

**BRAZILIAN LEFT-WING LITERATURE**  
**LITERATURA BRASILEIRA DE ESQUERDA**

Fan Xing<sup>1</sup>

**Resumo:** A gênese e desenvolvimento da literatura de esquerda no Brasil está intimamente ligada aos obstáculos e dilemas encontrados durante a evolução do país, e também é inseparável de movimentos políticos internacionais e correntes intelectuais. Da abolição da escravatura e colapso do império, no século XIX ao estabelecimento e retorno da ditadura, nos anos 30 e 60 do século XX, em cada momento de crise, a literatura brasileira de esquerda teve um papel seminal. Ao criticar injustiças sociais, ela também revigora o desenvolvimento da moderna literatura brasileira, incorporando diferentes formas de linguagem, pensamentos e arte. É seguro dizer que a literatura de esquerda forma um tipo de tradição literária no Brasil, porque não somente representa uma posição moral e estética, mas também inova a forma e a estética.

**Palavras-chave:** literatura brasileira, literatura de esquerda, tradição literária

**Abstract:** The rise and development of Left-wing literature in Brazil is closely connected to the obstacles and dilemmas encountered during the evolution of its nation, and it is also inseparable from international political movements and intellectual trends. From the abolishment of slavery and collapse of empire in the nineteenth century, to the establishment and return of dictatorship in the 30s and 60s of the twentieth century, at every moment of crisis, Brazilian left-wing literature always played a seminal role. While criticizing social injustices, it also invigorates the development of modern Brazilian literature by incorporating different forms of language, thoughts and art. It is safe to say that left-wing literature forms a kind of literary tradition in Brazil, as it not only represents a moral and ethical stand, but also innovates the form and aesthetics.

**Keywords:** Brazilian Literature, Left-wing Literature, Literary Tradition

Left-wing writers and their works have always occupied an important position in the studies of Brazilian literature, thanks first and foremost to the left-wing's close attention to social reality. As a former colony of Portugal, Brazil, after its independence, on the one hand continued to absorb European cultural influence, and on the other hand, was conscious that it lagged behind Europe in economic and social development. Therefore, from independence onwards, the construction of the Brazilian nation has been closely related to solving practical problems and promoting social development. On this basis, recording and criticizing the various flaws of Brazilian society and attempting to improve the living conditions of the ordinary people have become the core pursuit of many Brazilian intellectuals. Since the end of the 19th century, as a large number of European immigrants entered Brazil, anarchist ideas and naturalist literature spread in Brazil, ethnic division and economic inequality have become important literary themes. In the 1930s, influenced by the October Revolution in Russia, the Great Depression in the West and the “Estado Novo” dictatorship in Brazil, left-wing novels took the center stage of Brazilian literary creation, becoming the driving force in Brazilian modernist literature. The

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<sup>1</sup>Peking University – PKU, Beijing, Beijing, China; <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1193-547X>;  
fan.xing@pku.edu.cn

resurgent military dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s prompted another wave of resistance literature, and even after the process of "re-democratization" in Brazil in the 1980s, the left-wing spirit is still respected by the literary community, as great emphasis have been placed on literary creations' ability to expose, to criticize and to promote social equality.

However, despite leaning towards a left-wing ideological stand in literary creation, the concept of "left-wing literature" itself has not received due attention. That is to say, most of the existing studies have separated the works of writers with strong social criticism in various periods, nor have they noticed the connection between them or incorporated them into a unified left-wing literary tradition. Therefore, this review of Brazilian left-wing literature is not only an outline of this type of literature in Brazil, but also an attempt to demonstrate the inner coherence and evolution of this particular tradition in Brazilian literature.

### **What is Brazilian left-wing literature**

Due to the lack of systematic exposition of left-wing literature in Brazilian literary studies, the use of "left-wing literature" also seems ill-defined, which is often applied interchangeably with terms like "Revolutionary Literature", "Intervention Literature", "Resistance Literature", "Marginal Literature", "Social novels", "Regionalism Literature" and "Proletarian Literature". For example, in the 1930s, Aderbal Jurema made it clear that "(No Brasil) a literatura da esquerda está sendo chamada impropriamente de literatura proletária" (211). At that time, there were in fact no proletarian writers, and many works that criticized class exploitation did not directly reflect the life of the working class, instead were observation and reflection from the perspective of the bourgeoisie. Even so, many intellectuals still referred to such works as "Proletarian Literature", and the misuse of this concept still occurs today.

