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Territory of Arts: The Theory of Literature in the Boundaries Between the Pictorial and the Verbal

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Abstract*— *The interactions between literature and painting can be analyzed in different ways. This article presents several comparative methodologies discussed by Wellek and Warren (1989), and Praz (1982). The objective is to reflect on the relevance of those theoretical approaches to the current landscape of research on comparative literature. To this end, the article analyzes the dialog between the pictorial and the verbal in Clarice Lispector's Água Viva [The Stream of Life].

Keywords*— comparative literature, literature and visual arts, literary theory, Brazilian literature, Clarice Lispector

I. INTRODUCTION

A dialog between aesthetic languages has existed—with varying degrees of intensity—for millennia in the Western tradition. During the Roman Empire, Horace (65 B.C. - 8 B.C.) expressed his millennia-old axiom, *ut pictura poiesis*, understanding that there were different ways to appreciate the arts: "Poetry resembles painting. Some works will captivate you when you stand very close to them and others if you are at a greater distance. This one prefers a darker vantage point, that one wants to be seen in the light since it feels no terror before the penetrating judgment of the critic" (Golden, 2010: 65). This quotation, according to Mário Praz (1982: 3), "enjoyed an undisputed authority for centuries" and was, consequently, taken up by a series of scholars who attempted to elucidate the complex interactions between the verbal and visual

From the Greco-Roman perspective, it would be possible to juxtapose poetry and painting because both would emerge from the Aristotelian paradigm of *mimesis*: "the translation (of images) of the world only exists through its translation, through its recodification, whether it occurs via words or via new images" (Seligmann-Silva, 2011: 12). The idea is that the two arts have a common aim: representation. However, it is essential to understand that this representation—whether expressed in paint or in words—is not intended to duplicate the real. In literature, as explained to us by Wolfgang Iser (2002), a great proponent of reception theory, the linguistic sign is modified by the specific ways in which the literary text nullifies the literal meaning of language, its designative function, which points towards the real, converting the designative function of language into a figurative function. In the words of the German theorist:

> But even if the denotative character of language is suspended in this figurative use, such language is still not devoid of references. These references, however, are no longer to be equated with existing systems (Iser, 2002: 968).

In this line of reasoning, the theorist explains that literary language has the distinction of referring to itself as well as remaining bound up with the real, which it takes as a starting point: "At the same time—owing to its figurations—figurative language makes its references conceivable" (Iser, 2002: 968). It is thus evident that the

real will be unrealized to the extent that it becomes a sign that is unsubmissive to the meanings preestablished in society, which precede the act of reading.

Moreover, it is common knowledge that over the course of history, the hierarchical relationships between artistic genres has contributed to the fact that, at different moments, certain modalities developed more than others (Wellek, Warren, 1989:165). In the Renaissance, for example, Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519) wrote texts with the objective of "inverting the traditional hierarchy that established the primacy of poetry over painting, arguing in terms of the greater immediacy and force of 'signs' in painting" (Seligmann-Silva, 2011:14). Indeed, we now know that the question of *paragone* (a dispute among the arts) is irrelevant and even misleading because, as argued by Santaella and Nöth (2011: 12), "none of the arts is superior. All individual arts can indeed excel with their specific semiotic means."

In the eighteenth century, G. E. Lessing (1729-1781), with the publication of *Laocoon*, attempted to delineate—with acuity—the boundaries separating the verbal arts from the imagistic in the context of Greek antiquity. According to that Germanic intellectual, poetry and painting have specific internal rules. As such, representations of the classical deities, for example, should be adapted to their respective mediums. It is evident that in the visual arts, the gods "personified abstractions which must always be characterized in the same way, or we fail to recognize them" (Lessing, 2011: 151). In the verbal arts, however, it is possible to mimic other "qualities and passions" (Lessing, 2011: 151), given the high dynamism of the narrative circumstances. Starting from this boundary, Lessing explains that the image of Venus must change its shape to adapt to the aesthetic language in which it is expressed:

> Venus is to the sculptor simply love. He must therefore endow her with all the modest beauty, all the tender charms [...]. The least departure from this ideal prevents our recognizing her image [...] a Venus all wrath, a Venus urged by revenge and rage, is to the sculptor a contradiction in terms. For love, as love, never is angry, never avenges itself. To the poet, Venus is love also, but she is the goddess of love, who has her own individuality outside of this one characteristic and can therefore be actuated by aversion as well as affection (LESSING, 2011: 151).

