A Noticia*, 1926)



Figure 3 – At a time when photographs were still very rare in the Araraquarense press and only published on commemorative dates or in special editions at the end of the year, Floriano de Lemos was a figure guaranteed among the people portrayed (*O Municipio*, 1926). The caption contains epithets that were routinely linked to his figure: 'established', 'first-class' and 'brilliant', amongst others.

It is worth noting that the author, like his contemporaries and better known colleagues such as Belisário Penna, Roquette Pinto and Afrânio Peixoto, has what Wegner¹⁸ recently called “the common trait of his generation”, in other words the fact of being “characterized less by a specialization than by an erudite education.” This generational characteristic also corresponded to “a large number of intellectuals directly engaged in public life whose education was marked by erudition of the self-taught type, even though it had started in the schools of medicine, law or engineering.”

Nevertheless, Lemos also fits into the distinctions that Miceli¹⁹ identified in relation to ‘polygraph intellectuals’ or ‘Anatolians’, namely:

- a) the fact that they had been assimilated by the new political order established with the republic, which allowed the undeniable obtaining of success with the public in relation to their publications and personal prestige;
- b) the practice of discussing certain themes in conferences, books and journals;
- c) the luck of having been raised to the position of ‘guides’ to the taste of the urban public of their time through the intermediation of their authorized discourse, principally through their action in the press;
- d) the bad luck, with rare exceptions, of being later designated as ‘pre-modernists’ by those raised to positions of command with the 1930 revolution and for having passed, as identified by Miceli (2001), “the common trench without right to their own name”.

In relation to the Anatolian/polygraph intellectuals, the author (2001, p.54) also states that this involved

A new type of professional intellectual, employee, or small independent producer, living from income given to them by the various modalities of their production, from legal assistance, giving speeches, also including collaborations in the press and even participation in mundane events and in mobilization campaigns in favor of military service, literary, primary teaching, etc.

Specifically in relation to the character in question, without a doubt it is his systematic work as a journalist or collaborator in the press with small, medium and large circulation that resides not only his most significant perennial and little studied legacy, but also his *hexis*, his aptitude or mode of presence of a polygraph intellectual.

He was a type of modern dandy, in the meaning of searching for elegance

in style, convergent with a special appreciation for mundane themes, he was not a subject marked by the contradictions of a time, felt and expressed through the ‘journalistic pen.’ When he was in São José do Rio Preto, he always wrote on the front page about the need to beautify the streets, people, gardens and shop windows, as well as stories about the (many) parties, plays and soirées that occurred in the capitals of Brazil, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, and the (few) that were held in what he designated as the *hinterland* or the *far West*, in a clear allusion to the phenomenon of the clearing/civilizing of land that had occurred in the United States.

With an undisguisable melancholy, he criticized the lack of education of his own peers, who he said were incapable of gracing the shows destined for the ‘fine arts’, which were held in the region; nevertheless, his companions were, according to Lemos, fans “of the most bedraggled circuses”, something meant for those from the ‘plebs’ who kneeled down in tents.

The malady is the following: the disinterest that seems to exist in the visitors who come to Rio Preto in order to exhibit their works of art, their theatrical prowess, or their literary abilities. While the most bedraggled circuses are filled to the rafters whenever they set up a tent in a corner of the city, it is very difficult for a pianist, a singer or a poet to find a room where he can successfully present a concert or recital. The fact would not be so strange if Rio Preto did not possess hundred of educated men – and this is said fairly and without flattery – spirits of culture far above the normal in towns in the interior of the country. (*O Município*, 1928)

Perhaps Floriano de Lemos’ local interlocutors were not as *civilized* as he imagined. Perhaps the select group of literati with whom he shared the experience of the *sertão* were not as cohesive and articulated as he would have liked. Without a doubt the nights in the *hinterland* were far different from those he had experienced in the bohemia of Rio de Janeiro.

In possession of a measuring tape built in the *belle époque* of Rio de Janeiro, the author found little to measure in the *sertão Paulista*. Where were the cafés, bars and the continuous babble of the life experienced or idealized in Rio? Divided between the civilizing task to be undertaken and the daily routine in the cultural *desertão*, Floriano de Lemos publically lamented the absence of interlocutors. Disenchanted both with the utopias of national regeneration and the ambiguous reality that he encountered from day to day, he prepared to move on and to leave Araraquarense behind forever – which he would do at the beginning of the 1930s.

In the middle of an international economic crisis (the 1929 crash); a national political crisis (the 1930 revolution) and personal crises of every type (the bankruptcy of the secondary school he had founded in Rio Preto; his split with the group behind the newspaper *A Notícia*, which had aligned with the Democratic Party; the closure of *O Município*, the official organ of the *Partido Republicano Paulista*, and misunderstandings with various members of the Society of Medicine), Lemos packed his bags and moved to Rio de Janeiro.

