

The Rainbow of Senectus in Latin America: Configurations of LGBT Old Aged in Contemporary Brazilian Literature /

O arco-íris de senectus na América Latina: configurações da velhice LGBT na literatura brasileira contemporânea

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Received: 08 ago. 2026. **Approved:** 12 ago. 2026.

How to quote this article:

SILVA, Antonio de Pádua Dias da; HOLANDA, Helder de Araújo. The Rainbow of Senectus in Latin America: Configurations of LGBT Old Aged in Contemporary Brazilian Literature. *Revista Letras Raras*. Campina Grande, v. 15, n. 2, e7702, sep. 2026. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22436619.

ABSTRACT

In the broader context of Latin American literatures, contemporary Brazilian literature has also foregrounded gender diversity and LGBT subjectivities, portraying lesbian, gay, transvestite, transgender, and other characters. In works published between 1975 and 2022, representations of old age show that literary texts do not follow a single aesthetic pattern when depicting sexually dissident characters. Lesbian characters, for example, are often portrayed superficially, with limited attention to their bodies, sex practices, desires, and affections, unlike gays, transvestites, and transgenders' settings, whose old bodies are discussed with no sabotaging or diminishing treatment, especially in homoerotic representations. The discussion centers around a selection of nine short stories, within the given time

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of period, as a way of catalyzing the discussion that has taken place. This does not mean to say that the article analyzes the total number of short stories. The analytical categories of this literary cut are LGBT characters, old men, and erotic experiences. The debate focuses solely on the short story genre. Secco (1994), Benedetti (2005), Goldfarb (1998), and others are part of the theoretical field of old age.

KEYWORDS: Brazilian Literature; LGBT Old Age; Eroticized Body; Sex Practices.

RESUMO

No contexto das literaturas latino-americanas, a brasileira contemporânea é uma das que também tem colocado em pauta a diversidade de gênero e subjetividade lgbt, a exemplo de personagens lesbianas, gays, travestis, transgênero e outras. Ao investigar a velhice, no recorte dado entre 1975 e 2022, vê-se que as escrituras literárias não mantêm um padrão de configuração estética de personagens dissidentes sexuais, de modo que as lésbicas são abordadas de maneira não aprofundada e sofrendo sérias restrições de uma dicção referente ao corpo, às práticas de sexo, desejo e afeto; diferentemente das configurações gays, travestis e transgênero, em que o corpo velho é discutido sem o tratamento sabotador ou diminuidor, sobretudo nas representações homoeróticas. A discussão é centrada num recorte de nove contos, dentro do período temporal dado, como modo de catalisar a discussão entabulada. Isso não significa dizer que o artigo analisa todo o corpora do tempo citado. Toma-se como categorias analíticas desse recorte literário personagem lgbt, velho e experiência erótica. O debate se centra unicamente no gênero conto. Fazem parte do campo teórico, sobre velhice, Secco (1994), Benedetti (2005), Goldfarb (1998) e outros.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Literatura brasileira; Velhice LGBT; Corpo Erotizado; Práticas de sexo.

1 Introduction

For decades, websites, articles, theses and various social networks have pointed not only to a rise in Latin American literature, but also to a search for the writings gestated in the geopolitical and economic contexts of both ancestral peoples (indigenous people from various countries in the region) and cultures colonized by the former Spanish powers (Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico, among others), Portuguese (Brazil), French (French Guiana). The writings of this part of the continent stand out in various literary genres, as well as are built in a perspective of reflection on the role of literature in the expensive debates on local identity and its relations with the global crisis of subjects, resistance of minorized populations.

Contemporary Brazilian literature, an extension of this base, has also stood out in the continuous production of how the characters act in literary plots to deepen social issues, gender, and culturally displaced subjects, without access to consumer goods and cultural products, and how the hegemonic classes are approached in the texts concerning their relations with the social strata of less social prestige.

Our objective in this article is not to debate Latin American literature in general, but to focus the reflection on short stories from contemporary Brazilian literature of the last fifty years,

with a focus on short story narratives from 1975 to 2022 – as the article results from a topic of a doctoral thesis (Holanda, 2025), the time already announced refers to the most standardized moment of production in relation to the thematic short stories with which we work. The criteria for such a selection were based on the generic search for titles that pointed to the theme of the article. We searched on *google*, with keywords such as gay old age, lesbian, LGBT, homoerotic, until a representative picture was built. After reading, we selected those that asked the questions posed by us explicitly. Some of those selected, even so, are written in a non-objective direction regarding the treatment given to elderly LGBT. The question of authorship is disregarded in the discussion, given the focus of interest: body and desire, or the erotic experience of the old or aging LGBT character. We start from the hypothesis that in times of public policies on the best age – older age, maturity, elderly, or another politically correct term – there is a tendency of the various cultural products to foster discussions about the demands of this population. Literature as a writing experience that refers to aspects of an ethical and aesthetic nature would not fail to foster this prominent issue today.

