

Event and Singularity: *As mulheres do Tijucopapo* [The Women of *Tijucopapo*], the Contemporary Historical Novel of the Black Diaspora / *Acontecimento e singularidade: As mulheres de Tijucopapo, o romance histórico contemporâneo da diáspora negra*

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the analysis of Marilene Felinto's novel *As mulheres do Tijucopapo* [The Women of *Tijucopapo*]. First published in 1982, this novel significantly represents contemporary Black historical romance in Brazil. The narrative, which suggests an endogenous diaspora, unfolds from São Paulo to *Tijuco*, implicitly referencing the battle of *Tijucopapo* that occurred in Pernambuco on April 24, 1646. The impassioned narrator Rísia presents a fragmented critical exploration of the identities that establish "borders of exclusion" (Hall) and constructs a future-oriented view of time that opens new existential domains. I draw upon the concepts of "curved time" and "spiral" as articulated by Leda Maria Martins, as well as the notion of "anachronism" by Georges Didi-Huberman and intertwine them with "event" and "singularity" as proposed by Gilles Deleuze.

KEYWORDS: Historical novel; Diaspora and black literature; Curved time; Anachronism; Event and singularity

RESUMO

Meu objetivo é analisar o romance As mulheres de Tijucopapo, de Marilene Felinto, publicado originalmente em 1982, tomando-o como marco do romance histórico contemporâneo negro no Brasil. Narrado desde dentro da diáspora, diáspora endógena e a contrapelo, de São Paulo para o Tijuco, numa referência implícita à batalha de Tijucopapo ocorrida em Pernambuco em 24 de abril de 1646, a vocalidade da narradora, Rísia, é uma fragmentária exposição crítica sobre as identidades que criam "fronteiras de exclusão" (Hall), construindo uma concepção de tempo em devir que faculta aberturas a novos territórios existenciais e problematiza as bases do próprio romance histórico "clássico", eurocêntrico e historicista. Para lê-lo, uso os conceitos de "tempo curvo" e "espiralar" de Leda Maria Martins e de "anacronismo" de Georges Didi-Huberman, articulando-os aos de "acontecimento" e "singularidade" de Gilles Deleuze.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Romance histórico; Diáspora e literatura negra; Tempo curvo; Anacronismo; Acontecimento e singularidade

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Introduction: On Minor Literature and Their Multiplicity

The literature produced in Brazil is currently experiencing a period of significant activity due to the emergence of diverse forms of writing, including prose, poetry, the various forms of intersemiotic voice interventions, literary criticism, and academic research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Regina Dalcastagne's (2012) analysis reveals that large publishing groups have extensively influenced this production, particularly regarding gender, ethnicity, and class. However, it is important to note that several studies defy and question this established hierarchy. There is a vast potential for exploring productivity, allowing for ongoing challenges to the existing order. This is a time to reassess traditional beliefs, create fresh ones, and embrace alternate viewpoints on topics, bodies, emotions, memories, and connections with cultures and nature. It involves breaking down the rigid boundaries that have traditionally separated these aspects of life.

Beatriz Resende's (2008) observation at the beginning of the century about the increasing presence of political bias in all activities in Brazil and Latin America remains relevant and has become inevitable. The multitude of voices and viewpoints has sparked a crisis in the unity of the literary system, leading to a focus on minority perspectives related to gender, region, ethnicity, and generation. In the ten years following Dalcastagne's (2012) research, the legitimacy of this 'domain' has been openly challenged, just as it was previously outside of the dominant publishing companies. This contestation is primarily driven by political motives, extending beyond the realm of literature itself. Literature is both a subject of discussion and a medium for political disputes.

The idea of politicking all activities in Brazil and Latin America, as suggested by Beatriz Resende, resonates with the concept of "minor literature" put forth by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986)¹ in which each case is intimately linked to politics and carries a different story within it. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 82), "Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" as "a whole other story is vibrating within it."

¹ DELEUZE, Gilles; GUATTARI, Félix. *Theory and History of Literature*; v. 30. Translation by Dana Polan. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

This connection between politics and history, referred to as “other story” by Deleuze and Guattari (1986), emphasizes the relevance of reviving the historical novel as a genre of privileged discourse in contemporary times. This is due to its ability to intricately weave together elements of history, memory, power, dynamics, the subjugation of marginalized groups, and the resistance against such subjugation.

Here are several contemporary Black historical novels written in Brazil nowadays. These novels cover a period ranging from the late 20th century to the present: *Nada digo de ti, que em ti não veja* [Nothing to Say about You that You do not See] (2020) and *O crime do Cais do Valongo* [The Crime of Valongo Pier] (2018) by Eliana Alves Cruz, two Black narratives from the perspective of the genre; *Angola Janga* (2017) by Marcelo de Saleté, a comic about the conflicts around power relations in the quilombo of Palmares; *Rio negro 50* [Black River 50] (2015), by Nei Lopes, which maps the thriving Black culture of Rio de Janeiro in the 50s, *Um defeito de cor* [A Defect of Color] (2006), by Ana Maria Gonçalves, whose backdrop is the origins of the Malê Revolt in Bahia in 1835, narrating the eighty-year trajectory in the life of a slave and later freed narrator; Paulo Lins’s *Desde que o samba é samba* [Since Samba is Samba] (2012) and *Cidade de Deus* [City of God] (1994), which detail the origins of samba and how drug dealing spread in a Rio de Janeiro neighborhood. Despite their diverse perspectives, narrative structures, temporal contexts, and historical viewpoints, all these works suggest a pressing need to reconsider Brazilian literature. They challenge the notion of Brazilian identity and question Brazilian history, official discourses, and pervasive falsehoods. Moreover, they pave the way for the representation of new Black voices, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, the elderly, alternative religious practices, and other societal demands.

A structuring landmark of this new historical novel is the contemporary Black novel *As mulheres de Tijucopapo* [The Women of Tijucopapo] by Marilene Felinto (2004). Originally published in 1982, the novel makes a historical reference to the battle of *Tijucopapo* in the state of Pernambuco on April 24, 1646, while exploring the critical relevance of this historical event to contemporary Black experiences, particularly those of immigrants and women from the Northeast region of Brazil. A character named Rísia narrates the story as she experiences the exodus of Black communities while traveling along the BR 101 highway. It depicts an unconventional diaspora, with the protagonist

returning to *Tijuco* from São Paulo. The plot extends beyond the past, delving into numerous present-day settings and covering other temporalities.