Here his later writings, published in *Correio da Manhã*, were a great success with the public. His scientific column, especially concerned with medical subjects, lasted until 1965. Nonetheless, he occasionally published memorialistic articles writing about his times as a civilizing doctor in the *sertão Paulista*. His new public appear to have appreciated the reports of this discoverer/educator/traveler who went through Brazil with curious eyes. Floriano de Lemos truly adventured along paths in an open state of mind, in a country that was becoming a giant and was offering itself to be discovered.

NOTES

¹ This article is the partial result of the research project entitled *An Itinerant Intellectual: a study of the actions of the intellectual Floriano de Lemos in the Brazilian press (1906-1965)*, financed by CNPq and Fapemig.

² MONBEIG, Pierre. *Pioneiros e fazendeiros de São Paulo*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1984.

³ CAMPOS, Raquel Discini de. A “princesa do sertão” na modernidade republicana: urbanidade, imprensa e educação na Rio Preto dos anos de 1920. São Paulo: Annablume, 2004; _____. *Mulheres e crianças na imprensa paulista: educação e história*. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp, 2009.

⁴ FIGUERÔA, Sílvia. *As ciências geológicas no Brasil: uma história social e institucional (1875-1934)*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997.

⁵ PAZIANI, Rodrigo Ribeiro. Uma cidade chamada Petit Paris: as transformações e crises urbanas de Ribeirão Preto no auge da cultura cafeeira (1890-1916). *Temas & Matizes*, Cascavel (PR), n.6, p.94-99, ago. 2004.

⁶ ALMEIDA, Antonio Tavares. *Oeste paulista: a experiência etnográfica e cultural*. Rio de Janeiro: Alba, 1943, p.15. We have chosen to maintain in the citations from newspapers the original spelling.

⁷ Both newspapers were originally linked to the *Partido Republicano Paulista*, a group which until the 1930s controlled regional politics. However, in 1928, the editors of *A Notícia* broke with the party and sought afterwards to maintain the impression of distance from municipal power. Irrespective of the political differences between the idealizers of the printed material, they shared the same intellectual and ethical aims as the ‘educators’ of the

sertão: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers and other educated person, who sought to remain above daily interests related to politics (CAMPOS, 2004).

⁸ LIMA, Nísia Trindade. Um sertão chamado Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: Revan; Iuperj, 1999, p.67.

⁹ In 1930 Floriano de Lemos returned to Rio de Janeiro, where he lived until his death in 1965.

¹⁰ KUHLMANN, Moysés. Os intelectuais na educação da infância. In: _____. *A educação e seus sujeitos na História*. Belo Horizonte: Argumentum, 2007, p.109; BONTEMPI, Bruno. Roldão Lopes de Barros: um intelectual? In: _____. *A educação e seus sujeitos na História*. Belo Horizonte: Argumentum, 2007.

¹¹ The newspaper *Correio da Manhã* was one of the Brazilian newspapers of greatest visibility in the twentieth century. Founded in 1901 in Rio de Janeiro by Edmundo Bittencourt – a great friend of Lemos –, it circulated until 1974, when it closed down after its editors were imprisoned by the military regime. Among its collaborators were names such as Lima Barreto, Oswald de Andrade, Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Otto Maria Carpeaux.

¹² CARVALHO, José Murilo de. As conferências radicais do Rio de Janeiro: novo espaço de debate. In: _____. (Org.). *Nação e cidadania no império: novos horizontes*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2007; CARULA, Karoline. As Conferências Populares da Glória e a difusão da ciência. *Alm. braz.* [online], 2007. Available at: www.revistasusp.sibi.usp.br/pdf/alb/n6/a07n6.pdf; accessed on: 1 July 2010.

¹³ ELEUTÉRIO, Maria de Lourdes. Imprensa a serviço do progresso. In: LUCA; MARTINS. *História da imprensa no Brasil*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2008.

¹⁴ According to information provided by Maria de Lurdes Lemos, the youngest daughter of Floriano de Lemos (in an interview on 23 Feb. 2010), her father replaced his friend Coelho Netto as the editor of *Correio da Manhã*.

¹⁵ OLIVEIRA, Lúcia Lippi. *A questão nacional na Primeira República*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990; _____. *Questão nacional na Primeira República*. In: LORENZO, H. C.; COSTA, W. P. (Org.). *A década de 1920 e as origens do Brasil moderno*. São Paulo: Ed. Unesp, 1997.

¹⁶ HERSCHMAN, Micael; PEREIRA, Carlos Alberto Messeder. *A invenção do Brasil moderno: medicina, educação e engenharia nos anos 20-30*. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1994.

¹⁷ LUCA, Tânia Regina de. *A Revista do Brasil: um diagnóstico para a (N)ação*. Doctoral Dissertation in History – FFLCH/USP. São Paulo, 1996.

¹⁸ WEGNER, Robert. Prefácio. In: LIMA, Nísia Trindade; SÁ, Dominichi Miranda de (Org.). *Antropologia brasileira: ciência e educação na obra de Edgard Roquette-Pinto*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 2009, p.10.

¹⁹ MICELI, Sérgio. *Intelectuais à brasileira*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001.

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