

ARTIGO

Ad Immortalitatem: how politics was manifested in the Investiture Ceremonies at the Brazilian Academy of Letters During the Military Dictatorship (1964-1979)

Ad Immortalitatem: como a política se manifestou nas cerimônias de posse na Academia Brasileira de Letras durante a ditadura militar (1964-1979)

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ABSTRACT: To what extent was the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL) able to serve as an instance of legitimization of the military dictatorship established in Brazil after the 1964 coup? This article aims to examine a specific aspect in the daily life of this institution during the military dictatorship: the investiture ceremonies. We believe that this approach allows us to analyze how politics were able to operate “apolitically” within the ABL. We argue that the ceremonies may have become political events because they demonstrated, first, the proximity and networks of sociability between the conservative intelligentsia and the regime, and second, we have identified the transmission of values in several speeches that were, at that time, those of the conservative environment. An examination of the investiture ceremonies has indicated that the ABL helped to legitimize the regime which was established in Brazil in 1964. However, this legitimization did not take place by means of an overt “collaboration”, but through the behavior of all its members, their proximity to the representatives of the regime and the diffusion and circulation of a conservative discourse.

KEYWORDS: Brazilian Military Dictatorship. Brazilian Academy of Letters. Investiture Ceremony. Conservative Intellectuals.

RESUMO: Em que medida a Academia Brasileira de Letras (ABL) pôde ter servido como uma instância de legitimação da ditadura militar instaurada no Brasil após o golpe de 1964? O objetivo deste artigo é analisar um aspecto específico do cotidiano desta instituição durante a ditadura militar: as cerimônias de posse.

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Acreditamos que esta abordagem nos permite analisar como a política pôde operar “apoliticamente” dentro do ABL. Argumentamos que essas cerimônias podem ter se tornado eventos políticos porque mostraram, em primeiro lugar, a proximidade e as redes de sociabilidade entre a intelligentsia conservadora e o regime. Em segundo lugar, identificamos em alguns discursos a transmissão de valores que eram, na época, aqueles do conservadorismo ambiente. O exame das cerimônias de posse indica que a ABL contribuiu para legitimar o regime estabelecido no Brasil em 1964. No entanto, essa legitimação não se fez por meio de uma “colaboração” aberta, mas pelo comportamento de todos os seus membros, sua proximidade com o regime e a difusão e circulação de um discurso conservador.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ditadura Militar Brasileira. Academia Brasileira de Letras. Cerimônias de Posse. Intelectuais Conservadores.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the military dictatorship Jorge Amado published *Farda, fardão, camisola de dormir* (2009 [1979]). In this novel à clef, the celebrated writer tells the story of an election at the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL) during the years of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship. Set in the context of the beginning of World War II, when the triumph of Nazism and Fascism seemed inevitable, this election opposed the leader of the repression of Getúlio Vargas, Colonel Agnaldo Sampaio Pereira, supported by the opportunist and ambitious academician Lisandro Leite, and the anti-fascist general Waldomiro Moreira. The latter had been tempted back from his leisurely retirement by liberal academicians with the goal of defeating the Nazi colonel. At the end of the novel, after an aggressive campaign for a chair at the ABL, the Nazi colonel gave up on the dispute; as for the general, convinced of his unanimous victory, he failed to obtain the minimum number of votes necessary to be elected and died of a sudden heart attack. This satire, considered “minor” among the novels of Amado, unveils an aspect that the academicians attempted to disguise: the intrigues, alliances, commitments, blackmail, and the exchange of favors that are part of the daily life of the ABL. But it brings into question whether, in addition to the politicization unveiled in Amado’s novel, the “practices of immortality” did not play a more significant political role.

To what extent has the ABL been able to serve as an instance of legitimization of the military dictatorship which was established in Brazil in the aftermath of the 1964 coup d’état? This question has guided the research we have developed over the last few years. Our concern was to examine the relations of a section of intellectuals to authoritarianism, rescuing and privileging in the analysis ambiguities and accommodations of one part and another. In this sense, the ABL, an essentially conservative and officially “apolitical” institution, provided an excellent “sample” for the study of conservative intellectual elites. This paper aims to examine a very specific aspect of the daily life of the ABL during the military dictatorship: the investiture ceremonies. We believe that this approach allows us to analyze how politics could operate “apolitically” within the ABL, either through discourses or in a more symbolic plan in that, thanks to the proximity between the academicians and the regime, the latter could identify and be associated with a respected cultural institution. Therefore, we need to begin by reflecting on the earlier relationship of the ABL with politics.

The Brazilian Academy of Letters: the exclusion of politics or the illusion of the “apolitical”

The ABL was founded in the late nineteenth century, more precisely on July 20, 1897, by the writers who attended the office of the *Revista Brasileira*. Despite several attempts on the part of some of the writers, it received no state support. Thus, in its early years, the institution faced many financial difficulties and it is possible that it only managed to survive thanks to the aura and reputation of its first president, Machado de Assis. The situation improved when, in 1905, the government gave academicians a room in a building in the *Lapa* neighborhood, which they named *Silogeu Brasileiro*, the right to use the postal services for free, as well as having their work printed, also for free, by the National Press (EL FAR, 1997, p. 79).

After the death of Machado de Assis in 1910, the prestigious Rui Barbosa was elected as president of the institution, a position he held until 1919. From this point on, sessions were held every Thursday and most of the academicians who lived in Rio de Janeiro attended. The ABL ended the second decade of the twentieth century with non-negligible prestige and important visibility. On the eve of the 1930 Revolution, it had become the country's quintessential institution of letters and the official emissary for Brazilian literature (EL FAR, 1997, p. 126). During the 1930s and 1940s, the ABL achieved close connections to the power, the high point being the election of Getúlio Vargas himself to the institution in 1943. From the 1950s onwards, the ABL – and hence the “immortals”, as academicians are also called – progressively lost its influence. Our hypothesis is that the decline of its splendor was the result of important mutations in the political and cultural fields at that moment.

How may this “traditional intellectual”, that occupied institutions such as the ABL, the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute (IHGB) and the Federal Council of Culture (CFC) during the military dictatorship, be defined? An analytical prosopography of all the members of the ABL between 1961 and 1979 has enabled us to draw an accurate profile and to identify a sector of the Brazilian *intelligentsia* that remained neglected during the military dictatorship, when it was unforgotten, largely because of the idea of the “cultural hegemony” of the left (CUNHA, 2015). Despite being on the verge of disappearance, the literate generation born in the late nineteenth century retained a force and a power of influence that cannot be neglected. The analytical prosopography leads us to two findings. First, despite certain exceptions, almost all itineraries were on the right of the political spectrum. Second, there were, among the academicians, varying degrees of accommodation with the military regime, far beyond collaboration and opposition.

