

A bibliometric analysis regarding Brazilian studies of counterfactual novels

Uma análise bibliométrica sobre os estudos brasileiros de romances contrafactuais

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Resumo: Este artigo estudou a postura pós-moderna através do hibridismo entre História e Literatura elegendo como objeto o romance contrafactual. O objetivo do artigo é analisar a produção de estudos de literatura contrafactual no Brasil sob uma perspectiva qualitativa e quantitativa. A hipótese contemplada é que os estudos da literatura contrafactual brasileira ainda são incipientes e por isso devem ser promovidos. A metodologia escolhida foi a Bibliometria. A pesquisadora usou os termos: "história contrafactual", "história alternativa", "romance histórico" e "metaficção científica". O programa VOSViewer foi utilizado para análise da quantidade de publicações e redes de autores. Desde 2013, os resultados mostram um aumento no número de publicações. Os autores dispõem de uma rede de publicações/citações para os termos "história contrafactual" e "romance histórico". O software VOSViewer foi utilizado para desenvolver uma análise quantitativa e uma rede de autores.

Palavras-chave: Bibliometria. Literatura contrafactual. Pós-modernismo.

Abstract: *This paper studied the postmodern posture through the hybridism between History and Literature by electing the counterfactual novel as its object. The paper's aim is to*

analyze the production of counterfactual literature studies in Brazil under qualitative and quantitative perspective. The hypotheses contemplated is that Brazilian counterfactual literature studies are yet incipient and due to this fact must be promoted. The chosen methodology was Bibliometrics. Researchers used the terms: “história contrafactual”, “história alternativa”, “romance histórico” and “metaficção científica”. Since 2013, the results display an increase in number of publications. The authors have a network of publications/citations for terms “história contrafactual” and “romance histórico”. The VOSViewer software was used to develop a quantitative analysis and an author network.

Palavras-chave: *Bibliometrics.
Counterfactual Literature.
Postmodernism.*

1 Introduction

One of the aspects which characterize the contemporary period called postmodernism is a self-aware, self-critic posture towards problematics that involve language. Some of them are: language performance, language range of interpretation, scientific epistemology, narratives' delimitation and function. Postmodernism understands that everything - from science to fiction, from knowledge to events – is, in an ontological way, a narrative structure. “In the light of recent work in many theoretical areas, we have seen that narrative has come to be acknowledged as, above all, a human-made structure – never as ‘natural’ or given” (HUTCHEON, p. 62, 2003). This awareness, a postmodernist intrinsic element, promotes a very significant change in our understanding and our intellectual production.

Wherefore, a contemporary tendency is to revisit past works, postulates and episodes within a reviewer mode in order to propose and promote contrasting contributions from various points of view. Aware of its post-truth condition, the postmodernism is the opening to voices that have not participated on the building of history as well as the questioning of the construction of history itself. “Historical meaning may thus be seen today as unstable, contextual, relational, and provisional, but postmodern argues that, in fact, it has always been so” (HUTCHEON, p. 67, 2003).

Ergo, knowledge is contemporaneously recognized as composed narratives determined by the scientist background, which fixes the choices he or she makes to consciously or not

structure the studies, the presented point of view and results. In other words, the elements that compose theory are no longer seen as independent, neutral nor entitled as eternal truths. “The stake opposition between everlasting truths and contingent facts thus became blurrier [...]” (GALLAGHER, p. 1129, 2019) in postmodern era.

In this paper, the postmodern posture above mentioned will be studied through the areas of History and Literature. The reason for the preferred hybridism can be found in one of Linda Hutcheon’s work, *The politics of postmodernism* (2003). There, she asserts that “Raw materials are transformed, given ‘shaped and form – that is to say, meaning’. This is as true of history-writing as it is of novel-writing.” (HUTCHEON, p. 65, 2003). Ergo, the postmodern speculation on the power of narratives brings these two fields close together. Yet, this paper intends to elect an object that is seen as one of the most emblematic products of the postmodernist theory: the counterfactual novel. It is so due its clear work on the potential ways literature and history studies can take as well as its popularity and topicality.

