

FREUD AND LOBATO: THE POLITICAL METAPHYSICS OF CHARACTER

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ABSTRACT: In this article I examine the first publication by Monteiro Lobato. In conducting an analysis of *O Saci-Pererê: resultado de um inquérito* [Saci-Pererê (a black, pipe-smoking one-legged character from Brazilian folklore): the result of an inquiry] I seek to discern the features of what can be described as the political metaphysics of character, by entering into a dialogue with the ideas of Freud. My aim is to set out from a private standpoint to understand Brazil, and perhaps by conducting a more comprehensive research, to establish the connecting links between Monteiro Lobato, Mario Peixoto, Lúcio Cardoso and Mario Pedrosa. What these writers have in common is their expressed views on the problem of cruelty which can be addressed in psychoanalytical terms and rejects the traditional ways in which this problem was addressed, which simply involved making substantive alterations to the prevailing status quo. **Keywords:** Lobato, Saci, Freud, political metaphysics of character.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, investigo a primeira publicação de Lobato. Em *O Saci-Pererê: resultado de um inquérito* percebo elementos do que poderia ser denominada uma metafísica política do personagem, em diálogo com o pensamento do Freud. Quero indicar o início de pesquisa de uma linha intimista no modo de pensar o Brasil, que ligará realizações distintas, tais como as de certo pensamento de Lobato, Mario Peixoto, Lúcio Cardoso e Mario Pedrosa. A intuição é que disponibilizam uma forma de pensar a crueldade que pode ser lida psicanaliticamente e que suspende a velha forma de com ela lidar pelo encobrimento, apenas pela alteração substantiva de um estado de coisas.

Palavras-chave: Lobato, Saci, Freud, metafísica política do personagem.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concern with the political nuances in the work of Lobato, can be distinguished from both his carefree manner (which was reflected in his acceptance as a writer of entertainments for intelligent children and adult readers of newspapers) and the works that sought to clarify the social implications of the events arising from the "civilist campaign" up to the 1930s. Although his work was not strictly conceptual, it seems that his more serious approach might have drawn concepts from it. And this is what we mean by the notion of a metaphysics of character.

It is not hard to find the presence of characters in the body of Lobato's work; with a slight degree of exaggeration, it can be stated that creating characters was the main activity of his life, apart from a certain penchant he had for creating theatrical situations. However, it is not very clear how exactly the creation of characters can be linked to a system of metaphysics, not to mention the fact that there is still a need to explain what constitutes the political features of this system. In that case, what should a metaphysics of character be like?

The metaphysics of character in a conventional dramatic setting, is something that can be called a drama of supremacy; in this respect, the character is induced to speak so that he can represent something that goes beyond his metaphysics but which is appropriate to himself or in other words, he embodies the voice of the author. The metaphysics of character when accepted as expressing attitudes of supremacy, (which is not the case in the works of Lobato), can only be found in the lowest form of literature or in the most conventional kinds of political theory. But viewed as an axiom, what can be derived from the metaphysics of character, includes its basic meaning, since it is always uttered through the mouth of someone else and its utterance represents something that turns it into something opaque.

Thus in response to the question that is posited here, the metaphysics of character is a modality of representation, and encompasses a kind of politics that is structured in a dramatic realm, rather than being illustrated in pictorial terms. It can be attributed to an authorship that is well-known and widely disseminated and its most radical form lies in a supremacy, in which the utterance represents the infinity of an infinite disseminator. Powerful drama is very useful for traditional politics but very vulgar in literature. It is up to us to determine the nature of Lobatian drama, as well as to show that its apolitical plasticity allows it to shape and envisage the world in quite an effective way.

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that Lobato's metaphysics of characters is much more sophisticated than the traditional officially sanctioned metaphysics of political philosophy — with its men devouring men, noble savages, people in cold climates with a propensity to work and people in a warm climate inclined to be submissive. It could be that Lobato is a romantic figure and not subject to

the same needs for authority and social organization as a philosopher. However, this objection is not entirely justified because I wish to show that in Lobato the metaphysics of character leads to semi-conceptual political outcomes which, incidentally, are more efficacious than those practised by other Brazilian thinkers, among other reasons, because the ideas are evolved under the aegis of a political metaphysics of character. In other words, Lobato thought in rhetorical terms of putting a new character in a dramatic setting who was able to reshape the meaning of socio-political practices in a persuasive way for his readers, such as, for example, the condition of black people among other phenomena.

