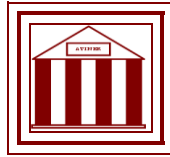


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**The Initials of João Guimarães Rosa
in Tutaméia's Stories**

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The Initials of João Guimarães Rosa in *Tutaméia*'s Stories

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Abstract

Some of *Tutaméia*'s stories interrupt the alphabetical order of the reading indices with the initials of the author. This paper deals with the inscription of João Guimarães Rosa's initials in the reading index of *Tutaméia: terceiras estórias*, especially concerning the stories titled: "João Porém, o criador de perus" (João Porém, *the turkey breeder*), "Grande Gedeão" and "Reminiscção". We take as theoretical basis, primarily, texts about the concept of *author*, signed by theorists such as Barthes, Foucault and Weimann. Our starting point was the theoretical assumption of author the story deals with, considered in a non-self-evident way. *Tutameia*'s stories can be thought, according with the functions, that it has historically assumed and whose operationality can be thought of as concepts of modern art. The modern consciousness implies the questioning of the unity of this subject and requires an examination thereof through the stories' lyricism and irony. The first preface of *Tutaméia*, "Aletria e hermenêutica," enters this debate of the literature through the fictional being of the story. This decentralizes the subject of scripture and imparts their invention mechanisms to the communitarian narrative categories that produce "supersense". In *Tutaméia*, the emphasis on the mechanisms of nonsense and irony makes the form empty of classical and realistic standardization of representation. This is rooted in unitarian principles of a superior sensory order and meanings adequate to them. Irony and nonsense dissolve away any sense of the author. Irony dissolves meanings unified in the authorized perspective of an author. The order of the reading indices is interrupted by the initials of the author (J.G.R.), thus assuming the position of unpredictable name and unpredictable being which extrapolate the ambit of representation. We propose to study, from a theoretical perspective relative to the concept of author, the stories that inscribe the initials of the author in the fiction of the order represented in the reading indices of *Tutaméia*.

Keywords: Guimarães Rosa, *Tutaméia*, author, stories.

Tutaméia inscribes the initials of the author in the reading index and thus alters its alphabetical order. In addition, the point of view of the author about the work's fiction is itself fictionalized, by splitting its presentation into various characters and four prefaces. Here we will study some of the theoretical approaches to the concept of author with special regard to the stories which disturb the alphabetical order of *Tutaméia*'s reading indices with the initials of the author (J. G. R.). That new alphabetical order forms a conventional unit and brings the modern issue of the fiction's intervention in the preceding representations to the front. It manipulates a particular point of view which, paradoxically, disrupts the usual representation sequence in order to inscribe the singularity of an author's name.

The chapter "Author", by João Adolfo Hansen, defines the authorship in literature as a historical notion, originally proposed in the 18th century as *presence*. In the Romantic period of the 19th century the notion was generalized as an individual's creation, and since then it has been questioned regarding "à unificação substancializadora da sua particularidade histórica de produção e produto"¹. In the 20th century, the Marxist and Foucaultian assumptions opposed the trans-historical *presence-author* notion, which conserves mimetic and expressive verisimilitude. Instead, they proposed the *scripture* (HANSEN, 1992, p.11 and 30). Since then the *death of the author* was announced, that much interest and reactions in the literary field. In "Reminiscção", one of the three *Tutaméia*'s stories that allegorize the name of the author, the hero dies, or pretends to do so, in order to offer the community a transformed vision. *Tutaméia* offers us a similar opportunity for transformation through the aesthetic transcendence that manifests in the voids of the form.

Unlike the consecration of the written, *Tutaméia*'s preface "Aletria e hermenêutica" (*Vermicelli and hermeneutics*) announces that "o erro não existe"² (ROSA, 1979, p.4) and the preface "Hipotréllico" presents a discussion on the use of neologisms. Instead of disappearing, the author of *Tutaméia* masquerades under four prefaces, which have an *alterego*, characters and autobiographical clues, in addition to the allegories of the stories that receive his initials.