Counterfactual novels are historical novels in which the hypothesis of if clauses and then clauses are at the center of the speculation (GALLAGHER, p. 1131, 2019). The narratives take a real event, usually very known by the big public, and change an important aspect of the course of action – for example, Nazi Germany is the winner part of the World War II dispute in “*The Man in the High Castle*”, by American writer Philip K. Dick. Thus, counterfactual novels go to show the plausible outcomes of an alternative history. They strike the voices heard through history, the elements chosen to compose history and therefore the

supposed neutral gear that creates history along with its methodology. In other words,

Works like Coover's *The Public Burning* or Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* do not rewrite, refashion, or expropriate history merely to satisfy either some game-playing or some totalizing impulse; instead, they juxtapose what we think we know of the past (from official archival sources and personal memory) with an alternate representation that foregrounds the postmodern epistemological questioning of the nature of historical knowledge (HUTCHEON, p. 70, 2003).

The rise of the traditional historical novel's new performance is symptomatic. The increasing interest by writers, intellectuals and public in general in postmodern prepositions is undeniable.

"Literary fiction has never been more historical – nor historical fiction more literary – than at present" (MANSHEL, p. 1, 2017). The fruitful production and recognition, since the 1980s, has proved that literature produced contemporaneously has its own domain and must be studied like so. As Alexander Manshel asserts,

[...] the field of counterfactual fiction has undergone "a radical retemporalization" since the 1980s: while popular fiction continues to favor setting novels in the temporal present, literary fiction has turned dramatically – and so far irreversibly – toward the historical past (MANSHEL, p. 1, 2017).

Due to the fact that counterfactual novels mirror the postmodern core of thinking and also regarding the recent aspect of this study field, the aim of this paper is to analyze the production of counterfactual literature studies in Brazil under qualitative and quantitative perspective. "If literary fiction's pronounced turn toward history is in part what defines the novel after postmodernism's grip has slackened, then both the shape of

that turn and its historical imagination are of paramount importance to scholars of contemporary literature” (MANSHEL, p. 1, 2017). It is mandatory to determine in which baseline Brazil is in relation to postmodern literature research, specially the one which condenses such imperative elements – the counterfactual novel. The chosen aim was defined in order to contemplate the hypotheses that motivates this article: Brazilian counterfactual literature studies are yet incipient and due to this fact must be promoted. To achieve the answer that the hypothesis proposes, the methodology known as Bibliometrics was selected. It is the one that best fits the endeavor this paper wants to perform. Because it has been widely applied to analyze written publications, it is a secure choice to the study.

The bibliometric methodology, not a frequent approach to the literary researches, is a refreshing method to such an initial and relevant corpus. It is conceptualized as the analyzes of the measurements of publication patterns. Therefore, bibliometrics has conceived tools for identifying the corpus of literature. It allows one to deploy overviews regarding scientific production, that can be subdivided into the production nationality, the list of author productions and rank journals, authors and institutions (ELLEGAARD; WALLIN, 2015).

More specifically to this paper, bibliometrics will be used to analyze the production of papers in Literature Studies, the area that communicate to the object of our consideration, the counterfactual novels. Geographical and language boundaries are going to guide the research in order to determinate Brazilian Portuguese publications.

2 Material and methods

Bibliometrics, in the present work, aimed analyze the evolution of the field of study on counterfactual novels in Brazil written in Portuguese. According to Cunha (1985, p.37) bibliometrics can be defined as a research method that allows researchers to carry out quantitative analyzes and to identify core journals, where the most relevant articles published on a given subject can be found.

In this study, the bibliometrics method was used in order to analyze the number of publications regarding counterfactual novel studies produced in Brazil and in Portuguese. Even though there are several studies about counterfactual novels in other languages – especially English -, filtering the research by Brazilian Portuguese language narrows the results for this paper's purpose.

Bibliometrics is a field of information science that is devoted to analyze scientific publications (BROADUS, 1988). The bibliometrics method requires that one or more databases is selected. Then, in the preselected databases, key research terms are used to accomplish the researcher purpose (HIBBS et al., 2015).

