

The erotic in time and fruits: a comparative analysis between Fidélia Cassandra and Manuel Bandeira /

O erótico no tempo e nas frutas: uma análise comparativa entre Fidélia Cassandra e Manuel Bandeira

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze and compare the relationship between temporality and the appeal to the senses in the lyric poetry of two poets from different contexts: the Pernambuco modernist Manuel Bandeira, in “Maçã” [Apple], and the contemporary Paraíba poet Fidélia Cassandra, in the poem “O Jambo” [The Malai Apple]. The study seeks to demonstrate the ways in which the lyrical subjects in their poems construct unique perceptions of temporality and gender, as well as the role the elements play in exploring poetic resources aimed at constructing and problematizing the erotic. To this end, a comparative analysis of the poems is conducted in order to highlight how female-authored lyrics positions itself in relation to male-authored lyrics concerning the representation of the aging female body. From this reading, reflections emerge on the lyrical perspective adopted in each text, considering the relationship established with the fruits that give title to the poems, the evocation of female body parts observed from both external and internal viewpoints, as well as the contrast between a lyric that apprehends reality through an experiential manner and another that contemplates it through a more empirical lens.

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KEYWORDS: Eroticism; Manuel Bandeira; Fidélia Cassandra-

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar e comparar a relação entre a temporalidade e o apelo aos sentidos na lírica de dois poetas de contextos distintos: o modernista pernambucano Manuel Bandeira, em “Maçã”, e a poeta paraibana contemporânea Fidélia Cassandra, no poema “O jambo”. Busca-se demonstrar como o eu-lírico de seus poemas constroem percepções singulares acerca da condição do tempo e das questões de gênero, bem como o papel desses elementos na exploração dos recursos poéticos voltados à construção e à problematização do erótico. Para isso, realiza-se uma análise comparativa dos poemas, a fim de evidenciar o modo como a lírica de autoria feminina se posiciona em relação à masculina no que diz respeito à representação do envelhecimento do corpo feminino. A partir dessa leitura, suscitam-se reflexões sobre o ponto de vista lírico adotado em cada texto, considerando a relação estabelecida com as frutas que dão título aos poemas, a evocação de partes do corpo feminino observadas a partir de uma perspectiva externa e interna, bem como o contraste entre uma lírica que apreende a realidade de forma experiencial e outra que a observa sob um viés mais empírico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Erotismo, Manuel Bandeira; Fidélia Cassandra.

1 Initial considerations

The representation of the female body and eroticism in Brazilian literature reveals, over the decades, profound transformations in the way desire, sensory perception, and subjectivity are poetically constructed. Comparing works from different periods and different voices allows us to understand how these elements change depending on the historical context and the speaking place in which one writes. In this paper, the concept of “speaking place”, as systematized by Djamila Ribeiro (2017)³, is employed as an analytical category to understand how social and historical positions – analyzed here through the lens of gender – shape the forms of enunciation and the process of legitimization in literary discourse.

Fidelia Cassandra writes from the perspective of female authorship in a context in which - although prejudices regarding women’s writing still persist, especially when it comes to the expression of eroticism - spaces for the legitimization and circulation of such works have been gaining ground, driven by the efforts of research groups, feminist literary criticism, and university-based literary movements, especially public institutions. In the other hand, Manuel Bandeira produced his work from a position historically legitimized by the canon of Brazilian literature, as one of the leading representatives of the first modernist generation. These differences do not exhaust the possible interpretations of the poems, but they are fundamental elements to comprehend the

³ Djamila Ribeiro published this book in English under the title “Where we stand” in 2024, by Yale University Press. Speaking place is the idea that everyone has a social position in the world and that what we are able to say, and how it is received by others, depends on it.

distinct ways in which eroticism and the representation of the female body are explored in their respective works.

In this context, the dialog between the poems “Maçã” [Apple] by Manuel Bandeira, published in *Lira dos Cinquent'Anos* (1940), and “O Jambo” [The Malai Apple] by Fidélia Cassandra, included in the collection *Amora* (2002), highlights significant contrasts in the way eroticism is explored and the female body is symbolically represented.

