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actalan@uem.br
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Ramicelli, Maria Eulália

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Stages of modernity in perspective: Jane Austen's *Pride and prejudice* and José de Alencar's *Senhora*

Maria Eulália Ramicelli
Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Brasil
meulalia@uol.com.br

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ABSTRACT:

In the nineteenth century, England was one of the countries with a decisive influence on the formation of modern bourgeois society. Brazil experienced this process very unevenly and in particular ways. Jane Austen's fiction and José de Alencar's urban novels formalize important aspects of this formative process for both bourgeois society and the accompanying mindset in England and in Brazil respectively. A comparison of Austen's *Pride and prejudice* and Alencar's *Senhora* reveals similarities and differences between the narratives which point to meaningful contextual aspects of the broader modernizing process. Analysis of the relationship between point of view and the protagonists in both novels reveals specific socio-cultural rationales that the readers of both Austen and Alencar were encouraged to follow. In this sense, comparative study of the novels also discloses less obvious aspects of the formation of the modern bourgeois mindset in their different but related national and socio-cultural contexts.

KEYWORDS: nineteenth century, England, Brazil, novel, internal focalization, socio-cultural rationale.

RESUMO:

No século dezenove, a Inglaterra foi um dos países com influência decisiva na formação da moderna sociedade burguesa. O Brasil vivenciou esse processo de modo desigual e particular. A ficção de Jane Austen e os romances urbanos de José de Alencar formalizam aspectos importantes da formação da sociedade e da mentalidade burguesas na Inglaterra e no Brasil, respectivamente. A comparação de *Pride and prejudice* de Austen e *Senhora* de Alencar aponta semelhanças e diferenças entre as narrativas, que indicam aspectos contextuais significativos do amplo processo de modernização. A análise da relação entre foco narrativo e protagonistas em ambos os romances revela lógicas socioculturais específicas que os leitores de Austen e de Alencar eram encorajados a seguir. Nesse sentido, o estudo comparativo desses romances apresenta aspectos menos óbvios da formação da moderna mentalidade burguesa naqueles contextos nacionais e socioculturais diferentes, mas inter-relacionados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: século dezenove, Inglaterra, Brasil, romance, focalização interna, lógica sociocultural.

INTRODUCTION [1]

Published sixty-two years apart, *Pride and prejudice* (1813) and *Senhora: profile of a woman* (1875) are novels of great importance within their national contexts of production – England and Brazil, respectively^[2]. Jane Austen and José de Alencar made undeniable contributions to the consolidation of the novel in their respective countries at a time when, not coincidentally, English society on the one hand and Brazilian society on the other were, in their own way, experiencing significant changes.

As England consolidated itself as a bourgeois society over the course of the nineteenth century, its way of life and its economic and political achievements set the basis for modern society elsewhere in the world. Together with France, England was viewed by the Brazilian socio-economic-political-cultural elite as the quintessential modern civilized nation. Yet, the English and Brazilian contexts differed considerably in their pace and in their respective modes of building a bourgeois capitalist society. Indeed, the complex multifaceted process of forming the bourgeois mode of life in England, although marked by various socio-economic-political-cultural conflicts, was consistent, while in Brazil that process was constantly adjusted so as to guarantee that old privileges and practices could be maintained without alteration. Therefore, in Brazil

the modern bourgeois tenets that underpinned new socio-economic-cultural-political practices did not form deep roots; rather, they were used by the conservative ruling class as signs of socio-economic status. In other words, in Brazil this modernizing process was marked by continuous friction between new modern ideas and ways of living on the one hand and archaic mindsets and old practices on the other hand. Rio de Janeiro was the main stage on which novelists worked in this conflicting experience.

The fictional literature of Jane Austen and the novels of manners (also known as urban novels) of José de Alencar portray both the implications of and the significant struggles in the formation process of the bourgeois society and mindset in England and in Brazil, respectively. Living and writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Jane Austen (1775-1817) created narratives that depict both the more obvious and the more subtle socio-economic-cultural movements of a period in which a new mindset and a new way of living were taking root in England. In his turn, José de Alencar (1829-1877) produced his fiction, was active as a man of letters, and engaged in politics in Rio de Janeiro during the period of more intense modernization in nineteenth-century Brazil. Alencar's novels of manners – with plotlines located in Rio de Janeiro – are expressive of the particular uses of and different meanings given to liberal ideas and bourgeois practices in nineteenth-century Brazil. In his discussion of the production of fiction in Brazil in the 1800s, Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz (2012, p. 41) argues that Alencar – “[...] a reader of Balzac” – was the first writer “[...] to make a serious attempt at realism” and *Senhora* would be “[...] his best achievement in this vein”. It is worth remarking that Alencar (1955) himself acknowledged that, as a nascent writer, he had taken Balzac's novels as models to follow.

Important formal aspects of Balzac's fiction underpin the organization of the central line of action of *Senhora*, a novel that focuses on bourgeois features and conflicts. In fact, *Senhora* formalizes important tensions and conflicts of the movement towards a certain type of modernity that were experienced in the Brazilian court — tensions and conflicts, with particular socio-cultural nuances, that can be related to those experienced in the corresponding period of formation of the bourgeois way of life in England. In this regard, although it is not possible to affirm that Alencar was a reader of Austen's fiction, his *Senhora* and her *Pride and prejudice* have a similar status in their respective contexts of production. Indeed, in preserving due proportions of scale and breadth of the historical modernizing process that was developed in England on the one hand and in Brazil on the other hand, these novels are vivid expressions of Austen's and Alencar's acute perception of the type of mindset that prevailed in the initial period of bourgeois modernization taking place in their respective countries.

