

“The Gracie Legend”: an analysis of Nelson Rodrigues’s chronicle

*Riqueldi Straub Lise**

*Natasha Santos***

*André Mendes Capraro****

Abstract: This research aims to analyze one of the first sports chronicles written by Nelson Rodrigues and published in the newspaper *Ultima Hora*. The author speaks about a “challenge” between Jiu-jitsu athletes Carlson Gracie and Waldemar Santana in 1955. That chronicle – marked by literary aesthetics and language typical of Rodriguean theater – stresses a discourse on the Gracies family’s tradition as creators and disseminators of Jiu-jitsu in Brazil. In order to analyze the work, we will use some concepts of literary analysis, based on Antonio Candido and Carlo Ginzburg.

Keywords: Jiu-jitsu. Literature. Sports chronicle.

1 INTRODUCTION

Rio de Janeiro, Saturday, October 8, 1955, *Ultima Hora* ran the following headline on its front page: “Juscelino Kubitschek consolidates his victory”. It referred to the final moments of vote counting for that year’s presidential election. Below, another headline of similar size showed pictures of three athletes with the following words:

Three fighters; three fates – These are three famous figures of Brazilian “Jiu-jitsu”. Super champion Hélio bears on his face the marks of the defeat that rocked Brazil’s sports.

*PhD candidate in Physical Education. Federal University of Paraná. Curitiba, PR. E-mail: ricklise@ig.com.br.

**PhD candidate in Physical Education. Federal University of Paraná. Curitiba, PR. E-mail: nata.shas@ig.com.br.

***Assistant Professor III at the Federal University of Paraná, Post-graduate Studies in History and Physical Education. Curitiba, PR. E-mail: andrecapraro@onda.com.br.

However, he is still the super champion, since the winner was his former disciple. We could say that Hélio defeated Hélio himself. The other fighter, Carlson Gracie, carries the responsibility of a famous name upon his shoulders. He will defend a history of victories achieved with sweat and blood along 25 years. And finally, Waldemar Santana. If someone asked, we would say that the “Leopard” has no past. His name emerged overnight. His truly meteoric career is due to a kick that went down in the history of Brazilian sport. The ebony idol represents an enormous legion of enemies of the Gracies. Soon, at 21 pm in Maracanazinho, Carlson the “Avenger” will come across Waldemar the “Beast”. A fight that is sweeping the city (*ULTIMA HORA*, October 8. 1955 cover of supplement 1).

This excerpt refers to the fight between Waldemar Santana and Carlson Gracie. The third athlete mentioned is Hélio Gracie – Carlson’s uncle – who had been defeated by Waldemar in a “*vale-tudo*” Challenge four months earlier.¹ Carlson wanted to avenge his uncle’s defeat to his “former disciple”. This time, the challenge would follow the rules of Jiu-jitsu, so that no percussive blows would be allowed.

The story on that combat is also on the cover of the sports supplement and much of the remaining pages, sharing space with news on politics, economy, football and horse racing. Photos of fighters, interviews, technical analyses, all the details surrounding the dispute were addressed in that issue. Called by the newspaper the “fight of the year” or “the Jiu-jitsu Fla-Flu” (a reference to the well-known match between two football clubs from Rio), the fight would take place at Gymnasium Gilberto Cardoso – known as Maracanazinho. That place had seats for 13,613 people, and it is

¹The fight between Hélio Gracie and Waldemar Santana occurred at the YMCA on May 24, 1955. The rules laid down by the fighters themselves allowed percussion strikes, i. e., punches, kicks and head butts (GRACIE, 2012).

still the largest multi-sport gymnasium in Rio de Janeiro,² which shows the importance of the event.

Still on the cover of the sports supplement is the daily column “Drama-Tragedy-Farce-Comedy”, whose author Nelson Rodrigues approached the Jiu-jitsu confrontation between Carlson Gracie and Waldemar Santana. Thus, focusing on that text, the question is: How did Rodrigues, who devoted most of his chronicles to football, present the fight? From this perspective, how did the playwright treat the sport in question?