As mulheres de Tijucopapo presents a challenge to two dimensions of historical narrative within the context of diaspora: the *classic* historical novel's foundation in the old historicism and how "the ideas of blackness and darkness are much the same" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 9).² Diaspora contexts, according to Stuart Hall (2003),³ are "*places de passage*" with positional and relational meanings that slide along a spectrum with no beginning or end. From a narratological perspective, if history depends on representational processes – a tacit agreement between an ideologically disseminated level of content and an associated level of expression – then the novel challenges this idea of representation. This challenge arises from the need for a new perspective on history that focuses on marginalized groups and rejects the notion of representation as the ultimate identity emblem and as a contributing factor to restrictive perspectives on subjects and their agency.

I intend to contribute to the ongoing critical and theoretical discussion around historical novels through an in-depth analysis of influential literary works. This investigation entails an assessment of the declining popularity and lasting existence of the examined subject in contemporary literature, juxtaposing it with the contemporary Brazilian historical novel, renowned for its amazing variety. At the core of this analysis is a landmark novel that utilizes an "anachronistic"⁴ (Didi-Huberman, 2015) and "spiraling"⁵ (Martins, 2015) semiotization of the diverse temporalities associated with diasporas, Black individuals, women, and Brazil's Northeasterners.

In a later stage, with a focus on the diverse ways time is articulated, I interpret *As mulheres de Tijucopapo* as a contemporary historical novel that explores Black history. This interpretation draws from Gilles Deleuze's concepts of events and singularities. Through an analysis of modern Brazil from the standpoint of blackness and minorities, this study aims to fully grasp the relevance of historical novels and convey the need for a new approach to understanding memory and history. This new viewpoint challenges fixed

² GILROY, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London & New York: Versos, 1993.

³ HALL, Stuart. Thinking the Diaspora: Home -Thoughts from Abroad. In: David Morsley (Ed.) *Stuart Hall. Essential Essays*. Volume 2. Identity and Diaspora. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

⁴ "Anacrônica."

⁵ "Espiralar."

concepts of identity and memory, shedding light on the impact of stigma and its underlying influences. Additionally, this approach allows for a deeper exploration of the various historical contexts.

1 Rise, Decline, and Resilience of the Historical Novel

Gyorgy Lukács' *The Historical Novel* (1962)⁶ examines this unique narrative discourse, specifically its manner of presenting time and conceptualizing the past as the "prehistory of the present" (Lukács, 1962, p. 53).⁷ In the Brazilian edition of the book Arlenice Almeida da Silva (*apud* Lukács, 2011, p. 18) argues that the historical novel emerged because of the numerous and significant changes that occurred during the nineteenth century. These changes challenged the perception of historical events as natural occurrences and instead prompted individuals to view themselves as active participants in shaping history.

The emergence of the novel as the quintessential form of modern literature is closely tied to this abrupt perception of historical events. The novel, being a genre that inherently grapples with the issue of history, aims to accurately depict everyday life, as described by Ferenc Feher (1997). This not only engenders the creation of the novel itself but also molds our understanding of literature. It is worth noting that the novel is the first form of literature that is exclusively literary.

Lukács attributes the rise of the historical novel to the perception that history exists as an ongoing and transformative process that directly impacts the lives of individuals (1962).⁸ According to him, the focus is not on the continual recounting of significant historical events, but rather on the fictional awakening of the individuals who play a central role in these events.

In his article published in 2007, Perry Anderson argues that the traditional historical novel typically revolves around ordinary characters of average stature and limited significance. These characters serve the purpose of providing a personal

⁶ LUKÁCS, Gyorgy. *The Historical Novel*. Translated by Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.

⁷ See footnote 7.

⁸ LUKÁCS, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. Translated from the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. London: Merlin Press, 1962.

perspective on the intense clash between opposing forces, illustrating the profound impact of societal dynamics on the lives of typical individuals.

Both Lukács and Anderson, rather than just analyzing the protagonists' protagonism, examine the ways of existence in the protagonist's conflictual connection with new and old institutions and the impact of the transformation of the world of labor on people's lives.

Fredric Jameson (2007) explores the declining popularity of the traditional novelistic model concerning the emergence of modernism. Jameson following Lukács' ideas distinguishes historical from modern novels by arguing that the former encompasses two different aspects: a public dimension and an individual one.

Additionally, he introduces a third dimension, which he terms "cosmological," drawing inspiration from Paul Ricoeur. These three levels are triggered by a "cataclysmic"⁹ event that impacts the public and the individual domains, eventually surpassing them. The author argues that the absence of this specific event is the main challenge that modernism presents for the historical novel.

According to Jameson (2007, p. 192), *Ulysses* by James Joyce cannot be considered a historical novel, for example, because it lacks a significant event that overlaps both individuals and collectives. The author argues that a historical novel requires a moment that profoundly affects the lives and fates of individuals, occurring all at once. The decline of the historical novel in the twentieth century can be attributed to the emphasis on 'pure perception'¹⁰ and "intensified subjectivism."¹¹ This is further compounded by a contemporary attraction to private life, which presents new challenges in expressing the previously assumed triple temporality of the existential, the public, and the cosmological.

Considering Jameson's comparison between the historical novel and Joyce's *Ulysses*, I believe that Clarice Lispector's character G. H., despite not being the character of a historical novel, serves as a valuable indicator of the pure perception of modernism and the emphasis on personal experiences during the post-modern era. It also serves as the gateway to other existential realms. This is evident in the intense atmosphere created by the unexpectedly clean room left by Janair. There is no strong historical foundation

⁹ "Cataclísmático."

¹⁰ "Percepção pura."