Pride and prejudice and *Senhora* have interesting similarities regarding plot and protagonists. Both novels have as protagonists a pair of lovers whose conflicts are expressive of the formation of the bourgeois mentality, a subtle process experienced under specific conditions by the English and by the Brazilians. The two female protagonists are strong-willed young ladies who have particular ways of dealing with the pressure to marry and, therefore, with the marriage market and its numerous implications for their individual feelings and moral principles. The complications and difficulties faced by the main couples (Elizabeth Bennet/Mr. Darcy, and Aurélia Camargo/Fernando Seixas) are, in good part, related to the different socio-economic positions held by each one of them and the corresponding moral implications. For Elizabeth/Mr. Darcy, class prejudice is aligned with questions of personal conduct. For Aurélia and Seixas, her personal revenge entails his socio-economic debasement and humiliation. In both cases, change of mind paves the way to reconciliation and, consequently, the happy ending.

Notably, money is a conspicuous element in both novels because it mediates the relationships between the characters. The famous opening sentence of *Pride and prejudice* introduces the question of marriage market clearly and ironically (because interest in marriage is not only or chiefly on the man's side): “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (Austen, 2012, p. 2). As for *Senhora*, this novel is divided into four parts with titles that characterize

the story of Aurélia Camargo and Fernando Seixas's marriage as one of commercial transaction: 'the price', 'redress', 'possession', 'ransom'.

This brief account of the protagonists' situation points to the difference in scope and complexity of the two narratives. The conflicts lived by Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy have socio-economic and cultural reasons that are also valid for other characters in the novel, whereas the basic reason for the conflicts between Aurélia and Seixas does not resonate beyond their own troubled relationship. This significant difference in plot is a telling indication of the necessary adaptation of European bourgeois plots to the Brazilian socio-cultural context, in which the complex construction of a bourgeois society had not been an all-embracing and deeply rooted process. Such an adaptation would have been consciously undertaken by an author such as José de Alencar, who, as Schwarz states, was concerned with the realist configuration of his fiction. This particular inflection in plot organization can also be observed in the comparison of *Senhora* with its more obvious French model. In his analysis of the structural problems raised in *Senhora* through the necessary combination of European models of the novel and local Brazilian subject matter, Schwarz (2012, p. 42) argues that the protagonists "[...] behave according to this shrill Balzacian formula, with its extreme social choices" whereas the secondary characters "[...] belong to the world of patron-client relationships, of paternalism – a less dynamic domain". As a consequence, "One of the great effects of Balzac's novels – the substantial unity between the principal conflict and secondary anecdotes – does not come off" (Schwarz, 2012, p. 42).

Schwarz asserts that the local subject matter (i.e. the patron-client system) has a secondary role in *Senhora* once it is represented in the type of relationship that the female protagonist (Aurélia Camargo) has with the secondary characters. The argument is undeniably valid, but does not account for significant narrative features regarding the protagonists themselves. Indeed, the analysis of the relation between point of view and the protagonists has the potential to reveal less obvious aspects of conflicting issues that are highly representative of the novel's context of production. Therefore, in this article I will analyse how the protagonists' perspectives are constructed in *Pride and prejudice* and in *Senhora*, and will then discuss the implications for the reader of authorial emphasis on one view over the other. In other words, based on the assumption that each narrative envisages a reader, I will analyse the type of socio-cultural process the reader is encouraged to follow given the narrator's and the protagonists' respective views and the interaction between them in each novel. In doing so, I will also discuss the cultural implications of this formal narrative aspect in England and in Brazil. These issues correspond to those addressed by Stephen Heath (2004) in his discussion of how literary genres give concrete shape to socio-historical processes. As Stephen Heath (2004, p.168-169) argues, genres are "[...] specific socio-historical operations of language by speakers and listeners, writers and readers; orders of discourse that change, shift, travel, lose force, come and go over time and cultures". Heath (2004, p.170) goes on to explain that "If genres are forms of history, they are also, of course, [...] historical forms, articulated within socio-historical contexts". In this sense, "[...] the politics of genre" is "[...] a politics of representation, with change and innovation implicated in the crises as to who and what is represented and how and to whom" (Heath, 2004, p. 170).

With regard to the discussion of point of view and the protagonists in both novels, this article also draws on Richard Walsh's consideration of the nuances of narrative voice. Walsh explains that one sense of narrative voice is 'interpellation' which consists in building implied subject positions in the narrative. As narration "[...] always involves perspectival choices, which necessarily carry with them some set of presuppositions [...]" "[...] the act of narrative comprehension requires an imaginative alignment between the reader [...] and the implied subject position of the discourse" (Walsh, 2007, p. 98-99). Such alignment may be conscious or unconscious on the reader's part. If unconscious, "[...] it has the ideological effect of making the implied subject position seem to constitute the authentic selfhood of the narrative recipient" (Walsh, 2007, p. 99).

Walsh's remark about the complexity of narrative voice and its relation to the construction of an implied subject position in the narrative points to the fact that this structural element is, first, highly expressive of the context of literary production and, second, it can be perceived analytically. The implied subject position

constructed in *Pride and prejudice* and in *Senhora* will therefore be considered in this light in order to discuss the extent to which it is representative of the formative period of the bourgeois cultural logic in England and in Brazil.