Thus no attitudes of officially-sanctioned supremacy can be found in the metaphysics of characters in his work but something much more sophisticated. Before anything else, the political metaphysics of character gives rise to practices that require a heightened sensibility and an ability to describe the current age. However, this does not simply involve providing a faithful description but rather requires the ability to undertake a description that can evoke cruelty and shows few signs of generosity, while being able to expose the inherent weaknesses of the characters being described. This is achieved after undergoing a sort of meditation on the cruelty found in the characters and provides a glimpse into their colourful features as compositional traits of fiction. Lobato's metaphysics of characters does not purely and simply entail improving a state of affairs that can be found in fiction but rather, lays stress on the fictional shortcomings of this state of affairs by introducing a figure who is new and terrible. In this case, the metaphysics is more of a challenge than a diagnosis and to a certain extent arises much more from high spirits than political generosity. And here there is a need to tell the cruel truth and introduce a work of fiction by an author who is among the greatest of of fiction writers.

The division of works for adults and children into two distinct categories, is not something that is watertight, especially in the early stages of Lobato's work. Imagist material can be found in Lobato's adult books and there is a streak of cruelty in his stories for children. The child and the adult are nothing more than expressive strategies for a spectral way of establishing a powerful metaphysics about the feeble old works of fiction. We cannot abandon this framework for characters when dealing with this author of characters. Nonetheless, what is most important is that it is conceded that his works for children have all the intensity of an anachronism or in other words, from a close reading, it is clear that at least some of the characters in these books have the outlines of conceptual figures that are evoked through concepts. On the other hand, the works for adults lead us to some kind of temporal order. At the same time, we should not treat this too strictly since at times the relationship can be reversed.

At all events, the problem can be described in another way. Thus we can imagine that politics can be reduced to its component parts. It can be said that this procedure is justified since if we believe that politics is everywhere, there could be something significant in its fixation which makes it indeterminable. Moreover, if such an event takes place, it could be that there is an inherent vice in politics in so far as it is unable to be aware of what is really reprehensible. In our view, this procedure can allow the political ontology to be described as a 'determination' since only a minimum number of features need to be observed for an experience to be described as political. It can be said that this entails having no awareness of its being or in the case in question, its better appearance. Clearly a political ontology of this kind is unable to give a precise idea of what politics is, given that the desired procedure would rapidly lead to the conclusion that politics exists in a set of given circumstances, since it can be described much more as a question of *when* than of *being*. This is not to say that politics exists, but when it exists, cruelty is involved. For this reason, a sceptical approach seems to be most appropriate for an investigation of politics because the person who says *when* is speaking about appearances and this attracts the attention of the sceptics. However the concern about cruelty is also a deep feeling that has been driven by scepticism at least since its significant revival in the works of Montaigne, Bayle and Hume. Clearly the way it has been welcomed by scepticism is something that can be passed on to the tradition of psychoanalysis.

Hence, as we have stated, the question of a political ontology is not *what* politics is but *when* politics is. The hypothetical question that links this kind of question to psychoanalysis is the part of the reply that states that politics exists when somebody imposes restrictions on something or someone else for a certain period of time. This mechanism must be seen as a cause of suffering when it has a malign appearance and gives rise to a series of problems over the ambivalence of political experience. It is here that the problem of drama begins. The reason for this is that there are ways of eluding a direct awareness of cruelty which in a predictable way, only involves it in deeper issues. Drama can be bound up with the question of representation and political representation.

Roughly speaking, drama takes place both in certain descriptive modes of thinking and as a political representation, namely, when someone speaks on behalf of someone else. The analogies drawn here are not accidental since theatrical representation or drama operate on different planes and offer a way of understanding and acting which takes place in a vicarious way either at a positive or negative level. A wide range of reasons can be given as to why this occurs. In the cognitive and affirmative field, there is a certain duality between thinking and the world, in so far as thinking does not imagine the world itself but only a copy of it derived from the sensory organs. In the field of political

representation, the explanations tend to centre on demographic factors and take place in the following terms: why are there so many people in the world? And do political practices have to be concerned with making things? It is necessary for a few to represent the many, and the greater the representation, the better it will be; however, unless there is some limit to the number of players, nothing can be undertaken. The first attempt is to think in numerical terms; if a large figure represents a large number, then it is as if people are almost represented by themselves. But clearly the same problems can be rephrased in such a way that it is possible to decide that a small figure can effectively represent a large number if it is carried out by taking note of the values of these people when they are well represented. There are distortions of every kind when it comes to political representation. One of these is trust, in so far as at certain times there are few people who know what is best for the majority; this is for a number of reasons, ranging from where they represent a large number in a better way, to the way that this same number understands who should be represented. Thus, in our argument, it does not matter what drama is in the cultural sense because it can be many things and similarly, we are not in a position to say why we represent people, because the most varied explanations can be given. But what we want to suggest is that we represent something and in this representation, we produce a kind of political theology. Now when we are represented, we speak or are speaking by establishing vertical disparities between the person who dramatizes and the experience that is dramatized, which culminate in constituting modes of authority.