In addressing such questions through a literary source, we seek not only to propose an analysis of what Nelson Rodrigues wrote about the struggle that is the subject of chronicle in question, but above all to expose the type(s) of sporting creation displayed in literary terms – hence the relationship between literature and sport. Therefore, this research aims at analyzing Rodrigues’s chronicle in order to highlight some characteristics of the discourse expressed in the text and develop a possible critical reading.

To this end, we sought support on the notions of text and context pointed out by Antonio Candido (2000) when addressing the link between literature and society, which is constituted by contextual interferences in the fictional text. That is, such interferences are related to the social context of which the author is part, favoring amalgamation between him or her and the text – understood as the particle of art in the production, i. e. literary creation. The degrees of context woven into the fictional text depend on the author’s writing style, the literary school to which he belongs, the genre he is using and also the means through which he will reach the public. From this perspective, it may be said that some literary genres are closer than others to contextual elements – and that is the case of chronicles.

²Maracanazinho’s capacity has been reduced to 11,800 seats (SUDERJ). Available at: <<http://www.suderj.rj.gov.br/maracanazinho.asp>>. Accessed on: Feb. 11, 2013.

As border literature,³ chronicles – usually published in newspapers – are placed at the fine border between fiction and reality, between literature and what happened the day before, “somehow being time turned into text, always and in many ways, writing of time” (NEVES⁴ cited by CANDIDO, 1992, p. 82). In this way, especially considering its relationship with newspapers, chronicle ends up not being too far from newspaper’s news.

Given the size of the reading public, chronicle tends to use loaded language, so that it is easier to understand. Thus, that lightness of language makes it more accessible and it becomes a catalyst not only of information, but also of theses, ideas and opinions. However, like other literary genres, it carries the of the author particularities, whose styles range from dialogues to lyrical biographies and anecdotes that are further developed (CANDIDO, 1992).

Nelson Rodrigues uses a number of fiction elements, for example, including characters, as can be seen in some of his football chronicles where famous protagonists are: Sobrenatural de Almeida, Grã-fina das Narinas de Cadáver or Gravatinha (MARQUES, 2000; ANTUNES, 2004; SANTOS, 2012). Incorporating theater features, he adds particular emotions, described as collective, linked to sporting facts but moving beyond sport – hence the interest in debating how this happens (if it really happens) regarding Jiu-jitsu.

In order to describe the context in which Nelson Rodrigues’s discourse is included, the next paragraphs present, through a literature review, the context (broadly speaking) and the scene (strictly speaking – the time of production), which will serve as the basis for further analysis of the proposed text.

³The notion of border literature follows Carlo Ginzburg (2004), referring to the literary genre located between History and literature. For more information about that debate, see: CAPRARO, A. M. **Identidades Imaginadas: Futebol e Nação na Crônica Esportiva Brasileira do Século XX**. Curitiba, PR: Departamento de História da Universidade Federal do Paraná (PhD Thesis), 2007.

⁴NEVES, Margarida de Souza. Uma escrita do tempo: memória, ordem e progresso nas crônicas cariocas. In: CANDIDO, Antonio. **A crônica**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Unicap, 1992, p. 75-92.

2 NOTES ON THE “JIU-JITSU FLA-FLU”

From the 1950s on, the city of Rio de Janeiro witnessed some fights between different martial arts; most of those disputes were starred by members of the Gracie family.⁵ The most widespread version of the fighting techniques used by the Gracies refers to a re-styling of Jiu-jitsu – a martial art developed in Japan, which led to judo (ALMANAQUE COMBATE, 2011). Still according to that version currently prevalent among martial arts and in specialized publications, the Gracies created fighting positions,⁶ changed, added and removed strikes aimed at increasing the combat efficiency of that fight. Such efficiency allowed practitioners with lower physique to fight on equal terms with stronger athletes using their own techniques. Therefore, the Gracies developed training methods and improved ground fighting techniques, emphasizing strangling and joint manipulations (GRACIE, 2012; ALMANAQUE COMBATE, 2011; AWI, 2012; LIMA, 2012).