PROGRESSIVE SELF-EVALUATIVE THINKING IN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

In the 'Introduction' of *The English novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, Raymond Williams (1974) discusses how, in her fiction, Jane Austen effectively formalizes a social view that is ideologically aligned with the domain and interests of a specific social group, namely, the landed gentry. For Williams, this social view is very important because the changes experienced by the landed gentry were among the most significant English historical events of the time. As Williams points out, Austen was successful in creating narratives that depicted a contemporary socio-economic and cultural movement that would definitively change the paradigms of the age-old and powerful rural elite. Therefore, the imaginative power of Austen's fiction would reside in her ability to build an abstract and seductive view of the landed gentry by emphasizing the necessary relation between property and propriety as the basis for the numerous evaluative judgments of characters in her novels. According to Williams (1974, p. 17, emphasis in the text), what most preoccupied Jane Austen was "[...] personal 'conduct': a testing and discovery of the standards which govern human behavior in certain real situations". Examination of conduct is always related to "[...] estates, incomes and social position" in order to express critical concerns with the socio-cultural-economic implications of the increasing social mobility that was "[...] affecting the landed families at this time" (Williams, 1974, p. 17).

While agreeing with Raymond Williams's arguments about the meaningfulness of Jane Austen's fiction, the social and economic historian David Spring (1983) delves deeper into the problematization of Austen's fictional human world. Spring (1983, p.55) begins by remembering that Austen's England is basically restricted to "[...] the rural elite [...]"; that is, "[...] neighborhood – one of the prime words in her social vocabulary". As Spring (1983) goes on to argue, this neighborhood was far from being a homogeneous group and would not easily be called bourgeois (as it is called by some critics). Picking up on a brief comment made by Marvin Mudrick on his view that Austen wrote about a "[...] hybrid society [...] that combined 'dying feudal tradition and progressively self-assertive bourgeois vigor'" (Spring, 1983, p. 57),^[3] Spring discusses the socio-cultural-economic characteristics that either approximated or marked off the differences between the three groups that formed Austen's hybrid English society: the landed aristocracy, the gentry, and the pseudo-gentry. Special attention is given to this 'pseudo-gentry', a term that Spring borrows from historian Alan Everitt and which he considers to be more appropriate than 'bourgeois' or 'middle class' as a term for the social group that, more than any other, lived in 'positional competition' and that is at the core of Austen's fiction. In Spring's view (1983, p. 61), "Of this positional competition, central to the lifestyle of the world of neighborhood, no one knew more than Jane Austen. Her novels are full of it."

The pseudo-gentry was a social group formed by non-landed people who, consequently, did not originally belong to the aristocracy or the gentry, but strove to "[...] be taken for the gentry" (Spring, 1983, p. 60). This group had a sharp eye to making social position and status visible by means of social relationships, jobs, and the ownership of properties and different types of goods that could be quantified monetarily and thus make evident their social success. Spring's emphasis on the pseudo-gentry is important because it is in line with the mindset that underpins the organizing principle of Jane Austen's novels, a mindset that is understandably less easily depicted throughout the novel than the socio-economic connections and positions of the characters. The female protagonist of *Pride and prejudice* illustrates this issue well. Elizabeth Bennet is the daughter of a typical member of the gentry, but embodies in her way of thinking and personal trajectory the 'progressively self-assertive bourgeois vigor' mentioned by Mudrick. Elizabeth's particular position can be illustrated by a significant and well-known passage where she thinks about her own situation while she tours around Pemberly House. As she thinks these words to herself, the reader is made to follow her rationale:

Every disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks, and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with delight. [...] The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings.

'And of this place', thought she, 'I might have been mistress! With these rooms I might now have been familiarly acquainted! Instead of viewing them as a stranger, I might have rejoiced in them as my own, and welcomed to them as visitors my uncle and aunt. – But no,' – recollecting herself, – 'that could never be: my uncle and aunt would have been lost to me: I should not have been allowed to invite them'. This was a lucky recollection – it saved her from something like regret (Austen, 2012, p. 476).

It is important to note the narrative movement in this passage. From the moment that the Gardiners and Elizabeth drive into Pemberley, the narrator follows the protagonist's perspective and presents not only what she sees but also what she thinks and how she feels about it all. Clearly, the narrator shares Elizabeth's opinions about Pemberley. Elizabeth has not walked much around the house when she reflects on the opportunity she had been given to be the mistress of that place. The contradictory socio-economic implications of this pleasant hypothetical situation follow one another in Elizabeth's mind: the satisfaction with Pemberley as material evidence of her elevated status as Mr. Darcy's wife is substituted with her strong conviction that her bourgeois uncle and aunt would not be welcomed there. In the sequence, through a quick but subtle movement away from Elizabeth's mind, the narrator evaluates her line of thinking and praises her sensible and thoughtful care for her family, which is also care for her own socio-economic and cultural background. As this passage shows, Elizabeth is, above all, honest with herself and unwilling to live above her family standards if her socio-economic elevation would not also entail the full acceptance of her milieu, which is here ingeniously represented by two of its most respectable but less socially favoured members, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner.

