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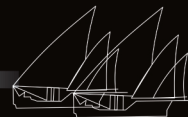
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TEXTOS EM PORTUGUÊS/INGLÊS



DIALOGUE BETWEEN VIDAS SECAS AND GAIBÉUS:
A UNIVERSE OF SILENCES

DIALÓGO ENTRE VIDAS SECAS E GAIBÉUS:
UM UNIVERSO DE SILÊNCIOS

Cecília Krug¹

ABSTRACT: The article discusses two literary works of the twentieth century, *Vidas Secas* and *Gaibéus*. Both novels are an open provocation to the situation in a certain historical period, in the countries of their respective authors. Among them we identify some social, political, economic issues, such as poor working conditions, poverty, hunger, drought, repression and censorship. The last word is related to the novel's characters' silencing that somehow represent the society of that time. Graciliano Ramos and Alves Redol capture and represent in their literary works some aspects of that time experienced by both in order to lead the reader to a critical reading of that reality of oppression and retrenchment ideas. About the topic, this article aims to compare the novels *Gaibéus* from Alves Redol and *Vidas Secas* from Graciliano Ramos, clarifying similarities and contrasts present in the works. On the analysis of the works and to contribute in an enriching way of the ideas and interpretations were researched some references on some texts as Antonio Candido, Tania Franco Carvalho, Alfredo Bosi, Theodor Adorno and Afranio Coutinho.

KEYWORDS: Comparative Literature; Graciliano Ramos; Alves Redol; *Vidas Secas* and *Gaibéus*.

RESUMO: O artigo discute duas obras literárias do século XX, *Vidas Secas* e *Gaibéus*. Ambas as obras fazem uma provocação em aberto de situações vigentes, em determinado período histórico, nos países de seus respectivos autores. Dentre elas destacam-se algumas questões sociais, políticas, econômicas, tais como as más condições de trabalho, a miséria, a fome, a seca, a repressão e a censura. Esta última tem relação com o *silenciamento* das personagens nas obras que, de certa forma, representam a sociedade daquela época. Graciliano Ramos e Alves Redol captam e representam em suas obras alguns aspectos daquele momento vivenciado por ambos, de maneira a requerer do leitor uma leitura crítica daquela realidade de opressão e cerceamento de ideias. Acerca do assunto, esse artigo tem por objetivo comparar os romances *Gaibéus*, de Alves Redol e *Vidas Secas*, de Graciliano Ramos, aclarando semelhanças e contrastes presentes neles. Diante da análise e, para contribuir de forma enriquecedora nas ideias e interpretações, foram buscadas referências nos textos de Antônio Candido, Tânia Franco Carvalho, Alfredo Bosi, Theodor Adorno e Afranio Coutinho.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Literatura Comparada; Graciliano Ramos; Alves Redol; *Vidas Secas* e *Gaibéus*.

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A lot of concerns, ideas, scholars questions and writers collaborate to the reflections about elements that are revealed in many ways, contributing significantly in the creation and analysis of literary productions. In this sense, the interdisciplinary dialogue and the cycles of relationships in the literature are established, designing questions that conceptualize Comparative Literature.

Assuming this interdisciplinary that surrounds the dialogues, we infer the fact that comparative literature cannot be understood only as a synonym for “comparison”, but a procedure that goes beyond, in searching of interpretations, analysis, literary relations and ideas in order to establish the interactions in literary productions,

[...] Comparative literature compares not the procedure itself, but because, as analytical and interpretative resource, the comparison allows this kind of literary study an appropriate exploration of the working area and achieve the aims that it comes up with (CARVALHAL, 2006, p. 07, our translation).

Therefore, the comparative scholar takes into account the diversity of ideas, thoughts, feelings, history and relationships between two or more literatures and establishes analysis that aims the growth interpretations. According to these ideas, Carvalho (2006, p 06 e 07, our translation) says that “literary criticism, for example, when analyzing a work, is often taken to establish comparisons with other works of other authors, to clarify and justify value judgments”.

It is worth mentioning that, in this comprehensive process of comparative researches, some aspects are relevant, as the similarities, the differences, the time, the place and the history. From this point of view, it is important to remember that solidarity among authors, the time and the space transformations and understanding ideas, shared and analysed by the researchers are important in the comparative studies.

