

MODERNITY AND POWER IN A *HORA DOS RUMINANTES*

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Abstract: This essay aims to analyze the narrator in the novel *A hora dos ruminantes* (1966) by José J. Veiga, examining how the themes of modernization and progress are addressed. Despite the allegorical and metaphorical tone of Manarairema's description, the characters' actions and the narrative voice approach the process of modernization, which took place in Brazil from the second half of the 20th century onwards. In this respect, the characters and the narrator intersect and separate in a kind of contrapuntal structure. On the one hand, the townspeople of Manarairema are represented by means of a traditional point of view. On the other hand, there is the presence of intruders, whose objective is to modernize the region. In addition, there is the narrator instance, whose point of view oscillates between one and another, composing a critique of the progress of modernization. Therefore, this article intends to map how the movements of distancing and nearness of the narrator, while functioning as a critique of the logic of modernization, are also an escape from the naturalist model that had been part of Brazilian literature since the 19th century.

Keywords: Modernity; José J. Veiga; Brazilian literature.

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo a análise do narrador no romance *A hora dos ruminantes* (1966) de José J. Veiga, e como a instância narrativa aborda os impasses da modernização e do progresso. Apesar do tom alegórico e metafórico da descrição de Manarairema, as ações dos personagens e da voz narrativa abordam o processo de modernização que ocorreu no Brasil a partir da segunda metade do século XX. Sob este aspecto, os personagens e o narrador se cruzam e se separam numa espécie de estrutura contrapontística. Por um lado, há a representação dos nativos de Manarairema através de um ponto de vista tradicional. Por outro lado, há a presença dos intrusos, cujo objetivo é modernizar a região, além da instância do narrador, cujo ponto de vista oscila entre um ponto de vista e

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outro configurando uma crítica ao progresso da modernização. Portanto, este artigo pretende mapear de que maneira o movimento de afastamento e aproximação do narrador, ao mesmo tempo que funciona como crítica à lógica modernizadora, também se configura como fuga do modelo naturalista latente na literatura brasileira desde o século XIX.

Palavras-chave: Modernidade; José J Veiga; Literatura brasileira.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene el objetivo de analizar el narrador en la novela *A hora dos ruminantes* (1966) de José J. Veiga, y como la instancia narrativa aborda los impases de la modernización y del progreso. Aunque hay un tono alegórico y metafórico de la descripción de Manaraima, las acciones de los personajes y de la voz narrativa tratan el proceso de modernización que tuvo lugar en Brasil a partir de la segunda mitad del siglo XX. En virtud de ello, los personajes y el narrador se cruzan y se separan en una estructura contrapuntística. Por un lado, se representan los nativos de Manaraima por medio de un punto de vista tradicional. Por otra parte, se presentan los intrusos, cuyo objetivo es modernizar la región. Asimismo, no se puede ignorar la instancia del narrador, cuyo punto de vista oscila entre las dos esferas, configurando una crítica al progreso y la modernización. Por lo tanto, este artículo pretende mapear de qué manera el movimiento de alejamiento y acercamiento del narrador funciona como crítica a la lógica modernizadora y, a la vez, como fuga del modelo naturalista dominante en la literatura brasileña desde el siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: Modernidad; José J. Veiga; Literatura brasileña

1 INTRODUCTION

The novel *A hora dos ruminantes* (1966), by José J. Veiga, was published in the troubled context of Brazil's Military Dictatorship and of serious deadlocks regarding the modernization of the country. After the 1950s, discourses on underdevelopment and backwardness in the process of nation formation in Brazil gained predominance among some Brazilian intellectuals – such as Caio Prado Júnior, Octávio Ianni, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Roberto Schwarz, and Florestan Fernandes. In this respect, José J. Veiga's work approaches regionalism no longer in the nineteenth-century molds, or in the memorialist molds of the 1930s novel, but through allegory and magical realism. In this regard, Arnoni Prado, in his preface to the 2015 edition of the book by Companhia das Letras, states:

Veiga veio nos relevar uma singularidade inventiva que desde logo o destacou dos demais escritores do período. E o destacou porque o projetasse como novo representante do relato mágico ou fantástico em si mesmo, como foi então a opinião corrente. Basta lembrar que a grande marca deste livro, em relação ao volume de estreia, está no

traçado das personagens e na ambiguidade dos diálogos, já então em grande parte desligados da subjetividade emotiva.³(PRADO, 2015, p.11).