As Raymond Williams points out, material accumulation was part of a more complex socio-cultural system that also entailed 'evaluation' of the individual position and attitude in that changing and unstable English context. According to him (Williams, 1974, p. 19, emphasis in the text), this is "An openly acquisitive society, which is concerned also with the 'transmission' of wealth, [and] is trying to judge itself at once by an inherited code and by the morality of improvement". The connection between material and moral improvement is abstract because the "[...] conversion of good income into good conduct was no automatic process" (Williams, 1974, p. 20). Indeed, Austen contrived plots that favour the connection between 'acquisition' of property and of propriety (seen as the two sides of the same coin); acquisition that works as a 'formula' that is never criticized. On the contrary, the criticism that distinguishes Austen's fiction is built towards some of the "[...] results [of the formula] in character and action" (Williams, 1974, p. 20).

Just as happens in the other novels by Austen, in *Pride and prejudice* we find the narrator's critical view of each and every character usually combined with the implications and complications of the marriage market which affect several characters in different levels. One aspect is singular in this novel, though. As David M. Shapard (2012, p. xxvi) remarks, in *Pride and prejudice* "[...] both hero and heroine are in the wrong on important matters, and both bear a significant responsibility for the estrangement that lasts for most of the novel". In Shapard's view (2012, p. xxvii), this particular condition in the protagonists creates interesting narrative features because "[...] the hostility between the two protagonists allows the novel to present a running battle of wits and intellects". As neither of the protagonists has a moral advantage over the other, they both feel the need to come to terms with their own faults. In this context, "[...] the sharp estrangement of the protagonists allows for a highly dramatic reversal of fortune, in which for a long while all looks hopeless but then, in the end, all turns out right".

Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy are, in fact, the two characters whose process of growing self-criticism and self-knowledge is narrated in the novel. But narrated with a difference; as we know, it is Elizabeth's

internal process that the reader is made to follow more closely and intimately. Along the narrative, Austen maintains a carefully controlled critical distance between the narrator and Elizabeth in particular, by subtly alternating between the narrator's sharp critical views and the use of indirect speech and (less frequently) free indirect speech for this character. Such criticism exposes Elizabeth's current immature and/or not deeply reflected position on certain issues and her relationship with certain people. This flawed perception of herself in relation to others (mainly Mr. Darcy and Mr. Wickham) is gradually overcome by Elizabeth in her process of self-improvement. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that the full strength of this narrative pattern can be observed in Elizabeth's progressive thinking and rethinking of the contents of Mr. Darcy's letter as she changes her ideas and feelings about Mr. Darcy, Mr. Wickham, and herself, from the moment that she reads the letter until her dialogue with Mr. Darcy. It is noteworthy that Jane Austen planned two chapters in volume two for Elizabeth's reading of Mr. Darcy's letter. Chapter XII briefly narrates the delivery of the letter and presents the full text for the reader to read it alongside Elizabeth. Chapter XIII narrates Elizabeth's close rereading of the letter and her continuous reflection on and revision of her approach to Mr. Darcy's text; it also narrates the impact this letter has on her previous ideas and feelings about the people involved in the circumstances discussed by Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth is particularly impressed by her intense and reasonable change of mind about Mr. Darcy and herself:

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself. – Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd.

'How despicably have I acted!' she cried. – 'I, who have prided myself on my discernment! – I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust. – How humiliating is this discovery! – Yet, how just a humiliation! – Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. – Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossessions and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself' (Austen, 2012, p.404, 406).

As for Mr. Darcy, his thinking and self-critical process are always manifested to Elizabeth (consequently, to the reader too) in very specific moments which are understandably also revealing of Elizabeth's own thinking about the ins and outs of their relationship. They are: a) the aforementioned letter in which he informs her of his reasons for separating Mr. Bingley and Jane, and about Mr. Wickham's past actions against his family; b) key dialogues. The fact that Mr. Darcy is portrayed with less varied and less internalized means of self-expression is part of the narrative emphasis on the female plot. As a matter of fact, the female perspective has more diverse and complex means of development and communication to the reader - a characteristic that is not limited to *Pride and prejudice*. As E. J. Clery (2012, p. 335) points out, the heroine's plot is marked by lacunae that "[...] arise from the lack of knowledge about the development of the hero's plot, an ignorance shared by the heroine, the reader, and generally, it would seem, the narrator as well". Clery (2012, p. 335) further explains that "It is a radical aspect of Austen's art that with few exceptions she denies direct access to the unspoken thoughts and views of her heroes".

Indeed, in *Pride and prejudice* all dialogues between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy (a very reserved man) are important not only because they are occasions for the couple to develop mutual knowledge (even in the part of the narrative where Elizabeth is still more inclined to dislike him outright), but also because these dialogues allow the reader to have a glimpse of Mr. Darcy's ideas and feelings about people and situations. Not coincidentally, the most important of these dialogues happens towards the end of the novel when both Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth avow their mutual positive influence and growing affection. This is the moment when Elizabeth acknowledges the many times that she had nurtured deep dislike of him even though she did not have convincing reasons for doing so. In addition, this conciliatory dialogue expresses each character's self-evaluative thinking and summarizes Elizabeth's change of mind and of feeling.

