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# Around Literary Criticism in Newspapers: Lima Barreto and José Veríssimo

## *Em torno da crítica literária em jornal: sobre Lima Barreto e José Veríssimo*

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the relationship between the literary critic José Veríssimo (1857-1916) and the writer Lima Barreto (1881-1922). The starting point is the circuit established around them in the press. The study goes beyond the convergence of ideas to address the communication circuit to which they belong, considering criticism in its relation to journalism. Primary sources contribute to composing *snapshots* and enable a review of Sevckenko's proposition that Veríssimo was a "tutelary master" to Lima. The proposition is only partially confirmed, especially with regard to public stance on social criticism.

**Keywords:** José Veríssimo, Lima Barreto, literary criticism in newspaper, communication circuit, history of journalism

### RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a relação do crítico literário José Veríssimo (1857-1916) com o escritor Lima Barreto (1881-1922). Toma-se como ponto de partida o circuito que se estabelece em torno dos dois autores a partir da imprensa jornalística. Não se trata apenas de observar a confluência de ideias, mas o circuito comunicacional no qual se inserem, tomando a crítica como instância relacionada ao jornalismo. Fontes primárias contribuem na composição de instantâneos e permitem rever a proposição de Sevckenko de que Veríssimo foi um "mestre tutelar" de Lima. Matizada, essa proposição confirma-se apenas parcialmente, especialmente no que se refere à crítica social.

**Palavras-chave:** José Veríssimo, Lima Barreto, crítica literária em jornal, circuitos comunicacionais, história do jornalismo

Article translated by Anthony Cleaver

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### A COMMUNICATION CIRCUIT

**T**WO MAIN ELEMENTS shape the *communication circuit* herein addressed: materiality of communication and ideas. Both are inseparable. The former element, materiality, involves the editorial circuit that allows the circulation of printed matter, such as newspapers and books. The latter relates to the ideas that journalists, critics and writers reverberated in the press according to the conditions available to them.

This study aims to introduce and analyze elements of the relationship between the literary critic José Veríssimo (1857-1916), who was intensely active in the press in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the writer Lima Barreto (1881-1922). Without considering the conditions surrounding their work – besides their actual ideas – it is not possible to fully understand their agreements and disagreements. The starting point is Sevcenko’s proposition (2003) that Veríssimo would have been a “tutelary master” to Lima and his tireless encourager. Alongside Lima and Euclides da Cunha (to whom he would also have been a “tutelary master”), Veríssimo formed, also according to Sevcenko, an “indissoluble triangle” or an indelible “prism” through which to observe cultural life at the time. In other words, these are signs of incisive activity.

In addition, the research draws on texts that accuse Veríssimo of silence and incomprehension regarding Lima Barreto’s work. To understand his position, however, one must observe his relation with the press. In this sense, there are still very few studies on these two authors which address the conditions in which the texts circulated. For example, due attention is not always given – and this may influence the conclusions, according to the objective of the research – to the editorial line of the newspapers where Veríssimo and Lima published their articles and/or their relation with such publications.

On the other hand, literary criticism is acknowledged, especially in Veríssimo’s case, as an element of journalistic writing that played a key role in the press at the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other works, criticism is recognized as a journalistic *practice* that contributed to establish the public reputation of media outlets.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that literary criticism in newspapers is not usually associated with the practice of journalism would be linked, to a certain extent, to the institution of objectivity parameters in journalism throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such parameters were prioritized over writing genres that did not correspond to their norms. Thus, the theme of criticism (which may be associated with that of opinion in journalism<sup>2</sup>) is still little explored in communication. Research on the development of news stories and reporters prevails in historical studies in the area, for example; not that criticism is ignored, but it is not usually addressed in its specificity, appearing in more general contexts of analysis.

<sup>1</sup> The same can be said of *features articles*, to some extent related to criticism, albeit different. Newspaper writers were important to gain credibility.

<sup>2</sup> The study by Melo (1994) is one of the few to consider opinion as a genre of Brazilian journalism. The theorist seeks to analyze the conditions in which opinion articles were written in the Brazilian press throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and concludes that there was no openness to the plurality of ideas.

However, if criticism was one of the most prestigious practices in 19<sup>th</sup>-century journalism culture, at a time when literature occupied a prominent position, one runs a double risk by giving up this subject in the field of communication (it is usually extensively studied in literature). One of those risks is failing to grasp more comprehensively the dynamics of newspapers, and, moreover, failing to completely understand criticism, when it is not analyzed from the multiple pressures involved in the publishing process.

The current transformations of media culture, with new means of circulating information in digital environments, have broadened journalism's spectrum of interests, whether in daily practice or in the academy (opinion, for example, has made a strong comeback). Thus, not only does the present itself change, but it modifies the past. In this work, literary criticism is related to the dynamics of newspaper demands.

Darnton (2010) provides the initial key in methodological terms by suggesting the history of communication processes, relating the different interacting stages of editorial production to social, political and cultural contexts. However, composing the "communication circuit" also draws on the influence of Kittler's suggestion (1990) of the "discourse network" (the American version of the German term *Aufschreibesysteme*, or "notation system" in a more literal translation<sup>3</sup>).

The classic work of the German media theorist evidences the conditions for the emergence of literary criticism in 19<sup>th</sup>-century German Romanticism (in the period he calls the "discourse network of 1800"), compared with its decline in the late 1900s (in the "network of 1900"). Above all, the objective here is to draw on (albeit not in a literal sense<sup>4</sup>) the idea of *snapshots* as a method to compose the discourse network. The "snapshot" in Kittler does not aim to be strict intellectual history (although it is also), by taking into account the *materiality* of communication. Such materiality is not only supports, but also comprises the institutions (such as newspapers or educational institutions) that determine the relationships. The *snapshot* provides a key to trigger the writing genre herein chosen. Crossing-referencing newspaper articles, diary (Lima Barreto's), letters (Veríssimo's, previously unpublished), the research resorted to primary sources and seeks to contribute to understand the circuit related not only to Lima and Veríssimo, but also to the generation to which they belonged.

The analysis of the idea of "tutelary master" supported by Sevckenko, concerning Veríssimo's relationship with Lima Barreto, will also take into account the urban space they frequented in Rio de Janeiro during the tropical *belle époque* (with the city also as a materiality in the communication circuit). Sevckenko talks not only of an exchange of ideas, but of an interaction network ("triangle" or

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed explanation, see Muller and Felinto (2008).

<sup>4</sup> Kittler's work is complex, controversial and has numerous ramifications, with different theoretical heirs. According to Winthrop-Young, one of his leading commentators, the author has "left-wing" and "right-wing" heirs. The former develop their propositions in a more open way (with contributions from different areas of knowledge), while the latter seek to subordinate every human element to the technical cultures of closed times and technological circuits (apud Parikka, 2015: 187). This article, therefore, belongs to the former group. Kittler offers elements to understand the conditions that allowed the emergence of a kind of writing genre such as literary criticism (and which he calls a hermeneutic criticism) within pedagogical, political, literary, philosophical and editorial systems. The original *Discourse Networks* in German was published in 1985.

