

THE ORIGINS OF THE NOVEL CRONICA DA CASA ASSASSINADA AS SEEN IN LUCIO CARDOSO'S DIARES

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ABSTRACT

After a promising start to his literary career, Lúcio Cardoso seems to have lost his way as a novel writer. After publishing *Dias Perdidos* em 1943, he only produced another novel and his masterpiece *Cronica da casa Assassinada* in 1959. In the interval, he work as a journalist, translated seven classics into Portuguese for publication, wrote and organised for the theatre and even began filming *A mulher de Longe*. The reading of his *Diarios* sheds light on the existential process which led to the blossoming forth of his masterpiece.

Keywords: Lucio Cardoso. *Cronica da Casa Assassinada*. Origins.

Lúcio Cardoso was born in the small city of Curvelo in the State of Minas Gerais on the 14th of August of 1912, baptised as Joaquim Lúcio Cardoso Filho. He was the youngest of six children, three boys and three girls. They were Maria Helena Cardoso, Maria de Lourdes and Regina, and the boys, Aduauto Lúcio Cardoso and Fausto Cardoso as well as Joaquim Lúcio Cardoso Filho. The family moved to Belo Horizonte when Lúcio was one and then to Rio de Janeiro when he was eleven. From an early age, he showed a very sensitive personality with a strong artistic vein and had little time for the official schooling of his time. Even later while a boarder in the college in Belo Horizonte, he had little time for the official subjects and gave a lot of attention to the learning of languages that was to be very important in his later life. He also dedicated himself daily in a constant reading of literary works and in this way developed early his ability with language which was to be the hallmark of his style. The father was normally absent from the family. He had three years of studies in engineering and, working in projects for the opening up of farm lands and marking out the basic layout out for a new town or village in the interior of Rio de Janeiro and of Minas Gerais, he had little time for staying at home either in Curvelo or Belo

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Horizonte. The fictionalised story of this pioneer is told with enthusiasm by Lúcio later in his life in his first novel **Maleita** (1934).

It was the mother who was the principal influence in the household. Maria Helena, his sister and six years older than Lúcio, tells us that their mother brought up the family alone since the job of the father kept him away from the house though he did always send them the money he earned. To the boys, even when they were young, she tried to transmit a love for political activity, admiration for the famous men of history. She would often read them pages from books that exalted public virtue and patriotism. Although she had only a primary education, which she had supplemented with a few private lessons in Portuguese, she improved her mind by constant reading and with her native intelligence, she had an active mind. And she maintained throughout her life a wide interest in all that happened around her. She had an enormous desire for knowledge, loved reading especially novels. On one occasion, Maria Helena relates, she even tried to write a novel, but abandoned it later unfinished. All this obviously stimulated her sons and daughters and they made great progress in life. One began a doctor, another a leading political figure in Minas and later a minister of the High Court and Lúcio himself an outstanding writer. The daughter Maria Helena became a biochemist, although she never exercised the profession, working most of her active life as a clerk in Rio de Janeiro in her uncle's insurance company.

The relationship between Maria Helena and the young Lúcio (called by her as Nonô), although six years separated them, was very close. She tells us that they incessantly made plans about what they would do if and when they had money. She would buy furniture, but little Lúcio would buy crystals, beautiful crockery and would fill the walls with paintings of famous artists. Maria Helena mentions Gauguin, Renoir and Van Gogh. All pretty ambitious for a poor family living in the interior of Minas.

She tells us that her favourite pastime was reading novels and explains that, in order to avoid the others and especially her mother, who wanted her to help around the house, she would lie under the bed, holding the book up near the bottom of the mattress and in the half darkness, she would spend hours reading novels. She says that it was a period of complete happiness and great discovery in the world of letters. She relates:

Até então só conhecia a literatura francesa. Coube a Nonô, ainda adolescente, me iniciar noutros mundos, ainda não percorridos: ampliei os meus conhecimentos na literatura russa, lendo Dostoiévski, outros romances além de **Crime e Castigo** e **Recordações da Casa dos Mortos** que já conhecia. Li também Tolstói, Tchecof, Gogol, Tourguenef. Fizemos mais uma aquisição: os grandes romancistas ingleses, sobre os quais não tinha a menor idéia, Galsworthy; Thomas Hardy, George Elliot, *Mrs. Gaskell*, as irmãs Brontë, além de outros da língua inglesa como Moore e Joseph Conrad (CARDOSO, 1968, p. 116).

As a result, Lúcio developed his first tendencies to literary production. Maria Helena tells us in her autobiography: “A inclinação literária de Nonô nessa época já se manifestara: tinha escrito vários contos e peças de teatro, com tendências esquerdistas, entregando-se à leitura com maior curiosidade e paixão” (Ibidem).

The father was not very pleased with the way that young Lúcio was growing up and during one of his rare visit to the home back in Belo Horizonte, he complained about this to his wife. Maria Helena, the sister, tells how he was different from the other children. He would go out to the outhouse where old things were kept, would play with his cuttings from newspapers, with pictures of famous actors and actresses from the cinema and he would announced the screening of films prepared by himself with the most suggestive titles. When he was not busy with these games with the cinema, he would play dolls with the girls. The father complained to the mother:

Você é culpada, você e a comadre criam esse menino na barra da saia, como se fôsse mulher, e o resultado é o maricas que se vê. Onde já se viu um menino brincar com boneca? Por que não gosta dos brinquedos dos outros rapazes? É um menino medroso e vai acabar não dando cousa que preste. Não se pode criar um homem assim (CARDOSO, 1968, p. 272).

