

Pour une géopoétique interaméricaine

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Resumo: Esta resenha relata a pesquisa de Lícia Soares de Souza sobre um novo modelo de Geopoética Urbana. Tal modelo parte da semiótica da cultura, com seu conceito central da Semiosfera (LOTMAN, 1982) na qual os processos de signos operam no conjunto de muitos ambientes interconectados. A autora propõe uma geopoética interamericana a partir de romances contemporâneos (Gervais, Mavrikakis, Segura, Proulx,

Arcan, entre outros) que criam figuras espaciais genuínas de Montreal. Os romances analisados abordam a globalização nas Américas onde se desenvolve a ilha de Montreal, como espaço urbano suscetível de perder suas referências de origem francesa. Com a ideia de texto-xadrez, cujas peças, proporcionam diferentes movimentos em um tablado hipodâmico, a autora privilegia a figura do “cavalo flâneur” que desestrutura os traçados bem desenhados, com o fim de superpor as imagens dos subterrâneos invisíveis da cidade e as da superfície visível, através das quais tenta-se flagar uma nova estética geopoética.

Palavras-chave: Geopoética urbana. Semiosfera. Montreal. Texto-xadrez. Flânerie.

Summary: This summary considers Lícia Soares de Souza’s research on a new model of Urban Geopoetics. This model departs from the semiotics of culture, with its center on Semiosphere (LOTMAN, 1982), in which sign processes operate in a group of many connected environments. The author proposes an inter-american geopoetics based on contemporary novels by Gervais, Mavrikakis, Segura, Proulx, Arcan, among others, who create genuine Montreal spatial figures. The novels analysed approach globalization in the Americas where the island of Montreal develops as an urban space susceptible of losing its French origin references. From the idea of a chess text whose pieces offer different movements on a hypodynamic board, the author privileges the “flâneur horse” a figure that unstructures the well designed courses with the aim of superimposing images of the invisible city’s undergrounds and of its visible surfaces and through them try to surprise a new geopoetic aesthetics.

Key words: Urban geopoetics. Semiosphere. Montreal. Chess text. *Flânerie*.

Pour une Géopoétique interaméricaine by Licia Soares de Souza, Saint-Denis, Société des Écrivains, 2019, presents a new method of analyzing Geopoetics. It depicts the representation of Montreal among various novels of contemporary Quebec literature. As the author states, this study is the fruit of several debates among her group of researchers (including Brazilians, Canadians, and French professors) that arose in the *Conferences of the French Canadian for the Development of the Knowledge Association* (ACFAS - Association Franco-Canadienne pour l'Avancement du Savoir). *Figures Spatiales de Montreal*, published in 2017 (Montreal's 375th birthday), had already analyzed some of the books that are discussed here.

In this new work, the author improves and **strengthens** the Geopoetics method, collaborating with the concepts regarding Semiosphere (Lotman, 1982) and the stratification of Discourse Analysis (discursive universes, fields, and spaces). She creates the concept of *chess-text* where the elements move according to the needs of the space narration. For a dynamic character narration that crosses new cultural boundaries of different discourses, the author emphasizes the moves of the

Knight. The *Knight* is able to jump linearly to the other chess pieces, metaphorized as other characters. The space analysis is very important because it creates *geograms* (diagrams in Peirce's sense) that link the surface of the city to its underground. There are many characters "flâneurs" that move among the streets, roads and subway, that is known as RÉSO, in Montreal.

In France, the literature of sewers is very important in the XIX century, mainly because of Victor Hugo's work. We don't have such literature in Montreal, but some novels emerge that begin to illustrate how to dynamize the superficial city (a Hypo-Damien Model) in relationship to the subterranean; these areas of business and commerce as opposed to the slums or impoverished with basements infested with mice. The author analyzes and debates the various movements of the rebel characters, such as the *Knight*, with the dystopian *Oscar de Profundis* by Catherine Mavrikakis. She describes how the Francophone's world of Quebec can disappear because of Montreal's financial wealth and reality.

She depicts the many problems of globalism and gentrification that create increased economic disparity, separating

the “*many poor*” from the small caste of “*The Wealthy*” These two spaces, poor and rich, will fight for Montreal’s last remaining resources that is needed to survive.

In the book, we see that the indigents try to build a revolution that would overcome the hegemonic situation of the *Mondial* (Global) State. They conspire to kidnap the well known Canadian, Oskar de Profundis, who comes from Los Angeles where he lives now. He intends to visit his country where people have forgotten how to speak French, but they speak a bastard English, almost incomprehensible.