# A

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<sup>5</sup> *Revista Brasileira* was the main publication of the intelligentsia at the end of the century, a space coveted by authors, generating an interaction circle that led to the creation of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL) in 1897. Veríssimo played a key role in this cultural circuit. Lima Barreto was an avid reader of *Revista Brasileira*, despite being a teenager at the time it was published. On the fifth shelf of his “*limana*,” the library he kept in his house at Todos os Santos, is listed “*Revista Brasileira* (J. Veríssimo). 16 vols. Bound” (Barbosa, 2012: 383). In his *Diário íntimo*, there are two references to the publication.

One of them, undated, recommends the reading of *Revista Brasileira* to learn more about the discoveries of the naturalist Peter Lund (2011: 12). In another passage, also undated, he reports having started reading it at the age of 14: “Oh! The science! I was a boy, I was that age, amidst my secondary studies, when I read, in *Revista Brasileira*, its secrets, its anathemas... There spoke the authoritative pens of Domicio da Gama and Oliveira Lima...” (Ibid.: 48). Therefore, as the editor of *Floreal*, to be noticed by the editor of *Revista Brasileira* was no small thing for Lima.

<sup>6</sup> In the passage in which he comments on his notice, he says: “I wrote almost the entire Gonzaga de Sá, worked successfully at *Fon-Fon*, created *Floreal* and was praised by José Veríssimo in the columns of *Jornal do Commercio* last month. Already I start being noticed.” It should be noted, therefore, that the popular *Fon-Fon*, an illustrated magazine created in 1907, was important for his promotion, besides his own magazine.

“prism”) formed by the authors (alongside Euclides da Cunha). In his understanding, the analysis of ideas is blended with that of biographical aspects. The *snapshot* will be used here to capture a dynamic picture to review his proposition based on the connections sustained in the *communication circuit*.

### THE MEETING

In the entry for January 5, 1908 of his *Diário íntimo* (2011 – Intimate Diary), Lima Barreto mentions a meeting with José Veríssimo (1857-1916) a few days before, at the end of the previous year. The literary critic, whose opinions in the press were avidly read by Brazilian authors, had written a brief note about him in *Jornal do Commercio*. A former editor of *Revista Brasileira* magazine between 1895 and 1899, Veríssimo was also well-versed in literary magazines.<sup>5</sup> At the time, Lima had not yet launched any of his novels:

Woe to me if I were to review every last journal with a pretense to literary, artistic and scientific merit. I'd have my work cut out for me and would displease almost everyone; because most of them seem to me to be worthless, from whatever angle they are examined. I make a fair exception, not desiring to set a precedent, for a lean brochure which, with the hopeful name of *Floreal*, has been recently launched, and where I read an article “Spencerism and Anarchy” by Mr. M[anuel] Ribeiro de Almeida, and the opening pages of a novel *Recordações do escrívão Isaías Caminha* (Memoirs of the Scribe Isaías Caminha) by Mr. Lima Barreto, in which I believe to have discovered something. And both written with simplicity and sobriety, and already a sense of style as to corroborate such an impression. (Veríssimo, José. *Jornal do Commercio*, July 9, 1907.)

“Already I start being noticed,” wrote Lima, whose name appears prominently on the front page of *Floreal* as editor.<sup>6</sup> The publication had been created by Lima Barreto and his friends and ran to only four numbers. As a result of the note in the important newspaper, he and his friend Manuel Ribeiro arranged to meet the critic shortly before Christmas. “He welcomed us affectionately.” While his friend spoke “wildly, ramblingly,” Lima was silent almost the whole time, making one or another remark. Veríssimo gave them advice, read Flaubert and Renan to them. They talked about sincerity in Brazilian literature, which for the critic was “cerebral, artificial”. Lima seemed to agree: “I have always considered as condition for superior work the blindest and most absolute sincerity” (Barreto, 2011: 54).

The glory of the second-generation romantics (Castro Alves, Fagundes Varela, Casimiro de Abreu), Veríssimo told them, “had appealed to the nation

because they had been above all sincere” (the author was concerned with the “communicability” of literature<sup>7</sup> and, as a pedagogue, worked to develop critical public opinion in the country; “sincerity” in literature would be a way of applying communicability). That prompted self-analysis in the writer: “I believe myself to be sincere. Am I? Sometimes I think I am; other times, I don’t. I love myself a lot; with the love I have for myself, I will surely love others”<sup>8</sup>.

When he published *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha* (Memoirs of the Scribe Isaías Caminha) in 1909, his contemporaries had no difficulty identifying *Correio da Manhã* newspaper as its (sincere) inspiration. The press hardly took notice. Medeiros e Albuquerque wrote an unfavorable review in *A Notícia*, under the pseudonym J. Santos: “A poor novel for being of the inferior art of *romans à clef*. A bad pamphlet for lacking the courage of direct attack” (December 15, 1909, apud Barbosa, 2012: 197). His friend Alcides Maia, who had encouraged Lima to finish the novel, surprised him negatively with harsh comments in *Diário de Notícias*. The idea of portraying Caminha as a newspaper clerk had supposedly been his. However, Maia censured the personalism with which, in his opinion, Lima Barreto had colored the characters. The book was no more than a “photo album,” an “intimate chronicle of revenge, a tormented journal of bad reminiscences, of surprises, of hatred” (December 16, 1909, apud Barbosa, 2012: 197).

José Veríssimo, in turn, was not indifferent to the work whose initial extracts he had already publicly praised. The critic decided to write to Lima Barreto, not refraining from expressing reservations, especially regarding what he considered to be “excessive personalism,” the same criticism made by other reviewers<sup>9</sup>. In his opinion, if on the one hand Lima appealed to the “malice of contemporaries who put a name to every pseudonym,” on the other the “literary photograph of life” could make the book “ephemeral and occasional.” Even so he encouraged him:

I sincerely and cordially congratulate you on your book. There is in it the main element of superior, talented work. There are many imperfections of composition, of language, of style, and others that you, I am sure, will be the first to recognize, but with all its drawbacks it is a distinct book, revealing, with no possible deception, of genuine talent. (Veríssimo, José. Letter to L.B., May 5, 1910)

He claimed he did not publish a review because he was not contributing regularly to the press. Indeed, Veríssimo was not writing for newspapers at that time (although he continued contributing essayistic pieces to magazines, less focused on specific works). In March 1908, *Jornal do Commercio* had dismissed the critic’s services “once again,” as he revealed to his friend and diplomat Oliveira

<sup>7</sup> This concept appears in Guimarães (2004) in his analysis of readers in the oeuvre of Machado de Assis, who supposedly used strategies in his work to communicate with readers. Machado and Veríssimo interacted closely and worried about developing reading audiences in the country. In the study, Veríssimo, based on evidence gathered by the researcher, is singled out as the “ideal reader” of Machado de Assis. The critic considered Machado to be the greatest author of Brazilian literature.

<sup>8</sup> Schwarcz stresses: “A compliment from Veríssimo would mean a lot at the time, worthy of being framed; therefore, it is not at all strange that the writer should boast” (2017: 205). In Lima’s new biography, the author emphasizes that the writer had a “special esteem” for the critic (Ibid.: 528). Schwarcz says that they probably met in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and he may have attended some of the critic’s courses. Be that as it may, the 1907 meeting concerning *Floreal* is considered here to be the most important in their relationship.