But the mother replied: “Deixe por minha conta. Criei os outros que estão aí e nem por isso deram cousa ruim. Êste há de ser igualzinho. Tenho fé em Deus que será um grande homem” (Ibidem). However, this behaviour was only in the house. He often played truant from the Primary School and would run away with the other boys and go off to the park, playing there until the end of the school period. And when he arrived home dirty with his clothes torn, he would get a good hiding from his mother.

Later the closeness of the brother and sister was interrupted for a few years. Young Lúcio was sent off to a boarding school in the capital of the State of Minas, Belo Horizonte. There he stayed as a boarder for some years. It was in the Colégio

Arnaldo, run by the Divine Word missionaries, a group of German missionary religious educators who specialised in education for the young boys in several states in Brazil.

When he returned from the boarding school in Belo Horizonte, Maria Helena Cardoso gives us more information about his literary development. She expressed her surprise at the young man who returned from the boarding school. She reports: “saíra menino de calças curtas e voltava um rapaz. Não me cansava de admirá-lo. Um bonito homem, embora de estatura média: moreno-pálido, rosto de traços finos, olhos expressivos e sobrancelhas bem desenhadas, iguais às de papai” (Ibidem, p. 309). But it was his literary ambitions that she encouraged. He would show everything he wrote to her. She tells us that she doubted her ability to give an objective judgement on what he wrote: “Meu amor e meu orgulho de ter um escritor na família me incapacitavam e não podia julgar com frieza. Para mim tudo que escrevia era bom, tinha qualidades, fôsse o que fosse. Ah, para ser escritor. Toda pobreza, toda dificuldade valia a pena” (Ibidem, p. 311). And she ends with the question: “Quem sabe não daria um escritor?” (Ibidem). He was at this time between sixteen and seventeen years old in the words of Maria Helena.

He was in fact, seventeen at the time and he was soon to enrol in the Instituto Superior de Preparatórios. Three years later, began in his first official job in the Companhia Equitativa de Seguros and all the time he was busy writing. He worked with various collaborators in literary journals: first one called **A bruxa** and then, with Santa Rosa, **Sua revista**. But it was in 1933, that the big break came. He transferred to the Companhia Metr pole, an insurance company owned by Augusto Frederico Schmidt, a modernist poet, and his uncle Oscar Netto. Schmidt had also a publishing house as well as having a reputation as a writer and it was in the following year that his first novel **Maleita** came out. The family settling after various attempts at living elsewhere, in Rio de Janeiro, had allowed the young L cio to enter immediately into the literary, the journalistic and theatrical world of the city. That first novel, *Maleita*, written when he was just 16 and published by the Schmidt Publishers in 1934, caused an impact on the contemporary literary scene. Even the feared Agripino Grieco, the literary critic of most importance at the time, saw in him an admirable talent which he had rarely seen in Brazilian literature, especially since the writer is still so young.

Maleita, a book now hard to find even in the old stock of libraries and in the second hand bookshops that specialise in literary rarities, was a book which surprised the critics with its vigorous structure, the originality of its language as well as for its autobiographical element since it related with realistic details, the adventurous life of the author's own father, who had lived as a founder of small villages that later became cities, and was an eternal migrant with a great spirit of adventure. It is easy to see that if he had continued in this path of literary neo-realism, he might have soon become as famous as José Lins do Rego or even Graciliano Ramos since it was this type of neonaturalist novel that was fashionable at the time. It was Lins do Rego in his commentary of 1954 on the novel **Enfeitiçado** who pointed out the richness of vision of Lúcio Cardoso, which always had the same profundity of a Julien Green, with an ability to cut into what was not of the senses like a Proust and who worked along the deepest layers of the human soul.

It seemed after this promising start that Lúcio Cardoso would have that gradual maturing and widening acceptance that is common among talented novelists. In fact, there was a steady production of good novels. In 1935, a year after the first novel, *Salgueiro* came out from the more influential publishing house José Olympio. A year after 1936, **A luz no subsolo** was released and despite the discussions on its value, no one questioned the literary talent of the writer. The following year, he published what would be called a novelette, **Mãos vazias**, the following year a collection of children's stories, and in 1940 the second novelette **O desconhecido**. In 1941, he published his first book of poetry and in 1942, a long interesting autobiographical novel, **Dias perdidos**.

Unlimited in his energy, the following year, he published not only a second book of poetry, but a play which was successfully staged by the Comediantes, **O Escravo**, and another novelette **Inácio**. In 1946, he published two more long short stories **A professora Hilda** and **O anfiteatro**. Not content with his efforts in the fields of prose, poetry and drama, he also began an energetic period of literary work as a translator.

But what is strange about this period of his literary life, is that Lúcio Cardoso seems to have lost his way. Despite all this work, as a journalist and a translator, the energies of Lúcio seem to have gone into producing the plays he wrote. In 1947, he did not direct but was viscerally involved in the production of **O filho pródigo** and **A**

corda de prata. 1949 saw the production of **O coração delator**, an adaptation prepared by Lúcio on the short story of Edgar Allan Poe, and he worked on the script of **Almas adversas**. Then 1950, he saw his own **Angélica**, with Luisa Barretto Leite as the main actress, produced in the theatre of Copacabana.

We have a privileged insight into what was happening to Lúcio Cardoso during this period, since we have the access to his **Diário** whose first volume was published in 1961, and which traces his intimate life from the 14th of August of 1949 to the 17th of March, St Patrick's day, of 1951. This diary seems to have been providential in putting Lúcio back in the direction where his talent lay, that of a fine novelist.