The poem by Bandeira belongs to a mature phase of Brazilian Modernism, in which the first generation had already consolidated its break with Parnassian and Symbolist formal models. Set in the 1940s - a period marked by a more colloquial, introspective, and sensory lyricism - “Maçã” presents an erotic composition that reflects not only Bandeira’s style but also the male gaze of his era, often mediated by idealizations, metaphors, and fruit-related imagery associated with the female body. The poem expresses a sensibility marked by an awareness of time and aging - recurring themes in Bandeira’s poetry - which play a central role in the way the speaker perceives and describes the woman.

Fidélia Cassandra’s “O Jambo”, on the other hand, emerges within a distinct literary context, marked by the rise of female authorship and the expansion of critical studies focused on gender issues. Since the last decades of the 20th century - driven both by the consolidation of feminist literary criticism and by women’s growing access to spaces for the production, publication, and dissemination of knowledge - Brazilian women writers have come to occupy a more prominent place on the national literary scene. This movement has not only brought greater visibility to works by female authors, but has also led to a reinterpretation of themes traditionally addressed from male perspectives, including eroticism, which is now explored through the experience, subjectivity, and desire of women themselves.

In earlier periods, literary tradition was dominated by depictions of women as objects of contemplation, inspiring muses, or the objects of male desire. In much of erotic poetry, women’s voices were filtered through the male gaze, while the direct expression of female desire was often constrained by moral values and social conventions that favored representations associated with romantic love and the idealization of the female figure.

In her 2002 book *Amora*, Fidélia Cassandra inscribes the female body as the subject of her own sensuality, exploring synesthesia and tactile and visual experiences that subvert the external, objectifying gaze historically directed at women.

Starting from this contrast between periods and positions of enunciation, this paper is guided by the following central question: How does the relationship between temporality and the appeal to the senses contribute to the formation of eroticism in the poems “Maçã” and “O Jambo,” and in what ways do these constructions differ when viewed from the perspective of a male modernist poet and a contemporary female poet? To answer this question, we propose to analyze how each author is situated within their literary context, considering both the cultural and political tensions of the first modernist generation and the transformations in contemporary literature written by women. Furthermore, the study seeks to understand how eroticism is conceived differently in each poem, considering the social roles historically assigned to men and women and their implications for the poetic representation of desire.

This discussion also involves a reflection on the presence of images of youth and old age in the two poems, understood as points of contrast that reveal different ways of perceiving the body and the passage of time. Similarly, we examine how the use of synesthesia contributes to the construction of eroticism, whether from the more contemplative and idealized perspective found in Bandeira’s poetry or through the intense, internal sensory experience that characterizes Fidélia’s writing.

The relevance of this study lies in the opportunity to compare two distinct periods in Brazilian poetry in order to observe how contemporary female poets reinterpret classic themes such as eroticism, the body, and aging, offering new interpretations and challenging aesthetic paradigms inherited from the modernist tradition. By fostering this dialogue, the study highlights how temporality, sensoriality, and gender intertwine in the construction of the erotic and in the representation of the female body.

2 Eroticism in temporal rivers: feminist struggles in Paraíba literature

Women writers from Paraíba ⁴have faced countless obstacles in expanding their work since the movement’s inception, which was marked by constant struggles for recognition. A prime

⁴ Paraíba is a state of northeastern Brazil. Primarily an agricultural state, Paraíba is bounded by the states of Rio Grande do Norte on the north, Ceará on the west, and Pernambuco on the south and by the Atlantic Ocean on the east. The name is Tupí Indian origin formed from the words para and hiba, meaning “arm of the river.”

example in the realm of cordel [pamphlet] literature is the use of pseudonyms as a strategy for validation, as seen in the case of Paraíba cordel writer Maria das Neves Batista Pimentel (1913 - 1994), who published her first cordel under the male pseudonym Altino Alagoano. In this regard, Silva (2017) highlights a historical shift in cordel literature, in which women have moved beyond merely occupying the role of characters to assume authorship and a leading role in their narratives. We will examine this phenomenon in relation to erotic themes in poetry: from the body as an object in modernist poetry written by men to the desiring body in contemporary poetry written by women.

Among the group of women writers who, despite historical difficulties in gaining recognition and establishing themselves in the literary field, maintained a body of work marked by resistance, the Paraíba poet Violeta Formiga (1951 - 1982) stands out as a major figure in Paraíba literature and she is the author of *Contra Cena* (1981). Her career was brutally cut short when she was murdered, a victim of femicide. Her death transcended the realm of personal loss and came to symbolize a collective cause, becoming a milestone in the struggles against impunity for femicide in the state of Paraíba.