¹¹ "Subjetivismo intensificado."

that connects G.H.'s life to Janair's life. This radical work may be seen as a *symptom* of emerging lifestyles and a fresh approach to individuality, which encompasses a different understanding of historical significance and the events that shape it. G. H., in the context of discussing historical fiction, introduces a new element that is less focused and less familiar with significant events. Essentially, G. H.'s strong and self-centered perspective, to concur with Jameson, signifies the downfall of the historical novel. On the other hand, the historical novel in contemporary times serves as a crucial kind of discourse for minority agencies, enabling them to challenge and disrupt all forms of oppression based on differences. This is achieved by embracing an alternative temporality while simultaneously expressing disagreement with the dominant narrative.

A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (2004)¹² by Linda Hutcheon is unquestionably one of the most thought-provoking publications on contemporary historical fiction. Historiographical metafiction problematizes the heuristic foundations of the historical novel by recognizing that no historical fact is true a priori; all access to the past is textualized; historical facts and their subjects must be parodied rather than legitimized; there is thus no unity of either the subject or the historical fact itself. By surpassing the limited scope of the individual realm, one gains a critical perspective of the self and its history, whether it be recent or distant. Additionally, one rejects the fundamental principles of both historicism and the traditional historical novel, especially, the notions of teleology and causality.

Historiographical metafiction diverges from classic historical novels by focusing on “minor” events that occur on the fringes of established power structures. These events primarily involve marginalized groups such as Blacks, Indigenous people, gender minorities, workers, immigrants, and refugees, in other words, the impoverished and their struggles.

Walter Benjamin (1987) serves as an inescapable point of reference for the dual problematization of historiographical metafiction, which involves both the great event and its protagonist. Although Hutcheon does not explicitly cite Benjamin, his ideas are nonetheless relevant. According to Benjamin, the past carries an enigmatic indicator that compels it towards salvation, as nothing that occurred in the past can be regarded

¹² HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London & New York: Routledge, 2004.

as lost to history. The perilous nature of the past lies in its ability to connect with the present through remembrance. Put simply, it is crucial to consider an ethical standpoint that rejects a sympathetic connection with a history written by the winners, as well as the prevailing historical approach known as historicism. This perspective, as Perry Anderson has pointed out, is heavily reliant on a homogenous and thus devoid notion of time. Walter Benjamin's insights allow us to view the modern historical novel as a simultaneous reimagining of history and memory, while also serving as a forceful disruption in the present, originating from its internal multiplicity.

Georges Didi-Huberman (2015) draws inspiration from Walter Benjamin to explore the concept of anachronism in the context of art history. He argues that anachronism expresses the richness, complexity, and multiple influences present in images. According to Didi-Huberman, anachronism represents a fusion of diverse temporalities, creating a montage of heterogeneous timespans that is both extraordinary and impure. He believes that all history is anachronist and that myriad instances of time need to be considered to understand what happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen in the future. In historical encounters, the distinction between what happened and what could have happened is blurred, so we need to develop more sophisticated ways of understanding time. This involves navigating through various memories, connecting different periods, traversing the complexity of multiple memories, weaving together heterogeneous eras, and recomposing rhythms to fit “disjoint *tempi*”¹³ (Didi-Huberman, 2015, p. 43).

Leda Maria Martins, writing from a Black perspective, employs the concept of “curved times of memory”¹⁴ to explore genealogy in a manner that has a remarkable resemblance to Georges Didi-Huberman's use of anachronism:

A time ontologically experienced as the contiguous and simultaneous motion of retroaction, prospection and reversibility, dilation, expansion and containment, contraction and relaxation, and synchronization of instances composed of present, past, and future¹⁵ (Martins, 2021, p. 63).

¹³ “*Tempi disjuntos*” (Didi-Huberman, 2015, p. 43).

¹⁴ “*Tempos curvos da memória*” (Martins, 2021, p. 63).

¹⁵ “Um tempo ontologicamente experimentado como movimento contíguos e simultâneos de retroação, prospecção e reversibilidades, dilatação, expansão e contenção, contração e descontração, sincronia de instâncias compostas de presente, passado e futuro” (Martins, 2021, p. 63).

Therefore, based on these concepts of “anachronism” and “curved times of memory,” as well as Gilles Deleuze’s notion of an event and its related singularity, I interpret *As mulheres de Tijucopapo* as a historical novel about the Black diaspora.

2 *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo*: A Spiral of Event and Singularity

In contrast to the concept of history derived from historicism, which emphasizes a teleological and linear understanding, it is suitable to present Gilles Deleuze’s notion of ‘event’ as a heuristic framework for interpreting *As mulheres de Tijucopapo*.

Gilles Deleuze (1990, p. 1)¹⁶ characterizes the event as “the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present” since “it does not tolerate the separation or distinction of before and after, or of past and future.” These statements assume that there is a temporal and historical aspect in which the significance of an event is not limited to what occurred, but rather encompasses the multitude of potential outcomes that could have happened. According to Deleuze (1991),¹⁷ an event is not simply an accidental occurrence but a pure expression that provides us with a sign and awaits our response. In simple words, the first aspect of the event refers to the part that occurs and is successfully completed, while the second aspect refers to the part that its fulfillment cannot be achieved.

Sousa Dias (2012), as he interprets the concepts presented by Deleuze, states that “an event only exists through its effects. However, it is not solely restricted to them, nor is it limited to their present existence. It exists beyond the realm of a tangible reality”¹⁸ (Dias, 2012, p. 93). The event does not disclose the specific details of what occurred, but rather the time in the immeasurable form, encompassing all precise chronological specifications. This time expression instantaneously conveys the event’s meaning as an absolute virtual movement that surpasses many modes and temporal boundaries.

As mulheres de Tijucopapo is a contemporary historical fiction that explores the concept of the “meaning-event.” Allow us to peruse three excerpts from the book:

¹⁶ DELEUZE, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by Mark Lester. London: The Athlone Press, 1990.

¹⁷ See footnote 17.

¹⁸ “Um acontecimento não existe fora de suas efetuações. Mas também não se esgota nelas, não ‘está’ apenas no seus existir atual. Ele subsiste fora dessa existência sensível” (Dias, 2012, p. 93).