In spite of all the research that has been conducted on the magical aspect of Veiga's work, Arnoni Prado reports that the author preferred not to be analyzed from the perspective of fantastic narrators. When compared to Murilo Rubião or Gabriel Garcia Marquez, José J. Veiga replied: “A minha literatura é uma literatura realista: nem fantástica, nem mágica”⁴ (VEIGA apud PRADO, 2015, p.11). Arnoni Prado also adds that Veiga was “um autor que nos faz lembrar o realismo mágico ou surrealista, criando uma realidade bem brasileira, usando o nosso coloquial localista, como se estivesse escrevendo literatura regional”⁵ (PRADO, 2015, p.11). As just mentioned, Veiga's regionalism is not like that of nineteenth-century authors, such as Bernardo Guimarães, Franklin Távora, or José de Alencar; nor like that of authors from the 1930s, such as Graciliano Ramos, Jorge Amado, and José Lins do Rego. On the one hand, Veiga's regionalism brings him closer to Brazilian literary tradition. On the other hand, by denying the prevailing naturalist narrative style, the author also distances himself from this same tradition. According to our hypothesis, the narrator is a fundamental element in this divergence from naturalism, especially through his movements of distancing and nearness to the characters.

According to Flora Sussekind, in *Tal Brasil, qual romance?* (1984), the naturalist aesthetic has been a common feature in the Brazilian literary

³ Veiga revealed an inventive singularity that immediately set him apart from other writers of the period. And he singled it out because he projected it as a new representative of the magical or fantastic account, as was then current opinion. It is enough to remember that the main mark of this book, concerning the debut volume, is not traced by the characters and in the ambiguity of the dialogues, already largely disconnected from emotional subjectivity.

⁴ My literature is realistic literature: neither fantastic nor magical.

⁵ An author who reminds us of magical or surrealist realism, creating a very Brazilian reality, using our colloquial localists, as if he were writing regional literature.

tradition since the nineteenth-century literature; as she describes, “a primeira vez com estudos de temperamento [ainda no século XIX], a segunda com os ciclos romanescos memorialistas, a terceira como romances-reportagens”⁶ (SUSSEKIND, 1984, p.40). Also, according to Sussekind, the continuity and permanence of naturalism in Brazil operate “no sentido de representar uma identidade para o país, de apagar, via ficção, as divisões e as dúvidas”⁷ (SUSSEKIND, 1984, p. 43). In this sense, authors such as Sousândrade, Qorpo Santo, Pedro Kilkerry, Gregório de Matos, and Murilo Rubião were marginalized by Brazilian literary historiography precisely because their works breached the naturalist pattern that perpetuates the sense of national identity. The narrator of *A hora dos ruminantes* refuses both the fantastic tradition and the naturalist regionalism that permeated the Brazilian literary tradition in the 19th and 20th centuries. Instead, he introduces us to Manarairema as a space whose external description “realismo naturalista já havia delineado, sem no entanto evitar que ficassem em aberto os veios mais fundos de uma configuração social e humana que fatalmente viria à tona quando revisitada pelos narradores do futuro [...] com Veiga marcadamente entre eles”⁸ (PRADO, 2015, p.12). According to Agostinho Potenciano de Souza, Veiga performs a critical reading of progress by means of “sintagma narrativo particular fundado sobre questões nacionais contemporâneas, atuando, portanto, como um escritor que tem uma ‘consciência dilacerada do subdesenvolvimento’ e do advento do desenvolvimento”⁹ (SOUZA, 1987, p.4). In other words, although the narrator

⁶ The first time with studies of temperament [still in the 19th century], the second with the memoirist novel cycles, the third with novels-reports.

⁷ In the sense of representing an identity for the country, of erasing, via fiction, divisions, and doubts.

⁸ Naturalistic realism had already outlined, without, however, preventing the deeper veins of a social and human configuration, that would inevitably surface when revisited by the narrators of the future [...] with Veiga markedly among them remain open.

⁹ A particular narrative phrase founded on contemporary national issues, acting, therefore, as a writer who has a 'torn awareness of underdevelopment' and the advent of development

departs from the naturalist model due to his distancing, he does not lack criticism of modernization.

2 DISTANCING AND CLOSENESS OF THE NARRATOR

The novel begins, somewhat prophetically, with one of the men standing on the road near Manarairema. He declares: “Vai chegar o dia de faltar tudo”. The friend who accompanied him corroborates his prophecy by replying: “É o fim do mundo que vem aí¹⁰” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 21). These characters reflect on the future of humanity as they observe the arrival of what they believe are freighters. After the prophetic declaration, a mystery was already established in the small town in the following day:

(...) um grande acampamento fumegando e pulsando do outro lado do rio, coisa repentina, de se esfregar os olhos. As pessoas acordavam, chegavam à janela para olhar o tempo antes de lavar o rosto e davam com a cena nova. Uns chamavam outros, mostravam, indagavam, ninguém sabia.¹¹ (VEIGA, 2015, p. 24).

