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Naming the Unnameable: Literature in Time of Cholera

ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes Luiz Costa Lima's book *O Redemunho do Horror. As Margens do Ocidente* (*The Vortex of Horror. The Margins of the West*). This essay highlights: (a) the constructive acuity of the subtle development of its three sections; (b) horror as a theme which manifests itself in the configuration of fiction, one which internalizes the real in order to speak of the unnameable, and thus the praise of the fictional that Luiz Costa Lima's work continuously critically produces; and (c) the enunciation of the text whose clarity becomes ever more apparent even as it veils the sinuosity of the labyrinthine or oblique path of his thoughts.

BIOGRAPHY

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NAMING THE UNNAMEABLE: LITERATURE IN TIME OF CHOLERA

This essay analyzes Luiz Costa Lima's remarkable book published in 2003, highlighting its terrible and dramatic modernity, which appears first in its title, *O Redemunho do Horror. As Margens do Ocidente (The Vortex of Horror. The Margins of the West)*.ⁱ The book has three extensive and intensive sections, together comprising 456 pages, wherein it is argued that literature is 'not only a literary issue.'ⁱⁱ Consequently, any reflection on it implies all of an existential, political, and social situation concentrated and condensed in the fictional arena, configuring an historical creation of our experience in a way that cannot be realized by historical narratives and that involves us, especially today, with the mark of that which we do not know or cannot name – modern horror.

Terrible and dramatic is its actuality because, even before we know what it deals with, we know what it talks about. Horror has become our (un)friendly routine, coming from all sides, diffuse and persistent, in the West and on its borders. Its incidence, as outlined by Costa Lima, is doubled, with the horror of physical violence predominating in the peripheral countries of Asia, Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula, worsened by poverty, corruption, and political instability, as well as the psychological horror brought about by the boredom, anxiety, and despair which reign in Central Europe and the United States in spite of the relative stability of their institutions. And this is how two worlds, two horrors, and no way out are constituted and cannot be distinguished from each other.

As the essay develops, we understand that this distinction also makes us consider two dominant trends in the textual unconscious of modern literature: a central path that would be traveled in the company of Flaubert, Kafka, Musil, Beckett, and its best representative, Paul Celan, among others,ⁱⁱⁱ and a marginal path, the focus of this book, which deals with the 'horror known in marginalized continents.'^{iv} Costa Lima sees this latter path announced in the works of Fernão Mendes Pinto and successfully fulfilled through its non-fulfillment by Joseph Conrad and other Hispano-American writers mentioned here. Brazilian literature, saving few exceptions, will curiously appear in the essay as being situated in the margin of the margin, wrapped in a peculiar alienation or insulation, because the horror it displays appears to be self-inflicted, as if the confrontation is internal without an external dimension, an issue that is kept open for consideration: 'What could this self-inflicted horror mean? Could it be that the Brazilian imaginary sees itself as disconnected from the external world or that, in order to express the effects of violence, it is enough to consider the internal reasons for our tremendous social inequality?'^v

The extent of the book, the quantity and quality of the works analyzed, the complexity of the theoretical issues involved, lead us to address some of its aspects, highlighting: (a) the constructive acuity of the book, evident in the very subtle development of its three sections; (b) horror as a theme which manifests itself in the configuration of fiction, one which internalizes the real in order to speak of the unnameable, and thus the praise of the fictional that Luiz Costa Lima's work continuously, critically produces; and (c) the enunciation of the text whose clarity becomes ever more apparent even as it veils the sinuosity of the labyrinthine or oblique path of his thoughts.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THREE SECTIONS

Although there is no way of knowing where the present horror will end, Costa Lima's book indicates where it began: in the expansion of European domination stemming from the discovery of the sea route to India by the Portuguese in the 15th and 16th centuries. Therein lay the genesis of the horror arising from the contact of the white man with the 'unknown world,' *terra incognita*, and from the manner in which this contact would disrupt the ethos and discourse of white men.

First, Christianity will be undermined from within as it is faced with the impossibility of maintaining what Costa Lima calls the 'double truth,' which equally supports two contradictory justifications for the advance of the European colonization movement: the propagation of faith and of commercial interests. The latter gives rise to pillaging, plundering, and massacres, requiring the need to find other justifications in addition to the Christian one, whether borrowed from biology, with the notion of an 'inferior race,' or from the need to advance civilization.