In short, it can be inferred that Lessing's work was responsible for the dissemination of a recurrent notion in studies focused on comparing aesthetic languages: the idea of poetry as the art of time and painting as the art of space. This oppositional paradigm, solidified over the decades, even reverberated in the Brazilian artistic scene of the previous century. A letter sent by Ferreira Gullar to the concrete poet Augusto de Campos describes one of his poems as follows:

> It is possible that you intend to organize it (and this is what I see in your poems) in a purely dynamic way and in such a manner that all the parts are equally involved in the totality of the poem, in the structure, like the elements in a painting by Mondrian. But this doesn't seem possible in poetry because poetry is created in time rather than in space, like painting (cf. Campos, 2015: 78).

However, recent studies in the field of semiotics, for example, have indicated that it is necessary to surmount the dichotomous notion established by Lessing. Liliane Louvel (2002: 22 *apud* Arbex, 2006: 48), opposes that dichotomy by arguing the following point: "the understanding of the poem, like that of the painting, depends on a highly relative degree of duration, in accordance with the subject, their educational background […], their capacity for aesthetic understanding." Indeed, since Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), it has been possible to detect a certain interpenetration between the spatial and temporal plane, as, in *A Throw of the Dice,* "the blank spaces take on great importance, as a 'significant silence' enveloping the text, and their function is to emphasize each poetic image" (Arbex, 2006: 26).

Consequently, to think about hybridity in contemporary aesthetics, an interdisciplinarity between literary theory and other fields of knowledge—such as semiotics, aesthetics and comparative literature—is essential. According to Tânia Carvalhal (2006: 73), theoretical reflections with a comparative perspective have opened up unprecedented spaces for "other fields of comparativist research." Among those fields, we highlight the one

concerned with the interaction between literature and the other arts. In short, comparative studies "have broadened the points of interest and the methods of 'placing in relation,' characteristic of comparative literature" (Carvalhal, 2006: 73). This field of knowledge was consolidated in the nineteenth century, evolving over time up to the present, through the broad support of interdisciplinary research between literature and the most diverse fields of human expression. According to the scholar,

> Interdisciplinary studies in comparative literature instigate an expansion of research fields and the acquisition of skills. This expansion is reflected in the most current concepts in comparative literature, such as that given to us by Henry H. H. Remak, considering it *the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. on the other.* In brief it is the comparison of one literature with another or others and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression (Carvalhal, 2006: 74, emphasis ours).

Beginning with the *ut pictura poesis* tradition, which helped to reinforce studies in comparative literature, the objective of the present article is to discuss several methodologies used by this field of knowledge to address, specifically, dialogs between literature and the visual arts. This approach becomes particularly relevant when we remember that in the most contemporary development of the arts, "the borders between artistic genres are blurring together, or more specifically, their dividing lines are fraying" (Adorno, 2018: 21). We have thus divided this article into three sections. In the first, we will discuss a trio of methodological models presented by René Wellek and Austin Warren (1989). In the second, we will analyze the "time spirit" methodology, in accordance with Mario Praz (1982). In the last, we will use the model developed by Praz (1982) to present a case study focused on the interactions between literature and painting in *Água Viva* [The Stream of Life], a novel by Clarice Lispector that explores the aesthetics of the nonrepresentational pictorial arts.

II. COMPARATIVE METHODOLOGIES IN THE LIGHT OF WELLEK AND WARREN

Wellek and Warren (1989) dedicated a chapter of the renowned *Theory of Literature*, first published in 1949, to the question of the complex interactions between the language of literature and the other aesthetic languages. In "Literature and the Other Arts," part of the section focused on the extrinsic demands of literary theory, the authors consider the effectiveness of a series of comparative methodologies. We will discuss three of those methodologies: the first is based on the subjectivity of the viewer; the second, on authorial intentions and the "time spirit" of artistic schools; and the third, on the cultural/intellectual background. Although the text by the U.S. authors addresses certain parallels between literature and music, our intention here is limited—as mentioned above—to exploring the territories shared by literature and the visual arts. Finally, this section also seeks to determine the value of those comparative models for studies on the interaction between the arts in the contemporary world.