We wish to say that this way of proceeding is very immoral because it encompasses cruelty. Dramatic modes distract us from the fact that giving stability to different kinds of humanity at a particular time, is only tenable through cruelty and for this very reason, it must be seen to be maintained at minimum levels. The physical situation which we have isolated leads us to the conclusion that drama encompasses cruelty and gives it a deeper dimension.

Lobato, (as was inevitable since he was the child of his environment), was moved by this kind of political drama. He could be found in every kind of delirious state on the national stage. This ranged from the need for an Anglo-American style of industrial development in Brazil, in the already existing furnaces of the Baron of Mauá for example, to the belief that there was oil in the country and that its exploration would lead to forms of independence and should be based on private enterprise — one of the reasons why he was imprisoned during the Vargas era. If it had only been this, Lobato's work would only be of historical interest; but there was also an orphan locked inside him. In our view, on the one hand Lobato penetrated into the thickets of political theology where he explored beliefs as trivial as the need for national change, to much more serious

ideas. But it can also be seen that he went a long way beyond this, in particular through what has been described here as a political metaphysics of character. He imagines that there are literary craftsmen who break the dramatic pattern and make cruelty explicit. However, their efforts can never be fully realised because, by virtue of fact that they are working with characters, they are already, in effect, involved in a cover-up. But, as stated above, we believe that this intimate translation was broadened by ways of thinking in Brazil and that the works of Lobato can be regarded as a kind of ground zero for intimate modernity despite their constant reliance on political histrionics.

It is for this reason that the question of belief should be dragged into the arena. As everyone knows, sociability depends on the beliefs that underpin it but it is the sceptical tradition which (after describing how beliefs are formed), provides us with a way of understanding how they lead to a fixation. In the last analysis, it is belief that enables us to seek a perception of cruelty.

2. THE STRUCTURE OF THE IMAGE – AN INQUIRY

The first work by Lobato, that can be included in his writings for adults, was the result of an investigative inquiry. He published several articles, some of which were quite controversial, and these were later included in his book *Urupês*, and others in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* and the magazine *Revista do Brasil*. In the case of the former, this led the readers to recall their impressions of *Saci*. The idea of Lobato was to create a wide-ranging patchwork of representations so that he could carry out an experiment to test this belief in the interior of São Paulo, which involved a confluence of diaphanous patterns. Rather than simply evading the plurality of the discourse by appealing to literary figures and scientists, he preferred to obliterate the difference between experimenting and experiencing and simply listen to everybody. This included giving the belief a chance to speak for itself. The belief also found shelter on gossip.

Oddly, the inquiry of *Saci* is also a war effort. The inquiry appeared for the first time in 1917 under the title *Mitologia Brasileira*. [Brazilian Mythology]. The text surfaced again in 1918 where it appeared in printed graphics in the newspaper, *O Estado de São Paulo* (it is worth noting the the amusing advertisements which were included to boost the sales of the publication and created by the illustrator and cartoonist Lemmo Lemmi). Thus it involved a text that was inspired, written and published in the course of the Ist World War (1914-18).

O Çaa Cy Perereq (“o olho mal que saltita” [the shifty eye with an evil intention]), by Lobato, can only be seen as emerging from the transparent inner region of the interior of São Paulo (and to some extent, from the States of Minas Gerais and Rio) and is a reaction against the “European bloodbath ” (LOBATO,

1918, p. 27). The European carnage must be opposed to investigative practices which avoid, (as in the carnage) “[...] a single person taking up the subject and boring everybody by forcing them to accept his far-fetched intellectual conclusions [...]” (LOBATO, 1918, p. 25). The Inquiry is more rational than the ideas of authority because “[...] everybody speaks, the style is varied and there is a greater scope for the picturesque; and above all, it competes with intellectual or literary non-professionals” (LOBATO, 1918, p. 25). Lobato, certainly sets out an interesting idea in his investigation — even to the point of being wrong (which only makes it more interesting). In his view, the inquiry exists (I believe that it is only in this particular case or in a number of particular objects in his imagination), in an activity that investigates *malicious humour* — because the Portuguese word ‘*saltitante*’ [leaping around] refers to the way someone’s eyes seek to meet the eyes of someone else, while at the same time being passive, (unless furtively showing a sign of interest).