The first section, '*Os transtornos do discurso*' ('The disruptions of discourse'), follows the Portuguese expansion to the East in the 16th century through the analysis of João de Barros's *Ásia* (1496–1570), Diogo de Coutos's *Década IV* (1542–1616), and Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinação* (1510–1583). These texts, according to Costa Lima, are situated on an horizon 'undergoing a process of change' and can also be read

observing the criteria used in those days, whether as medieval chronicles, in the case of the first two books, or as an allegorical text about a mystical pilgrimage, in the case of the third. As works ‘in the middle of the way,’ however, they already point to, although not fully accomplishing it, an horizon of future expectations: either to the early historical narratives, in the case of Barros’s and Couto’s works, or the realm of literature, as in the fictional production of the future novel genre, in the case of Fernão Mendes’s publication, which inaugurates what Costa Lima defines as ‘an unnameable discourse’: ‘A Hybrid book, it teaches us that the discursive forms know moments of indecision where it is possible to feel what will later be ordered.’^{vi}

The work of Fernão Mendes Pinto, the main focus of the first section, brings the germination of the future and increasing disenchantment with the world, shown above all in the attitudes of the pirate, Antonio de Faria, a character already signaling skepticism, a sign of modern cosmo-vision, in a world where economic rationalism will become dominant. This is the reason that, as Costa Lima writes, ‘from a current perspective, Fernão Mendes Pinto announces the colonization novel and its greatest representative: Joseph Conrad,’^{vii} making explicit the relationship between this first part and Section II, ‘*A consolidação do redemunho*’ (‘The consolidation of the vortex’), which is entirely dedicated to an analysis of Joseph Conrad’s works (1857–1924), comprising four chapters and 189 pages, an autonomous book within the wider work.

The pariah, Mendes Pinto, is not only the eyewitness to what is occurring in Asia but also ‘someone who undergoes an inner transformation’^{viii} because ‘The East causes his disruption.’^{ix} Joseph Conrad – a naturalized British Pole who lives in the ‘situation of an exile who is never at ease in his adopted society’^x – is also the sailor–writer who suffers disruption from his direct experience with the British imperial expansion in Africa, which, in the 19th century, reaches the height of the Western expansion begun by the Portuguese in the 16th century.

Conrad’s characters, away from the metropolis, represent the white man’s ethos and behaviour in a situation of confrontation with other peoples in such a way that the attitudes which would initially seem like a deviation relative to the norm, end up showing that the norm itself was already deviant and perverse. This issue is the centre of the approach towards Conrad’s works, portraying the maximum synthesis of the confrontation between the colonizers and the colonized, shaping ‘the textual unconscious which germinates in our days.’^{xi}

Section III, ‘*A expansão do redemunho*’ (‘The expansion of the vortex’) is set in post-colonial Iberian America. It begins with the analysis of a little known book written by William Henry Hudson (1841–1922), born in Argentina, the son of British parents, who published *The Purple Land that England Lost* in London in 1885, a book based on his trips to Uruguay and which situates itself between ethnographic narrative and fiction. Costa Lima then analyzes a novel by Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, which points to a world that is becoming increasingly inhospitable, where he cannot belong, signaling ‘a new Latin-American fiction which highlights the contemporary simultaneity of horror forms.’^{xii} Finally, the work of Gabriel Garcia Márquez is analyzed in an attempt to understand how he is able to join the fantastic with the historical plane.

It is then that the construction machine of the text opens, with the *figura* theorized by Auerbach in his 1938 essay.^{xiii} We are now able to understand that Mendes Pinto’s *Peregrinação*, which was analyzed in the first section, represents, in Costa Lima’s proposed reading, the figure that announces the disenchantment that will be realized in Conrad’s colonization novels (analyzed in the second section). Costa Lima’s text reaches a third moment in which García Márquez, in *El general en su laberinto* (1989), completes the realization of the figure through its *disfiguration*, that is, through a ‘realization, de-realization,’^{xiv} because the disenchantment, whose outline was only announced previously, now has become real in the ‘failure of the unification ideal dreamed by Bolívar.’^{xv}

If, in the concept of medieval patristics, the realization of the figure ensured the stability and success of interpretation and meaning, in modern literature, on the other hand, the disfiguration points to the failure and bias in the relationship between signs and peoples.