This mystery narrative dominates the entire first part of *A hora dos ruminantes*, entitled “The Arrival”. The mystery is reinforced by a heterodiegetic narrator who does not even know the men who come to Manarairema. The whole novel's point of view is situated within the small town. The view that we readers hold of the men is imparted to us by a narrator who knows the inhabitants of Manarairema very well, but who discovers the intentions of these outsiders little by little, alongside the characters. Like the townspeople, we readers observe the outsiders with curiosity, unaware of their

¹⁰ The day will come when everything is missing”. The friend who accompanied him corroborates his prophecy by replying: “It is the end of the world that is coming.

¹¹ A big camp pulsing across the river. People woke up, came to the window to look at the weather before washing their faces, and saw the new scene. Some called others, showed, inquired, no one knew.

real intentions. In the passage below, we can observe how the narrator speaks based on rumors, by use of the expression "it seems that":

Mesmo não prestando atenção aos curiosos, **parece que** os homens se aborreceram com aquele ajuntamento sistemático e deram para estender roupa numa corda esticada diante da cerca, justamente no ponto mais devassado. Algumas pessoas ainda tentaram subir nos fios da cerca, mas os grampos espirravam com o peso, o arame escorregava para baixo antes que elas tivessem tempo de ver qualquer coisa. Não vendo vantagem em ficar plantado diante de um tapume de panos (**parece que** os homens nunca recolhiam aquelas roupas), o povo conformou-se em continuar olhando o acampamento de longe.¹² (VEIGA, 2015, p. 35, grifos nossos).

In this passage, the repetition of the expression “it seems that” points to the distance between the narrator's point of view and the actions of the outsiders; at the same time, it signals a rapprochement to Manarairema. This imprecision in the narrative instance corroborates the mysterious quality that prevails in the novel. Since the narrator highlights in the third part of the novel that “Manarairema já estava no limiar da morte, e só um milagre a salvaria¹³” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 130), all we can do is follow the story and wait for the next steps the outsiders will take, considering the narrator, as has been mentioned, observes them from the town’s point of view. In this respect, the narrator's speech reveals to the reader the subjectivity of several characters, but also incorporates their voices into his own, sometimes reproducing the perspective of one, sometimes of another and, sometimes, even a collective voice – such as the voice of Manarairema.

¹² It does not pay attention to the onlookers, and it seems that the men were annoyed with that systematic gathering and found themselves hanging clothes on a rope stretched out in front of the fence, precisely at the most open point. Some people even tried to climb the fence wires, but the staples squished with the weight, the wire slipping down before they had time to see anything. Seeing no advantage in staying planted in front of a cloth fence (it seems that the men never collected those clothes), the people resigned themselves to continuing to look at the camp from afar.

¹³ Manarairema was already on the verge of death, and only a miracle would save her.

The novel is divided into three parts – “A chegada”, “O dia dos cachorros” and “O dia dos bois”. In the very first pages, the narrator introduces us a collective protagonist - the town of Manarairema - who is not used to dealing with outsiders. At first, it tries not to face the problem: “Manarairema foi dormir pensando nos vizinhos esquivos e fazendo planos para tratar com eles quando chegasse a ocasião¹⁴” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 26).

In this sense, it is essential to highlight the collective protagonism that the narrator attributes to the 'people of Manarairema'. For the German philosopher Hannah Arendt, the concept of people, rooted in the French Revolution, was synonymous with unhappiness (ARENDR, apud AGAMBEM, 2015, p. 35). In the same vein, we see throughout *A hora dos ruminantes* how the people are susceptible to various oppressions and cannot react to a new established order. If there ever was an alternative, such as a collective rebellion or an organized mutiny, this idea is not envisioned at any point in the novel. Some characters are at times more obstinate and display a more rebellious stance; however, they end up incorporating themselves, as we will see later, to the new order that has been established in the town.

Father Prudente, the town’s highest religious authority, is the first to make contact with the unknown men who had just arrived in the town, but is utterly ignored. Thus, the priest realizes that they do not respect him like the inhabitants of Manarairema do. Balduino, the priest’s assistant, witnesses the scene, and ends up prophesying about Manarairema: “Se aqueles homens eram como Balduino estava contando, empanturrados e atrevidos, Manarairema ainda ia ter muita dor de cabeça com eles”¹⁵ (VEIGA, 2015, p. 27). By means of free indirect speech that alternates between the voice of the narrator and that

¹⁴ Manarairema went to sleep thinking about her elusive neighbors and making plans to deal with them when the time came.