Such a large degree of misuse of terminology makes it difficult to determine the scope of Brazilian left-wing literature. The most common mistake is that the meaning of "left-wing literature" is improperly expanded to include all works containing social criticism, despite the fact some of the authors may simply be nostalgic and *saudosist* dissatisfied with the status quo, or social conservatives who yearned for freedom because they detested dictatorship. Especially when a writer belongs to the same literary circle as many left-wing writers, their differences in political positions are often overlooked, of which José Lins do Rego is the prime example. José Lins is regarded as a member of the "Northeast Writers" group because of a wonderful tale of the decline of his hometown Paraíba, and is often associated with Communists such as Jorge Amado. Therefore, posterior studies of José Lins usually focused on his criticism about social realities, ignoring the fact that such complaints may derive more from his nostalgia for being a privileged landowner in an epoch when the rural areas had not declined. In reality, from the perspective of the leftists, José Lins was actually more like a "right-wing writer" (Bueno, 207).

Another common error is to unnecessarily narrow the concept of left-wing literature by equating it solely with literary creation guided by communist or Marxist principles. After all, in the context of Brazilian literature, even when communist ideas were most popular in the 1930s, the Brazilian Communist Party had a rather limited role in leading left-wing literary creation. During this period, many well-known communist writers outright rejected the Party's inner censorship. At the same time, even after joining the Communist Party, most intellectuals did not have a particularly deep understanding of Marxist theory itself, as emphasized by Jorge Amado, Brazil's most iconic left-wing writer: "Eu nunca lera Marx, não sei se muitos dentre nós o leram (...) mas a maioria dos líderes do PC sem dúvida jamais o leu." (Raillard 74) This lack of theoretical unity did not prevent them from directly attacking class exploitation in their writing, or calling for a revolutionary movement centered on the proletariat.

Taking the above factors into consideration, the concept of Brazilian left-wing literature should first be defined before further analysis. In fact, despite confusion in its expression and use, Brazilian works classified as left-wing literature still show many consistent features. When discussing Brazilian proletarian literature in the 1930s (that is, left-wing literature, if we concur with the above-mentioned point of Zurema), Luís Bueno pointed out that although this category of literature is ill-defined, there are still three main characteristics that can still be observe: focus on the mass, revolutionary spirit and its ability to document reality (207). Such characteristics can also be extended to describe later Brazilian left-wing literary creation. Therefore, for the purpose of discussion in this article, "left-wing literature" will be limited to those works that focus on the living conditions of the socially disadvantaged groups and intentionally promote the overall change of society towards achieving justice, freedom and equality.

### **Race and Politics at the Turn of the 20th Century**

In studies of European and American left-wing literature (Wu; Foley), even if the subject is proletarian literature after the October Revolution, scholars usually go back to the 19th century to start discussion with the socially critical Naturalistic Literature. According to the definition above, Brazilian left-wing literature undoubtedly also originated in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of dramatic change in Brazil's history. Major powers of the world had already abolished slavery, and most South American countries established their own republics after independence, which put more pressure on the Brazilian empire that held on to slavery. From the promulgation of a ban on the import of slaves in 1850 (Lei Eusébio de Queiroz) to the complete abolition of the slave system in 1888, internal debates over the existence and abolition of slavery in Brazil heated over time. On the one hand, the plantation economy based on slaved labor was still the pillar of the Brazilian income, and political groups representing the interests of large estates occupied important positions in the Brazilian parliament. On the other hand, abolitionist pressure both from the international community (especially the United Kingdom) and within Brazil also increased over time.

It was in this context that Aluísio Azevedo created *O mulato* (1881), primarily influenced by European naturalist and positivist trends. In this pioneering work of Brazilian naturalist literature, Azevedo directly engaged in topics such as slavery and racism, not only showing his clear tendency towards abolishing slavery, but also regarded the work as a straightforward "Romance-tese". As the title indicates, the hero of the novel, Raimundo, was a mulatto, an illegitimate son of a white landowner and a black slave. The landowner's wife beat the slave in public and even tortured her out of jealousy. Raimundo was sent to live with his uncle Manuel and then sent to Portugal to study. He was always bullied and ostracized at school because of his skin color, but he managed to graduate and came back to Brazil, and fell in love with Manuel's daughter, Anna Rosa. However, this relationship was frowned upon because of his skin color and lowly background, and he was eventually murdered. At the end of the novel, Anna Rosa obeyed his father's will in marrying the murderer of Raimundo and eventually gave birth to three children.

