

José Lins do Rego's sports chronicles: politics, passion and power relationships

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Abstract

Two major aspects of Jose Lins do Rego's chronicles were the reference to soccer and the establishment of a dialogue (or discussion) with his intellectual circle. The influence of Gilberto Freyre and Mário Filho were the most prominent ones, but Rego had many other dialogic counterparts. Thus, this paper aims to understand José Lins do Rego's stand in his sports chronicles at the same time it sheds light on the exchange of ideas within the Brazilian intelligentsia. Ultimately, we conclude that José Lins' chronicles, full of rationality and passion, have played multiple roles when related to the Brazilian intellectual production.

KEY WORDS: Jose Lins do Rego; Brazilian literature; Soccer; National identity.

Introduction

The goal of this paper is to understand the stand José Lins do Rego¹⁻² takes in his sports chronicles as well as the relationship between literature and soccer established between the 40s and the 50s by Brazilian intellectuals, namely the one that explores the identity-forming aspect of soccer, discussed by members of the artistic/literary society such as Gilberto Freyre, Mário Rodrigues Filho, José Lins do Rego, Nelson Rodrigues, Graciliano Ramos, Gilberto Amado, Coelho Netto and Lima Barreto².

However, this article does not aim to delve into the role of literature within the realm of sports - a subject which has been largely discussed in some theses, essays and articles²⁻⁵ -, but to focus specifically on José Lins do Rego's chronicles.

Why was he chosen? Because, as noted by CAPRARO², in the first half of the 20th century there was a group of thinkers which, aside from approaching soccer in the Brazilian territory (particularly within the Rio-São Paulo circuit), saw the sport as a means to discuss the subject of national identity. José Lins was an active member of this trend and, differently from the others, he got involved in the politics of soccer clubs, which gave him the upper hand in power struggles¹ - something that possibly influenced

his chronicles as well as his power relationships with other intellectuals. To this end, the present analysis will revolve around his chronicles, as this genre has a strong tie to newspapers, which makes it a fruitful vehicle for the dissemination of social theories.

José Lins do Rego Cavalcanti was born in June 1901 in the small town of Pilar, in the State of Paraíba, more specifically in a big-house located in a property called *Engenho Corredor*, which belonged to his maternal grandfather (p.71-6)⁶.

Later, while living in Pernambuco, he chose to study in the Faculty of Law of Recife, obtaining his bachelor's degree in the beginning of the 1920s, at a young age. At that time, he began working as a contributor to the "Recife Diary" and was a founder of the weekly journal "Dom Casmurro"⁷. Sports began to awaken his attention, sometimes becoming the subject of some of his chronicles, but soccer was not one of his favorite topics (p.11)⁸. At that time, he met the man who later became his great intellectual mentor, Gilberto Freyre - who was also in the prime of youth and had just returned from the United States, having recently completed his university studies.

In 1932, José Lins do Rego published his first novel, "Menino do Engenho", where regionalist⁴

precepts are quite noticeable (p.397)⁹. The success of his first work made it possible for the writer to launch other works in the coming years, “Doidinho” (1933) and “Bangüê” (1934) - a kind of trilogy, whose ideas encompassed the sum of Freyre’s theory and Rego’s childhood reminiscences^b.

In 1935, José Lins decided to accept a job as a tax inspector of the city of Rio de Janeiro. He was a fully grown man already (at 34 years old) and knew the Federal Capital was the most appropriate place for him to further his career as a writer. He then moved permanently to Rio de Janeiro, a city he would not leave until his death, in 1957 - reaching the apex of his literary career in 1955, when he was chosen to be a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters⁶.

His initiative was successful because, as he was already a well-known writer, the reception was good. The move to Rio de Janeiro, in addition to reinforcing a solid relationship with the Jose Olympio^c publishing house, allowed the the Northeastern writer to expand his circle of acquaintances through living alongside writers, dramatists, filmmakers and artists in general, including the Rodrigues brothers, Mário and Nelson.

Keeping in touch his countrymen who belonged to the Regionalist Movement, particularly with Gilberto Freyre, with whom he maintained a close friendship, José Lins do Rego was deeply involved with sports, a typical phenomenon of the metropolis; he was specifically passionate about soccer (p.19-20)⁸. This passion would become more evident in 1939 - when José Lins do Rego joined the Clube de Regatas Flamengo - when he was already 38 years old.

