

The discourse of resistance as a political metaphor of Fantastic Literature in a scenario of democratic crisis /

O discurso de resistência como metáfora política da Literatura Fantástica em cenário de crise democrática

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a reflection on the mechanisms of production of the discourse of resistance as a political metaphor of Fantastic Literature in a scenario of a democratic crisis based on an analytical critical nature study of the books *A Hora dos Ruminantes* by José J. Veiga and *O Seminário dos Ratos* by Lygia Fagundes Telles. The study has as its general objective to understand the idea of Fantastic Literature discourse as a political metaphor and as specific objectives to evaluate the degree of sustainability and effectiveness of this discourse amid the growing resurgence of

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authoritarian governments. The theoretical contributions of Todorov (1981), Berardinelli (2011), Camarani (2014), Candido (2015), Vereza (2010), among others, substantiate the analyzes undertaken here which emphasize the relevance of the effervescence of resistance discourses housed within of Fantastic Literature as fracture bias of different hegemonic fields of knowledge in a reality steeped in crises.

KEYWORDS: Discourse of Resistance. Fantastic literature. Metaphor. Politics.

RESUMO

O presente artigo apresenta uma reflexão acerca dos mecanismos de produção do discurso de resistência como metáfora política da Literatura Fantástica em cenário de crise democrática a partir de um estudo de natureza crítica analítica das obras *A Hora dos Ruminantes* de José J. Veiga e *O Seminário dos Ratos* de Lygia Fagundes Telles. O estudo tem como objetivo geral a tarefa de compreender a ideia do discurso da literatura fantástica como metáfora política e como objetivos específicos avaliar o grau de sustentabilidade e eficácia desse discurso em meio ao crescente recrudescimento dos governos autoritários. As contribuições teóricas de Todorov (1981), Berardinelli (2011), Camarani (2014), Candido (2015), Vereza (2010), dentre outros fundamentaram as análises aqui empreendidas as quais ressaltam a relevância da efervescência dos discursos de resistência abrigados no seio da Literatura Fantástica como viés de fratura dos diferentes campos de saberes hegemônicos em uma realidade mergulhada em crises.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso de resistência; Literatura fantástica; Metáfora; Política.

1 Introduction

The thematic call of Comparative Literature and Literature Teaching launched as a research and production proposal by the Revista Letras Raras, from the Federal University of Campina Grande - UFCG in The year 2024, falls into the soil of our research project, in a very fruitful way the opportunity to Let us reflect in more detail on “Discourses of resistance in a scenario of democratic crisis”.

We conducted a study entitled "Between Rats and Ruminants: The Politics of the Fantastic in Veiga and Telles," which focuses on reflecting on literary discourse in times of political and social crisis, through the study of fantastic literature in the works *O Seminário dos Ratos* by Lygia Fagundes Telles and *A Hora dos Ruminantes* by José J. Veiga. One of our specific objectives was to examine the level of contestation and resistance evident in the language of each of these works, considering the socio-political context of their production, particularly the experiences of the socio-political landscape in Brazil between 1964 and 1985. This research has been completed, and it is now time to disseminate our results.

In this sense, the production of the present article, considering the knowledge built during the field studies we recently concluded, is justified by the overlap between these studies and the proposal of this journal's specific call.

The themes we have chosen also to aim to contribute to the discussion from a critical-

analytical perspective, by selecting the discourse of fantastic literature as a discourse capable of engaging with the reality of a specific time, whether this time is marked in the chronology of the past or the present, in the life of one nation or another, of our people or other peoples. Fantastic literature consolidates itself as both a synthesis and projection of human experiences, as we start from the premise that fantastic literature establishes the construction of a new discourse that blends realism with the fantastic and encompasses a political dimension. This is because its narratives often incorporate an implicit critical stance against the dominant elite, notably assuming a subversive posture in the face of alarming social and political crises that demand new directions, new decisions, and new paths.