Driven by the certainty that the techniques developed were superior to those of any other fights, the Gracies began promoting fights to make that martial art more popular. Masters of capoeira or wrestling, boxing teachers, dockworkers, street bullies, among others, were constantly challenged to fight the members of the Gracie family and their pupils (AWI, 2012). Jiu-jitsu used to win most of those fights between martial arts – although it should be noted that practitioners of other fights would also win sometimes.⁷

About a decade after the beginning of those fights and the success achieved by practitioners, Jiu-jitsu gained certain popularity

⁵The Gracie family is very large, but it is worth noting the names of those who most influenced the conception and dissemination of Jiu-jitsu. Carlos Gracie was the first to have contact with the techniques of Japanese Jujutsu. Through him, brothers Hélio, Jorge, Gastão Filho and Oswaldo learned the techniques. In the second generation of Jiu-jitsu fighters in the Gracie family, the most renowned are Carlson (Carlos Gracie's son), Rorion, Rickson and Royce (Hélio Gracie's sons).

⁶Progression of body posture in order to apply the strikes with greater efficiency and safety.

⁷An example is the victory of judo fighter Kimura over Hélio Gracie. The fight took place on October 23, 1951 and was widely publicized by Rio's press. The newspaper *Hélio* run the following headline: “Kimura won in the 2nd round” (DUARTE, October 24, 1951, p. 7).

in Rio de Janeiro. That popularity can be seen in newspaper excerpts about the increasing number of practitioners or the high media coverage to the fights that in some cases drew a large paying audience to the Maracanã Stadium.⁸ Years later, precisely in 1959, TV Continental aired *Heróis do Ringue*, a program featuring live challenges starring the Gracies family (REVISTA DO RÁDIO, Nov. 28, 1959, p. 12).

Ultima Hora, for example, shows considerable expectation about the fight between Waldemar Santana and Carlson Gracie, most likely due to the popularity gained by those fights, shown in statements such as “a fight that has been sweeping the city” (*ULTIMA HORA*, October 8, 1955, cover of supplement 1), or:

The sporting city is living the Carlson Gracie vs. Waldemar Santana fight. To enhance the show, there was a sort of break in Rio’s football championship. It would be a tribute by the Municipal Football Federation to the two technical and valiant young fighters (RENATO, Oct. 8, 1955, p. 6, supp. 2).

Radio Mundial, which used to broadcast football matches of Rio de Janeiro’s teams, also selected a broadcaster for the fight, and announced it as follows: “To broadcast the ‘clash’, the fabulous Raul (Pimba) Longras will hold Mundial’s microphone directly at Maracanazinho” (RENATO, Oct. 8, 1955, p. 6, supp. 2). From the excerpts taken from *Ultima Hora*, the fight was relatively important for some media, and since it was a sporting event comparable to major football classics of the state capital, we can say that the fight raised some public expectation in Rio.

3 NELSON RODRIGUES AND *ULTIMA HORA*

Founded in Rio de Janeiro on June 12, 1951 by journalist Samuel Wainer, the newspaper *Ultima Hora* was sold until 1970

⁸“Preliminaries with long intervals between them and a heavy rain exhausted the patience of the hundred thousand people who clogged Maracanã the last night” (LEMOS, October 24, 1951 cover supp. 1).

in several Brazilian cities,⁹ with average editions of approximately 150,000 copies. Its editorial line strongly favored the government, which is shown by the fact that President Getúlio Vargas himself had been one of its founders and partners. Because of that, *Ultima Hora* had suffered a series of accusations by leftist newspapers – including *Estado de São Paulo* and *Diários Associados* – because of Vargas’s commitment to release quick and massive loans for its foundation, which, according to the opposition, were never paid. Thus, Vargas could fend off attacks on his government and strengthen his popularity (SANTOS, 2012, p. 96). While left-leaning newspapers strongly criticized the government, *Ultima Hora* served Getúlio Vargas’ purposes (ARQUIVO PÚBLICO DO ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO, 2008).