Notably, the authors (1989: 154) do not overlook the multiple modes of interaction between the arts, declaring that no scholar can deny that "the arts have tried to borrow effects from each other and that they have been, in considerable measure, successful in achieving these effects." As we explained in the introduction, this dialog between aesthetic languages is secular and mutable along the time axis. Wellek and Warren (1989: 155) observe that in eighteenth century literature, the "addicts of the picturesque cannot be easily dismissed." In the wake of this, we should remember that Antonio Candido (1977: 176), in his analysis of *O Uraguai*, by Basílio da Gama (1745-1795), argues that the most striking element in the text is the explosion of colors resulting from culture shock, in which "the platoons uniformed in blue and yellow face the Guarani warriors, adorned with yellow and blue feathers; the red uniform of the grenadiers corresponds to the red plumage of Caitetu's cover." This recognition of the historical weight of connections between the verbal and the pictorial prompts Wellek and Warren (1989) to evaluate a series of comparative methodologies.

The first of these methodologies is characterized by privileging the subjectivity of the recipient in the process of comparing works with different aesthetic languages. This approach suggests that we can juxtapose a painting and a poem if both "induce the same mood in me"

(Wellek, Warren,1989: 157). However, the lack of systematization in this approach leads Wellek and Warren (1989: 157) to discuss the unproductiveness of this methodology: "parallels between the arts which remain inside the individual reactions of a reader or spectator [...] will, therefore, never lend themselves to verification and thus to a cooperative advance in our knowledge."

Indeed, from a structuralist perspective, basing comparative analyses on subjective impressions can prove to be a fruitless method, insofar as there is not necessarily a convergence of meaning production in the readings of the works. However, based on the reception studies in the literature, it is held that art must be understood synchronically and diachronically in the act of reception, and thus, the concepts of the reader are essential to the discussion on the specificity of the literary text. In this line of reasoning, the methodology grounded in subjectivity gains traction, for the proponents of reception theory argue that the aesthetic reading can in no way be perceived as constant; following the publication of a particular work, as time passes, the understanding of the earliest readers is superseded by the reception of later audiences (Zappone, 2009: 168). The comparative criterion grounded in the particular effect of the work on the reader thus becomes unavoidable following the contributions made by reception theory to the artistic debates.

Wolfgang Iser (2002: 977) explains that the fictitious configures the imaginary, establishing a relationship in which "the represented world is not a world, but the reader imagines *as if* it were one." In other words, the reader plays an active role in the process of signifying the text because it constitutes—through their imaginary—one of the essential elements for the consolidation of the fictional text. The meaning-construction process is the result of tension between the real, the fictional and the imaginary of the reader, and as such, the meanings of the artistic text should not be related to predefined interpretations, inscribed in the text and preceding the act of reading. According to Iser,

> Consequently, meaning is not inscribed in the text as a solid be-all and end-all. Rather, it is the result of an inevitable operation of transmutation triggered and sustained by the necessity to cope with the experience of the imaginary (Iser, 2002: 980).

Because art does not have a stable meaning, we must reexamine Wellek and Warren's (1989) considerations and ask ourselves the following: would it be possible for a reader to argue that this poem or that painting could be compared due to the fact that they are received—by them—with a similar feeling? The answer is affirmative, if we rely on Iser's (2002) considerations, which emphasize the subjectivity essential to the act of reading. Furthermore, recent studies in the field of semiotics have also demonstrated the validity of the comparative methodology grounded in emotions. For example, in proposing his pragmatic classification for the phenomena of intersemiotic transposition, Leo H. Hoek (2006: 170) suggests that from the receptive perspective, an individual (i.e., subjective) correlation can prove so effective that it becomes a collective correlation:

> When an image and a text are associated as a result of personal affinities, the reference will be considered individual. An example: the character Maigret in Simenon's detective novels is, for me, as no doubt for many others, overdetermined by Jean Gabin's portrayal in the films based on those novels.

The second comparative methodology that we propose to discuss is characterized by being based on artistic theories and authorial intentions. Wellek and Warren (1989: 157) do not deny that "there are some similarities in the theories and formulas behind the different arts." However, they believe that comparative investigations based on common artistic schools are problematic because the arts have divergent evolutionary trajectories. For example, the term Classicism cannot be applied uniformly to music, literature and painting. This is justified by the following reason:

> [...] no real classical music (with the exception of a few fragments) was known and could thus shape the evolution of music as literature was actually shaped by the precepts and practice of antiquity. Likewise painting, before the excavation of the frescoes in Pompeii and Herculaneum, can scarcely be described as influenced by classical painting (Wellek, Warren, 1989: 157).