Lúcio himself says that the Diary was “uma súmula de remorso e de consciência culpada. Tenho agora outro remorso, é o de não ter ido até o fim, de não ter perseguido até a fronteira, as sombras que sempre me acenaram de lá (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 284). He says too at an earlier date that the Diary was “Sem dúvida é o meu inconsciente – ou o meu Anjo da Guarda – que dia a dia me faz mais unido a estas folhas. É um processo de defesa onde entra muito dêsse instinto de conservação [...]” (Ibidem, p. 143).

Over half of the entries of the diary speak of his anguish and shows the turmoil of his troubled soul. This type of anguish was not uncommon with one who had his strong Catholic background though he perceived that in his intimate life, he was betraying basic principles of moral code but by the end of the book, he has come to accept the inevitability of this situation and decides to move forward and use this as a way of creating his literature. “Ao terminar êste caderno, e ao despedir-me dêste que fui eu – [...] repito, não creio que um escritor, um ser humano, se encontre jamais senão na vibração contínua de seus sentimentos extremos” (Ibidem, p. 284).

He puts it more eloquently speaking later in an article about William Faulkner, whom he had met in Rio de Janeiro:

Não há dúvida de que Faulkner brilha numa das esquinas da literatura - e das mais belas, das mais altas, das mais justas -, mas brilha simplesmente porque na verdade era um "criador", não de conflitos literários insolúveis, mas de conflitos humanos, estes sim insolúveis, porque feitos dessa tumultuada matéria com que besuntam as mãos todos os escritores dignos desse nome, e que se chama injunção humana (BANCO DO BRASIL, 2003).

At the end of the article, Lúcio confesses that he found the same explanation of the process of literary creation in the writings of Virginia Woolf: “Todos os escritores são desgraçados. A pintura do universo refletida nos livros é, por isto mesmo, sombria demais. As pessoas sem palavras é que são felizes”. And Lúcio concludes that the nervousness of Faulkner came from “permanente consciência de sua condição de escritor e de ser humano crucificado à febre agônica do seu tempo” (Ibidem).

In this way, the diary helped Lúcio Cardoso to come to terms to himself and to find in the hidden depths of personality, the courage to use the conflicts and emotional anguish of his personal life to prepare for his greatest writing which was yet to come. It would not be absurd to see the long letter that he wrote to Frei that crystallised in his mind the necessity to accept this moral situation in which he finds himself and to stop crucifying himself for not living according to the strict rules of a Catholicism that he saw as lacking in human understanding and in a deep and unperceived way, against nature. He ended his **Diário** free from his burden and ready to work this tension into his future writing. But he had no disillusion that it was in this struggle and suffering that the great text of the future novel would emerge. He put it marvellous in a newspaper article on the novel of his friend Octávio de Faria, **Mundos mortos** in 1937:

Para mim, o romancista tem um certo número de obrigações, e uma delas, para quem deseje atingir determinados fins, é arrastar conscientemente os seus personagens ao mais implacável desespero; é preciso atirá-los em todas as engrenagens da dúvida, da angústia, da descrença, da crença continuada em si e nos homens, porque é nesses instantes que tocamos o fundo que procuramos: aquele em que a essência nua do ser se revela, no medo da morte ou na esperança de Deus. Esta é uma das grandes tarefas do romancista, procura cega dos momentos supremos em que do fundo obscurecido brota a palavra irremediável que salva ou que condena – colheita dessa longa seara plantada por todos os tormentos da vida, obediência absoluta à tragédia que deve ser a atmosfera, onde as almas se agitam (apud CARELLI, 1988, p. 145)

Diário too is a diary of his meeting with other writers and artists in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Lúcio was a well-known bohemian figure at this time. He mentioned that on the 13th of May, he talked to Clarice Lispector on the phone and in the evening, came across Marcos, Athos, and Heitor Coutinho sitting around a poor and badly lit table in a bar. On the 15th of August, on a Sunday night, he received the visit

from Marcos Konder Reis and Agostinho Olavo and they discussed the stay of the French actor Jean Louis Barroult in Rio de Janeiro. On the 19th he had a long talk with Nelson Rodrigues about the theatre in Brazil and thinking about his comment that it was better to have a play well staged than a fortune earned. He commented rather ironically that since he had neither, then the comment made little sense in his case. The truth, of course, that he had played being staged during this period. Following on from this comment, he reported the opinion of his principal actor in the play for which he had written the script **Almas adversas**, Fregolente who described Lúcio as the unreal riding the real. He mentioned later his meeting with Rosário Fusco and with Otto Lara Resende, Burle Marx among others.

The book also gives a running commentary at times on the violent crimes mentioned in the newspapers and offers very pessimistic comments on the politics and in a special way, the politicians of the day. It is strange that he was so negative about politics since his brother was the president of the party UDN (União Democrática Nacional) and was to become an important figure in the future of the country.

But the *Diário* is much more important as a series of reflection that led Lúcio Cardoso back to the pathway of novel writing. At the beginning of the diary, he was busy filming **Mulher de longe**, and another film **Maria Fernanda**, about the daughter of Cecília Meireles, the famous poetess in which, besides writing and producing, he was also the director. He left the films unfinished and what we have of them, shows us two melodramatic narratives. There were elements of social realism in the films, but perhaps he glimpsed through this experience the need to move forward towards a style which he later developed in the **Crônica da casa assassinada**, what was called by one writer that of a delirious Baroque which denounced the decadence of the interior of Minas Gerais. The projects ended partly because of lack of money and since it was Lúcio himself who was doing the financing, he must not have had much capital behind him for emergencies. There were also a few lawsuits of the actors about their wages. In the end, he abandoned it and it all came to nothing. But there was, however, the experience and the learning and one can see that there are strong elements of filming in the newer methods of narration that he will use in his later books.