The problem of reflection, when considering the objective and the hypothesis of interpretation of the texts to be considered, occurs when the critical reading of the stories does not provide affirmative expectations in an egalitarian way in the aesthetic configuration of gay, lesbian, transvestite and transgender characters. From this confirmation, we work with the thesis that the representation of erotic LGBT old age in tales of contemporary Brazilian literature still seems to remain within a pattern in which gay characters move better in the social and cultural dynamics of the worlds represented, in relation to lesbian characters.

It is not our intention to classify or determine a certain terminology for each body in its experience with the erotic, but only to follow the delimited path of the construction of the *rainbow of senectus* in which the diversity of colors and subjects finds a place in the modes of writing and contemporary representations, favoring a more heated and urgent debate on the Brazilian old ages of sexually dissident characters from the heteronormative model.

2 Aspects of old age in different contexts

Discussing concepts and aspects of senescence can lead the person who studies to a temporality far from the present, because historically each culture has established the concept of

old age due to the functionality of the subject in the social dynamics in which he or she found himself. In Ancient Greece, with the establishment of gerontocracy (Secco, 1994), the old person was interpreted in a privileged perspective, because the old person had with him an experience and wisdom capable of guiding the younger people to the destiny of the polis. This same concept runs through Ancient Rome, especially when the Gerussias were formed, politically speaking. But it is in the medieval period (Ariès, 1981) that the old man finds his downfall in the social body from the rigid Catholic Christian morality that speculated the values of the old people. It was the Renaissance, then, that seemed to determine the cult of youthful beauty and systematically introduced the standard of beauty and ugliness, which was directly linked to the young person, by the harmony of the contours, liveliness and freshness of the body, while senescence was interpreted with a certain rigor of rejection and repugnance (Secco, 1994; Eco, 2004; 2007). It should be noted that whenever the subject is addressed by historians, the sexual issue seems to be permissible only in the period of freshness of the body, of youth, as if the old body were doomed to the penury of desire, to the neutralization of feelings and to the uselessness of sex.

From the nineteenth century onward, especially with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the Industrial Revolution (Secco, 1994), old age began to be reconsidered from chronological and gerontological perspectives. The continuous expansion of industry demanded a steady labor force capable of meeting the needs of consumer societies. As a result, older people came to be seen as incapable of producing, working, or contributing—even under exploitative conditions—to the progress of a society dominated by the classes that controlled the machinery of power (Peixoto, 1998).

In Brazil, the word “old” was impregnated with pejorative connotations for a long time, but at the end of the 1960s there was a gradual insertion of other terminologies such as *elderly* and *third age* in official documents or in studies on the subject. Although the term “elderly” was part of the Portuguese lexicon, it was little used. This information favors the construction of questions about how to define old age and being old, because there are still debates and studies that point to the equation of parameters to tabulate the subject’s entry into old age. The criteria that form the parameter are diverse: biological or psychological data can be considered. Goldfarb (1998, p. 9) states that, “although there are more or less universal signs and indications in each culture about old age, neither individually nor together, they account for a categorizing definition”, because the periodization of life in its various phases is permeated by cultural and social processes elaborated in different ways in each society to characterize this phase.

The process of maturation, in Brazilian culture and, according to historical and theoretical texts on the subject, in other Latin cultures as well, with rare exceptions, begins at the age of fifty. This period is generally critical in terms of the analysis and reflection on one's body, physical limits, and the achievement of problems related to the body wear: vision, hearing, motion, balance, memory, articulation, among others. Not that the limitations coordinated by genetic, chronological, and physical loads are factors that arise in an equalized way for everyone. But it is from the moment on that the body requires more care. And it is precisely in this period that we seek to understand how writers approach LGBT old age in tales of contemporary national literature.

3 Lesbian characters and their disguises for an invisible existence

Although we are aware that the study of the old LGBT body and its relationship with the erotic experience is nothing more than a generic view on this aspect, due to the fact that we focus on texts chosen (clipping) from a whole that is impossible to be accounted for, we bet on the defense of a thesis that supports the interpretation and that spreads over the texts not consulted, because the reading experience makes us affirm that it is difficult for contemporary texts outside the given cut to have approached a configuration in such a divergent way from the one we present. Our discussion centers on four Brazilian short stories, namely, "Encanto" (Mesquita, 1998); "Marília acorda" (Polesso, 2015), "Isaltina Campo Belo" (Evaristo, 2020) and "Domingas and the sister-in-law" (Silva, 2010). The number of texts refers to those that best configured the old lesbian body in its relationships of affection, among those read. But this is not a linear configuration: It is solely a representation of most of the short stories read, with rare occurrences of others that could differ from the thesis defended here.