Walter Benjamin (1987) has attributed the weakening of grand narratives' tradition, which were replaced in modern societies by the poet's mercantile work, to the loss of communitarian experience and the values attached to it. The stories of *Tutaméia* are short narratives of two or three pages on average. In that aspect they differ from the novels considered grand narratives. The preface "Aletria e hermenêutica" attributes to the communitarian narratives the devices that the story employs to produce transcendence. However, those narrative mechanisms observed in nonsensical wits tell very little about the story, comprehensively defined as a way of being that denies the story as a narrative genre and the History as a social process. In response to the contemporary crisis of values, Rosa has invented in his literature a language as

¹"The substantializing unification of its historical particularity of production and product".

²"The error does not exist".

that which was spoken before Babel, as stated in an interview to Lorenz (1983, p.88).

The recent notions of author refuse the metaphysical enclosure of the *presence-author*. The first of these is the *scripture as absence* (BARTHES, 1984). The second is the *author-function* which allows one to assign to an *author's name* appropriations, classifications and uses of existing and circulating discourses constellations in a specific society (FOUCAULT, 1992, p.46). The third is the conception of author as a point of view to be inferred in the relations between the representation (or choices that compose it) and the evaluations of the represented to the addressee and the reader, according to the stylistic treatment of the social issues and the modeling of the reading scene (WEIMANN, 1984). Since the 1960s and 70s, notions concerning the authorship came to be questioned as what was considered a metaphysical enclosure of the meaning. In order to overcome such a categorization it is necessary to review concepts such as expression and *mimesis*.

Psychoanalysis and Lévi-Straussian structuralism paved the way for the language conceptions to include voids or indeterminacies. In conformity with Iser, the fictional text emphasizes those voids by proposing a verbal wit, which transforms the stereotypes of the reader and prevents him from triumph or gloss the authorial intent (COSTA LIMA, 2002, p.26 e 58). The assistance of the classical works yields familiar rhetorical models able to suggest an updated, communal worldview. Modern fiction presents conflicting rhetorical models which the reader associates without been able to eliminate the voids, to fill in the blanks or to find a unit for the various models. That impossibility produces pleasure. The voids guarantee space for the difference.

Indeterminacy and Regionalism

For the early critiques of *Tutaméia*, the four prefaces seemed to have an author's poetic sense. The prefaces were read as the synthesis of an authorial project: for Assis Brasil (1969, p.42 and 57), the prefaces are the key of the work or a didactic summary; Mary L. Daniel (1968, p.12) considers the fourth preface as confessional; and, for Benedito Nunes (1976, p.209), the texts of *Tutaméia* form a poetic ordering unit, or a verbal wit, to which the prefaces provide the metalanguage.

With regard to *Grande sertão: veredas*, Hansen (2000, p.30) states that “o texto de Rosa se dá como unidade de ficção, mas é ficção de uma unidade, ostentando as marcas de sua contradição”¹. The critiques evaluate the prefaces of *Tutaméia* as a poetic or as metalanguage. We need to consider that the classical concept of unit implied in those notions is denied, both in the prefaces and in the stories. The unit of the work is unsusceptible in the mobile meanings

¹“Rosa's text presents itself as the unit of a fiction, but it is the fiction of a unit, flaunting the marks of their contradiction”.

of the texts, and the unit of the subject is questioned in the masks of the authorial voice.

Since *Sagarana*, Rosa's literature has already presented a distinguishing factor, which Candido proposed as "superregionalism": the expansion of regionalist representations reach with the freedom of modernist experimentation (CANDIDO, 2000, p. 161-162). *Tutaméia* associates these and other complications by concentrating and multiplying, with great humor, the many structural innovations (NOVIS, 1989, p. 22) in order to emphasize the critical evaluation of the author, which was rejected as a metalinguistic fad (COVIZZI, 1978, p.63-88) and praised as experimental work (AVELAR, 1994, p.67).

The critical emphasis of *Tutaméia*, reiterated in four prefaces and in the paradoxical and ironical narratives, is the result of a process of evaluation of the text by the author whose scripture accumulates and puts in conflict the discourses of critics, readers and translators. Bolle (1973, p.12) observes that, from 1963 to 1965, Rosa held an intense correspondence with translators and readers. Furthermore, the author followed the pronouncements of critics about his books.