It is believed that the first time that the sport has caught the attention of the regionalist writer was during the World Cup in Italy, in 1938 (p.50)¹⁰

Method

In the attempt to answer the question posed above, we selected some chronicles written by José Lins do Rego and published between the 40s and the 50s in the *Jornal dos Sports*. The choice of this particular period was not only due to its being the moment when José Lins produced the most commentaries on football - which culminated in the publication of collections such as “Flamengo is Pure Love” and “Mozart’s Harpsichord” -; but also because the discursive mark of this period are the ideals of Brazilian identity promulgated by soccer.

(p.28)¹¹. In Brazil, that was the first time the world tournament would be broadcast on the radio, and the population closely followed the performance of the national team through their devices¹².

Despite soccer having been slow to awaken the interest of José Lins, his adherence and engagement were sudden: he went from being a Flamengo club member to a sports columnist and from being a columnist to a club officer in a short period of time.

José Lins do Rego died in 1957, just a year before Brazil being crowned World Champion for the first time. However late was his involvement with the sport, his production was substantial: he had 1571 sports chronicles published in the *Journal of Sports* alone (p.20-1)⁸. There were some recurring issues in this set of texts, such as the link between politics and soccer, but the main topics were the dialogue within his intellectual circle, especially with Gilberto Freyre and Mário Rodrigues Filho; and the constant display of affection towards the Clube de Regatas Flamengo.

But if José Lins do Rego the writer who most revealed himself as the supporter of a club, openly admitting his passion for the Clube de Regatas Flamengo, there was another one who, albeit not showing such devotion to a single team, was the most engaged with the development of this sport in Brazil. This writer was Mário Rodrigues Filho, a sports columnist who owned the *Jornal dos Sports* and introduce his countryman José Lins to the literary/ journalistic field that had sports as a main subject.

In this sense, taking into consideration the intellectual environment that discussed the identity-forming aspects of soccer, a question arises: based on this interdependent relationship, what are the main features of his production? What role did José Lins’ chronicles play within his intellectual circle?

The analysis of these chronicles was backed up by Norbert Elias theoretical framework regarding the prospect of power in interdependent relationships. To ELIAS¹, as societies became more complex, they brought about new formats of interpersonal relationships, which consist of symbolic and emotional attachments. These new ways to connect to others through a network that supports the symbolism of power relations, are understood in this article as the network of interdependence of which José Lins do Rego was a part.

In this sense, it is part of our hypothesis that José Lins tried to introduce in his chronicles literature aspects defined by Antonio CANDIDO¹³ as text and context. Believing that the chronicle was a journalistic format and, thereby, trying to keep a relative commitment to research - at the same time that his overwhelming passion for Flamengo ended up making his texts extremely biased and considering that he was a club officer - the writer was the most striking example of the merging of extrinsic elements (the soccer world) and intrinsic ones (how he chose content, the characteristic of his narrative and literary aesthetics).

An evidence for that is the use of soccer as a transitional tool in his literary production to shift the environment from the Northeastern countryside to the city. This materialized in Joca, a character of one of his novels who works as a lumberer in the Brazilian outback but decides to try his luck as a soccer player in Rio de Janeiro.

From this example, it is important to stress that the analytical method applied on the selected chronicles refers to text-context conjunction established by Antonio CANDIDO¹³. From Candido's point of view, every literary production is endowed with an intrinsic factor (text) and an extrinsic one (context). Extrinsic factors, that is, the social position from which the author speaks as well as the features of the society to which they belong, end up becoming intrinsic to the work, as if they

merged with the artistic elements - or the fiction. Methodologically speaking, the focus of this research was the interference of the contextual elements conjoined to fiction in the chronicles.

Candido points to a blend of text (literary aesthetics and autonomy of the author) and context (historical and social elements) as the constituent of the literary work, which means the researcher, therefore, should understand how the social context - as well as the biography of the writer - is manifested in a certain work. Thus, with regards to literature and social life, the interrelation between the position of the artist, the structure of the text and the readers should also be considered¹³. The author's position is part of the societal structure and, therefore, it is important to verify the role they play in it. This role will interfere directly in the structure of the narrative, which depends on the artist and his social status - considering that the author's values and ideologies (for example) will have a fundamental influence over the text content to be analyzed. Besides, similarly to the aforementioned elements, the reader undergoes their own social influences and give meaning to the text, connecting it to its author. That is, literature exists not only in and of itself, but it suffers the interference of the social sphere to which the author belongs and, consequently, their personal influences.

