

UTOPIC MASCULINITY: HUMOR, XENOPHOBIA, AND HOMOPHOBIA IN JOSÉ PAULO DE ARAÚJO'S "XRM-2600"

Rex P. Nielson
Brigham Young University

Abstract: This article examines expressions of male heterosexual identity present in José Paulo de Araújo's 1997 award-winning short story "XRM-2600." This story highlights growing tensions in Brazil between local and global changes in how sexuality and masculinity are constructed. In particular, the story humorously addresses and subverts manifestations of hegemonic masculinity (namely, homophobia, machismo, misogyny, and xenophobia) by foregrounding male heterosexual identity as performative rather than essentialized. While the performative nature of gender and sexuality has long been theorized by scholars such as Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick, in the context of Brazilian literature and culture, heterosexual masculinity has rarely been viewed with the same fluidity afforded to queer identities. In the introduction to her insightful book *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam critiques the tendency of many studies of masculinity to recenter the white male body, arguing that "masculinity becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body." Reading Araújo's story as a unique example of how masculinity becomes legible in Brazil when confronted by foreign expressions of masculinity, this paper argues for the place and value of understanding non-normative male heterosexual identity, or what might be called heterovariant masculinity, in democratic society.

Key words: Contemporary Brazilian literature; Gender; Masculinity

Resumo: Este artigo estuda as expressões da identidade masculina heterossexual presentes no conto premiado "XRM-2600" (1997) de José Paulo de Araújo. O conto expõe as tensões crescentes no Brasil entre mudanças locais e globais na construção da sexualidade e da masculinidade. Em particular, o conto humoristicamente aborda e subverte as manifestações da masculinidade hegemônica (inclusive, homofobia, machismo, misoginia e xenofobia) ao colocar

em primeiro plano a identidade masculina heterossexual como uma identidade performativa em vez de ser essencializada. Apesar do fato de que a natureza performativa do gênero tem sido teorizada por estudiosos como Judith Butler e Eve Sedgwick, no contexto da literatura e cultura brasileira, a masculinidade heterossexual raramente é tratada com a mesma fluidez proporcionada às identidades queer. Na introdução do seu livro *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam critica a tendência de muitos estudos sobre a masculinidade a recentralizar o corpo branco masculino, argumentando que “masculinity becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body”. Lendo o conto “XRM-2600” como um exemplo original de como a masculinidade torna-se legível no Brasil ao ser confrontada por expressões estrangeiras de masculinidade, este artigo defende a importância de entender uma identidade masculina e heterossexual que não seja normativa, o que pode ser chamada de uma masculinidade heterovariante, numa sociedade democrática.

Palavras-chave: Literatura brasileira contemporânea; Gênero; Masculinidade

Within Portuguese and Brazilian studies, increasing numbers of scholars have turned their attention to the study of masculinity. To cite only three examples, recent special issues of *Revista Estação Literária* (2015), *Journal of Lusophone Studies* (2018), and *Revell: Revista de Estudos Literários* (2018) have dedicated space to examining literary representations of masculinity. These volumes attest to the variety and complexity of the forms that masculinity has assumed within the Portuguese-speaking world, and they point to the need for further analysis of gender as a fundamental marker of social identity. Given the extensive work feminist scholars have already accomplished in advancing our understanding of gender and promoting the rights of women and minority groups, it is perhaps unsurprising that some scholars are extending critical analysis of gender to masculinity. Indeed, the field of masculinity studies has emerged directly out of feminist scholarship and theory. As Jeremy Lehn and I have noted elsewhere, while the framework established by feminist writers and activists “initially provided insight into the social positions assigned to women, it has likewise revealed the social scripts that govern understandings of men and concepts of masculinity” (Lehn and Nielson 2). Nevertheless, the goals of masculinity studies vary somewhat from those typically associated with feminist projects, and this difference merits some consideration.

More than one critic has noted the fundamentally utopic nature of feminist criticism. Feminisms look forward to a future as yet unrealized moment of gender equality and the end of oppression in all its forms. Judith Kegan Gardiner, for example, notes that “feminist theories hope to develop effective ways to improve women’s conditions [by] transforming ideologies and institutions, including the family, religion, corporations, and the state” (“Men, Masculinities, and Feminist Theory,” 35). Gardiner’s succinct summary is typical in its formulation and notable for its forward-looking stance. In contrast, masculinity is often characterized by an orientation towards the past and the failures of men coupled with a longing for some lost idealized mode of male behavior and identity. Gardiner observes this difference, stating, “Masculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp” (*Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory* 10). Others have similarly noted this “nostalgic mode” (Alexander) of masculinity discourse.