MAPPING

The three sections of the book thus map out the social-historical and discursive consequences of the advance of European colonization on the three continents of Asia, Africa and (Iberian) America that will constitute a broad marginal space, part of the unknown world that Central Europe will colonize as it expands. Costa Lima’s study traverses these spaces, during a period that begins with the disruption (in the 15th and 16th centuries), consolidates in the 19th century, and expands in the 20th century, in a growing vortex.

The new world map means a new discursive map. Let us say that the new territorial organization will generate discursive deterritorializations yet to be named in the 16th century and therefore are called by Costa Lima 'phantasmal texts' until modern fiction and historical discourse are able to name the unnameable.

In this book, it is possible to observe the very intense bond that is gradually established during the exploration of a world ignored up to that time – Asia, Africa, and America – with the exploration of new discursive fields (fictional and modern historiography) which, in their turn, are defined and differentiated by considering the issue of mimesis. In Costa Lima's previous book, he defined this issue as the 'exploration of the ignored,'^{xvi} for it is born from a 'fascination with the unknown alterability.' The articulation of these three dimensions underlies the book. It is possible, thus, to better understand the reason that 'it is the contact with the 'unknown world' [...] that is the foundation for the entire book.'^{xvii}

Therefore, it is in the simultaneous concurrence of these three dimensions that the umbilical relationship between *form* and *world view* occurs, between historical experience and fictional theory – the contact with the other, the dissemination of a universal idea to sustain colonial domination, and the installation and expansion of the horror that arises; these three dimensions find, in the active mimesis which explores the alterability, their expression and translation as the horror or the unnameable that Costa Lima will detect in the analysis of characters whose behaviour denounces the bankruptcy of the values of white ethos, as in the words of Conrad's Kurtz: 'In this sense, his final words, 'The horror, the horror,' are the articulation of that which cannot be translated into words: what cannot be represented is the unnameable.'^{xviii}

And this allows us to formulate a question: If Costa Lima gets closer to nominalism, which asserts that there is never any correspondence or total coincidence between the intended project of the author and what is effectively nominated by the text, which, by being literary operates with voids, are we to understand that the 'unnameable' would be an extreme or paradoxical realization of nominalism? If nominalism has as its basis the notion that there is no full adequacy between what one intends to say, what is actually said, and the object that one desires to talk about (there being the possibility of a friction between the saying and the said, but not a union or communion), would the unnameable here used as the non-name for modern horror be what increases the gap between what one wants to say, what is actually said, and the intended object in the saying, thus causing the object to escape more than to be represented? Apparently, his text calls for this reflection, allowing the representation to self-problematize, increasing the weight of the voids that the text produces and also increasing the need for the reader to interact with what he/she reads, completing the void effect of the unnameable as something that one wants or does not want to name: this unnameable is in the foundation of the discursive form of modern literature. This issue is completed by the *disfiguration* of the figure, the representation without reality, the un-fulfilment of the fulfilment.

LITERATURE AND HISTORY

One of the aspects that we can also highlight in the development of the three sections is that all of them begin with the experience of travelling to the New World(s) and their respective narratives and subsequent reports of scientific and ethnographic travels which narrate the contact between the settlers and the colonized societies. These reports are the foundation for future historiography, which, in its turn, will predominate over the fictional, especially in the case of Latin American fiction and what is thought of it, which subordinates it as a document, imposing over it the subsidiary task of the construction and formation of a national identity until the disruption of this position in the 1950s by authors such as Alejo Carpentier, Juan Rulfo, and J. G. Rosa, who will affirm their literary autonomy through their work.

This issue brings us to the theoretical presuppositions that direct Luiz Costa Lima's thoughts. In the case of this study, it is important for him to reflect upon the relationship between literature and history to develop a better definition and differentiation of both. His intense critical view of this issue is signalled when he states that literature is not a document that reflects history, and it cannot be reduced to an 'ornate lie,' and that history, which cannot do without narrative configuration, is not literature even when it is formally and stylistically elaborate. It is simplistic, he says, to state that elaborate language is what distinguishes literature or that it is its exclusivity. It is not the use of tropes that establishes the distinction between these two discursive fields: 'what differentiates historical and literary discourse: their goals.'^{xix} The goal of literature is the fictional while history lacks this, although it does not move away from narrative or from the 'configurative task of language.'^{xx}