This approach encompasses the understanding that the discourse of fantastic literature is characterized by its ability to renew the narrative form, clarifying the poles of power—the side that commands and the side that obeys, the oppressor and the oppressed. It dynamizes this literary exercise in such a metaphorical way that it circumvents censorship, making it difficult for the dominant elite to understand what is being said or find space to contest it. It is with the purpose of revisiting the strategies and mechanisms of resistance discourses evidenced in Fantastic Literature that this article is named and guided: *The Discourse of Resistance as a Political Metaphor in Fantastic Literature in a Democratic Crisis Scenario*. In it, we seek to understand the idea of the discourse of fantastic literature as a political metaphor, as well as assess the sustainability of this discourse during the growing resurgence of authoritarian governments. Consequently, we aim to provoke reflections on the possibility of considering the effectiveness of the discourse of fantastic literature in times of crisis. We believe that the discourse of this genre can thrive more profoundly within the realm of human subjectivity, as through fantasy, various readers can more easily grasp certain topics, whether mild, controversial, or severely critical, which naturally arise from the conflicts experienced in the concrete existential reality of society at a well-defined time and place.

In other words, literary work is the creative representation of an imagined, fictionalized reality. However, this fictional universe maintains a living connection with the real world. Thus, for those who seek literature merely as a form of entertainment, leisure, and enjoyment, fantastic literature fulfills this goal with its mysterious, everyday nature, filled with fantasies and human emotions. But for those who seek it as a vehicle for analysis and social critique—for those who are aware of their own history and the surrounding stories of a people's life, for those who look beyond the story being told — there will be the realization that what is presented in a work of fantastic fiction can symbolize oppressive relationships, the social dynamics at play in that moment in society. This

echoes what the Mexican poet Octavio Paz (2005) expressed, regarding the idea that literature is a portrayal of reality, veiled by the web of fiction, but which necessarily demands a new form of storytelling that reaches other perceptions of reality, addressing contexts through different languages.

In this regard, we can identify in Lygia Fagundes Telles' short story *Seminário dos Ratos* and José J. Veiga's novel *A Hora dos Ruminantes* the marks of a discourse of resistance that illustrate the experiences of the “anos de chumbo” (the “lead years”), a period of extreme political radicalization in Brazil and around the world, experienced at different moments during the 20th century. In the context of the 21st century, this period is renewed through new social, political, and strategic frameworks, creating new spaces and new discourses for Fantastic Literature, which never loses its dimension of contesting reality and decisively establishes itself as a discourse of resistance in a scenario of democratic crisis.

The hypothesis of this study lies in the belief that in every moment of social, political, and economic crisis—whether in Brazil in the 1960s and 70s or in any other social context of conflict in the present day—the foundational discourse of Fantastic Literature has played, and continues to play, a firm role in challenging the status quo. Thus, it will always be present in the eyes of critics. The perspective of literary criticism toward Fantastic Literature renews itself with each moment of crisis, whether in Brazil or elsewhere in the world.

2 Theoretical backgrounds

The investigation of the fantastic discourse intertwined in the foundational corpus of this study allowed for a specialized perspective on each author's style, the presentation of the plot, the use of voices, figures, and overall approach. Both narratives resemble each other in presenting to the reading public a symbolic interlocution between the idea of freedom and oppression of humanity during times of recession and peace, and above all, a symbolic dialogue with aspects of the surrounding reality in Brazil and the contemporary world, marked by severe political crises and the desire for the revitalization of democracy.

The boundaries of the fantastic will be addressed here, initially, by exploring two orders of events, as Todorov (1981, p.16) discusses: those of the natural world and those of the supernatural world. This study incorporates key terms such as “mystery,” “inexplicable,” and “inadmissible,” which were carefully examined by the author in his quest to define the term “fantastic,” drawing on

various formulations developed since the 19th century. Todorov defines the concept of the fantastic between these two orders of events, situating it in a time of uncertainty, hesitation, and vacillation between natural and supernatural causes. In his own words: "the possibility of vacillating between the two creates the fantastic effect."

This fantastic effect, born from moments of vacillation and tension, can foster a political atmosphere within the discourse, which we consider the political metaphor of the fantastic. This idea is based on Rancière's studies, which place the politics of literature within the realm of aesthetic constitution, elevating it beyond personal engagements in political and social struggles in which writers are naturally involved. Rancière redefines the politics of aesthetics within the reconfiguration of the sensible, as he argues that "the new forms of circulation of words, exposure of the visible, and production of affects [that] determine new capacities, in rupture with old configurations of the possible" (RANCIÈRE, 2012, p.63).

From this perspective, the understanding that literature, to be political, must inherently contain engaged content and themes, capable of being transmitted with the aim of shaping consciousness and influencing decisions, becomes limited, inappropriate, and outdated. In the present time, we must challenge past experiences where the relationship between art and politics was one of mere convenience or dependency. In other words, contemporary literature no longer finds satisfaction in documenting real people and events, even if it incorporates experiential data from the creator. At this moment, the foundation of creative action lies in the aesthetic dimension, which, in an inventive manner, linguistically narrates the perceptions awakened during the creative act.