The diary also mentions the experience of Lúcio in the theatre. It covers the period in which he had his closest contact with the theatre. In 1949, he was involved in the staging of “O coração delator” and wrote the script for **Almas adversas** of Leo Marten and in 1950, his own unpublished play **Angélica** was being put on. All three experiences proved to be very negative. He comments after the first night of “Almas adversas” that “se trata de uma grande esperança fricasseed” (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 113) and he confessed that the failure was due more to himself than to others because he did not have the small soul necessary for dedicating himself to little things.

In October of the following year, he comments on the first night of the play **Angélica**. The presentation was a failure and he saw clearly the reasons. The stage was too small, the actors had not learnt their parts, the direction was deficient and there was too much bad will but when he saw Louisa Barreto Leite on stage, he felt that she put across the indestructible truth that the play had aimed at portraying. He ended the day's entry with the following comment:

Não, não, é completamente inútil voltar ao teatro. “Angélica” marcou definitivamente a minha última tentativa. Agora o caminho é um pouco mais estreito, o desenlace mais próximo. Mas não me sinto amargo e nem hostil a ninguém; ao contrário, tenho a alma leve e é com alegria que imagino planos diferentes, viagens, etc. (Ibidem, p. 210).

First came the trips. He went with his mysterious friend X to a farm house in Penedo where he passed an idyllic holiday. He describes the long rides on horseback along the stone covered paths, and talks of the words of Finnish that he learnt. The house was like so many farms that he had visited with numberless empty rooms which agonise in dust and humility. “Antigas casas sem serventia – e lá fora, uma fila de coqueiros que se move brandamente sob um céu cinza” (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 183).

Then a month later, he went by car to Ubá. Sonia Brayner writing about this visit situates it in the middle sixties. This is, of course, may be an oversight on her part. Lúcio suffered his stroke in 1962 and became seriously paralysed. The trip is dated probably in the middle fifties with his actor friend Fregolente and his friends. Lúcio confessed that he rediscovered “as pequenas cidades que tanto me apaixonam” (Ibidem, p. 218). And after these trips came the certainty of his future

path. On the 23rd of Janeiro of 1951, he wrote in his diary: “Agora sei: nenhuma força, nenhuma tentação me afastará novamente do caminho do romance. Eu o sinto desenvolver-se em mim, como uma árvore secreta que alongasse pelo meu sangue seus galhos estuantes de sombra” (Ibidem, p. 241).

He was referring to his plans to write the novel **O viajante**, which in fact was only finished posthumously by his friend Octávio de Faria in 1973 using the notes of Lúcio Cardoso. He confessed that he then saw the novel as a whole, that “it could be finished without much difficulty” (idem, p. 236). The characters had taken form in his mind, and the atmosphere was defined. He could see in his mind the old hotel when the traveller would knock at night. He concludes saying: “Agora sei que a história irá sem tropeço até o fim” (Ibidem, p. 236).

But what was more important was that during this period of introspection and personal doubt, the basic idea of his greatest novel came to him. It would take eight full years before the novel was published but the entry in the *Diário* on 8th of February 1951 gives a detailed description of what was going on in the imagination of Lúcio. The entry deserves a full quoting:

O plano do romance avança. Já agora, transpostos os limites da novela, derrama-se uma vasta extensão e, unindo-se a idéias antigas (todo eu sou o mapa antigo de um romance que ideei na adolescência; quando aprofundo muito os veios novos, converto-os em afluentes do mesmo rio dominador e soberano; quando deixo as idéias vicejarem espontâneas, acondiciono ilhotas e pequenos territórios ao país oculto que trago em mim...) converte-se numa série inteira: o velho, o nunca abandonado “Apocalipse”, que já mudou de nome várias vezes (Ibidem, p. 248).

He tells us that he walked around the whole day long, imagining situation and slowly the figures came out of the mist. He emphasises: “O panorama é o de uma cidade, uma cidade inteira, com suas praças e cantos sombreados, suas velhas casas onde se escondem ainda tonéis de vinho, pipas portuguesas, com suas varandas que já não retinam mais ao rumor dos bailes, seus mexericos e seus tipos peculiares” (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 248).

Then he comes on to the essence of the story talking about the interaction of the characters and the hidden passions involved.

Imagino que nessa cidade as paixões rivais se entrechocam sem descanso; enquanto os idílios antigos esmorecem ou se transformam em inapeláveis

rancores, os novos repontam, e se desenvolvem à sombra dos jardins que nunca cessam de florescer. As lutas se sucedem e, num ritmo largo, se bem que acelerado, o mesmo vento de insânia e crueldade percorre as suas páginas (Ibidem).

He concludes saying that through the city, there will be “o mito de um país agonizante nessas lutas sem trégua, a descrição de sentimentos envenenados que corroem o espírito desse país, que o torna inerte e sem viço para o futuro” (Ibidem).

Here is a clear central idea of the great novel **Crônica da casa assassinada** and Lúcio confessed that he was aware that “será difícil levar avante semelhante plano” (Ibidem).

But the diary had done its work. It had brought Lúcio back from his attempts in the cinema and in the theatre and had given him a clear idea that his future lay in the novel and had found the central idea that would filled itself out in the marvellous complex masterpiece that he was to published in 1959.