Where did these women come from, my heritage, women of the matter of Tijuco, thick locks tangled in the horse's mane, smeared on the silkworm's back, an Amazonian. It was one night, once upon a time, my mother was born in the bosom of a swamp. In muddy backwoods. Women like my mother bring the fate of those who go out into the world on their horses, horsewomen, defending themselves from who knows what, only from love. It is only known what love made them suffer from. It is only known what made them betrayed about love¹⁹ (Felinto, 2004, p. 80).

Then the women left. Roughly ten. From my window, I could see them riding the backs of bareback horses. Those women were among my ancestors, they were not my mother. They dragged their thick hair through the horse's mane-like ropes. I knew these women were born that way, it could only be. In that book of mine, a schoolbook, a book with a red figure in crayons, was it? A landscape? A revolutionary landscape of warrior women²⁰ (Felinto, 2004, p. 180).

My meeting with Lampião only took place at the entrance to Tijucopapo. But at that moment he entered the room slowly pushing the door. He was a man with whom I had chatted for so many months. Nine months. A manly man who wooed me on a moonlit night - I wanted to be seduced, a rare moonlit night, silky, because during the day the sun had melted me all over²¹ (Felinto, 2004, p. 182).

There is no implicit division between the present, past, and future. Instead, they are clustered in a dynamic and spiraling manner. According to Leda Maria Martins (2021), this temporality both expands and contains itself, remaining fixed while also allowing for the coexistence of multiple timespans. As a result, the narrative occasionally aligns with the women of the battle of Tijucopapo in the present, "from my window, I could see them riding the backs of bareback horses," while other times it positions them as ancestors and symbols of resistance "where did these women come from." Ultimately,

¹⁹ "Donde vieram essas mulheres assim, a minha herança, mulheres da matéria do tijuco, cabelos grossos arrastando pela crina do cavalo, escanchadas no lombo do bicho de seda, amazonas. Era uma noite, uma vez, minha mãe nasceu no seio de um pântano. Num sertão de lama. Mulheres como minha mãe trazem a sina das que desembestam mundo adentro escanchadas em seus cavalos, amazonas, defendendo-se não se sabe bem de quê, só se sabe que do amor. Só se sabe que do que o amor as fez sofrer. Só se sabe do que do amor as fez traídas."

²⁰ "Então saíram as mulheres. Umas dez. Eu pude vê-las pela janela montando o lombo de cavalos sem sela. Havia mulheres assim, então a minha herança, mulheres que não fossem minha mãe. Eram umas mulheres de cabelos grossos como cordas arrastando pela crina do cavalo. Eram umas mulheres que eu vira nascer, só podia ser. Só podiam ser. Naquele meu livro, um livro de escola, um livro com uma figura vermelha a lápis de cera, era? Uma paisagem? Uma paisagem revolucionária de mulheres guerreiras."

²¹ "Meu encontro com Lampião só se deu na entrada de Tijucopapo. Mas nesse instante ele entrou no quarto empurrando devagar a porta. Ele era um homem com quem eu mantivera um diálogo de pois de tantos meses. De nove meses. Um homem másculo que me seduzira na noite em que eu queria ser seduzida, uma noite de lua raramente melada porque de dia o sol me derreteria toda."

the narrator identifies herself as one of them in the future of the story, “my meeting with Lampião only took place at the entrance to Tijucopapo.” The event’s setting has both ancient and modern elements, ensuring its enduring mythological and historical essence, “it was one night, once upon a time, my mother was born in the bosom of a swamp.”

The event occurs within the intersection of language and history, much like the novel brings it to life through propositions, including insults, that allude to the event, the historical fact, and its ideological symbols. These propositions consistently exclude some details and remain incomplete, yet they exist as virtuality, as a state of being that can be realized throughout time. Therefore, it can be argued that Rísia’s voice, hindered by language, chatty propositions, revenge, and interaction with various interlocutors, especially the many women around her, is not expressed as a complete and resolved dialogue, but rather as an ongoing delay, constantly occurring while preserving the potential for new events.

The event is biface. On one side it’s focused on objects, and the other on language. Yet it defies reduction to its actions or its linguistic expressions. It is currently ‘incarnated’ in beings, bodies, and the quality of bodies, and is also updated in verbal utterances as its expressions, but without losing anything of its nature as an incorporeal extra-being and as an extra-propositional entity²² (Dias, 2012, p. 100).

Rísia’s speeches are ritornellos, which are continually revised, stabilized, and then receptive to further transformations, particularly in the realms of family and gender dynamics. This notion aligns with the concepts put out by Félix Guattari, they are the “virulent, partial fragments of enunciation” (Guattari, 1995, p. 20),²³ captured and solidified in a specific moment of the narrative, only to later burst forth and return in a different scene as a transformative change. This change affects the subjectivity that verbally conveys these fragments.

The correlation between language, history, repetition, and difference, which is evident in the occurrence of events in individuals, organisms, and their attributes, is most

²² “O acontecimento é biface. Tem uma face voltada para as coisas e outra para a linguagem. Mas sem ser redutível quer às suas efetuações quer às suas expressões linguísticas. Ele ‘encarna-se’ atualmente em seres, corpos e qualidade de corpos, e atualiza-se também nos enunciados verbais como suas expressões, mas sem nada perder da sua natureza de extra-ser incorporeal e de entidade extra-proposicional.”