Besides the political orientation of the newspaper’s editorial line, other important features distinguished it from the others after changes implemented in the processes of journalistic production. It innovated in graphics, including color, highlighting photographs and, finally, in the many illustrations that played an important role in facilitating reception by readers as well as to identify certain characters or columnists themselves (caricatures).¹⁰ In addition, sports have come to occupy a prominent place in the new format of the newspaper, especially football. However, other sports such as rowing, horse racing, athletics and wrestling often occupied half of the front page. *Ultima Hora* had two supplements, the first of which focused on politics and economics and the second one approached everyday matters, leisure, comics and especially sports. With large photographs and professionals specialized in certain sports – a novelty at the time – the newspaper sought to establish dialogue and a close relationship with all types of readers, regardless of social class or educational level:

Importantly, chroniclers summarized the newspaper’s democratic stance. Having varied

⁹Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Niterói, Campinas, Santos, Bauru and São Paulo’s ABC area. It also had local editions in the states of São Paulo and Paraná, the Federal District and the North-eastern region.

¹⁰These characteristics are present today in more popular newspapers.

training, its team gathered distinct social types, from intellectuals to beauty queens. Thus, the newspaper wanted to please “all and sundry” and break away from the pattern of segmented newspapers (OLIVEIRA, PENTEADO, p. 9, n. d.).

The view described above was very close to that of Antonio Candido (2000) when he refers to the author of a given work as the focal point for understanding not only the context, given his or her social status, but also his or her writing.

Nelson Rodrigues was one of *Ultima Hora*'s leading chroniclers. The controversial playwright and journalist began his career as a sportswriter only in 1955,¹¹ precisely at *Ultima Hora*, the newspaper that had published his short stories known as “Life as it is” (SANTOS, 2012) since 1951. Therefore, the chronicle about that “challenge” is one of the first sports columns written by Nelson Rodrigues in that newspaper. But Rodrigues' history in journalism is much longer. In 1925, at thirteen, he worked at the newsroom of newspaper *A Manhã*, of which his father Mario Rodrigues was one of the partners. Later, in *Crítica*, Rodrigues worked as a police reporter. His job was to obtain testimonies of those involved, describe crime scenes and then report the facts to his readers. However, he often added some fictional content in order to increase the impact of stories for the reading public (CASTRO, 1992, p. 68-70). For Rodrigues, journalists' craft should never be subjected to reality. The chronicle *O Passarinho* – published on March 31, 1956 in *Manchete* magazine – sums up how Nelson Rodrigues saw journalists work:

¹¹Nelson Rodrigues had been a sports reporter at *O Globo* since the 1930s; however, his texts were unsigned, and it was necessary to resort to other means to identify him as the author. The same happened in his time at the Rodrigues family's newspaper *Crítica*, which published three sports stories in 1929 – included in the collection organized by Nelson Rodrigues Filho, *O Profeta Tricolor – cem anos de Fluminense*, from 2002 (SOUZA, 2006; SANTOS, 2012). “However, according to the inventory of Rodrigues's work prepared by Marcos Francisco de Souza (2006, p. 64), it was after the mid-1950s that the well-known playwright re-presented himself as a chronicler. Also according to Souza, newspaper *Hélio* and magazine *Manchete Esportiva* published Rodrigues's chronicles from 1955 on; *Jornal dos Sports*, where he published a daily column after 1958; *Diário da Noite*, from 1961 to 62. He returned to *O Globo* in the 1960s and 70s” (SANTOS, 2012, p. 29).

A model professional was that reporter who saw a fire. Note: – I have described the episode, but I will repeat it for illustrative purposes. The journalist looks at the fire and concludes that it was actually a lousy fire, a shameful fire. Any family mother with a humiliating watering can would put it out. The reporter goes back to the newspaper and there he writes a page on the failed disaster. More: – he places an invented little canary in the middle of the flames, a canary that dies while chirping. The next day, the edition is sold out. The whole city, from end to end, weeps the irreparable loss of the bird. See the lesson of life and journalism: – with two lies, the reporter reached an admirable poetic and dramatic result (RODRIGUES, March 31, 1956, n. p.).

Regardless of the topic, Rodrigues sought fantasy as an ally to his argument. In the case of football, according to Antunes (2004), the playwright tended to escape objectivity and address the subjectivity behind the game he would write about – which is repeated when he speaks about Jiu-jitsu.