In other words, it is related to affinities and differences and also intertextuality. In this sense, through intertextual analysis that build interpretations, insights and understandings of what contributed to the work and to the author at the time of its creation. This idea takes into account that literary productions and its speeches are wide and do not mischaracterize the relations with other knowledge areas such as explained by Maingueneau (2006, p.60, our translation) “[...] category that allows better to learn relations between literature and philosophy, literature and religion, literature and myth, literature and science.”

Finally, a comparative work assumes an investigative study of the historical context of the novels that will be analysed to understand that they are situated in a historical, social, political, economic and cultural time. Such elements can enrich and explain interpretations of artistic works and validate some concepts, styles and theories. In addition to these ideas, they are new resources to literary analysis, as Candido explains (2006, p. 18, our translation) “[...] always remembering that the current criticism, for by far interested in the formal aspects, cannot dismiss or diminish independent subjects [...]”. Thus, the works pass into a vast field, by further from the original value to contribute to the literature’s history in which the authors represent the real situation at the moment literary works were produced.

In this context, to search and compare the novels *Vidas Secas* and *Gaibéus*, it notes up that both works were thought and produced in a historical and political moment with certain similarities, although some differences on the issues of the literary movement and the place where the authors lived. In Portugal, *Gaibéus* novel was in the Neorealist period, and in Brazil, *Vidas Secas* was contemplated the list of the Modernism works. From this perspective, there are relevant considerations that are setting up for such analysis of the works mentioned.

The novel *Gaibéus*, written by Alves Redol, refers to the *gaibéus* life, they are workers that have occupation in the fields where rice is cultivated in the Ribatejo or Beira Baixa areas. The *gaibéus* or workers were *hired* to hard work from sunrise to sunset, with low income, being compared with machines, and even mistreated, that is, through an explicit exploration. From this overview, the author reveals the social difference between the owner and the employee. In this context, Alves Redol intends to represent the collective, the alienation and the passivity in those characters related forefront all the problems of that time.

The other novel *Vidas Secas*, written by Graciliano Ramos, presents a story about northeastern family in Brazil context, father, mother, children and also the dog, called Baleia. These characters survive in a hostile environment, with different needs, such as drought, hunger, even the lack of structure in the northeastern lands and the state’s absence. In this way, these characters are forced to migrate constantly, searching for better life conditions.

It is noticed that both Graciliano Ramos and Alves Redol work uniquely about topics that are relevant in two different societies, but with similarities about social problems. So, They have the same ideal: to report

through the writing art, the adversities experienced by many people in the society.

It is inferred in the European context, specifically in Portugal, relevant facts, which succeed in the transition between Monarchy and Republic. The decisions about this moment are crucial in the social-historical understanding of the time, when the Republic was inaugurated on 05th October 1910. In the meantime, according to Mendonça (2003), Portugal goes through numerous setbacks in financial matters, for no longer it had not received more rents and profits from ex-colonies like Brazil and economic conflicts post-war are established. And, Sidônio Pais, Portugal ex-minister in Berlin, gives a coup and established the dictatorship as a regime in the country. However, he was murdered shortly afterwards. At this point of facts comes the name of Salazar, to take over and manage economic, political and social of the nation. It is important to observe that Salazar and his supporters were based on conservative tradition and were imbued with fascist principles. It is necessary to clarify that Salazar assumed effectively in 1932, as the Chairman of the Ministers Council and, subsequently, in 1933, announced the constitution that inaugurated the New State and it disseminated all the principles from Salazar regime.

Therefore, the *Gaibéus* work by Alves Redol was first published in 1939, which was designed and built in this troubled context in Portugal in the 30s, with the government system configured with the fascist tendencies, with the farmer aristocracy and the exploration on field workers. At this point, the decisions and control were determined by the military forces, so that censorship and abuse of power were imposed by right ideas, which are established a strong control on economic, political and social issues. So, the Salazar society caused repressed people by dictatorial regimes that lasted around 40 years. The dictatorial government went through the Second World War and the 70's and, according to Rosas (1994), all departments and institutions in the society from this time were controlled by the military forces that represented the power.