²³ GUATTARI, Félix. *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*. Translated by Paul Bains and Julia Pefanis. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995.

effectively exemplified in chapter 13. The significance of this chapter is self-justified by its vast passage:

When you passed away I'm going to write an elegy. I don't stand up to believe. When you passed away I will look for my smiles in all the photos from before. Willn't experience more joy? When you passed away I cry my tears of salt. And the sea rumbles there, but I wanted it to be here inside me. And that I swallowed a wave of water into this empty, hollow, dry place. When you passed away, I went out into the countryside like a cornered mare. And, ironically, I run again for the freedom of my mare's legs. I don't want the world and anyone else. I shiver all over, tremble my locks, wag my tail. The field is green and endless. This is the only way I can save myself. Being in an endless field where there is no limit; Were you a limit? It's irony. The green meadow stretches out and I turn crankshafts when you passed away. I throw my arms and legs in gymnastics. I do jumps and acrobatics. When you passed away, I need to live. My body. What about my soul, though? Nothing in the wake of this hurricane caused its death. But did you pass away? You did not pass away, you did not pass away, you did not pass away. I jump five stars into the meadow in the name of your non-death. Please, you have not passed away. When you passed away, I still don't know whether I hate you or life for the fact that it dares to keep on living even as it takes your life. Was it life that killed you, this life that lives me? Me? No, I wasn't the one who killed you. Maybe I even wanted to hurt you. But not killing. Never. But if it is true that you died, then leave me for good. For this death of yours is my torment in life. I'm the one who perishes now. Let me go to the countryside at least without horse or port. The world and other people aren't important to me. On the day you passed away, I imagine you alive and I think you're seeing me thinking here about you, creating you in images of someone who didn't die. You are not dead. You are not dead. You are not dead. Dying is not the place for this. But if you died, leave me alone. Don't show up to me. And if you go for good. Don't stand there whispering to me (what? Its death?) or snooping through the keyhole. I can't stand that. This is not done with a person – to die and not to die²⁴ (Felinto, 2004, pp. 83-85).

²⁴ “Quando você morreu eu vou fazer uma elegia. Não me levanto em crer. Quando você morreu eu vou buscar, em todas as fotos de antes, os meus sorrisos. Não terei mais risos? Quando você morreu eu choro minhas lágrimas de sal. E o mar estronda lá mas eu queria que fosse aqui dentro de mim. E que eu engolissem onda d'água para esse vazio, oco, seco. Quando você morreu eu desembesto campina afóra como égua acuada. E, ironia, eu corro de novo a liberdade das minhas pernas de égua. Não quero mais o mundo e ninguém. Eu balanço o corpo, sacudo a crina, abano o rabo. O campo é verde e infinito. Eu só assim me salvo. De estar num campo onde é infinito e você não é limite; você era limite? Ironia. A campina verde se estende e eu viro cambotas quando você morreu. Eu jogo os braços e as pernas em ginástica. Faço saltos e acrobacias. Quando você morreu eu preciso viver. Meu corpo. Mas e minh'alma? Nada que a reboque desse furacão que se fez tua morte. Mas tu morreste? Tu não morreste, tu não morreste, tu não mor-res-te. Salto cinco estrela na campina em nome de tua não-morte. Por favor, não tenhas morrido. Quando você morreu eu não sei se odeio você ou se a vida, ela que ousa ainda me viver enquanto te mata. Foi a vida que te matou essa vida que me vive? Eu? Não, não fui quem te matou. Talvez eu ate quisesse ferir-te. Mas matar, não. Nunca. Mas se é verdade que morreste, então sai de vez de mim. Pois que essa tua morte é meu tormento em vida. Sou eu quem morre agora. Deixa-me ir aqui pelo campo ao menos, eu, sem cavalo nem porto. Eu

Chronological time, with its linear progression from a past historical event, is disrupted by the concept of endlessness, which brings together the event and the present moment of the story. This disruption gives rise to new forces and possibilities, as seen in the lines “When you passed away, I’m going to write an elegy” or “I went out into the countryside like a cornered mare. And, ironically, I run again for the freedom of my mare’s legs.” From this eternal and ever-present endlessness, both in the past and the future emerges an original connection between the realm of objects and emotions, as reflected in the saying “and the sea rumbles there, but I wanted it to be here inside me.” Death, as an ultimate significance, undergoes transformations and adapts to illuminate new existential realms, “don’t stand there whispering to me (what? Its death?) or snooping through the keyhole. I can’t stand that. This is not done with a person – to die and not to die.” Those lines seem to emphasize the complete recognition of the potential of all things to persist, to endure indefinitely in an infinite state. Let us examine the subject based on the insights provided by Leda Maria Martins:

Death is an event, a necessary act in the dynamics of the transformation and renewal of all that exists. It enables the continuous movement of the cosmos and its perpetual renewal and regeneration. While death may signify the loss of an individual within a family, at a collective level it can lead to enrichment²⁵ (Martins, 2021, p. 65).

Furthermore, as Sousa Dias has previously expressed, death is a double-edged event that simultaneously manifests past events from an alternate timeline and preserves them in the future, “on the day you passed away, I imagine you alive and I think you’re seeing me thinking here about you, creating you in images of someone who didn’t die.”

The dual nature of the event is consistently underlined in the narrative through the repetition of complete sentences with slight alterations and the recurrence of various

não quero mais ninguém nem o mundo. No dia que você morreu eu te imagino vivo e acho mesmo que você está me vendo a pensar aqui sobre você, a criar você em imagens de quem não morreu. Você não morreu. Você não morreu. Você não morreu. Isso não se faz com uma pessoa – morrer. Mas se você morreu, me deixe em paz. Não me apareça. E se vá de vez. Não fique aí a sussurar-me (o quê? A sua morte?) ou a bisbilhotar-me pelo olho da fechadura. Isso eu não aguento. Isso não se faz com uma pessoa – morrer e não morrer.”

²⁵ “A morte é um evento, um ato necessário na dinâmica da transformação e de renovação de tudo o que existe, permitindo o movimento contínuo do cosmos e sua permanente renovação e revitalização. Se, no plano familiar, a morte significa a perda do indivíduo, no plano coletivo ela traduz seu enriquecimento.”

Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 20 (3): e66477e, July/Sept. 2025

episodes. While these episodes may not unfold each time, they merge with other parts in a fragmented and underdeveloped manner, resembling persistent memories without any predetermined causal connection. However, they return as something different, representing another circumstance. The culmination of all these elements, the emergence of the event as an endless, ongoing, and postponed occurrence, might be summarized as follows: “Who had planned this war that I conceived”²⁶ (2004, p. 115), where two chronological dimensions are intricately entwined within the same statement.

The battle of Tijucopapo is not a typical historical event set in a bygone era like a classic historical novel. Tijucopapo, where the historical event unfolds, is only mentioned in chapter 30 out of 33, yet it continues to resonate throughout the story. “Every thought, every day, brings me back to As mulheres de Tijucopapo”²⁷ (Felinto, 2004, p. 27), says Rísia, without the grand event needing explicit mention more than once in the narrative.