As we can see, the reader of *Pride and prejudice* is encouraged to align themselves imaginatively with the ethics of social improvement, which are most thoroughly represented by Elizabeth, who achieves the most advantageous levels of property and propriety. Elizabeth is the character that most perfectly embodies these ethics precisely because she goes through a deep process of self-evaluation that is narrated in detail due to its ideological importance in the novel. All in all, it is the combination of a progressive line of thinking and a capacity for self-criticism that makes Elizabeth worthy of being raised to an upper socio-economic position. The connection between Elizabeth's material and moral improvement is abstract. In this sense, the ethics of social improvement would be the expression of a powerful ideological, according to which 'some' people would have the right to move upward socially or keep their inherited socio-economic position. This principle entailed a complex compromise between the old aristocratic and the new bourgeois values and socio-cultural practices; it also underpinned the aspiration of the pseudo-gentry to incorporate distinguishing cultural signs of status that had been the exclusive prerogative of the nobility for centuries. Understandably, this ideological principle necessarily implied strong criticism of the aristocratic prerogative of 'naturally' possessing certain rights and moral values, as Elizabeth makes clear in some of her dialogues with Mr. Darcy and with Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

CIRCULAR THINKING IN *SENHORA*

In *Senhora*, money matters are explored on more than one narrative level. The narrative is organized into four parts that explicitly set out the idea of marriage as a financial transaction; wealth – or the lack of it – is a recurrent topic in the narrator's detailed presentation of the characters' physical appearance and of the interior décor of houses, with special implications for the characterization of the protagonists; money rules over matchmaking and personal relationships in general. As a consequence, money has central importance to the protagonists' conflict while material comfort and/or security are a matter of careful consideration by secondary characters.

The first chapters of *Senhora* show Aurélia Camargo as a rich heiress who ridicules her suitors by tagging them with a price according to their attitudes towards her. For Aurélia, money has a corrupting effect on people. As the narrator states, "[...] she felt deeply humiliated thinking that to all these people who surrounded her, she, herself, merited none of the flattery that they dedicated to each of her thousands in capital" (Alencar, 1994, p. 5).

The humiliation felt by Aurélia must be highlighted as this sentiment permeates the narrative – not for her, but for Fernando Seixas. In fact, humiliation is central to the novel due to Alencar's use of indirect and free indirect speech to express Fernando Seixas's reflection on his socio-economic situation before and after his marriage to Aurélia Camargo. It is true that these techniques are also used for Aurélia, but less frequently and in very specific short passages. Most of the time it is the narrator who presents Aurélia's inner feelings and thoughts, just as happens in the passage quoted above. Thus, it is noteworthy that these narrative techniques are explored in greater detail and are more frequently used for Seixas, whose particular way of thinking the reader is therefore made to follow more intensely throughout the narrative. Consequently, unlike the trajectory in *Pride and prejudice*, in *Senhora* both the female and the male plots are developed equally since the female and the male perspectives of the central issue are explored through their points of view. Nevertheless, it is striking that Fernando Seixas's inner feelings and ideas receive greater narrative emphasis in a novel that is titled after the female protagonist.

Indirect and free indirect speech are first employed in *Senhora* in order to build up a closeness to Fernando Seixas's reasoning about his family's socio-economic situation. In chapter VI (part I), due to a romantic disappointment, Seixas arrives home earlier than usual from a ball and overhears a conversation between his mother, two sisters, and their friends. The guests talk about an opera enthusiastically. At this moment Seixas realizes that his family had never had any of the enjoyments that he constantly lavished on himself. He then

decides to give his mother and sisters a treat by taking them to the opera house to see the performance in question. Only when they are already in the opera house does he notice his family's unfashionable attire, which provides the cause for a jest by his acquaintance. Seixas feels extremely embarrassed and for some days "[...] remained sullen and preoccupied with the incident" (Alencar, 1994, p. 30). As the narrator affirms, "[...] this crisis led to a rationalization that appeased our journalist" (Alencar, 1994, p. 30), and the rationalization is narrated in five paragraphs through indirect speech. In this passage, Seixas considers his successful acquaintance and friendship with upper-class people. An "[...] advantageous marriage" (Alencar, 1994, p. 30) and a political career would soon be the most probable results of such connections. Raised to such a wealthy and influential position, he would share "[...] the material pleasures of this opulent way of life" (Alencar, 1994, p. 30) with his family and "[...] arrange good marriages for his two sisters" (Alencar, 1994, p. 30). Seixas believes that "Interaction with society would impart to them [his mother and sisters] the seal of distinction they would need to show themselves at their best" (Alencar, 1994, p. 30). The character goes on to think to himself:

If, on the contrary, Seixas burdened himself very early, at the beginning of his career, with the weight of his family, entangling himself in an obscure life from which he could never free them, not even at the sacrifice of all of his income, what could he expect but to vegetate in the shadow of mediocrity and fruitlessly expend his youth?

Seixas therefore hardened his conviction that luxury meant not only the infallible struggle of a noble ambition, but also the only pledge for the happiness of his family. Thus his misgivings vanished. (Alencar, 1994, p. 30)

As a single man, Seixas dreads poverty. After he marries Aurélia, he experiences deep feelings of humiliation for having been relegated to the position of dependant in the role of a husband. Seixas's dependent position is sarcastically (but subtly) exposed by himself on the very first day of his life as a married man. For instance, after breakfast, Seixas wishes to smoke a cigar and asks Aurélia if the smoke would disturb her. As she affirms, "I must adjust to my husband's habits", he replies: "No, not for that reason. As your husband I have no habits, only obligations" (Alencar, 1994, p. 108). Later, when Aurélia decides that it is time for them to dress for dinner, the reader finds more lines about Seixas's feelings than Aurélia's:

This consideration [of Aurélia's orders to the servants that Seixas should be well provided for] which in other circumstances would have deeply pleased him, 'in his current position humiliated him. He felt the influence of tutelage weighing upon him and reducing him to the condition of a nuptial ward, if not worse. But he was resigned to the ordeal to which his error had subjected him' (Alencar, 1994, p. 113, emphasis added).