I propose, however, that in tandem with this nostalgic mode, in the context of Brazilian literature, especially during the last four decades, an alternate strain of masculinity exists—a form of masculinity that, like the best of feminist discourse, also resists and subverts the oppression and violence of hegemonic masculinity while contemplating an utopic future. This utopic masculinity challenges normative masculinity and its exaggerated stereotypes through a variety of strategies: by affirming that “men are neither mindless, sex-obsessed buffoons nor stoic automatons” (The Good Men Project); by denouncing sexual aggression, violence, repression of women, and intransigence; and by fostering nurturing, connection, and intimacy rather than competitiveness and hierarchy. This forward-oriented masculinity is disruptive in nature, one that critiques the unseen, naturalized order.

The short story “XRM-2600” by José Paulo de Araújo presents an exemplary model of utopic masculinity and the relationships between men in contemporary Brazilian culture. The story highlights growing tensions in Brazil between local and

global changes in the ways that sexuality and masculinity are constructed. In particular, it humorously addresses manifestations of hegemonic masculinity—i.e., the naturalized relationship between maleness and power as expressed through homophobia, machismo, misogyny, and xenophobia—and subverts this hegemonic masculinity by foregrounding male heterosexual identity as culturally performative rather than essentialized.¹ The story deploys the now-common narrative of masculinity in crisis: Felipe, a white heterosexual cisgender male middle-class Brazilian protagonist confronts Vladomir, an equally white heterosexual cisgender male middle-class protagonist from another country, and this confrontation provokes an identity crisis in Felipe. Some scholars of gender, such as Jack Halberstam, have critiqued the way in which narratives of masculinity in crisis tend to re-center the white male body and reinscribe normative masculinity. Yet, this story subverts the crisis narrative by allowing Felipe’s identity crisis to remain unresolved. In doing so, “XRM-2600” constitutes a unique example of how masculinity becomes visible in Brazil when confronted by a foreign heterosexual body. The juxtaposition of Felipe, a stereotypical middle-class male citizen, and Vladomir, a foreign exotic male, renders Brazilian masculinity legible. The story ultimately challenges hegemonic masculinity in Brazil by promoting the value in democratic society of non-normative male heterosexual identity, or what we might call heterovariant masculinity, or simply utopic masculinity.

“XRM-2600” was published in 2001 after having received an honorable mention in the Julia Mann² prize for literature, a competition sponsored by the Instituto Goethe São Paulo and Editora Estação Liberdade. The winning story and other finalists appeared together in a volume entitled *Entre Dois Mundos*. The jury included the writers Ignácio de Loyola Brandão and João Silvério Trevisan, the philosopher Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin, and literary critics Nicolau Sevcenko and Willi Bolle. “XRM-2600” is the first story ever

¹ The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been studied at length by Donaldson (1995), West and Lay (2000), and Connell and Connell (2005). Insightful studies of hegemonic masculinity in Latin America include Valente (2001), Cowan (2007), and Carrieri et al. (2013).

² Júlia da Silva Bruhns Mann was born in 1851 in the immediate area near Paraty, Rio de Janeiro. Seven years later, following the premature death of her mother, she moved with her family to Germany, eventually settling in Munich. This radical change caused her to navigate the difficult path between two worlds. A writer herself, she is today most well-known as the mother of Thomas Mann, who received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929.

published by the author, José Paulo de Araújo, who has since published two volumes of poetry.³

“XRM-2600” tells the story of a mid-level employee (Felipe) working within the bureaucracy of a large technical company. One day, Felipe receives an assignment to train a new employee (Vladimir), who has recently immigrated to Brazil as a refugee to escape the political unrest of his war-torn European country, Vrasláquia. Felipe initially views Vladimir with a fair amount of respect in deference to Vladimir’s European origin and the fact that he has gone to college and also mastered Portuguese in such a short amount of time. Nevertheless, this respect quickly turns to apprehension and anxiety as Felipe observes how quickly Vladimir masters his new tasks. In typical xenophobic fashion, Felipe begins to suspect that Vladimir may have been hired to replace him. Felipe’s fears are significantly compounded, moreover, by Vladimir’s masculinity—that is, by his attitudes and behaviors that not only diverge from Felipe’s expectations for how men should think and behave but also cause Felipe to feel threatened. Consequently, Felipe responds in some self-destructive ways, placing him on a trajectory that in the end leads to his dismissal from the company.