In the case of the discourse of history, beginning in the 16th century, Costa Lima sees the emergence of an 'exceptional opportunity' when he analyses *Ásia* (1552, 1553, 1563, 1615) by João de Barros and contrasts it with Diogo de Couto's *Década IV* (1602), for he finds in both the description of the same event: the dispute

between Pero Mascarenhas and Lopo Vaz de Sampaio for the Indian government. This allows him to verify 'from within, the very constitution of written history.'^{xxi} He is able to determine that 'it is not the registration of facts that differentiate them,'^{xxii} but their configuration. In Barros there is a 'strictly aristocratic ordering,'^{xxiii} while Diogo de Couto (who discreetly criticizes the Portuguese expansion process in Asia) uses a dramatic configuration. Thus, 'having as the basis the same facts, each one of them builds his historical narrative in a very distinct way.'^{xxiv} The facts are the same, but the way they are narrated differs according to the 'stand taken in relation to the social order.'^{xxv} And also: 'the place, therefore, from which he writes, does not lead to falsifying what happened; the author selects the subject matter to fit the place.'^{xxvi}

On the other hand, the configuration of the event in fictional narrative *disrupts reality* as it is incorporated, making it unreal, which allows us to place it into perspective and therefore better able to criticize it: 'The fictional text, instead of turning its back on reality, dramatizes and changes it; fiction transforms, in volume and discontinuity, the linear with which, in daily life, we organize the world; the world, that which is there; fiction disrupts the dimensions of the world instead of placing the world between parentheses.'^{xxvii}

By capturing the imaginary and the fantasy of the period, fiction includes, in its discourse, the aspect of time that history does not encompass, *the time that runs*, for Costa Lima remembers and highlights the Heideggerian distinction between the *historisch*, 'i.e., the history of historians,' and the *Geschichtlich*, 'the time that elapses and does not fit in documents.'^{xxviii} He also reminds us that history is not only in the events that historical narratives report but also that imagination is historical as well and that its discourse is fictional: '...that the historical essays do not exhaust what is imprinted in time; that time does not exhaust itself in the register and analysis of what occurred; that fantasy itself, anonymous or authorial, is also historical, even if it does not 'fit' on the archive's shelves.'^{xxix}

TEXTUALISM AND SOCIOLOGISM

The discussion of the relationship between literature and history permeates the study and is accompanied by another that fractures the theory of literature. In the book, the analysis leads to the possibility of a third road for literary studies – one that is neither the deconstructionist view, immanentism or textualism (which tends to abolish any social-historical reference because it sees fiction as self-referent), nor as a sociological reading which considers, on the one hand, the established reality and the solar subject whose intentions are not to be discussed and, on the other hand, sees literature as something that, after the historical fact is established, would propose its narrative to document or beautify it. This debate between sociologism and textualism is dramatized in the final section of the book where it contrasts both types of analysis around *Cien años de solitude*, deconstructing both: 'Therefore, it is sociologism and textualism that we are working against.'^{xxx}

The third path for critical reading opened up by Costa Lima proposes that literature produces a disruption of the real because it does not consider context as something that surrounds the text but as a reference which, from outside, is brought into the discourse and, in this incorporation, is altered and changed so that from similarities and identification, the production of difference can be generated. Like history, literature is truth, a truth that is disguised so that it can be better unveiled or, as the author says, reality is the semen that literature incorporates to generate the body: 'the fictional text, although not being guided by fidelity to context as a reference, dramatizes it, i.e., uses it as the semen which will develop its body.'^{xxxi}

This notion is reiterated several times because the issue is also sinuous and not evident and needs to be re-articulated in order to disrupt deep-rooted concepts of literary reading which, in the course of defending literature, more often controls or naturalizes it. This attitude is one of the marks of Costa Lima's 'illegibility,' pointed out with great insight by Wlad Godzich.^{xxxii}

THE 'DISCONTINUOUS TRAJECTORY'

One of the ways in which to better understand the issue of 'illegibility' raised by W. Godzich can be found in enunciation, i.e., the way in which the voice sounds in Costa Lima's text, which could be described as skewed or oblique, producing a deviation that is at the same time labyrinthine, as if there were an 'equivocation' in the clarity of the enunciation. The illegibility that is produced in spite of the author, but which *his text already knows*, is evident, from our point of view, in what I call 'Lima's enunciation gentleness.'