The story unfolds from within the diaspora, delving into the return to origins damaged by abandonment, poverty, and racism, where insults, jokes, and affection intertwine in a narrative including multiple agencies: gender, race, and regionalism. It’s both a Black and Northeastern novel, rich in regionalisms such as “*pisa*” [a beating], “*tabefe*” [a slap], “*gota serena*” [amaurosis fugax], and “*bexiga lixa*” [smallpox]; this is a story about gender and generation, a portrayal of childhood as experienced by a community of women as seen through the words and vindictive viewpoint of Rísia, who is always furious and unyielding, stemming from her struggles with speech impediments.

In the nine months of traveling from São Paulo to Recife, she returns to the homelands of her childhood – Poti? Recife? São Paulo? – whatever. From this transformative experience sprang an angry, sarcastic, lyrical, bitter, homicidal, and powerful woman. Tijuco’s clay immanence, in line with Gilles Deleuze, enables the historical strata and their singularizing mechanisms to become consistent.

The “tijuco” is the mud; it is the clay; it is the pond; metaphors that render meaningless any fixed identity whose source runs around a fact firmly established back there defining a subject always the same. Clay is neither the commencing nor the childhood nor does it signify the lack thereof. In Rísia’s discourse, the clay and the “tijuco” symbolize the external manifestation of time from within. In the diaspora, time,

²⁶ “Quem planejara essa guerra que inventei.”

²⁷ “Todas as ideias, todos os dias, me remetem às mulheres de Tijucopapo.”

in its endless form, is a continuous and ever-present force that encompasses both the past and the future while remaining rooted in the present, “where identities become multiple”²⁸ (Hall, 2003, p. 27) and significantly disrupts the cultural and historical dynamic of belonging (Gilroy, 2001):

The points or nodes that make up this new constellation are not successive stages in a genealogical account of kinship relationships—branches of a single-family tree. The future is not produced from a sequence of ethnic teleology. Nor are they points of a linear trajectory toward the destination that identity ultimately represents²⁹ (Gilroy, 2001, p. 20).

Several critics have cited the book’s supposed search for identity as a means of overcoming language barriers (Gonçalves, 2001; Machado, 2009), reliving one’s childhood (Vieira, 2001), or dealing with an overabundance of subjectivity and intimacy (Bastos, 2013). I do not entirely agree with these interpretations of the work, since the critics’ stress on Rísia’s ongoing house isolation stems from misguided concerns about her childhood, identity, and self.

If the event is constantly discontinuous or if the same thing repeats in several forms, then childhood, identity, and subjectivity cannot be regarded as stable or *identical*. These concepts are never resolved in a purely individual sphere, but rather cross-sectionalized and eventually create interfaces with everything that is not a true subject in and of itself, therefore fully controlling its meanings and, consequently, a limited number of existential territories.

Moreover, the women in the title could refer to Rísia, the narrator, and the other women she addresses (Nema, Luciana, her mother, etc.). The title also encompasses As mulheres de Tijuco, who exist in both mythical and factual realms, spanning from 1646 on the banks of Recife to encounters with other women in the 1980s during the military dictatorship; it is worth noting that this encounter is repeated in the novel’s epilogue.

²⁸ “onde as identidades se tornam múltiplas.”

²⁹ “Os pontos ou nós que compõem esta nova constelação não são estágios sucessivos num relato genealógico de relações de parentesco – ramos de uma única árvore familiar. Não se produz o futuro a partir de uma sequência de teleologia étnica. Nem tampouco são eles pontos de uma trajetória linear em direção ao destino que a identidade afinal representa.”

Social, collective, and institutional processes revolve around what Félix Guattari (1995)³⁰ called the non-individual and pre-subjective components of subjectivity. The pre-verbal layers of Rísia's subjectivity, as seen by the numerous references to stuttering and muteness in *As mulheres de Tijucopapo*, can be considered pre-subjective because the dominant idea of subjectivity is closely intertwined with the modes of meaning that are inherent to language use. This suggests that subjectivity cannot be grasped in stages, as the pre-verbal layers and the existential domains are supposedly supplanted by linguistic activity throughout childhood and into adulthood. Rísia reveals the inverse; the pre-verbal components nevertheless act as modifiable potential vectors and coexist with the verbal means of conveying real-world significance.

Rísia dismantles all symbols, particularly when it comes to her family, and vehemently articulates the reality of the occasions that mold her subjectivity. The many layers of meaning and the meanings that were assumed beforehand are scornfully dismissed, dismantled, and deemed insignificant. Linda Hutcheon calls Rísia's numerous "ex-centricities" her deliberate rejection of establishing a fixable and stable identity. She rejects any aspects of femininity, motherhood, or familiarity: "Mom, for example, threw the weight of her sinful pregnancy in my hands"³¹ (2004, p. 54); "Mom and dad were hell"³² (2004, p. 44) or "daddy, you son-of-a-bitch. Mom, you ass face"³³ (2004, p. 28). It proliferates: "What I am has no name"; "I am capable of becoming a prostitute, a homosexual, a madwoman, a drunkard, a bandit, an outcast"; "I have the floor and I am the one who chooses."³⁴

This premise of temporality as a spiral and an ever-changing element offers a criticism of identity as stigma and restriction. Hence, there is a deliberate attempt to dismantle identities and their stigmas: "My grandmother was so black that she dragged herself"; "I come from Indians and blacks, dark people," to conclude: "They still try to define me, bastards. Without even knowing me, I discount with stones. I will never allow

³⁰ See footnote 24.

³¹ "mamãe, por exemplo, jogava o peso de sua gravidez de mundo nas minhas mãos."

³² "mamãe e papai eram um inferno."

³³ "papai, seu filho-da-puta. Mamãe, sua cara de cu" (2004, p. 28).