In effect, the story presents two modes of masculinity. Felipe represents the attitudes and values of Brazil’s deeply ingrained conservative patriarchal culture. Many critics refer to this deep structure of masculinity as machismo, a mode of masculinity and even an ideology, according to some scholars, “practiced by men [...] in which gender is naturalized through moral discourses of labor division, education, public presence, emotion, physicality, and other marks of social value” (Pardue 439). Barker and Loewenstein note that “machismo is generally equated with bravado, sexual prowess, protecting one’s honor, and a willingness to face danger” (169), and they summarize, in simple terms, that “machismo is an exaggerated form of masculinity” (169). Pardue adds this insight: “Machismo is a discourse constructed to resolve one of the basic problems of

³ José Paulo de Araújo received a doctorate degree from the interdisciplinary program of Applied Linguistics at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), where he subsequently worked as an adjunct professor. He currently works as a training analyst for Eletrobrás.

society, the problem of order and distinction” (439). Machismo thus describes a particular form of masculinity that governs the behaviors of men (and women) and is culturally specific and variable.

In the story, Felipe reveals attitudes typical of conservative masculinity insofar as he believes in “working hard, being responsible, being the financial provider” (Barker and Loewenstein 181). He embraces his role as father and explicitly acknowledges how this role defines his identity. For example, after learning that Vladomir does not have children, Felipe proudly replies: “Filho faz bem. Faz o homem ficar mais novo. Fica até mais homem. Prende a mulher também” (93). While recommending having children to his new colleague, Felipe also subtly implies that he is more of a man than Vladomir by virtue of the fact that he has children. Yet even as he self-consciously projects an outward appearance of stability and success, Felipe is also terribly insecure. In the same conversation referenced above, after discovering that Vladomir has gone to college, Felipe ponders: “Ele tinha feito faculdade! Isso ia pesar na hora da promoção. Felipe começou a se arrepender de ter se acomodado tanto tempo. Podia ter feito pelo menos um cursinho de digitação, mas sempre quis acreditar que o emprego estava garantido” (94). Vladomir’s presence elicits from Felipe fear and unease, which in turn begin to reveal the fragile profile of white, male, middle-class, normative heterosexual masculinity in Brazil.

Vladomir, in contrast, exhibits a very different mode of masculinity. In Felipe’s eyes, Vladomir appears—at least initially—extraordinarily common: “gordinho, baixinho, olhos pretos, cabelo escorrido e parecendo sujo. Tinha que ser sujeira, afinal gringo não toma banho mesmo” (90). Vladomir is middle-aged but married to a much younger woman, Irina. He is college-educated, a refugee from an Eastern European country, and in spite of his own eagerness to fit into his new work environment, he experiences some cultural discomfort. For example, in a humorous moment early in the narrative, Vladomir expresses both unease and awkwardness in regard to the close personal space occupied by his new Brazilian colleagues. Nevertheless, Vladomir is a hard-working immigrant who, for all intents and purposes, symbolizes the values of European white,

male, middle-class heterosexual masculinity.

Over the course of the first few days, as Felipe and Vladomir become better acquainted, significant cultural differences in attitude emerge between the two coworkers. We learn they hold distinct views on women and gendered roles within the family. After learning that Vladomir's wife, Irina, works outside the home as a professional cosmetologist, Felipe explains that he would never let his wife work outside their home. He states, "Ela é feliz. Ela faz o que toda mulher nasceu pra fazer bem. E nisso ela é perfeita" (99). Vladomir silently considers this and thinks to himself: "A mulher de Felipe fez uma troca. Deve ter tomado a melhor decisão. Irina jamais trocaria sua profissão pelo serviço da casa. Cada um tinha seu emprego fora, e em casa eles dividam tudo" (99). Felipe, on the other hand, struggles to understand how Vladomir and his wife can get the housework done if Irina is working and they don't have an *empregada* or a *sogra* to take care of things. Vladomir explains: "Minha mulher e eu fazemos tudo" (99), to which Felipe answers: "Você faz o serviço dela?" (99). Vladomir responds: "O serviço dela é meu também" (99), and Felipe counters: "Isso está errado. A mulher tem que saber o lugar dela" (99). The narrator then observe

De repente, Felipe se deu conta do ridículo que estava passando. Estava tentando convencer um homem de quarenta e tantos anos, de cabelo cacheado vermelho, de que o homem não faz o serviço da mulher. Resolveu abandonar o assunto de repente. O grinto nem ia notar" (99).