It is important to mention that throughout its history, the *Casa de Machado de Assis* – as the institution is also known – has developed a series of “rules of conduct” that all academicians are expected to follow, and a number of attributes that both the institution and its members should reflect. Among them, the most important, and complex, is to remain strictly “apolitical”. When the ABL was founded, Machado de Assis stated in his inaugural speech that it should be an “ivory tower”: “Here, men may write pages of history, but history is made out there” (MACHADO DE ASSIS, 1897). This apolitical behavior has therefore become an obligation, whereby politics have become a taboo, which the academicians have always tried to respect. This is not however, specific to the ABL; this reflects the traditional models of the academies of letters. As French historian Daniel Roche stated, looking for politics in an academy of letters may seem paradoxical because, as everyone knows, it should not go beyond its doors (ROCHE, 1988, p. 159). But the question of

his action and his “political innocence” may be put in other terms. Even though Roche was analyzing the French academies of the eighteenth century, the French historian brought an inescapable contribution to the study of other academies of letters, regardless of the historical period. He stated that it is necessary to examine *how politics is reintroduced in the upper room of the institution, less by reflection than by habits and manners* [emphasis added] (ROCHE, 1988, p. 160).

If there were no speeches, from the top of the academic rostrum, for or against the Brazilian military regime, there was, however, an intense sociability between the academics and high dignitaries of the regime. This was substantiated in visits and celebrations, the elaboration and circulation of a conservative discourse between different cultural institutions, in donations made by the regime and in the valorization of a certain memory and a political conception of Brazilian culture. We could not agree more with Roche when he stated that the exclusion of politics signifies defining, if not a real policy, then at least an ideology. In the case of the modern era, this ideology, in some way or another, determined the principles behind the action of the State and conformism, indispensable in a society based on orders (ROCHE, 1988, p. 161). If, before the French Revolution it was through the channel of the prestigious institutions of Paris and the modest academies of the countryside that an ideal of civic service was spread throughout the social body, we may say – kept to the proportions – that the ABL, as an agent for constructing nationality and transmitting a certain conception of Brazilian culture, contributed to the diffusion of a conception of life founded on the acceptance of the established order as being the only viable solution for the country, for social integration and for eliminating conflicts. The ABL moved closer to the military dictatorship because there it recognized the only form of government that could protect this conception of culture and this model of social integration. In other words, we may state that the institution created by Machado de Assis was in harmony with the ideology of the dictatorial state. To borrow Roche’s words regarding the French Academy during the modern era, in the Brazilian case, the ABL was the “cultural crowning” of a political order.

The investiture ceremonies

Between 1964 and 1979, 28 personalities were elected to the ABL. The following table indicates who they were, as well as the date they were elected and the date of their investiture ceremony.

Table 1 – Date of election and inauguration of academics elected during the military dictatorship (1964-1979).

Academician	Date of election	Date of investiture ceremony
Marques Rebelo	10/12/1964	28/05/1965
Adonias Filho	14/01/1965	28/04/1965
José Américo de Almeida	27/10/1966	28/06/1967
Fernando de Azevedo	10/08/1967	24/09/1968
Joracy Camargo	17/08/1967	16/08/1967
Mário Palmério	04/04/1968	22/11/1968

Academician	Date of election	Date of investiture ceremony
Abgar Renault	01/08/1968	23/05/1969
João Cabral de Melo Neto	15/08/1968	06/05/1969
Hermes Lima	22/08/1968	18/12/1968
Cyro dos Anjos	01/04/1969	21/10/1969
José Honório Rodrigues	04/09/1969	01/12/1969
Odylo Costa Filho	20/11/1969	24/07/1970
Mauro Mota	08/01/1970	27/08/1970
Aurélio de Lyra Tavares	23/04/1970	02/06/1970
Francisco de Assis Barbosa	19/11/1970	13/05/1971
Antônio Houaiss	01/04/1971	27/08/1971
Herberto Sales	06/04/1971	21/09/1971
Paulo Carneiro	20/05/1971	04/10/1971
Otávio de Faria	13/01/1972	06/06/1972
Genolino Amado	09/08/1973	14/11/1973
Carlos Chagas Filho	03/01/1974	23/04/1974
Américo Jacobina Lacombe	24/01/1974	02/07/1974
José Cândido de Carvalho	23/05/1974	01/10/1974
Miguel Reale	16/01/1975	21/05/1975
Bernardo Élis	23/10/1975	10/10/1975
Rachel de Queiróz	04/08/1977	04/11/1977
Pontes de Miranda	08/03/1979	15/05/1979
Otto Lara Resende	03/07/1979	02/10/1979

Source: Table produced by the author.

It is possible to identify that the majority of the group was to the right of the political spectrum. There were those who were more discreet and, although they remained silent, were very conservative and therefore certainly favored military intervention: Octavio de Faria, one of the most brilliant intellectuals of the far right in the 1930s, also Odylo Costa Filho, and even Américo Jacobina Lacombe. The latter, a fervent Catholic and integralist in the 1930s, was the director of the Army Library during the dictatorship. Others played an active role in the conspiracy that resulted in the coup, and went on to collaborate with the regime, such as Adonias Filho, Lyra Tavares, Miguel Reale and Rachel de Queiroz. While a discussion on gender would be beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to highlight that Rachel de Queiroz was the first woman elected to the ABL. The statute that enabled the investiture of women was changed in 1976, one year before the death of Cândido Motta Filho, whose chair she would occupy. At the time, there was intense debate regarding the investiture of women into the *Casa de Machado de Assis*, but the division between those in favor and those against was not imbued with the same logic as that between the right-wing and left-wing intellectuals. For instance, among those who opposed the

investiture of women into the ABL there were both liberals, such as Austregésilo de Athayde, and nationalists who opposed the military dictatorship, such as Barbosa Lima Sobrinho. On the other hand, Rachel de Queiroz's greatest supporter was Adonias Filho, the organic intellectual closest to the military dictatorship. Apart from him, Octávio de Faria, an author who rose to fame in the 1930s for his proximity to fascism, was one of those who strongly defended her investiture (FARIA, 1977; ÚLTIMA HORA, 1977).

The investiture ceremonies are one of the most visible moments of the everyday life of the ABL in the eyes of society, in which the values of the institution are emphasized: tradition, conservatism and apolitical behavior. It is expected that the speeches of the newly elected "immortals" exalt those who have taken the chair before them, which contributes to giving the institution its character as the guardian of literary tradition and of "authentic" Brazilian culture. In this segment we examine in depth three investiture ceremonies of conservative personalities that took place in the aftermath of the 1964 coup d'état, namely those of: Gilberto Amado in 1964; Adonias Filho, in 1965; and Aurelio de Lyra Tavares, in 1969. Besides analyzing the inaugural speech, we attempt to reconstitute what took place during the ceremony: whether it bore weight with the dignitaries of the military regime and what the repercussions were in the newspapers. We argue that this perspective allows us to examine another dimension of the relationship between the ABL and the regime: the networks and ties of sociability.