Taking the importance of contextual elements for the analysis into account, we will get back to the aspects of José Lins' insertion into his intellectual/literary circle.

Results

Soccer

In March 1945, the cover of the *Jornal dos Sports*, whose owner was Mário Filho, enthusiastically announced that, from that date on, the periodic would feature a renowned collaborator: the celebrated José Lins do Rego, who was to write a column under the title "Sports and Life". It would not be the first time that Zé Lins would write about sports, as the author of "Fogo Morto" had occasionally written about the subject theme in his social chronicles and had also been a sportswriter for a short period of time (p.143-4)⁸.

His persona network has always been evident in his chronicles and two people stood out in particular: Gilberto Freyre - a personal friend who was the main influencer of his thought - and Mário

Filho - considered by the author the leading expert in soccer. In the first of his daily chronicles in the *Jornal de Sports*, for example, as the author notes: "Mário Filho didn't want me to shut down my career in sports chronicles and called me to write for his newspaper. I confess that I was beginning to miss the column that had provided me with so much work and so much joy" (p.27)^{8, d}.

Giving evidence that he had previously written chronicles about soccer, José Lins showed some perplexity, however, with the appreciation of passion in the soccer world. He knew his public and warns beforehand that the readers of chronicles did not have the same sophistication and politeness as the readers of novels. Even so, as stated above, he readily accepted the invitation made by his friend Mário Filho. This was further evidence of his quick and

intense involvement with the sport that was gaining popularity in Brazil (p.47-122)¹⁰.

But José Lins do Rego's passion for soccer would constantly fluctuate. There was an aspect of it in particular that made him cynical: the violence (which was not only physical but also verbal and moral). Generally, the writer would try to be rational about it, criticizing any action he deemed reckless, whether it had been perpetrated by fans, officials or players.

He regularly associated soccer to civility. Thus, although he belonged to a revolutionary literary/intellectual movement - the Northeastern Regionalism - Rego saw a racial integration element in soccer, one that formed the Brazilian identity (which had its origin in the northeastern culture of big houses/mansions and slave quarters/mocambos).

Reinforcing this idea, Fatima Antunes stated the following: "It is interesting to note that José Lins constantly associated sportsmanship to civility, social habits of emotional self-control which stemmed from the same civilizing process (...)" (p.72)¹⁰.

As a writer who was directly involved with soccer^e, José Lins had to discuss with the press, including with some renowned writers, both constantly and fiercely, about its political and ideological attitude towards the sport.

Zé Lins was a staunch patriot, so attacks against the Brazilian nation, racist views or manifestations and clashes between Brazilian states caused by soccer, bothered the author of "Menino do Engenho," who never ceased to reflect about it - "[...] at a ceremony, as the Brazilian flag was being hoisted in River Plate's stadium, in Buenos Aires, the public standing on the bleachers disrespected our dear, glorious banner" (p.33)^{8,f}.

This was the ultimate irrationality tolerated by the author, and it was a part of sports and more specifically of soccer. But it was not only the attitude of a portion of the Argentinian fans that aggravated José Lins. The very manifestation of some Brazilian about the episode also sparked his literary anger, as follows:

We all know passionate crowds, masses conducted by passionless leaders. They commit acts of madness and can be cruelly unfair. That is something we all know, yet forming a movement to transform a rude gesture into an insult against our homeland goes beyond the common sense and feels absurd (p.48)⁸.

As José Lins had always been involved with soccer, having occupied office positions in clubs, he was more diplomatic than other members of the press. He also had access to what happened behind

the scenes, which allowed him to formulate more sophisticated analysis that considered the complexity of the situations instead of elaborating shallow interpretations (which for him was a ubiquitous mistake made by the sports press at that time).

It isn't strange that politics were always at the background of his chronicles, if we consider that he was himself an analyst who was involved in the development of soccer. The writer was constantly getting involved in either national, international or Flamengo's internal political discussions. would have a high cost to his career in sports, mainly in regards to his struggle for power in the journalistic sphere.