This inquiry by Lobato is very non-Oedipean, because Oedipus and the evil eye (which searches for itself and finds it), is pierced with blindness because he has an evil eye and is forced to wander through the desert. In Lobato’s inquiry, the scrutinising eye does not carry out a search but gives an account of the search so that the eyes will be drawn to him. The eye of Lobato seeks another eye — one that is different from him; it is shifty and in its agitation, it is evil. Even though the book of the Inquiry “reveals where and how the features of the study should be sought and assists in an understanding of ourselves”, in itself, the book searches for *Saci*. And this simplicity is really important because it is such a simple evil and free from ambivalence that it makes us forgive *Saci* when he is compared with the carnage in Europe. *Saci* does not embody the absence of evil but is another kind of evil, which is apparently preferable.

For several weeks my world has been torn apart. Oh what a wretched business! We must turn our attention to a milder scene than the slaughter of peoples. Let them be blessed! They can be forgiven for their many misdemeanours which have for a time been interrupted in our imagination by the atrocious and permanent period of horror which was sparked off by that fateful day of hideous memory, 2nd August 1914 (LOBATO, 1918, p. 25).

But what makes the inquiry of Lobato so special? It is by a purposeful deception. This is because the inquiry gathers representations in much the same way as someone who fits together the pieces of a jigsaw in a complex system of beliefs — its purpose is an image and its elements are an array of pigments. The image conceived as a purpose is a ruse to ward off the purpose. This is because

the image is only able to be a figuration of something when it has something entirely different from itself which can serve as its purpose.

The image which has for example, its configuration as an end, can only be regarded as a second-order image and for this reason sees itself as being in a stable condition since it is unaware of its own composition and in the case of the example, is distracted by the copy. However, this is not the procedure carried out by Lobato, who is free from any distractions and is only concerned with the ultimate image — Saci.

The difference is that without being distracted, Lobato will have and will only show us, the 'figurability' of Saci and never his entire 'figuration'. Saci is only seen from a single standpoint, which is to be absent-minded, since his attentiveness is drowned in a plurality of representations. As Lobato ironically points out, by being absent-minded, Saci is able to escape from the clutches of war and absolve the evil eye with all its restless shiftiness. Attentiveness sees in Saci an image of its inner struggle — our warfare.

3. THE DENSITY OF THE IMAGE AND WAR

It is not without interest that Freud published his twin essays *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915) in the same period. If we think in broadly general terms, we can see that the spirit of the *Inquiry* and the *Thoughts* resemble each other. There can be a number of reasons for this — a reading of Nietzsche, which both shared or a profound scepticism with regard to values and perhaps a fortuitous coincidence of temperaments.

Scepticism concerning values is different from an attitude to knowledge, which has no special interest in the unfairness of experience. For this reason, scepticism with regard to values — and it is not a question raising epistemological issues here — consists of being aware that there is something intrinsically problematic about our social structures. For both Freud, and Lobato, it is through the wretched state of European civilization that evil had become a synonym of death.

The problem, to this extent, is not the existence of evil in our societies but the radical form it has taken in war. Lobato seems to believe in the need for evil, in particular in his ludic sociability and even in his infantilizing. Saci embodies this bitter-sweetness. Thus he reacts against the bitter evil of the savage slaughter of civilized modes of being.

For this reason, in seeking to justify our attention to this strange inquiry, and go beyond the shallow and frivolous admission that there is a streak of savagery in the whole onslaught of the civilized system, it must be admitted that having a monopoly of imaginary evil is not desirable because it leads the social

fabric of civilization into a state of carnage. If civilization is a complete form of sociability — and for some reason, it persuades us that there is nothing to dread except fear itself — what exists is an everyday sensation of ‘non-death’. Slaughter is the offspring of a form of civilization that is dominated by the sensation of non-death. This domination leads to the formation of an enemy that is wholly alien from us, dehumanized, utterly disfigured, without a friendly face but with a ‘face’. And the compelling need to combat it, leads to the appearance of the hero who is not afraid of death (RANK, 1914/2008, p.27).

If Saci is an answer to slaughter, it is surprising that the analyses conducted by Freud and Lobato about the experience of war should be so similar — apart from an understandably greater degree of pessimism displayed by Freud. It remains to think about where Saci fits in the pattern of civilization which, as already seen, embodies as many destructive as conservative and constructive beliefs. The place of Saci lies in an irresolute cruelty. If war decides, Saci is involved. Saci is amusing in his cruelty but does not cease to be terrible, even in his ability to make us laugh. The evil of Saci does not become banal nor is it buried but is always shown as something that exists in things in the way that they are. There is no just Saci, in the way that there was a will for a just war. Saci never has any grand good intentions — he just has an infinite number of petty bad intentions.