With regard to the sources, it is important to stress that newspapers have been essential for research on the period of the military regime. Between the 1950s and 1970s the Brazilian press went through an important process of modernization and professionalization. During these two decades there was a process of media concentration. Now, run as big profit-seeking corporations, small newspapers, whether politicized or popular in character, began to disappear or to be taken over by large conglomerates. Alzira Alves de Abreu (2002, p. 17) cites the example of the press in Rio de Janeiro: while in 1950 there were 22 newspapers, by 1960 there were only sixteen, and in 1970 only seven. The main newspapers in the country were fundamentally conservative and played a notable role in the 1964 coup. Later, as is well-known, several were eventually censored by the dictatorship. However, the relationship between the media and political power was complex and needs to be grasped within its complexity, as did Beatriz Kushnir (2012) and João Teófilo (2019). Both went beyond the dichotomy between the "dictatorship censors" and the "hero journalists", who dodged censorship. They highlighted the networks into which various actors were inserted – journalists, censors, businessmen, police officers, soldiers – as well as their circulation, demonstrating how they moved from camp to camp, with censors sometimes playing the role of journalists and journalists playing the role of censors. The fact remains that newspapers are an unavoidable source in order to analyze daily life during the period of the military dictatorship and, like any historical source, needs to be critically analyzed. We have also used the *Discursos Acadêmicos* for the reception speeches. One would imagine that these speeches have nothing to reveal, being limited to a boring list of praises, as indeed they often were. However, it is possible to identify a set of values common to academics and the military regime. It is from this angle that they have been analyzed, while placing them in the context into which they were spoken. That is to say that, by crossing these reception speeches with other sources, we have attempted to return to the different ceremonies that took place between 1964 and 1979.

The Ceremonies of the Conservative Intellectuals: Defending Order and National Unity

Elected before João Goulart was ousted, the ambassador Gilberto Amado was the first to be received after the 1964 coup. A celebrated intellectual, and author of important political essays, he entered politics in 1915 and withdrew when Getúlio Vargas came to power in 1930. He then joined the Brazilian Foreign Office – the *Itamaraty* – and became Brazilian ambassador to the UN for several years.

Amado's investiture ceremony took place at the *Petit Trianon* on August 29, 1964. Two days later, the *Jornal do Brasil* gave him a full page, where long passages of his inaugural speech were published together with a photograph of him being congratulated by President Castelo Branco. Apart from Amado's speech, which occupied almost the entire page, the newspaper's coverage of the ceremony and the guests was scant, only noting that the "solemnity had counted on the presence of the President of the Republic, Castelo Branco" (JORNAL DO BRASIL, 1964). As tradition dictates, Gilberto Amado gave a long commendation of his predecessor and friend, the poet and diplomat Ribeiro Couto, and evoked the conditions of his election:

To some readers, especially those in the countryside, my absence from this house has become a kind of obsession. "Why do you not go to the Academy?", they asked. In my opinion, this honorable concern reveals the extent to which the Academy has penetrated the layers of the population. It is, we could say, a presence not only prestigious, but sacred. The Academy rises in the center as a reference point, a kind of focus to which the spirits turn. Machado and Nabuco will be happy there in immortality. If it does not fulfill its purpose of "preserving literary unity in the midst of the political federation", if it has not become, according to Nabuco's dream, "the organ of expression, not only literary but also of the Nation's very instinct to search for its genius and its originality", it is certain that the Academy EXISTS, and immensely so, for the Brazilian people. It is at the very center of their beliefs (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1108).

A few lines later, he adds:

It was to this chair that Joao do Rio and Ribeiro Couto came, so young, and from which the strange, squalid figure of Laurindo Rabelo is enhanced, where Guimarães Passos and Constâncio Alves once sat, neither of whom particularly loom within the memory of the people. The Academy revives them, rekindles the votive flame before their effigies, their names, calls them from time to time by the voice of the newcomers to the places they exalt as patrons and as the first occupants, the people remember them through our voices, through different voices (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1109).

This seemingly anodyne excerpt takes on a political meaning when we attribute to the notions of "people" and "Brazilian culture" the meanings ascribed by conservative intellectuals since the 1920s. According to them, the Nation may only be built with the people and the Brazilian culture that has emanated from them: the "true" Brazilian culture. Academicians are inscribed in the tradition which was forged at the beginning of the century, and which gave the intellectual a key role in this process: they should be the guardians of this cultural heritage whose people are at their origin without necessarily having a conscience. We should point out the use of the word

“remember” by Amado: intellectuals, through the ABL, should not “create” or teach the people what their own culture consists of; it already exists in its “raw state” and the intellectual needs to help the people not to forget that. In the last part of the speech, Amado says:

We used to extol “national unity”, preserved in its splendor – the people, language, religion. Nothing could go against it! Against the work of the white colonizer and the black worker, against the work of mulattoes, priests, doctors, colonels, from whence they came, the products of our joyful miscegenation, some “unstable” mulattoes, without character, with no effort, conforming to the psychology and generalizations of ethnologists; but also mulattoes, and in large numbers, undoubtedly by work and imposition of the milieu, solid mulattoes, grave, dignified, some rigid even as Swedish exponents of moral virtues, high expressions of humanity, conclusive denials of the Bohemian theories of the superiority or inferiority of races. National unity, the work of the Church, the Army and the Navy, which were joined by the Air Force, connecting links, nuclei, bases, and organic parts of the Nation. No erosive force could corrode or whittle away this block of infallible, unfathomable matter, porous however to all fluids and osmoses... To populate, maintaining the material unity of the country, i.e., populating in the broadest sense of the word, through the economic use of the arm, through the positive use of the spirit, which comes to be in man’s political use of synthesis [...] all enlivened by awareness of the Fatherland, by the understanding of our particular formation, by the concrete adherence to what is ours, to solve what is ours in our way, so as to be of use to humanity, as Brazil [...] (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1125-1126).

This passage evidences the proximity between the values shared between a part of the academicians and the military. Three elements occupy a prominent position here: national unity, miscegenation and economic dynamism. The first two are inseparable. Brazil forms a nation united by the people, the language and the religion, i.e., a harmonious and balanced nation. A unity achieved thanks to what Amado calls “fixer links, bases, organic parts of the Nation”, including the Armed Forces. Miscegenation, in turn, is described as a “happy product”; i.e., the mixture of three races, three cultures, three symbolic universes that harmoniously formed the people, the “Brazilian people”¹. The third element is perhaps closest to the National Security Doctrine drawn up by the National War College, an institution that played an important role in the 1964 coup. According to the National War College manuals, there can be no national security without economic development, because underdeveloped countries are the most vulnerable to “penetration” by the “communist enemy”. Economic development was therefore an ideal counter-offensive. Brazil was a country full of “empty spaces” that formed “paths of penetration” for communist ideas, and it was essential to fill them by means of settlement. Even if Amado did not use the terms “national security”, “economic development” or “communism” in his inaugural speech, ideas of settlement, national unity and “Armed Forces as organic parts of the Nation” are a direct reference to the conservative discourse of the time.