Since our interest is to get to know the number of studies published by Brazilians on counterfactual novels, the scientific database Periódicos Capes was used. Besides being massively used by Brazilian researchers, this database was also selected due to aggregating international and national academic works in its results. The key terms used for identifying the scientific production regarding studies on counterfactual literature produced in Brazil were “história contrafactual”, “história

alternativa”, “romance histórico” and “metaficção histórica”. The time period used was from 1982 to 2020.

The bibliometric method protocol performed in this study is divided in five main steps: 1. Initial paper research; 2. Paper selection; 3. Paper delimitation; 4. Paper classification; 5. Paper analysis.

For the first step, the research is deployed by using the key terms in the selected database. Next, the paper segmentation is developed as to the content of their abstract. The papers' abstract should answer the question: “Does the article study the postmodern theory in novels in which History is a main axis?” Then, the third step is about downloading the papers that filled the criteria. For the fourth step, the papers are segmented according to the key terms used. And finally, the papers are analyzed in order to be separated between the ones that truly examine counterfactual novels and the ones interested in other aspects born from the hybridism between literature and history.

The VOSviewer software was used for authors network analysis.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Results using Literary studies field of research filters

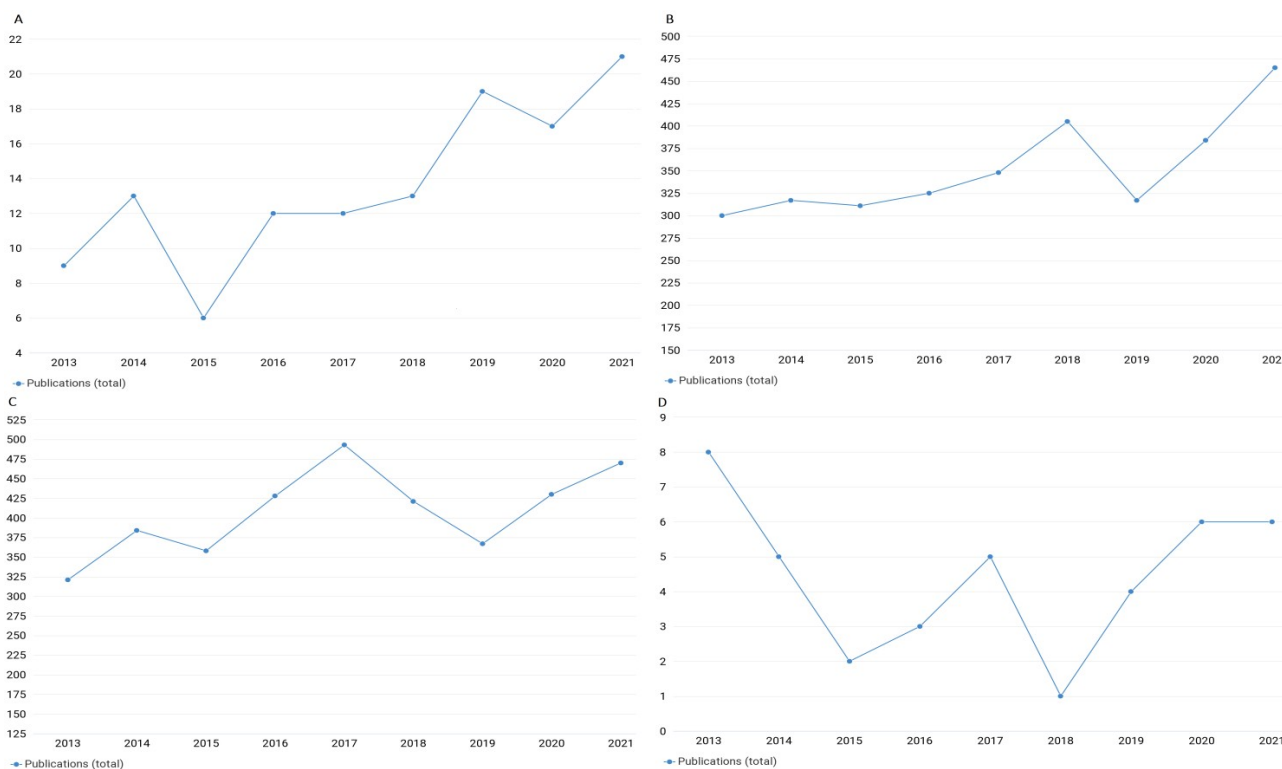


Figure 1: Evolution of publications using the terms: A “história contrafactual”, B “história alternativa”, C “romance histórico” and D “metaficção científica”.