The abundant divulgence opposes the silence of the specialized critics, those assigned by Mônica Gama to the reading difficulties arising from an accumulation of heterogeneous discursivities. The early critiques of *Tutaméia* were guided by (Brazilian) modernist principles, valorizing the historical contributions of the literary text, such as regionalism and the idea of nation as paradigm. Critics haven't found in the abundant fragmentation of the forty-four stories of *Tutaméia* a unit of meaning with the fiction of Rosa which would fit the supposed contours of his work (GAMA, 2008, p. 4, 13, 14, 24, 49 e 176). Seen as a problem by some critics, the obscurity in the point of view of the author is strategic, and results of the correlations between cultured and hinterland representations that relativize, respectively, the supposed universality of the first and the archaic unity of the second (HANSEN, 2010, p.20).

The Name of the Author

According to the paper "*Grande sertão: veredas e o ponto de vista avaliativo do autor*", from João Adolfo Hansen (2007), the point of view of the author, in Rosa's literature, can be observed in the selection and stylization of his particular scripture. It functions as an indeterminacy producing device with an aesthetic-political sense. Rosa's literature functions as a device that produces indeterminacy or that cannot be reduced to meanings corresponding to the previous knowledge of the reader.

Tutaméia, notably in its four prefaces, evaluates (for the reader) the very style of the work, which innovates for ironizing and denying traditional

patterns representation, such as the classical and the realistic ones¹. The prefaces propose an ironic debate that deals with the laws of representation and decompose them. In this process, the subject of scripture is decentralized and distributed as fiction, and, in the interior of this fiction, the debate (in whose field the author makes himself dissolved) is fragmentized.

The name of the author is anagrammatically written into the indices of the stories which carry his initials. Those initials interrupt the indices' conventional (alphabetical) order, raising issues of representation and expression. The intention, the mechanisms or the point of view relate to the concept of art adopted by João Guimarães Rosa and can be evaluated in the stories that begin with his initials: "João Porém, o criador de perus", "Grande Gedeão" e "Reminiscção".

Three stories of *Tutaméia* inscribe the initials of the author in the fiction of the order represented in the reading index. In the stories, the relationships of the protagonists with the labor and the community operate as allegories of authorship: the vow to the birds of João Porém, the style of the birdies incorporated by Gedeão and the act of hitting shoe soles by Romão, until the transformation of Nhemaria operated by the communitarian assimilation of his point of view.

The first preface of *Tutaméia*, "Aletria e hermenêutica", puts literature in debate by conceptualizing the story as a fictional being which decentralizes the subject of scripture and imputes their invention mechanisms to the communitarian narrative categories that produce supersense. In that preface the so-called everyday language adopted by realistic literature is compared to the "círculo-de-gis-de-prender-peru²" or gum-Arabic. The story "João Porém, o criador de perus" employ the figure of that bird whose gobble is associated with automatic uses of language in order to tell the story of João. This character persevered in the breeding of wretched turkeys until they become fat, produced in flocks, despite the people set against him in business telling him about a woman who had fallen in love with him. João dies after the announcement of the invented lady's death, without this changing the people at all. The denouement of the story compares the vocalization of the turkeys to the ridiculous discourse of the people who proposed the hero's nickname. "Ainda repetiam só: – 'Porém! Porém...' Os perus também³." To the benevolence and greed of the people, João Porém always pondered semi-deaf and one-eyed, "prático de economias quiméricas, tomadas as coisas em seu meio."⁴ (ROSA, 1979, p.4, 74 e 76). Refusing automatic uses of language, the author proposes paradoxes that, with their opposites and complementary meanings, provide continuous reflection or the opportunity to shirk the exclusive decisions to which the pragmatic discourses lead us.

¹About the refusal of the classical model and the realistic pattern of representation, see the article by João Adolfo Hansen (2007) "*Grande sertão: veredas* e o ponto de vista avaliativo do autor" ("G.S.:V. and the author's point of view").

²"Chalk-circle-to-hold-turkey".

³"They still only repeated: – 'However! However...' The turkeys also".

⁴"practical of chimeric economies, taken the things into their resources".