Although *O mulato* revolves around Raimundo's story, this work is not about the fate of one individual, but a portrayal of the overall social environment and collective consciousness. In fact, the novel has a spot-on description of the place where the story took place, and most of the characters in the book are based on reality. The only abrupt intrusion is in fact Raimundo the protagonist. Through elaborate settings, Azevedo forcibly placed the son of a black slave in a social circles dominated by white people, thereby creating conflicts and inducing the ruling class to reveal their true colors. It can be said that in terms of emphasizing the social responsibility of novelists, Azevedo echoes French naturalist writer Émile Zola. As French scholar Jean-Yves Mérian argues, "Para Aluísio Azevedo, o naturalismo, antes de ser uma

teoria literária, é uma nova atitude diante da sociedade e um combate ideológico"(266). In this sense, it is not difficult to understand that, in addition to attacking Racialism and slavery via the tragic story of Raimundo and his mother, the novel also criticized some other prominent issues of Brazilian society such as patriarchy and collusion between politicians and Church.

In 1890, two years after the abolition of slavery in Brazil and one year after the founding of the Republic, Azevedo published another classic, *O Cortiço*, shifting his focus from race to class. At that time, a large number of emancipated labor went to big cities in search of opportunities, and the Brazilian government also vigorously attracted European immigrants, so the lack of residence soon became a plaguing problem, of which Azevedo was keenly aware. He described the abysmal living conditions of the shanty dwellers and their lack of upward mobility opportunities. The ruthless protagonist João Romão exploited the tenants economically, and after one of his neighbors obtained a noble title, he forced his long-time lover and companion to death in hopes of marrying the new aristocracy.

At the end of the nineteenth century, in addition to Azevedo, several other naturalist writers stand out, such as Adolfo Caminha and Inglês de Sousa. The former wrote *Bom crioulo*, the first novel on homosexuality, and the latter published *O Missionário*, which deals with the Indian community and Christian ethics. Although these works also played a certain role in revealing and criticizing the flaws of Brazilian society, they can hardly be compared to Azevedo's representative works in terms of social significance or literary value. It wasn't until Lima Barreto appeared in the literary scene that Brazilian left-wing literature took another leap forward.

If a white elite like Aluísio Azevedo needs to create a "Mulatto" in words, in order to analyze and expose the problems of Brazil, then Lima Barreto's advantage is in himself being a mixed-race. In real life, however, his mulatto identity and black appearance caused him more burden. He was excluded from the mainstream literary circle, and never received his due recognition during his lifetime. This seclusion aggravated his dependence on alcohol and mental crisis, which contributed to his early death at the age of 40. Unsatisfaction in life and literature exacerbated his suspicion and made him more critical of the surroundings, and this attitude in turn led to further alienation by contemporary intellectuals. He declared war on all forms of elite, and was critical of racism, of the republican system, of the political incompetence, of the atmosphere among high education system, of the news media, and even of feminism that prevailed at the time, because the movement did not include black women. He strongly advocated the importance of "Literatura Militante" and stated in newspaper that if literature "se não visam a propaganda de um credo social, têm por mira um escopo sociológico" (Barreto 129).

Barreto's combative stance is fully reflected in his 1911 novel *Triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma*, which is mostly known for its irony and critique. The homonymous protagonist is a Don Quixote-like patriot who aspired to contribute to the betterment of the Brazilian nation, but never succeeded in his endeavors and ultimately paid the price of his life. In the book, Policarpo had three major projects: he proposed to adopt the indigenous language Tupi as the official language of Brazil, but was deemed delusional and was confined to a mental institution; he then retreated to work as a farmer, but was ruthlessly oppressed by local politicians; towards the end he joined the federalist revolution out of patriotism, but was stigmatized as a traitor for not speaking out against inhumane treatment of the prisoners of war, and was ultimately sentenced to capital punishment.

It can be argued that Policarpo's tragic fate pointed to the inherent ills of Brazilian society in terms of culture, economy, politics, and justice, a sentiment incompatible with the overwhelming optimism at the time. This work also participated in the innovation in literary

language for it to conform to Brazilian ways of expression, which set an precedent for the *coloquialidade* in the later modernist literary movement. However, this down-to-earth style did not meet the requirements of elegance in the literary world at that time, thus it received a lot of criticism. It is essentially this pioneering attitude which transcended his time that forbade Barreto to be recognized during his lifetime, but helped him gain immortality in Brazilian literary tradition after his death. His literary principles and style have been largely inherited and developed by subsequent left-wing writers.