¹⁵ If those men were, as Balduino was telling them, stuffed and bold, Manarairema would still have many headaches with them.

of Balduino, the problems that Manarairema will face with the outsiders are foreseen.

The first man to feel Balduino's unoptimistic omen is Geminiano, portrayed in the narrative primarily as a strong-willed, obstinate black man who works with his donkey whenever he pleases and for whomever he wishes. In a dialogue full of ambiguities, a striking feature in the work of José J Veiga, we observe in subsequent pages how Geminiano changes his mind and surrenders to the outsiders, in a regimen that, throughout the narrative, verges on slavery. Geminiano is ultimately turned into a workhorse for the men and cannot find a way out of this situation.

In the course of this essay, we will show how the narrator gives voice to the town of Manarairema, and how this space receives and 'reacts' to a new social-political system, that is, how modernity and progress are inserted into the narrative and the consequences entailed for the characters in the novel. By oscillating between one point of view and another, the slippery narrator dissolves the formal differences in his own discourse precisely by creating a single unit out of different voices – which he does mainly by employing free indirect speech. In other words, as the narrator develops a unity between the voices of characters, of the space, and his own, he both criticizes modernity and breaches the naturalist aesthetic. This unification of voices occurs in the novel with no resort to the memorialist discourse of the 1930s or the naturalist journalistic discourse of the 1960s. Rather, it is achieved through the mystery and the movements of nearness and distancing.

3 THE 'PROGRESS' REACHES MANARAIREMA

Given the difficulty of understanding Veiga's narrator, it is possible to highlight a double criticism of progress in *A hora dos ruminantes*. On the one hand, the narrator points out how the capitalist logic brought by the new

inhabitants changed the characters, especially Geminiano and Amâncio. On the other hand, the progressive logic that advocates work and surplus value as its fundamental principles is found not only in the discourse of these new inhabitants, but also in that of the characters from Manarairema. We can first highlight how Geminiano and Amâncio feel attracted to the modernizing discourse held by these new inhabitants: “Se todo mundo aqui fosse como eles, Manarairema seria um pedaço de céu, ou uma nação estrangeira”¹⁶ (VEGA, 2015, p. 49). While Geminiano is the first to get involved in the work logic set by them, Amâncio is the first to realize how this new logic may benefit Manarairema. His speech points to an essential factor: the provincial town, and the entire country as well, are lagging behind. Therefore, if the old inhabitants adopted the practices of the new residents, the town would improve to the point of becoming comparable to a foreign nation. It is evident in Amâncio’s speech that he wishes the town to progress. Such progress, however, would only be possible with a change in the attitude of the population itself, which is responsible for the town’s backwardness.

Progress has always been regarded as a positive idea in society. As Adorno (1995) points out and Amâncio overlooks, the problem with this line of thinking lies in the logic of exchange that drives bourgeois society. In it, for there to be progress, there must be unequal exchange; if exchange were equal, nothing would happen, and everything would remain just as before. Accordingly, for Manarairema to progress, Geminiano and the other inhabitants would have to submit to this capitalist logic of exploitation and exhaustion.

In the first part of the novel, the narrator portrays the general disapproval of the people of Manarairema, especially in the report of the disrespect Father Prudencio and Geminiano suffered because of the new

¹⁶ If those men were, as Balduino was telling them, stuffed and bold, Manarairema would still have many headaches with them.

progressive order imposed by the new residents. Father Prudencio was the first to contact them, but he “virou-se para eles esperando o cumprimento, e eles nem tocaram o chapéu¹⁷” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 26). Later, Geminiano is presented as someone who “não gostou dos modos, e para mostrar que não tinha gostado continuou viagem, sem parar nem para olhar¹⁸” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 28). However, as the narrative unfolds, the collective signs of outrage gradually fall silent. In the third part of the novel, direct speech is scarce, and the narrator takes the lead to translate the collective suffering. In this aspect, the unveiling of the suffering of the people of Manaraima is presented to us by the narrative instance through grotesque and ironic images. If, in the first part of the text, the narrator seemed to agree with the progressive views of Geminiano and Amâncio, in parts two and three he expresses repulsion towards the matter. According to Juliano Carrupt do Nascimento:

O problema consiste em que o narrador se mantém distanciado, mas não distante; na verdade, ele não se distancia do imaginário característico do espaço e das personagens, sua soberania se dá, simplesmente, em sua fala organizada cuja vigência propõe as reações ou as não reações das personagens e do espaço em face do poder instaurado, no plano da narrativa.¹⁹ (NASCIMENTO, 2008, p. 302).