The destitute, and sick are defeated and killed by soldiers of the Global State, while the affluent people win the fight and return to Montreal’s urban spaces. Mavrikakis’ lesson concerning the victory of savage capitalism is linked to a financial system that destroys parts of humanity and excludes people that think differently about the ruling class.

Afterwards, the author observes a magnificent book about the meeting of two children who are excluded from Montreal’s hegemonic semiosphere. One child is born in Quebec, but he was found on the street by a family that adopted him. He says that he was “adapted” to live with a no-biological family.

In order to build a speech about the sadness of children that are marginalized in a society, Sylvain Trudel, in *Le souffle de l’Harmattan* (1986) creates two narrative “*Knights*” that crisscross the dystopian city known as Montreal. Those children form a new space that they call *Ityopia* which exists as a passage from Montreal to Africa. It is a mixed space with flexible boundaries that allow superposition of African nature spaces in a new territory. The children build *Ityopia* in order to escape from the rigid rules of the semiospheric zone that they call “*Accident*” (analogous to *Occident*). Additionally, Trudel tries to show that the dialogue among people of different cultures is possible and desired, as opposed to immigrants’ acculturations by force and severity.

On the other hand, *Squeegiee* by Henri Lamoureux (2003), owns a group of “*Knights*” that invade the houses of the city to try to rebuild new kinds of communities. This action known as *squatting* is very significant because it reveals the thoughts of young people who want to invade *The Hôtel de Ville* (the mayor’s house) and *Notre Dame de Montréal*. The novelist produces an intertextual discourse with texts from Victor Hugo. *Cour de Miracles* stages

character's actions between a *wonderful* Paris with its underground to show that the space shelters different people that can coexist in the same territory.

Lamoureux describes a new character from the underground that passes through the labyrinths of the interior side of Montreal, unknown to most. Licia de Souza compares the literature of Hugo and that of the German author Süskind (*Das Parfum*, 1994) with Lamoureux's work. The Novel *Squeegee* is full of *junkies* who go between the surface and the underground, where strange and unpredictable sounds and odors emerge, that people in general never experienced. Lamoureux like Mavikrakis, tries to construct a literature that reveals this invisible world. It is hidden under the lights of a vibrant Montreal, similarly as Hugo did with Paris.

The author further analyzes other novels such as *Paradis. Clef en main* of Nely Arcan, that talks about the communication difficulties of Antoinette, a girl that is depressed and considers suicide. In downtown, she turns in circles emphasizing the insularity of Montreal that is developing above a "lazy" St Laurent river, doing nothing to stop the envelopment of French culture by the

North American continent.

The character Antoinette would like to die similarly to the French Queen of the 18th Century. She prepares with *Paradis Clef en main's* employees a guillotine simulation that could kill her. However, instead of hurting her head, it injures her back and she becomes a paraplegic. In a room well equipped with all kind of modern technology, she can communicate with people by social media and discuss the social configuration of her society that pushes people to suicide. Globalization and financial system are the most insidious economic mechanisms that break the spirit and joy of living for those who wish to exist with human and spiritual values. With technological tools, Toinette can prepare her chess texts and weave various narratives that reveal the hidden faces of an urban semiosphere that neglects more and more disenfranchised people.

One of the last novels investigated is *Ce qu'il reste de moi* by Monique Proulx. In this novel, Montreal is the main character witnessing the collective destiny of various citizens with multiple voices. They would arrive to the XXI century to realize the dream of Jeanne

Mance of Montreal, *The Crazy Enterprise* (1642-1665,) that imagined harmonious lives between Natives and French Colonials. Of course, this harmony never existed, but this conception of solidarity between different people remained in the minds of Montreal's population who were able to receive new immigrants without hostility. The insularity and *Nordicity* are very debated in this work by Licia Soares de Souza, where the island, Montreal, becomes like a "white jewel" even during the chaotic times caused by the glare ice crisis. Jeanne Mance dies in Montreal and in her will and last testament she gives her heart to the inhabitants of this city where it will beat to motivate a breadth of narratives about cultural mobility. This permits a new form of urban Geopoetics that shows positive ways to reflect cultural accommodations.

Finally, we can consider that Licia Soares de Souza creates a very interesting method of Urban Geopoetics. Taking into account the urban configuration of Montreal, the author examines the Hipo-Damien plan in relationship to its labyrinth underground that is constantly invisible to its inhabitants. For the

flâneurs characters, it is very pertinent because they reveal to the readers, connections between spaces that they could not suspect. With their senses, they can produce a web of geograms able to fertilize the imagination and the knowledge about the city. In this field, the author considers arrangements with images and words in several unchained *syntagms* that can work together in a *chess-text*, a tool to weave links between time and territory.

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Notas

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