The dialogue is revealing on many levels. On one hand, Felipe's interior monologue reveals his entrenched views on how men should behave and what roles are appropriate for both men and women. His encounter with opposing opinions about the roles of men and women does not lead him to change his mind but rather causes him to articulate and justify his own behavior. Meanwhile, Vladomir interprets Felipe's conclusion in the opposite manner, and he believes that he clearly won the conversation since Felipe had no other argument to convince him that men and women are not equal and should not do the same chores around the house: "Afinal, que mal há em lavar, cozinhar ou qualquer outra atividade da casa?" (99). The exchange highlights the way in

which both men feel obligated in this situation to translate their attitudes about the roles of women to each other. Neither is convinced by the other, but the juxtaposition of mindsets not only heightens Felipe's perception of Vladomir as a foreigner, as an *other*, but also, and more significantly, as less manly.

But it is not only Vladomir's attitudes that make Felipe's Brazilian masculinity legible--his physical embodied presence provokes Felipe as well. A couple of weeks into the new job, Vladomir arrives at work one day with permed hair. Felipe is shocked:

Felipe arregalou os olhos e ficou de boca aberta. Mal acreditou quando viu o gringo de cabelo cacheado. Não era um cacheado discreto. Não era um ondulado normal. Não era um penteado moderno tipo 'afro'. Era um cabelo encaracolado de boneca. Com cachos que balançavam conforme ele andava (95).

Clearly upset by his colleague's new appearance, he asks what has happened, and Vladomir responds that his wife occasionally will test her new cosmetology products on him. Felipe's shock deepens: "Ela usou você de cobaia?" (95). Vladomir patiently explains the logic of the situation--his wife is a professional and she obviously cannot use products on clients that she has not tested, and he is happy to help her with her work. Felipe, predictably, remains unconvinced. Yet the situation takes a dramatic turn as, over the next few days and weeks, Vladomir's appearance continues to evolve. A few days later he arrives not only with his hair permed but dyed bright red as well. On another day he arrives at work wearing "batom permanente." One day his eyebrows have been sculpted, another day he wears eyeshadow, and finally one day he has had his arm hair removed. Felipe cannot understand Vladomir's behavior and tries to correct him: "Homem que é homem não anda de cabelo feito. Homem não pinta a unha vermelho, nem faz cachinho. Isso é coisa de mulher" (103). Felipe offers Vladomir a lesson in Brazilian masculinity: men do not have their hair done, they do not paint their nails, and they do not get their hair curled. To do so is to act contrary to the very nature of masculinity.

The humor of this situation additionally serves an important "unmasking function" (Witkin 102). By focusing on Vladomir's unusual behavior and appearance

along with Felipe's shocked response, the narrative humorously draws attention to normalized codes of masculinity in society. In other words, the passage uses humor to reveal what has been naturalized and otherwise made invisible. The cognitive scientists Matthew Hurley, Daniel Dennett, and Reginald Adams have closely studied the deployment of humor to uncover and reveal a variety of conflicts and contradictions embedded in everyday social situations. They argue that humor helps to "expose and resolve heretofore unnoticed glitches in our common knowledge" (113). The humorous presentation of Vladomir's social conduct draws attention to the normalized codes governing masculinity. Yet by presenting Vladomir's behavior and appearance in a way that elicits laughter on the part of the reader, the narrative simultaneously aligns the reader's perspective with Felipe's, that is, the narrative uses humor to help the reader develop an awareness of the way in which he or she might also harbor stereotyped attitudes about masculinity.