About Alves Redol literary style, before such circumstances, it was established in a Neorealist context, which has the characteristics related to reality, the attention was turned to the art and the production of literary, but it is no longer only focus on the fictional and the feelings, but the world perception, such as social, critical and, in a way, an anxious feeling to adduce what really prevails in a conflicting moment in which all forms of expression were suppressed. About this, the literary works brought a social denunciation, relentless pursuit of criticism and reflection for

social transformation, in which this artistic situation goes further, because it leads us to think of art full of meanings and interpretations, as well as closer to reality, where you can design it as an intercession to the literary construction. Accordingly to it, Adorno explains (1971, p 289, our translation): “Certainly, the art as a form of knowledge, implies knowledge of reality and there is no reality that is not social. Thus, the truth content and social content are mediated [...]”.

Given this conjecture, Redol wrote too among other considerations, the art must have a function that favors the man in society, which is able to transcend the pleasure only, in order to significantly contributes to society life.

Graciliano Ramos and Alves Redol lived in different contexts, however the historical moment experienced by them showed that both wanted changing in literary productions, so this was a conflict situation with repressions and oppressions.

In the 30 and 40 decades, Brazil had many changes that contributed to other perspectives about artistic participations and literary productions, as new political relations, both in education and in art, industry expansions in the country, World War, economic crisis and conflicts in various sectors of society. In 1930, Getúlio Vargas took the power with populist politics, although authoritarianism prevailed. As a result, in 1936, many thinkers in society, described as communists were criticized, suffered repressions and they were even arrested or exiled in other countries, which contributed to the establishment of the Military Dictatorship period in Brazil, causing many social conflicts. Regarding to this context full of conflicts experienced by the artists, Coutinho writes (2004, p. 278, our translation):

It was not difficult at a time of intense propaganda of social reform and even revolution as in the 30s, that the artists constituted a *engagée* literature, political participation, to “expose” the ills of the current state premised the necessary revolutionary transformation. Many of these writers have become to political activists, coming to constitute a real left-wing literature.

In this sense, the society in general suffers from oppression and people take more awareness of social problems and understanding about political and economical issues. Therefore, the artists of this time, not unrelated and out of society events, approach in their literary productions subjects and themes with aim to report, to make inquiries and launch so-

lutions for anxieties experienced by many people, since keep on all forms of oppression and censorship. In these terms,

Summarily, it can be said that the problem of engagement, whatever the value taken as absolute by intellectual participant, was the keynote of novelists who reached adulthood between 30 and 40. For them it's phrase Camus: "the novel is, first, an intelligent exercise in favor a nostalgic or angry sensitivity. (BOSI, 2006, p. 390, our translation)

It's worth mentioning that the Brazilian Modernism, according to Moisés (2001), in three phases (1922 to the present days), seeking artistic freedom, in the form of expression, creation and appreciation of society's characteristics and artists inspiration, without censorships and oppressions. So, Graciliano Ramos is pointed in the second phase of modernism, who emphasizes the engaged and politicized literature, as well as social and ideological issues. As explained Coutinho (2006, p.141, our translation): "About these considerations, Modernism is a rough effort and happy for cultural readjustment to social and ideological conditions".

Graciliano had interests in politics, journalism and published many novels and short stories and books for children. It stands out among his works the novel *Vidas Secas*, as a great repercussion work, not only because it presents society problems, but also it shows the man's condition living on authoritarian regimes, the question of democracy in such a rude and rough universe.

On the understanding of the historical context, it is understood that the concerns of Graciliano Ramos with *Vidas Secas* (1938) and Alves Redol with *Gaibéus* novels (1939) have engaged literature with criticism in the discussions by showing restrained people in the authoritarian regimes in Brazil and Portugal. In *Gaibéus*, it is highlighted the collective, although, at times, appears in the novel the boys who dreamed and made plans, the community idea is presented in the work. In other work, *Vidas Secas* it is the strength of the oppressed northeast people, and the image of this Sertanejo without expectations about a better life, which, in a way, also this represents a whole class intimidated. The narrators style in both novels are elaborated with a critical eye, both used the stylized "voice" between refined narrators and the simple and humble way of those characters, that represents a lot from society in general and it brings a new transfiguration, an honest vision with miserable characters and their universe. The novels narrators are omniscient, they are aware of the history,

the characters' situation and they brought innovations in the way of narrating as it is observed in a fragment from the work *Vidas Secas*:

Day came and day went. The nights covered the abrupt earth. The wiped out cover lowered, getting dark, broken only by the reddening sunset. So small, lost in the burning desert, the fugitives grabbed figuring their disgraces and fears. The Fabiano's heart beat together with Sinha Victoria's heart, a tired hug made them near, felt even ragged clothes that covered them. They resisted the weakness, moved away ashamed, no mood to confront again the harsh light, afraid to lose the hope that liven up them all (RAMOS, 2006, p. 13 and 14, our translation).