Soccer and politics in sports chronicles

In a chronicle published in the *Jornal dos Sports*, in April 19, 1945, a mere three months after he debuted as a sports writer, José Lins would already link soccer and politics. He wrote about the amnesty granted by Getúlio Vargas, at the end of the period entitled Estado Novo ("New State") (a decree-law that freed Luis Carlos Prestes from prison). The author stated "(...) Mr. President has just granted amnesty de anistia [...]. Acts such as this one honor and dignify our social composition" (p.30)^{8,g}. He went on, making a direct association to soccer - "[...] I would invite every entity, every club, every board of directors, to imitate this governmental act and to, through boards and committees, also concede total amnesty to all sportsmen who are being subjected to punishments" (p.30)⁸.

In this text, soccer was clearly just a pretext. At the time, athletes were not commonly punished. As doping tests hadn't been invented yet, the few cases of punishment were related to breaches of contract. Back then, professionalization was still in its beginnings, the historical scenario was tense, and athletes were going through severe hardships. José Lins, being a club officer, had enough knowledge to write about these matters in depth. He could write about politics with a relatively good amount of freedom from censorship, since censors wouldn't monitor sports journalism very closely¹⁴, as it didn't seem very political to them. Regardless of the lack of censorship, we can infer that the *Jornal dos Sports*, led by Mário Filho, was at the very least tolerant of his political commentary, since it was highly unlikely for an outlet that supported Vargas to publish this kind of text.

As an intellectual who participated in a literary movement rooted in the Northeast and being affiliated to the group labeled the "Democratic Left", in Rio de Janeiro, José Lins do Rego had

serious disagreements with Vargas⁶ government. The subtle detail in his chronicle, as noticed by Marcos de Castro, in his annotated edition of Rego's⁸ chronicles, is that Vargas' name is never even mentioned the writer. Also, the chronicles make it clear that the concession was more motivated by the demands of the public, which was unhappy with the political restrictions being enforced, than by an altruistic initiative of the government.

The criticism towards the government had to be somewhat excusing, because at that time the writer held the position of director of the National Sports Council, having been appointed by the Minister of Education, Gustavo Capanema, to whom, in turn, he had been introduced by the renowned poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who was a Chief of Staff⁸. Therefore, José Lins do Rego - who held a position of trust in a government office, even if he disagreed with the New State's controlling and anti-democratic rigor - tried to establish a balanced "dialogue", when it came to public policies: sometimes he would praise them and at other times he would - ever subtly and and constructively - criticize them^h.

Even though the national political discussion made a regular appearance José Lins do Rego's chronicles, he always place more emphasis on regional politics and on Flamengo's own internal politics. A keen observer of the conditions of the city in which he had settled, Rio de Janeiro, the author used his chronicles as a tool for challenging the municipal management. In one of his chronicle-manifestos, the writer barely says he was going to watch Flamengo's practice and soon starts criticizing the City Hall.

But, instead of beautiful butterfliesⁱ, this writer encountered grim vultures roaming, tumbling over the garbage, the filth, dead animals, over all the rotting matter that the city administration leaves there, behind the walls of the Jockey Club. The path stank so much that the poor writer, a man who weighs ninety kilos, had to run to escape that nauseating scene as soon as possible (p.34)^{8,j}.

The chronicle deliberately starts in the first person singular - "This morning I was [...]" (p.34)⁸ - and suddenly reverts to the third person singular, a verbal structure commonly used by soccer players at the time. He was likely trying to mitigate the criticism or not to give the impression that it was a direct attack on municipal management.

The fiercest strikes were always against those who played against Flamengo's best interest, like the rival Vasco da Gama, which was presided by Ciro

Aranha, the brother of Oswaldo Aranha, who, in turn, was one of the most prominent ministers and a personal friend of Getulio Vargas'. That meant the club had an important political support that made it easier for it to earn titles - "Only Vasco exists and Ciro Aranha is its prophet" (p.58)^{8,k}.

Always tightening the gap between soccer and politics, José Lins even saw a chance for discussing the support for Flamengo's candidates and projects in the presidential elections. In a certain chronicle, he attempted to highlight Flamengo's democratic character, by explaining:

A friend asks me why all of Flamengo supports Dutra's candidacy. And I tell him that was not true. Flamengo has no candidate, no candidate advises, it's not committed to any one candidate. [...] Each supporter and club member acts and thinks with their own minds, tendencies, impulses (p.45)^{8,l}.