Six months after Gilberto Amado’s inauguration, the writer Adonias Filho, “one of the most prestigious figures in the hierarchy of the Revolution”, according to *Jornal do Brasil* (04/03/1965), was elected to occupy Chair 21, left empty by the death of Alvaro Moreyra. He was one of the most active intellectuals in favor of the coup d’état of 1964. In his memoirs, another renowned

¹ The theme of miscegenation and harmony of the Brazilian people throughout the country’s history frequently appeared in the discourses of conservative intellectuals during the 1960s and 1970s. This will not be further investigated in this paper, since this topic deserves a separate study, which has already been conducted (CUNHA, 2019).

writer, Rachel de Queiroz, claims to have established relations with the agents of the military coup through Adonias Filho: “Our Adonias was a sort of civil general and had contact with all the uniforms” (QUEIRÓZ, 1998, p. 203). His inaugural speech is arguably the most politicized that occurred in the ABL during the military dictatorship. What makes this ceremony even more interesting is that it was Jorge Amado who gave the reception speech.

Elected to the ABL on January 14, 1965, Adonias Filho personally invited President Castelo Branco to the investiture ceremony scheduled for April 28 of the same year (JORNAL DO COMÉRCIO, 1965). Right from the beginning of his speech, he lays out the role that the intellectual and the ABL should play. The latter allows the reunion through time, of different generations of men who unite around the same affinities and the same values. Amongst these values, freedom must be the greatest concern for intellectuals and its defense is precisely what makes intellectual work a “public act”. It would be “the center of the great problems of the world” and it would be this freedom that allowed the meeting of Adonias Filho and his predecessors, to set up a “revolutionary stronghold” within the “academic arena” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1159).

Adonias Filho then mentions each of his predecessors in order to show how every one of them had fought for freedom. For the writers who occupied Chair 21 before him, freedom was not just a subject, but a determination:

Our message, this permanent claim for freedom in a state of struggle or in theoretical manifestation, this recognition of freedom as a social condition indispensable to life, belongs both to us – and as a consequence – to the Academy. The academic spirit, democratic in the choice of its members and in the impartiality of all its debates, if it reflects wisdom then it is precisely because it adopts freedom as the norm. Chair 21, as it turns out, does not subsist like an island. But it is so integrated into academic behavior – an active behavior in the function of freedom that allows a creative vocation – a revolutionary behavior in preserving the innovative and reforming work that characterizes culture – Chair 21 is enlarged, almost a war front, in its intransigence in the defense of freedom (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1161).

Adonias Filho chronologically examined the occupants of his chair. The patron was Joaquim Serra, chosen by founding member José do Patrocínio. For Adonias Filho, his humanistic training went hand in hand with his defense of freedom and with his struggle against slavery, which began to “reveal the determination of Chair 21 as the bastion of freedom” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1162). This struggle was the same as that of the founding member of the ABL in the same chair, another celebrated abolitionist, José do Patrocínio.

Adonias Filho very briefly also mentioned the other two occupants of the chair, Mário de Alencar, who would also have “understood abolitionism in all its cultural consequences” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1163), and Olegário Mariano, before speaking in greater detail about his predecessor, the literary critic Álvaro Moreyra. Adonias stated that Moreyra embodied an “existential freedom”, in his sense of goodness that was revealed in his everyday practices. According to Adonias, the *gaúcho* literary critic personified freedom, adding that he was someone who, “listened, listened so that he could understand, without ever issuing judgments” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1164). Chair 21 would now be occupied by Adonias Filho: “It is my chair”. Thus, following on from his argument, the writers who had occupied this chair, from José do Patrocínio through to Álvaro Moreyra, all had affirmed freedom as a tradition. And, according to the new “immortal”, destiny had deemed it to be henceforth occupied by a writer and literary

critic, in this case himself, who “knows that it is in freedom that one finds intelligence itself as an intellectual function” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1167). Moreover, as a writer of his time, he could not avoid what had been laid down in the very work of his predecessors, since: “they have demanded the struggle against ideological censorship, against the command of a single party in the arts and sciences, against cultural blockade – which I tried to address in one of my books – which today still represses peoples and humiliates men” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1168). He concluded:

Ideological fanaticism, responsible for wars and revolutions, and particularly responsible for the return of totalitarian brutality, has not destroyed man’s confidence. And when it was unable to measure the results and consequences, the conclusion it imposed was not alienated from the world’s problems: freedom, as a function of human behavior and in its political use in the democratic process, has remained a decisive value. This freedom, which has been of such great concern to the writer in his relations with receptivity, he will find again – less as motivation and more as an element – but he will find it again in Chair 21. I now know that, amongst us, there is no distance or conflict, debate or crisis. The shadow that comes from above shelters us all. The gift of God, for which I am thankful, is to belong to Chair 21, the Chair of Freedom (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1169).

The event had wide repercussions in the newspapers. On the day of the ceremony, it was reported in the *Diário de Notícias*, stating that President Castelo Branco would be present, together with his Chief of Staff Luís Viana Filho, who was also a member of the ABL. The newspaper also mentioned that in his inaugural address, the new member of the academy would speak of freedom. A freedom, Adonias Filho told the newspaper, “guaranteed in Brazil by the revolution that neither interfered with books, nor arrested writers, as in Russia” (DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS, 1965). He affirmed that the “Manifesto of intellectuals”, issued a month earlier calling for a return to democracy, and signed by personalities such as Alceu Amoroso Lima, Barbosa Lima Sobrinho and Antonio Callado, was an “imposture”, before emphasizing that “the revolution [...] as a phenomenon to renew the social process, should influence literature and make it possible for the literary cycle to emerge, although it is still early for this” (DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS, 1965).

The cover story of the newspaper *Tribuna de Imprensa*, owned by the right-wing politician Carlos Lacerda, was entitled *Academician Adonias promises to fight cultural blockade* (TRIBUNA DA IMPRENSA, 1965), while the *Diário de Pernambuco*, bringing an article entitled “The Academic Square and the Revolutionary Stronghold”, included the more politicized sections of the academician’s discourse. Finally, *A Notícia* reported that the writer Jorge Amado had reaffirmed his “condition as a man of the left” in his address to Adonias Filho and that “the two immortals were in agreement on the apology for freedom and coexistence, characteristic of the Brazilian people”, in a report with the suggestive title of “The left and the government commune of freedom” (A NOTÍCIA, 1965). The manner in which *A Notícia* addressed Adonias Filho’s investiture ceremony and the how he was received by Jorge Amado, referring to an alleged agreement between the “left” and the “government” regarding freedom, leads us to reflect on a crucial aspect: the relationship that existed amongst intellectuals of different political views.