In panel A from figure 1, it is displayed the evolution of publications under the term “história contrafactual”. It can be noticed that, since 2013, there was an increase in the number of articles published that match the criteria, falling under the Literary Studies dimension. The number of publications under this term goes from 9 in 2013 to 21 in 2021. Regarding the term “história alternativa”, results are presented in panel B from figure

1. Since 2013, it is noticed an increase in publications. The number goes from approximately 300 publications in 2013 to 475 publications in 2021, a significant increase. The term “romance histórico” resulted in a peak of approximately 500 publications in 2017. In 2013, the amount of works was 325 and in 2021 the number grew to 475. The term “metaficção científica” resulted in a decrease of publications, from 8 works in 2013 to 6 in 2020 and 2021, presenting also an oscillating pattern of distribution. These results translate the growing interest in research in this field.

Figure 2 present the authors network for each term, using the filter of Literary studies field of research to narrow down the amount of works. As we can see in panel B and D, regarding the terms “romance histórico” and “metaficção científica”, these terms resulted in the highest numbers of works, also, presenting a higher number of authors. Although, there are only one connection between authors and it falls under the D panel. Regarding the results for “história contrafactual” and “história alternativa” the results present lower numbers of publications, but the authors are connected in both panels.

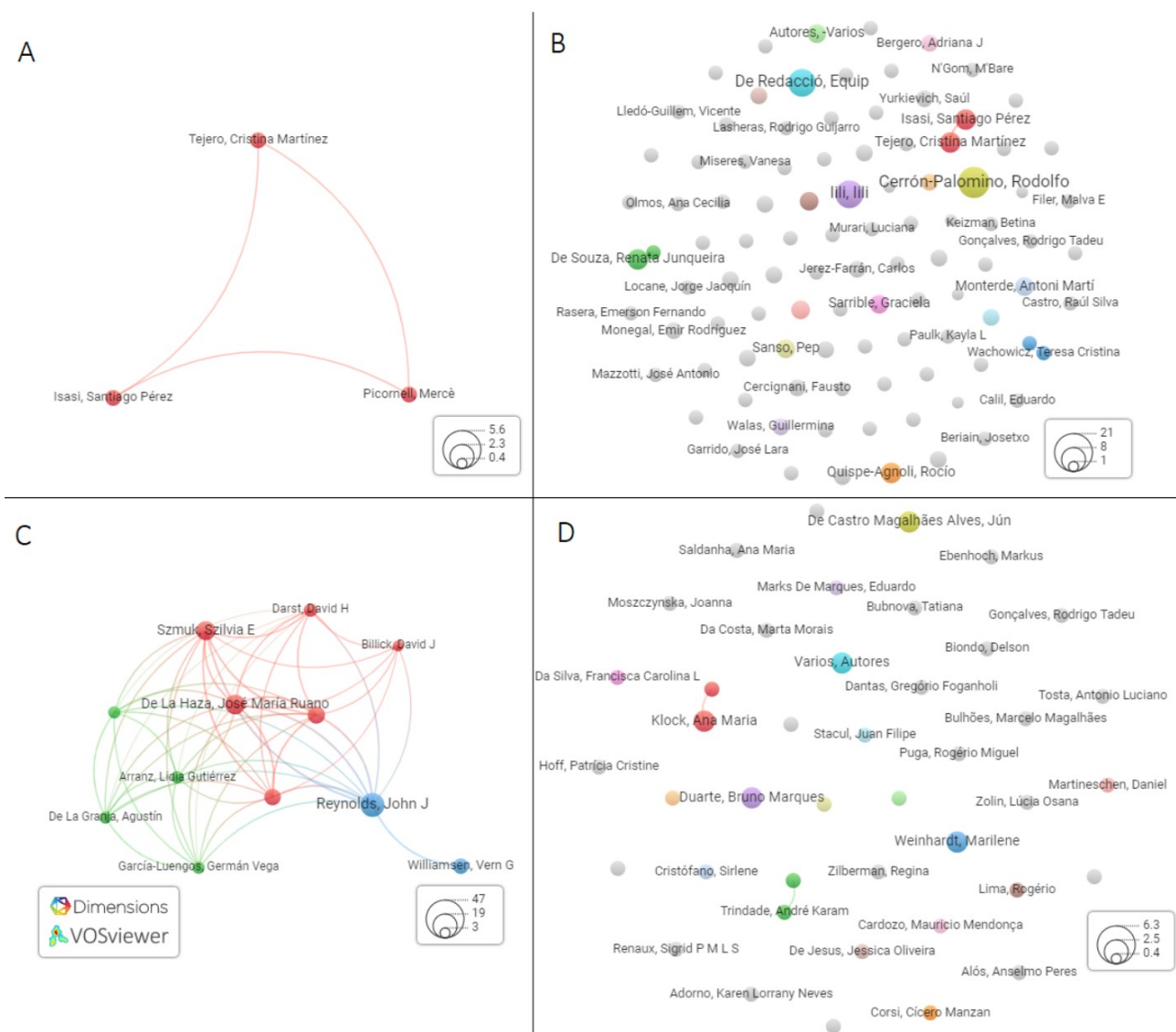


Figure 2: Authors network for terms: A “história contrafactual”, B “história alternativa”, C “romance histórico” and D “metaficção científica”.