In 1998 Fátima Mesquita, a Brazilian writer from Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), published the short stories collection *Juliet and Juliet*, considered one of the first lesbian-themed works in Brazilian literature to approach the subject from a more affirmative perspective. In "Encanto" (1998), the narrative is told in the first person by an unnamed fifty-nine-year-old widow who had previously lived in a heterosexual marriage and had three children. The story recalls the beginning and development of the protagonist's lesbian relationship with Augusta, a woman ten years younger. One of the

passages that draws our attention, one of the passages that draws our attention, because it reproduces a recurring model of lesbian womanhood throughout the story, is the following:

The doorbell blows my head. Noonish. It's her. I've just taken a shower and I have a sweaty perfume stuck to me to throw off the urge to hug this stranger [...] so that I no longer have to hide my sadness and abandonment, painting my face with wrinkle and lipstick [...] the sexless kind of woman I have effortlessly become [...] I open the door and come face to face with her. And the wide smile kisses my cheek (Mesquita, 1998, p. 22).¹

It is seen in the excerpt that initially the protagonist reveals a very passive and demure side of the mature woman who lives her lesbian subjectivity, when she meets Augusta, with whom she has a relationship. Painting her face with lipstick and roars," as she says, sounds like a figurative tactic to "hide sadness and abandonment". In this sense, the voice that narrates the old lesbian character makes it evident in the discourse of the text that the protagonist lives a non-reactive experience of the old or mature body, feeling "asexual". It should be noted that there is a kind of discursive reproduction in the sense of keeping a bodily practice for mature and old people: far from eroticism, desires, activity as a possibility of maintaining a quality of life in all possible aspects. It is a repeated, performed construction, as Rich (2010) would say, which affects everyone and leaves lesbian women in the social rubble, as if they did not exist. This reveals what Pinto-Balley (1999) had already stated, considering the views on these women: "The cause for the non-recognition, or lack of knowledge, of the presence of the lesbian subject and desire in Latin American works, lies in the same ideological attitude that makes the lesbian woman invisible to the eyes of society" (Pinto-Balley, 1999, p. 405).

As the plot develops, the protagonist has the possibility of changing her behavior, because she is also building herself in another way. If initially she was "the asexual species of woman that I became effortlessly", throughout the story the process of self-construction has its route changed to be able to deny the social ideal pointed out by scholars of the subject, that of a socially asexual, apathetic, inactive lesbian woman, in a process of degeneration, because the concept of old age circulated has always been that of physical and mental degradation, often reaching the degree of decrepitude and senescence, because the definition of old subject has

¹ The doorbell blows my head. Noonish. It's her. I've just taken a shower and I have a sweaty perfume stuck to me to throw off the urge to hug this stranger [...] so that I no longer have to hide my sadness and abandonment, painting my face with wrinkle and lipstick [...] the sexless kind of woman I have effortlessly become [...] I open the door and come face to face with her. And the wide smile kisses my cheek (Mesquita, 1998, p. 22).

always been linked to ageism. The following excerpt shows the way the protagonist faces her lesbian condition in an old body that dares to live a romantic erotic relationship.

Do you know [...] Today I feel very flexible, willing to put my body in a curve to avoid friction. And Augusta also helps a lot [...] We built together this relationship [...] Already half late in life this surprise, this kind of reward comes to me! [...] Well, the fact is that we are together, we have pleasure together. And today, nine years later [...] we are not separated. I collect orgasms, as well as spasms of loose laughter. And now I'm the one who prepares, adding up the crumbs of what I earn, to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of the woman I love. (Mesquita, 1998, p. 24).²

Ten years older than her life partner, the protagonist met her when she was fifty. At the time of the narration, she is already a sixty-year-old celebrating Augusta's birthday. It narrates a decade of experience in which the couple does not fight, one helps the other, both avoid friction, because she, the protagonist, has become more flexible in her worldview, as she states in the excerpt. The experience becomes one of pleasure together, collecting "orgasms, spasms of loose laughter". The old body of the lesbian protagonist starts to be treated in a more humane way when the character matures, demonstrating the writer's commitment to making the vision of lesbian women in literary writing affirmative. Far from circumscribing sexual dissident subjects in debates of prejudice and discrimination, Fátima Mesquita chooses to highlight a quiet life of the couple in focus. He chooses not to give details of their maturity process, but makes it clear that the desired body, even in old age, is lived.

Lesbian old age finds a subtle place of prominence in Fátima Mesquita, a fact that does not occur in Conceição Evaristo, in the short story "Isaltina Campo Belo" (2020), in "Marília acorda" (2015), by Natália Borges Polezzo and in "Domingas e a cunhada" (2010), by Cidinha da Silva. In the case of Conceição Evaristo, there is a whole discursivity in the social and cultural context of the writer's surroundings that places her in a position of black and lesbian feminism, previously subordinated and now led to central discussions. But the short story, very representative of the writing on the theme in question, makes the characters in the plot invisible. In "Isaltina Campo Belo" there is a story that, like others by the same author, is part of a particular

² Sabe [...] hoje me sinto muito flexível, disposta a pôr o corpo em curva para evitar atrito. E a Augusta também ajuda muito [...] erguemos em conjunto essa relação [...] Já meio tarde na vida vem para mim essa surpresa, essa espécie de recompensa! [...] Bom, o fato é que estamos juntas, temos prazer juntas. E hoje, nove anos depois [...] nós não nos separamos. Eu coleciono orgasmos, além de espasmos de riso frouxo. E agora sou eu quem prepara, somando as migalhas do que ganho, para comemorar os cinquenta anos da mulher que amo. (Mesquita, 1998, p. 24)

writing project, which she called *writing* (something like “lived writing”) ³, through which she collected reports from black women to transform into literary narratives, debating issues of identity and blackness, problematizing aspects of gender, race, and age.