<sup>9</sup> Veríssimo’s letter to Lima Barreto is part of the collection of the Brazilian National Library Foundation (FBN) and was published in full in Barbosa’s biography of Lima (2012).



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<sup>10</sup> Veríssimo's correspondence with the diplomat Oliveira Lima (1867-1928) includes 180 letters, covering twenty years of friendship, and is kept at the Oliveira Lima Library, at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. This set of letters contains about one thousand manuscript pages, transcribed by me in the course of the research on Veríssimo. The collection assembled by Oliveira Lima is an important private collection on Brazilian culture with many rare works.

Lima, with whom he corresponded assiduously (the following is an excerpt from an unpublished letter)<sup>10</sup>:

I hope, by the way, that this will be the last [dismissal] for unless driven by starvation, I am done with literature other than reading to myself what is not needed to perform public work. Literature as an industry and livelihood, or supplementary livelihood, is in the end a despicable thing. (Veríssimo, José. Letter to O.L., March 5, 1908).

Following that dismissal in March, Veríssimo wrote in 1908 only a special article on Machado de Assis for *Jornal do Commercio*, commissioned on the occasion of the author's death in September. Machado and he were very close friends and the author of *Dom Casmurro* considered him the main literary critic in activity in Brazil. Lima Barreto was aware of the prestige afforded by an encouragement from that critic in Machado's circle. However, in 1909, the year he published *Recordações*, his debut novel, Veríssimo had published only two articles in *Jornal do Commercio*.

One of them was about Anatole France, on May 17, on the occasion of the French writer's celebrated visit to Brazil. Veríssimo chaperoned him during the visit to the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL) and took him sightseeing in Rio de Janeiro to places like the Corcovado mountain (as he relates in his correspondence). Therefore, he was a special witness to this visit and in a good position to write about it. The second article published in 1909 by Veríssimo in *Jornal do Commercio* appeared on June 30 and addressed the biography of the Portuguese king John VI by Oliveira Lima. But this was an exception: Felix Pacheco, editor of *Jornal*, had written to the critic expressly requesting the review. Veríssimo mentions France and Pacheco in his correspondence of that year with Oliveira Lima himself. Besides those exceptions, there was no further opportunity that year for Veríssimo to review new authors in the mainstream press. Evidence of his relationship with *Jornal do Commercio* confirms what he had told Lima about not contributing reviews to newspapers. Even so, the critic's praise, despite its private nature, made in a letter without public disclosure and containing reservations, can be considered an encouragement for Lima Barreto in his debut (a letter from Veríssimo in itself would already be a positive fact).

<sup>11</sup> Francisco de Assis Barbosa wrote the preface to the first edition of *Literatura como missão* (Literature as Mission), which Sevckenko published in 1983. The two researchers were interlocutors, which suggests Barbosa was as an important source for Sevckenko.

### TUTELARY MASTER

The biographer Francisco de Assis Barbosa (2012)<sup>11</sup> emphasizes that the meeting between Lima Barreto and Veríssimo would have been decisive for the writer. Nicolau Sevckenko, above all, points out that the critic would have admitted

to being a “tutelary master” (2003 [1983]: 269) not only to Lima Barreto, but also to Euclides da Cunha, with whom he was much closer and undoubtedly influential in his career. Lima and Euclides, the main Brazilian authors of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, albeit different, would form with José Veríssimo “an indissoluble triangle, like a prism that provided an indelible vision of the entire cultural scene of this early republican life” (Sevcenko, 2003: 269). The author describes Veríssimo as a “tireless encourager of Lima Barreto’s career” and observes that “the shadow” of the critic “hangs incontestably over the personality and the work of one and the other [Lima and Euclid]” (Ibid.). Additionally, he would have been “a living representative of the combative intellectuals who had campaigned for the abolition of slavery and prepared the advent of the republic” (Ibid.: 270).

His disenchantment with the new regime was conveyed to his proselytes and his nonconformity – wavering between skepticism towards local elites and faith in European reformist currents – resurfaced in the texts of both writers. The author of *História da Literatura Brasileira* (History of Brazilian Literature) thus imposed himself as a critical vertex of those oeuvres, defining not only the spirit of the two authors, but even guiding their intellectual enterprise.

That is not to say that Euclides and Lima ever failed to give their productions a typically personal trait. The distance between inspiration and creation was always preserved in this case (Ibid.).

The author’s analysis of Veríssimo is suggestive of ways to think the critic’s relationship with Lima Barreto and opens perspectives for dialogue concerning the main study on the critic, the first thesis of literary theory in Brazil, defended in 1970 at the University of São Paulo (USP) by João Alexandre Barbosa, whose advisor was Antonio Candido. The work was published in 1974 with the title *A tradição do impasse* (The Tradition of Impasse) and addresses what the author calls the “language” of Veríssimo’s criticism<sup>12</sup>.

Briefly, one could define the impasse as being between a socially progressive stance – insofar as Veríssimo was an incisive critic of the evils of the First Republic – and a conservative posture regarding the language innovations of contemporary writers (i.e., an impasse of position on social and aesthetic issues). Sevcenko, in turn, has a less segmented and more dynamic view of the critic’s activities compared to J. A. Barbosa’s analysis, stressing his key role in the cultural circuit and alleged influence on contemporary writers.

Both studies, however, lack an analysis of empirical data not available at the time. Neither Sevcenko nor J. A. Barbosa, whose work remains essential to understanding Veríssimo’s legacy, identify, for example, his contribution to the publishing

<sup>12</sup> There are still relatively few studies on Veríssimo. As he wrote quite assiduously in newspapers, his work is difficult to grasp. Souza’s (2015) research on the history of literary criticism in Brazil is important to situate his contribution in the area of literary studies, but in the area of communication no studies have been found about him. The critic also attracts interest in the area of education, with good studies such as that by Cavazotti (1997). He also draws the attention of researchers from Pará, who seek to understand his role in local cultural life (see Pamplona, 2009).



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<sup>13</sup> Veríssimo also published an advance excerpt of the work in 1899 in *Revista Brasileira*.

of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões* (*Rebellion in the Backlands*). In his correspondence, Euclides, shortly after closing the contract with Laemmert, acknowledges his debt to Veríssimo (Galvão; Galotti, 1997)<sup>13</sup>. But besides introducing Euclides to the editors at Laemmert, Veríssimo exalted the book in *Correio da Manhã* in its first review in the press, swiftly turning it into a bestseller for the standards of the time (Ventura, 2003). This shows that Veríssimo was very close to Euclides, in addition to their interaction at ABL. Barbosa does not consider Veríssimo's relationship with Lima Barreto, which is justified, for indeed he did not publish any reviews on that author; what we have are fragments, suggestions of a relationship that would have been significant for the writer in the communication circuit.