### **"The red decade of 1930s" and Brazilian Modernist Literature**

The death of Lima Barreto in 1922 coincided with the centenary of Brazil's independence. In this monumental year, three major events took place in Brazil: Modern Art Week in São Paulo, the 18 of the Copacabana Fort revolt, and the establishment of the Brazilian Communist Party. These three events are closely related to political situation in and out of Brazil (Russian October Revolution, World War I, Brazilian industrial development and political crisis), and also prepared for the flourishing of Brazilian left-wing literature in the 1930s. Specifically, the Brazilian Modernism movement which began in 1922 cleared the way for the 30s generation of writers to create new styles by emphasizing innovation and free expression. The fort uprising marked a growing dissatisfaction in the military with Brazil's political situation, and some of the participating officers were directly involved in the 1930 revolution which established Getúlio Vargas in office to begin his 15-year authoritarian rule. The Brazilian Communist Party not only attempted to organize domestic intellectuals, but also gained recognition from the Communist International in 1923, thus becoming a part of the global proletarian revolution.

Domestic political turbulence, coupled with the impact of the US financial depression in 1929 on Brazil's economy and the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe, led Brazilian intellectuals to fall into ideological extremisms in their preoccupation with national security and direction of development. In terms of literary production, the division is reflected in simultaneous rise of left-wing proletarian literature and right-wing integralist (Brazilian fascist) literature. However, today's literary history rarely mention those right-wing writers any more, and left-wing literature (especially social fiction) has become the dominant subject in literary research of this period. Writers from the economically backward Northeast region have received the most scholarly attention, as their production correspond with the international "Red decade of 1930s".

Graciliano Ramos, Rachel de Queiroz and Jorge Amado are among the most famous among the "30s generation" Northeast writers in Brazil, as they represent the peak of Brazilian literary creation during this period, and that they are also regarded as "communist writers". Among them, Rachel and Amado joined the Communist Party when they were about 20 years old, and the Party's guiding ideology as well as its internal issues are prominent themes in their earlier works. On the contrary, Graciliano only joined the Party more than ten years after entering the literary scene, when he was over fifty. But before that, he already had a very clear understanding of the social function of literary creation. In the 1937 literary essay "Norte e sul", Ramos satirized those who were reluctant to expose hardships and struggle in literature, emphasizing that only Northeast writers who wrote "inconveniently" could truly grasp Brazil's "truth" (Ramos 136). In the 1945 article "O fator econômico no romance brasileiro", he put forward an even higher requirement for writers who cared about social issues:

(Os romancistas) abandonaram a outras profissões tudo quanto se refere à economia. Em consequência disso, fizeram uma construção de cima para baixo, ocuparam-se de questões sociais e questões políticas, sem notar que elas dependiam de outras mais

profundas (...) Não podemos tratar convenientemente das relações sociais e políticas, se esquecemos a estrutura econômica da região que desejamos apresentar em livro. (Ramos 253-254, 258)

One month after the publication of this article, Graciliano officially joined the Communist Party, so this emphasis on the "economic base" is likely to be affected by Marxist doctrines and Party policies. Overall, however, Graciliano still based his ideas on literary creation itself, with a strong focus on the work's authenticity and inner logic. In other words, left-wing thinking is not purely ideological here, but also a theory of modern aesthetic. Looking back at Graciliano's life, he clearly carried out his pursuit of literary authenticity rather consistently, which sometimes overshadowed the revolutionary nature of his works. Even in *Vidas Secas*, his most socially critical novel, the narrator did not speak directly for the illiterate and the ignorant among the inhabitants of the less developed areas. Instead, he used simple psychological descriptions to subtly convey accusations of social injustice. In this sense, Graciliano may represent the best combination of Brazilian modernism and left-wing ideas, and he was by no means an exception among the many writers who opposed oppression and strived for freedom. In fact, Graciliano was quite influential among his contemporaries, and his literary beliefs also had an lasting impression on the subsequent development of Brazilian literature. In a similar fashion, even politically engaged writers such as Rachel de Queiroz and Jorge Amado can be found making groundbreaking contributions to Brazilian aesthetics.