As the narrative continues, Vladomir's changes in physical appearance provoke a radical response in Felipe, who soon goes to great lengths to avoid both being with Vladomir and especially being seen with Vladomir. He begins to hide in the bathroom during their lunch break, and he comes to work late and leaves early, while inventing all manner of excuses about problems at home. "As desculpas da hora do almoço estavam ficando cada vez mais criativas. Felipe já tivera que 'matar' alguns parentes distantes, a fim de justificar seus desaparecimentos repentinos. O serviço começava a acumular-se sobre sua mesa" (102). Felipe feels so threatened by the thought of being seen with Vladomir that he is willing to avoid his professional responsibilities. Loewenstein observes that generally speaking manhood is "contingent upon public recognition" (182), which explains why although Felipe's productivity at work suffers, he can justify his actions: "Quanto menos fosse visto ao lado daquela figura estranha, melhor para sua imagem de homem sério, pai de família" (97). Felipe insists on avoiding Vladomir in order to preserve his public image and reputation, that is, his masculinity, his sense of maleness as a "serious" man and the head of his family, *personae* founded upon public manifestations.

The social threat of this situation is very real. Despite the fact that Vladomir repeatedly asserts his heterosexual identity by regularly speaking to Felipe about his wife, Irina, and at no point in the story does he express the slightest hint of homosexual desire—Vladomir is perceived not only by Felipe, but others, as different. One day, one of the women who work in the cafeteria somewhat hesitatingly asks Felipe, as he races to eat and leave before Vladomir arrives: “Ele é mesmo o que as pessoas andam dizendo. Felipe mal conseguiu disfarçar o medo. Dizendo o quê? — Que ele é ... assim ... — Assim ... o quê? — Ossessual. — O quê” (100). “Felipe percebeu que as outras estavam juntas num canto, olhando para ele, como se esperassem uma resposta” (101). The woman continues, “Ele é vi... Ah, o senhor sabe!” (101). Felipe responds brusquely, “Não! Ele é casado. Eu conheço a mulher dele. Ele é ... é ... gringo” (101). This humorous moment of mini-drama reveals and confirms Felipe’s fears. Given the manner in which public opinion, attitudes, and morality undergird his personal identity and masculinity, he struggles to explain Vladomir’s gendered identity in a way that will preserve his own. Vladomir is not gay, according to Felipe, but rather a foreigner. This response is hardly satisfying, however, as the girl in the cafeteria retorts: “Gringo ou não gringo, pra mim ele é outra coisa — disse outra, mais nova” (102). Once again, Vladomir is *othered* (he’s literally called “outra coisa” [something else]) in this situation based on the fact that he presents a mode of masculinity that differs significantly from the socially accepted standards for male behavior.

Felipe’s collective reactions to Vladomir can only be interpreted as homophobic. Patrick Hopkins observes, “One way to read homophobia and heterosexism in men is in terms of homosexuality’s threat to masculinity, which in light of the connection between gender and personal identity translates into a threat to what constitutes a man’s sense of self” (97). Indeed, as the story progresses, Felipe increasingly finds himself unable to tolerate Vladomir’s variant heterosexuality, which he perceives and feels as a direct threat to his own sense of self. Vladomir’s non-normative appearance and behavior cast sharply

into relief Felipe's masculinity, that is, his normative Brazilian masculinity.⁴

Sadly, and ironically, Felipe's behavior and efforts to preserve himself eventually lead to his dismissal. This occurs, primarily, because Felipe begins to contemplate violence towards Vladomir:

Cada vez que olhava para aquele velho ridículo, sentia vontade de dar-lhe uma surra. Talvez apanhando ele voltasse a si. Mas, se fizesse isso, com certeza perderia o emprego. Talvez pudesse dar uma surra na mulher. Ela, sim, merecia uma boa sova. Mas aí podia perder o emprego, a promoção e a liberdade. Depois de muito pensar e se irritar, resolveu que ia deixar tudo como estava, mas ia continuar evitando ser visto ao lado dele. Os comentários maldosos já corriam toda a empresa e mesmo ele, que não se pintava, já era alvo de olhares maliciosos pelos corredores e no refeitório. (104)

[...]