Perhaps one of the major literary features of Nelson Rodrigues is to enhance and extrapolate feelings, dramatizing situations. That had accompanied him since his work at *A Manhã*. That characteristic was also notably reflected in his plays, his main passion. Despite being passionate about drama, Rodrigues needed to write other genres to survive, since serious theater,¹² which was his style, was not a good source of income, and that was the main reason that made him write both plays, short stories, feuilleton and chronicles. However, the (also) sportswriter, true to his convictions, starts a different way to approach sports, in which feelings overwhelm sporting techniques and tactics, making drama constantly present. Nelson Rodrigues brings a language typical of his theater to sports chronicles – dramatic and passionate (SANTOS, 2012). And it could not be otherwise when he dealt with Jiu-jitsu... or could it?

¹²Serious theater, whose purpose was the development of Brazilian plays, seeking aesthetic and artistic improvement, as opposed to theater made for laughing, focused on public taste and oriented at success at the box office (PEREIRA, 1998; PRADO, 2008).

4 “DRAMA-TRAGEDY-FARCE-COMEDY”: THE CHALLENGE IN NELSON RODRIGUES’ VIEW

When discussing the Jiu-jitsu challenge that was to take place between Waldemar and Carlson Gracie, Nelson Rodrigues wrote the following words in “The Legend of the Gracies” (RODRIGUES, October 8, 1955, p. 1):

1- What I find most likable in today’s fight between Waldemar Santana and Carlson Gracie is its passionate aspect. Only simple and silly minds see tonight’s clash as an exclusively technical and sporting competition. No, my friends, a thousand times no. What makes it more valuable, more than Jiu-jitsu, is the passion of each opponent. And make no mistake: the two contenders will clash under the shadow of hate. It is very fair that they hate each other, from the first to the last moment of the battle. And let us be honest: nothing more hateful than a cordial fight, a friendly fight. If it is cordial, if it is friendly, why fight it? Why not stay at home? On the other hand, I do not understand how one can punch or take a punch in the face as sport. There must be an emotional justification behind every strike. Each fighter beats due to an exasperated feeling. So yes – the fight, whether it is Jiu-jitsu, boxing or wrestling, reaches its fullness, its fierce grandeur to its mindless and magnificent violence.

2. When the opponents are imbued with the most cordial and fraternal feelings, the battle takes on an air of mystification, of swindle. Fortunately, the fight between Waldemar and Carlson does not run that risk. On the contrary: in this case, Jiu-jitsu is only a cardboard facade covering something wilder, more somber and even tragic. I will say it, with justified emphasis: it is a life-and-death fight. In sports, losing or winning is a normal and legitimate contingency. We have seen that this is a necessarily unsportsmanlike confrontation. Why the life-and-death struggle? Let us see: because both are betting everything. First of all, there is a fabulous sum at

stake: the three hundred *contos* that the Gracies bet on the fight. Three hundred *contos*! That is what Waldemar will get if he takes Carlson down. Just think of the huge stimulus, the tremendous demand received by the black fighter. To a loan shark, a tycoon, a trade or industry gangster, that amount means little or nothing. But to Waldemar it would be a solution to his life, the solution of the present, of the future, and even the rescue from his miseries, from past humiliations which still hurt in his flesh and soul. And there is no doubt: the three hundred *contos* that Waldemar may win, which the Gracies may lose, justify hate between the antagonists.

3- To date, Waldemar's only capital is his unexpected and almost unbelievable victory over Hélio Gracie. He is “the man who beat Hélio”. According to Carlos Renato – the chronicler who best understands Jiu-jitsu – Waldemar will also play that triumph. If he loses, he will no longer be the “man who beat Hélio” and will be left with nothing. Will the fight be easy? Will it be hard? Unless something unforeseen happens, it should be very difficult for both. When two opponents play more than a simple and eventual outcome, reciprocal and binding ferocity can be expected. As for Carlson, he plays more than three hundred *contos* – he plays his family's name. If he were any Carlson, a Carlson So-and-so, Waldemar's chances would be immense. What matters, in this case, is not Carlson's vast and complex technique, his helmet, his spear, his flag, his mast. Here is the truth: being a “Gracie” means a lot. The name means weight, load, a collection of feats, wins, trophies. In the ring, Carlson will be more than a person, more than a fighter – he will be a raging name striking left and right.