Rachel had a quite legendary career both in politics and in literature. Politically, she started participating in polemics in newspapers as a teenager, and later underwent a series of unparalleled changes in political stance, from orthodox communists to Trotskyists to supporter of the 1964 military dictatorship. In literature, she published the classic "O quinze" (1930) at the age of 20, and became the first woman to join the Brazilian Academy of Letters as well as the first female winner of the Camões Prize, the most prestigious prize for literature in Portuguese language. It is undeniable that in addition to the crafty novel structure, distinctive character portrayal and profound social themes, the great success of "O quinze" has a lot to do with the author's identity as a female writer. More accurately, Rachel subverted the dominant prejudice of Brazilian literary circles on female writing, because in this novel about droughts, there is nothing of "o pernóstico, a futilidade, a falsidade da nossa literatura feminina" (Schmidt 166). Instead, aside from portraying the miserable life of those affected by the droughts, she made a fabulous portrayal of a female teacher in the hinterland who had courage for change.

Rachel's work differed radically from traditional Brazilian female writings, but this does not mean that she was simply imitating male authors. In fact, in each of Rachel's works, she managed to create unforgettable female characters rarely seen in any male writer's work. Much of her portrayal of women's life and mental state comes from her own experience and observations, which is also consistent with Graciliano's emphasis on "truth". Even in *Caminho de pedras* (1937), her most politically engaged work, the development of female characters still stands out. This book is a rare insight into the relationships between characters within a communist organization, and it truthfully documents their courage as well as cowardice, enthusiasm in conjunction with apathy. In addition to revealing the hardship and sacrifice in the class struggle, this book also demonstrates the relationship issues of communists, as well as the irreconcilable conflicts between intellectuals and the working class. Although modern literary critics do not regard this book as Rachel's masterpiece, as there are outstanding flaws in the structure of the text, Noemi, who simultaneously represents the image of wife, mother and revolutionary, is still a classic character worth exploring. After the publication of *Caminho de pedras*, Rachel de Queiroz left the Communist Party due to disagreement with the

organization's skepticism and repression of intellectuals, and the main theme of her later works shifted towards severe criticism of the patriarchal system especially in Northeast Brazil.

While Rachel de Queiroz revolutionized Brazilian female writing, Jorge Amado's main contribution to Brazilian literature lies in his incorporation and representation of folk literature, local customs and African culture. At the same time, Amado was also the most influential left-wing writer of his era. Except his debut novel *O país do carnaval*, in the first phase of his literary career (that is, from the creation of *Cacau* in 1933 to the publication of *Subterrâneos da liberdade* in 1954), Amado published more than ten novels, plays, biographies, and travelogues that conform to the principles of social realist aesthetics, and almost every one of them has a distinctive political agenda. In *Cacau*, Amado already made the following statement/question: "Tentei contar neste livro, com um mínimo de literatura para um máximo de honestidade, a vida dos trabalhadores das fazendas de cacau do sul da Bahia. Será um romance proletário?" (Amado 121) In the 1934 novel *Suor*, through depicting the lives of many poor tenants and giving about equal attention to each one of these characters, Amado attempted to achieve the goal of "suprimir o personagem, matar o indivíduo" to prove the idea of "o que interessa é o grupo" (Ramos 95). After that, he created an iconic black character in *Jubiabá* to call for class struggle through raising the racial issue. As for *Terra do sem fim*, *São João dos Ilhéus* and *Seara Vermelha*, they tackled the issues of scramble for land in Brazil, the invasion of foreign capital, and the tragic fate of landless farmers respectively.

Thanks to Amado's keen observation and revelation of his hometown's reality, although the political intention weakened the depth of these work to a certain extent, it did not undermine their literary value. *Jubiabá* and *Terras do sem fim* are even regarded as groundbreaking works because of their incorporation of local customs, culture and religion. In contrast, *Subterrâneos da liberdade* is the only novel in which Amado shifts focus away from his home state of Bahia and turns to São Paulo. This three-volume book recounts a series of incidents involving communists in the São Paulo region, including their underground propaganda, organization of strikes, and their arrests. It could not impress the critics for its over-the-top political discourse, and more importantly, for it lost connection with the land. As a result, the characters in this work are considered flat and the language regarded as relatively pale.