Felipe começou a desenvolver os sintomas de uma doença grave: em todo lugar imaginava que as pessoas estavam comentando sobre um suposto romance seu com o velho Vladomir. Podia jurar que ouvia seu nome. Às vezes voltava-se para os prováveis fofoqueiros e os encarava chamando-os para briga. Certa vez, agrediu o rapaz da entrega, quando este, ao passar-lhe o malote de documentos, sorriu amistosamente. (105)

Felipe begins to nurture an elaborate conspiracy theory in which his boss and Vladomir have colluded for the purpose of provoking Felipe's dismissal from the firm. In response, Felipe fantasizes revenge and imagines a variety of scenarios that will publicly embarrass Vladomir and result in his removal from the company. For example, he wonders to himself: 1) perhaps Vladomir is in the country illegally and Felipe can orchestrate his deportation back to his war-torn country where he will suffer, 2) or perhaps Vladomir's wife would leave him for another man, after stealing all his money, and 3) he ultimately imagines a final confrontation in which he will have a chance to finally hit him: "A surra vingaria do vexame e de quebra ensinaria o velho a agir como homem de verdade" (108). Acting out this violent fantasy would somehow teach

⁴ Though this story highlights a deeply conservative and homophobic current that defines masculinity in Brazilian culture, in comparison to other cultures, Brazil surprisingly ranks among the most tolerant. For example, in a 2011 comparative study of six countries (Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico, and Rwanda), Brazil ranked as the least homophobic and most tolerant: "Homophobic attitudes were common although varied tremendously by context. Men who said they would be ashamed to have a gay son ranged from 43 percent of men in Brazil to a high of 92 percent in India. A slightly lower, but still high proportion of men said that being around homosexual men makes them uncomfortable, ranging from a low of 21 percent of men in Brazil to a high of 89 percent in India. Younger men and men with higher levels of education were generally less homophobic." (Barker et al., "Evolving Men: Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey," International Center for Research on Women and Instituto Promundo).

Vladimir to act like an “homem de verdade,” a true man.

In the actual final confrontation, however, Felipe entirely misreads the events unfolding around him. Felipe approaches his supervisor to denounce Vladimir as an unqualified, scheming foreigner, but he is thunderstruck when his boss responds by praising Vladimir and then firing him for just cause after enumerating Felipe’s professional failings: “Agressão, afastamento deliberado do local de trabalho durante o expediente, irregularidade no horário de almoço, atitude suspeita dentro da empresa” (107). Stunned, Felipe returns to office where he approaches the unsuspecting Vladimir, “Avançou na direção de Vladimir e agarrou-o pela gola da camisa. —Me conta agora, safado! O que você fazia no seu país antes de vir roubar meu emprego?” (108). Before he can do anything else, however, the supervisor and two security officers enter the room and restrain Felipe, who is then carried out in a state of shock. It is sadly unsurprising that Felipe turns from intolerance and homophobia to violence, for hegemonic masculinity often operates on the principle of aggression. As one critic has noted: “Masculinity has always been governed by aggression” (Almond 31). What is surprising, however, is that despite the threat of violence, at least in this narrative, the threat remains unfulfilled. The authorities intervene, stop Felipe, and remove him.

While we may debate to what extent this conclusion reflects a social reality of changing masculinity in Brazil, it certainly constitutes a utopic desire for an acknowledgement and tolerance of the variant forms of heterosexual masculinity present within Brazilian culture. In this sense, the story offers a radical departure from how masculinity traditionally operates in Brazil.

Vladimir appears in the story not merely as a foreigner but as a new member of Brazilian society, an individual who eagerly seeks inclusion and place. It is significant that the narrative casts a variant mode of masculinity in the body of a foreigner, an outsider. Nonetheless, he is an individual seeking inclusion into mainstream society. Although some in the story (notably the cafeteria workers) perceive him as an *other*, many others,

including his superiors view him positively—far from merely tolerating him, they recognize his many valuable attributes and contributions to the company:

Apesar da aparência estranha, era eficiente, aprendia com rapidez a rotina dos diversos departamentos e era capaz de redigir relatório objetivos. Havia erros gramaticais, mas só nos primeiros. Vladomir era educado e não custou a conquistar a simpatia dos outros funcionários. Chegava cedo, fazia seu serviço e sempre estava pronto a ajudar. Era um funcionário exemplar” (105).

Vladomir is polite, kind, sympathetic, vulnerable, willing and eager to help others. His mode of behavior fundamentally challenges Brazil’s hegemonic masculinity. In the final analysis, despite the outcome of Felipe’s actions--the tragedy of his dismissal and his marginalized role within the company (a metaphoric representation of Brazilian society)--the narrative promotes a mode of masculinity that is in effect utopic: inclusive, flexible, non-hierarchical, non-competitive, and non-oppressive. Vladomir’s strange and foreign mode of manliness suggests that an alternate path exists for men in Brazil and that “men can choose something different from the traditional roles they seem to be thrown into” (May et al., xi).