It is important to highlight that the task of reflecting on possible articulations between literature and politics has long been a subject of intense debate among critics. This is because each of the areas examined here constitutes true fields of knowledge that, throughout history, have structured their theoretical foundations based on their own references, in search of their own specificities, definitions, and historically constructed paths.

This issue is a prominent subject of debate in literary criticism, and according to Gao Xingjian (in Estevam, 2011, p.22), the literary community cannot forget the practices of containment, control, and ideological direction imposed on all intellectual manifestations produced in the 20th century, including literature and literary criticism itself. This resulted, in various parts of the world, in a historical record of numerous writers being persecuted for their writings, dozens of artists exiled during military regimes established through coups, and, of course, many intellectuals

who “disappeared” or were tortured.

Gao Xingjian insists that “freedom of thought and reflection free from any external noise” (in Estevam, 2011, p.23) is essential for the artist, and that the exercise of both practices grants literature a unique potential that transcends ideology, politics, and practical welfare benefits. In this sense, he highlights several points that he considers important in balancing the poles of discourse between literature and politics: 1. Literary testimonies are rooted in aesthetics; 2. The emotions evoked by aesthetics are capable of impacting readers from different nationalities and eras; 3. A literary work is a vehicle that circulates worldwide and transcends time and space; 4. Literature is timeless, with the concept of an “era” holding no relevance; and 5. Literature is not a factual account.

The aspects highlighted by Gao Xingjian, when analyzed more specifically, presuppose an understanding of some foundational characteristics of the political dimension of the fantastic discourse. The articulation between literature and aesthetics, for example, is observed in the subtext of fiction, where significant links between art and the world can be identified, which is where we find the concept of Structural Reduction, developed by Antonio Candido. This is understood as “the process through which the reality of the world and of being becomes, in fictional narrative, a component of a literary structure, allowing this structure to be studied in itself, as something autonomous” (CANDIDO, 1991, p.119). From this perspective, the artistic nature shapes the social aspects of immediate life, making literary work an important vehicle for exposing hidden ideologies. Therefore, the value of the work is closely tied to its capacity to relate to reality.

Rancière (in MANNA, 2012, p. 98) also discusses this unification between literature and aesthetics. According to him, aesthetics unites literature and politics in such a way that fiction does not merely achieve the status of storytelling from the imagination; rather, it constitutes the living construction of a new relationship between appearance and reality, the visible and its meaning, the singular and the common. According to the philosopher, where there is aesthetics, there is politics, and this common ground fosters a different type of political imagination that, in some way, challenges the fundamental codes of a culture.

Although this dimension of political discourse is not exclusive to fantastic literature, it is observed that within this genre, this dimension finds an expanded field of focus, facilitated by its characteristic traces of hesitation. These traits establish a sharing of the sensible capable of operating with greater precision, offering critical perspectives on elements associated with contradictory ideas between the visible and the invisible, the real and the imaginary, the rational

and the irrational, the plausible and the implausible, transparency and concealment, spontaneity and submission to rules, positive and negative values. In essence, it presents various approaches to ambiguities that fracture the field of hegemonic knowledge—not necessarily denying it outright, nor expressing consensus or power dominance, but rather finding alternative ways to introduce new perspectives on a given reality.

Rancière's thought seems to indicate that there is a common root between the two terms, "politics" and "literary art," and this idea of the sensible, the construction of meaning, and the space occupied by the act of writing may correspond with the possibility of situating the aesthetic practice within the composition of a politically allegorical writing.

Manna (2012), drawing on Rancière's studies (1994), proposes a reflection on the dimension of political discourse embedded in fantastic narrative, through an analysis of the configuration of the idea of the sensible and the dialectical process of discordant concordance of temporal experiences within the fictional realm. She explains that "fantastic narratives are those in which the discordant dimension—encountered in the supernatural, the absurd, the irrational, the unusual—challenges the concordant dimension—normality, stability, balance, order" (2012, p. 99).

The work *A Hora dos Ruminantes*, narrated in real time—"that time when the sun barely sank behind the mountains" (VEIGA, 1972, p. 1)—is broadly characterized by elements of the discordant dimension, where the predominance of magical realism blends the known world with the unknown, bordering on the absurd, exemplified through the metaphor of the two invasions of Manarairema.