It can be argued that when the Northeast writers of the "30th generation" were respected in the Brazilian literary world, their identity was closer to that of "rural writer" rather than "urban writer". What complicates the matter is that when we speak of proletarian novels, the first image that comes into mind is narratives of revolution with the working class as protagonist, which has a lot to do with the high degree of industrialization in the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, with a few exceptions such as São Paulo and Rio, the majority of the areas were still in the pre-industrial stage. Therefore, the most classic image of Brazilian left-wing literature in this period were not urban workers, but tenant peasants, herders, fishermen, and craftsmen as described by Amado and many others. However, just as "the images that leave the most impression in modern Chinese literature is not that of the working class, but the peasants, not the urban life, but the transformation of the countryside" (Jiang Hui 22), this characteristic of Brazilian left-wing literature differs from European and American literature, but establishes more links with Chinese literature. Therefore, in the early stage of the Chinese translation of Brazilian left-wing literature, misinterpretations often occurred, with examples like mistaking Brazil's *fazendeiros* for "feudal landowners" and *retirantes* for "refugees of famine". But on the other hand, this misreading also creates accounts for a closer link with the Chinese readers, which undoubtedly facilitated the acceptance and dissemination of the works in question. It can even be argued that the reason why Amado's works could have had considerable influence on Chinese literary creation in the 1950s is also related to this (actual and perceived) similarity.

It is worth noting that although the Northeastern writers dominated the Brazilian literary scene in the 1930s, certain areas in the South and Southeast like São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul also produced many high-quality left-wing literary works. Among them, Patrícia Galvão's *Parque Industrial* (1933), published under the pseudonym Mara Lobo, adopts the perspective of female workers in a São Paulo textile factory. The fragmented and colloquial narrative technique contributes to it being a modern female proletarian novel. In the same year, Amando Fontes published *Os Corumbas*, which tells the story of the relocation of the protagonist's family. They move to the state capital of Aracaju because they do not want to endure the drought and the oppression of the manor. However, they encountered a series of tragedies such as elopement, arrest, serious illness, and degeneration of their children, and eventually had to return to the farm. Although the development of these stories differs completely, *Parque Industrial* and *Os Corumbas* contain some similar plots, such as the discussion of a communist revolution among party members and the persecution against them; the physical and mental exploitation of the working class; and women with low social position being forced into prostitution. Such topics are repeatedly treated in many Brazilian left-wing works in the 1930s. In 1935, Dyonélio Machado, a fellow member of the Communist Party with the above two authors, published *Os ratos*. It used a lot of psychological descriptions to showcase the corruption effect of money, thus creating another line of tradition in Brazilian left-wing novels.

### **Romance-reportagem and Resistance Poetry under Military Dictatorship**

In 1945, with the end of the Second World War came also the fall of Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship, and Brazilian literature embraced a new round of change. Communist writers such as Amado who still adhered to the creation of revolutionary literature became more of an exception, as the majority aligned themselves with the emerging post-modern literary trends. Existentialism, individual consciousness and reflections on art became more popular subjects than social resistance. After the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of USSR in 1956, a major division within the Brazilian Communist Party occurred, and the influence of left-wing forces further declined. By 1964, however, the situation in Brazil had taken a turn for the worse. João Goulart, then President of Brazil, failed to advance reforms of socialist nature, thus triggering a coup which kicked off another 21 years of military dictatorship. Compared with Vargas's rule, this later military dictatorship was more hardline in the name of national security. As a result, there were waves of resistance movements in Brazil, and left-wing literature flourished again in this background.

Antônio Callado was one of the most active writers of this period and achieved remarkable achievements in the field of novel writing. During the military dictatorship, Callado published some of his most important works like *Quarup* (1967), *Bar Don Juan* (1971), *Reflexos do baile* (1976) and *Sempreviva* (1981). Every one of these novels point directly to the reality of Brazilian society, expressing a clear criticism of dictatorship. Among them, *Quarup* tells the story of a priest who ultimately committed himself to social struggle after experiencing a series of spiritual shocks; *Bar Don Juan* depicts a group of leftist intellectuals who engage in nothing but empty talk and dare not to act; *Reflexos do baile* centers on the attempt by a group of young people to kidnap a foreign ambassador; and *Sempreviva* focuses on a political figure in exile who secretly returns to Brazil to investigate the truth behind his wife's persecution during the dictatorship.