Thus, even though there is a system of beliefs that allows do Saci to exist, in the same way as there is a system of beliefs in savagery, it cannot be said that Saci is, in any way, himself a belief, since he is much more like an illusion.

This raises a number of questions: (1) Can a belief be compared with an illusion? (2) Could this comparison have any effect on changing beliefs? (3) In some circumstances, can an illusion be preferred to a belief?

Because it is this that Lobato offers us: — Saci being in opposition to carnage. But how can we explain the impasse that faces us when we choose belief rather than fiction and Saci rather than war? This means that war leads to a sensation of truth since it is a belief and Saci, at most provokes a sensation of belief because it is an illusion. Even in his essay of 1915, Freud comments on the perils and need for an illusion. The general problem outlined by the Viennese thinker can be expressed in the following image: civilization is infected with a germ of unacceptability. Although for reasons of survival and culture, it may seem good, one must admit that it is only possible through the burial of illusion and when this is actively encouraged.

It has already become a matter of common sense to say that there is no civilization without illusion but the problem is deeper, because there is no ‘acceptability’ in civilization without illusion — which does not mean that it cannot be imposed, despite the burials. It is not that we do not crave for civilization — it could be that we are able to cling to it even when it displays a chilling

cruelty — but we are unable to accept it without some kind of illusion, even if it entails preserving our integrity. Some kind of Mephistopheles must exist; this devil has to promise us something although we know he has no intention of keeping his word.

One cannot prefer an illusion to a belief but there is no belief without illusion. Even a cold-blooded civilization is a belief of a cold-blooded civilization. This is Lobato's dilemma since civilization either compels one to have some kind of illusion regarding evil in a way which allows it always to be unchecked and petty and thus desirable to possess, or there is nothing else except the slaughter of men without fear.

What is terrible about war is not surprising because it is an "evil", but because it takes place where there is no evil but only where there are faultlines in civilization. In seeking to prevent small misdemeanours, it becomes a refuge not of a metaphorical illusion of evil or its small offences but of a social evil, which is not perceived as such, but only as a fleeting shadow.

Nonetheless, once the carnage is under way, no widespread civilisation can escape from it. Lobato does not set out to solve the problem — it seems that war can only be settled by exhaustion and the loss of morale. He decides to explore the petty misdemeanours of a small-scale civilization. In this world, social ills are never controlled and there is a dimming of the lights, a kind of penumbra or another shadowy civilization exists where a strong imaginary feeling of evil can be felt. There are no novelists in this other civilization but only story-tellers.

On the civilization of the right, on the other hand, as evil becomes increasingly apparent (and as a result can be trivialized), owing to its lofty grandeur and the efficient methods by which it can be controlled; there is no effective means of delineating the enemies as barbaric by means of an inventive imagination. Only men of flesh and blood are dead, never their imagined faces. Thus, according to Lobato, Saca is the illusion of the little man from another civilization — in which the density of images conceals the face without disfiguring it —, but his belief is not in the future but in death.

The little man, Jeca [another of Lobato's characters — literally, the 'country bumpkin'], is not in any way a Greek, because he sees the 'almost dead' lurking in all the shadows. He has no fear except the fear of death and is incapable of being afraid of a great evil in a way that can make him lose his fear of death. And it is not that he is incapable of being courageous but simply that he is incapable of not seeing his own extinction in the shadows. If he is sealed off from any acute fear of a great evil, the doors are open to him to glimpse an infinite number of acts of mischief. War does not lodge in this man from a lesser civilization even though he struggles, as did the people of Canudos, [the War of Canudos (1896-7) was between the Brazilian army and a popular uprising by rural farmers] and

no face is seen as being perfect; evil and men look like each other and this is a man of circumstances.

4. THE 'FIGURABILITY' OF SACI'S FACE

As can be seen, Saci, and Jeca too, form a part of Lobato's strategy to establish for himself a political metaphysics of character. This operates in such a trivial way that the characters speak on behalf of the author and as a way of supplementing this, they also speak on behalf of those who do not have a voice. But these two dramatic functions of conceptual characters are, so to speak, something that has an inherent weakness. This is because these are the unrelenting features of big-time politics in so far as they are now seen as being identified with a lesser civilization. Although Lobato does not see this and does not like the practice when he does see it, these dramatic functions end up by being involved with a certain representative dimension of the public imagination, according to which nobody can be granted attention as if he is speaking in his own name. The reason for this is that every utterance ends by being taken as being subject to biographical interpretation or as belonging to a group from which one has broken off ties.