The text treats the reader with gentleness because its narrator is always providing hints that indicate how the journey will be developed, and frequently pausing the development in order to explain an issue and re-establish his position in case there are any lingering doubts about the intended view, and often resuming his positions, as

if carefully leading the reader through a labyrinth. His enunciation thus acts as a host who carefully entertains his guests, ready to show them his three-storey home, keeping in mind the goal of reaching the top floor, a metaphor used by L. Gama, who portrays Costa Lima as a host of literary criticism.^{xxxiii}

Starting from the ground floor of this text, the host is careful to observe un-noticed details and, just when it appears that it is time to go up to the second floor, he apologizes in advance, saying that if he had given that impression, his intent was actually different, and informs the guest that first a detour to the basement is required, for there are objects there that need to be named and defined before we can understand what is to come. And, at first, the hurried reader may feel restless at the length of the seemingly endless road – and in fact it is; the openings do not close – they actually broaden the dimension and extension of the house and any detour or shortcut will end up taking you on other detours. It is thus necessary to undergo this test of endurance and patience in order to accept the enunciation game that his text offers.

An example of this oblique enunciation can be found in a passage in Section I of *O Redemunho (The Vortex)*. To test the hypothesis that the texts therein analysed do not fit the legitimate discourse of their time, Costa Lima first finds it necessary to speculate on the definition of discourse. In order to do this, he reminds us of the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole*, from which he defines discourse as being the historical grid that is configured according to its purpose – whether it be pragmatic, speculative, or operational. Costa Lima then begins to explain what each of these is. Before he resumes his analysis of the works that are the central theme of the first part of the book, he adds two aspects, the first is a negation or rather a warning about his having led the reader down the wrong path, which he needs to clarify, explaining that his intent was not that which may have occurred to the reader, but something else that he then makes explicit. Next, he defines fictional discourse, alluding to the concept as it was before the early German Romantics, and providing a refined analysis of excerpts from Petrarca and Boccaccio. It is only then that, based on these analyses, he makes the point that an allegorical reading of *Peregrinação*, in the context of its time, would not have been able to give the reader an appreciation of its singularity, and Costa Lima uses this as an opportunity to respond to João Adolfo Hansen's objections. After these detours, he resumes the discussion of the works that were the object of the analysis and also introduces the central theme of his study: the issue of the 'unnameable discourse.' And thus, as if by chance, without our perceiving it, the more his text seems to set itself apart or turn away from the core, the more it introduces us to the central theme of the book.

In this manner, as opposed to the *House Taken Over*, as this discursive house is shown, the rooms open up, each door leading to another, and one never enters the final room, constituting thereby an effective anti self-indulgent discourse, which he defines as the 'discontinuous trajectory.'

Therefore, more than just a text of frontiers, it is better viewed as a text of passages not as one produced by a *flâneur* but rather as one written by an archaeologist who excavates subterranean passages, encounters ancient vestiges of distant times, and brings them back into his own context in order to better understand and de-stabilize his own time.

Our hypothesis is that part of Lima's 'illegibility' must come from this hybrid between the gentleness with which he invites the reader, guiding him on his journey, and the sinuousness of the path that becomes ever more oblique and unstable as it is travelled down. This is the reason that, consciously or not, his text needs to be so gentle because he knows, or suspects, that the reader may give up the journey or abandon the way. His text becomes increasingly more careful of the reader, for he also knows that it will lead the reader not to a safe-haven of knowledge but, very gently, it will slowly de-stabilize the reader's archive of preconceived notions as they are dismantled, little by little.

THE INSTABILITY

The voice in Costa Lima's texts comes from a place located not only at the margin or to the side, but also in the middle of the road where we know there are at times immovable objects, and sometimes thorns, a corrosive principle certainly. This nucleus is what Wlad Godzich stated so well in his text as being the basic illegibility of Costa Lima's texts. We, his readers, who cite and discuss him, are incapable of reading them. How so? There is a constant appeal that we are incapable of fully hearing, and this appeal refers to the theory of the literary as the human habitat. According to Godzich, it is the radicalism of this appeal that we are not capable of hearing which constitutes Costa Lima's illegibility.