On this point, one of the main caveats in Wellek and Warren's (1989) text is that aesthetic languages should not be compared on the basis of a "time spirit," as the

traditional history and the means of expression are far too different for each of the arts. In the words of the authors themselves, the study of aesthetic relations "is not a simple affair of a 'time spirit' determining and permeating each and every art" (Wellek, Warren, 1989: 165). However, that same methodology, strongly contested by the U.S. theoreticians, can present fruitful parallels in the artistic analyses performed by Mario Praz (1982), as we will see in the following sections of this article. Even Praz himself (1989: 56), aware of the suspicion awakened by that method, uses a humorous metaphor before opening his argument:

> The reasons why one should not speak of a 'time spirit' determining and permeating all art seem to be of the same order as those brought forward against the possibility of a bumblebee's flying: the volume and weight of the insect, the smallness of its wing surface, rule out the possibility; still, the bumblebee flies.

With regard to authorial intentions, Wellek and Warren (1989) signal that painter and poet have distinct objectives because they are embedded in different cultural traditions. As a result, research that is structured around intentionality is not endorsed by the theorists because "conscious intentions mean something very different in the various arts and say little or nothing about the concrete results of an artist's activity: his work and its specific content and form" (Wellek, Warren, 1989: 158). Although poet and painter are the same person, the intentionality tends to vary significantly due to the artist's need to adapt their expression to the aforementioned demands shaping the arts, whether they are pictorial or poetic. Accordingly, Wellek and Warren (1989: 158) conclude that "a comparison of the poetry and the paintings of Blake, or of Rossetti,[1] will show that the character (...) of their painting and poetry is very different, even divergent" (WELLEK; WARREN, 1989: 158).

However, it seems to us that the methodology of intentionality can also be productive in comparative studies between arts. As is widely known, Clarice Lispector (1920-1977), who was renowned for her commitment to language, also explored the fields of the visual arts. We thus call attention to the harmonization between poetic and pictorial practices orchestrated by the Brazilian writer in *Água Viva*, an experimental novel in which

> the writing progresses, interweaving synesthetic perceptions, amalgams of references to the art of language, of music, of painting—as if, with this recourse to diverse modalities of sensory perception, the text were less incapable of grasping the unspeakable (Oliveira, 2017: 266).

In this line of reasoning, what Wellek and Warren (1989) allege regarding the incompatibility between poetry and painting in Blake seems to not apply to Lispector's artistic productions. This is because the abstraction of a painting such as *Interior da Gruta* [Cave Interior] (1960) converges with the tonalities of certain passages in the novel in question. Note that in the following passage the rhythmic (alliteration) and visual resources (animals of different colors) present in the poetic discourse converse—with ease—with the oneiric chromatic organization of the canvas below:

> And if I often paint caves that is because they are my plunge into the earth, dark but haloed with brightness, and I, blood of nature (...). Forever dreaming cave with its fogs, memory or longing? *eerie, eerie, esoteric, greenish* with the slime of time. Inside the dark cave glimmer the hanging *rats* with the cruciform wings of *bats*. I see downy and *black spiders*. Mice and rats run frightened along the ground and up the walls. Between the rocks the scorpion. *Crabs*, just like themselves since prehistory, through death and births, would look like threatening beasts if they were the size of a man (...). All is weighted with sleep when I paint a cave or write to you about it (Lispector, 1998: 14-15, emphasis ours).

[1] Here, Wellek and Warren (1989) refer to William Blake (1757-1827), an English painter and poet, and Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti (1828-1882), also an English painter and poet.

The final methodology that we have selected for debate proposes a comparison between the verbal and the imagistic based on a common social/intellectual background. Of all the methodologies discussed throughout the chapter, this is the one that most satisfies the U.S. scholar. The assumption of the method is simple: the receiving audience is not exactly the same for the different artistic languages, as "the social classes either creating or demanding a certain type of art may be quite different at any one time or place. Certainly the Gothic cathedrals have a different social background from the French epic (...)" (Wellek, Warren, 1989: 158).