It is evident that Fernando Seixas correctly understands that being Aurélia's husband is a task to be performed in exchange for a high dowry and access to a life of luxury, which he had always dreamed of having. It is true that Seixas's attitude is provocative once he decides to obey Aurélia in a pointed fashion. It is also true that he not only keeps his job as a public servant, but actually starts to take it seriously because he intends to use his savings to pay the dowry back to her. However, working does not prevent him from feeling resentment for his position, which is expressed in passages set out in indirect speech, such as the following one:

There [in the houses of acquaintances visited by Aurélia and Seixas on that day], as on the street, all attentions were for Aurélia [...] In some houses, in the zeal to welcome his wife he was left behind, as 'unnoticed as a servant'.

In different circumstances, this 'annihilation of his individuality' might not have bothered him. [...]

But the circumstances in which he found himself must completely alter the disposition of his spirit. The higher his wife was elevated – 'this wife to whom he was bound' not by love but merely 'by a monetary obligation – the more debased he felt'. He exaggerated his position; he even compared himself to one of the 'lady's accessories or adornments'. [...]

When he offered his hand to his wife to help her alight, or carried her cashmere shawl on his arm, 'he compared himself to the coachman who drove the car and the doorman who opened the step'. [...]

Never, 'after finding himself enslaved by this woman' or before the ill fortune 'subjected him to her whims', had Seixas so needed the resignation he had draped about himself to avoid succumbing to the 'shame of such degradation'. [...] (Alencar, 1994, p. 132-133, emphasis added).

Seixas's circular way of thinking does not allow him to develop a deeper reflection on his own situation and to take effective measures to change it. Seixas goes over and over the idea of his debasement and economic subjugation to Aurélia, which implies moral degradation and an 'annihilation of his individuality'. On this note, it is important to remark that the coachman and the doorman mentioned in the quotation above would certainly have been black slaves. Therefore, by comparing himself to them, Seixas emphasizes his sense of humiliation and degradation for living in what he considers to be a debased condition. Seixas clearly understands that his dependent position prevents him from developing as an individual, for he is not free to act. The only thing Seixas does (because this is the only alternative he can think of) is to become punctual and assiduous at work, and to save all the money he can from his salary. In addition, the plot of the novel tacitly affirms that Seixas's lack of "[...] energy and willpower" (Alencar, 1994, p. 25) is acceptable once it can be perfectly compensated by his turning into a lucky investor who suddenly finds the means to buy his independence back. Indeed, by this sleight of hand, José de Alencar speeds up the narrative pace towards its happy ending, as he makes use of an expedient to solve Seixas's economic problem, an expedient that is backed up by the Brazilian economic system.

Near the end of *Senhora*, Seixas finds himself in possession of "[...] a profit of fifteen thousand" (Alencar, 1994, p. 183) in a long-forgotten joint investment, which had started under the government's protection. This situation was credible in nineteenth-century Brazil where business and financial activities were regularly sponsored by the government if personal contacts were properly established. Even a wealthy persistent entrepreneur such as Viscount of Mauá was aware of his dependence on government stimulus to carry out his numerous business affairs because he knew that development in Brazil would not derive from individual initiative, but rather from state aid (Faoro, 2000).

It is this context of very limited possibilities for individual entrepreneurial activity and of discouragement to continuous individual effort to achieve socio-economic prosperity that underpins Fernando Seixas's personal trajectory and mindset. In fact, before marrying Aurélia, Seixas pursued all possible shortcuts towards becoming a wealthy man. As he confesses to Aurélia in their conciliatory dialogue (in the final chapter of the novel), by mismanaging his own money and his family's savings he had led himself into debt and jeopardized the future marriage of one of his sisters. Seixas claims that this critical situation was the reason for his having broken his engagement with Aurélia in order to marry a rich young lady. Seixas then asserts that he has changed and become a better man.

Seixas's improvement of character and of mind is not narrated, but simply summarized by himself and through Aurélia's own view of him.^[4] As a consequence, the reader of *Senhora* does not follow Seixas's process of reformation which, although invisible in the novel, is central to the reconciliation of the couple and the ensuing happy ending of this Romantic narrative. It is, then, possible to conclude that *Senhora* focuses on the final product (i.e. the reformed Seixas) and the ensuing happy emotional and material consequences for the protagonist couple, and not on the individual movement towards personal improvement. Indeed, throughout the narrative, the reader follows Seixas's repetitive resentful thinking, which entails the reactive and self-protective measures he takes in order to cope with his position as adjunct to Aurélia. In this sense, Seixas's socio-economic and emotional position would correspond to that of an *agregado*, although in a very peculiar way. As Roberto Schwarz (2012, p. 44) explains, the *agregados* were "[...] men or women attached to a family as permanent adjuncts, who could be put to any and every task at hand". In this condition, "[...] the poor remained below the water line of modern liberties" (Schwarz, 2012, p. 44). Being an *agregado* implies moral indebtedness and humiliation, as reflected in the remarks by Schwarz (2012) on characters