In other words, considering Nascimento's argument that the narrative instance remains at a distance, but not distant, it is possible to assert that the narrator stands as an observer who condones with little or nothing of what he describes. Nascimento highlights one example of this not distant distancing in

¹⁷ He turned to them, waiting for the greeting, and they didn't even touch his hat.

¹⁸ He didn't like the manners, and to show that he didn't like it, he continued his journey, not even stopping to look.

¹⁹ The problem is that the narrator remains distant but not distant. In fact, he does not distance himself from the characteristic image of space and characters. His sovereignty is simply given in his organized speech whose validity proposes the reactions or non-reactions of the characters and the space in the face of the established power.

the scene in which Amâncio visits the outsiders tent. In this place, he supposedly played shuttlecock with the yet unknown outsiders:

Amâncio jogando peteca com gente desconhecida... Tudo confuso, trançado, sobrando pontas. Se ele estava nesse papel, devia ser por outras pontarias. **E que homens eram aqueles outros que passavam o tempo num brinquedo tão miúdo, quando tinham tanto trabalho a fazer em volta, conforme dizia Geminiano?** A notícia não se encaixava, ficava solta, pedindo explicação.²⁰ (VEIGA, 2015, p.30).

This passage is written in free indirect discourse. The opinions expressed in it are not linked to a specific character; rather, they represent the voice of the people of Manarareima. In this sense, the narrator's voice and the general opinion of the population converge. After seeing Amâncio playing with the new inhabitants, the population turns to Geminiano to question him and resolve "the loose end". Regarding the question raised by the narrator in free indirect discourse in the passage above with Manarareima - "And which men were those others who spent time in such a small toy when they had so much work to do around them, as Geminiano had said" -, it is not just a question, but above all, a reproach from the narrator and the space to these characters. However, the narrator's criticism of the new residents' progressive logic is also directed at Manarareima's characters, who become contaminated with an eagerness for modernization and progress. From this perspective, the narrator incorporates Manarareima's voice to criticize outsiders through free indirect discourse, but at the same time also distances himself from the characters when criticizing them for surrendering to the logic of modernization. In this sense, Geminiano most clearly represents the logic of exhaustive work. The character, formerly talkative and strongly opinionated, gradually becomes apathetic:

²⁰ Amancio playing shuttlecock with unknown people... Everything confused, braided, leaving ends. If he was in this role, it must be for other purposes. And what men were those other men who spent their time in such a small toy, when they had so much work to do around them, as Geminiano said? The news didn't fit, it stayed loose, asking for an explanation.

“Geminiano consertou a carroça e continuou carreteando areia, cada vez mais calado e encolhido²¹”. (VEIGA, 2015, p. 57). The next step after apathy is madness: the grueling work starts to drive Geminiano out of his mind. At this point, he is already a very different person from the one he was at the beginning of the narrative: “Não adiantava mais falar com Geminiano. Aquele trabalho sem fim estava bulindo com o juízo dele. Ele agora preferia falar sozinho a conversar, e qualquer dia sairia por aí gritando e xingando a esmo (...)”²² (VEIGA, 2015, p. 58).

Therefore, this new mode of labor that Geminiano joined, focused entirely on productivity, supports our argument that the men try to introduce the capitalist logic in Manarairema. According to Adriana Röhrig’s analysis of *A hora dos ruminantes*:

Percebe-se aí [no romance de Veiga] uma mudança paradigmática, pois enquanto nas sociedades pré-capitalistas o fim da produção é o atendimento de certas necessidades sociais, na sociedade capitalista o trabalhador é posto para trabalhar para enriquecer o capitalista.²³(RÖHRIG, 2002, p.13).

In this respect, Geminiano represents the exploitation of the workforce and the alienation that results from this model in which the worker knows only one step of the production line, and ultimately points to the consequences of the sudden transition from a system based on artisan work to a capitalist scheme.

Adorno’s critique of the capitalist, progressive logic aligns with Max Weber's thought in “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”. In this classic sociological work, published in 1905, the German theorist shows how

²¹ Geminiano repaired the cart and continued hauling sand, increasingly silent and shrunken.

²² It was no use talking to Geminiano anymore. That never-ending job was boiling with his wits. He now preferred talking to himself to talking, and one day he would go around screaming and cursing at random.