4- For 20 years, or 25, the Gracies were invincible in Brazil. But invincibility ends up being a poison, a corrosive acid. The fighter who never loses becomes fragile, reckless, vulnerable. For many, Hélio's defeat was bad: for me, it was good. Nothing more exasperating, nothing more terrible than a loser looking for revenge. It will be said that

it was not Carlson who lost; it was Hélió. No, my friends, it was neither one nor the other. Above Carlson, above Hélió, there is the name of the Gracies always hoisted, always unfurled, always waving. I will not make a prognosis, and it is not the case here. But I must note the following: the brave Waldemar Santana will have more than a fighter against him: he will have a name. He will wrestle with the name, the tradition, the legend of the Gracies.

Some points in the chronicle should be stressed. Nelson Rodrigues began his chronicle (paragraph 1) by promoting the fight between Waldemar Santana and Carlson Gracie for its passionate aspect. Combining emotion to human life issues¹³ is a characteristic of the author. And in the first paragraph Nelson already sets the tone his text: by claiming that “Every fighter beats due to an exasperated feeling”, the author points to certain need for hate in order for the fight to achieve its greatness. He criticizes it while he says that he does not understand beating as sport.

That idea grows throughout the text. In paragraph 2, the playwright, to the detriment of the chronicler, takes control and says that a friendly fight is swindle and calls the challenge in question a life-and-death battle. Rodrigues’ drama is found, albeit tenuously, in the conception of the struggle under the poetics of life and death. While victory and defeat are common in sports, that does not apply to the Maracanazinho event, since both fighters bet everything they had – or almost everything. From Rodrigues’s perspective, Waldemar risked being the man who defeated Hélió Gracie, while Carlson would lose money and expose his surname to another defeat.

However, while qualifying the challenge based on the hate that sustains it, he somehow disqualifies Waldemar for putting

¹³Nelson Rodrigues often spoke of the importance of feelings in men’s lives. For example, when dealing with the 1956 Children’s Games, he wrote: “I only believe in things that cause tears. (...) And seeing the image of Brazilian children, still unscathed by our miseries – the city should cry sitting on the curb” (RODRIGUES, April 21, 1956. *In*: RODRIGUES, 2007, p. 81).

the prize of three hundred *contos* as a stimulus to the challenger, who supposedly would not be fighting out of hate to the opponent, but thinking of the benefits that the money could provide. And he reiterates: “the three hundred *contos* that Waldemar may win, which the Gracies may lose, justify hate between the antagonists”. But the hate between the opponents would hardly be limited to money in that event...

Waldemar Santana had already established close emotional ties with the Gracies, especially with Hélio, considered one of the family patriarchs. For some time, in addition to practicing the sport’s techniques at Hélio’s Gym, Santana also worked taking care of fighters’ clothes; he was later promoted to sparring and eventually represented Jiu-jitsu in the challenges between distinct martial arts promoted by the Gracie family. Santana, who was undergoing financial problems, chose to accept a set up fight. Hélio Gracie did not allow his students to take part in that kind of simulation, fearing that Jiu-jitsu would fall into discredit. Even with Hélio’s disapproval, Santana participated in the event, which caused a rift between the student and his master. Hélio fired Waldemar Santana and even humiliated him by uttering racist offenses and insults (GRACIE, 2012).

The outrage against Hélio Gracie’s racist attitude made Santana go public, through the newspapers, proposing a challenge between the master and his former student – a challenge accepted by Hélio. The fight lasted three hours and forty-five minutes and Waldemar Santana – 20 years younger and much heavier than his opponent – was the winner. Immediately after Hélio’s defeat, his nephew Carlson Gracie challenged Waldemar for a fight that would be considered a rematch for the Gracie family.