The tale presents a black, lesbian, elderly woman. Initially, there is an introduction made by the narrator, who then gives space to a first-person narration conducted by the protagonist Isaltina Campo Belo:

Campo Belo, como gostava de ser chamada, entre outros detalhes, tinha uma idade indefinida a meu ver [...] os seus cabelos curtos, à moda *Black Power*, estavam profundamente marcados por chumaços brancos, denunciando que sua juventude já tinha ficado há um bom tempo para trás (Evaristo, 2020, p. 55-56). ⁴

Initially, both here and in the earlier short story, *Encanto* (1998), old age is not narrated in his daily experience in process, but as a catch, remembering the past. Old age, so to speak, follows the passage of time for the protagonists in a somewhat mute, deaf, blind way, without a continuous narrative. There are motivations, obviously, for choosing this way of narrating. But perhaps it is not a political vision claimed or necessary for lesbian visibility. As says Schüller (1989) in this regard, there is, on the part of the voices that narrate, or even in the author’s voice, a kind of kidnapping of eroticism in aging.

In Brazil, Mott (1987) states that if female sexuality has been repressed throughout history, lesbian women have been marked by occupying a place of greater exclusion. We agree with this observation and with Navarro-Swain's (2004) assertion that there has been a historical silencing in relation to this type of relationship between women. Mott (1987) records that, from 1646 onwards, the Catholic Church ceased to condemn female sodomy, despite the fact that, in the first visit of the Holy Office to Brazil, between 1591 and 1595, according to Bellini (1989), several women were indicted for sodomy.

³This concept/project/procedure of literary writing, formed by the process of agglutination of the words *writing* + *experience*, will manifest, according to Conceição Evaristo herself, her vision of the world, based on her personal experiences and those of other black women, inserted in a place of enunciation.

⁴ Campo belo, as she liked to be called, among other details, had an undefined age, on my view [...] Her short hair, styled in a Black Power afro, was deeply marked by white tufts, revealing that her youth had been left far behind a long time ago (Evaristo, 2020, pp. 55-56). My translation.

In the case of "Marília wakes up", the vision of the old lesbian character is configured as a person distant from desire, showing only the factor of age and disregarding the erotic experience of the body in favor of her care. There is no particularization of the visible body, but a universal rhetoric that understands the uniformly tabulated bodily assemblages. In prejudiced cultures such as Brazil, it makes the difference to know how old LGBT people and characters live, because there is no way to have a public policy, for example, in which only the gendered body fits in the heterosexual male and female standard. Depending on the way people experience sex and sexualities, legal treatment - both political and medical - is considered in its singularities. The lesbians in the short story "Marília wakes up" shape it into the narrative only for the reader to perceive an old couple who are in advanced maturity, one depending on the help of the other, that's all. Old age, in this sense, is aesthetically humanized in a universal, not particular way, as not belonging to a different old age: "Marília sits on the bed without the tray [...] I ask her what the problem is. She tells me that she keeps forgetting things, I reply that both of us do. She looks at me sadly and says that she made the coffee without adding powder and burned the bread in the toaster. She tells me she's old and forgetful. I say that we are forgetful old women [...]" (Polesso, 2015, p. 133).

This is one of the scenarios in which Natália Polesso sets the couple of lesbian women. In it, the writer opts for a narrative aesthetics that prioritizes the humanistic and universal side of the old person, to the detriment of a more politicized view that problematizes the lifestyle of women in relation to erotic desire. In fact, there seems to be a hijacking of this discussion. If in the context of empirical reality, it is this silencing that still prevails over LGBT people when they are old; literary texts such as those in question seem to reiterate this erasure or maintain the pattern of invisibility of these women. _ Shame, fear, rancidity of an education based on the degradation of women who assume a non-standard sexuality. The same happens in Cidinha da Silva's short story, "Domingas and the sister-in-law" (2010).

The tale revolves around the lesbian relationship built between Domingas and her sister-in-law Arminda, after her brother left home and his wife to join a band of outlaws. Arminda, aged sixteen at that time, went out into the world in search of her husband, did not manage to find him, but ended up coming across Domingas, at the age of nineteen, and a relationship of affection was established between them. Although short, the text describes a union that began in youth, when both were adolescents, until old age. The whole logic of the text is quite clear as to the fact that "they sleep together and this is public, but woe to those who declare them lovers"

(Silva, p. 45). This initial excerpt already reveals the couple's experience, which is confirmed when the narrator describes that the sister-in-law had left "Serra Talhada to look after her husband, who was thought to be with her sister-in-law Domingas. As she did not find him, they began to live together" (Silva, 2010, p.45).