The first invasion, that of the dogs, brings panic to the city, as they invade homes and corner the inhabitants:

It was impossible to know how many there were; anyone who tried to estimate quickly gave up, alarmed. They were always passing by and seemed to never stop. By mid-morning, the smell of sweaty fur, concentrated urine, and trampled dung was so strong that it invaded the houses, forcing people to burn herbs to drive away the stench. (VEIGA, 1972, p. 35, our emphasis and translation).

The second invasion, that of the oxen, corners the fictionalized city, imprisoning the residents and stripping them off their peace.

Throughout the rest of the day and all through the night, more oxen arrived, trampling everything, knocking down the houses of the poor, invading the corridors of the rich, pressing against each other, their heads raised so their horns wouldn't get tangled. There was no room even to lift their tails when defecating, with the waste forced out, running down their legs and coating

everything (VEIGA, 1972, p. 35, our emphasis and translation).

The excerpts above, which depict the two invasions of Manarairrema, seem to lead the reader to construct an imagery scheme based on experiences analogous to those who lived during the rule of the Military Regime. This can be seen as a transference of meaning from common experiences caused by the violence imposed by a political movement that affected different dimensions of Brazil's social configuration and the daily lives of its people.

Through this play of imagistic proximity or other connections, built considering other possible interpretations, this reflection is directed toward a more specific study of the role of metaphor in the construction of Veiga's literary text, beyond mere ornamentation. Instead, the metaphorical play he employs becomes an expressive symbol of cognition, not exclusive to a single reader but part of a "collective cognitive unconscious," as explored in the studies by Vereza (2010), which treat discourse as the "locus of memory," based on Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory:

For most people, metaphor is a mechanism of poetic imagination and theoretical refinement: a matter of "extraordinary" language rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically seen as a feature of language: a matter of words rather than thoughts and actions. For this reason, most people think they can live perfectly well without metaphor. We, however, believe that metaphor is part of everyday life, not only in language but also in thought and action. Our conceptual system, from which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical by its very nature (LAKOFF e JOHNSON, 1980 [2002]: 3, apud VEREZA, 2010, p. 201, our emphasis and translation).

Contextualizing the idea of metaphor in Veiga's literature means perceiving the narrative discourse in his works as a space for producing meaning—a narrative coherent with creatively thought-out and articulated purposes. In this context, the present research is based on the principle that Veiga's thought, albeit unconsciously, when employing metaphors, can be analyzed as elements that capture experiences which, in some way, shaped the speech and thought of a collective in their daily life, within a certain time and space. This naturally constitutes a literary discourse with a political bias, as the essence of politics is speech—it is the everyday discourse, enriched with metaphors and expressions directly connected to thought, and the understanding of the world and life in society.

A similar line of political engagement can be identified in the short story *A Assembleia dos Ratos* (The Assembly of the Rats). According to specialized critics, Lygia Fagundes Telles, at 95 years old, remains one of the most politically engaged writers in Brazilian literature, responsible for

denouncing numerous situations of social inequality and openly opposing the military regime implemented in Brazil during the “anos de chumbo” (the “lead years”), a period of heightened repression and violence (1968–1974).

Candido (1999, p. 92) highlights that Lygia Fagundes Telles' work excels within established narrative forms, emphasizing her ability to “enrich the narrative with a composition that enchants and captures reality through its most unexpected aspects, translating it harmoniously.” The author notes that, within the evaluative universe of literary criticism, both in her short stories and novels, Telles has continued to produce work “still in full development, always valid and characterized by serene mastery.”

This mastery in narration, highlighted by Candido, pointing out Telles' qualities as a writer, can be observed in various constructions throughout her production. For instance, the play of hesitation that permeates her plots, immersing the reader deeper into a climate of mystery, suspense, and fantasy within her narrative, which often features open endings, allowing the fantastic to extend even after the reading is complete. This is seen, for example, in the concluding paragraph of the short story currently being studied, where an open space for the reader's imagination is suggested, inviting participation in the narrated plot: “She couldn't even remember how she managed to reach the field, she could never reconstruct the run, she ran for miles. When she looked back, the mansion was all lit up” (TELLES, 1977, p. 126).