Amado’s trajectory is well-known and does not need to be addressed in any depth within the confines of this paper. Amado was one of Brazil’s most celebrated left-wing intellectuals, having been a member of the Brazilian Communist Party. What is important to emphasize, on the other

hand, is that we have encountered few criticisms of the military regime in the sources found in the ABL archives. One exception would be an offensive against censorship that he began as from the 1970s, especially when it began to impinge on his own novels. Some of his statements are astonishing, such as that made to the Portuguese newspaper *Diário de Lisboa* and reported by *Correio da Manhã* in which

[Amado] made considerations regarding the current moment in Brazilian politics, which he finds disappointing. “There is only one thing that I am afraid of losing in Brazil: healthy, humane cordiality, which does not prevent circumstantial violence and struggle, but allows us to live amongst opposing ideologies, to maintain indestructible friendships even with the differences and the most adverse positions, and to maintain personal sympathies above and beyond the aspirations that divide us. Thus far, we have managed to retain the wonderful quality of ignoring the accumulated resentments (CORREIO DA MANHÃ, 1966).

This demonstrates a reproduction of the ideology of cordiality and miscegenation, also by the left-wing. However, recent studies, such as that by Carolina Fernandes Calixto (2021, p. 347), demonstrate that there was no isolation on the part of Jorge Amado during the military dictatorship, but different criticism resulting from a new relationship he established with the political sphere. While there was no defense made of a takeover by the communists, he continued to participate in the political debate making use of his fame and credibility. What is interesting to note, returning now to the investiture ceremony of Adonias Filho, is that Amado fully agreed to welcome him. In his speech, after having completed the work of a literary critic by analyzing some of Adonias Filho’s novels, Amado refers to the curious situation of someone on the left, like himself, welcoming and acclaiming one of the most celebrated intellectuals of Brazil’s far right-wing, an enthusiastic supporter of the 1964 coup d’état:

Forgive me, Mr. Adonias Filho, if I lose myself in adjectives, and make no criticism, analysis, or erudite evaluation of your books. If I almost forget to draw attention to your activity as an essayist, whether as a political essayist, so very far from my viewpoint of problems and solutions, or whether as the excellent literary essayist that you are [...] If today, on this night of celebration, your celebration, you would have wished to hear an analysis of your admirable work and the just nature of your concept, your exact measure of importance upon our Letters, you would have chosen one of the various masters of literary criticism sitting in this house to welcome and greet you [...] However, you have chosen with your heart, your fellow companion from Bahia, your childhood friend, a colleague from the internal college, a companion of Letters, the fraternal friendship that has remained unshaken either by literary divergences or by political differences. For each of us knows, Mr. Adonias Filho, that literary intrigue and political gossip are worth little when placed alongside a man’s integrity, his dignity (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1187).

He went on to say:

There are those who, rather niggardly, have tried to deride the fact that it is I, this old, confirmed man of the left, who comes here tonight to welcome you, because of the differences between our political activities, between your political thinking and mine. As if the fact of being your opponent in the field of political ideas could ever influence my opinion and the esteem I have for your work as a novelist, as if we could never maintain a fraternal friendship

simply because we disagree on conceptions and political solutions. Well, the idiots are the sectarians and dogmatists of any position, party, or ideology, of any sect, be it left or right. As politicians, I believe there is something we have in common, that goes beyond our ideological differences, something of the greatest importance, Mr. Adonias Filho. And that is, the horror, the total disregard we both hold towards any and all sectarianism, to this narrowness of vision and of action, which is the negation of intelligence, and which is the sole, sad capital of certain political men, their only manner with which to undertake politics. For these, politics is only hatred, injustice, persecution, and a denial of culture and humanism (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 2008, p. 1189).

With this speech, Amado reinforced what we have identified within the main elements of the academic ethos: the “apolitical behavior” of the institution, the harmony, the cordiality that must govern the relations between “confreres”. He faithfully followed the cautionary words of Machado de Assis, who stated in 1897 that “history is made out there”. The question that we may therefore legitimately pose is which political field was being benefitted when a man of the left, in a conservative institution such as the ABL, and at such a moment of crucial visibility, assumed a behavior that was supposedly “apolitical”. Ultimately this “apolitical behavior” was associated, in more general terms, with conservatism. This passage also tells us much about the relationships that members of a select group, like the intellectuals, form with one another. Often, bonds of friendship and personal quarrels play a more significant role in these relations than ideological and/or partisan divisions that divide the political field between right and left. This is clearly indicated by Amado himself when he mentions his friendship with Adonias Filho. The proximity between academics from different political fields within the scope of the ABL is often cited by academicians themselves as an example of the institution’s “undeniable apolitical behavior”. However, as mentioned above, we believe that when some men of the left – or at least those with no reputation for being of the right or conservative – adhere to the “practices of immortality”, they reinforce the idea of apolitical behavior, and consequently contribute to the diffusion of a conservative discourse supposedly apolitical.

A third important investiture ceremony to be analyzed for the purposes of this study, was that of General Aurélio de Lyra Tavares. His election to Chair 20 is directly linked to a donation to the ABL, by President Medici, of a plot of land next to the institution’s headquarters. Our analysis here, however, will be limited to the ceremony. As is well known, Lyra Tavares had a long list of services rendered to the Armed Forces, which he joined in 1925 as an “aspirant engineer officer” after having completed his schooling at the Military College and Military School of Realengo. In 1964, despite his proximity to the group that conspired against the Goulart government, it appears that Lyra Tavares did not play a prominent role at the time of the coup d’état. However, as early as October 1964, Castelo Branco appointed him commander of the IV Army Corps, before naming him Army General the following month. In 1966, he was appointed director of the War College before taking over the Ministry of War, the most powerful post during the dictatorship, subordinate only to the Presidency of the Republic.

The results of his actions as Minister of War have been widely criticized by the experts of the period. Thomas Skidmore considered Lyra Tavares to be “incapable” (1988, p. 191). For Elio Gaspari, he was a “weak”, “disastrous” and “discredited” military minister thrown into the midst of a High Command formed by generals who, unlike him, had risked their careers in 1964. On an intellectual level, opinions are even less flattering. He joined the junta that ruled the country after Costa e Silva was removed from duties due to cerebral thrombosis between August and October

1969, and was elected to the ABL shortly after he handed over power to Médici, “without ever”, according to Gaspari, “having made peace with grammar”. “He was the target of jokes”, continues the journalist, “because in times of crisis he used to lose his voice” (2002, p. 264-265).