Although he tries to convey the idea that the club does not officially support a presidential candidate, José Lins does not omit his opinion, being quite overt when he says that ... "Although none of this has to do with Flamengo, albeit this is just a hopeful support, I'm with the Brigadier. I recommend his candidacy for president as the path to national redemption" (p.45)⁸.

As stated by Marcos Castro in his annotations of the "Flamengo is Pure Love"⁸ collection, José Lins belonged to the Democratic Left, openly supporting the candidate of the National Democratic Union (UDN), Brigadier Eduardo Gomes. But the latter ended up being defeated by Vargas' candidate, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra¹⁴.

Dutra's victory turned out to be beneficial to Flamengo because the club's director had a pretty solid contact with the new president. Thus, some internal issues came to rely on the support of the Federal Government. A few months later, José Lins states in a chronicle that ... "Mr. General Dutra can rest assured that his act, which allowed Flamengo and the other clubs to build sports courts, met the people's needs" (p.64)^{8,m}.

José Lins do Rego would still extensively write about (and fight for) the federal funding for the construction of a stadium for his favorite club. These chronicles always tried to establish a direct dialog with politicians who could help the club - especially the President of the Republic, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra. Exploiting Flamengo's popularity and immersed in his passion for the team, José Lins, as analyzed by ANTUNES¹⁰, formulates a new concept of nation: the sports nation. For this new concept, the reference could only be

Flamengo¹⁶: “Because no club is more Brazilian, more truly national, than Flamengo” (p.64)⁸.

If, from the author’s point of view, soccer clubs and their supporters could be seen as nations, as symbolized by Flamengo, it was not surprising that the relationship between soccer and politics came to be constantly featured in his texts - even if sometimes this relationship seemed rather forced. The points he made were of a diverse nature: going against a councilor who accused Flamengo of being a racist club (p.92)^{8, n}; subtly linking the stubbornness of the America Football Club to the lawyer Sobral Pinto, who boldly defended political prisoners during the Vargas’ dictatorship (p.93)^{8, o}; demanding completion of the construction of the Municipal Stadium of Rio de Janeiro^p - popularly called the *Maracana* (its name was later changed to Mario Filho Municipal Stadium) (p.128)^{8, q}; or prematurely criticizing and fighting the ownership of players’ registrations, as he called one manager a “exploiter of the new white trafficking” (p.137)^{8, r}.

In conclusion, the writer’s involvement and engagement had the consequence of making his short texts polarized, directed to heated discussions both in relation to politics - in municipal, state, sports and club levels - and regarding what soccer represented to country.

On the other hand, in other circumstances, due to his political positions - Flamengo’s General Secretary, CND advisor and director of the CBD - some internal issues, obviously known by the writer, were not made public in his chronicles¹⁰. In her thesis, Fatima Antunes analyzed the faulty arrangements for hosting the 1950 World Cup, specifically the delay in the construction of the Maracana Stadium. According to the author ... “José Lins do Rego closely followed these issues, but none of them were mentioned in his chronicles, which were overflowed with pride and patriotism” (p.79)¹⁰. This “silence” regarding management problems can be understood as the “ideological oblivion” defined by Eni Orlandi (p.35)¹⁶.

As he was the head of the Brazilian delegation that played and lost the South American Tournament in Peru, in 1953, José Lins received severe criticism from the national press, due to the numerous incidents during the championship: infighting, unsportsmanlike conduct in the field, truncated orders, etc. Frustrated, the writer decided to move away from management positions in sports, remaining a sports writer only.

Thus, in the four last years of his life, the content of his chronicles shifted, becoming more critical, distanced and balance, regarding both the Brazilian team and Flamengo (p.101-18)¹⁰.

Passion for Flamengo

Since his first text was published in the *Jornal dos Sports*, José Lins showed that he noticed that sports chronicles were quite different from other literary and journalistic styles. Consequently, he knew his readers very well: Common people seeking specific information about a subject - sport - which had become popular, mainly among the less privileged social segments¹⁷.

Knowing his public, most of which had not even read his literary works, dramatically changed his style. The stories were simple, built with short, direct sentences. His style consisted of the use of appropriate vocabulary to the popularity of soccer practice, however, although it was less apparent, his erudition still showed, thus reiterating the condition of José Lins do Rego as one of the most recognized novelists of his time.

It is noteworthy that his conception of chronicle was paradoxically attached to the commitment of journalism with the truth, even though he was an outspoken supporter and associate of Flamengo - where he even became a director.