This image, established in the reader's mind, is long-lasting and more difficult to fade into forgetfulness. Telles, when questioned by Clarice Lispector about this short story, responded as follows:

A short story may give the impression of being a mere picture that you see and then forget. But no one will forget that picture-story if there is something more in it beyond the static image. The portrait of a tree is just the portrait of a tree. However, if we feel that there is someone behind that tree, that something is happening or about to happen behind it, if we sense, intuit, that in the apparent stillness, life is pulsing in the ground with insects and grass—then it will be an unforgettable portrait. (TELLES, interview with Clarice Lispector, published by Templo Cultural Delfos, Elfi Kurten Fenske, Year VIII, 2018, our emphasis and translation).

In the short story, the image of the mansion all lit up evokes the sensation that the rodents were all gathered there, holding an assembly and planning something. The seemingly static scene conceals great movement, mystery, and suspense, turning the final scene of the story into an unforgettable reading experience.

This is the nature of the discourse of resistance evident in works of fantastic literature. In Veiga and Telles, the metaphorical figure of fear throughout the narrative in both works is creatively contextualized with the social and political dimensions of a specific time and place, even though it unfolds on the stage of fiction. The discourse of fear, as expressed in fantastic literature, is a theoretical approach rooted in the work of H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937). According to him, "the criterion of the fantastic does not lie in the work itself but rather in the reader's personal experience, and this experience must be one of fear" (in Todorov, 1981, p. 20). Lovecraft emphasizes the emotional reaction of the reader when encountering dark and tragic themes, which, according to him, also inhabit the discourse of fantastic texts, creating a kind of emotional atmosphere that he considers the definitive criterion of authenticity in the fantastic.

By way of contextualization, the excerpt below illustrates the style of discourse that metaphorizes the idea of fear in the short story *Seminário dos Ratos*:

The head cook took off his apron, balling it up in his hands:
– I'm leaving, I won't stay here a minute longer. I think we're in their world now, I swear to my mother's soul. I nearly died of fright when that cloud came in through the door, the window, the ceiling—it almost carried me and Euclídea away! They even ate the dish towels, only leaving the fridge alone because it was shut, but the kitchen is spotless, completely clean! (TELLES, 1977, p. 124, our emphasis and translation).

The excerpt reveals the level of terror experienced by the characters, as well as their astonishment due to the abrupt attack, despite previous signs, since there is no logical explanation for what occurred. The level of violence depicted in the scene perhaps reflects situations of human experience in society and establishes a rupture in the order of daily life. This disruption, embedded in the heart of reality, reinforces the role of the fantastic in its persistent task of questioning the established reality.

In Veiga's novel, the symbolism of fear is presented in a very different way. The characters, driven by fear, assume subservient behaviors in response to the events that haunt them. For example, the residents, out of pure fear, revere the dogs, as described in the following excerpt:

On the streets, if a dog approached a fountain, there was always someone who rushed over, cupping their hands to save the dog the inconvenience of drinking from the spout. The dogs of Manarairema, once the rulers of those streets, also suffered great humiliations. When attacked by one of the strangers, they couldn't react or defend themselves. If they so much as growled, their owners would come running to punish them for their audacity. They had to either run away or passively allow themselves to be bitten if they didn't want to be slapped

(VEIGA, 1972, p. 37, our emphasis and translation).

It can be observed in both Telles' and Veiga's excerpts that fear indicates an inversion of powers within a fictional setting of oppression and resistance. The invasion of the rats in Telles' work and the invasion of the dogs in Veiga's serve as the personification of the human act of surveillance, control, and imprisonment. In other words, the presence of animals in the narrative represents the zoomorphization of men who violate, invade, command, and impose fear on a population that bows and avoids confrontation. The exaggeration of the number of rats and dogs invading a familiar environment and provoking a collective sense of fear is classified as a characteristic of the fantastic.

Another notable feature of Fantastic Literature that can evoke a discourse of resistance in a democratic crisis scenario is the "sense of strangeness," a field of study by Louis Vax, as cited by Camarani (2014, p. 44). It refers to the fundamental emotions that fantastic narratives evoke in the reader, making them feel estranged from themselves, seduced by this feeling of strangeness and, consequently, swayed by ambivalent emotions: suffering and enjoyment. In other words, Vax's study involves understanding that consciousness, the allure, and the horror of the strange are elements that generate conflict within the narrative and rely on certain techniques such as repetition and figurative language.