In his memoirs, Lyra Tavares states that he never imagined he would attain “the glory of immortality”, and that it was a commission of academicians who went to him and asked him to become a candidate. According to Lyra Tavares (1977, p. 254), the “immortals” who formed this commission argued that since the death of Gregorio da Fonseca in 1934, the Armed Forces had not been represented in the ABL. While we are unaware of who actually composed this “commission”, thanks to a letter from Alceu Amoroso Lima to his daughter dated the day that the general put forward his candidacy, it would seem very probable that the sponsors of this initiative were the ABL president, Austregésilo de Athayde, and the academician Vianna Moog, with the support of Ivan Lins, since it was he who received the general at his investiture ceremony. The election of Lyra Tavares is an indication of how the disagreements and conflicts between the academicians – which are certainly numerous – are rarely brought to the public eye. In another letter to his daughter, Alceu Amoroso Lima told of his indignation concerning the general’s candidacy:

As you can see from the attached telegram, the general, a former war minister of the dictatorship, has just put forward his candidacy to the Academy [...] I refuse to give him my vote, not merely for ‘political reasons’, but because I am against ‘the exponent theory’, the only reason why a ‘general’ with no literary or intellectual works of any value has the nerve to present himself at the Academy! And the political motive is not that his ideas are quite the opposite of mine, but that he is part of the ‘military of the dictatorship’ and because of that, gives the impression, at least, of taking advantage of this in order to put pressure on the Academy [...] What a fiasco this is, on the parts of both the general and A. A. [Austregésilo de Athayde]. Now, if the Academy were to be cowed, the lapse would belong to the Academy, rather than to these two interested parties. And in that case, I do not know if I will have the stomach to continue attending. For something very similar – the election of Lauro Müller –, José Veríssimo stopped going to the Academy. I am as yet unsure whether I will do the same, but I know that I would like to do it in three months’ time, when the election is held [...] In any case, this general will never enter the Academy with my vote, but if he does enter, it is very likely that I will leave, or at least refuse any activity or to attend. I will leave discreetly, just as one day I intend to leave the newspapers, the books, the tribunes and, ultimately, life (BETTO; AMOROSO LIMA FILHO, 2013, p. 249-250).

The fact is that Lyra Tavares was elected on April 23, 1970, and the investiture ceremony occurred just over one month later, on July 2, days before his departure for France to take up his post as Brazilian Ambassador. The front page of the newspaper *Diário da Tarde*, in Minas Gerais, carried a photo of the ceremony in which President Emilio Médici and Vice-President Augusto Rademaker occupied the center of the table, next to the president of ABL, Austregésilo de Athayde, the academic Ivan Lins and the governor of Guanabara, Negrão de Lima, and was entitled “Medici and Rademaker attend Lyra’s investiture at the ABL”. The newspaper also listed the guests:

In addition to the President and Vice-President of the Republic, the Ministers of the Army, Navy, Aeronautics, Justice, Governors of Guanabara, Paraíba and Santa Catarina and the Ambassadors of Finland, El Salvador, Chile, Uruguay, Germany, Venezuela and Australia (DIÁRIO DA TARDE, 1970).

The newspaper *O Globo* gave more details of the investiture ceremony reporting that Lyra Tavares had arrived wearing the *fardão* (the ceremonial uniform of the ABL) offered by his own state government of Paraíba and surrounded by several companions. They awaited the arrival of the authorities. At 8:45 p.m., the Vice-President, the Governors of Bahia, Luís Viana Filho, and of Paraíba, José Agripino arrived, followed by the Ministers Mario Gibson and Márcio de Sousa Melo and Barros Nunes. At 9 pm, the Governor of Guanabara, Negrão de Lima, arrived. They all waited in the “French Hall” for the arrival of President Médici, who arrived at 9:15 p.m. According to the newspaper, he “was welcomed at the entrance of the ABL by a commission of “immortals” led by the ABL President, Austregésilo of Athayde. The President of the Republic was brought into the Hall to thunderous applause and greeted by the authorities present” (O GLOBO, 1970). According to *O Globo*,

The President engaged in lively conversation with the Vice-President and General Lira Tavares, who were by his side. Soon afterwards, the same commission brought President Medici into the stately hall of the Academy, at this point completely taken over by a large audience [...] General Medici and Governor Negrão de Lima were invited to participate at the table, with General Medici acting as Honorary President. Austregésilo de Athayde, after brief words of thanks for the presence of President Médici, invited General Lyra Tavares to deliver his inaugural address (O GLOBO, 1970).

The newspaper goes on to mention the speech by the newly-elected member, merely highlighting the praise he had given to his predecessor and the reception he received from Ivan Lins, who mentioned “the thirty works of the military” (O GLOBO, 1970). It should be emphasized that if Lyra Tavares had been intending to make an apolitical speech, as would be expected of the new “immortals”, politics was in fact very present:

I finally decided to run for the privilege of enjoying a coexistence with you and the comfort of the spiritual activities, with which it provides us, after the disenchantment, fatigue and misunderstandings that consume, if not sacrifice, the lives of those who, through the work of destiny, participate in the serious responsibilities of governing, within the framework of a Nation, such as Brazil, which has suffered so greatly from the accumulated errors, thereby disturbing its harmony, its rationality and the march of its development [...] It is also so much easier to think only of ourselves, of our own interests, and always to claim for new rights, including the right not to fulfill our duties, which are commitments to the Motherland, when it is a certainty that working towards its progress and its security is, without distinction, up to each and every citizen (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 1972, p. 221).

If the notions of harmony, miscegenation, cordiality and national unity were already present in Gilberto Amado’s inaugural speech in 1964, Lyra Tavares provided them with an even greater political connotation in 1970. In fact, he related the idea of harmony with security and development, slogans of the military regime. In addition, in his speech, he took up the key notions of the regime’s propaganda, such as “ultraconservative optimism” (“the march of development”) and civism (“duties towards the Motherland”), to which he added two other notions historically linked to the right, that of order and duty:

In the Academy, we may be certain that we do not encounter politics [...] This is my way of seeing our “House of Machado de Assis”, even though the words with which I refer to it now are not my own [...]. It was along these lines of thought that I decided to petition for a chair amongst you all. My spiritual formation has not been consistent with intolerance, nor with the irremovable lines of intransigence and radical ideals, but in the coexistence of studies among men of culture, since coexistence signifies harmony and understanding, aiming towards the same higher, selfless ends, thereby implying that each one respects the ideas of the other. This is what transpires within the very Nation itself, as a social community, the security and progress of which may only occur with a predominance of the postulates of law and freedom. Such postulates, however, can only prevail where there is order, and when citizens, classes and social groups are guided by the altruistic understanding of the interests of the Motherland, which must be placed above our own interests and viewpoints [...]. Colors, like ideals, coexist with one another, in forming hues, through the creative intelligence that is part of man, without, however, ceasing to exist, in their essentiality, however extreme they may be and confronted by predilections, in the debate of different thoughts and conceptions, and that will never be extinguished by violence, or by force, both being resources incompatible with achieving collective happiness (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 1972, p. 223).

The distance between this discourse – which spoke of understanding, harmony and mutual respect – and the social and political situation of Brazil in 1970 is striking. This was a year and a half after Institutional Act No. 5, the regime was already using torture as a state policy and was preparing to enter its most violent period.