As we reflect on the significance that certain historical events hold in the field of the arts, we must recognize that many of the achievements related to women's authorship are the result of a long process of resistance and the struggle for spaces of expression, publication, and recognition. Although countless women have written and published throughout history, their works have often faced mechanisms of invisibilization and exclusion from spaces of literary legitimacy. This is a journey marked by irreparable losses, by the difficulties faced by countless women writers, and by constant resistance to various forms of silencing - aspects that cannot be understood merely as stages in a process of progress, but also as an expression of the historical tensions that permeate women's experiences in literature and society.

Some literary movements have expanded the reach of women's voices in literature, including literary fairs, which serve as important spaces for the visibility and circulation of works by women authors. Despite a historical context marked by this silencing, literature by women in Paraíba has proven to be strong and active. We can highlight the importance of the movement launched in 2017, known as *Mulherio das Letras*, organized by Maria Valéria Rezende, a prominent figure in the field of contemporary cultural and literary production in Paraíba. The movement has established itself as a space for listening, collaboration, and the circulation of literary works by women, reinforcing the importance of women's presence in both creative production and cultural

mediation. Discussions about the role of women in literature and the historical struggles to achieve the right to literary production are central themes of great relevance within the movement.

The fact that a national event of such magnitude is being held in Paraíba is also due to the presence of a significant generation of contemporary female authors from Paraíba. It is against this backdrop that the poetic work of Fidélia Cassandra stands out, comprising: *Amora* (2002), *Plumagem* (2008), *Melikraton* (2013), and *Antes de ser blues* (2019). One aspect that has been gaining prominence in the national context of women's writing - and which recurs throughout Cassandra's poetic repertoire - is the presence of the erotic, expressed through a female lyrical subject who asserts herself as a desiring subject, rather than as a mere object of male desire. This perspective signals a shift in the literary field, in that, whereas in earlier traditions women were often portrayed as objects of male desire, in literature authored by women they now take on the role of protagonists of their own desire.

Fidélia Cassandra has already established herself in Campina Grande's literary scene. Even before the publication of her first books, she was actively involved in cultural activities, with her writings appearing in magazines and anthologies, in addition to her participation in poetry readings. From this early period, the poem "Antiqua" stands out, published in 1995 in the *Antologia contemporânea da poesia paraibana* edited by Eriberto Coelho.

The theme of aging, though rarely addressed in Cassandra's poetry, appears in the poem under analysis in this paper as a concept open to multiple interpretations, especially with regard to the aesthetics of the body. However, one cannot overlook the way in which the lyrical subject deals with the fact that, with each passing year, one grows a little older. Another equally relevant aspect concerns the perception of others' aging: the way we perceive old age in others often reflects our own perception, shaped by underlying ideological systems, such as the patriarchal structure of society. These social tensions are often expressed and have implications within the poetic fabric.

If all literary production by women has faced - and continues to face - multiple forms of opposition, it must be emphasized that erotic literature has been subjected to even more intense resistance. This resistance occurred, above all, through a silent ideological control, sustained by the idealization of romantic love as the normative model of what was expected of women in a given historical context. This ideal functioned as a mechanism of restraint, keeping women's mindsets distant from asserting their right to desire and to the expression of that desire. Sociologist Giddens (1993) discusses this imposition of the ideal of romantic love on women by stating:

Ideals of romantic love have long affected the aspirations of women more than those of men, although of course men have not been uninfluenced by them. The ethos of romantic love has had a double impact upon women's situations. On the one hand it has helped to put women 'in their place' – the home. On the other hand, however, romantic love can be seen as an active, and radical, engagement with the 'maleness' of modern society. Romantic love presumes that a durable emotional tie can be established with the other on the basis of qualities intrinsic to that tie itself (Giddens, 1992, p. 2)

Conforme menciona o pesquisador, as mulheres foram mais profundamente afetadas por esse ideal de amor romântico, o que contribuiu para a limitação de suas formas de expressão, inclusive no âmbito literário. Tal ideal configura-se, assim, como um instrumento de reprodução da hegemonia patriarcal, funcionando como uma estratégia de manutenção do poder masculino sobre aquilo que foi historicamente idealizado como parte do repertório feminino de percepção e interpretação do mundo.