Camarani (2014, p. 49) references Vax's assertions regarding the boundaries of the fantastic narrative, highlighting that "it often emerges from a rupture in the perceptual or physical world (giants, the undead), the moral world (perversity), or the aesthetic world (monsters)." One rupture attracts others, and according to Vax, what captivates the reader of fantastic literature is not psychological conclusions nor the dogmatic views of creeds and rituals, but rather the enchanting power of the storytellers.

In *A Hora dos Ruminantes*, the sense of strangeness is evident beyond the three invasions: the arrival of cargo ships full of elusive men, the influx of restless and turbulent dogs, and the invasion of tame, fat, and indifferent oxen. The feeling of strangeness permeates every action triggered by each of these invasions. This can be seen, for example, in the discourteous behavior of the invaders towards the town's residents, as conveyed by an omniscient narrator who also seems touched by the strangeness of these men's unexpected arrival: "If those men were as Balduino described, gluttonous and insolent, Manarairéma was still going to have a lot of trouble with them" (VEIGA, 1972, p. 6), or in the absurd number of dogs: "It was impossible to know how many there were, anyone who tried to estimate quickly gave up, alarmed; they were always passing

by and seemed to never stop” (VEIGA, 1972, p. 35), and also in the silent, rapid, and undisturbed occupation by an astonishing number of oxen: “even if the oxen wanted to leave, for now, they wouldn’t have anywhere to go: the roads were taken as far as the eye could see. The world belonged to the oxen; there was no room for other animals...” (VEIGA, 1972, p. 88).

In *Seminário dos Ratos*, the description of certain reactions, particularly fear, exemplifies elements of strangeness, with the characters’ emotions creatively constructed. This is evident from the title of the story itself, where a sense of strangeness is already implied, tied to the ambiguity of whether the seminar’s real purpose is to discuss possible solutions for exterminating the rats that infest the city, or if, on the contrary, it is being presided over by the rats themselves. Although the narrative gradually deconstructs this initial strangeness, the story maintains the element of hesitation until the very end, where the possibility that the exaggerated rat population has indeed taken control of the seminar creates a powerful impact. Throughout this chain of events, various examples of the feeling of strangeness can be seen in the characters’ behavior and actions, from the initial invasion of the mansion by the rats to the story’s climax. The excerpt below illustrates how this sense of strangeness builds up to a peak of tension in the narrative:

... Do you hear it now? It's stronger, did you hear that? So loud!"
The Head of Public Relations jumped to his feet. He squeezed his flushed face between his hands:
– I told you! Didn't I tell you? – asked the Secretary. He seemed triumphant: – I've never been wrong, never! I've been hearing things for hours, but I didn't want to say anything, they might think I was delirious, and look at this now! It almost feels like we're in a volcanic zone, like a volcano is about to erupt right under us...
– Volcano?
– Or a bomb, there are bombs that give warnings before they explode!
(TELLES, 1977, p. 122, our emphasis and translation).

Parallel to the reflection on the mechanisms of resistance discourses in scenarios of democratic crisis, it is relevant to bring to the forefront the discursive role of fantastic literature during these critical scenarios. This begins with the principle that the world representation established by fantastic literature cannot be separated from the political, social, scientific, and philosophical crises and impasses experienced by a collective at a given time and place. Otherwise, it would not fulfill its foundational role, rooted in the tense zone between the narrow poles of the real and the unreal.

In this understanding, a society always immersed in impasses of all foundational orders will need the discourse of fantastic literature, which, in some form, will always be present—

sometimes more pronounced, sometimes more subdued—but always crystallized within the core of the unrest experienced by a people. In the context of Brazil, from the time of the *Estado de Exceção* to the present, amid the oscillation of power and the resurgence of right-wing movements, including globally, fantastic literature should be addressed as a narrative of resistance. As Berardinelli (2016, p. 56) states, perhaps literary creations (in this specific case, fantastic literature) encompass, and in the best cases do encompass much more than merely aligning with a political stance.

Finally, it is important to highlight the conceptual nature of fiction in Rancière's (2014) thought, when he proposes a reflection on the strategies of artists as they explore, in their creative work, the fields of change in what is visible and enunciable. They show readers what is not naturally or easily seen, creating language structures that correlate ideas and offer alternative interpretations, thus opening paths for ruptures in perceptions and the dynamics of emotions. In his own words, he defines it as follows:

Fiction is not the creation of an imaginary world opposed to the real world. It is the work that creates dissensus, changing modes of sensory presentation and forms of enunciation, altering frames, scales, or rhythms, and constructing new relationships between appearance and reality, the singular and the common, the visible and its significance (RANCIÈRE, 2012, p.64, our emphasis and translation).