Through this approach, we might better understand the reasons that lead certain artistic genres to be more widespread and democratized than others, particularly within the context of modernity, in which "the technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations that would be out of reach for the original itself" (Benjamin, 2017: 14). In other words, in that historical context, "the artwork reproduced en masse disdained the sacramental aura, with a ritualistic nature, in the name of a praxis closer to the audience" (Portolomeos, 2009: 34). Based on this methodology, according to the U.S. authors, there is a vast contribution by studies that investigate "how the norms of art are tied to specific social classes" (Wellek, Warren, 1989:159).

With regard to the chapter by Wellek and Warren (1989), some of their considerations are relevant to new comparative studies between literature and other arts, in the sense of delineating the specificities of aesthetic languages, or rather, of the three matrices of language, i.e., the acoustic, the visual and the verbal, as we are told by Santaella and Nöth:

> Despite the great variety of media and channels and despite the considerable differences between media such as photography, cinema, television, video, newspaper, or radio, all sign processes and all aesthetic forms and genres, whether music, literature, theater, design, painting, engraving, sculpture, or architecture, can be subsumed under one of the matrixes or they are the result of mixtures and combinations thereof (Santaella, Nöth, 2011: 3).

We also believe that some of the comparative methodologies discussed by the scholars may be more productive than they claim, particularly if we lay the foundations for studies in reception theory and semiotics. In this vein, in the following section, we will see how the comparative methodology related to the "time spirit" is one of the main avenues for Mário Praz's (1982) research.

III. THE "TIME SPIRIT" IN MARIO PRAZ

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Mario Praz (1982) published a work of paramount importance for comparative aesthetic studies: *Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts*. In this book, the Italian scholar uses the aforementioned "time spirit" to establish comparative lines between the poetic and the pictorial. In this section, we will discuss the main ideas from a decisive chapter of the work, "Sameness of Structure in a Variety of Media," which demonstrates the feasibility of identifying an ideological and cultural unit when we compare aesthetic languages based on a specific historical reference.

The analytical philosophy utilized in this chapter is grounded—explicitly—in Vladimir Ja. Propp's (1895-1970) studies on the morphology of fairy tales. According to this Russian theorist, it would be possible to "reduce all 'magic' tales to thirty-one functions and seven characters" (Praz, 1982: 57). Thus, with Propp's model in mind, Praz (1982) searches for aesthetic patterns—emerging from artistic moments—present in both the literary and the imagistic text. In his words, with this methodology, "one may ask oneself whether, irrespective of the media in which works of art are realized, the same or similar structural tendencies are at work in a given period" (Praz, 1982: 57).

The Italian scholar leads us through a long history of art in that chapter, the intention of which is to pinpoint the transfigurations of the formal principles that shaped this history. In the context of Ancient Greece, for example, it is possible to see how the arts were orchestrated by a shared *ductus*, of a Pythagorean and Platonic nature. In other words, there was a melodic and symmetrical mathematics in the Hellenic era that guided all aesthetic expression, from music to poetry. In that period, the rhythmic proportions were so polished that even a piece damaged by the storms of the centuries could be reconstructed through the observer's imaginary:

> A Greek statue of the golden age, mutilated and reduced to a fragment which would normally be shapeless (as has befallen marbles from the Parthenon and others), reveals the melody expressed at its

> Creation in its integrity because the architectural, or tonic, or plastic rhythm is perceived as a whole. The fact that some tracts of proportion are missing or obliterated does not in general affect the rhythmic unity of the whole, nor the awareness of it; the reconstruction in the perceiving mind is, so to say, automatic (Praz, 1982: 63).

Furthermore, Praz (1982) also compares different works by painters and poets who lived at the same time. One of those convergences should be highlighted in order to allow us to better understand the application of the "time spirit" methodology. It is a comparison between two artists of English Romanticism: William Wordsworth (1770-1850), the poet, and John Constable (1776-1837), the painter. In this line of reasoning, Praz (1982: 60-3) argues that we can compare the spontaneity of Constable's colors with the descriptivism of Wordsworth's verses.

With this, Praz (1982: 60) concludes that "the media of expression employed by the painter and the poet are different, but the two have in common a taste and a message." This taste and this message are inspired by the "time spirit," which confers a certain sacredness upon the natural landscapes. After all, "romantic nature is expressive" (Bosi, 2017: 97). It is thus plausible to examine this expressiveness of nature in the two works juxtaposed, for "what the painter has conveyed in a visual image, the poet renders in a language which vaguely hints at the implications of the natural scene" (Praz, 1982: 62).