Sevcenko, in turn, despite providing clues about Veríssimo's incisive activity, does not dwell on his career. For example, he affirms that the critic was at the head of literary life in Brazil in the 1900s, echoing to a certain extent the words of Brito Broca (1956). However, he only mentions his contributions to the conservative *Jornal do Commercio*, without considering the fact that he was the most active literary critic in the press at the time (even more so than Sílvio Romero and Araripe Júnior<sup>14</sup>), and worked for various magazines and newspapers, most of which followed an oppositional line. The critic's key role in the press was recognized even by his detractors. Sílvio Romero, in the controversial lampoon (as was his custom) directed against Veríssimo in 1909, accuses the critic of having become a "perfect penny-a-liner in matters of the mind," accustomed as he was to writing "for hire in the newspapers" (1909: 10). The poet Antonio Salles, in an article published on January 6, 1903 on the front page of *Correio da Manhã*, also with severe reservations about the critic, said that Veríssimo concentrated all the expectations of Brazilian writers, as he was the only one who followed "step-by-step our literary movement, who comments without exception on all individualities and all works that have emerged in our intellectual milieu." The others who occupied a prominent position, "and they are only two – Messrs Sílvio Romero and Araripe Junior," continued Salles, spent long periods in silence and only wrote "in the eventuality of a request or a predilection." Veríssimo, in turn "labors daily and it is to him that the authors turn for the judgment of their work."

While Sevcenko discusses at length the writings of Lima Barreto and Euclides, the third tip of the "indissoluble triangle" they formed is not analyzed in such depth. In the study, José Veríssimo (that third tip) remains – to use the historian's own expression about him – just a "shadow" hanging over the two authors.

There is indeed an element of deep social nonconformism in Veríssimo's work that brings him closer to Lima Barreto and Euclides da Cunha. In addition, Sevcenko stresses the critic's importance to the two authors in terms of

<sup>14</sup> Romero, according to Brito Broca, never actually engaged in militant criticism in newspapers or magazines. "And for that very reason would get irritated with the excessive activity developed by Veríssimo in this sense" (Broca, 1956: 244). Araripe, in turn, according to the same author, was a militant critic only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before the proclamation of the Republic, but wrote sporadically for different newspapers, often in a more essayistic tone than of actual criticism.

encouragement, besides considering his work one of the cornerstones of influential cultural criticism at the time. However, he does not consider the critic's analysis of the aesthetics of Euclides and Lima (while Barbosa dwells extensively on this analysis regarding Euclides). Concerning the latter, despite the praises and the prominence given to *Os Sertões* with a review that took up half of the front page of the December 3, 1902 issue of *Correio da Manhã*, Veríssimo criticized the language that, in his opinion, lacked simplicity, with the use of neologisms, archaisms and scientific and abstract terms. Nonetheless, he noted that this was a "flaw" committed by "almost all of our scientists who write literature" and that it did not diminish the power of Euclid's "nervous and vibrant" writing nor the importance of the book.

Veríssimo also emphasized the importance of book's denunciation of the crime committed in the hamlet of Canudos in 1897 by the republican forces, a controversial subject at that time. This is one of the most courageous critiques he ever published and, possibly, the one with the greatest impact<sup>15</sup>.

The critic always strived to diligently analyze language issues in the work of Brazilian authors. He was concerned about communicability in Brazilian literature. It is no wonder, therefore, that he brought up the subject in his meeting with Lima Barreto in late 1907, when he spoke of "sincerity." If there was any advice he could give young people, it was keeping language simple and aiming to communicate with the reading public. In a country where the majority was illiterate, writers had no way to circumvent such a reality.

The critic went back to the theme of language in the letter he wrote to Lima Barreto in 1910. In his opinion, *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha* had "many imperfections of composition, of language, of style"<sup>16</sup>. But Lima himself, according to the biographer Francisco de Assis Barbosa, did not consider the novel as the great work he aspired to write.

Nevertheless, in a way the writer would be following the precepts defended by Veríssimo. Sevckenko points out that Lima Barreto had a "furious longing for communication that marked his entire literary life" (2003: 199). To this end, he made use of a stripped-down writing style, "common, transparent, careless, of immediate communication, journalistic, anti-rhetorical, devoid of effects, [...] fluent, homogeneous, direct [...] with little metaphor and imagery, and highly concrete" (Ibid.). In his insistence on communication, Lima Barreto would be aware of the "transformations of the urban literary audience" accustomed to journalistic processes and, from that, "also defined the technical-aesthetic solution suggested by the milieu" (Ibid.: 198). He highlighted popular characters and social victims, manipulating irony and caricature.

<sup>15</sup> Brito Broca says that the critic had risked "all his prestige" by betting on an unknown author such as Euclides (1956: 242).

<sup>16</sup> In *Últimos estudos de literatura brasileira: 7ª série (Recent Studies in Brazilian Literature: 7th series)*, published in 1979 based on recommendations left by the critic, Luiz Carlos Alves, who prepared the edition, included an unpublished text by Veríssimo about Lima that was handwritten in the material (Veríssimo, 1979: 17). In the text, included in an article titled "Moment Literário de 1906-1910" (Literary Moment 1906-1910), and which Lima probably did not read, the critic affirms that the portrait the writer depicts in *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha* "came out awkward and defectively composed, the representation lacking serenity, extremely personal" (Ibid.: 239). This passage about Lima appears in *Prosa Seleta (Select Prose)*, a book on Lima Barreto edited by Eliane Vasconcellos (2002).



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<sup>17</sup> On this identification, Sevcenko points out: “However, the most prestigious aesthetic of the period, widely spread by José Veríssimo, is based on the processes of irony. But to the bitter and skeptical irony of Machado de Assis, Veríssimo prefers that of a social character, enhancing human solidarity, as in Anatole France, and best executed in Brazil by Lima Barreto. Studies on satire and irony dominate criticism, at least up to World War I” (2003: 124). But skepticism and bitter irony also develop in Veríssimo over his career.

<sup>18</sup> Machado de Assis met with friends every afternoon at the Garnier Bookstore in Ouvidor Street, in a select circle that included many other scholars and which Veríssimo often frequented.

<sup>19</sup> Veríssimo made this revelation to his friends at ABL on the occasion of Euclides’s tragic death. In a letter to Mário de Alencar (the son of José de Alencar and one of Machado de Assis’s closest friends), the critic said that although he might convey an impression of closeness, he felt uncomfortable in the writer’s presence and did not believe his work would survive long (letter of August 17, 1909, ABL collection). Soon after the publication of *Os Sertões*, Euclides exchanged letters with Veríssimo openly disagreeing with the critic’s position, especially with regard to the scientific proposal of the work.

José Veríssimo did not have time to follow closely the development of Lima Barreto’s work. But his conception of literature was more akin to that author’s ideas<sup>17</sup> than to those of Euclides da Cunha, whose literary and personal trajectory he was able to follow with privileged intimacy. In articles following that of 1902, when *Os Sertões* was published (and even then), Veríssimo showed his disbelief towards Euclid’s literary proposal, especially his emphasis on scientific language (this view accorded with his criticism of the lack of “sincerity” in literature, which prevented communication with the reading public). Regarding Lima Barreto, he expressed reservations about excessive caricaturing. “Forgive my pedantry, but art, the art you are capable of creating, is representation, is synthesis, and, even being realistic, idealization,” he wrote in March 1910.