In the story “Grande Gedeão”, the slogger Gedeão refuses the legwork and adopts “the style of the birdies” after listening, half dozing, to fragments of the preaching of an itinerant priest about the Sermon on the Mount. A fragment of the myth is received by the giant Gedeão and the absent priest carries the authority on the interpretation. Gedeão decides to sell the “Afundado”, but his wife disagrees and sends him away from home. The small community interprets that there would be tangible motivations for that reaction, such as a buried pot of money, and benefits the hero promoted to manager of laziness and business. After adopting the style of the birdies, Gedeão is hired to manage the roofing of the house on the Boa constrictor farm (*fazenda das Jibóias*). He artfully prospers and, with humor, the story reverses the threat of tragedy included in the error, or in the prescription of the classical adjustment of the word to the thought as a reflection of things. “E – tome realidade!”¹ Instead of mediating senses supposedly given by things, language is also composed of voids for which the addressee creates meaning (ROSA, 1979, p.77-80).

The story “Reminiscção” begins with an advertence: “Vai-se falar da vida de um homem; de cuja morte, portanto. Romão – esposo de Nhemaria, mais propriamente a Drá, dita também a Pintaxa”². To people’s surprise the shoemaker Romão, since their improbable marriage by the extreme ugliness of the bride, forgave his wife for her constant wickedness. The narrator of the short story “Reminiscção” announces the remembrance of the long history of Romão’s life and death, showing the horror but also the compensation of the pure invention. The love story is enriched “como do amarelo extraem-se ideias sem matéria”³. The mystery is an effect, as well as the light of the firefly, and it is work, as well as the egret’s nest. Also Romão creates mystery. “Sapateiro sempre sabe. Ou num fundo guardasse memória pré-antiquíssima. Tudo vem a outro tempo”⁴. The shoemaker fabricates an artifact that protects the feet from the ground (ROSA, 1979, p.81-82).

After all the harm aggravated by Drá, the story ends with the death of Romão, which has occurred in large measure by the extravagant treatment of a mild illness. Drá assembled the people and the priest in the bedroom, and all of them watched her transfiguration in the luminous Nhemaria as soon as her husband died, or pretended to have died. The moment of Romão’s death may be named after the title of the story. Therefore, “Reminiscção” would be a neologism in which the substantive reminiscence coalesces with the augmentative suffix *-ção*, creating a verbal form which, in Portuguese, suggests a notion of invention (an idea without matter) instead of science. The vision of Nhemaria by the dying Romão is assimilated by the public opinion, and the shoemaker is compared to a whole triangle free of shackles and surrounded by islands. The perfection of the geometric figure reinforces the

¹“And – there goes more reality!”

²“It will be told about the life of a man; about ones death, so. Romão – husband of Nhemaria, properly known as Drá, also Pintaxa”.

³“As from yellow one extracts ideas without matter”.

⁴“Shoemaker always knows. Or in a depth pre-ancient memory was kept. Everything comes to another time”.

suggestion of the Platonic theory of reminiscence that the story reverses, by narrating a sequence of nonsense actions that result in a transfiguring vision of Pintaxa's ugliness and wickedness into Nhemaria. In Platonic reminiscence, the philosopher contemplates the truth of the things and puts aside the simulacra. In "Reminiscência", on the other hand, the community assimilates Romão's vision, which is produced by a loving, autonomous discourse, that enables the transformation of the beloved object's meaning. The story's name, "Reminiscência", consists of a neologism, fact that already signalizes the option for a new logic or for the refusal of the classical patterns of representation. These patterns are grounded in rational principles in order to guarantee verisimilitude to the sequencing of actions in the plot (ROSA, 1979, p.81-83).

In turn, the neologism "Cunhãberá" nominates the trope regarding where the story takes place and seems to be formed from the agglutination of the substantives "cunhã" (which designates the wife of the hick (HOUAISS; VILLARA, 2009) and "Berá" (which refers to the Arch of Triumph of Berá¹, in Tarragona, Spain). As the events occur, the people rename Romão's wife. Because of her ugliness, they initially call her Drá, in reference to "dragão"², "sinisga de magra"³.