Although Nelson Rodrigues seeks to promote the fight, speaking of hatred and a passionate dispute, the true aim of chronicle can be seen in paragraph 3: the defense and reaffirmation of the legend of the Gracies.

“When two opponents play more than a simple and eventual outcome, reciprocal and binding ferocity can be expected”. The description, which goes to the end of the text, subtly exposes Carlson’s advantage. While Waldemar would lose the stigma of being recognized as the one who defeated Hélio Gracie, Carlson would play, in addition to the three hundred *contos* he deposited, the family’s name. Thus, Rodrigues points out Carlson’s power in the dispute: more than a fighter, he would be an angry and therefore stronger name, since he would have more reasons to win than his opponent. Subtly, the playwright exposes elements that suggest that Waldemar, whose surname was Santana, would have more to lose.

Back to paragraph 2, we find the term “black fighter”. For the inattentive reader, it would be a description as any. However, it might mean more than that. Nelson Rodrigues, who saw football as a possibility for black people to rise (ANTUNES, 2004; SANTOS, 2012) also saw the absence of racial democracy:¹⁴ “Last Sunday, I wrote about our racial problem (another obvious point that no one wants to see). I said that in Brazil, whites do not like blacks while blacks do not like blacks” (RODRIGUES, 1967¹⁵ cited by Rodrigues, 1993, p. 235). That is, as if moving between fiction and fact, the term *black fighter* refers to the idea that Waldemar was in a lower social position than his opponent’s and that would be the challenger’s weakness: if he lost, he would no longer be the man who defeated Hélio Gracie and he would not be able to use that fame to leverage his career as a fighter, for example, and would become another man who lost to Carlson Gracie.

¹⁴In 1946, Nelson Rodrigues wrote *Anjo Negro*, a play that would only reach the stage in 1948. In the work, the playwright sought to highlight the prejudice against blacks in Brazil and, in speaking of the play in one of his memoirs, he said: “Instead of hating whites, Brazilian blacks are resentful against blacks themselves. I remember writing once, I don’t know where: ‘Abdias is the only black in Brazil, the only one’. What is hidden or, better yet, what is not hidden behind my assertion is desperate truth. Zé do Patrocínio did not love his color. Neither did Rebouças or Filipe Camarão. These and others, millions of others, would like to be ermine white. Only Abdias do Nascimento does not regret being very black. He is the only consented black, elated and saturated with racial hatred. The ‘racial democracy’ we pretend to have is the most cynical, the most cruel mystification” (RODRIGUES, 1967 cited by RODRIGUES, 1993, p. 229).

¹⁵RODRIGUES, Nelson. *Memória de Nelson Rodrigues*. Rio de Janeiro: Correio da Manhã, 1967, n. p.

That is even more evident in paragraph 5, when Rodrigues resumes the idea of the Legend of the Gracies, presented in the title. When describing the sequence of victories of the Gracie family, building a tradition in Jiu-jitsu for them, Rodrigues resumes the effort to demonstrate that, despite a possible defeat, given the weight of the surname, Carlson would remain a Gracie while Waldemar would not only lose money, but also the glorious fame of being the man who defeated Hélio. Considering such elements and despite his unwillingness to make a prognosis, Rodrigues sort of announces Carlson’s victory, based on Santanas’s difficulties: “The brave Waldemar Santana will have more than a fighter against him: he will have a name. He will wrestle with the name, the tradition, the legend of the Gracies”.

Rodrigues then dedicates his text not only to strengthen the grandeur of the Gracie name – acclaimed by then famous Jiu-jitsu columnist Carlos Renato, but also to the proximity of the Rodrigues family:

In the early 1930s, Carlos already had prestigious students, including Roberto Marinho, who had been introduced to him by Oscar. Roberto, then 27 and who had already replaced his father Irineu (who died in 1925) ahead of the newspaper *O Globo*, became a Jiu-jitsu enthusiast. Mario Rodrigues Filho, recently hired as head of the sports section of *O Globo*, eventually shared his boss’s enthusiasm. Since then, *O Globo* joined the newspapers that covered the Gracie’s performances (GRACIE, 2012, p. 80-81).