²³ A paradigm shift can be seen there [in Veiga's novel], because while in pre-capitalist societies the end of production is to meet certain social needs, in capitalist society the worker is put to work to enrich the capitalist.

modern capitalism followed the path Benjamin Franklin advocated for in his famous sermon: work above everything, since time is money and earning as much as possible must be the goal of any citizen of working age. Weber starts from Nietzsche's ascetic ideal to explain the capitalist ethics, according to which the working population believes that one must have a life of intense work aiming at a later and superior reality. That is, leisure and pleasure should not be considered. Geminiano conforms to this capitalist ethics, whose motto is “ganhar dinheiro e sempre mais dinheiro, no mais rigoroso resguardo de todo gozo imediato do dinheiro ganho.”²⁴ (WEBER, 2015, p. 54). With no immediate enjoyment, the purpose of human beings becomes to make money. Thus, money is no longer regarded as a means to satisfy the personal needs of the people.

According to Weber, the great adversary of the spirit of capitalism is traditionalism, since, a priori, human beings do not necessarily desire to endlessly earn money, as modern capitalism advocates. As the following passage clearly illustrates, the inhabitants of Manarairema, before the arrival of the men and, consequently, of capitalist ethics, worked little – and earned little – but were happy:

Quem havia de dizer que Manarairema ia mudar em tão pouco tempo? Antigamente a gente vivia descasado, sossegado, dormia e acordava e achava tudo no lugar certo, não era preciso pensar nada adiantado. Hoje a gente pensa até para dar bom-dia.²⁵ (VEIGA, 2015, p. 75).

After the men arrived and introduced a progressive, positivist ideal, the town changes and, to a large extent, is deprived of its former character.

²⁴ Earning money and always more money, in the strictest protection of all immediate enjoyment of the money ear.

²⁵ Who was to say that Manarairema would change in such a short time? In the past we lived unmarried, peaceful, slept, and woke up, and found everything in the right place, it was not necessary to think anything ahead. Today we even think to say good morning.

Manuel is the character who tries in every possible way not to be included in this new order brought by the men. Amâncio tries to convince him that he must collaborate (by repairing a wagon used for transporting goods); otherwise, he would have to face the consequences. At first, Manuel is emphatic: “Quanto mais escuto falar em carroça, mais enjoio tomo de tudo quanto é apetrecho de roda. Não tenho nada com carroça, não mandei ninguém carregar areia em carroça, quem mandou que conserte. De mais a mais, não engulo aquela gente.²⁶” (VEIGA, 2015 p. 74). Amâncio, however, points out that they have fallen into a trap, from which they cannot escape. Manuel eventually agrees to repair the wagon and becomes part of the logic in which the entire town has been inserted. However, why are the inhabitants forced to start following this capitalist logic? In the next section, we will discuss this issue.

In *A hora dos ruminantes*, Geminiano and Manuel represent, at first, a rejection to the newly imposed work order, but are then forced to incorporate themselves into it. At the end of the novel, Geminiano reports, appalled, how the money he was supposed to earn from his exhausting work was nothing more than a promise: “- Tratantes. Não cumpriram o combinado, nunca. Se não fosse a mulher se matar no forno e na costura, até fome a gente tinha passado lá em casa.²⁷” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 139)

Reflecting on the period when Veiga's novel was published, 1966, we can appreciate how Brazilian society was undergoing major social and political transformations. For the sociologist Florestan Fernandes, Brazil, like other Latin American countries, experienced a bourgeois revolution of a different order than the so-called first world countries. This process only took place in

²⁶ The more I hear about a cart, the more I get sick of everything that is wheel gear. I don't have anything with a cart. I didn't send anyone to carry sand in a cart, who ordered it to be fixed. Besides, I don't swallow those people.

²⁷ Scammers. Didn't do what was agreed, never. If it wasn't for the woman to kill herself in the oven and sewing, we would have been hungry at home.

the second half of the 20th century and introduced a new market logic in the country:

A fase de irrupção do capitalismo monopolista se caracteriza pela reorganização do mercado e do sistema de produção, através das operações comerciais, financeiras e industriais da “grande corporação” (predominantemente estrangeira, mas também estatal ou mista). Embora as tendências para essa evolução sejam anteriores, ela só se acentua no fim da década de 1950 e só adquire caráter estrutural posteriormente à Revolução de 1964.²⁸ (FERNANDES, 2010, p. 264).

According to Florestan Fernandes, the bourgeois thought of modern capitalism asserted itself through the modernizing élan. Thus, if a country desired to progress, modernize itself, and become a developed nation, it was essential to accept the 'spirit' of the bourgeois revolution. Nevertheless, at no time did “this “bourgeois spirit” demand the ruthless defense of citizen’s rights (FERNANDES, 2010, 351). Florestan Fernandes demonstrates how capitalism in Brazil was built upon class domination, and upon control of a small group over the destiny of the collectivity. When analyzing *A hora dos ruminantes*, we may observe how the logic pushed by the men to the small town resembles the process experienced by Brazil in the sixties. The small town has no choice but to accept and resign, since it sees no way to confront the power and violence brought about by the capitalist order²⁹, as we will see in the next section. Moreover, by communing with the characters “at a distance”, the narrator denounces this progressive logic.