Although this dramatic presence is intrinsic to any language, it can be said that Lobato is strongly inclined to adopt it, without wishing to do so, and this is the weakest side of his work. Nonetheless, this is also the strongest part of his work, since it leads us to take account of the political need for a metaphysics of character, where there is an opportunity to lay stress on the intimate aspects of the utterance. This means that when possessing intimacy in the circumstances surrounding the utterances, the characters think beyond questions concerning personality traits. The good character is like the virtuous man and his utterance is greater than himself. The characters are metaphysical because in an artificial way, they are embedded in their circumstances and have to solve recurring historical problems.

It cannot be said that Lobato's characters are entirely conceptual because the substance of the utterance always reflects signs of the circumstances, which means that it can only throw light on their human condition and its nature in an incidental way. At all events, it is necessary to appeal to a semi-conceptual state, which does not think about nature, but which thinks of something like the condition of Brazil which is historical in its representation. However, generally speaking, the effects of reducing the significance of the utterance has become unimportant for over a hundred years.

In allowing his characters to operate, Lobato works with what Emília called *Chave do Tamanho*, [The size key] in a novel of that name published in 1942: Pedrinho brought the news: "— New bomb attack on London, Granny. Hundreds of planes flew over the city. A deluge of bombs. Entire districts destroyed. Large

numbers of fires. A lot of deaths” (LOBATO, 1942, p.10). Dona Benta took this in a literal sense: “— I’m feeling a wish to die” (LOBATO, 1942, p.10). Emília, without much respect, took advantage of this literal interpretation and took it in the opposite sense of small lies: “Someone has turned the key of war. We need someone else to close it. But where is the key of war?” (LOBATO, 1942, p.10-11). Well, as every philosopher of history knows, the house of keys where the orderliness of the world can be unlocked, can only be found in a single place and Emília is going there (with the help of some magic powder), *Fim do Mundo* [The End of the World] (LOBATO, 1942, p.11-13).

The ragged doll is seen in a room full of keys and notices that the *Fim do Mundo* will not help her to discover the key of war. For this reason, she decides to employ an “experimental method ” “to sort out the keys, one by one, until she comes across the one for war ”. When looking for the war key she finds the “size key”:

If every creature was as tiny as I am, the whole world would be in a big muddle and their heads as perplexed as mine. But the war has ended! Oh, this has come to an end! Little as I am, men cannot any longer kill each other nor can they wield those terrible weapons of steel. The most that they can do is to poke around with needles or thorns. It’s already something really great ... ”(LOBATO, 1942, p.16).

“Now the changing size of mankind is making people’s ideas not worth a tinker’s curse” (LOBATO, 1942, p.17). The political operator of the size key carries out a kind of visual machiavellian trick because it makes the whole of human nature small but keeps the epistemological eye with the same abilities as before and requires an effort to single out the object so it can be seen. If it is seen close-up, it means one can glimpse the details at the same time as being able to assist in establishing something like a topological framework. However, the operator of the size key does more than this — he creates a relationship of amazement between the subjects and their practices and thus provides an opportunity to see what has been learnt again, while giving a feeling of uncertainty with regard to former customs.

The key operator size consists of a disorganized system of justice and is concerned with the active exercise of power in circumstances involving carnage, and where handiwork are confused with artifacts. The operator has to take action in the face of the challenge posed by Saci, as if someone says: — Try to shoot now that your arms are too heavy for your strength. The operator makes physical evidence out of what is already an evaluative conjecture. A physical weakening through the imagination involves carrying out a moral experiment. If there is a certain habitual proportion in the relationship between men and their artifacts, this make it admissible to concentrate a number of evils in a single supreme

figure. This involves the exercise of a deadly form of handiwork that is incapable of envisaging its own death. This is because as a result of a reduced size, human nature is left with death in its own hands. This is the belief that allows the size key and the momentary readjustment of its proportions to interrupt customs in an imaginative way. It also creates a kind of dizziness not only with regard to the size of the arms but as a result of the unwise dimension of the apathetic prospect of concentrating these modes in official institutional fiction.