³⁴ "o que sou não tem nome"; "sou capaz de virar uma prostituta, uma homossexual, uma louca, uma bêbada, uma bandida, uma marginal"; "eu tenho a palavra e sou eu quem escolhe."

myself to be defined”³⁵ (2004, p. 23). Thus, Rísia’s focus is not on exploring the desire for identity and its associated factors, as some critics have suggested, but rather on deconstructing them: “my childhood was great,” “I am a person of devilish memories.”³⁶

Nothing is resolved solely by the subject and its linguistic and important frameworks; therefore, the instance of the subject becomes irrelevant if the event is infinite, tangible, virtual, delayed, already there, and potentially changeable in another space-time relationship. Rather, it is the occurrence of a singularity. There have never been stable signifiers in the context of diaspora. In Rísia’s words: “I do not find a single way of seeing without deforming the object seen”³⁷ (2004, p. 68). Everything in existence revolves outer surface, every detail is replicated as a unique loop, “Nema, I need to say that I loathe it when love causes pain and drives me crazy”³⁸ (2004, p. 72); “Nema, Ema slim e seriema”³⁹ (2004, p. 73).

Throughout the novel, Rísia covers a wide range of interconnected topics that encompass her subjectivity, including her family, childhood memories, diaspora, affinities, the disparities between Recife and São Paulo, Brazil’s Northeast and Southeast, the military dictatorship, gender hierarchies, and she repeatedly denounces racism. Additionally, some interpersonal challenges, such as one-sided affection or failed bonds, intrinsically connect to her personal needs. Moreover, the conventional understanding of childhood, which closely links to the concept of the subject, is not relevant to Rísia’s transformations.

I disagree with Eliane Diógenes’s assertion in the note accompanying the third edition that the narrative represents a return to the protagonist’s origins. The battle of Tijucopapo is not a definitive genesis, but rather a recurring event that occurs without leaving any evidence or self-referential identity. The interconnectedness of everything is evident, and the potential for “return” is ever-present: “I departed from home and the city because I lost the beginning”⁴⁰ (Felinto, 2004, p. 104). Also, she states with conviction,

³⁵ “minha vó era tão negra que se arrastava”; “venho de índios e negros, gente escura,” para concluir: “ainda tentam me definir, os filhos da mãe. Sem sequer me conhecerem, eu desconto com pedras. Jamais vou admitir que me definam.”

³⁶ “minha infância foi grande,” “sou uma pessoa de lembranças endiabradas.”

³⁷ “Eu não encontro um modo sequer de ver sem deformar o objeto visto.”

³⁸ “Nema, eu preciso dizer que odeio porque o amor faz de uma dor que me enlouquece.”

³⁹ “Nema, Ema esguia e seriema.”

⁴⁰ “saí de minha casa e da cidade porque perdi o começo.”

“I’m in the middle, halfway”⁴¹ (2004, p. 81), saying: “the beginnings discourage me because I rarely believe”⁴² (2004, p. 43), and “It feels like I’m nearing the end. The beginning is behind a range of mountains. How can I reconnect them?”⁴³ (2004, p. 78). Thus, Rísia desires to master a language that is not often spoken, a variant of English that is consistently put off, “a foreign substance that captivates me and sets me apart from sending a letter in the language of my people, my language”⁴⁴ (Felinto, 2004, p. 90).

Rísia withdraws inwards, to a time beyond chronological time and static spatiality, so that inside and outside – Northeast and São Paulo – are always different manifestations of an endless being-for-itself. In contrast to the commonplace, being-for-itself is akin to an inward perspective that impacts and affects other bodies and states of affairs, subjects, and subjectivities, within which the former and the latter are no longer fundamental conceptions.

Far from being individual or personal, singularities preside over the genesis of individuals and persons; they are distributed in a potential which admits neither Self nor I, but which produces them by actualizing or realizing itself, although the figures of this actualization do not at all resemble the realized potential. Only a theory of singular points is capable of transcending the synthesis of the person and the analysis of the individuals these are (or are made) in consciousness (Deleuze 1990, p. 103).⁴⁵

Rísia, in simple terms, is the nomad who roams the pond, the clay, and the tijuco. It’s not something that disappears when a person does; rather, it is something that constantly transforms into something else, open to a new and entirely unexpected transformation: “I feel like a tree, I feel like a root, a manioc coming out of the earth”⁴⁶ (Felinto, 2004, p. 50); or, “wanting to be a mare that neighs so as not to be a woman who cries vomit over losing a man”⁴⁷ (2004, p. 51).

⁴¹ “estou no meio, na metade.”

⁴² “os inícios me desanimam pois que eu raro acredito.”

⁴³ “eu me sinto mais próxima é do fim mesmo. O começo ficou lá atrás serras e serra. Como ligar um no outro?”

⁴⁴ “Um material estrangeiro que me fascina e me separa dessa proximidade toda de enviar uma carta de mim na língua de minhas pessoas, a minha língua.”

⁴⁵ DELEUZE, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by Mark Lester. London: The Athlone Press, 1990.

⁴⁶ “Me sinto como uma árvore, me sinto raiz, mandioca saindo da terra.”

⁴⁷ “Querer ser uma égua que relincha para não ser mulher que chora vômitos de ter perdido um homem.”

In *As mulheres de Tijucopapo*, time, as defined by Marilena Chauí in the preface to the first publication, is a combination of future memories. Within it, childhood is anxieties; the present is already past and will always remain. (Chauí, 2004). The concepts of subject and subjectivity, person and personality, are only relevant when considered collectively, as a complete being possesses its extremes and the ability to embody alterity, “The people, the center of the crowd, the links in the chain that binds us all together despite its inevitable descent into oblivion—there’s where I’d rather be,” because “nobody is anything. All you can say is that someone has looked into it. It’s insignificant. The act of being is to be...”⁴⁸ (2004, p. 118).

To Conclude, Another Way to Begin

When analyzing *As mulheres de Tijucopapo* through the lens of a historical novel, we should consider several factors, including the novel’s subjective nature, the temporal and spatial context, the great event that gave rise to the classic historical novel, and the “human dramas”⁴⁹ that revolve around the narrative. According to Georges Didi-Huberman (2015), the concept of a chronological object can only be understood in its anachronistic counterrhythm. This uncovers alternate historical becomings and agents that go beyond mere assimilations into pre-established identities or official national histories and their repetitive representations.