3.2 Results using Portuguese language language filter

The search on the first two key terms - “história contrafactual” and “história alternativa” - was unsuccessful. There was no result for “história contrafactual” in Literature Studies in

Portuguese language, but 64 samples were found for “história alternativa”. Despite that, none of them was able to be selected after the second step proposed by the bibliometric methodology, that is, abstract reading.

Because of it, the terms “romance histórico” and “metaficção histórica” were also tried out, now with a bit more fruitful result. These terms were used because they can function as synonymous for counterfactual novels: the counterfactual type is understood as a specific performance of the historical novel. These two last terms brought a more significant outcome regarding numbers. For “romance histórico”, Periódico Capes provided 219 papers. This number was reduced into 11 by the abstract reading step. Then, “metaficção histórica” had 12 results, though 2 of them appeared previously in the research using the first term, “romance histórico”. Therefore, these two papers weren’t acknowledged for the second term, “metaficção histórica”. Ergo, “metaficção histórica” was left with 10 papers. After abstract reading, the term presented 5 papers to be analyzed.

Table 1 and figure 3 below show the explanation above:

Term	No filter applied	Filtering under Languages and Literature area	In Portuguese	Filtering by reading abstracts
<i>História contrafactual</i>	84	5	0	0
<i>História alternativa</i>	11773	566	64	0
<i>Romance histórico</i>	3198	823	219	11
<i>Metaficção histórica</i>	35	19	12	5

Table 1: The table brings the numerical results for each filtering step for the four terms used in the research.