There is no evidence to date that Veríssimo was a “tireless encourager of Lima Barreto’s career.” As the author additionally affirms, Veríssimo was Euclides’s “intimate friend” and there is indeed copious documentation proving that they had a close relationship in the Brazilian Academy of Letters and the Garnier Bookstore<sup>18</sup>. However, Euclides’s correspondence (Galvão; Galotti, 1997) does not deny a certain distance between. Towards close friends, such as Mário de Alencar<sup>19</sup> and Oliveira Lima, Veríssimo did not conceal his discomfort before the person and work of Euclides, although he recognized that he might often give the opposite impression.

Thus, if Veríssimo was in any way a “tutelary master” to both writers, it was especially at the beginning of their careers – which is no small thing and evidences how influential the critic was. But there is no biographical evidence pointing to such a close relationship over time, as Nicolau Sevcenko appears to suggest (the situation is quite different from Veríssimo’s relationship with Machado de Assis, although in this case the opposite may be affirmed, for if there is a “tutelary master” between them, it was certainly the writer).

The lack of a “tutelary master” relation with Lima or Euclides does not, however, undermine Sevcenko’s suggestion that they and Veríssimo formed a prism in the cultural life of the period. Indeed, their ideas coincide in many aspects, especially in the case of Lima Barreto (which may suggest a “tutelary master” relation in the sense of a more distant relationship, such as a *maître à penser* or an inspiration). The critic, thanks to the various newspapers he worked for and the editorship of *Revista Brasileira* between 1895 and 1899 attained such a key role that one might affirm that he conducted all relevant literary life in the first two decades of the First Republic (including in relation to Lima and Euclides). But such dominance was not smoothly achieved and preserved. On the contrary, Veríssimo’s career was marked by ups and downs, controversies and backstage disputes.

**“CORREIO DA MANHÃ”**

In his letter to Lima Barreto, José Veríssimo acknowledges: “I who tell you this [the disapproval of personalism], I myself was delighted with your precise and fair depiction of our journalistic and literary life, but I do not deem good the feeling it has stirred in me” (March 5, 1910). The letter shows that Veríssimo, despite attempting to suppress the sarcasm experienced with the reading of *Recordações do escrivoão Isaías Caminha*, was in tune with the writer in many of his points of view.

In qualifying the depiction rendered by the work as “precise” and “fair,” the critic knew what he was talking about: like Lima Barreto, he had worked at *Correio da Manhã*, a newspaper launched in 1901 by the Rio Grande do Sul lawyer Edmundo Bittencourt to disrupt the well-behaved press that conformed to the orchestrations of the Campos Sales administration (1898-1902). The new opposition periodical made some noise and Veríssimo joined its staff in the 18<sup>th</sup> edition, initially commenting on international issues. He only started writing about literature when, a few weeks later, he left *Revista Literária*, the weekly column he has been writing in *Jornal do Commercio* since early 1899. Even if he had wanted to, he could hardly have written for both newspapers at the same time: to establish itself, *Correio* decided at first to compete with *Jornal do Commercio*, which was still the largest and most successful newspaper in Rio de Janeiro.

Bittencourt’s daily soon became a discordant voice in the press. Less than a week after its launch, crowds already gathered outside its building to celebrate its success. The newspaper hit the streets just as the government announced an increase in streetcar fares of the São Cristovão company, causing waves of revolt and protest throughout the city, which resulted in severe police repression. *Correio* sided with the demonstrators, supported by Senator Rui Barbosa, and the government ended up backing down. According to Francisco de Assis Barbosa, Lima Barreto chose *Correio* as a model for his mordant portrait in *Recordações do escrivoão Isaías Caminha* for being the most significant newspaper at the time, having consolidated its prestige practically on the first day of circulation. Mindful of the development of new urban middle classes, the newspaper catered to this rising audience with a more accessible language compared to the main newspapers until then, albeit still followed the style of 19<sup>th</sup>-century newspapers in many respects, such as relying on the prestige of its leading writers – and José Veríssimo was one of them – to assert itself. The critic was quoted by the newspaper itself as one of its main names, reinforcing its opposition stance.

The critic contributed to *Correio* until the beginning of 1903, and the reasons for his leaving the paper are controversial. About a month after his



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article on *Os Sertões* was published, at a time of great prominence in his career, the poet Antonio Salles wrote for the *Correio* itself, and in the same space he usually occupied, a review of a collection of the critic's articles severely criticizing his work, especially what he viewed as excessive severity in his assessment of Brazilian literature (06.01.1903). The studies on Veríssimo do not usually address this review, published in the same newspaper where he worked, but it is an important document about him that helps understand how he came to leave the newspaper<sup>20</sup>. The text had an editorial tone that did not conceal some discomfort on the newspaper's part with regard to Veríssimo, accused of not setting aside his high aesthetic standards when assessing a literature that could never live up to such expectations. The critic would be "too big," as Salles said, for the milieu in which he lived. He was also ruthlessly criticized in the review for not being a nationalist and in this sense was negatively compared to Araripe Junior and Sílvio Romero.

Therefore, if the opposing and confrontational tone of the early days of *Correio* had served as a free platform for Veríssimo, especially compared to the more constrained space of *Jornal do Commercio*, later on the critic's independence would have been challenged, to some extent, by the newspaper's ambition for popularity. Following the publication of Antonio Salles's review, he stayed on only a few more weeks at *Correio* and did not write for the press for a year (he supported himself by teaching at Colégio Pedro II, where he had been a director from 1892 to 1898, and Escola Normal). Thus, literary criticism is challenged by the strains involved in newspaper production (and not merely by *light* or *feature* writing). In a way, the independence of ideas of the critic (who at *Jornal do Commercio* had no space to raise his critical tone) started disturbing the editorial line.

So it is not hard to imagine him smiling, to say the least, while reading the caricature of the newspaper and its owner, Edmundo Bittencourt, in the figure of Ricardo Loberant:

No one knew him to be a journalist, even during his makeshift course he had made no sacrifice to the letters: he had always been considered a *viveur* who enjoying spending and frequenting the society of the great *cocottes*. One fine day, the city's inhabitants heard the Italians shouting: "O Globo! O Globo!" The more curious among them bought it and read with indifference the editor's name: Ricardo Loberant. Who is it? No one knew. But the newspaper was attractive, it had competent language, great daring, courageous criticism of government things, which, whether fair or not, was substantial and seemed severe. This one liked it, that one enjoyed it, and within eight days he had created among the crowd foci of

<sup>20</sup> The author that probes deeper in this sense is Brito Broca (1956), but he does not offer information about Antonio Salles's demolishing text on Veríssimo. According to Broca, the critic was writing unsigned articles criticizing Barão de Rio Branco. Edmundo Bittencourt would have involuntarily revealed his identity, displeasing Veríssimo and prompting him to leave the newspaper. No data were found in the collection to substantiate this claim, presented by Broca without citing specific dates or texts.

contagion for the prestige of his daily. [...] And the newspaper caught on. It had innovations: besides the sharp language and a frank attack on the high classes, a pretense to absolute austerity and independence, contributions by names beloved of the public, evoking in that respect the old newspapers that our generation had not known. [...] the city, stirred by the newspaper's words, promoted riots, small mutinies and forced the government to dismiss this and that authority. And *O Globo* sold, sold, sold. (Barreto, 2010: 171-172)

There is also the portrait of another character who was not part of the *Correio* staff, but who was greatly influential in the journalistic milieu: João do Rio, whom Veríssimo considered a “reporter with no culture” and whom he always strongly opposed, including in the Brazilian Academy of Letters<sup>21</sup>. Such aversion was another point in common with Lima Barreto, who did not like the author of *As religiões do Rio* (The Religions of Rio), portrayed in *Recordações* as Raul Gusmão (Barbosa, 2012: 195).

