



NELSON H. VIEIRA, HIS LEGACIES, AND THE CURRENT VOLUME

Lamonte Aidoo
Duke University

Daniel F. Silva
Middlebury College

Throughout his illustrious career in academia within Luso-Brazilian Studies, spanning five decades and different roles, Nelson H. Vieira research and teaching has traversed numerous interests, contributed to several fields of inquiry, and shaped the scholarly trajectories of his many students and colleagues. Many of these unquantifiable and immeasurable achievements are reflected in the collection of essays we have compiled in this volume from some of Professor Vieira's many students that have gone on to pursue their own careers in Luso-Brazilian Studies. Each of these dialogue either explicitly or implicitly with his work, and more importantly represent a continuity of the lens through which Professor Vieira taught us to understand and unpack the realm of cultural production, social universes, mechanisms of power, and how these are challenged or reproduced in literature – where voices produce and subvert meanings.

Professor Vieira's interests imbued so much of his research and teaching that it is difficult to easily pinpoint or limit them to a particular course or line of work. For

instance, his interest in the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality can be found at the heart of myriad publications of his, whether these focus on a particular author, a literary piece, or the legacies of colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, and capitalism in Brazil more broadly. One can argue, moreover, that his scholarly interests mutually inform one another, with his work on Machado de Assis, to give only one example, contributing to novel ways to examine race and gender, while also theorizing the intersection of race and gender in order to provide a new critical lexicon on Machado's work and legacy. In other words, Professor Vieira's research and teaching interests were not disparate entities, but, rather, were neatly and complexly joined to form a holistic body of work.

This same synergistic view as a prescription for analyzing and contextualizing literary works and cultural production, with particular regards to race, gender, and sexuality, can be found in the first three essays of the present volume. Opening this special issue is Lamonte Aidoo's essay, "Closet Impurities: Miscegenation and the Racial Closet in Urbano Duarte and Artur Azevedo's *O escravocrata*." Through a close reading of Artur de Azevedo and Urbano Duarte's 1882 play *O escravocrata*, this essay examines the period anxieties surrounding miscegenation between black men and white women in the wake of abolition and turn of the century European immigration. Juxtaposing Brazil and the United States, Aidoo argues that these socially prohibited relationships challenged both slavery as an institution and Brazilian racial categorization. Drawing from queer theory, the essay shows how the progeny of these interracial relationships lived in a "racial closet," a space marked by clandestinity and precarity, and how the constitutive practice of "racial outing," the public revelation of African heritage was a way of sustaining white supremacy and the social and political distinctions between black and white, free and enslaved. Aidoo's essay reverberates in several ways with Professor Vieira's work with regards to reproduction of power structures and normalizing narratives and discourses. More specifically, the questions raised in this essay can be interfaced with those Professor Vieira placed at the heart of a first-year seminar he taught at Brown University titled "'Coming Out' Jewish, Gay, or Black: Mistaken Identity in Literature from the USA and Brazil." Both Vieira and Aidoo thus consider how identity is marked by particular power dynamics informing historical moments, performed in

accord with structures of privilege, and utilized by forces of power for its own reproduction.

The following essay, “Tent of Modernity: Miscegenation as Technology of Progress in Jorge Amado’s *Tenda dos milagres* and Contemporary Brazilian Visual Media,” by Daniel F. Silva dialogues with one of Professor Vieira’s earlier scholarly interests – Jorge Amado’s deployment of hybridity in signifying Brazilian nationhood in light of histories of racial oppression and contemporary narratives of racial exceptionalism. Professor Vieira published two well-known pieces on *Tenda dos Milagres* – “Testimonial Fiction and Historical Allegory: Racial and Political Repression in Jorge Amado’s Brazil” (1989) and “Hybridity vs. Pluralism: Culture, Race and Aesthetics in Jorge Amado” (2001) – attempting to sift through and make sense of Jorge Amado’s often conflicting literary and public views on national hybridity, multiracial modernity, persistent white supremacy, and racial democracy. Examining Amado’s 1969 novel, *Tenda dos milagres*, Silva’s essay interrogates the novel’s voicing of miscegenation as a field of knowledge by different characters with different racial politics. More specifically, this field of knowledge, the paper argues, functions in the novel as a national transhuman mechanism of engineering a modern body politic – one following existing discourses and nationalist claims of a racially hybrid national modernity alongside codified white supremacist notions. In this sense, Silva’s essay will consider the construction and deployment of miscegenation in the novel as one akin to a form of technology that manufactures an exceptionalist multiracial modernity to which Amado’s protagonist, Pedro Archanjo, subscribes. In approaching miscegenation as a technology of racialized and gendered biopower, we can more neatly contextualize it within a genealogy of misrecognized discourses and cultural mechanisms of national progress/whitening including hygienism and incentivized European influx, as well as contemporary forms of corporal transformation such as cosmetic surgery and fitness culture that operate nationally via assorted and reformulated images of mixed-race bodies, specifically Amado’s canonized *mulata*.