Although the passage about the size key was written after *Inquérito do Saci*, [The Inquiry of Saci] it is based on the same assumptions. But in what way? Well, in a manner that is very similar to that of the essay by Freud on how war presupposes a malaise [2]. Lobato already works with the notion of the size key in the *Inquérito* [Inquiry] and only gives it final shape in the text of *A Chave do Tamanho* [The Size Key] But how does he do this? Before anything else, he has a pictorial concern with the characters, which can be inferred from the question — how can we represent Saci? — We know that it is a duty to represent him because doing so is a way of triggering a set of circumstances opposed to the European carnage (LOBATO, 1918, p.35).

Again there is a need to speak about Saci in an inductive way so that he can be represented. There is also a need for him to be seen in movement, in a pictorial flow of his representations with colours in movement and even the rhythm of his flights. This is because the “figurability” of Saci is always accompanied by contorted facial features caused by the rapidity of his shifting positions. As a result, through the operator we become very small so that Saci becomes a picturesque object as he attempts to become frozen in movement. We also become as small as Emília who is lost in a maze of clothes since we have led ourselves to be reduced to or rather become victims — we and Emilia — from the *reductio ad absurdum*: this is a kind of alienation which cuts us off from the world so that we see the world as inscribed in the figure of Saci (LOBATO, 1918, p.31-32).

Opposed to the concentrated fear of the officially sanctioned slaughters, there is the contrived fear of the political space made up of small fears. Politics has few elements for thinking about small fears. As traditionally understood, prolonged cruelty is political rather than concentrated. But it does not seem that with Saci, Lobato intended to occupy a space that was less political, or at least less political than that of the European arena, not even in the figure of Jeca Tatu — the character who refuses to vote or pay taxes — rather it seems to us that he was concerned with propositions that were slightly political.

Hence the Hobbesian model of fear that is reified in the form of mortal death, does not seem to be appropriate when thinking of the fear that creates Saci. An amusing axiom can be inferred from this: If there is Leviathan, Saci doesn't exist. It is not only a question of fear perceived in varying degrees of

intensity but also of distinct kinds of fear. Someone who has a lot of everyday fears is inhibited from having only one fear. Similarly, someone who is preoccupied with the vivid spectrality of death in his everyday life is immune to the artificial fear of death which is driven by the State or Law. However, the heroes are precluded from either everyday fears or those experienced as a vivid spectrality. The circumstantial fear of Saci is much better described by Montaigne than by Hobbes or Heidegger.

The forces of darkness induce fear; fear produces gods and the devil and at their feet issues the entire legion of infernal bohemia — the lesser gods and demons [...] subterranean dwarfs, the blue-devils of Scotland [...] and sacis [...] The contagious apprehensions open the doors to all the instruments of understanding. And it is through the naively credulous mouth of Jeca Tatu who plays the viola that Saci is a malicious little kid, a sadistic creature, a friend of people who mount horses roaming free in the meadows, by seizing their manes and riding without using a saddle, sucking the blood of the poor animals when they are exhausted, galloping in panic and petrified with fear (LOBATO, 1918, p.33).

If the supreme evil places us before a great devil who offers us security in exchange for our souls, the small offences are the concern of a little devil (LOBATO, 1918, p.33). Both contracts are equally mephistophelian — giving up one's soul does not mean that one obtains the thing for which it has been renounced. But in the case of the little demon, there is a chance of imprisoning it and hearing it recount its mischievous acts so that one can attempt to obtain a slightly better pact. It is a question of a mephistophelism that is *rebus sic stantibus* [things standing thus — provided that conditions have not changed] and not *pacta sunt servanda* [agreements must be kept]. This is because the contract can be renewed because, to some extent, the little demon likes to recount stories while the supremacist needs to hide them, even to the point of changing the nature of political secrets. Above all, it likes to recount things in a sadistic way to anyone who wants to listen or is offended by what he hears. What protects us from the little demon is that he adores ambivalence and to be displayed in this way, whereas the officially-sanctioned demon dominates everyone when in a state of ambivalence. Thus the little demon lets himself be seduced by human nature. Human nature is a natural trap for Saci but is the weak prey of the officially-sanctioned demon. As we have seen, the face of Saci is disfigured to attract attention and in this way it appears to join us in exploring our own ambivalence. In the case of the officially-sanctioned demon, we must scrutinize our own human nature to establish modes of discipline for cruelty in the realm of ambivalences.

We should not cease from being aware that the European carnage changed the nature of political secrecy, as we set out to make clear above; it makes death into an incalculable phenomenon. Before the carnage, civilization concentrated the fear of death within itself. However, by making man an animal that is not genuine because he was a dweller of the infinite and unable to think of his own death but only of the death of others, the secrets of the officially-sanctioned demon are all of a discursive nature. This means that as a result of the pact, we cannot know how to give up our soul but if we see it written in a stolen letter, we can understand it. For some reason, the countless number of bodies made the discursive secret unbearable because the supreme security has proved to be very unsafe and if a complete revelation was bestowed on us, a supreme secret that was fully disclosed, public and non-discursive, we would not be able to understand it. A stolen letter would not have any importance. It is worth noting that it seems to us that Saci, in contrast with the official supremacist does not know how to tell stories and has no intention of learning.