[...] above them all hovered the bloated figure, half swine, half simian, of the famous journalist Raul Gusmão. Oliveira himself, so foolish and so stupid, had something of him, his pretense to superiority, his contrived gestures, his search for witticisms, his easy amazement and surprise. It was already his genius, which I would get to know later, that awed me with his artificial pose and ensnared me in the trap for simpletons. (Ibid.: 90)

Lima Barreto supposedly worked for *Correio da Manhã* in 1905, when he wrote a series of 22 articles about the underground passages of Morro do Castelo (Castle Hill)<sup>22</sup>. The articles are not signed by him or written under a pseudonym, although the author's archives kept at the National Library Foundation allow us to confirm the authorship. Francisco de Assis Barbosa points out that the data regarding his time at Edmundo Bittencourt's newspaper are inaccurate and it is not known whether he was a “simple contributor or staff writer” (Ibid.: 150). This would have been one of his unsuccessful attempts to enter professional journalism at the time.

As a document on journalism in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Brazil, *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha* is incontestable. However, Nelson Werneck Sodré, author of the most important (to date) book on the history of Brazilian press, considers the writer's criticism unfair. In his 1966 book, whose 1999 re-edition was herein used as a source, he affirms that the writer “did not understand the positive role of the newspaper he satirized” (Sodré, 1998: 304). According to Sodré, the daily contributed to the overthrow of the “old Republic,” establishing

<sup>21</sup> In an unpublished letter to Oliveira Lima, dated 1906, Veríssimo mentions for the first time the journalist's name in his vast correspondence with his diplomat friend. On the occasion of João do Rio's first attempt to be elected to the ABL, Veríssimo asked him not to vote for him because he was a “simple reporter with no culture” and a “cabotin” (23.05.1906). In the critic's view, João do Rio symbolized the new journalism that emerged at the beginning of the century in Rio newsrooms and to which he did not relate.

<sup>22</sup> The series was published by Editora Dantes in 1997 with the title *O subterrâneo do Morro do Castelo: um folhetim de Lima Barreto* (The Underground of Morro do Castelo: A serial by Lima Barreto), edited and with an introduction and notes by Beatriz Resende.



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itself as “an outlet for the feelings and motives of the urban petty bourgeoisie, in a most relevant role” (Ibid.: 287).

*Correio da Manhã* and its professionals were not the only targets in the press satirized by Lima Barreto. In *Numa e a ninfa* (Numa and the Nymph), for example, which was first prominently published as a serial on the front page of *A Noite* newspaper in 1915, he wrote a stinging satire of the political conditions that led to the election of General Hermes da Fonseca as President of the Republic in 1910, defeating Rui Barbosa. *A Noite*, founded in 1911 by Irineu Marinho, was one of the three pillars of the opposition daily press at the time, alongside Edmundo Bittencourt’s *Correio da Manhã* and José Eduardo de Macedo Soares’s *O Imparcial*, founded in 1912. In 1914 – the last year of Hermes’s term – these newspapers faced harsh repression over several months of state of emergency, suffering censorship and the imprisonment of their owners and professionals. The communication circuit to which Lima and Veríssimo belonged was not indifferent to the demands of journalism; both authors had to constantly negotiate with such demands.

In *Numa e a ninfa*, a roman à clef like *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha*, Lima Barreto portrayed João Laje, editor of the government-supporting newspaper *O País*, in the figure of the Portuguese-born Fuas Bandeira, who “regarded every journalistic debate as an object of commerce or industry”; in the novel, Fuas was engaged in “the newspaper industry, and there was no enterprise or building project, no matter how useful it might be, representing the investment of large sums of money and profit for the contractors, from which he did not seek to extract his share”. Nelson Werneck Sodré indeed describes João Laje as a “typical figure of the industrial press” at the time (1998: 335)<sup>23</sup>. Contrasting with this sort, also as a typical figure in the press, he points to Lima Barreto himself, whose “word is always of protest”<sup>24</sup>:

<sup>23</sup> João Laje provoked such revolt among opposition groups that on August 21, 1913, *O Imparcial* newspaper, which normally published only images on its front page, dedicated its cover to a protest of students “from our higher schools” that dragged a crowd to Rio Branco Avenue. In the protest, they simulated the burial of the Portuguese journalist. The front page headline read: “The Burial of João Laje” (Hemeroteca Digital da FBN).

<sup>24</sup> Corrêa’s research (2016), which unearthed 164 unknown texts by Lima published under pseudonyms, reinforces the idea of significant activity in the press.

Not only because he depicted in unforgettable pages the period, the characters, the Rio de Janeiro press, but because in his work as writer and journalist he eventually became an example of the antipode of the corruption of intelligence, the striking case of the social victim. Occasional contributor to well-known magazines and mainstream newspapers, *A Notícia*, *O País*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Rio-Jornal*, earning fifty *mil-réis* per article, a staff writer at *Careta* with a fixed monthly salary, the main part of his work goes to the small press, *O Debate*, *O ABC*, where he wrote from 1916 until his death, for they are modest magazines and newspapers that allow him to write with total freedom, to manifest his thought. His word is always of protest [...] he protests against all injustices, even the literary ones that the period, conducive to mediocrity, abundantly provides, many times directed personally at him. (Ibid.: 335-336)

The oppositionist stance was also a hallmark of José Veríssimo's work in the press of Rio de Janeiro, to where he moved in 1891 from Belém, in his native state of Pará. However, this combative facet of his is little known, since the critic is generally associated only superficially with his work for *Jornal do Commercio*. Even when his work for *Correio da Manhã* is stressed, no importance is given to the fact that it was the main opposition newspaper in Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Lima Barreto's criticism of the daily in *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha* may suggest, in many studies, that it backed the government, which was not the case. The fearless tone of Veríssimo's social criticism was certainly closely followed by Lima Barreto.

### SUBURBANS, BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND ANARQUISM

José Veríssimo lived with his wife and children in a comfortable house in Engenho Novo, not far from Lima Barreto's address in Todos os Santos, both of them suburban districts of Rio in the region known as Grande Méier. That was certainly the address where he received Lima and his friend Manuel Ribeiro in late 1907. Two years later, he moved with his family to a house on 24 de Maio Avenue, in the Riachuelo neighborhood, also in Grande Méier, and from there wrote the 1910 letter to the author, kept in the National Library, with his analysis of *Recordações do escrivão Isaías Caminha*. In his correspondence, when he occasionally invited illustrious friends, he reminded them of his suburban condition, which he promised to make up for with warm hospitality.