Praz's (1982) methodology can be adopted to compare Brazilian Romanticist works. One might think, for example, about the way in which the spirit of Indianism (a literary tradition) infiltrated the paintings of Rodolfo Amoedo (1857-1941), who, in turn, was inspired by the poems of Gonçalves de Magalhães (1811-1882) and Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864), such as "A confederação dos Tamoios" ["The Confederation of Tamoios"] and "Marabá." In short, the possibilities for applying this methodology to our literature are vast and heterogeneous. In the following section, this will be demonstrated in greater detail. For now, what we can conclude is that the "time spirit" model, critiqued by Wellek and Warren (1989), was reclaimed in a very productive way by Praz (1982).

IV. ABSTRACT ART IN THE LITERATURE OF CLARICE LISPECTOR

In this section, we will discuss another chapter in the aforementioned book by Mario Praz (1982), "Spatial and Temporal Interpenetration," which explores the intense dynamism of the interaction between the arts, spurred primarily by the explosion of avant-garde movements. We will then use the "time spirit" methodology to think about the work *Água Viva*, in dialog with the abstract pictorial arts that gained prominence in Brazil shortly before Clarice Lispector published the novel in 1973.

In that chapter, Praz (1982) continues to develop the idea of the "time spirit" as an important avenue for comparing literary works and paintings, particularly within the modernist context. Despite the enormous diversity of trends during that period, the scholar explains that "parallel lines of development can be observed in the various arts [...]. The same problems face writers, sculptors, and architects" (Praz, 1982: 199). Along those lines, for example, the production of James Joyce (1882-1941) is compared with that of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), insofar as both artists express the complex interweaving of styles towards which the modern spirit converges: "In both painter and writer we find the general contraction of the historical sense and that intoxication with the contemporaneity of all historical style [...]." (Praz, 1982: 200).

In *Ulysses*, a work first published in 1922, Joyce combines a number of literary genres (poetry, storytelling, theatrical play) with a range of narrative techniques from different eras in the history of literature (monolog, dialectics, and enthymeme), as well as associating each chapter with an art, a color, a symbol and a scene from Homer's *Odyssey*. In *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), Picasso also combines different painting styles; sections of the painting evoke Gauguin, the Iberian arts and the African arts, "whereas Cézanne is responsible for the hatching filling the space between the figures" (Praz, 1987: 200). Both the Irish writer and the Spanish painter drew on the modern tradition in order to reinvent aesthetic languages and thus create a new style characterized by this interweaving.

A brief overview of the social, historical and cultural transformations that have taken place over the past century is a key element that will allow us to understand how the abstractionist spirit—merely one of countless that emerged with modernity—made its way into Clarice Lispector's novel. In general terms, it is possible to observe that throughout the twentieth century, the model of bourgeois society becomes increasingly consolidated and, as Marx and Engels (2012: 47) indicate, "the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of

production and, thereby, the relations of production and, with them, the whole relations of society." The set of social relations was thus modified, accentuated by a series of technical advances, and by the end of the century:

> The world was filled with a revolutionary and constantly advancing technology, based on triumphs of natural science that could be anticipated in 1914 but had then barely begun to be pioneered. Perhaps the most dramatic practical consequence of these was a revolution in transport and communications that virtually annihilated *time* and *distance* (Hobsbawm, 1995: 22, emphasis ours).

This context marks the beginning of time-space compression, identified in the modern middle-class subject who begins to "have an idea of what was happening all over the world, through their daily newspaper" (Portolomeos, 2009: 32). That cosmopolitan society of the early twentieth century was located in the metropolis, the main allegory of modern life, which "in each of its constituent elements, such as urban planning, technology, industrialization, [...], characterize the time that emerged alongside the great international markets" (Portolomeos, 2009: 31). Consequently, given the consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie, art also becomes a commodity:

> As Marshall Berman notes, based on his readings of Marx, the modern individual possesses a creative and revolutionary individual force, but the capitalist system to which they belong rejects ideas that are unattractive to the market (Portolomeos, 2009: 29).