created by Machado de Assis. In fact, Schwarz speaks more emphatically about the figure of the *agregado* when he discusses the new thematic emphasis established by Machado de Assis in his first novels. As Schwarz argues, Machado began developing the intricacies of the patron-client relations from the very beginning of his writing career, because the protagonists of his first novels are *agregados*. By doing so, Machado would have promoted an increased realistic effect in Brazilian fiction ahead of his innovative use of point of view. The question that thus arises is whether Machado de Assis might have come up with this significant twist all by himself. Yet, as this discussion of *Senhora* shows, this important complex issue is already embodied by Fernando Seixas in a very interesting way. Therefore, Alencar's emphasis on Seixas's way of thinking expresses a deeply rooted mindset whose logic is not essentially bourgeois because it does not (in fact, it cannot) promote the individual's full intellectual, emotional, and material development or the expression of the individual's potential. Additionally, the reinforcement of the paternalistic system at the end of *Senhora*, with Seixas raised by Aurélia herself to the position of master in every way, also contributes to the building of realism in this novel. Indeed, Aurélia not only implores his forgiveness for the humiliating experiences she imposed on him, but also hands him the will she had written on the night of their wedding, in which she names him "[...] her sole heir" (Alencar, 1994, p. 198).

The end of *Senhora* might induce the conclusion that Aurélia Camargo and Fernando Seixas are equals who deserve to live happily thereafter. However, the trajectory of the money that governs their relationship points in another direction. Aurélia suddenly becomes rich because she inherits her grandfather's fortune. It is this fortune that gives her the means to exert all her power, to give free range to her whims, and to control the lives of those who are somehow economically dependent on her: Dona Firmina, Mr. Lemos, Eduardo Abreu, and – above all – Fernando Seixas. Therefore, by handing her fortune to Seixas and literally putting herself at his feet, Aurélia transfers to him the exclusive socio-economic control that she had exerted up to that point. Indeed, this is a context in which those who have economic advantage are clearly entitled to dominate those who, being less economically favoured, have no room or encouragement for individual expansion and self-assertion. This type of control was exerted by Aurélia's grandfather (the rude landowner Lourenço de Sousa Camargo), by Aurélia herself – for some time –, and will be exerted by Fernando Seixas, as can be inferred from the last scene of the novel. Aurélia's position as the owner of the fortune that underpins the central events in this novel is actually as transitory as her position as a master. Consequently, if the title of Alencar's novel highlights a woman's ascendancy over those who are somehow connected to her, it is male preeminence in the paternalistic Brazilian society that is confirmed at the end of *Senhora*.

FINAL COMMENTS: CONTRASTING AND CORRELATED STAGES OF MODERNITY EMBRACED BY THE NOVEL

Bringing Austen's *Pride and prejudice* and Alencar's *Senhora* together permits the visualization of general lines of force and specific contextual conditions for the formation of the bourgeois mindset in England and in Brazil. Selecting one novel by each of these writers who, in their particular place and time, expressed their view and understanding of the formative stage of this important historical process is, at one and the same time, an abstraction from complex multifaceted international dynamics and a search for an in-depth critical view of socio-cultural contingencies of this process.

English accomplishments (in all fields of work) were widely considered paradigmatic of the progressive movement towards modernity in the western world. As much as this process was generalized and irreversible on both sides of the Atlantic, it developed in very specific ways, according to the particular historical and cultural formation of the different national contexts. This international process had a heterogeneous and uneven development, which can clearly be perceived through artistic productions that ingeniously articulate deep views of particular lived experiences.

As I have shown here, *Pride and prejudice* and *Senhora* depict money as an important mediator of the social and emotional connections established by the different characters. The anxiety, insecurity, and socio-economic aspirations entailed in this modern living condition are mainly explored in both novels through the dynamics of the marriage market. However, the different treatment given to this theme by Austen on the one hand and by Alencar on the other is evident in the number of characters whose socio-economic position depends on the success achieved by themselves or their children in this dynamic system. In Austen's novel all the characters are somehow affected by movements in the marriage market, whereas in Alencar's novel only a few of them are connected through this type of transaction. Although this theme has restricted scope in *Senhora*, it is at the core of the central action once Aurélia's initial loss in the marriage market becomes the reason for her revenge on Seixas, as she decides to 'buy' him to be her husband. Yet, there is another – and more profound – distinction between the two novels regarding the way the authors construct the relation between point of view and the protagonists, and then make the main characters move within this system. In fact, the comparison of the protagonists of *Pride and prejudice* and *Senhora* indicates that their level of individuality and their rationale differ significantly.

Elizabeth Bennet's and Mr. Darcy's way of thinking is deeply individualized and follows a steady progressive movement towards self-improvement. By the end of the narrative, both characters are rewarded for their individual effort to improve, effort that is valued for being the outward expression of 'personal' hard 'work' and that deserves serious attention from the reader. Nevertheless, of the two characters, Elizabeth's personal effort and ability to change is the most complex and enduring for all its social, economic, and emotional implications. Not coincidentally, Elizabeth is the character who has the most successful trajectory in the novel – one that would be worth pursuing, as the narrative emphasis on her way of thinking suggests. Elizabeth combines a promising heterogeneous socio-economic background (bourgeois on her mother's side and landed gentry on her father's) and a "[...] progressively self-assertive bourgeois vigor" (Mudrick apud Spring, 1983, p. 57). Therefore, it is possible to infer that from Austen's perspective this combination would have been the most advantageous in early nineteenth-century England, as it evinces a well-balanced relationship between those upper social groups that were more open to compromise in their search to maintain and/or raise their socio-economic position and status. Consequently, it is with Elizabeth Bennet's personal progressive thinking that the readers of *Pride and prejudice* are encouraged to align themselves imaginatively. Elizabeth has such an open, honest way of thinking about her own feelings and her relationship with others that the purely economic aspect of her condition is overshadowed by her morally and emotionally successful trajectory, which is crowned by her marriage with Mr. Darcy. The economic drive of relationships (amorous or not) is explicit in the novel, being clearly introduced in the very first chapter through Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's dialogue. Nevertheless, despite the ubiquitous presence of money as the mediator of all relationships established in *Pride and prejudice*, Austen's choice of making Elizabeth's progressively self-assertive thinking central in the novel implies the construction of a beautifying veil to the matter of money.