The *Diário* is also very interesting because it gives us a privileged insight into the mind of the writer during this period in another aspect. It is a detailed report not only about what he was thinking about, what he was doing, but also about what he was reading. It is amazing the number of books he mentions and the energy he dedicated to reading and the wide variety of books that he digested.

It is surprising when one reads the **Diário** how little mention there is of Brazilian Literature. It may be that Lúcio was using a type of filter which excluded these readings as of little significance for the reader already familiar with Brazilian literature. It may be too that his readings were directed by obligations he had of writing for newspapers and magazines and as it is the case in the lives of most readers, it is because of the circumstances and the obligations of life that the decision of what to read is taken.

But this does not imply that he did not read also masterpieces of Brazilian Literature. In November of 1949, he discussed the works of Rui Barbosa and expresses his great admiration for the writer. He wrote that on the 11th of June in 1950, he began rereading *Os sertões* and despite his perception of certain ageing due to the defence of outdated ideas of Darwin, he expressed total admiration for the epic work and showed great perception of its value. In the same month, he mentioned all the plays of Nelson Rodrigues and showed that he saw clearly the

values and the limitations, as well as the reasons for their financial success. In August while down in Penedo, he wrote that he had finished reading *Minha formação* of Nabuco but without much enthusiasm. But all his references to Brazilian literature show a well informed and a perceptive critic. He mentioned for example in his entry of the 17th of April of 1950 with great perspicacity:

Idéia para um estudo: Álvares de Azevedo, o cantor de Satã, de Macário e outros mitos poéticos de romantismo, contra Castro Alves o cantor naturalista dos escravos. Aliás poderia haver uma separação mais profunda e que viesse até nossos dias: Álvares de Azevedo, Machado de Assis e Graça Aranha (o do prefácio às cartas de Machado e Nabuco) como líderes de uma corrente que se opõe nitidamente a Castro Alves, Lima Barreto ou Aluizio Azevedo, até os escritores regionais de hoje. Neste último caso, penso particularmente em Jorge Amado (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 111)).

When Lúcio dealt with modern writers, he did so with much more detail and with greater passion in defence of those he admired. He wrote magnificently on Clarice Lispector in his **Diário completo** in an entry of August of 1961 and compared her in her use of time in the narrative to Virginia Woolf and Guimarães Rosa. The text on Clarice and on the theme of “A mulher sitiada” is truly brilliant. He wrote with the same passion and the same deep understanding of the works of his friend Octávio Faria. Again, we find a reader well versed in contemporary Brazilian literature and one who had a sure understanding and a precise analysis. But in general terms, remembering the details mentioned above, it would seem that he was much more a reader of books of foreign literature.

One has the impression that it was the reading in French that touched him most deeply. He mentioned Julien Green early in the **Diário**, returned to mentioning him in the context of Graham Greene on the 14th of April. He pointed out:

Leituras: Green, um livro que eu não conhecia ainda: “Le voyageur sur la terre”. Prazer de encontrar um escritor diferente dos que hoje trafegam pelos anais da publicidade – Sartre, Camus, Greene, etc. Há aqui um sabor clássico e um jeito todo especial que evidencia, mais do que qualquer outra coisa, a presença do grande escritor (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 108-109).

On the 26th of June in the same year, he returned to an observation on Julien Green. He wrote:

Sem leitura certa, abro ao acaso um dos tomos do “Journal” de Julien Green [sic] e encontro uma frase que me perturba: “O verdadeiro romancista não domina seu romance, êle se torna seu romance, mergulha nele”. Por que motivo não havia reparado antes nesta anotação? Julien Green [sic], que nunca se arrisca, que é todo compromisso e exclusão – Julien Green é o melhor romancista mineiro – dá uma regra sem segui-la. Ele sabe de que se amputou (Ibidem, p. 177).

Interesting this comment that he was the great novelist of Minas. Obviously, Lúcio was thinking that his style, his type of writing was ideal for the type of novel that Lúcio thought should be written on the life and behaviour of the state of Minas Gerais. Green had indeed much in common with Lúcio Cardoso. His novels are all studies of “a man without God” using the phrase of Pascal which he mentioned in his own writing. All early novels written in a almost gothic style rely largely on darkness and the sense of fear which it generates to create a world of mystery which is not always free from exaggeration and his characters are all devoid of ethical consciousness and circulate in a world of murder, suicide, sadism and madness. But it was in his last novel *Moira* in which he moved forward from this world of darkness and amoral behaviour and studied the struggle in the main character between the sensuality and the spirituality of man. Green’s own background was strange. His parents were Americans and they went to live in France in 1895, five years before the birth of Julien. Julien himself was totally bilingual and wrote an autobiography in English **Memories of happy days**. He spent all his life in France except for a short period of six years in the United States during the Second World War and quick visits to Italy and the Scandinavian countries. Green also adventured into the theatre and wrote three plays in the early 1950s in which he explores the same world of spiritual conflicts. One can wonder if the feeling of difference which Green must have had living in France was not the experience too of Cardoso to a lesser extent and in another context, it may have been that same feeling of a person from the interior of Minas moving down to the capital of Brazil and the cosmopolitan city of Rio de Janeiro.

But it was obviously the journals of Julien Green had a special interest for Lúcio. By the age of 69, the journals had already run to seven volumes and we see from the **Diário** that it was one of the books constantly read by Lúcio. It can not be said that Lúcio was like Pedro Nava, a man of rereading. Nava tells us “Sou um homem muito mais de releitura do que de leitura (BARRADAS, 1998, p. 154). He

mentions that he had reread **Os sertões** twenty times and had read all the 400 pages of Proust four times. While, it does not seem that Lúcio was an avid re-reader of these classics, there were indeed books he came back several times. Julien Green's **Memories** was one of these books. At a later moment, there will be a chance to see how close the association and the similarity of ideas and concepts between the two writers can be seen in the novels of the two writers.