Continuing the topic of miscegenation in Brazil and its implications vis-à-vis colonial legacies and contemporary systems of racialized power, Sandra Sousa’s essay, “As

mulheres brancas dos homens da resistência afro-luso-brasileira: um olhar sobre as relações coloniais,” examines the interracial marriages of Abdias do Nascimento with Elisa Larkin and Amílcar Cabral with Maria Helena Vilhena Rodrigues. Utilizing recently published correspondence and other sources, Sousa considers how these central figures of anti-imperial and anti-white supremacist resistance negotiated their romantic relationships within their anti-hegemonic stances. The essay also asks how do these relationships fit into Portuguese and Brazilian narratives of racial exceptionalism; and how do they represent, for the white women in question, a form of liberation from white imperial guilt while nonetheless reproducing an imperial racial and social order. Throughout his scholarly trajectory, Professor Vieira has been concerned with the legacies of colonialism and how they are signified in cultural production and on/via bodies in their intimate and public relations with other bodies, time, and space. In doing so, he has taken trans-Atlantic and inter-American approaches to this line of inquiry; most explicitly in his first scholarly monograph, *Brasil e Portugal, a imagem recíproca: O mito e a realidade na expressão literária*. Meanwhile, Sousa’s essay resonates with Professor Vieira’s consistent inquiry into issues of race, gender, and power that have informed his significant portions of his broader academic oeuvre and teaching. Furthermore, as Vieira has throughout his work, Sousa posits the intimate and private as inseparable from the public; the sexual and romantic deeply intertwined with the political.

The fourth essay in this collection, “Humoring Masculinity: Expressions of Xenophobia and Homophobia in José Paulo de Araújo’s ‘XRM-2600,’” by Rex P. Nielson, examines expressions of male heterosexual identity present in José Paulo de Araújo’s 1997 award-winning short story. Professor Vieira’s work on gender as performative within established power relations of (post)colonial patriarchy has traversed much of his research and teaching on authors such as Clarice Lispector, Dalton Trevisan, Machado de Assis, and more broadly, contemporary post-dictatorship Brazilian literature of which Araújo’s short story is part. 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 his insightful book *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam critiques the tendency of many studies of masculinity to recenter the white male body, and he argues 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 will argue for the place and value of understanding non-normative male heterosexual identity, or what might be called heterovariant masculinity, in democratic society. One of the many optics through which Professor Vieira has approached Brazilian literature of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries concerned how discourses of identitarian normativity and performance in Brazil have shifted in the wake of the military dictatorship (1964-85), the struggle for re-democratization, national economic growth, contemporary flows of migration into and out of Brazil, and the nation-state’s place in late global capital.

For over thirty years, Professor Vieira has also published and taught courses on racial, religious ethnic identities in Brazil, most notably on Jewish identity and diaspora in Brazil and the Americas, beginning with his 1986 articles “Post-Holocaust Literature in Brazil” and “Judaic Fiction in Brazil: To Be or Not to Be Jewish,” published in *Modern Language Studies* and *Latin American Literary Review*, respectively, and spanning numerous articles, monographs, translations of literary works, and edited volumes including *Jewish Writing in Contemporary Brazil: An Anthology*, published in 2009. Through this decades-long work on Jewish identity in Brazil, he has offered indispensable theorizations of how ethnicity is signified, constructed, and lived within Brazilian society, national narratives, and orders of power. Through his courses, in which he endeavored to curate critical knowledges on matters of ethnicity in Brazil, Professor Vieira also brought to light contemporary migratory patterns into Brazil, and how new

immigrant subjectivities of the early twenty-first century grappled with notions of diaspora, transnationalism, and Brazilian national identity.

Traversing studies of ethnicity in contemporary Brazil, global Brazilian diaspora, and contemporary Brazilian urban literature, the following essay, “Imagined Geographies: Spheres of Simultaneity in Adriana Lisboa’s Novel *Hanoi*,” by Marguerite Itamar Harrison, focuses on the interweaving of immigrant life stories and layers of human spaces, from the urban to the cultural and ethnic. Relying on Doreen Massey’s geographical concepts of “multiple trajectories” and “spheres of dynamic simultaneity” articulated in *For Space*, this paper analyzes the sense of place in the novel, as well as the presence of elements denoting belonging, displacement and un-belonging, especially from the point of view of the two main characters and their interconnecting, yet disparate, worlds. Based on Massey’s views centered on a “creative and participatory” sense of space, this paper examines Hanoi itself as a conceptual space of imagined geography. It will also reflect on the title city as a place of longing, loss and renewal, in contrast to Chicago, a cross-cultural city populated by immigrants and refugees, including Brazilians. The essay includes comparisons between Lisboa’s *Hanói* and her previous novel, *Azul-Corvo* (*Crow-Blue*), on the specific topic they share regarding immigration to the U.S. In this regard, Harrison’s essay raises new questions and topics pertaining to experiences of ethnicity as a migrant-other vis-à-vis dominant conceptions of Brazilianness, in this case through the lens of a Brazilian-American residing in Chicago and negotiating selfhood in the overlapping discourses of race and ethnic identity that inform US society and Brazilian nationhood.