This dichotomy, explained by the author himself in his first daily chronicle daily published in the *Jornal dos Sports* permeates his entire production as a columnist. Every so often in the course of his career as a sportswriter he would direct satire, mockery and taunts towards opposing teams.

Constantly reiterating his neutrality, José Lins stated that the job of the columnist was to make sportswriting more literary, but above all to report solely the truth, based on solid and verified facts. A certain repressive and authoritarian ethic, typical of the New State (p.11-36)¹⁸, had a subtle prevalence in his chronicles (which could be a subconscious slip, since the writer was opposed to Vargas’ dictatorship). Beyond the control of the intellectual production, one can observe the “educational” function (actually controlling and oppressive), almost as an obligation imposed to his chronicles (p.149-228)¹⁹.

But broad analytical perspective was not a feature of José Lins do Rego’s chronicles²⁰. On the contrary, among prominent writers, regardless of the time period, he is likely to have been the most biased and involved with the subject of his writing. His chronicle showed the writer’s blatant passion for sports in general, for soccer and most of all for Flamengo.

His chronicles, therefore, were manifestations of a literature concerned with the object, in which the author builds the fan’s voice, establishing a dialogue with other sport aficionados, some in accordance with his views - in this case of Flamengo fans - and

others at odds with them - mainly the supporters of rival teams from Rio de Janeiro. José Lins do Rego's literary attitude of was an indication that Mário Filho, owner and editor in chief of the *Jornal dos Sports*, gave

his columnists free reign regarding style, as Mário himself had a very different style when writing his chronicles. But what are the artistic and intellectual dialogues found in José Lins do Rego's production?

Discussion

Power relationships

If the vast scope of his output is taken into consideration, Gilberto Freyre was not very dedicated to soccer. There were many circumstances in which he stated that he was not an expert on the subject. On the other hand, he was connected to a large circle of intellectuals (almost all faithful to their own theories) and glimpsed the possibility that this sport could strengthen his theoretical conception about Brazil in two instances: "[...] in the transition between a predominantly rural population to a predominantly urban one [a theory explained in *Sobrados & Mocambos*]. In addition, [...] it presents us with the conflict between two immense forces - rationality and irrationality [...]" (p.24)²¹.

Freyre was also an ambitious young man: in addition to trying to create a model to explain Brazil, he wanted to break away from the intellectual movements which often originated in the South or the Southeast¹¹.

For José Lins specifically, Freyre's influence transcended the intellectual limits, constituting solid friendship (p.49-63)²². But the power relationship²³⁻²⁴ between them was not balanced, although they shared a strong affective bond. Although they were very close in age, the relationship was patronizing, with Freyre taking the role of José Lins do Rego's intellectual mentor. The author of "Menino do Engenho" was influenced by the ideas and, above all, by the presence of Gilberto Freyre in his life.

I met Gilberto Freyre in 1923. [...] What had I read before that day? Almost nothing. Maybe not even a serious book from beginning to end. I had read the great Eca de Queiroz. But I instinctively wrote short stories and chronicles. And Joao do Rio, with his simple way of writing, had excited me. Lima Barreto too. Gilberto Freyre asked me to read from my newspaper scraps. He read the chronicles, short stories, and critiqued them, talking with interest about some of them. There was, in my way of saying things, something that grabbed his attention. Thus my learning from the master of my age had started and I didn't even notice I was taking lessons (p.49-50)²².

The shocking statement reiterates that the relationship between José Lins and his countryman Gilberto Freyre revolved around the latter's wishes, to the point that an almost unhealthy obsession with "being" Gilberto Freyre can be noticed in the beginning of Rego's career. Researching the José Lins' novels, CASTELLO⁶ stresses that this "fascination" with and submission to Gilberto Freyre - and the domination on his part - were very common. That means José Lins was not the only one who declared exaggerated respect for the essayist. Gilberto Freyre, with his active personality, integration with diverse and creative intellectual circles and sociological ideas about racial integration in Brazil, in a political climate that favored such a discussion, meant that his theories were quickly accepted and became an influence to the academic production and literary in the whole country (p.39-51)²⁵.