WORKS CITED

ALEXANDER, Kaelin. “Men’s Studies: Teaching Masculinities in the Margins.” *The Good Men Project*, 2 August 2011, goodmenproject.com/featured-content/teaching-masculinities-margins/.

BARKER, Gary, and Irene Loewenstein. “Where the Boys Are Attitudes Related to Masculinity, Fatherhood, and Violence Toward Women among Low-Income Adolescent and Young Adult Males in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.” *Youth & Society*, v. 29, n. 2, 1997, p. 166–96.

BARKER, Gary, and Manuel Contreras, Brian Heilman, Ajay Singh, Ravi Verma, and Marcos Nascimento. “Evolving Men: Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES).” International Center for Research on Women, 2011, icrw.org/publications/evolving-men/.

CARRIERI, Alexandre de Pádua et al. “Gender and Work: Representations of Femininities and Masculinities in the View of Women Brazilian Executives.” *BAR - Brazilian Administration Review*, v. 10, n. 3, 2013, p. 281–303.

CONNELL, R. W., and Raewyn Connell. *Masculinities: Second Edition*. U of California P, 2005.

COWAN, Benjamin A. “Sex and the Security State: Gender, Sexuality, and ‘Subversion’ at Brazil’s Escola Superior de Guerra, 1964-1985.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, v. 16, n. 3, 2007, p. 459–81.

DONALDSON, Mike. "What Is Hegemonic Masculinity?" *Theory and Society*, v. 22, n. 5, 1993, p. 643–57.

GARDINER, Judith Kegan. *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*. Columbia UP, 2002.

_____. "Masculinity's Interior: Men, Transmen, and Theories of Masculinity." *Journal of Men's Studies*, v. 21, n. 2, 2013, p., 112–126.

The Good Men Project, 2019, goodmenproject.com/about/.

HOPKINS, Patrick. "Gender Treachery: Homophobia, Masculinity, and Threatened Identities." *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in Light of Feminism* edited by Larry May, Robert A. Strikwerda, and Patrick D. Hopkins. Rowman and Littlefield, 1996, p. 95–118.

MAY, Larry, Robert A. Strikwerda, and Patrick D. Hopkins. *Rethinking Masculinity: Philosophical Explorations in Light of Feminism*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.

LADEIRA, António, Gustavo Costa, and Andre Rezende Benatti (Eds). Representações da masculinidade nas literaturas lusófonas. *Revell: Revista de Estudos Literários da UEMS*, v. 2, n. 19, 2018.

LEHNEN, Jeremy, and Rex P. Nielson, ed. Special Dossier on Lusophone Masculinities, *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, v. 3, n. 1, 2018.

PARDUE, Derek. "Getting an Attitude: Brazilian Hip Hoppers Design Gender." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, v. 15, n. 2, 2010, p. 434–56.

QUINLAN, Susan Canty, and Fernando Arenas. *Lusosex: Gender and Sexuality in the Portuguese-Speaking World*. U of Minnesota P, 2002.

SIMON, Luiz Carlos, edited. *Masculinidades na literatura*. *Revista Estação Literária*, v. 16, 2015.

VALENTE, Luiz Fernando. "Machado's Wounded Males." *Hispania*, v. 84, n. 1, 2001, p. 11–19.

WEST, Russell, and Frank Lay. *Subverting Masculinity: Hegemonic and Alternative Versions of Masculinity in Contemporary Culture*. Rodopi, 2000.

WITKIN, Stanley L. "Taking Humor Seriously." *Social Work*, v. 44, n. 2, p. 101–4.

Rex P. Nielson is Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Brigham Young University, where he teaches all levels of Portuguese language as well as a variety of courses on Luso-Afro-Brazilian literature, culture, and history. His research focuses on four principal areas 1) gender in Brazilian literature and culture, 2) ecocriticism and environmental ethics in Brazil and the global south, 3) language and literature pedagogy in higher education, and 4) digital humanities. His recent articles have appeared in *Journal of Lusophone Studies*, *Romance Notes*, *Hispania*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *Romance Quarterly*, and *Estudos de Literatura Brasileira Contemporânea*. E-mail: rex_nielson@byu.edu.

Artigo convidado.