Another French writer who was dear to Lúcio was André Gide, novelist, critic, diarist, playwright and traveller. He was a polemic figure and he wanted to liberate himself from his strict protestant and puritan upbringing. Lúcio wrote that he had thrown himself heart and soul into the reading of the last volume of Gide's journal on the 4th of June. Later with an interesting entry, he commented on the death of Gide and showed how important the writer had been in his intellectual formation:

Está enfim satisfeita a curiosidade de André Gide: desde ontem à noite não pertence ele mais a este mundo.
Quase sem querer, rememoro minhas primeiras leituras de Gide, as frases que sei de cor ("par coeur", como dizem impecavelmente os franceses...) os livros que ainda reabro – e sem dúvida parece-me estranho que não mais exista este homem que nunca vi, mas que ocupou lugar tão proeminente na minha vida, que foi matéria de tantas discussões, e com quem tanto aprendi a discernir o que é bom e o que é mau neste mundo (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 254).

Besides these two French writers, Lúcio also mentions his readings of Delacroix's Journals.

But it was in English and the literatures written in the English language that Lúcio Cardoso seems to have spent more time in reading, although the influence may not have been so intense. He mentioned many writers in the pages of the **Diário**: Poe, Marlowe, Byron, Brontë, Graham Greene, even Fulton Sheen. In the following year, he mentioned Pound and T. S. Eliot, Henry James, Conrad, Hawthorne, Emerson and Melville. On the 5th of November, he mentioned Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis and Scott Fitzgerald with the comments "não há dúvida, autores que muito eu li no começo da minha vida literária" (Ibidem, p. 208), with the implication that he no longer read them with much attention.

He mentioned the titles of some of the books he was reading in English and this must imply a more careful reading. He talked about Faulkner's **Satoris**, **Moby Dick**, **Wuthering heights** and two books of Dickens **Martin Chuzzlewit** and **Domby**

and Son. Like many another readers, he confessed about the American novelist from the south that in vain he had tried to finish *Satoris* several times. That certainly rings a bell. But of all these books, there is none of the detailed comment that Lúcio made about his French readings. He commented on his reading of Hemingway, for example, in the entry for the 31st of January of 1951: “Mergulhado há dias na leitura de vários romances americanos: Hemingway e Erskine Caldwell. Confesso que o primeiro me desperta maior intêresse. Mas sem arrebatamentos, sem grandes lances, sem extasiantes descobertas: apenas leitura fácil e sem tropeços” (CARDOSO, [1961], p. 244).

All this would not be so important if it were not for the fact that at this moment in his literary career, Lúcio began to see the path forward and back to the writing of a great novel. He was leaving behind him his experiences with the theatre and his unsuccessful attempts at the cinema and was back into thinking seriously about the writing of novels and shortly he would have a clear idea about the future writing. On the very day that he was reading the books of Hemingway and Caldwell, he reported a dream he had a night: “Sonhei esta noite que tinha um livro entre as mãos, escrito por mim. Logo à primeira página havia a seguinte dedicatória: ‘À real, ao ser verdadeiro e autêntico que serviu de modelo ao pálido esboço que tentei nestas páginas...’ Que livro era, de quem se trata?” (Ibidem).

Lúcio wrote a week later that he had the outline of this new book in his head and he used an image that helps us see the importance of all this reading in the formation of the plan of the novel. The image is about bringing from inside himself various islands from his own past and the ancient project of the novel **Apocalypse** but it is the image of bringing in other affluents to flow into the great majestic river that was to be his masterpiece that is also interesting. All the ideas and reflections, in the wonderful dislocation of the Oedipus complex to writing according to the theory of Bloom, would help Lúcio unite all this ideas from his reading to produce his greatest novel.

All in all, the reading of his **Diário** helps us to understand more clearly his literary aims and realisations. Unfortunately, his diaries did not reach the volume of those of Gide and Green, and he only managed to add another small volume produced during the writing of the **Crônica da casa assassinada**, which was

annexed to the other volume in the edition of 1970. But what they have offered us is a fascinating glimpse into the workings of this literary genius.

In this way, the **Diário**, published for the first time in 1961 and posthumously in a more complete form in 1970, constitutes a social, psychological and literary document of the greatest importance and it completes and clarifies details of a literary heritage of the highest value for the recognition of future generations. It has always been in literary diaries that great writers have been in touch with the profound movements in the depths of the psyche that caused literary creation and this depths are undreamable and unrecognised by so many modern writers who put market success before all else. Cardoso had no illusions about what he had to do.

It was this very emphasis on the depths of the human soul that previously brought about the lack of success of Lúcio Cardoso that brought him success when he published his masterpiece in 1959. **Crônica da casa assassinada** condensed all his experience of the oligarchy of Minas Gerais, which the author brought with him as his migrations with his father, but exaggerated by his romanticism, his poetry and his colourful style. Even Wilson Martins, ever parsimonious with his praise and averse to generalisations said that the book was a mark in the history of the Brazilian novel and pointed to a new path.