But although Freyre exerted a strong influence over José Lins, the admiration was mutual. Gilberto Freyre wrote dozens of articles in newspapers of Recife about his friend, as well as some texts analyzing his work⁸. Reflecting about this interdependent relationship, Leonardo Pereira, in the preface of the book *The Discovery of Football* by Bernardo Borges Buarque de Hollanda, believes that José Lins approached the subject of soccer because of the need to show the people a concept of nationality which had been brewed for years, from FREYRE's¹¹ cohesive creation. One of his most emotional and moving texts was undoubtedly the one published shortly after José Lins do Rego's death. Freyre wrote a mournful piece, where he even admitted to exert power over the author of *Bangüê*.

News of the death of José Lins do Rego reach my ears as the most brutal of absurdities. It never seemed to me that he could be something other than life. Overflowing life. So I can not imagine him dead. Dead like any other man. Dead liver and kidneys in a hospital room.

[...] I know that I had grea influence over him and no one confessed this more insistently than José Lins himself, in words, in intimate letters, in articles: If I oppose this, it will be futile or innocuous nonsense. But I also know that I was influenced

by him and that without his understanding and affection I would hardly have won [...]”²⁶.

The journalist who owned the *Jornal dos Sports* would also become a constant sounding board to the Northeastern writer’s texts: “Mário Filho wanted to know about Rio Branco’s behavior in relation to our defeat on Sunday” (p.39)^{8, t}. Another example: “Today Mário Filho looked like Santa Claus without a beard as he got to the Jornal dos Sports newsroom[...] It so happened that Mário Filho had had his greatest victory as a journalist” (p.46)^{8, u}.

There was mutual respect and admiration, because Mario Filho also dialogued with José Lins in his chronicles. In this excerpt, he teases his friend about his passion for his team: “Once Flamengo was winning by 4 x 0 and with a minute to the end of the game, Zé Lins do Rego asked me, with a bitter mouth, distressed, loosening his collar to breathe - not better, just breathe a little - if danger was over “(p.144)^{21, v}.

It is possible that José Lins was responsible for introducing Freyre to Mário Filho, where, once again, one can see Gilberto Freyre’s intellectual influence, since Mário Filho, when it came to football, had become the most adept reinforcer of the Braziliannes theory (p.13-50)²⁷. To explain this interdependent relationship, José Lins do Rego unveiled, in one of his chronicle, Freyre’s interest for Mário Filho’s production, as well as how his texts worked to strengthen the theory of the Brazilian man.

Mário Filho goes on with his magnificent essay on black men in football. Many people are not able to appreciate the importance of this work for an interpretation of Brazil in the 1900.

I know Gilberto Freire, who is writing the third volume on the social history of Brazil, Order and Progress, has already taken Mario Filho investigations in for an evaluation.

Brazil’s economic life right after freeing the slaves suffered, taking blows that nearly led to bankruptcy. But the wound of captivity that marked our society could not be healed with only words

and goodwill. The fraternity among races would encounter terrible obstacles to its true reality. Soccer would be its effective action element. That’s what Mário Filho tells us (p.55)^{8, w}.

Such relationships can be understood as power¹ microrrelationships because, however small they were, they gained importance in a wider social setting, since they were exposed in an open debate channel, in which the player - often a passive subject merely following the rhetoric - ended up accepting the arguments of one of the intellectuals, becoming a potential disseminator of ideas.

In this sense, adjusting the analysis scale is necessary because, at times, when seen from a long distance, the strength of microrrelationships could go unnoticed. Adding large and small *pieces* up to form a broader scenario is critical to understanding how the literati, as art generators²⁸, did not have such sharp creative freedom as suggested by some art critics; and how they were not free from the influences of the society in which they lived, their life stories and his own personalities.

Thus, an intricate intellectual context, specifically the one in literature, would show that personal viewpoints, affective and artistic features had a great influence on the recurrence of some issues in sportswriting and, consequently, in the establishment of discussions among Brazilian writers. Sports chronicles are hence understood as “[...] a base for symbolic struggles for power to produce and impose the one legitimate worldview” (p.161)²⁹. José Lins do Rego is no exception.

José Lins’ chronicles, which were permeated by rationality and passion, had multiple functions regarding the Brazilian intelligentsia. The main one concerns the reverberation of Gilberto Freyre’s theory about the national identity linked to soccer. More than promoting his own literature, José Lins was probably trying to strengthen and disseminate the predominant ideal within his circle, possibly due to the influence of the power relationships on his ideals as a writer.