In other words, these forms of aesthetic experience and modes of fiction discussed by Rancière find, in the short stories of Lygia Fagundes Telles and José J. Veiga analyzed here, a landscape enriched by a dissensual fabric that will naturally demand freedoms for new perspectives.

3 Methodology

Our study is based on the basic premise that the fantastic discourse in both works analyzed here symbolizes resistance discourses in a scenario of democratic crisis and serves as a vehicle for raising awareness. In this endeavor, the strength of this discourse's resistance lies in the specificity of its plot, the narrative it creates, the language it employs, and the chosen words that touch the reader's emotions, disarming them and preparing them for a new way of understanding narratives that speak to their own world.

Studying the style of the authors selected here brings to light stimulating sensations, which

were constant objects of reflection, linked to the fact that this literature, in its subtext, revived a literary style in which fantastic elements were used within a narrative structure that mirrors the social and political landscape of Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s. It managed to remain unnoticed by censorship, conjuring bizarre, inexplicable, and exaggerated events alongside everyday occurrences in a fully dictatorial scenario in such a denunciative way, surpassing the boundaries of the fantastic and provoking an impact on the reading public through a narrative that appeared detached from the surrounding social and political context.

That said, the method structuring this study was based on bibliographic research, employing an analytical-interpretative approach in which theoretical and critical assumptions regarding fantastic literature were read, interpreted, and contextualized for a more comprehensive understanding of the intended analyses.

4 Results

It is pertinent to consider that in both works, within the body of each paragraph and in the selection of each word, characteristics of a resistance discourse present in fantastic literature are evident. These include the inevitable questioning of the truth of the events, the space that fosters hesitation, the play of ambiguities, the critical reach achieved through the use of irony and paradoxes, the presence of metaphorical devices, the inexplicability of the narrated facts, the symbolism of images, and even allegory, adopted at the core of other proposals, distinct from Todorov's proposition, which characterize contemporary fantastic literature. All these elements, along with many other references discussed here, signal common traits in the construction of the fantastic within the fictional universe of both works.

Although stylistic differences between Veiga and Telles are perceptible, it was possible to identify common points of articulation in their approach to the fantastic, particularly in the dimension of unease that emanates from the creative act of resistance discourse in a scenario of democratic crisis.

For example, in Veiga's work, traces of an engaged style can be inferred:

I write to better understand the world and people. Anyone who pays attention will notice that my books are inquisitive, not explanatory. This makes them a game or a toy between author and reader, both questioning, together or not, and discovering—or not. My texts are an exercise, or an adventure, or an intellectual journey. They don't "end" in the traditional sense, and in this lack of

closure is where the reader's collaboration comes in (VEIGA, 1996, p. 2, our emphasis and translation).

In the same way, Telles values the elements of this engagement in her works, particularly when she considers her work to be of an engaged nature, or as she puts it, “committed to our condition within the scandal of social inequalities” (TELLES, 2002, p. 90).

In this sense, studying the dimension of resistance discourse through fantastic literature in the selected works of both authors has meant gaining a deeper understanding of the time in which these works were produced—Brazil during the height of the military regime (1964–1985), a time marked by the restriction of rights and concentration of power, a regime of exception that left deep scars on the civil and political rights of an entire nation.

The time lived in Brazil during the twenty-one years of military rule, as well as in different Latin American countries, calls for a reinterpretation of *A Assembleia dos Ratos* and *A Hora dos Ruminantes*, especially considering the renewed clash between left- and right-wing movements that, during that time, brought about new experiences of social de-democratization. These shifts occurred in various parts of the world, especially in Brazil, during a time when the right-wing hegemony overthrew the left-wing, implanting de-democratization agendas under a guise of apparent legality, on the margins of a democratic system, under the aegis of the Institutional Acts (AIs). This was a context in which the central power was strengthened, particularly the Executive branch, establishing a regime of exception where the Executive took on legislative functions, to the detriment of the other powers established by the 1946 Constitution and its social and political guarantees.

The sociopolitical reality of Brazil, entangled in the chains of the Military Regime for twenty-one years of persecution, censorship, and deaths, secured a privileged space within fantastic literature during the 1960s and 1970s. By analogy, it can also be observed that the sociopolitical sphere that emerged during the establishment of the New Republic in Brazil, from the end of the Military Dictatorship (1985) to the present day, has provided new opportunities for the resurgence of fantastic literature. In summary, it is reasonable to understand that the resurgence of one or another pole of power, whether right-wing or left-wing, contravenes social aspirations—such as democracy, equity, and social justice—can lead to the return of the fantastic. Thus, it is natural for the analytical evaluation of fantastic literary productions created in such contexts to reemerge.