É importante repensar as idealizações leigas do erotismo, que o associam exclusivamente ao âmbito sexual em seu sentido mais restrito. Etimologicamente, o termo erótico remete ao grego ἔρως (éros), cuja concepção está intimamente vinculada às ideias de amor e desejo, entendidas como dimensões interligadas, nas quais o amor emerge a partir do desejo.

No campo das ciências literárias, Bataille (1987) discute o que distingue o erotismo do simples ato sexual ao afirmar que “o que diferencia o erotismo da atividade sexual simples é uma procura psicológica independente do fim natural encontrado na reprodução e na preocupação com as crianças” (Bataille, 1987, p. 11).

Dessa forma, o erotismo caracteriza-se como uma busca que ultrapassa os limites da biologia humana, alinhando-se a dimensões afetivas, simbólicas e sociais. A constituição de laços, nesse contexto, estabelece-se por meio de processos subjetivos e culturais, abrindo espaço para a atuação da imaginação e para múltiplas possibilidades de significação do desejo. Observa-se, ainda, que a expressão do erótico está submetida a convenções sociais específicas, variáveis conforme a cultura e o momento histórico, o que resulta em diferentes prismas de representação ao longo da tradição literária.

Para Octavio Paz (1994), linguagem e erotismo mantêm uma ligação intrínseca. O erótico assume, em sua constituição, a presença estruturante da linguagem: a sensação é comunicada por meio da representação linguística. Não é por acaso que os poemas eróticos conseguem

transmitir com eficácia a experiência sensível através da palavra, explorando recursos como simbologia poética e discurso. Como afirma o autor:

Language - sound that conveys meaning, a material trace that conveys tangible ideas - is capable of giving a name to the most fleeting and evanescent thing: sensation; eroticism, in turn, is not mere animal sexuality - it is ceremony, representation. Eroticism is transfigured sexuality: metaphor⁵ (Paz, 1994, p.12, own translation).

In this way, sexuality is transformed into symbolic representation: it is through language that sensation takes shape, and it is through language that eroticism transcends instinct, becoming a metaphor and an aesthetic construct.

Every historical era exhibits a greater or lesser openness to the expression of the erotic, depending on the moral, cultural, ideological, and linguistic values that define it. Given these conditions, erotic writing adapts its modes of expression to the restrictions it encounters. However, for long periods, the female body was systematically denied the power of speech - both in terms of the ability to speak about itself and the capacity to articulate its own desire - which constitutes a form of symbolic and social control. In this regard, Audre Lorde (2007, p. 53) states:

For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives. We have been taught to suspect this resource, vilified, abused, and devalued within western society. On the one hand, the superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority; on the other hand, women have been made to suffer and to feel both contemptible and suspect by virtue of its existence (Lorde, 2007, p.53).

Controlling women's freedom of expression of desire is, therefore, a mechanism of silencing that deprives women of the right to express their subjectivity. This practice is part of the maintenance of the chain of patriarchal domination, which seeks to discredit or diminish the significance of the elements that make up the culture of the oppressed. In the case of women, oppressive ideology has historically sought to strip them of their autonomy in relation to men and curtail their power of speech, thereby diminishing their symbolic relevance and limiting the scope of their literary output.

If, for Octavio Paz (1994), eroticism constitutes sexuality transfigured into metaphor - that is, an experience that takes place through language and symbolic representation - it becomes

⁵ A linguagem – som que emite sentido, traço material que emite ideias corpóreas – é capaz de dar nome ao mais fugaz e evanescente: a sensação; por sua vez o erotismo não é mera sexualidade animal – é cerimônia, representação. O erotismo é sexualidade transfigurada: metáfora (Paz, 1994, p.12).

evident that the expression of desire is not merely biological, but is shaped by cultural codes and historical conventions. The erotic thus depends on the ways of naming that either permit or prohibit certain experiences.

When this perspective is applied to the female experience, it becomes clear that the way women feel and express their own desire constitutes a unique experience, often strained by structures that seek to standardize or silence their voices. Oppression often works by delegitimizing individual narratives and reducing the diversity of the female experience to homogeneous models.