The dynamics of the short story in question reveals an emptying of discursivity around the experience of the bodies of old women who live the relationship between equals. This emptiness found seems to deal either with a timidity to face the theme in a society still restricted to dissident experiences related to the masculine, or the performance of the characters in the short stories discussed here so far is related to issues generated in the power to talk about lesbianism without the affective-sexual content being the first image to be considered. A metaphor, perhaps, to talk about relationships of old and lesbian characters without the category of sex and body of desire being an essential point.

What frustrates the reader is the fact that the writers are known as defenders of practices of affection and sex between women, but the discourse present in the texts they write makes this image erased, making it politically invisible what, in our view, should be a motive for reflection. In the excerpt the characters are defied of what happens in the social world in which they live, as erased or hidden from social life that is common to people of dissident sexualities: "They didn't have a social life. Only the former Dutch nun often visited them. The nun lived with a friend and changed friends from time to time. The people mistreated their friendship" (Silva, 2010, p. 45-46). They reach old age and are, in the view of the writers, tabulated by the same ruler, the common ruler that distributes each subject in an age perspective without their singularities being able to be discussed or problematized. This is a cultural loss for those who read and cannot reflect on the issue in the light of a more elaborate image on the subject.

4 Transvestite and transsexual characters: relations of absence, presence, and resistance

Although some theorists, such as Alós (2021), claim that the presence of transvestites and transsexuals as an object of literary representation has a relatively long history in Brazilian literature, we prefer to be guided by the point of view of Fernandes (2016). The scholar states that the proportion of these characters in literary texts is exceedingly small, compared to that of other human types. We believe that the reduced occurrence of these subjects in national

narratives is associated with the context of pathology, perversion, and abjection, to which they have always been related. While we launch this hypothesis, it would be appropriate, in another context of a more general order, to expand the debate and investigate whether in Latin America the configuration of these types of characters is also restricted in literary representations.

Consequently, we also note that "studies on transvestite characters in Brazilian literature are still very recent, but they already structure important and uncomfortable relationships between society, literature and the literary field" (Franco, Vale & Soares, 2018, p.94), as Fernandes & Schneider (2017) also think. In both studies, there is a political concern with making a transvestite and transgender aesthetic visible, focusing on places of power and voice to characters who, historically, still find barriers to occupy hegemonically masculine and heteronormative spaces in the social body. Dalcastagnè (2012) draws attention to a map of absences in relation to the literary representations of subjects who have been or still are silenced in the various forms of contemporary Brazilian narratives. According to her, "literature is a human artifact and [...] participates in power games within society. This invisibility and silencing are politically relevant, in addition to being of the exclusionary character of our society, and, within it, of our literary field (Dalcastagnè, 2012, p. 149).

The discussion of this topic, if compared to the previous one, in which lesbian representations were the focus of the debate, concentrates on three short stories written by authors who not only configured the relationship of the characters with the transvestite and transgender experience, body and desire in old age, but are also subjects whose subjectivities are not normalized in the compulsory heteronormative system. These are the short stories "Amor Grego" (1977), by Aguinaldo Silva (a gay man); "Silva e a Puta" (2019), by João W. Nery (a trans man); and "The Condominium of Being" (2022), by Atena Beauvoir (a transvestite man). In them, the representational dynamics of the characters, protagonists or secondaries, are sometimes present, sometimes absent and, in others, resistant.

The short story "Greek Love" (1977) centers on Lina Lee's affective relationship with Cristo Xantopoulos, a Greek sailor who had landed in the port area and bohemian quarter of Recife Antigo, a space where she works as a street prostitute and singer of the Chantecler Cabaret. But it is the secondary character who assumes a primary importance for the denouement of the central story: Ótima (her name), an elderly transvestite owner of the boarding house where Lina Lee lives: "No one paid attention to Ótima anymore, who said she was eighty-nine years old, but in fact counted at least one hundred and twenty and certainly was the oldest in

the area" (Silva, 1977, p. 13). The most impressive scene in the tale is the one in which Ótima, almost a nonagenarian, reflects negatively on her old age and how she took on Lina Lee as a daughter. Therefore, she engages the prostitute in her plan:

Pulamos da cama ao mesmo tempo e eu me precipitei até a porta. Ela estava fechada por fora. Ótima, gritei e repeti o nome do velho! Ótima, o que está acontecendo? [...] – A porta está fechada. Eu a fechei [...] porque tudo deve terminar assim.

– Ótima, foi por isso que você me emprestou o quarto?

– Escute, Lina! Você quer sair daí, tem certeza disso? Depois de tudo que lhe aconteceu aí dentro você quer voltar a ver a luz do dia? [...] Lembra como era sua vida antes do intervalo desta noite! Sabe como será depois? Você quer viver quinhentos anos, como eu, a esperar sempre, a farejar o ar em busca das coisas a que não tem direito, até ficar como eu? É isso que você pretende? [...] É importante ficar aí dentro e queimar até o fim. Porque, então, você terá apenas esta noite e nada mais virá depois para diminuí-la (Silva, 1977, p. 38-39).⁵

By unilaterally deciding to kill herself and the couple (Lina Lee and Cristo Xantopoulos), setting fire to the boarding house ("because everything must end like this"), the character can be seen to amplify her voice in the narrative (a voice that until then had been hijacked by the narrator) and communicate her worldview, extremely negative about the aging of transvestitism ("to live five hundred years"). Her phrasal constructions reinforce the degradation, frustration, anguish, and continuity of the non-validation of transvestite existence in old age ("always wait", "sniff the air", "have no right" and "stay like me?"). In the excerpt given, aging is evoked by the elderly transwoman in a dramatic aspect, gaining projection and density in the narrative denouement.