²⁸ The irruption phase of monopoly capitalism is characterized by the reorganization of the market and the production system, through the commercial, financial and industrial operations of the “large corporation” (predominantly foreign, but also state or mixed). Although the trends for this evolution are prior, it was only accentuated at the end of the 1950s and only acquired a structural character after the 1964 Revolution.

²⁹ Along the same lines as Florestan Fernandes, sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in *Autoritarismo e democratização* (1975), explains the modernizing character of the 1960s in Brazil, primarily characterized by import-substituting industrialization. FHC questions, however, what became known as the “miracle”, relativizing the economic and social transformations both in the town and, mainly, in the rural environment, historically underprivileged throughout Latin America. (CARDOSO, 1975, p. 70)

4 POWER AND VIOLENCE IN MANARAIREMA

If in the first part of the novel the characters Geminiano, Manuel, and Amâncio are given considerable prominence through their speeches, from the second and third part onwards – *O dia dos bois* – the narrator’s speech dominates the narrative. From this moment on, criticism of progress, power and violence becomes more scathing in the narrative instance, no longer hidden within characters’ voices. At the beginning of the second part of the novel, as a demonstration of power, with no regard for the consequences, the outsiders unleash a swarm of dogs on Manarairema. Then, the narrator imparts a judgment that is contrary to Amâncio’s perceptions, who from the beginning of the novel believed in the “good intentions” of the modernization imposed by the new inhabitants. According to the narrator, the men were not joking and did not show any consideration for the rights of others:

O derrame de cachorros foi o primeiro sinal forte de que os homens não eram aqueles anjos que Amâncio estava querendo impingir. Mesmo que fizessem aquilo por simples brincadeira, mostraram completa desconsideração pelos direitos alheios.³⁰ (VEIGA, 2015, p. 58).

From then on, the outsiders show that they can whatever they like, with no risk of retaliation from the population: “- Engraçado. Eles vieram trabalhar, trazer progresso, fazer o bem. Então por que ficam entocados lá longe, cercados, fechados, não se abrem com ninguém, e quando querem se distrair soltam cachorros em cima da gente?³¹” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 67). When addressing the issue of violence by men in his essay “The Critique of Violence – The Critique of

³⁰ The stroke of dogs was the first strong sign that men were not those angels that Amancio was trying to foist. Even if they did it as a joke, they showed complete disregard for the rights of others.

³¹ Funny. They came to work, to make progress, to do good. So why are they holed up out there, fenced-in, locked in, not opening up to anyone, and when they want to be distracted, they release dogs on top of us?

Power”, Walter Benjamin demonstrates how all power, in the making and preserving of law, generates violence. Upon arriving in Manarairema, the men needed to establish and maintain power over a traditional town that was not inserted in the modern capitalist logic. Without resorting to power, it would not have been possible to change the logic of the town and establish a new progressive order. However, this new order is imposed through violence and, consequently, maintained through it as well. Still according to Benjamin, society can always question the ethics of the institution of power, as Manuel Florêncio did in the passage above. That is, one can always reflect on the sense of justice in the practice of power and violence. Therefore, for Benjamin, “a questão central passa a ser a da legitimidade de determinados meios que constituem o poder.³²” (BENJAMIN, 1986, p. 161)

Amâncio, a character who is the holder of knowledge in the small town and, therefore, has a power of a different order – knowledge – works as a persuader in Manarairema. He constantly attempts to regurgitate the rhetoric of capital and to show how, despite the town experiencing the men’s power – through the swarms of dogs and oxen –, it is all worth for the sake of progress: “- Bom – disse Manuel Florêncio –, você diz que eles estão trabalhando e que no fim nós todos vamos lucrar. Então eu acredito e fico esperando”³³ (VEIGA, 2015, p. 67). In other words, since the beginning of the novel, both the narrator and the characters present the outsiders as a vector of modernization; however, the modernization promised by the men and, above all, advocated by Amâncio and Geminiano, does not occur in Manarairema. In this respect, the progress so desired by the characters, and to some extent by the distanced narrator, is not only a failed project but also ruled by authoritarianism. In other words, the modernization outsiders provided was intrinsically built on an authoritarian

³² The central issue becomes that of the legitimacy of certain means that constitute power.