In this regard, in *Explosão feminista*, Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda observes the emergence of a new political configuration within contemporary feminisms:

Differences among women, intersectionality, the multiplicity of their oppression and their demands - now, the feminisms of difference have triumphantly claimed their spaces to speak, as one of the most legitimate struggles they face. On the other hand, I clearly see the emergence of a new political generation - which includes feminists - with its own strategies, creating forms of organization unknown to me: autonomous, rejecting representative mediation; horizontal, without leadership or central figures; based on narratives of the self and personal experiences that resonate collectively; and valuing ethics over ideology, and insurgency over revolution⁶ (Hollanda, 2018, p.12, own translation).

The valorization of these self-narratives - which stem from individual experience and resonate collectively - shifts the focus away from traditional representation and grants political centrality to intimate discourse. If eroticism, as Paz (1994) proposes, is realized through language, its articulation by contemporary women also becomes an act of rebellion: by naming her own desire, a woman claims the legitimacy to speak for herself.

3 Brushing against the veil of time: a comparative analysis

Our primary focus is to conduct a comparative analysis of the poems “O Jambo,” [The Malai Apple] by the Paraíba poet Fidélia Cassandra, and “Maçã,” [Apple] by the Pernambuco poet

⁶ Diferenças entre as mulheres, a interseccionalidade, a multiplicidade de sua opressão, de suas demandas, agora os feminismos da diferença assumiram, vitoriosos, seus lugares de fala, como uma das mais legítimas disputas que têm pela frente. Por outro lado, vejo claramente a existência de uma nova geração política, na qual se incluem as feministas, com estratégias próprias, criando formas de organização desconhecidas para mim, autônomas, desprezando a mediação representativa, horizontal, sem lideranças e protagonismos, baseadas em narrativas de si, de experiências pessoais que ecoam coletivas, valorizando mais a ética do que a ideologia, mais a insurgência do que a revolução (Hollanda, 2018, p.12).

Manuel Bandeira. Both poetic texts exhibit numerous similarities, as well as significant differences, and explore distinct conceptions of time by employing poetic language to depict parts of the female body. Drawing on images of fruit, the poems construct metaphors that engage with eroticism, desire, and the passage of time.

The analysis proposed in this paper is based on the principles of Comparative Literature, understood not as an investigation of relationships of influence among authors, but as a critical procedure that makes it possible to bring works from different historical and aesthetic contexts into dialogue with one another. In this sense, we adopt the perspective of Tania Franco Carvalhal (2006), for whom comparison constitutes an interpretive tool capable of highlighting similarities, contrasts, and unique features among literary texts, thereby broadening the possibilities for understanding the works under analysis.

Manuel Bandeira's poem "Maçã" has a title that does not include a definite article, limiting itself to the direct naming of the fruit. This choice already points to an expressive aspect, since the absence of the article suggests less individualization and greater symbolic openness. Furthermore, in Western cultural imagination, the apple is often associated with the so-called "forbidden fruit," which broadens its interpretive possibilities.

In this poem, the lyrical subject adopts an external perspective: it does not speak of itself nor does it position itself as the object of the gaze, but rather observes the fruit from the outside. Let us observe it in the poem:

Maçã [Apple]
On one hand, I see you as a withered breast
On the other, as a womb from whose navel hangs the cord
[placental]

You are red like divine love
Inside you, in tiny seeds,
Life pulses prodigiously
Infinitely

And it lies there so simply
Beside a piece of silverware
In a shabby hotel room (own translation)⁷.
(Bandeira, 1986, p. 209)

⁷ Por um lado te vejo como um seio murcha/ Pelo outro como um ventre de cujo umbigo pende o cordão/ [placentário/ És vermelha como o amor divino/ Dentro de ti em pequenas pevides/ Palpita a vida prodigiosa/ Infinitamente/ E quedas tão simples/ Ao lado de um talher/ Num quarto pobre de hotel (Bandeira, 1986, p. 209)

From the very first line, it is clear that the lyrical subject is focused on a reality outside of itself. Even so, the description of the apple employs words and images that explicitly refer to the female body and to the passage of time. Although the central object is the fruit, the imagery is constructed through references to parts of the human body - especially female ones - as seen in the lines “On one hand, I see you as a withered breast / On the other, as a womb.”