After Drá betrays Romão with a foreigner who then discards her, the people nicknamed her Pintaxa, which seems to be a derogatory variation of the regionalism "*pinta*", a public personage, with the meaning of symptomatic aspect. In the denouement of the story, Romão has a vision of his beloved that causes the "sorriso mais verossímil"⁴. That makes the people of Cunhãberá, gathered in the bedroom, share with him the resplendent, beautiful vision of Nhemaria. The nologism "Nhemaria" seems to engage the Guaraní word "nhé"⁵ to the name "Maria", which, in the Christian tradition, gathers in its semantic field characteristics such as purity, virginity, resplendence and beauty. As we read the names as evidence of an allegorical plot, Cunhãberá is the place where the wife of the hick (*caboclo*⁶) goes through the triumphal arch arch opened by the transfiguring vision e by the verisimilar smile of Romão (ROSA, 1979, p.83).

¹The arc of Bera was built in 13 B.C. by Emperor Augustus, possibly to mark territorial limits (<http://www.rutasconhistoria.es/loc/arco-de-bara>).

²"Dragão" (*dragon*) designates "ugly women" in Brazilian slang.

³"Sinisga de magra" (*skinny sinisga*). "Sinisga" is a neologism that seems to be formed from the agglutination of words "sinistra" (sinister) and "vesga" (cockeyed).

⁴"The most verisimilar smile".

⁵"For us, Guaraní-Mbyá, the being *Nhe'e* is our principle, as human beings, persons. He is a spirit that gives the meaning of our lives. Every single habit and behavior belongs to *Nhe'e*. We, human beings, are just imperfect representations of this perfect being in which consist the Spirit of Name *Nhe'e*".) (<http://osguaranimbya.com.br/?p=937>)

⁶The masculine noun "*caboclo*" designates a mestizo from indigene, who can be a suspicious backcountry, dancer of popular festivities. According to the Houaiss Dictionary, "*caboclo*" is a generic designation to the spirits of Brazilian indigenous ancestors, which presumably arise in rituals and ceremonies that were idealized (already in the twentieth century) in conformity with the models of orishas, in the Jeje-Nagô theogony, and the literary Indianism of the Brazilian Romanticism (HOUAISS; VILLARA, 2009). The notion of the orisha "*caboclo*" approaches the demiurgic character of the Romantic genius.

If, according to Barthes (1984, p.49), the death of the author is the beginning of the scripture, the death of Romão is the beginning of Nhemaria. “Ele era a morte rodeada de ilhas por todos os lados. Mentiu que morreu.”¹ (ROSA, 1979, p.81-83) The renaming of Drá (*dragão*) into Nhemaria contests the notion of verisimilitude and validates Romão’s *discourse of love* (BARTHES, 2007), character who dies, or pretends to do it, in order to return it to the community.

The first preface of *Tutaméia* defines the narrative category “story” as a variable way of being, which sometimes denies the history, and sometimes wants to be as certain anecdotes. “O erro não existe” (ROSA, 1979, p.4). In a way that is based on “Aletria e hermenêutica”, life is supposed to be read in its supersense and through crooked lines, concept that the preface legitimates by quoting with humor the “Allegory of the Cave”. Plato excludes the crooked lines by evaluating them as error, and “Aletria e hermenêutica” denies the error by refusing the Platonic policy of *mimesis*. “Aletria e hermenêutica” states that the myths can read the life through crooked lines, related to discourses of not-sense, which, in turn, autonomous as the poetry’s verbal wits that create transcendence, puts aside the not-being or the error contained therein. Rosa proposes a political, diplomatic point of view, he is a friend of Plato but he is a better friend of truth. He does so by not excluding the crooked-lines, such as the ones of the myths and not-senses, and by valorizing the indeterminacy, so evaluated as *supersense* (ROSA, 1979, p.3, 4 and 8).

The three heroes (João, Gedeão and Romão) are characterized by their relation with the labor and by the contraposition of their acts to the community’s discourses, which Englekirk (1978, p.56) understands as a refusal to the reality. The style of the stories, the style of the birdies adopted by Gedeão, operates as a critique to the rationalist logic², and such process approximates the texts to the modern fiction, or to the verbal wits of the modernists. The style, which represents a challenge to the reader (responsible for producing knowledge through the aesthetic experience), results from the work of the author, element allegorized by the relations of the heroes with the labor and the community: the devotion of João towards the turkeys, the high’art (*alt’arte*) of Gedeão and the mystery of the life-death of the shoemaker Romão. The stories of João, Gedeão and Romão enact the game as a sort of device that products transformation, or what Nietzsche once called *transvalorization*.