By accepting this perspective, we clarify that our reading is based on the consciousness of this illegibility, which at the same time that we try to comprehend, we reaffirm it, because it also seems to us that it is the condition of

permanence of the questions proposed by Costa Lima, and not its appeasement or neutralization. Whether or not it is done on purpose (because what the author wants is the social circulation of his texts, and the enunciative gentleness is a proof of this), it is determined by the constant semantic instability that the concepts presented in his works will not permit stabilization; apparently, it is not about his creating a discourse of knowledge about the works he analyses but his bringing to the surface the not knowing from which *mimesis* acts.

Thus, the semantic instability that literature produces leads, in Costa Lima's case, to the production of critical and theoretical thoughts about it that in their lucidity highlight the instability, refusing to fix or stabilize it, in an extremely coherent way so as to avoid the control of the imaginary that he vehemently denounces. And this is also because the object of intended desire – literature – presents itself as a lost object for it acts by producing voids that can be filled by critical reading, but can never be truly completed, and could only be found in the oscillation between sound and sense and not in frozen and fixed stillness. As literary critics are generally expected to stabilize the disruption caused by the fictional by providing readers with clues to its interpretations, the 'illegibility' of Costa Lima's text increases because his text is not deconstructionist and does not accept the Barthesian vein of critique as a literary genre. Therefore, in Costa Lima's texts, the reader will find neither the appeasement of an interpretative critique nor the pleasure of reading a critical text that trespasses its limits. The delight in Costa Lima's text lies in the journey itself, one which the more discontinuous it becomes, the more it insists through its detours, contours, and returns.

Costa Lima's reflection also seeks passages between aporias, between extreme positions, not taking one side or the other but in between. Thus, for example, by denouncing the veto to the fictional, he does not advocate the ideals of a free art, liberated from any norm, because art implies a game of identification and estrangement, similarity and difference, norm and disruption, and it is in this middle road that we need to free literature from its vetoes and live with the unstable limits of a mutable social-historic framework. Thus, he also searches for a passage between the poles of deconstructionist or sociologic reading, or even in the delicate situation of his thoughts, when he attempts to re-direct *mimesis* without the substantialist thought that sustains it, since the criticism of this same substantialist thought abolishes *mimesis*.

The illegibility of Costa Lima's texts certainly may be his sadness, but also an oblique means to escape from control and from veto – its hard nucleus is what impedes its dilution, and his continuously re-affirmed divergence does not permit the sepulchreing of the issues proposed. This is the reason that his answers lead to new inquiries because they maintain the dilemma or question under a constant challenge, and any agreement is appeased only in the affirmation of divergence because there is also a belligerent feature to these texts – they are battling texts because they have a cause.

THE MARGIN

In the case of the *O Redemunho (The Vortex)*, Costa Lima's perspective is that of one who writes on the margins of the West, in which can be identified the policy of his critical analysis. In much the same way that 'the double truth' analysed in the first section will be defrauded in *Peregrinação* 'by two individuals outside the imperial apparatus: an errant, his narrator, and his captain, a pirate,'^{xxxiv} the writer on the margin of the West, where Costa Lima's enunciation is located, is similar to the margin where these two characters are set: 'outside the imperial apparatus.'

In the construction of the book, the margins also gain importance in the footnotes, as those which contain the dialogue that the author established with João Adolfo Hansen, his interlocutor during the elaboration of the work or in those that give more precision to the arguments, including the 'central theme' of the study.^{xxxv}

Advancing a bit more, we might say that the confrontation of margin and centre, or of centre and margin, encounters its other path in the battle of the fictional – associated with the margins of the 'lie' – with the discourse of history, associated with the centre of truth, which Luiz Costa Lima's study incurs once more in order to highlight his critical, analytical, and theoretical point of view: it is from the margin that the voice of his text speaks and, therefore, it is literature, or better stated, the fictional, that is accentuated.

I cannot think of higher praise for a book that rethinks literature than to say that, as a theoretician, Luiz Costa Lima is one of its greatest advocates. This love in times of the present cholera does not alter the horror we live in, but it shows where we might read the unnameable and where to find its possible writing. At a time in which literature, literary studies, critical reflection, and philosophy seem to have been banished from circulation, a book such as this is more than auspicious. On its two-way street, the exits always point to other viable roads, and on these, its readers may meet.

Finally, *O Redemunho (The Vortex)* is a remarkable book because it also confirms a thought that challenges the established centres of conformed thought, thus indicating that there are still inhabitable and possible places in impossible times, even if they are to be found at the margin of the margins of Vitória da Conquista (the victory of conquest).

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