About the novels writing, it is observed that there is a difference in the Portuguese work, it is referred about the using of the cinematographic narrative technique, which approximates the work perception by the readers the sensation realized by the film viewers, causing a greater concern reading. There is also the presence of pictorial visual language that incites to create prints, as throughout the novel there were paintings, feelings, impressions from reading and building images. The *Gaibéus* work is a landmark of this feature by the repetition of the characters actions in order to reproduce as near as possible the reality.

Another important detail in *Gaibéus's* work is the epigraph at the beginning of the work, which aims to clarify and bring information to the reader, which makes it clear that there was a field work for writing, as clarifying this assertion can be checked the heading below:

They sensed it since 1936 many men of that time. I was with them. *Gaibéus* germinated at that time and it was consciousness alerted before being novel. Who read it, however, should turn it to the history coordinates then. Only that way people will know how to read it in fully way (REDOL, 2011, p. 27, our translation).

Both Graciliano as Redol guide their works with a dream stylistic mark, it is related to reverie, when the characters dream of a better life, about the rain that will come, with a place to live, with a job. This novel construction mode reflects the mark of the critical narrator and the characters that are taintless. This feature is realized in the two works. The following excerpt illustrates this stylistic style presents in *Vidas Secas*:

Fabiano was happy and believed in that land because he did not know how it was or where it was. Repeated nicely the words from Sinha Vitória that grumbled because she trusted in him. And they went to the south, focused on the dream. A big city, full of strong people. The boys in schools, learning difficult and necessary things (RAMOS, 2006, p. 127, our translation).

In the *Gaibéus* work, in some parts of the novel, people are inert and apathetic in the achievement of a better life. However, some *gaibéus* boys dream of a changing, the dream beyond the sea and the land conquering, as read in:

The two emigrant *gaibéus* feel the ditch, to board the eyes and the desires on the boat that depart. They lost that boat, but they will go on another - another that is bigger, because that is narrow to the size of the dreams. From a wider port they will go to adventures in the new lands. Both want to live why they will go - as soon as, because the days and the nights always go and they are in hurry to be men (REDOL, 2011, p 213, our translation).

On the relentless subhuman questioning about the characters that match in the novels, the authors put people with animals characteristics and vice versa, not to ridicule but, yes, to show the rude, the harsh aspects and the adversities that the humans live with, those are man's zoomorphization and animals' anthropomorphization. Realizing these characteristics, when several times, Fabiano must say that he is a man, because he felt as an animal, called himself the "animal" according to Ramos (2006 p. 19, our translation) "You are an animal, Fabiano". The character even asks himself if he was really an "animal". Redol also makes clear, in the novel, several passages, in which human characters present animals behaviors or they are compared to machines because they needed to work in a nonstop style. People are treated as if they were animals, such as mare and cattle, they were tired and breathless, but they could not stop the work. It can be observed in this part Redol (2011, p. 196, our translation) "Do not stop the machines - do not stop the men. There are no men - there are machines. Only machines".

Something else surrounds the both authors narratives, the question of "time" as explained by Nunes (2008, p.74, our translation) "Although the word time has the penchant to mean a single natural reality, it is no less a polysemic term that harmonizes the conception of a plural time as set of variables relationships between events". In *Vidas Secas* novel, a

stylistic style that Graciliano uses is the way to approach the characters wishes, the soon desires, the possibility to build a paradox and to build a dream, when the author uses the future unreal conditional tense throughout the narrative as it is shown below:

They were all happy. Sinha Vitória would wear a wide branched skirt. Sinhá Vitória wilted face would be younger, sinhá Vitória fall wob buttocks would be thick, sinhá Vitória red clothes would cause the other caboclas the envy. (RAMOS, 2006, p.16, our translation)

The passage shows clearly the desire and resilience feelings from characters, in other words, the changing of life. This feature is somewhat related to the oppression and marginalization suffered by people in that society at that time.