The stylistic option for the game conflicts with the allegory of the authorship that the stories propose through the relation of the heroes with the labor. In ancient times, as advised by Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, the delight provided by the public readings of poetry used to have a social function and was considered useful as proof knowledge and action. In a different way, the contemporary uses of language associate the almost always solitary delight of

¹“He was the death surrounded of islands on all sides. He lied he has died”

²Regarding the critique of rationalism in Rosa’s literature, it is very enlightening the essay by João Adolfo Hansen (2012): “Forma literária e crítica da lógica racionalista em Guimarães Rosa” (*Literary form and critique to the rationalist logic in Guimarães Rosa*).

the reading with the aesthetic experience, what we dissociate from knowledge and action (COSTA LIMA, 2002, p.96). In Rosa's literature, the game coincides with the inventive use that the author makes of the language.

The paper "Grande sertão: veredas e o ponto de vista avaliativo do autor" proposes that this point of view has an aesthetical-politic sense which is little noticed when the narrative is understood just as the representation of contents, and that the point of view becomes more pertinent towards the form which creates indeterminacy "responsável pelas interações funcionais do autor com o leitor."¹ The point of view of the author distributes itself in the fiction of a language which operates through displacements, or which precludes the realistic determination of the social matters transfigured as the overcoming of the regionalism. Rosa's literature presents the fiction of a language pre-Babel, which blends linguistic matter from oral and written sources (taken from different regions in which Portuguese is spoken) with invented words and archaisms. The pre-Babel language opposes what Rosa calls current language, i.e., degraded versions of the instrumental language valorized by the cultural industry. It opposes also to the "logic" that makes the form correspond to classical and realistic patterns of representation. Rosa's fiction displaces the limits of the mimetic literary languages of the Aristotelian tradition about the form, performed as an constructive arbitrary masterminded by the author towards the reader (HANSEN, 2007, p. 58-62).

Guimarães Rosa proposes an authorial language, evaluating it also regarding the signs and representation patterns scrutinized by the author in his historical processes of signification. Early critiques have noticed the presence of neologisms. However, according to Mary L. Daniel (1968, p.31), they do not exceed the number of terms in dictionaries. In Rosa's literature, the style results from the authorial appropriation of the language and the genres without compromising the value of the transmission of the meaning.

The second preface of *Tutaméia*, "Hipotrélico", broaches the employ of neologisms and precedes the three stories which break the alphabetical order of the reading indices with the initials of the author. In that preface, the rhetoric of a humanist chorus, which judges the uses of neologisms, conflicts with the style of the narrative that refuses the logic, and displaces the categories of the mimetic discourse. *Tutaméia* displaces the notions of the *presence-author*, *work*, *project*, *representation*, and *form*, which required from the text the confirmation of knowledge previously acquired.

What would be the meaning of the almost twenty years of silence regarding such an editorial success as *Tutaméia*, published one year before the death of the author? Critics approach Rosa's literature's approach to Brazilian modernism and to the regionalism, comparing its differences and similarities. The paradoxical combination of vanguard and historicism occurred throughout the American continent, and particularly with political emphasis in Latin America. If Europeans experienced modernity as nostalgia for the mythical thought, dominated by historical discourse, the Americans valorized the oral

¹"responsible for the functional interactions between the author and the reader".

cultures, in which they sought the vestiges of ancient mythologies, whose peoples were ruined by colonization. The Platonic-Aristotelian logic hierarchies justify the nonexistence of everything that wanders out of the dictionaries and history books. “Queria, não queria, queria ter saudade. Não ri”.¹ (ROSA, 1979, p.147) In that case, Rosa’s literature was no stranger to the literary demands for aesthetic upgrade and political awareness, but introduced differences regarding to the modernizing assumptions of Brazilian literature, by displacing the debate for the current struggle for truth in Greek thought.

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¹“Do Want, do not want, do want to feel longing. Do not laugh”.

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