Callado's contribution to the literature of this period was mainly due to his extensive experience as a journalist. Since entering the newspaper industry in 1937, Callado had more than 30 years of professional experience, which granted him a keen sense of politics and accurate judgment of fleeting events. The publication of the *Quarup* in 1967 opened a new era in Brazilian resistance literature, and Antonio Candido praised Callado as "o primeiro cronista

de qualidade do golpe militar" (209). In terms of writing style, Callado also intentionally combined the language used in newspaper with literary language, incorporating non-fictional texts like news reports, diary and letters in fiction to guarantee a simultaneous stress on textual combativity and literary value, or in other words, facilitating readers' comprehension while not giving up on the novels' quality.

This technique played a huge role in the sixties and seventies. On the one hand, in this unusual period, media coverage was essential for both documenting important events and molding of ideologies. On the other hand, the news language is more concise and clearer. As it can tackle the problem itself, its usage contributed to the spread of resistance rhetoric. Many writers regard fictional creation as a supplement or even a substitute for documentary reports, using the name of fiction to record reality and fight against injustice. Both Esdras do Nascimento's *Engenharia do casamento* and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Bebel que a cidade cameu* came out in 1968, and both of them contain direct excerpts from news reports. *Engenharia do casamento* seems to reveal the narrator's subjective thinking in the form of a diary, but in reality it achieved an objective record of reality by incorporating a pastiche and rewriting of everyday news. The death of the narrator at the end is closely tied with the historical background that he constantly documents. At the same time, *Bebel que a cidade cameu* absorbed a large number of slogans, political flyers and propaganda taglines, and then put together a pastiche of these fragmented materials to achieve innovation in language.

Following global liberation movements such as the Prague Spring and May 68 movement in France, Brazil also saw the Passeata dos Cem Mil, a manifestation of popular protest against the military dictatorship. In December, AI-5 was signed by the dictatorship, giving the regime enough power to overrule every previous legislation, which further ramped up political persecution and violence and strengthened cultural control and censorship. The civil resistance movement was hit hard, and it became increasingly difficult to create and publish literary works. Except for a few works such as *Bar Don Juan* which criticized the leftist struggle, political fiction in this period was difficult to come out. Only the works of some of the most popular writers like Jorge Amado and Érico Veríssimo were allowed to be seen by the public.

Veríssimo was about the same age as Amado, and he also entered the literary world in the 1930s. However, Veríssimo was more like a rare centrist in the extreme 30s. Despite works such as *Caminhos Cruzados* that satirized the bourgeois moral standards, generally speaking, Veríssimo paid more attention to personal mental activities and emotional life. However, in the period known as *Anos de chumbo* (1969-1974) in which the political atmosphere was the most depressing, Veríssimo's *Incidente em Antares* (1971) became more of an influential icon of resistance literature than Amado's *Tenda dos Milagres* (1969) for its direct approach to social problems.

*Incidente em Antares* is divided into two parts, of which "Antares" depicts the historical and political structure of the fictional city from archeological excavations to 1963, and the story of "Incidente" ranges from the general strike of Antares at the end of 1963 to 1970. Veríssimo's ambition can be seen because, on the one hand, he took the risk of being classified as "cliché" in insisting to educate the readers of politics and history; and on the other hand, he tackled some of the key issues that the dictatorship most dreaded, such as the general strike, the absolute power of the government, the repression of the people, the corruption and hypocrisy of the officials, etc. More importantly, this book manages to combine political engagement with admirable literary techniques and plot arrangement. Taking the strike of the cemetery workers as an entry point, Veríssimo recounts the resurrection of 7 people who died on the same day, and used their voice to denounce the corrupt local politics. It could be said that he achieved a perfect balance between political allegory and capturing of psychological state. Therefore, it

achieved widespread influence both in Brazil and abroad. As early as 1975, Chinese translators already “translated some of the chapters of *Incidente Antares* to Chinese”(Fan and Chen 2).

It is worth mentioning that while novels were the main target of censorship following the deterioration of the publishing environment, poetry became the main form of literary expression in this period, which is also a major difference with the resistance literature in the 1930s. Thanks to the concise nature of poetry, with the support of some small independent publishing organizations, "o número de poetas aumenta dia-a-dia e as segundas edições já não são raras." (Hollanda 9). At the same time, some of the new trends of poetic production in this period, such as the simplification of language, the appropriation of spoken language and the writing of daily life, also helped to achieve a wider acceptance of poetry. This “desierarquização” (Hollanda 10) of poems was largely influenced by the "Tropicália" movement of the 1960s, and further narrowed the distance between Brazilian poetry and popular culture (especially pop music). Generally speaking, the poems published between 1969 and 1974 tended to be more allegorical and more implicit in their critique of reality, but this did not prevent them from forming a sizable resistance force under the strict control of the military government.