Other intellectuals who were close to the regime and entered the ABL during the dictatorship gave their speeches without refer to the political conjuncture. This would be the case of Miguel Reale, elected on January 16, 1975, to occupy the chair left vacant by the death of Fernando de Azevedo. A few days before his investiture ceremony, on May 21 of the same year, Reale flew to Brasília at the request of ABL President Austregésilo de Athayde, to personally invite the President of the Republic General Ernesto Geisel to the investiture ceremony (DIÁRIO DE BRASÍLIA, 1975). According to the newspapers, on that occasion they talked about philosophy, literature, politics, and Brazil’s development. In his inaugural speech, the new scholar confined himself to recalling the life and work of his predecessor. Curiously, the newspapers covered the event rather superficially, to which the jurist did not remain indifferent. A decade later, he said that this silence was a consequence of being engaged in the ranks of the far right during his youth (REALE, 1987, p. 256). It is, however, a strange argument, since he had numerous opportunities to express his views regularly in the newspapers. Nevertheless, the silence on the part of the media remains difficult to understand.

Two years later it was the turn of Rachel de Queiroz to be elected to the *Casa de Machado de Assis* to succeed Candido Motta Filho. The writer from Ceará is one of the most important Brazilian intellectuals of the twentieth century. After a communist youth, she went on to become one of the most celebrated intellectual supporters of the 1964 coup. After renouncing communism, she became, in her own words, “liberal”. In the early 1960s, she was one of the most active intellectuals in the conspiracy that overthrew João Goulart. Many years after the regime has come to an end, she did not seek to hide her conspiratorial activity of the 1960s. In 1977, Rachel de Queiroz stood against the famous jurist Pontes de Miranda fighting for Candido Motta Filho’s chair. It was a controversial election because the jurist, defeated for the second time had declared that Queiroz’s victory had been a victory for the military government. According to the *Jornal do*

Brasil, “observing that yesterday’s winner was the government, his wife, Mrs. Annelis Pontes de Miranda, added: ‘more precisely the Federal Council of Culture, which is a branch of the ABL” (JORNAL DO BRASIL, 1977, p. 22). There then followed a quarrel between academics taking part in the defense of the first woman to become “immortal”.

As previously mentioned, the ABL did not welcome only right-wing intellectuals. Some progressive personalities were also elected. It is important to analyze these “cases” more closely.

The elections of progressive intellectuals

To speak of an “academic left” would suppose the existence of an “academic right”. In the academic sphere, however, the boundary between these two fields is not watertight. To define the institution and most academicians, we prefer to use the term “conservative” or “progressive”, which is more generic, rather than identify them as either right-wing or left-wing. We consider that it is not possible to speak of an “academic left”, especially because it is problematic to frame even the progressive personalities who have become “immortal” as being “leftist” in the political-party sense. Ultimately, as we shall demonstrate, we believe that even they have “played the game” of academic conservatism. These would be Fernando de Azevedo, João Cabral de Melo Neto, Hermes Lima, José Honório Rodrigues and Antonio Houaiss. In this paper, we will limit our analysis to the final three. Their elections, between 1967 and 1971, symbolize the paradox and ambiguity that were the dominant note of society as a whole during the military dictatorship.

Hermes Lima, a famous jurist, was elected to the ABL just five days after AI-5 was decreed, and a month before he was removed and forced into retirement from the Supreme Court. He had been close to the National Liberation Alliance (ANL) in the 1930s, was one of the creators of the Democratic Left group at the end of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship and played a leading role during the government of João Goulart (1961-1964). He was initially Chief of the Civil Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic under the government of Prime Minister Tancredo Neves. When Neve’s government fell, the new Prime Minister, Francisco de Paulo Brochado da Rocha, offered him the Ministry of Labor; and after Brochado da Rocha fell, Hermes Lima himself became Prime Minister, which he accumulated along with that of Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position he held until the plebiscite of January 6, 1963, which restored presidentialism. After the plebiscite, he remained as head of Brazilian diplomacy pursuing the independent foreign policy initiated by his predecessor San Tiago Dantas. He left the *Itamaraty* after a ministerial reform on June 23, 1963, and it was at this time that he was appointed minister of the Federal Supreme Court (Dicionário Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro).

He was elected to the ABL on August 22, 1968, and his investiture ceremony took place five days after AI-5 was decreed. On the occasion of his election, he received a greetings telegram from General-President Costa e Silva. Despite his trajectory as a left-wing politician and former member of João Goulart’s government, Hermes Lima seems to have maintained good relations with some of the regime’s personalities. On December 2, 1968, therefore shortly before his inauguration in the ABL, the newspaper *O Globo* noted that

Minister Hermes Lima received a tribute from the “Congress Club” on the occasion of his investiture ceremony at the ABL scheduled for the 18th. All the Ministers of the Federal Supreme Court, government members, a number of deputies and senators, as well as intellectuals and personalities of Brazilian society were present (O GLOBO, 1968).

However, from our point of view, the strangest and most unexplained aspects, are the chapters of his memoirs in which he evokes his forced retirement and his election at ABL: he lauds praise for Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva and only mentions his forced retirement *en passant* (LIMA, 1974, p. 289). Upon entry into the ABL, he stated that he was particularly honored to receive two telegrams, which he transcribed in full: one from General President Costa e Silva and another from the Minister of War of the time, General Aurelio de Lyra Tavares (LIMA, 1974, p. 294).

José Honório Rodrigues was one of the most important Brazilian historians of the twentieth century. There is little available information regarding Rodrigues' political leanings. Some mention is made about his participation in the Democratic Left group at the end of the *Estado Novo*. He was a liberal with progressive tendencies, and he certainly opposed the coup d'état and the military regime. In one of the letters that Alceu Amoroso Lima wrote to his daughter, he tells of a dialogue he had with Austregésilo de Athayde. Asked by the president of the ABL about the relevance of the candidacy of Archbishop Marcos Barbosa, Alceu Amoroso Lima replied that

on the day that Dom Marcos is to stand, he will have my vote and if José Honório [Rodrigues] calls me, which he will not delay in doing, I will tell him that if Dom Marcos does not stand, then I will give him my vote [...]. It happens that *Xará* [Austregésilo de Athayde, president of the ABL] does not like José Honório, perhaps because of his political positions, because *Xará* is right-wing [...] while José Honório has the same position as I, leaning towards the left, but without being left [...] (AMOROSO LIMA, 2013, p. 111).

José Honório Rodrigues was elected to the ABL on September 4, 1969. In his file, we came across some letters written by Austregésilo de Athayde, inviting some important dignitaries of the military regime, including President Medici, to Honório's investiture ceremony, which took place on December 5 of the same year. However, it is unlikely that the president went, since the *Jornal do Brasil* makes no mention of his presence. The day after the ceremony, this same newspaper reported that "José Honório praises liberalism at his investiture at the Academy of Letters" (JORNAL DO BRASIL, 1969). In fact, the historian retraced the trajectory of his three predecessors of Chair 35 to exalt liberalism, proclaiming the most critical discourse of the dictatorship, without actually mentioning it. He began by stating that the Academy was not "neutral", but open to all kinds of irreconcilable beliefs, be they political, religious, or social (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 1972, p. 175). The historian first used the supposed diversity of the members of the ABL and their freedom to express themselves, and then associated this with political liberalism. According to him, "academic freedom shelters all nonconformities and dissent, and it is only with them that it maintains itself, rediscovers itself and perpetuates the humanist past and prepares the creative innovations of the future" (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 1972, p. 176). He used the same strategy as Adonias Filho, but to achieve the opposite goal. While the writer from Bahia, as we have seen, retracted the trajectory of his predecessors by associating them with the defense of freedom and, consequently, claimed his own role as a defender of freedom in his struggle against communism, Rodrigues, in turn, affirmed that what one of the occupants who had preceded him in his chair was the "liberal idea" against "absolutism".