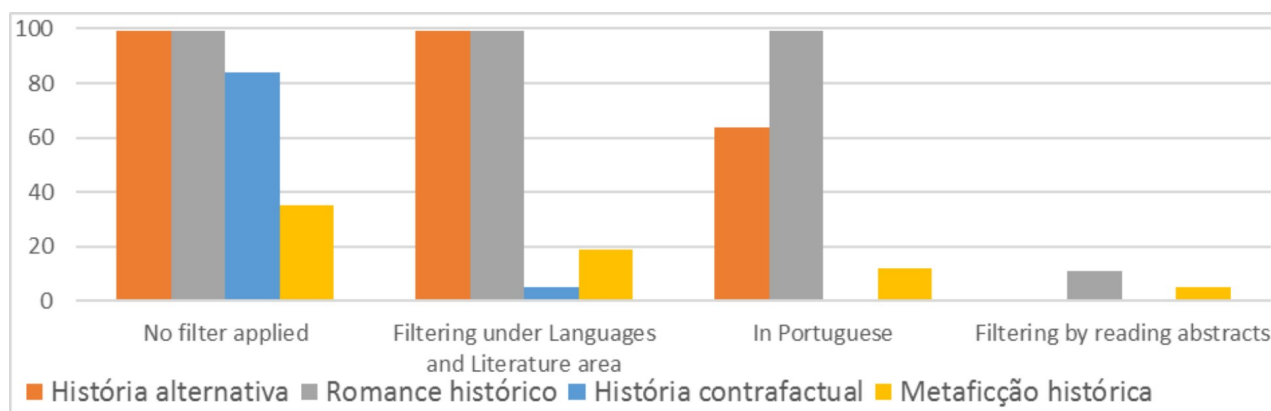


Figure 3: The chart displays the results found by the research in bar chart.

The total number of analyzed papers was 16, for both “Romance histórico” and “Metaficção histórica”. They were read in order to be analyzed regarding how much their content addressed the main object of this paper, the counterfactual novel. Once more, the results were fruitless. Although, the papers had very interesting perspectives on postmodern novels, none of them focused on this particular performance of postmodern literature.

Here are some brief comments on each read articles. They were separated by the key terms. First, the ones filtered by “romance histórico”:

a) A trama da memória sobre Ana Miranda, Adriana Varejão e Tatiana Salem Levy, by Antonio Maura

The article will comment on the relevant works of the writers mentioned in the title, especially the vast work of Ana Miranda, extolling the historical character of the narratives. The protagonists and plots will fit into the postulate of a new historical novel, as it gives voice to groups that are not white in the process

of history making, however, there is no counterfactual character in the analyzed texts.

b) Confluências da América e da Europa na hibridez de “Rede des toten Kolumbus am Tag des jüngsten Gerichts” (1992), de Hans Christoph Buch, by Gilmei Francisco Fleck and Robert Thomas Georg Würmli

The book studied by the researchers will be relevant insofar as their paper wishes to analyze the interference American historical novels had, those produced from the perspective of the colonized ones, on the production of current European historical novels. It intends to demonstrate the change occurring in the canon's direction. The article mentions a variety of historical novels, thus focusing on theory. The article seems more interested in the hybridity between literature and history than more specifically in counterfactual aspects. The question goes more about the historical revisionism needed by the colonies since they did not participate in the writing of their past.

c) Do retrato à caricatura: a figuração da personagem histórica em Saramago e Assis Brasil, by Maria Regina Barcelos Bettiol

The author will analyze the process of figuration of the historical characters in “História do Cerco de Lisboa” (2011) and “A Margem Imóvel do Rio” (2003) in a literary and pictorial perspective. The article intends to study the construction of historical characters by the authors who wished to treat the historical personalities more similarly to a fictional character. Despite the presence of “História do Cerco de Lisboa” (2011), a

counterfactual novel, the focus of the research is not exactly on the axis of alternative history.

d) Entre a ‘verdade’ e a ficção: um outro olhar sobre o romance histórico em “El arpa y la sombra” de Alejo Carpentier, by Liliam Ramos da Silva

In this article, the author wishes to analyze the way in which Cristóvão Colombo is demystified in the book, since he was already considered to be beatified. Thus, there is no counterfactual aspect, but a demonstration of an unknown portion of the Portuguese hero.

e) Entre o “poeta” e o “historiador” – a propósito da ficção histórica, by Alcmeno Bastos

The present article intends to consider the similarities between literary and historical discourse in order to exalt the postmodern posture in the treatment in both areas. And it does so in a way that a temporal review of the historical romance is traced. As a final product, we have a typification of historical fiction, without, however, mentioning the counterfactual novel.

f) Narrativas ao Sul: viagem e música em quatro romances de Assis Brasil, by André Tessaro Pelinser and Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury

The authors of the article will study the issue of Regionalist migration found in contemporary literature, more specifically in “Visitantes do Sul” (2002 – 2012), a set of books published by Assis Brasil. The writer's work intends to question the totalization present in the discourses that make up history as human knowledge. There is, however, no indication of alternative history

novels. There is a gathering of voices to compose a historical episode more widely, using fiction as an instrument to combat historical fallacies.

g) O romance histórico brasileiro no final do século XX: quatro leituras, by Antonio Esteves

The article draws attention to the problems related to the terminology of contemporary historical novels and shortly afterwards it mentions that, although diversified, historical metafiction will be a place for recovery of figures marginalized by hegemonic narratives. The study will make a comparative reading of four novels that will problematize this restlessness, all by Brazilian authors. No counterfactual aspect is mentioned.

h) “Eldorado, Babel e faroeste”: a Londrina de Rodrigo Garcia Lopes, em O trovador, by Marilu Martens Oliveira

In this article, as mentioned in the summaries above, the study is based on the contemporary Latin American historical novel. There is, therefore, a historical reinterpretation of the past focusing on “[...] as diferentes facetas dos acontecimentos e dos sujeitos neles envolvidos ” (OLIVEIRA, 2020, p. 225). Once more, there is no counterfactual study.

i) O romance histórico brasileiro na atualidade, by Cristiano Mello de Oliveira

The article traces a timeline in relation to the study and publication of the historical novel in Brazil. It mentions several works and several intellectuals - mainly the Brazilian Antonio R. Esteves. However, when approaching the contemporary historical novel, the article does not mention the counterfactual literature,

but focus on a revisionist one, which intends to dismantle the canon by subverting its title of truth. That way, it weaves

[...] algumas considerações acerca do Novo Romance Histórico Brasileiro na atualidade, expandindo olhares para alguns escritores que se destacaram nesse novo seguimento, o público receptivo dessas leituras, as editoras e, por último as estatísticas que revelam os bastidores numéricos desse assunto tão importante. (OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 9)

j) Um meta romance histórico: Jaguar em Ilhamas, Arturo Arias, por Marcia Paraquett

Once again, the analyzed article will discuss the typical posture of the new historical novel as the discourse that questions the written word and its registration as enthronement of the truth. Here more specifically the parodic narrative of Spanish America from the late twentieth century, *Jaguar em Ilhamas*, by Arturo Arias. Its linguistic, structural, cultural and historical complexity is a parameter for the other historical novels, advocates the researcher. Once more, it will not acknowledge the existence of counterfactual elements.

k) Proeminência e dessacralização da personagem histórica por meio do anacronismo em “Los perros del paraíso” de Abel Posse e *As Naus de Lobo Antunes*, by Mauro Cavaliere

Despite dealing with two postmodern historical novels, in an interesting comparative perspective between Portuguese and Spanish languages, the article does not mention the point of relevance for the research done here, the alternative history. Once again, there is work based on postmodern historical books in the sense of focusing on historical and fictional characters and work on the construction of each type.

Here are the articles read on the group created by the term “metaficção histórica”:

a) Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo: A Morte como Lucidez, by Maria Theresa Abelha Alves

Very different from what the present article aims to find, the analysis here meets history in a critic gesture, but in a way that serves us little. The work in question will exam death, in a book that the ones who have already passed away were giving voice. The house is the amalgamation that brings together the whole plot.

b) Entre o Mar e o Pampa: questões de civilização e barbárie, by Lívia Petry Jahn

Again, the read article deals with the question of historical revisionism, studying the works “O Pintor de Retratos” by Assis Brasil (2001), as well as “As Naus” by Lobo Antunes (2011) that intend to reframe the past and question the official history. In this way, the author discusses the theory that will base the postmodern historical novel like those in opposition to the epic while seeking to answer the question posed by both books: “Em que medida somos civilizados, em que medida somos bárbaros?” (JAHN, 2013, p. 99).

c) Percurso Doloroso entre a Prática e a Teoria: Reflexões sobre a Personagem Urania em “A Festa do Bode”, de Mario Vargas Llosa, by Eduardo Marks de Marques and Raíssa Cardoso Amaral