In addition, it is noted that the elderly trans character establishes a strong dramatic tension, by promoting a violent and impactful death for everyone, specifically for herself and for Lina, subjects linked to a constant social abjection, caused by what "disturbs identity, the system and order and that does not respect borders, positions, and rules, because it is ambiguous and multiple" (Kristeva, 1982, p.4). On the other hand, Ótima's intention may also have been noble

⁵ We jumped out of bed at the same time, and I rushed to the door. It was closed from the outside. Great, I screamed and repeated the old man's name! Ótima, what's going on? [...] "The door is closed." I closed it [...] because everything must end like this. "Ótima, is it why you lent me the room?" "Listen, Lina!" Do you want to get out of there, are you sure about that? After everything that happened to you there inside, do you want to become exposed again? [...] Remember what your life was like before tonight's break! Do you know what it will be like afterwards? Do you want to live five hundred years, like me, always waiting, sniffing the air in search of the things to which you have no right, until you become like me? Is that what you intend? [...] It's important to stay inside the room and burn until the end. Because then, you will have only this night, and nothing else will come after to diminish it (Silva, 1977, p. 38-39).

and based on her feeling of "motherhood", in order to avoid greater suffering for Lina, eternalizing her "daughter's" moment of happiness and preventing her from experiencing, like her, the pain of aging in transvestitism, since "elderly transvestites suffer a double stigmatization: that of being of age and that of aging as a transvestite (Antunes, 2013, p. 24).

In the short story "Condomínio do Ser"⁶ (2022) we find a relatively simple plot centered on a 59-year-old transvestite character named Estella, who "had met a young boy. Eighteen on his face, smooth skin perfumed with masculine aroma [...] soccer player on the neighborhood courts. Without completing high school, his satisfaction was to have his cock above average and a libidinous youthful smile [...] Ricardo" (Beauvoir, 2022, p. 106). The life and sex experience of the almost sixty-year-old character is centered on the idea of monetizing a boy who has him as company, if he meets her needs. It is a model of companion that circulates among people in the same circle of identity and subjectivity, as stated by the scholar: "They must generally come from the lower strata of the population. They are usually young men, with a large physique and considered handsome and/or attractive (Benedetti, 2005, p. 119-121)."

The "husband" model for elderly trans characters like Estella needs to "live a stereotypical masculinity. This can mean, for example, being violent or having a history of experiencing violent situations. Many are small offenders, some even with stints in prisons [...] it is common for them to be supported, materially, by transvestites" (Benedetti, 2005, p. 122). This male pattern almost unanimously required by transvestites and transgenders reiterates a cultural issue on which we focus in this article: the image that sexual and gender dissident subjects have when they reach maturity or, more precisely, old age, seem to only find escape routes to their happiness in the choices made by men with virile bodies and very young in age. As they cannot compete with the standard of youth and co-opt for themselves young subjects and bodies that were attracted to old transvestite and transgender subjects, the monetization (Nascimento, 2020) of the other is the easiest way to this happiness. Transvestite and trans old age, here, seems to work in this existential dynamic.

In "Silva e a puta"⁷, extracted from the book *Velhice transviada*⁸ (Nery, 2019), there is a narration that shows the male trans subject, Silva, at the height of his sixty years of age, hiring a call girl to be able to fulfill his desire to have a sexual relationship in a more relaxed and less

⁶ "Condominium of Being"

⁷ "Silva and the whore"

⁸ "Queered old age."

tense way, with a woman who knew nothing about his gender condition: "I wanted to have sex with a cis woman without being discovered as a trans. His transition was late, at the age of 48" (Nery, 2019, p. 98). This is because it is common for trans men, in affective and loving relationships, or even solely sexual, to have to confess their anatomical-bodily state to avoid surprise and rejection by the other person involved.

The life experience of the trans subject in the short story on screen demonstrates a discomfort in relation to the body, especially when he needs to perform the gender to which he has transitioned – in Silva's case, to the masculine. This implies, in the most conservative ways, having a penis that satisfies the person who is the object of one's desire. If the character were allowed to communicate his desire as a gender subject, he would certainly state that "I wanted to be a man and not a trans" (Nery, 2019, p. 98). The character's self-knowledge is permeated by a negative view of the psychic and social dynamics that see the transgender subject. And a whole deeper and, why not say, heavier reflection is confirmed when the character's sixtieth birthday comes. When he hires a whore and, at the time of sex, when she demands him to "put his dick out" (p. 98), Silva's world seems to collapse; "whatever is solid", in Berman's words (1986), melts into the air", causing him the deep pain of not having the body he wanted to.