Living far away from fashionable neighborhoods like Botafogo and Cosme Velho suggested that, despite his prominent work as critic and teacher, his financial circumstances were fragile. Contributing to the press was not dilettantism, but necessity, although there was some scope for freedom (and identification) in the choice of outlets.

The critic never agreed to write for free and, in his articles, always defended the professionalization of his activity in newspapers and the publishing market. Being suburban was a hallmark, as it was for Lima Barreto, who set many of his stories in surrounding neighborhoods. Their awareness (almost an imposition) that writing was a necessity to supplement their income set them apart from other literati: they could not afford to be dazzled.

The combative and oppositionist stance they nurtured is closely associated with that condition. At the end of his life, when the War of 1914 became a cause for Veríssimo's intellectual engagement against Germany's belligerent intents, the critic intensified his political criticism, coming closer to socialist ideas. It was Graça Aranha (1923) who first defined him as a socialist<sup>25</sup>, a system which

<sup>25</sup> Schwarz recalls that Elisio de Carvalho's 1904 project of a Popular University involved figures such as Fábio Luz, José Veríssimo, Domingos Ribeiro Filho, Evaristo de Moraes, Manuel Bonfim and Rocha Pombo. "If the experience lasted only a few months, the initiative would remain in memory for a long time" (2017: 348). According to the author, Lima Barreto had interacted with this group since 1903. "They would meet in the lively downtown cafes, where they debated politics, literature, anarchism, and spoke ill of those who, unlike them, did not gather around a pub table" (Ibid.: 348).



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he had supposedly supported since the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century – Veríssimo and Graça Aranha were very close friends and the critic introduced him to illustrious figures like Joaquim Nabuco and Machado de Assis<sup>26</sup>. Veríssimo’s socialist sympathies appear more strongly in his last articles in the press.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding the importance of Veríssimo’s relationship with Graça Aranha, see Azevedo (2002). Aranha was Veríssimo’s closest friend until at least his departure for Europe in early 1899, when he accompanied Joaquim Nabuco on a diplomatic mission.

Socialism, which is now formidable, socialism, which taken as a whole, is not only this or that doctrine of new anti-capitalist social organization, but the coalition of all discontent with the organization that leads to crises such as this [the War], may feel entrusted, by the very unfolding of events, to destroy the present European political state. That the latter has proved itself incapable is evidently demonstrated by what it has come to: the only way out it has left is general war, a war whose only possibility is tremendous, and which puts at risk all the advances of civilization in the last forty years. (Veríssimo, José. “Si vis pacem, para pacem”, *O Imparcial*, August 3, 1913)

In 1913, Veríssimo published in the oppositionist *O Imparcial* some of his most incisive social and political critiques (besides literary criticism, which, however, he did not produce as assiduously as in previous years). The newspaper’s language is light and humorous, and many of the articles he published there would have the same style, sarcastic, even. At the end of 1913, commenting on the dictionary of Brazilian terms that the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL)<sup>27</sup> was preparing, he recalled that it could not leave out creative terms of republican life. A word that had become common was *bajulação* (fawning): “It is taught in schools, in manifestations of praise and deference to the entire caste of superiors.” It was a phenomenon with multiple forms, with new neologisms related to “adulation” like *engrossar*, *engrossamento*, *engrossador*. There were other expressions with the same purpose: *bico da chaleira*, *pegar no bico da chaleira*, *chaleirar*. But the “the cream of the crop, the finest of this republican semantics” was a word “sublime in meaning and crudity”:

<sup>27</sup> By 1912, Veríssimo had definitively broken with the ABL, which he helped create in 1897 and of which he was the first secretary, that is, the second in importance. After Machado’s death in 1908, Rui Barbosa became president, but hardly frequented the organization. Veríssimo left the institution harshly criticizing the actions of its “confrères.” The election of the then Foreign Minister, Lauro Muller, was the last straw – the critic said he only wanted men of letters in ABL – but his correspondence with Oliveira Lima shows how he was betrayed in this election by his colleagues, who “disgusted” him. João do Rio was one of leaders of the scheme to oppose Veríssimo.

This word, which begins in “es” and ends in “ão,” unfortunately, I cannot write it here yet, although I’m told you can already hear it in the ballrooms where thrive the tango and the *maxixe*. If there are words that exactly define our political, social and moral situation, it is this one and its cognates. Its creation is a brilliant invention. (Veríssimo, José. “Brasileirismos”, *O Imparcial*, December 18, 1913)<sup>28</sup>

Veríssimo’s criticisms were sometimes so scathing that *O Imparcial* came out in his defense more than once, reiterating that he was the country’s greatest literary critic and citing in support the opinions of names such as Rui Barbosa

<sup>28</sup> Probably the word he refers to is “espertalhão”, someone who tries to take advantages in all situations.

and Joaquim Nabuco, while recognizing that Veríssimo was, indeed, “the most attacked [critic]” by readers from North to South. For the newspaper, his presence was a sign of independence.

He cultivated the fame of being implacable, though irony, with its ambivalences, was a mark of his writing. Again, criticism was not employed as a loose idea, but as part of the writing game at the newsroom. And the fact that Veríssimo’s criticism had changed (being now more combative, more concrete and more political rather than a discussion of literary ideas) suggests a new demand in the communication circuit, to which he sought to adjust. The criticism he initially proposed and practiced, and which still owed much to the writing genres of the “network of 1800”, was starting to struggle to impose itself in the “network of 1900.”

When he left *O Imparcial* early in 1915, he was greatly involved in the Brazilian League for the Allies, against Germany, of which he became the de facto leader, while Rui Barbosa presided only formally, not engaging in its daily activities. Such was the prominence of Veríssimo, the organization’s vice-president<sup>29</sup>, that after his death in February 1916 the League lost force and credibility (the *O Imparcial* itself would criticize its activities after Veríssimo’s death). It is not hard to imagine that he met Lima Barreto again during this period. The writer says he joined the League at the beginning of the war, that is, precisely during the period it was run by the critic. He only left when “it strayed off course, taking advantage of the simplicity of many and the complicity of some” (Barreto apud Barbosa, 2012: 227). As with Veríssimo, the war represented a turning point in Lima Barreto’s ideas. One of the topics under debate was nationalism. The conflict forced people to review the issue.

Veríssimo was well known to be against it. In 1906, in the foreword to the second edition of *A educação nacional* (National Education), which he had published in 1890, when the budding Republic filled him with optimism, he admitted to having changed his mind. He denied being a patriot: “At least not in the political sense of the term, debased by its dishonest use to qualify the most unworthy Republicans” (Veríssimo, 1906: 59). And he continued: “Let us not make of the fatherland an idol, a new Moloch, to whom we sacrifice everything” (Ibid.: 59). A severe critic of Brazilian reality, with the war, however, in opposing the German project, he was able to take a positive view regarding Brazil. Its mixed people could be considered “a new Latin type,” as opposed to the German “sociological ideal” of a “single type.” In spite of all its problems, Brazil was building a liberal democracy, “peaceful, progressive, very broad and accommodating so that each and every one of us can fit in” (“Os brasileiros e a guerra”, *O Imparcial*, March 16, 1915).