This masterpiece of Cardoso brought with it an emotional trap that perhaps stopped the writing of a series of novels on the same type of country, as he had foreseen in his entry in his *Diário* on the 8th of February. He had suffered always from a problem of self-identity and had related in a sad and visceral way with his characters and this had always hindered in him the distance so necessary for the great prolific writer. He confessed that he entered the plot and the suffering of others because he lived in a full and absolute way his writing. Had he been able to break away from his characters, he might have been able produce a series of novels with the poetical intensity as well as an epic vastness as those of a William Faulkner. But this is only to say that Lúcio had links to another type of writer, like Franz Kafka for example, who is more intense and more concentrate and in his lonely and tormented mind, he is able to write that claustrophobic text that exposed with brilliance the decadent society that he attacks in his masterpiece. This feat is beyond many others.

He perceived the limitations of the traditional values of family life and the Catholicism of his time, still unchanged by the winds which came with the Vatican Council. He gives us a good picture of this feeling, referring to a visit to Ubá:

Minas, êsse espinho que não consigo arrancar do meu coração – fui menino em Minas, cursei Minas e os seus córregos, vi nascer gente e nome em Minas, na época em que as coisas contam. O que amo em Minas é a sua força bruta, seu poder de legenda, de terras lavradas pela aventura que, sem me destruir, incessantemente me alimenta. O que amo em Minas são os pedaços que me faltam, e que não podendo ser recuperados, ardem no seu vazio, à espera de que eu me faça inteiro – coisa que só a morte fará possível (CARDOSO, 1970, p. 293).

He denounced the decadence of society but he was never able to accept and assume completely his position in contemporary society of Rio de Janeiro and harked back in his writings to the state where he had been brought up and reared. But this is often the case with the great writers.

He was always followed by the idea of evil and was blinded by the concept of salvation, a need to meet his God and redeem himself. He continues in his **Diário**:

O mal, para mim, não foi uma entidade literária, ou uma sombra apenas entrevista no horizonte humano. Soube com pungente intensidade o que êle significa em nossas vidas, e muitas vêzes, toquei seu corpo ardente com meus dedos queimados. Não inventei e nem idealizei a minha salvação; eu a vivi humildemente como homem, no recesso mais fechado da minha alma (CARDOSO, 1970, p. 168).

In the theme of **Crônica da casa assassinada**, Lúcio Cardoso found the perfect objective correlative, in the famous concept of T. S. Eliot, for the anguish and the suffering of his own life and was able to produce his masterpiece with the profundity and the ambiguity of one who has lived, questioned and suffered in a country where he was always an outsider.

Temos de viver até o âmago a crassa época de egoísmo e barbárie que nos foi destinada. Talvez desapareçam todos os sinais da inteligência sadia, talvez sejam tragados todos os valores com que fomos criados, e que prezamos desde a infância.
Talvez. E acho que diante de tantos casos dolorosos de desconhecimento e indiferença, que o gênero Diário valerá para o futuro – nesse futuro que teimamos em acreditar que servirá de berço para o renascimento do homem – não mais como um índice de confissões pessoais gênero Amiel, mas pela descrição do itinerário pelo qual conseguiram subsistir alguns espíritos (Ibidem, p. 166).

When Lúcio published the first diary in 1961, he wrote on the inside cover, rather hopefully that volumes 2 to 5 were to be published. In fact, only the second volume came out and that was published posthumously in 1970. The first volume in the 1970 edition runs to 166 pages while the second one is slightly shorter with a total of 131 pages. The time covered however, is very different. While the first volume covers the intense period of 14th of August 1949 to 17th of March 1951, the second volume covers almost a whole decade of his life. The first entry is made on the 12th of May 1952 with the simple note that it was his mother's birthday and ends the 17th of October 1962, the year of his stroke. The last entry must have been made soon before the illness.

It ends symbolically with a lovely passage on loneliness, a reference to his reading at the time, **The town** by William Faulkner, and the decision to write two new books, so full of ideas he was. One book would have the lovely name of **Carvalhos queimados** and the other would have the less poetic title, but more existential of **O outro - vocacidade**. The final paragraph is a fitting ending to his memoirs and summarises what seems to have been his life:

Ouço a voz de Cornélio Pena – naquele tempo – “o seu sofrimento é um sofrimento bom, de permanecer à margem”. Não há, Cornélio, pior sofrimento do que permanecer à margem. Não tenho temperamento para isto. Quero amar, viajar, esquecer – quero terrivelmente a vida, porque não creio que exista nada de mais belo e nem de mais terrível do que a vida. E aqui estou; tudo o que amo não me ouve mais, e eu posso com a minha lenda, forte sem o ser, príncipe, mas esfarrapado (CARDOSO, 1970, p. 304).

The first follow of the memoir had been dedicated to Walmir Ayala and it was Walmir who in the presentation in the dustcover of the **Diário** had observed the same painful existence of the writer:

Seu diário é uma obra literária, tem a mesma música da sua novelística, o mesmo ardor poético que dá sangue aos seus episódios, a mesma paixão pelo subterrâneo, o mesmo deslumbramento luxuoso diante das luminosidades. Seu depoimento vem tangido por uma rara inteligência, e o que é mais importante, uma feroz agonia de vida. É, vai ser, um livro contra o disfarce dos medianamente bons, contra as boas intenções das filosofias côr-de-rosa, contra a mentira dos pretensos salvadores do homem. Seu diário vai ser o depoimento sincero de um espírito atribulado, seu pânico diante da morte, seu conflito diante de uma fé constantemente dilacerada, para uma reconstrução mais urgente e responsabilizante, jamais perdida. É

um homen condenado a viver entre os homens, com gôsto terrestre, mas de olhos abertos, para ver até o fim a miséria, a decadência, o outro lado da beleza de que se compõe toda a carne fadada ao passamento (In CARDOSO, [1961]).