More than a brother, Nelson Rodrigues was part of the same intellectual circle of Mario Filho, pointing to the possibility of an influence on the latter’s opinion on the matter – since the playwright knew little or nothing about fights, which was clear when the author resorts to the poetics that cordiality would turn the fight into a sham.

5 FINAL REMARKS

On Rodrigues's football chronicles, Marques (2000) points to textual exaggeration as part of a baroque aesthetic full of exaggerated hyperbole so as to make football more important than social problems. Such exaggeration is treated by Silva (1997) as a peculiarity of what he calls "fake speaker" who is more concerned about "touching up" the facts than reporting them as they occurred. Thus, the main rhetorical resources would be persuasive discourse that, in the case of Rodrigues, remains under the perspective of a passionate chronicler who used to write as a fan, that is, not objectively. In the author's words, in Nelson Rodrigues's chronicles,

[...] there is ingenious, radical and deliberate use of rhetorical resources, and the whole discourse is organized on the basis of persuasion. Aware that the reality of sporting events is nothing more than a construction, Rodrigues's openly moves in the field of opinion: his opinion, the opinion of fans, of writers, public opinion, common sense (SILVA, 1997 p. 103).

Even without the same exaggeration given to football, Rodrigues keeps a persuasive discourse to convince readers about three elements: 1) that the challenge is not only about Jiu-jitsu, but also about the hate driving the fighters; 2) that Carlson would have more chances of winning; and especially 3) that the name Gracie would carry the weight of tradition in Jiu-jitsu. This is where literature is amalgamated with history: when it proposes – or even underscores – the Jiu-jitsu tradition attributed to the Gracies, especially when considering that such discourse resonates to this day.

The dramatic quality present in most of Rodrigues' texts is not exacerbated in the chronicle analyzed. However, it appears in the tragic element, in the fighters' emotion hidden behind Jiu-jitsu. That is where the playwright appears, because the idea of the sport turned into cardboard that hides something wilder establishes

the literary element of the text. How could Nelson Rodrigues, as a chronicler, know the emotions of the athletes? He could not, hence the approximation to the realm of possibility and a bit of literary creation. When dealing with the subjective reasons for the challenge, Rodrigues goes beyond the simple fact of the clash between Waldemar and Carlson: an event whose particularity would lie in the fact that Waldemar was part of the Gracies' group. That would be the loophole to think of other motivations.

In the same newspaper issue, both fighters speak about their opponents and once again their words do not carry the characteristics attributed by Rodrigues. According to Waldemar Santana, “Carlson is without a doubt one of the best fighters in the country. In any case I’m aware of the responsibility in that fight, which I believe will mark a new stage in my career as a professional fighter” (cited by RENATO SANTANA, Oct. 8, 1955, p. 6 supp. 2). And, according to Carlson Gracie, “Waldemar is for me a man without mysteries. I just hope he steps in the ring willing to do a great fight” (cited by RENATO GRACIE, Oct. 8, 1955, p. 6, supp. 2). Fighters establish a sports ethics towards the fight, shown by cordiality, when they recognize the qualities of their opponents. This is not to say that Waldemar and Carlson were not highly sensitive in the fight. What is questioned is the fact that Nelson Rodrigues would know these subjectivities as an omniscient narrator who knows what characters think and feel, giving only hints of what may happen.

In addition to resorting to literary narrative, it is worth noting that if the chronicle genre is propitious to disseminate theses, the case of Jiu-jitsu would be no different: Rodrigues himself reports the reputation of the Gracies as news while emphasizing it. Although he emphasizes the qualities of Santana – who was a former student of Hélio’s – the author underscores a discourse on the tradition of the Gracie family as creators and disseminators of Jiu-jitsu in Brazil. No wonder, the title refers to the legend of the Gracies – a space to stress the glory related to the name.

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Correspondence address

Riqueldi Straub Lise.

E-mail: ricklise@ig.com.br

Rua Otávio Réchia, 143, Bacacheri – Curitiba/PR.

CEP: 82600-560

Received on: October 23, 2013

Approved on: September 17, 2014