This understanding consolidates the notion that the resurgence of the right in Brazil, considering the historical period outlined here and the palpable threat to democracy, inherently

demands the immediate invocation of fantastic literature. The expectation is that this literature will be able to comprehend and fictionalize the mechanisms of hidden oppression present in the discourse and actions of those who manage a fragile democratic system. In doing so, fantastic literature, with all its elements of engagement and symbolic tools, can work both perceptibly and imperceptibly to observe, comprehend, clarify, and denounce situations that remain ideologically masked, difficult to read and interpret.

In this sense, the national crises cataloged here confer upon the fantastic literature that aims to be produced in the present day a new forewarning: What times, my God!—the robes and the gowns exclaimed as they began to contemplate alternative ways to prevent similar experiences from reoccurring in the lives of the Brazilian people. Meanwhile, democracy, sitting on the bench of the accused, patiently awaits that the goddess Themis may arm herself with righteousness to protect humanity and the law, guarding with her blindfolded, impartial eyes, closed to any traps that could bring back the experiences of those leaden years. Above all, democracy hopes that, unlike the past, its arms will reopen to all in an equitable, just, and selfless manner.

5 Final considerations

A focused look at understanding the evidence of resistance discourses in scenarios of democratic crisis, found between the lines of fantastic literature, in fictionalized narratives of a national past marked approximately six decades ago, when a regime of authoritarianism and oppression characteristic of the ideas and practices of a state of exception was established in the country—a paradigm of government based on the imposition of administrative and military power to the detriment of fundamental rights—was the task pursued throughout this study. Considering all the readings and analyses undertaken, the breadth of a resistance discourse that metaphorically intertwined fiction and resistance around the political, social, and historical reality of the time when these works were produced was evident.

A careful reading of the successive line of historical events experienced during this period, combined with a meticulous reading of both works, seems to evoke a play of images that largely metaphorize elements of a concrete reality. For example, a re-reading of the three invasions orchestrated in Veiga, as well as a re-reading of the invasion and devastation caused by the rats in Telles, fits into the narrative of different societies that, in the recent past, faced a growing divide between society and politics.

Based on an internal understanding, substantiated within the universe of the various readings undertaken thus far, it can be deduced that the escalating agony of a country's democratic institutions may foster the production of varied resistance discourses, and these find fertile ground in fantastic literature. In this sense, post-1964 Brazil, under the effects of the resurgence of right-wing forces, led by successive military governments and the consequent intensification of the disconnect between the political system and society, compounded by various controversies and conflicts, created the ideal environment for the emergence of fantastic literature. Along with it came a solid proposal for constructing discourses that dissent from the prevailing order—discourses of resistance.

In this way, regardless of the time or place—whether we look at the nation of the past or the nation of new times—any society immersed in a crisis, particularly those caused by the resurgence of ideological political forces, whether right or left, even if legitimized by the vote, when they stray into marginalizing social abysses that deny human beings as subjects of rights and guarantees, will likely give rise to fantastic works that metaphorically encapsulate this entire scenario, employing resistance discourses in a contextualized manner.

What is likely expected in the face of a possible resurgence of the fantastic and its discourses, in their task of metaphorizing the evolutionary picture of political and social demands of a given time and society, is a systematic study of this new configuration of fantastic discourse. This discourse will undoubtedly be subject to changes in the way new metaphors are perceived and recorded, stemming from other paradoxes, other absurdities, and another framework of control, alienation, and ideologies specific to the time and context being fictionalized. Paths must be opened to interpret the new social anthropomorphizations proposed by fantastic literature, preferably grounded in new stories that retrace the steps of oppression, possibly drawing near to seemingly calm lands, breaking the silence of seemingly peaceful nights—just as the early and rapid fall of night was fictionalized in Veiga, or the bright light that illuminated the night in Telles.

Thus, from this point onward, this study leaves the door open for new academic perspectives from those interested in exploring the next chapters of literature that have much to confabulate about the different moments of a nation and its people. In each of these moments, it forges a metaphorical protest symbolized by a resistance discourse that seeks to suffocate the crises of a struggling democracy.

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