The image of the “withered breast” clearly evokes the deterioration caused by the passage of time, both in the human body and in the fruit itself, alluding to parts of the female body. It is important to note that while the sentence is typically used to create a metaphor for a part of the female body, here the process is reversed. It is invoked as a point of reference to describe the fruit, creating a significant symbolic inversion in the metaphorical process.

Another important aspect is the personification of the apple, especially in the passage “Life pulses prodigiously / Infinitely.” The verb “palpitar” [to pulse] is traditionally associated with animal life, the vital movement of the heart, and the circulation of blood throughout the body. In this sense, the apple is depicted as a living organism, endowed with an inner life and generative power, reinforced by the presence of the “tiny seeds,” which symbolize the continuity of life and fertility.

Despite these associations with the body and life itself, it is significant that the poem does not carry an explicit erotic connotation. The tone is more contemplative and restrained, culminating in the image of the apple – “And it lies there so simply / Beside a piece of silverware / In a shabby hotel room” - which situates the object within an unadorned, everyday scene, distancing it from sensual idealization.

It is essential to emphasize the shift in perspective between the masculine and the feminine - men and women - noting that there is usually a significant difference between them in how they perceive life’s occurrences, whether due to social conventions or idealized stereotypes. From women, society expects gentleness, attentiveness, and a commitment to caring for loved ones; whereas men are expected to demonstrate leadership, firmness in their actions, and the maintenance of family order as a form of authority. Obviously, these idealized stereotypes - reinforced by patriarchy - influence individuals’ psyches, shaping their attitudes - even if implicitly - and arise from a patriarchal structure designed to mold social roles.

The technique employed by the lyrical subject consists of using connotations of parts of an aging female body to refer to the apple. However, this association takes on a pejorative connotation, insofar as the fruit is linked to images such as a withered breast or a womb whose

function is to sustain life. Thus, the meaning of these body parts is reduced to what they can provide, rather than what they are in and of themselves. By establishing this semantic bridge between the aging female body and the fruit, the lyrical subject ends up objectifying these body parts within the figurative process itself. Thus, although this is a symbolic device that brings the body and the fruit closer together, this association does not aim to exalt the female body; on the contrary, it contributes to reducing the understanding of the apple to something simple and mundane.

It is noteworthy that the titles of the poems suggest, at first glance, a possible theme centered on fruit. However, Fidélia Cassandra's poem already contains, in its very title, a fundamental syntactic element: the presence of the masculine definite article "O" [The]. This is not just any Malai Apple, but "the" Malai Apple - a mark of definition and singularity that dialogues directly with the precise and emphatic way in which the poem is structured and unfolds. Let us therefore examine the composition of the poem below:

O Jambo [The Malai Apple]
I look at myself in the mirror
And I see nothing of myself.
Vitality fading away in the rivers of time.
The only sweetness: the malai apple,
Half-open and succulent.

I look at myself in the mirror
And see myself as yours, as I never was
Nor ever will be...
The only beauty: the malai apple,
Of tender flesh.

I look at myself in the mirror
And not even time reveals itself.
The only caress: the malai apple,
In its scarlet fever.

I look at myself in the mirror
And I know that I have everything and yet I have nothing.
Only the malai apple,
Warm,
Brushing against the veil of time⁸ (own translation).
(Cassandra, 2002, p. 33)

⁸ Olho-me no espelho / E me vejo nenhuma/ O viço perdendo-se em rios temporais / Única doçura: o jambo, /Entreaberto e suculento. / Olho-me no espelho / E me vejo tua, como nunca fui / Nem serei.../Única beleza: O jambo, /De carne terna. / Olho-me no espelho / E nem um tempo se revela. /Única carícia: O jambo, / Em sua febre escarlate. /Olho-me no espelho / E sei que tenho tudo e não tenho nada. /Apenas o Jambo, /Cálido, /Roçando o véu do tempo (Cassandra, 2002, p.33).

It is clear that the lyrical subject speaks in the first person, with the speaker being female - an aspect that ties in with the self-definition already foreshadowed in the title. Standing before the mirror, the poetic voice turns inward; however, at first, she cannot fully recognize herself, stating, “I see nothing of myself.” This perception seems to be linked to the loss of vitality and youthfulness in the face of the passage of time, as evidenced in the line “vitality fading away in the rivers of time.”