³³ Well - Manuel Florêncio said - you say that they are working and that in the end we will all profit. So I believe and keep waiting.

model belonging to an archaic model. In this regard, Roberto Schwarz, in *O Pai de Família e outros estudos*, emphasizes the incongruence of Brazilian modernization being linked to the logic of world economic progress by means of archaisms:

[...] incorporados ao mercado mundial – ao mundo moderno – na qualidade de econômica e socialmente atrasados, de fornecedores de matéria prima e trabalho barato. A sua ligação ao novo se faz, estruturalmente, através de seu atraso social, que se reproduz em lugar de se extinguir.³⁴ (SCHWARZ, 1978, p. 77).

To wait and resign is actually the only action – or lack thereof – that the inhabitants of Manarairema take: “Suspirava-se muito em toda parte e ninguém se comovia, os suspiros de um não interessavam aos sofrimentos íntimos dos outros, eram meros comentários à desesperança geral.³⁵” (VEIGA, 2015, p. 130). If the ‘good priest’, upon seeing the swarm of oxen, decides to close the window and contemplate his collection of stamps, the attitude of his fellow townspeople does not go against the grain. It is the men who decide to leave at the end of the narrative, undisturbed at all times. Only then can the town return to its usual course, as it was the days before their arrival: “O relógio da igreja rangeu as engrenagens, bateu horas, lerdo, desregulado. Já estavam erguendo o peso, acertando os ponteiros. As horas voltavam, todas elas, as boas, as más, como deve ser.³⁶” (SCHWARZ, p. 140). Therefore, the outcome of the narrative does not point to a promising, optimistic future. On the contrary, the reader is left

³⁴ They are incorporated into the world market – the modern world – as economically and socially backward, as suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor. Its connection to the new is structurally made through its social backwardness, which reproduces itself instead of extinguishing itself.

³⁵ There was a lot of sighs everywhere and no one was moved, the sighs of one did not interest the inner sufferings of others, they were mere comments on the general despair.

³⁶ The church clock creaked its gears, chimed hours, sluggish, out of adjustment. They were already lifting the weight, setting the hands. The hours came back, all of them, the good, the bad, as it should be.

with the impression that, if the men were to return to the town, Manarairema would resignedly endure it just as it did before.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

An unoptimistic omen at the beginning of *A hora dos ruminantes* declared that Manarairema would soon greatly suffer. As we have seen in the course of this essay, the arrival of the 'new' completely changed the routine of the inhabitants of this always quiet small town. Previously, its greatest problems were related to the 'strong genius' of some residents, such as the overbearing Amâncio. The narrator's movements of nearness and distancing from the characters' perspective, while corroborating the atmosphere of mystery and fear in relation to outsiders, also breaks with the continuity of the naturalist aesthetics in Brazilian literary tradition, as Flora Sussekind discusses in *Tal Brasil, qual romance?*.

However, the arrival of the men caused the inhabitants of Manarairema to suffer much more than they had ever imagined. Although some townspeople actively take part in the new order put forward by the 'men', they all feel the effects of the actions of this group that 'camps' on the other side of the river, be it by fear instilled by rumors, or by the severe droves of oxen and dogs.

Florestan Fernandes argues that Brazil experienced a new era of modernization in the 1960s. In the same vein, we observe in *A hora dos ruminantes* a truly modernizing thought promoted by outsiders who do not belong to the universe of the town. The town is embedded in a logic quite removed from the capitalist logic, whose motto is the promotion of exhaustive work in favor of a modern society. In this respect, *A hora dos ruminantes* reveals its Brazilian substratum, especially concerning the narrator's characterization of the space, the characters – above all, Geminiano and Amâncio – and the plot. On the one hand, the narrator introduces us to Geminiano and Amâncio as

advocates of modernization, as a way to oppose backwardness. On the other hand, the narrative instance strongly criticizes progress through a movement of distancing itself from the characters and by the search for Manarairema's voice. In this sense, the narrator highlights Brazil's underdevelopment and cultural dependence, in a way bringing the narrative closer to 1930s regionalism. However, the mixture of the narrator's, the characters', and the space's voices drives Veiga's narrative away from the naturalist tradition, as Flora Sussekind points out.

Therefore, José J. Veiga crafts a novel brimming with meanings, whose strength lies in the relationship between a traditional town and the 'thriving' progress that knocks on its door. If there was a belief in Brazil in the 1960s that the country needed to modernize itself, in *A hora dos ruminantes* Veiga deconstructs this idea through a story marked by resignation and suffering, in which the spirit of capitalism makes the night fall earlier in Manarairema and takes its time to leave the town.

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