5. SACI: THE FACE, VOICE AND CRUELTY

We must renounce that part of belief that in a whole official pact utterly removes us from the need to think about cruelty. This refers to both what is involved in official cruelty, the physical nature of which is to conceal it from itself and its own ambivalence, and the attraction that cruelty wields in the discovery of the Other so that we can support Saci's illusion.

It might be that the renunciation that is necessary to obtain the pictorial condition of Saci is the cause of displeasure whether as the illusion of love or death since the perception of the mephistophelian pact we have already alluded to is very distressing. This is because Saci, as Lobato tells us, seems to be silly. But this is of necessity a moral argument when dealing with a mass of small offences where cruelty cannot be seen to hidden beneath a great abstract and administrative system of morality. We need to be submerged in small acts of cruelty to see those of the worst kind and combat them.

6. CONCLUSION

Antonio Candido, in the original preface of *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*, [Formation of Brazilian Literature] wrote about the meagreness and weakness of our literature when compared with that of other countries. However, to offset this, he put forward a feeling based on a 'substitute theory'. If it is not studied here, nobody will study Brazilian literature. In the field of political thinking, Candido's substitute theory is adopted almost unconsciously. The low numbers

of Brazilian authors can be offset by seeking to establish a canon. Or if not this, to compile a historiography of objects that have been rejected. [3](CANDIDO, 1959/1981, p.11).

This feeling was covered by the question about the existence of political Brazilian thought. Attempts to answer this question have been largely equivocal. Faoro tried to explain it as existing between the cultural climate of politics, the proliferation of its discourses in practice and political philosophy. In this context, questions have been raised about the existence of a Brazilian character for such a praxis (FAORO, 1987/2007, p.31). But not even the licence of culturalism can eradicate the spurious nature of the problem .

Well there are authors and there are problems. If the problem is falsified, it should be forgotten. If the author is not genuine, it should be forgotten too. The affirmation of an independent political culture of thought, is nothing more than an excuse for not thinking. No culture is so small that it does not need a philosophy and no philosophy is on such a grand scale that it does not need a culture too. It is impossible even to work with documents without a concept and if we have chosen to think through the works of authors, very well, it must be done from the position of authorial utterances.

Hence, it is not the case of asking questions through a universal homology of all thought, following the same pattern as a republic of letters and equally it is not the case of insisting on the cultural features of political activity. Political thought sets from thinking. It does not wonder where it belongs but is powerfully attracted to problems that it deems it is able to solve.

This conclusion states that the presence or absence of political thought or of political Brazilian thought or political thinking carried out in Brazil etc is a false issue. A single unifying reflection can take place through language not because there is a common essential feature in Portuguese thinking but because it is a question of proximity. But nothing more than this. It does not seem to be important to know the number of times that a question has been addressed in a particular language, even if this were possible in epistemological terms. Thus a particular discipline can be unified by its object which allows us to speak of Brazilian problems and even observe the way Brazilian problems have been addressed in Portuguese. This generalization is not the outcome of a supposed universality of political thought, but only concerns the fact that ideas begin to be thought out in a circumscribed way while in its early stages, they are capable of addressing a problem and not just being a contrivance. The comparison between approaches in different idioms is nothing more than a circumstantial contrast between authors but never involves the national appropriation of the supposed essence of thought.

For this reason, thinking about Lobato and the problems Lobato thought about is nothing more than thinking about Lobato and the questions and making them my questions, albeit in an altered way. However, they are no more mine than the experiences which I own. It must be admitted that the problem of character is addressed by the man from Taubaté with unparalleled intensity, including the factors that concern the invention of characters of a semi-conceptual kind on the basis of issues that are very Brazilian. The case of the Inquiry opens up wonderful way of thinking that he put into practice in all his work. The fact that he resisted forming concepts does not diminish his stature as a thinker but only makes him a difficult thinker and reveals his decision to choose a type of image that is not conceptual but a literary image. It was perhaps a strategic perception of the specific features of this image in the creation of worlds of experience in Brazil in which he lived. Thus the strategy of seeking conceptual operators in his work for children, he expressed a kind of disrespect that only thinkers are capable of attaining.

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