Furthering the focus on urban literature, Sophia Beal’s essay, “Contemporary Urban Brazilian Fiction and Discourses of Power,” also dialogues significantly with Professor Vieira’s groundbreaking work on contemporary urban writers such as Rubem Fonseca, Samuel Rawet, and Dalton Trevisan. Through copious published scholarship, innumerable public lectures, and several courses at different institutions, Vieira has deftly defended contemporary Brazilian prose that pairs sophisticated narrative techniques with pulpy disquieting themes. With regards to various authors (Roberto Drummond, Fonseca, Rawet, Sérgio Sant’Anna, and Trevisan), Vieira has argued that their fiction—in

its combination of aesthetic innovation and uncomfortable subject matter—challenges discourses of power in Brazil’s everyday reality. These discourses of power involve bourgeois society’s rigid norms, hegemonic value systems, discrimination of marginalized groups, or reductive understandings of “high art” as pure and superior to mass culture. Drawing on Vieira’s insights on Brazilian contemporary urban fiction, this article first argues that the rise of Brazilian urban fiction can be understood not only as a response to urbanization, but also as reflective of a desire to aestheticize conflicts related to place, power, storytelling, and language. Next, the article argues that the first four novels of João Almino’s Brasília quintet—with the specific backdrop of Brazil’s capital city—contrast sophisticated form and pulp themes to examine the ties between language and authority as they relate to the hypocrisy and superficiality of its elite characters.

The volume’s eighth and final essay, “O especta(u)tor na narrativa performática de Sérgio Sant’Anna,” by María D. Villanúa, represents yet another contribution to the critical scholarship on contemporary Brazilian urban fiction, particularly that of Sérgio Sant’Anna, focus specifically on one of the complex and daring narrative techniques that have come to mark current literary production – that of the forging a diegetic fabric imbedding and centered around the act of writing and the writer as character. Professor Vieira’s scholarship on contemporary fiction has elucidated diegetic techniques such as these, while providing an analytic idiom through which to examine their deployment in light of post-dictatorial political, demographic, cultural, and economic shifts. The destabilization of the writer and the act of producing meaning coincides in many ways with the philosophical and ethical deconstruction of the fascist grip on meaning and quotidian historicization. In this regard, Villanúa’s essay examines the diegetic representation of the writer-as-character by drawing on theories of duplicity, metafiction, and performativity. The article interrogates this leitmotif primarily in relation to the work of Sérgio Sant’Anna while also drawing parallels with other notable contemporary Brazilian works, namely Chico Buarque’s *Budapest* and João Gilberto Noll’s *Berkeley em Bellagio*, all being novels on which Professor Vieira has published and or taught in his graduate seminars. In the case of Sant’Anna’s oeuvre, this *topos* informs a significant portion of his literary trajectory, including his earliest short stories published in the

1970s, traversing his first acclaimed novel, *Confissões de Rulfo* (1975), his later novel, *Um crime delicado* (1997), and his most recent short stories. Buarque and Noll, on the other hand, have added new layers and different stakes to this deployment of the writer as character, utilizing it also as a vehicle through which to comment on and deconstruct issues of transnational movement and displacement, as well as queer identity construction and performativity in heterosexist global patriarchies. In these works, more broadly, emerge various lines of questioning pertaining to literature and self-representation that are explored via mechanisms of duplicity. These in turn serve to lure the reader into nuanced reflections pertaining to identity, authority over meaning, social orders, and the role and construction of literature as a consumable materiality of signification.

The broad and seemingly disparate array of topics covered in this collection of essays serves as a testament to Professor Vieira's breath of knowledge on a myriad of issues, fields of inquiry, literary aesthetics and movements, and genres of cultural production. Most impressively, and most reflective of his brilliance and intellectual impact, he so often and complexly connected these in his research, courses, and mentorship in rigorous, innovative, and thoughtful ways. In this regard, Professor Vieira's work has given us frameworks for not only answering key questions, but also for how to connect them and thus strive for deeper understandings. We hope this volume is the first of many to celebrate Professor Vieira's career and continue his profound intellectual legacies.