When the political environment in Brazil loosened a little bit towards the end of 1970s, more serious and reflective poems found their space. Exile poet Ferreira Gullar published *Poema Sujo* in 1976, and Alex Polari who was imprisoned published *Inventário de cicatrizes* in 1978. *Poema Sujo* immediately became a classic in Brazilian contemporary poetry. In addition to Gullar’s consistent revolutionary stance and innovation of language, the most striking thing about this work is that it grasped the inherent nature of the collective consciousness of Brazilian society, linking his own "subjetividade solitária" during exile with the collective memory that was "múltipla e solidária." (Bosi 13). As a representation of *literatura de testemunho*, *Inventário de cicatrizes* in turn exhibits a stronger spirit of struggle and resistance than similar writings produced after the "re-democratization" process started in 1979.

### **Concluding Remarks: Left-wing Literary Traditions and Brazilian Contemporary Literature**

This paper attempts to outline the left-wing tradition in Brazilian literature, showcasing that its continued development is not only due to consciousness of social participation of each generation of Brazilian writers, but also inseparable from the reality of Brazil that has been constantly challenged by one crisis after another. From the nineteenth century to the present, Brazilian intellectuals have often described their homeland as "peripheral" and "less developed", but their criticisms have been also full of hope of change, which is also the root of social responsibility of Brazilian writers. At the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2013, while speaking on behalf of Brazil which was the guest nation of honor, Luiz Ruffato explicitly affirms: "O que significa ser escritor num país situado na periferia do mundo, um lugar onde o termo capitalismo selvagem definitivamente não é uma metáfora? Para mim, escrever é compromisso." This statement basically represents the attitude of Brazilian left-wing writers of the last century or so.

In addition to the influence of the changing political positions, the development of left-wing literature in Brazil also accompanies the evolution of literary theories. After Graciliano proposed in the 1930s that documenting the “truth” both subjective and objectively should be an aesthetic pursuit, in the 1960s Gullar continued to expound on the importance of basing one’s writing on the Brazilian reality. He believes that art in developed countries is not better than that in developing countries, and art based on local reality can not only show the particularity of this region, but also discover the "a universalidade presente nessa particularidade, e que só está presente nela, e que nenhuma outra arte poderá exprimir – e, por

isso, é uma contribuição à experiência de todos os homens."(Gullar, 83). It is undeniable that in the recent decades of Brazilian literary criticism, this entanglement of the particularity and the universal, of the local and the global, have been their focus of discussion, which also provides a theoretical support for the continuation of the Brazilian left-wing tradition.

In this way, it is not difficult to understand that even after the end of the military dictatorship, literary works with social criticism at their core still are seeing growth in Brazil. If divided by time period, in the 1980s when democratization had just completed, dystopian fictional works like Amado's *Tocaia Grande* and João Ubaldo Ribeiro's *Viva o Povo Brasileiro* were the most notable. From the late 1990s, literature on the marginal groups and slums gradually took the center stage, with the most famous being Paulo Lins's *Cidade de Deus*, and Ruben Fonseca, Luiz Ruffato and others also made significant contributions in this field. The establishment of the Comissão Nacional da Verdade in 2011 coincided with a series of reflections on the period of military dictatorship, and many writers have also participated in this historical rethinking. Bernardo Kucinski's *K* and Julián Fuks' *Resistência* are two of the most representative works dealing with this issue.

However, in the past two years, this particular mode of discovering and criticizing social illness seems to demand revision. Especially after the right-wing politician Bolsonaro was elected president in 2018, more and more people have begun to doubt if left-wing discourse has been lacking in some regards. After all, since the fall of the military dictatorship, democracy and freedom that were originally sought-after goals seem to have become requirement for political correctness. As social criticism became the mainstream position among the intellectuals, engaging this form of literary expression look more like submitting to academic authority than truly representing the original left-wing spirit of resistance and embracing its risk. In this context, what constitutes as true left-wing literature has become a new problem, and related discussions will continue to influence the future direction of Brazilian literature.

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**Fan Xing** is Assistant Professor of Portuguese at Peking University (PKU). For further information see <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5188195127045156>

Submetido em 21/04/2020

Aprovado em 23/06/2020