As a historian, José Honório Rodrigues spoke about the history of liberalism, about the moment the term had arrived in Brazil and had acquired a political sense. Then, he retraced the

trajectories of the patron of Chair 35, Tavares Bastos, of the founder of the ABL, Rodrigo Otávio and, finally, of his predecessor Rodrigo Otávio Filho, all of them liberals. Most of his inaugural speech was devoted to the first, Aureliano Tavares Bastos, writer, journalist and politician, precursor of federalism and a great defender of liberalism. José Honório Rodrigues exalted his writings and, amongst his struggles, recalled the one against slavery, the defense of immigration and free labor, his struggle for universal suffrage and the free vote, religious freedom, the separation of powers, and his accusation of the “double crime of absolutism and colonialism” (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 1972, p. 184). “All these ideas”, the historian added,

are connected to each other. Its general formula, freedom. Its end result, the good of the people. Freedom is true greatness, freedom is the builder of the future, freedom is development, freedom is progress, freedom is the supreme law. Only the triumph of freedom, only the avenues of liberation will lead us to the Future (DISCURSOS ACADÊMICOS, 1972, p. 186).

Born on October 15, 1915, in Rio de Janeiro, Antonio Houaiss was the last left-leaning academic to be elected to the ABL during the military regime, at the height of the *anos de chumbo* (the years of lead), on April 1, 1971. Of modest origins, he enrolled in the National Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Brazil and completed a course of Classical Literature in 1942. A few years later he passed the entrance exam for the Rio Branco Institute and began a career as a diplomat, which was only interrupted by the military in 1964. Parallel to his career as a diplomat, Antonio Houaiss also pursued a career as a philologist.

The inauguration ceremony of Antonio Houaiss was atypical. Simple, fast, without the presence of authorities. On the day of the ceremony, the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* pointed out that, in the case of a diplomat who was banned by the regime, “Antonio Houaiss does not expect the presence of authorities” (O ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO, 1971). The night of his inauguration ceremony confirmed the prognoses of the newspaper. In a news article entitled “Houaiss received at the Academy in a ceremony without traditions”, the newspaper *Diário de Santos* noted that Houaiss’s tenure was marked by the absence of tradition: “with no champagne and no long speeches” (CIDADE DE SANTOS, 1971).

What do these itineraries and investiture ceremonies at the ABL reveal? Initially, that intellectuals “with a lean towards the left”, to use the expression of Alceu Amoroso Lima, were elected to the *Casa de Machado de Assis* at the height of the dictatorship. This confirms that the institution and its members gave room for maneuver, as mentioned above. Does the fact that distinguished personalities outside the regime who were elected or, as in the case of Hermes Lima and Antonio Houaiss, even punished, signify that they may be considered a protest in the part of the institution against the military? It is unlikely, especially since ultraconservative personalities were elected during the same period. These elections should be understood more through the biased relations of sociability than by political acts. The second question that emerges is: why did these more progressive personalities remain so discreet in their criticism of the regime? On this point, we can do little more than conjecture. The reasons may be attributed either to the profession, since it is known that in general, diplomats, as in the case of João Cabral de Melo Neto, retain a posture of greater discretion, or to old age and the consequent withdrawal from politics.

Conclusions

Does politics manifest itself behind these worldly ceremonies? If we look closely at the recruitment modalities, we observe that they follow a logic that originates from the beginning of the twentieth century, when the “exponent theory” was imposed. That is, besides the literati, representatives from the Armed Forces, Medicine, Law, and Diplomacy would have the right to a seat at the ABL. These were members of the predominantly conservative ruling classes. In this sense, the methods of recruiting the new “immortals” during the dictatorship were not broken and existed for several decades. This academic profile approached the institution of the military regime and was decisive in maintaining this proximity, thereby allowing mutual exchanges and support on both symbolic and material levels.

With regard to the investiture ceremony itself, it may on occasions have become a political event. As we have observed, ceremonies were attended by high dignitaries of the dictatorship, including the President of the Republic, who was often invited to preside over the ceremony. The next day, newspapers reported how they had spent the night, detailing guests – particularly when it came to representatives of the regime – as well as parts of the reception speech of the new “immortal”. It was also common for newspapers to evoke their proximity of the ceremonies to power with the exchange of invitations – from the new academic, often made personally, to the President of the Republic – and the congratulations – from the President of the Republic to the academic. This demonstrates that both sides were interested in maintaining a close relationship. Finally, in a number of speeches, we have identified the transmission of values that were, at that time, those of a conservative environment. Explicit political speeches were rare, and during the dictatorship, that of Adonias Filho was the only one.

It may be noticed that progressive personalities elected during the regime were a minority, and that their trajectories were generally very aligned to those of the conservative *intelligentsia*. Progressives and conservatives of this generation were part of the same political and cultural elite. Perhaps with the exception of Antonio Houaiss, most were from the same social class, with a very similar trajectory: alongside their writing, these progressives occupied a long list of positions at the highest levels of the State’s bureaucracy, both during authoritarian and democratic periods. However, it should be noted, at least in the case of the names we have analyzed, that, unlike various conservative personalities who became “immortal”, they were well recognized in their respective domains. What surprises historians is their discretion and silence. It is very likely that with the prestige they enjoyed, added to the status of academics, they certainly had room for maneuver in order to make much harsher critiques of the dictatorship than other less famous intellectuals of the left wing with no connections to the establishment. Thus, their election to the ABL during the dictatorship – the ceremonies of which were not attended by the authorities and that received much less attention from the newspapers – did not alter the conservative character of the institution or threaten its proximity to power. On the contrary, by keeping silent and assuming the apparent values of “immortality” – namely cordiality and an apolitical stance – these progressive figures merely reinforced the supposed apolitical behavior of official academic discourse.

At the beginning of this paper we questioned whether the ABL might have been a legitimating instance for the military dictatorship. The examination of a very specific aspect of the daily life of the institution, the investiture ceremonies, has indicated that it helped to legitimize the

regime established in Brazil in 1964. However, this legitimization did not take place by means of open “collaboration”, i.e., through direct declarations of support for the military. Although some academics actually collaborated with the dictatorship, it was the behavior of all its members, their silence and their varying degrees of accommodation, their proximity to the regime’s representatives, manifested in intense sociability, and the diffusion and circulation of a conservative discourse reinforcing the notions of civism and patriotism that played the most important role in this process of legitimization.

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