Despite this, a “only sweetness” emerges: the malai apple, described as “half-open and succulent.” These adjectives create a clear association between the fruit and the female body, establishing an erotic atmosphere that is projected onto the lyrical self’s own appearance. The gaze that is established is self-reflective: it is she who observes herself, evaluates herself, and makes value judgments about herself, highlighting the malai apple as a central element of her beauty and bodily identity.

Throughout the poem, the malai apple is repeatedly described as “the only sweetness,” “the only beauty,” and “the only caress,” culminating in the image of the “warm malai apple.” The adjective “warm,” which evokes a high temperature, intensifies the sensory experience and contributes to the creation of eroticism. Furthermore, the statement that “not even time reveals itself” suggests a suspension of time, as if the body symbolized by the malai apple were resisting the passage of time or remaining untouched by its ravages.

It is worth noting that, although there are different types of jambo in Brazil, in the Northeast - where the author was born - the most common is the red jambo [the malai apple]. This fact resonates with the image of “scarlet fever,” reinforcing the chromatic and symbolic association with desire, vitality, and the flesh. The final line, “brushing against the veil of time,” intensifies this interpretation by suggesting a gentle, delicate touch of time upon the body, without the body being fully consumed by it.

In this way, the terms associated with the malai apple construct an erotic metaphor that evokes the female body - not only through its imagery and sensory suggestions, but also through the fruit’s very shape. The female body thus emerges as something unique, inflamed by desire and marked by a vitality that merely touches upon time, remaining young in the sensory and symbolic experience of eroticism.

Thus, it is essential to consider the difference in perspective between the two poems analyzed. In “O Jambo” [The Malai Apple], the fruit - a metaphor for the female body - “brushes

against the veil of time,” suggesting resistance to the passage of time and the preservation of vitality. In “Maçã” [Apple], however, the male lyrical voice acknowledges the passage of time more explicitly, viewing the fruit as a “withered breast,” even as it paradoxically attributes to it the power of a “prodigious life” latent in its seeds.

As such, while Fidélia Cassandra’s poem constructs an affirmation of the female body based on inner life and desire, Manuel Bandeira’s poem offers an external observation, in which temporality exerts a more visible influence on the subject being observed, even as it symbolically retains the promise of life.

Final Considerations

The purpose of this paper was to conduct a comparative analysis of the relationship between temporality, the female body, and eroticism in the poems “O Jambo,” by Fidélia Cassandra, and “Maçã,” by Manuel Bandeira. The analysis revealed that the perspective from which the poems are observed plays a decisive role in how the lyrical subject positions itself in relation to representations of the female body, since the gendered persona assumed by the lyrical subject shapes their poetic vision and is linked to the social and cultural context of their time, as well as to historically constructed stereotypes.

It was observed that the symbolic procedure associated with fruit follows a reverse trajectory in the two poems. In Fidélia Cassandra’s poem, fruit is used as a metaphor to refer to the female body, thereby constructing a lyric marked by eroticism through suggestive expressions that associate the characteristics of the malai apple with female corporeality. In contrast, Manuel Bandeira’s poem begins with references to the female body to describe the fruit, resulting in an approach that can be understood as almost anti-erotic, since it deconstructs traditionally sensual attributes, despite the apple being culturally associated with the so-called forbidden fruit. In this context, the fruit/woman takes on a prosaic quality, presented as a simple object set within an everyday space, alongside a piece of cutlery, in a shabby hotel room.

This contrast highlights a division in lyrical perspectives. While female authorship is constructed from lived and internalized experience - marked by an awareness of the impositions, silences, and limitations historically directed at women’s bodies and subjectivity - male poetry is

grounded in an external, observational, and objectifying gaze. This differences directly influences how temporality is perceived in each poem.

Thus, in “O Jambo,” [The Malai Apple] the female body, though marked by the passage of time, remains assertive in its identity and vitality, whereas in “Maçã,” [Apple] the fruit is depicted as a matter subject to the ravages of time, evoking images such as the “withered breast” or the “throbbing belly” which, paradoxically, still harbors the promise of a future life. Thus, the analysis highlights how gender, time, and eroticism are articulated differently in these two pieces of poetic works, reaffirming the relevance of authorship and the lyrical point of view in the symbolic construction of the female body.

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