<sup>29</sup> Entry on the subject in CPDOC: <<http://cpdoc.fgv.br/sites/default/files/verbetes/primeira-republica/LIGA%20BRASILEIRA%20PELOS%20ALIADOS.pdf>>. Accessed on: April 4, 2017.



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Lima Barreto, in turn, in his articles for *Correio da Noite*, openly declared at the outset of the war that he did not believe in patriotism (apud Barbosa, 2012: 268). According to Resende, the writer criticized overzealous patriotism and exclusionary nationalism: “The articles he writes about the world conflict reveal the aspiration for a broader concept of nation, understood as a group of citizens, of men united by a greater sense of solidarity” (2004: 12).

The 2004 edition of his articles included the text “A minha Alemanha” (My Germany), published in *A.B.C.* newspaper in 1919, which had been left out of his *Complete Works* published in 1956 (Resende, 2004: 13). German emigrants were being harassed in Brazil, and Lima, who was against Prussian militarism, reiterated: “Germans, blacks, mulattos, Italians, Portuguese, Greeks and vagabonds, we are all men and must understand each other in the vast and broad land of Brazil. I’m not a nationalist.” To some extent, it echoes the idea of an “accommodating” and non-nationalistic Brazil advocated by José Veríssimo.

However, in 1917, when the government abandoned its neutrality in the war to side with the USA, Lima was not pleased. In *Diário íntimo* (2011), he stated as the reason for this disagreement the “painful situation of men of color in the United States” (Barbosa, 2012: 272). He could not accept the alliance with the Americans. He even stated on June 3: “Given the choice, yes, I’d prefer a thousand times Germany. I cannot say anything and will not; but let my silent protest be recorded” (Barreto, 2011: 91).

Also in 1917, the writer, who claimed to be a supporter of maximalism, a doctrine often associated with Bolshevism, welcomed the Russian Revolution. He also wrote in favor of anarchist ideas in many of his columns. In this sense, he was more radical than Veríssimo, who did not have time to see the growth in the press of the columnist Lima Barreto, whose literary activity was mostly concentrated in the last years of his life.

The actual relationship of the authors with each other, with the city, the public, politics and the newspapers, besides the negotiation of ideas in which they engaged in different fronts, make up what we call the *communication circuit*. Criticism emerges within it as a journalistic project, as emphasized regarding Veríssimo’s work at *Correio da Manhã* and *O Imparcial*. Both the critic and Lima made their mark in the press with combative and critical profiles, besides the promotion of literature. Through different approaches, this study attempted to analyze Sevcenko’s proposition that Veríssimo would have been a “tutelary master” to Lima Barreto. His proposition is here nuanced,

confirmed only partially in certain aspects, especially with regard to public stance on social criticism.

### SAD END

*O triste fim de Policarpo Quaresma* (The Sad End of Policarpo Quaresma), Lima Barreto's second novel, was published in February 1916, the month of the death of José Veríssimo. The book had been written in serial form in 1911, but serials were not usually reviewed.

Veríssimo left ready his *História da literatura brasileira – De Bento Teixeira (1601) a Machado de Assis 1908* [History of Brazilian Literature – from Bento Teixeira (1601) to Machado de Assis (1908)] (Veríssimo, 1998), published in the same year of his death. His historical research ends with the death of Machado de Assis. It was in a way a tribute to his friend, whose memory he strived to expand and preserve, which was not always so obvious and easy at first. The book had been nurtured since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as opposed to the eponymous book by Silvio Romero (*História da literatura brasileira*), of 1888. Machado represented an apex, a literary ideal. Highlighting his work was also a way to respond to Romero.

Euclides da Cunha could have been included in *História da literatura brasileira*, considering its time span. But Veríssimo, as seen above, despite having been responsible for the initial success of *Os Sertões*, did not believe the work would survive long. In this case, his criticism was mainly of the emphasis on scientific language as a literary resource and his *História* makes a strict selection of what he considered literary art – in which he also contrasts with Romero, who is much more inclusive. (To expand this discussion, however, one would have to address the meaning of criticism to scientific writing at the time.)

In mid-1914, Veríssimo told Oliveira Lima that his *História* was ready and even typewritten. At that point, one could surmise that Lima Barreto's work was not sufficiently complex (and it is not the case of discussing whether it would be in the future, in the critic's view) to alter Veríssimo's project, intended as an apotheosis of Machado de Assis. In any case, it cannot be said that the critic would have left out the two authors, Euclides da Cunha and Lima Barreto, for *conflicting* with his purposes, insofar as both aimed to denounce "the social problems of Brazil" (Pereira, 2009)<sup>30</sup>. On the contrary, those aspects would have been prized by the critic, who was concerned, however, with their literary achievements. In Lima's case, despite criticizing by letter the excessive personalism of his debut novel, *Recordações do escrívão*

<sup>30</sup> "José Veríssimo, in choosing Machado de Assis as the focus of his national literary canon, leaves out many writers, such as Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909) and Lima Barreto (1881-1922), who would supposedly conflict with the critic's purposes. Thus, the intellectual field proposed by Veríssimo could not be defined by writers who showed the social problems of Brazil, but by writers who, in a certain way, maintained a pattern of 'public sphere' centered on the European ideals of civilization" (Pereira, 2009). The data collected for this research do not confirm this hypothesis.



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Isaías Caminha (and he was not alone in this respect), he viewed him as a promising author.

In 1917, Lima published a second edition of *Recordações* which included an introductory “brief notice”, dated December 31, 1916, with a tribute to the critic<sup>31</sup>. Veríssimo, who had died earlier that year, was the inspiration for Lima to restore, as the brief notice explains, the original manuscript as confided to him by his “friend” Isaías Caminha, a clerk at the Federal Tax Office of Caxambi (Isaías is the fictional protagonist of the novel). The reason was that the first chapters published in *Floreal* had led that “that firm and independent spirit, that shrewd critic, with his noble love for the great ideals of letters, who was called Jose Veríssimo” to write a very positive comment about him in his column *Revista Literária*, in *Jornal do Commercio* (2010: 62). For an equally critical spirit such as Lima Barreto, always in search of *sincerity*, it cannot be considered an empty praise. Not to mention Isaías’s personal glory. ■

<sup>31</sup> Also in 1917, Lima Barreto plans to create a new literary magazine, which would be called *Marginalia*. Corrêa (2016) states that his editorial project was half-way between illustrated magazines, such as *Fon-Fon* and *Careta*, of great popular success, and intellectual magazines, which “clarified facts and opinions” (Barreto apud Corrêa, 2016: 25). Corrêa cites as examples of influential magazines for Lima French publications such as *Revue des Deux Mondes* and *Mercure de France* (Ibid.: 23). However, he does not cite *Revista Brasileira*, which had been the main publication of this kind in Brazil in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and of which Lima was an avid reader (as was his entire generation). But the influence of Veríssimo, editor of *Revista Brasileira*, should not be ignored as a local model for his cultural project. Corrêa (2014) stresses that the magazines to which Lima contributed were key to his literary project for allowing greater interaction with the reading public (even more than the newspapers). It is, therefore, another potential link between Lima and Veríssimo.

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