When it comes to the protagonists of *Senhora*, it is clear that Aurélia Camargo's and more particularly Fernando Seixas's way of thinking displays weak traits of bourgeois individuality and is much more representative of the self-confined position of patrons and adjuncts. This aspect is more evident at the end of the narrative when Aurélia willingly reverses their positions by placing herself and her fortune in Seixas's hands. Seixas is then raised to the position of 'master' from that moment on. In this sense, the end of *Senhora* has a realist note inasmuch as it confirms the patriarchal dominator/dominated basis of nineteenth-century Brazilian society. Hence the meaningfulness of Alencar's choice in emphasizing Seixas's self-deprecating perspective. As I have already shown, Seixas does not envisage a way of changing his debased condition. For him, the only option is to endure the humiliation of being economically dependent while he saves money from his salary in order, eventually, to pay the dowry back to Aurélia. In other words, this is a character who does not display much personal initiative and/or effort to alter his condition. Even so, all ends well for Fernando Seixas. Therefore, Seixas embodies the superficial status of the modern bourgeois way of life in

nineteenth-century Brazil, once he emulates the bourgeois fashion, mannerisms, and lifestyle, but does not need progressive thinking or personal effort to succeed. Yet, despite Fernando Seixas's seemingly indolent nature, he does undergo some degree of change. Seixas's improvement of character is first observed by Aurélia and later mentioned by himself to her - but it is not narrated. His material gain, which allows him to become a free man, is not narrated either. In fact, with a snap of the fingers, money comes to Seixas in the form of profit from financial speculations carried out under government protection. Financial speculation is, therefore, overtly characterized as pure gambling, as a matter of chance and luck. In the same way, Aurélia becomes a rich woman by mere chance, once she is the sole heiress to her repentant grandfather. All in all, the personal change experienced by Aurélia and especially by Seixas, which makes them more worthy of their mutual love, is undermined (because it is not narrated to be followed imaginatively by the readers) in favour of the idea of personal empowerment promoted by sudden possession of wealth. As a consequence, in *Senhora* the mediating role played by money in personal relationships is never eclipsed or beautified by individual effort towards moral and/or emotional improvement. And in fact such improvement is not an issue in this narrative.

The marked differences between *Pride and prejudice* and *Senhora*, especially in regard to the implied subject position constructed by Austen and Alencar, are highly suggestive of contrasting standpoints in the general move towards modern bourgeois society in the western world in the nineteenth century. If one viewpoint can be qualified as active (because progressive, self-assertive, and vigorous), the other, by contrast, would be passive (because it lacks 'energy and will power'). But it is important to consider an interesting aspect in the uneven connection between the different English and Brazilian historical-cultural contexts, which are here approximated through the comparison of two of their most important nineteenth-century novels. The *un*-vigorous standpoint does not cover up the blind spots and dead ends of the presumptive avenues open for the socio-economic-emotional self-fulfillment of the individual person. On the contrary, this standpoint (established mainly through Fernando Seixas) barefacedly acknowledges that there is a game to be played - a game whose rules are established elsewhere (note that Seixas receives the money he needs thanks to the selling of the concession for copper mines 'in London'). In addition, while playing this game, one could well count on chance and not worry about continuous individual effort to succeed (an idea certainly not avowed by Elizabeth Bennet's line of thinking).

By way of conclusion, Jane Austen and José de Alencar wrote novels that express in-depth perceptions of subtle and complex aspects of the specific conditions of the formation of bourgeois society in England and in Brazil. Such conditions were neither equivalent nor developed concomitantly in the two countries. When compared, *Pride and prejudice* and *Senhora* highlight different facets of the widespread bourgeois cultural logic current in the nineteenth century. In short, by comparing *Pride and prejudice* and *Senhora* to discuss the ideological implications of the implied subject position constructed through the narrative emphasis on Elizabeth Bennet's and Fernando Seixas's ways of thinking, it is possible to show that the novel is adaptable enough to give shape to the lived experience of different aspects and different stages of modernity.

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NOTES

- [1] This article is the result of a study developed as part of the project of international collaboration "Displacements: the novel without frontiers" coordinated by Sandra Vasconcelos (University of São Paulo/Brazil) and Ross Forman (University of Warwick/England). The project received grants of the agreement between FAPESP and the University of Warwick and of the British Academy.
- [2] All references to José de Alencar's novel are taken from the English translation by Catarina Feldmann Edinger, *Senhora: profile of a woman* (1994).
- [3] Spring particularly refers to footnote 26 on page 15 of Mudrick's book *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).
- [4] In chapter VI of 'Ransom', Seixas's change of character is the subject of a long passage where the narrator follows Aurélia's perspective and self-congratulatory thinking about her own importance for her husband's reformation (Alencar, 1994).