It is no coincidence that avant-garde movements emerged at this historical moment, with the objective of "criticizing the art institution as it was formed in bourgeois society" (Portolomeos, 2009: 39). According to Hobsbawm (1995: 192), the invention of the lens, for example, was decisive for the emergence of new dialogs between the arts, given that "in the new visual media, avant-garde and mass arts fertilized one another." In this artistic explosion, Cubist painters began to open up space for the emergence of abstract currents by breaking down "the appearance of objects and natural beings, geometrizing their shapes and flattening them" (Lopes, 2010: 17).

In Brazil, the *Semana de Arte Moderna* [Modern Art Week] in 1922 was "an event and a declaration of faith in modern art" (Bosi, 2017: 409). Although this event inspired unprecedented ideas within the national territory, Lopes notes that abstractionist aesthetics was not on the agenda in the *Semana* of 1922:

> The *Semana de Arte Moderna* became the primary catalyst for debate, reflection and the creation of a critical conscience, lighting the flame of the modernist style from the north to the south of the country. However, abstraction was not part of this debate (Lopes, 2010: 29).

Abstraction, which emerged in Europe in the 1920s, was assimilated belatedly in Brazil and only began to gain significant space at the end of the early 1950s, driven by events such as *I Bienal de São Paulo* [I São Paulo Biennial], which played "a decisive role in modernizing the abstract languages" (Lopes, 2010: 40). In later years, the abstract arts are situated in the context of Clarice Lispector's literary production. Our hypothesis is that there was an abstractionist "time spirit" that potentially inspired the style of *Água Viva*. The fact is that in general, the most prominent characteristic of post-war Brazilian literature is "the conscious *interpenetration of planes* (lyrical, narrative, dramatic, critical) in the pursuit of a broad and all-encompassing 'writing' capable of mirroring the pluralism of modern life" (Bosi, 2017: 415, emphasis ours). That *interpenetration of planes* is precisely the foundation used by Praz (1982) to dialog about the interaction between the arts in modernity and post-modernity.

In his text, Praz (1982) highlights several characteristics of novels by Henry Green (1905-1973) that are compatible with the key idea of abstract painting, i.e., the negation of "its condition as a reflection or double of the world, in order to establish itself as an autonomous and nonobjective language" (Lopes, 2010: 21). Accordingly, in his novels, to evade the classical mimetic formulas, Green performs the following procedures:

> the substitution of a much subtler arabesque of conversations and inconclusive episodes [...] for a plot in the current sense of the word [...]; the placing of

> the story almost outside a definite time and space [...] the nearly total absence of descriptive passages—all these features contribute to the impression of abstract art (Praz, 1987: 223).

It is intriguing to realize that the quotation above could refer to the poetic prose of *Água Viva*. In this work, Clarice Lispector ruptures the principles of the narrative tradition by abandoning elements such as a well-defined time and space for action. In short, it is possible to say that in this experimental novel, rather than following the pathways of a linear or fragmentary story, the reader is asked to glimpse a mosaic composed of images, thoughts and forms: "But I am kaleidoscopic: I'm fascinated by my sparkling mutations that I here kaleidoscopically record" (Lispector, 1998: 31). According to Bosi (2017: 452), the disruption of the factual plot and the use of unusual metaphors and reveries for the flow of consciousness are consistent characteristics of the Lispectorian style, which "in its manifest heterodoxy resembles the model christened by Umberto Eco as 'opera aperta.'" We thus argue that in *Água Viva*, these procedures were enhanced by the dialog with abstract pictorial art present since the selection of the epigraph by the Belgian artist Michel Seuphor (1901-1999): "There must be a kind of painting totally free of the dependence on the figure [...]."

As we mentioned above, in the years leading up to the publication of *Água Viva*, the nonfigurative art movement gained increasing force in Brazil, particularly following the creation of museums (São Paulo Museum of Art [*Museu de Arte de São Paulo – MASP*], São Paulo Museum of Modern Art [*Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo - MAM*]) dedicated to spreading abstractionist ideas by encouraging "lectures and debates that would broaden the reflection on these movements" (Lopes, 2010: 38). Over time, these new artistic approaches became established in the heterogeneous Brazilian artistic landscape and, in one way or another, infiltrated the Lispectorian literature, which demonstrates that it is aware of its own abstraction. The passages below, in which the narrator speaks to the reader about the aims of her writing, illustrate this point:

> All of me is writing to you and I feel the taste of being and the taste-of-you is as abstract as the instant. I also use my whole body when I paint and set the bodiless upon the canvas, my whole body wrestling with myself. You don't understand music: you hear it. So hear me with your whole body. When you come to read me you will ask why I don't keep to painting and my exhibitions, since I wrote so rough and disorderly. It's because now I feel the need for words—and what I'm writing is new to me because until now my true word has never been touched. The word is my fourth dimension (LISPECTOR, 1998: 10).