The article aims to analyze the relationship between memory and theoretical knowledge in the time frame of the dictatorship of the Trujillo era (1930-1961). For this purpose, the construction of the character Urania is analyzed. The novel is considered historiographical metafiction as it is self-reflective and appropriates historical events when fictionalizing. There is the study of the acute self-conscious facet of the postmodern novel. However, there is no counterfactual element in the book analyzed nor in the read article.

d) Pós-modernismo e pós-colonialismo: questionamentos e interpretações, by Maria Helena Sansão Fontes

In this article, the Brazilian author wishes to analyze African Portuguese-speaking literature in its postmodernist aspects. Its focus is on the analysis of works in which “[...] a literatura se liberta dos cânones coloniais para assumir sua emancipação” (FONTES, 2010, p. 38). For that, it uses the work of the Angolan writer Pepetela. The article will make the study according to a bias that will take into account the contradictions printed by the late independence processes when compared to American countries together with the possibility of postmodern experience in literature. Here again, there are questions related to historical revisionism, to the approximation of the typical uncertainties of postmodernity, to polyphony, to the self-reflexivity of post-colonialism without, however, having any counterfactual mark in the studied books as in the theoretical discourse.

e) Cama-de-Gato: Reflexões Hodiernas sobre o Descobrimento do Brasil, by Maria Theresa Abelha Alves

Maria Theresa Abelha Alves's article will analyze the work "História do Gato" (1997), by the Bahian writer Antônio Brasileiro. The present work aims to rewrite the past in order to emphasize the ambiguity, the opacity of history. The narrative "[...] ironiza o processo de colonização que se efetuou respaldado por falsas estruturas de representação, fomentadoras de desigualdades e de exclusões" (ALVES, 2001, p. 58). The text presents several aspects that circumscribe it in postmodern literature, such as the dismantling of chronological time. Characters live simultaneously at the end of the 20th century and the arrival of the Portuguese on the island of Vera Cruz. There is, therefore, a certain temporal intersection that brings the narrative closer to a more nonsense than counterfactual performance, which cross it out of the objective of this research.

As seen, the leitmotiv in the articles was clearly the historical revisionism. In other words, the need to study novels that aim the understanding on the role colonialism had into Brazilian identity – more personal aspects of historical figures, the mark white European point of view left on history making, the silenced communities given voice to defend and illustrate their experiences. So, most of the papers were composed based on the very recurrent aspect of South and Central American Literature, the postcolonialism. Another frequent point was the investigation on the blurrier boundaries between Literature and History in postmodernist historical novels, as well as the impossibility – or ineffectiveness - of separating each into the novels.

Final considerations

Despite of the importance and quality of those debates to the development of a critic posture towards Brazilian past printed in narrative making, no specific pleasant result came across. This paper intended to look for and also find researches written specifically on counterfactual novels by Brazilian scholars. The hypothesis given in the first part of this paper was proved - the study of counterfactual novels in Brazil is yet incipient and must be promoted. There was no paper written about the chosen object in Brazilian Portuguese. The matter can be described as not pleasant, as mentioned, but as well as extremely inviting, since it is not explored. It is a case of two sides of the same coin – worrisome and appealing –, in a suitable metaphor to the questions postcolonialism literature grants.

A possible interpretation for Brazilian panorama in this aspect, as Latin American in general, is that the country is now absorbed by its own history. By the chance to reframe its history, Brazil reframes its identity. By so, Brazil and Brazilian researchers are not leaning towards a kind of postmodern novel that seems to be endemic to the United States.

Brazil has experienced colonialism differently from the USA. It also experienced modernism in a different way by being a developing country. The outcomes of postmodern literature cannot be innocently analyzed, dismissing the differences between both nations. It is necessary to think the reasons for such difference not in a simplistic way, since different political processes fabric different literary outcomes. This provocation is also a result and metaphor to the awareness brought by postmodernist posture.

That said, this paper has proved its hypothesis as well as contributed to the beginning of such important area of Literature Studies by executing a state of art examination. It also proposes the enlargement to the counterfactual importance when invites Brazilian scholars to the enterprise of studying the components of this very specific performance of postmodern literature.

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