The presentation shows the same tortured Lúcio as the man we see in his *Diário*. The second volume is dedicated to his other friend Octávio de Faria, who was responsible for the publication of it after the death of Lúcio.

This second volume gives us a continued look at the intellectual life of Lúcio. He continued fascinated for French Literature, but it shows him moving away from Green and enjoying the works of Gide, Genet and the classics of Balzac. He mentions too that he was reading Henry James, **The Dubliners** of James Joyce with the “mais viva admiração” as well as Thomas Hardy, Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. But it seems that Brazilian writers have a more important place in this new period of his life and he often comments in a marvellous concise, pungent and perceptive prose his responses to this reading:

Não há, nunca houve Joyce em Clarice, há Virginia Woolf. O espectro do sentimento humano é dissociado nela não em função de sua permanente mutabilidade – o que faz o dia único de Ulisses – mas em relação ao tempo, tema preponderante de **Mrs. Dalloway** e de **As vagas**. Ao descobrir a mecânica dissociada do tempo, ela não atingiu o dissociamento da mecânica de comunicação humana, que é a língua, como Joyce. Ela não se desespera, de modo terrível como se desespera êsse místico do nosso tempo que foi o autor de Dedalus. Ela situa apenas a sua emoção. Não cria nem define: anota. Um Guimarães Rosa, que tão erradamente admiramos, dissocia a língua mas não inventa a sua emoção – em sua essência ela é clássica. Sob sua roupagem inédita e barrôca, **Grande Sertão: Veredas** é um romance válido porque levanta apenas os velhos problemas do homem. Ora, não há o homem em Clarice Lispector. Por isto é que ela arde. Suas fábulas, e mesmo as mais extensas, delatam a presença única desse problema – a mulher sitiada (CARDOSO, 1970, p. 288).

Here, the texts offers a perception into an important aspect of the writing of Clarice Lispector and while doing so, Lúcio throws light on the writings of three giants of 20th century literature, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Guimarães Rosa. The prose style has evolved and has a new precision and a new clarity of expression.

Sometimes his prose is more pungent and more sarcastic. He mentions in an entry in the month of August in 1961 his reactions to a book on Rome by a Brazilian writer who refers to the Brazilian writes as “tupi ignaro”. He starts ironically:

Quanto a mim, miserável homem inculto e de mau-gosto, a solenidade das paisagens históricas me oprime. Que posso fazer? Não sou guardião de museus. Amo as estradas largas e sem compromisso. Amo o futuro e o que faz o homem do futuro. Gosto das cidades que ainda forjam a sua história, e dos homens que ainda somam a sua vida – não dos que a encerram (Ibidem, p. 280).

The thought is structured on the double elements in each sentence and gives a strong rhetorical text. Then he comes to the Brazilian writer, writing from Rome

Êste homem vive o presente mas não o entende – os valôres com que lida são valôres falidos de literatura, e não valôres novos, captados na luta e no despojamento. Não voltarei a êle, mas é bom reafirmar, antes de deixá-lo, que ele representa o exemplo típico, infelizmente bastante comum em civilizações nascentes e tumultuadas como a nossa, de um ídolo de barro, feito com meios primitivos, mas que mãos ingênuas houvessem coberto de ouro e pedrarias – caindo ao chão, restam as jóias que não lhe pertencem, e sobra à parte o pó natural de que foi feito (Ibidem, p. 281).

The image is strong and the structuring of the text elegant and forceful and the result terrible destructure. But it does reveal a characteristic of Lúcio. Despite all his readings of foreign writers, he does not move away from his strong Brazilian roots and never falls into pedantism or facile imitation of foreign masters. He remains true to his vocation to write strongly about his own lands.

But while he often allowed himself the liberty to express opinions on literature in a way which was much clearer and personal than in the first *Diário*, he used the pages to record the sad moments of the death of those closest to him. He wrote about the death of Cornélio Pena, his close friend, of Vito Pentagna, in whose chácara he had written much of the *Crônica* and then of his own mother, whom he had watched daily wasting away.

Walmir Ayala had written on the dust cover of the first volume that:

A literatura brasileira é pobre de documentos íntimos. Esta frase é de Lúcio Cardoso, romancista maior do Brasil, de cujo diário venho falar aqui. Muitos encontrarão precedentes mais ou menos certos, mas eu direi que Lúcio Cardoso publica o primeiro Diário em literatura brasileira. Tudo o que houve antes foi impreciso e econômico, diante da avalanche existencial que o romancista de **A Crônica da Casa Assassinada** nos reservou (In CARDOSO, [1961]).

This may be an exaggeration but what Lúcio has given us in his diaries is a precious contribution to the genres of Diaries and one that reveals to us the

greatness and complexity and the richness of the mind that has produced one of the greatest masterpieces of Brazilian Literature.

AS ORIGENS DA NOVELA CRÔNICA DA CASA ASSASSINADA CONFORME OS DIÁRIOS DE LÚCIO CARDOSO

RESUMO

Após um início promissor de sua carreira literária, Lúcio Cardoso parece ter perdido o seu caminho como escritor. Após a publicação de *Dias Perdidos* em 1943, ele só produziu uma outra novela e sua obra-prima *Crônica da Casa Assassinada* em 1959. Durante este hiato literário, trabalhou como jornalista, traduziu sete clássicos para o português, escreveu e organizou peças para o teatro e até mesmo começou a filmar *Uma mulher de Longe*. A leitura de seu Diários lança luz sobre o processo existencial que propiciou a criação de sua obra prima.

Palavras-chave: Lucio Cardoso. *Crônica da Casa Assassinada*. Origens.

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