5 Homoerotic old aged: repairing damages, consolidating subjectivities.

The last topic of this article focuses on three short stories: "Inimigo Comum"⁹ (1975), by Gasparino Damata; "72" (2005), by Moa Sipriano, and "O Perfume de Olavo"¹⁰ (2019), by Vagner Amaro. Since in this work we perform as both literary and gender critics, we will not expand on the given narratives, because we take them as discursive figurations that exhibit ways of thinking about LGBT characters in literature, especially the homoerotic ones. It will be seen that among LGBT subjectivities, gay men survive the hardships of life more peacefully than other subjectivities, and the answer to this may be found in the fact that historically the relationships of encounters, affections, sex and permissiveness among men have helped to consolidate this identity. Since Ancient Greece, with the practice of pederasty, and even before it, written records have always exposed, even if metaphorically, relations of desire between men.

⁹ "Common Enemy"

¹⁰ "Olavo's Perfume"

"Common Enemy" is part of the collection *Os Solteirões*¹¹ (1975) and has as its plot the encounter between an homosexual subject "sixty years old or older" (Damata, 1975, p. 51) with a young prostitute (Hustler) in Cinelândia. In the plot, only one of the central characters of the monetizable bond is named, Otávio. The sixty-year-old, on the other hand, is referred to only as "the aged." At other times, Otávio is referred to by the attribute "young", and not by name. The tension established by the tale has its climax when Octavio claims to be in love with a girl and the old man, in his misogynistic version, emits a devastating speech about women, considering that even when young people fall in love with them, it is with the elders' money that they support themselves. This is because, according to Nascimento (2020), "Most of the elderly population subsists harmoniously in the midst of commodified relations; that is, these individuals select significantly younger partners, financing the maintenance of the status of 'spouses' attributed to them."

The view can be both affirmative and negative, from the point of view of the subject's existence. It seems to be affirmative, on the one hand, because the gay man manages to deceive old age with the field of active desire. If it was common practice in the 1970s, today, with the wave of over-the-counter recommendation of Tadalafil, Cialis, Viagra or Sildenafil Citrate, the erotic and sexual life of the elderly, regardless of whether they are gay or heterosexual, has advanced, is renewed and recontextualized in this sense. There is no significant loss for the old gay man, because even in the absence of a steady companion, a marriage or stable relationship, he lives with the boys who are predisposed to give them moments of pleasure and enjoyment as steady companions.

The darker or non-affirmative side of this type of relationship presented by Damata is the fact that it seems that the only one who can benefit from a dignified old homosexuality, with regard to the maintenance of sexual pleasure, the use of the other's body for libidinal happiness is the well-heeled old gay man. Keeping a young person as a lover, husband or other term that speaks of the relationship that is established is not a financially cheap operation; on the contrary, it requires a lot of financial resources, because the young people available for these purposes receive different proposals from other people. In this, they evaluate, they judge what suits them best. To have a boy just for yourself, without division with another old gay man, it is necessary to cover the offer, as they say in the retail market. Although monetizable, the psychic stability of the

¹¹"*The Bachelors*"

old man, perhaps derived from financial stability and the construction of himself as a subject of desire, is found in other narratives of the same content.

In the short story "72" (a direct allusion to the narrator's age), written by the *cyber* author Moa Sipriano, and extracted from the virtual collection published on his website in 2022. It is about the affirmative representation of an old gay man at the age of seventy-two who decides to "come out of the closet" (Sedgwick, 1985), assume his sexuality and the love left in the past, rediscovered in the present of the narration, after a lifetime in favor of building a traditional family. The narrative provides the reunion of the two, already old, because their whole experience was lived inside the closet. In this way, the septuagenarian to whom the title of the story refers to, takes courage and opens the door of the closet in which he had been hiding, showing an exit strategy as a line of flight in his favor, deterritorializing his life experience until then, reterritorializing himself in the geography of his body, his affection, his relationship with the other, and blurring the heterosexual landscape in which he lived. The couple's story falls into the label problematized by Goldenberg (2020), which places the beautiful happy old age as an invention.

Vagner Amaro, in the book *Elas* (2019), addresses the aged gay character as located in the terrain of sexual desire, based on the short story "O Perfume de Olavo" ¹², keeping up the configuration of the other short stories. There seems to be a pattern of LGBT composition in literature that approximates the narratives as to the way of situating the subjects of desire. In the short story, the plot centers on the image of a couple of elderly homoerotic retirees, Olavo and Jaime, who try to live socially with people around them. When they try to draw a line of flight that seeks the integration and acceptance of the couple's love relationship in the social environment, the presence of the two causes a crime of homophobia and they are publicly killed, as in the short story "Fat Tuesday" ¹³(1995), by Caio Fernando Abreu.