> I am speaking to you in the abstract and I wonder: am I a cantabile aria? No, you cannot sing what I am writing you. Why don't I tackle a theme I could easily flush out? but no: I slink along the wall, I pilfer the flushed-out melody, I walk in the shadow, in that place where so many things go on (LISPECTOR, 1998: 73-4).

This confluence between literature and painting in the national "time spirit" leads us to ask the following question: what perspectives from abstractionism were captured by the poetics of Clarice Lispector? To answer this question, it is necessary to think about the two aspects that comprise abstract art: geometric abstraction and the informal and lyrical tendency. The former was derived from Cubism and is focused on the "rational and universal character of geometric lines and forms [...], as well as pure colors, flat or unmixed" (Lopes, 2010: 18). According to Oliveira (2000: 265), we find traces of this current in *A Paixão Segundo G.H.* [*The Passion According to G.H.*], a book by Lispector, published in 1964. The second tendency, which would dialog with *Água Viva*, emphasizes the unconscious and intuition, "in forms removed from the observable reality, although—at times—it preserves simplified figurative elements, illustrating a form of abstraction based on figuration" (Oliveira, 2017: 265). This is exactly what Lispector does in her poetic prose, in which the images—without predetermined outlines—have a highly reflective and subjective charge, while not being subjugated to a plot in the traditional sense:

> But 9 and 7 and 8 are my secret numbers. I am an initiate without a sect. Avid

> for the mystery. My passion for the crux of numbers, in which I divine the core of their own rigid and fatal destiny. And I dream of luxuriant grandeurs deepened in the darkness: whirl of abundance, where the velvety and carnivorous plants are we who have just sprouted, sharp love—slow faint (Lispector, 1998: 30).

We can therefore argue that in the middle of the previous century, there was a "time spirit" that circulated among the different Brazilian arts, which opened up space for the development of abstract proposals, both in the imagistic and verbal arts. The correspondences between Lispector's text and nonfigurative painting are so great that it has led many studies to focus on questions related to the interweaving of aesthetic languages by the author. Solange Ribeiro de Oliveira, for example, notes that in the novel in question, the writer is engaged in recreating pictorial language with words rather than pigments:

> Above all, as with abstract painting, which is underpinned solely by its intrinsic elements—color, line, volume, texture—literary abstractionism, imitating the practice of its sister art, explores its own material, the verbal media. The painter/narrator/character of *Água Viva* endeavors to replace the paint and the brush—the material of painting—with the word (Oliveira, 2017: 266).

As we have seen, contrary to what Wellek and Warren (1989) believe, Mario Praz (1982) shows us that the comparative methodology based on the "time spirit" can be very productive. To do that, the Italian scholar needed to analyze the social, historical and cultural atmosphere that permeated artistic productions from different moments of human history, but "it should not be thought, however, that the spirit of an epoch permeates all its artistic productions simultaneously" (Praz, 1982: 68). It is therefore essential, in a study of this type, to be very careful in the selection of the works, to analyze their historical, social and cultural context, and to recognize and respect the specificities of each of the artistic languages involved in the study. Furthermore, we reiterate that the models proposed by Mário Praz (Praz, 1982: 68) can be adapted to study the Brazilian arts—respecting, of course, the specificities of their context—as we demonstrated in this section based on a work by Clarice Lispector.

V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Methodologies for comparative studies evolve over time, interact with one another, and sometimes complement each other. Although Wellek and Warren's (1989) chapter proves to be rather dated for studying the dialog between the arts in contemporary times, we can deduce that the considerations of the U.S. authors are important for ensuring that the specificities of artistic systems are not overlooked in comparative analyses. Praz's (1982) considerations, which diverge from Wellek and Warren with regard to the "time spirit," are crucial to understanding the artistic expressions that are prominent at certain historical moments. Accordingly, reading Praz (1982) proves to be very productive when we seek to analyze works originating within the context of modernization, as well as the consolidation of that historical-cultural moment in modernism, as is the case with the work of Clarice Lispector.

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