Notes

- a. This particular artistic/literary movement is explained as follows: “Recife’s regionalist and traditionalist movement, as studied from the point of view of our literary history, strictly represents a sociologically founded critical reaffirmation, mainly focused on artistic creation as a whole and on a deeper knowledge about Brazil through its regional differences and similarities. [...]. The acknowledgement of this affiliation seems to not only celebrate Gilberto Freyre’s ideas and Recife’s regionalist current culturally and historically, but also, and above all, it makes it easier to explain Jose Lins do Rego’s work and that of other Northeastern modern novelists” (p.141-2)⁶.

- b. CASTELLO⁶ states that in José Lins' first work, "Menino de Engenho", initially he did not intended to write a novel, but rather just build a biography of his own grandfather, i.e., the patriarch's life in the sugar mill cycle period. Thus, even if "Casa-Grande & Senzala" was published a year later, it is notorious the influence of Freyre's work on José Lins; as it is quite possible that Freyre has been marked some moments in José Lins' memory of his childhood in the sugar mill
- c. Currently, in the 21st century, this publisher still holds the copyright for Jose Lins do Rego's works. They release new editions of his books often.
- d. Originally in: Volta a crônica. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1945 Mar 7.
- e. José Lins was a director of the National Council of Sport (CND) and of the Brazilian Sport Confederation (CBD), as well as a member of Flamengo's council (p.79)¹⁰.
- f. Originally in: Os patriotas alarmados. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1946 Jan 15.
- g. Originally in: Anistia. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1945 Abr 19.
- h. Like when he extolled João Lira Filho⁸ (p. 28 - originally found in: Queremos Lira Filho. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1945 Mar 9) or criticized some councilmen who went against governmental subsidy for the construction of a new stadium for Flamengo⁸ (p.87 - originally found in: O estádio. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1947 Ago 14)⁸.
- i. A reference to the blue butterflies, as described in one of Casimiro de Abreu's books.
- j. Originally in: O cronista, as borboletas e os urubus. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1945 Mai 5.
- k. Originally in: Só existe o Vasco. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1946 Jun. 25.
- l. Originally in: O Flamengo e as candidaturas. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1945 Nov 25.
- m. Originally in: Servir ao Flamengo é servir ao Brasil. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1946 Set 20.
- n. Originally in: O Flamengo não é racista. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1948 Abr 1.
- o. Originally in: O América. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1948 Abr 9.
- p. Due to being disputed by the other city clubs, the governmental funding of the construction of a stadium for Flamengo was dismissed, and a new plan was devised: the construction of a larg municipal stadium which could serve all of the teams in the city.
- q. Originally in: O engenheiro João Carlos Vital uma boa escolha. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1951 Abr 26.
- r. Originally in: O aliciador. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1957 Abr 25.
- s. On the website Virtual Library Gilberto Freyre (<http://prossiga.bvgf.fgf.org.br>), created by the Gilberto Freyre Foundation, there is a large amount of data on this author's production. Regarding the essayist's relationship with sportswriters, there have been found some chronicles written by Freyre himself, mentioning friends or analyzing their works. There is a considerable amount of graphic material that shows Freyre's closeness to José Lins do Rego.
- t. Originally in: O espírito do Rio Branco. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1945 Ago 29.
- u. Originally in: A alegria de um Papai Noel. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1946 Jun 16.
- v. Originally in: Rivalidade hemiplégica. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1957 Fev 16.
- w. Originally in: O futebol como agente social. *Jornal dos Sports*. 1946 Jun 16.

Resumo

A crônica esportiva de José Lins do Rego: política, paixão e relações de força

Além do envolvimento com o futebol, outra característica típica da crônica de José Lins do Rego foi o diálogo (ou debates) com o círculo intelectual no qual estava inserido. As influências de Gilberto Freyre e Mário Filho foram as mais sensíveis, mas não foram poucos os seus interlocutores. Desta forma, perspectiva-se compreender o posicionamento de José Lins do Rego em suas crônicas esportivas, sem perder de vista esta interdependência estabelecida pela intelectualidade brasileira. Em caráter conclusivo, constatou-se que as crônicas de José Lins, permeadas pela racionalidade e pela paixão, exerceram funções múltiplas em se tratando do convívio com a intelectualidade brasileira.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: José Lins do Rego; Literatura brasileira; Futebol; Identidade nacional.

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