The way the couple acts in the tale shows a society that is still unreceptive to gay experiences during old age. Not only gay, when it comes to the text commented here: the characters lived a whole life experience in homes where they formed nuclear families. Only in old age they decided to assume the gay relationship started in youth. The narrative configuration continues to show the denial or punishment of old subjects who assume eroticism or love at this

¹³ "Terça-feira gorda"- In Brazilian culture the last day of carnival. It was the last day when Catholics could eat meat and indulge in gastronomic excesses ("fat") before the beginning of Lent.

stage of life. Thus, even interpreting it in a panoramic way, we can affirm that the LGBT population has lived its existence in contemporary Brazilian literature, provoking political debates and learning by and for diversity.

Conclusion

The investigation of LGBT old aged in tales of contemporary Brazilian literature has shown aspects that need to be considered, due to the relevance that the aging process and ageism acquire today. As it is a phase of life that is felt in a very different way by people, social strata and public policies, there seems to be certain urgency to understand how literature configures this theme associated to characters who live the experience of senescence facing the desiring body. It is obvious that public policies employ a kind of standardized tabulation to reflect the quality of life of mature people. We know that due to experiences and bodily changes, a transgender woman needs to consult with a urologist, just as a transgender man requires an appointment with a gynecologist. We are talking about a simple fact, but one that corresponds to a vital reality, especially when people from these subjectivities reach old age and the issues of geriatrics become blurred, erased in face of experiences such as the two mentioned above.

The aged LGBT subjectivities of the stories studied show that there is an imbalance both in the representativeness (numerical issue) and in the qualitative content of the discourse about old age and the ways of aging, since the reader will not easily find stories that narrate lesbian, transvestite and transgender experiences, compared to those that narrate everyday stories that involve old homoerotic characters and fully experiencing the eroticized body. As scholars have already pointed out, due to the historical presence of the male body in contact with male bodies being a fact, over time literary writings have had the chance to consolidate the vision of male equals in the field of desire. Today, in addition to desire, the aging and/or old character enters the scene.

Thus, when reviewing part of contemporary short stories that address old erotic LGBT characters, it is seen that this discursive field is not as peaceful as, perhaps, some readers belonging to this niche would like it to be. Regarding the lesbian representations, we have the impression, given the critical attacks already announced, that even though Fátima Mesquita translates a constructive vision of the protagonists' maturation, as a whole, the characters of Natália Polesso, Conceição Evaristo and Cidinha da Silva are arranged in the plots as subjects

who live a common old age, tabulated in the heteronormative whole, without the lesbian singularity that would characterize subjectivity. Their old age is seen as human, hidden, distant from the events of life and the body, which seems to have no life, needing only care, like every person who ages and has physical and mental deficits.

Shyness or lack of courage to face the theme, for distinct reasons, is perhaps common to Latin American writings that have initiated discussions about lesbian old age in literature. They are subjectivities that are difficult to be represented, for the time being, and of little depth, because they are still being projected, they are in the discursive scope of what begins to be produced and advances as a standard of discussion or agency in the literary or fictional field. There are scarcely a few representatives of the issue. But the access to discussion in a freer way does happen when we read the transgender and transvestite characters. Kind of sick, with a discourse of social victimization, yes, they appear talking, speaking, pressuring the reader to understand the subject in question.

When the question is the gay man or the homoerotic character, there seems to be fluidity in the plot as to the construction of the story, the affirmative self-representation, in the discourse of tolerance about the subjects who, even though they are old - and already very old in Brazilian reality (seventy, eighty years old), live physical or sexual pleasure from the logic of monetization (Nascimento, 2020). Not that this practice is exclusive to gay and old men, in the universe of the *job* that societies present today. But the escape route found by the gay and old characters is to project themselves as subjects without health problems and living long-lasting paid affective and sexual relationships. The gay characters do not suffer, do not face difficulty, do not emanate trauma or shame in living this lifestyle. They like virility, beauty, strength, youthful stupidity and pay to have access to this pleasure, a fact that without monetization, considering the parameters of beauty and ugliness discussed by Eco (2004; 2007), would not be possible, because the notion of beauty is projected onto the young and virile body; ugliness would be for the old decrepit body.

Gasparino Damata and Moa Sipriano elect an affirmative discourse for their elderly LGBT characters. They give them sexual dignity and desire that is not common to hear in the daily life of Latin American societies such as Brazil; that it is possible to live non-binary old age without losing contact with the field of desire, of sexual pleasure, even if monetization is the propelling valve of this type of relationship. They are characters who have economic stability, retirees with well-paid careers; therefore, they can pay the price for matching with people with equal desires, being them an old and a young man. This is the keynote of the short stories we focus on. This is the profile of

representation or configuration of LGBT old age in tales of contemporary national literature. The ways of approaching the subject say a lot about what we socially understand by singular old age and universal old age. The discussion aims at motivating other debates in favor of in-depth investigations into how LGBT old age is entangled within Latin American literature.

CRediT
Acknowledgement: Not applicable.
Financing: Not applicable.
Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval: Not applicable.
Contributor Roles:
SILVA, Antonio de Pádua Dias da. Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.
HOLANDA, Hélder de Araújo. Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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