There is, however, a connection about the “time” exposed in *Gaibéus*. In this work, the workers show arduous repetition about the time they work, the time that is shown is temporal aspect that indicates and makes relations with repressions. The author uses the temporal aspect as an ideological resource. Also, the narrative is constructed on the jobs issues that are guided by the seasons changing, the weather, for example, the fall, the drought, the rain that comes. There is the passage that we can verify this: “But they did not want to think about rain. The rain became more painful than the heat wave sunless. The sickles would stop and the work was the bread.” (REDOL, 2011, p. 140, our translation). This form is characterized the *gaibéus* work. The work was a support for living, that is, the food, hard work and no time to talk, to increasingly generate profits to the land owners. This specific way on writing narrative brings interests in capitalism, characteristic of portuguese Neorealism.

It is recurrent in these novels the lack of speech aspect as well as the characters silencing. This language feature, in a way, shows linguistic marginalization or they are resources to stigmatize the characters that are in one way or another perceived in the narratives. The impression is something as irony by the narrator, which is found in the work *Vidas Secas* when Tomás da bolandeira was seen as a man who knew letters and who liked reading, but he was fragile in relation to nature things, and, about Fabiano, the ignorance of the literate world, but he has the strength to live in nature. This situation projects the idea of writer and politician versus explored and ignorant, as it can be revealed in the following excerpt: “Fabiano hesitated, grumbled, as he did always when people talked to him incomprehensible words” (RAMOS, 2006, p. 120, our translation). About

this ideia, Holanda says (1992, p. 35, our translation) “Fabiano silence, exposes oppression: the linguistic system shows the social system, which haunts.”

The whole question about Fabiano’s difficulties in speaking and arguing has deep influence on social relations that he has in the novel. He is submissive and oblivious to his rights, the character is never understood and he sees his hopes dashed and his dreams far away. Besides Fabiano, the children also spoke little, the Sinhá Vitória was the most educated character and she knew something of the literate world, but, in general, the characters are silent facing so many hardships and deprivations. Another episode that confirms the silencing is in the chapter “Jail”, when, after being arrested, Fabiano is in silence faced to military authoritarianism. The absence of speech also is present in chapter “The older boy” as the parrot that died, then it is observed: “could not stop being dumb. Ordinarily the family spoke little. And after that disaster all lived quiet, rarely speak some short words” (RAMOS, 2006, p.12, our translation).

Alves Redol uses similar style in writing, that is, the characters silencing, coming to the point of dehumanization, the exploration issue as the manual and sexual service, oppression, obstinacy for the work created by the system, low income for sustenance, the labors subordination and exploration, rigorous and extreme, which lead to the characters silencing in the narrative. The workers or *gaibéus* in the narrative are the marginalized layers, because Salazar’s system imposed subhuman rules, which are revealed with the passage: “The guys working in silence and only sickles and corn cob speak. The coughs, from time to time, say that there were people there- that distinguishes them from the machines, which have no lungs” (REDOL, 2011, p. 56, our translation).

In the end, Graciliano Ramos and Alves Redol had interest to expose the literary productions their social perceptions, by renewing and engaged criticism. This way is evidenced by the silence using as the horizon, as the imminence of sense, since it was the only tool that both could use in the context they lived, about silencing topic, Orlandi writes the conjecture:

The power relations in a society like ours always produce censorship, so that there is always silence besides the words. Then, in the analysis, we should note what is not being said, what can not be said. (ORLANDI, 2009, p. 83, our translation)

Thus, it can infer that the relation of the characters silencing is nothing more than a representation of the silenced voices of many in society, individuals who resemble the characters of Graciliano Ramos and Alves Redol when they stay inert in this state of apathy, loneliness and silence in front of so many conflicts, disappointments and frustration with politics, with social, with representatives who give no “voice” and prefer the “silence” of all. Anyway, the message that the authors wanted to possibly raise is important for literary studies, not only for purposes of understanding the time and conflicting and adverse issues of their countries, but also to understand that the “silence” fits to expose that literature is an art that even on rough censorships and oppressions, can capture and express human feelings, which, for various reasons, silencing themselves.

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