The contemporary historical novel in a diaspora context aims to preserve aspects of history deemed “unrepresentable” rather than focusing on what is replicated identically, formed by the passive relationship between signifiers and signifieds, and interactions between signs and images. As Leda Maria Martins (2021) explains, this process involves asymmetrical equilibrium, displacement, metamorphosis, and covering, which are fundamental principles and strategies in shaping cultural development across the Americas.

Consequently, the lives that are represented symbolically in that place not only experience the impacts of rapid social transformations, specifically the dominant

⁴⁸ “Eu prefiro o meio da multidão, a massa, os elos da corrente que nos conduz ao nada mas nos conduz juntos.” “Ninguém é coisa nenhuma. O máximo que se tem é que alguém estudou alguma coisa. Não se é coisa nenhuma. O verbo ser é...”

⁴⁹ “Dramas humanos.”

becomings of capital and its pre-established ways of shaping subjectivity; they resist this by refusing any fixed identity, any presupposed future, of any form of subjection that elevates the subject and their personal beliefs as the source of all promise, which is ultimately absorbed by its capital.

Gyorgy Lukács (1962)⁵⁰ accurately recognized that the portrayal of the characters in Walter Scott's novel was not a reflection of their psychological state, but rather a representation of their objective socio-historical context. The instance of affection as a potent catalyst for forging new connections with the historical becomings is a fundamental element in the contemporary historical novel. However, it is not a psychological bias, instead, it is a phenomenon that is influenced by hypothetical past traumas that consistently disturb future encounters. This idea is currently undefined and has not been fully formed inside the intricate framework of language. This is a construction of individual experiences and feelings that have not yet been labeled, or rather, require the formulation of a new lexicon to articulate them.

The concept of pure subjectivity, defined by Frederic Jameson (2007) as a barrier to the endurance of the historical novel, becomes inconsequential due to the inherently problematic nature of the subject. Rísia's objective, for example, is to unravel the various constraints that confine her to childhood, tradition, and stigma while simultaneously acknowledging and addressing these factors. According to Guattari (2012), self-alterity refers to the presence of several others within oneself, manifested through various aspects of one's identity. Rísia embodies these elements in fragmented forms that extend beyond the boundaries of individuality.

If the event encapsulates the unrepresentable with the utmost force, the subjectivity preserved by the dominant becomings of history – the official narratives of nations and their heroes – is gradually diminishing due to their rigid allocation of roles and agencies to the masses. This subjectivity has already been transformed, assimilating its other aspects. It means the rejection of identity is the flip side of rejecting the representation it imposes on lives. Rísia serves as a metonymy for all these uncontainable, potent, and boundless becomings, whose initial action is to dismantle all conventions, all passive connections between the signifier and the signified, between discourse and history between existence and time.

⁵⁰ See footnote 9.

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Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

1. The article's title is functional rather than decisive. Technically, the concepts of event and singularity give significance to the second part (As mulheres de Tijucopapo: spiral of event and singularity). The author anticipates this in the second paragraph of page 5. Extensive changes to the introduction and the rest of the first part are necessary to make the title more decisive rather than functional,
2. The study proposal and its goals are clear: "the analysis of Marilene Felinto's novel *As mulheres de Tijucopapo*. First published in 1982, this novel significantly represents contemporary Black historical romance in Brazil." The theoretical framework and the debate of the second part provide a highly successful accomplishment. The range of theories discussed, and their interaction, conflicts, and distinctions emphasize the study's relevance.
3. The originality of the article consists in the proposition of *As mulheres de Tijucopapo* (Felinto, 2004) as the temporal marker of a novel "The narrative, which suggests an endogenous diaspora, unfolds from São Paulo to Tijuco, implicitly referencing the battle of Tijucopapo that occurred in Pernambuco on April 24, 1646." This perspective offers a fresh approach to reading a well-known and widely debated novel. However, when theoretical support is required, it appears to diverge from the act of reading itself, resulting in a distinct authoritarian voice. This voice argues that if the reader is not acquainted with the initial part, they may have difficulty understanding the subsequent part of the article. However, is it truly the case? The first part, consisting of thirteen pages, might be considered a single article in the field of literary theory. The second part, on the other hand, could benefit from a more cohesive integration of its theoretical bases. The article's structure bears a resemblance to that of a thesis or dissertation chapter, with an attempt to adopt a different shape. This impression is confirmed by the extensive and recurring quotations and certain revision errors that do not harm the overall quality of the text but detract from the need for more accurate management.
4. A new revision is necessary to address issues such as the rapid change in font size from 12 to 11 on page 3, third paragraph, and inconsistencies in punctuation throughout the text.
5. Based on the observations mentioned before, it is crucial to note that the work has high literary quality and analytical strength, which is rather significant.

Further remarks

1. If the author considers the observations relevant, it would be appropriate to focus on the initial part of the article, as well as on the writers whose theories bolster the purpose and the validated interpretation

2. Another option for organizing the article is to retain the entire second part, incorporating some of the reflections presented in the first part. It is not simply a matter of “copying and pasting,” but rather a process of rewriting.

3. The observations presented here are based on the content outlined in the abstract. If the article maintains its current form of twenty-five pages, there will be a discrepancy between the content described in the abstract and the actual content of the text. However, this discrepancy is not caused by a shortage but rather by a theoretical overflow. The article will enhance its goals and achieve greater objectivity by reducing its length and focusing on 15 to 20 pages, along with the necessary references. APPROVED WITH SUGGESTIONS [Revised]

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Reviewed on May 30, 2024.

Review II

The article provides a pertinent and comprehensive analysis of the historical novel. The analysis of *As mulheres de Tijucopapo* holds the reader’s attention. The article’s introduction contains a few errors in accentuation and comma usage. The topic “Rise, decline and resilience of the historical novel” is well-founded, yet it suffers from word repetition and occasional lack of clarity. It explains many doubts regarding the concepts mentioned in the introduction and topic 1: “As mulheres de Tijucopapo: spiral of event and singularity.” APPROVED WITH SUGGESTIONS [Revised]

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